GCSE

ITALIAN

8633/SF: Speaking Test (Foundation)
Report on the Examination

8633
June 2019

Version: 1.0

General Introduction

In this first year of the specification for Italian, this examination has been new for everybody and all involved are to be congratulated for the successful way in which the new format has been embraced.

This report will try to indicate particular areas of success and also to inform teachers in order to further improve the outcome for students in future series. This report will be specifically about each question but also in more general terms which could be applied to any future question.

A copy of the Speaking Score Sheet used by examiners can be found at the back of the 2019 mark scheme.

Schools/colleges are reminded that a breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test per student is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via eAQA.

Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. Feedback is provided on the basis of need only and not for every teacher-examiner.

Assessing the Role play

Role plays are assessed firstly for communication of each task, up to 2 marks x 5 depending on how clearly a response was communicated. Please see the detailed mark scheme for the typical expected responses for each Role Play. Role Play is also assessed for Knowledge and Use of Language out of 5.

Teachers are encouraged to study the mark scheme to see exactly how the marks are awarded, for example: where one task does not communicate because of a 'lack of linguistic knowledge', a mark of 3 is likely to be the maximum for Knowledge and Use of Language and similarly, if two tasks do not communicate then a mark of 2 for Knowledge and Use of Language would be appropriate. For higher marks in this category teachers will note that effective control of verbs is required.

General points to note relating to role play

Role plays were generally well done and students used preparation time well to prepare the best response they could. There is no time constraint for the role play. However, some students gave unnecessarily long answers and were not interrupted.

Students generally managed the unprepared question very well. They were very well able to give lots of opinions and explanations in the *perchè?* questions. However many students mis-identified question words and could not respond correctly to,*'come?, dove? quando?* etc

Where a question had two parts, many students gave only one of the details. Teachers are allowed and encouraged to repeat that part of the stimulus to elicit a complete response as in role play 2 task 1: a student who gave just a birthdate could be asked again *e quanti anni hai?.* This would not

be allowed if an incorrect answer had previously been given. Some students were allowed a second attempt at a task after an incorrect answer and even if subsequently a correct answer was given, it was not credited.

Paraphrasing of the question by the teacher is not allowed but if no answer has been given by the student to part or all of a question, that part of the stimulus can be repeated. If a teacher does re-word a question it will result in a zero score for that task. This did occur in some tests.

An incorrect verb ending sometimes negated a response: In Role Play 1 *Quanti anni ha? - Ha 16 anni.* Students were incorrectly repeating back the verb in the question and this was a fairly common error.

Some students struggled with basic vocabulary about numbers, days, dates and times. By far the biggest challenge for students was asking the question. Many seemed unable to do this. Some just asked a random question not based on the stimulus as in role play 3: *? Giardino.* Even if students managed to formulate a question, for many it did not count, as 'flat' intonation communicated a statement rather than a question: *Ti piace la scuola*. is not the same as *Ti piace la scuola?*. Teachers are recommended to practise this skill with students.

ROLE PLAYS

Role play 1

T1 – Many did not include the word *biglietti* even though it appeared in the stimulus.
T3 – The time was not always well expressed.
T5 – Few knew how to ask a question about the toilet.

Role play 2

T1 – Often one detail was omitted. Provided an incorrect answer has not been given, teachers can prompt a second detail repeating the words in the stimulus relating to the omission: *e quando è il tuo compleanno?*

Role play 3

T4 – Not many could give types of shop.
T5 – Some asked questions but not relating to *Giardino.*

Role play 4

T1 – Many omitted *camera* even though it was in the stimulus.
T2 – Sometimes one detail was omitted and not further prompted.
T5 – Many were not familiar with *Colazione.*

Role play 5

T3 – Some did not note that the question word was *quando.*
T4 – Some did not note that the question word was *dove.*

Role play 6

T1 – Many did not understand the question word *come.*

Assessing the Photo Card

The assessment criteria relate to communication of information, development of answers and explained opinions. Clarity is also a consideration. The photo card is marked out of 15.

An example would be a student who clearly communicated replies to 3 questions but did not give an opinion could achieve a level 2 mark and a student who answered all 5 questions clearly but simply with just one developed answer could access level 3.

Teachers again are recommended to study the mark scheme to understand exactly what is required.

General points to note relating to the Photo Cards

Prepared/unprepared responses

As expected, the responses to the first three prepared questions were better than the last two.

Timing

There is a time limit of 2 minutes for Foundation. In reality, the performance of very few students exceeded this limit.

Paraphrasing

Teachers are allowed to slightly paraphrase so long as they do not give additional help or alter the meaning of the question. In Role Play 5 task 2 a teacher could ask *Quale materia preferisci?* but extra information is not acceptable as in Role Play 6 task 1 *Come vai a scuola? Per esempio, in autobus?* Further examples of acceptable paraphrasing are given in the mark scheme.

Describing the picture

This was mostly done well. Students used the preparation time usefully, providing a lot of information and sometimes opinions.

One difficulty was that students were wanting to use a present continuous construction as we would say, for example, in card F, when describing in English 'they are working' and they did not have the knowledge to do so. Of course, *lavorano* would have been be fine but they said things like *sono lavoro*. In description a *stare* + gerund can be useful.

Non-first person questions

At Foundation Level, there is always a question designed to elicit a non-first person reply and many students did not recognise it as such. If they did, they could not always access the appropriate verb endings to answer correctly. This would be a skill for teachers to practise.

PHOTO CARDS

Photo card A

T1 - This was well described with lots of detail.
T4 – Some struggled to say how they generally celebrate a birthday.

Photo card B

T1 – This was generally described well with plenty of good topic appropriate vocabulary.
T5 - Many found this difficult, possibly picking up a third person plural verb.

Photo card C

T1 – Students found plenty to talk about in this picture.
T3 – Some found it hard to answer *dove* and simply gave a job.
T4 – Some found it hard to think of two possible attractions for tourists in their town.

Photo card D

T1 – Students were generally well prepared and had good vocabulary to talk about this photo and this topic in general.
T5 – Again the third person plural verb caused issues for some students. An area to practise.

Photo card E

T1 – This was a familiar setting and students described it well.
T2 – Again only one detail was given in many cases and the second not prompted by the teacher.

Photo card F

T1 – The majority identified this as a workplace rather than a school and found lots to talk about.
T4 – Again, some students were not prepared for a non first-person question. When teachers gave additional information such as *tuo padre per esempio*, this negated any correct answer. Alternative vocabulary is acceptable: *Che lavoro fa qualcuno nella tua famiglia?*

GENERAL CONVERSATION

Assessing the Conversation

Half of the marks for the speaking test are available for the conversation so 30/60.
Again, teachers are recommended to study all the criteria for the four assessed aspects of the test.

Communication out of 10

Students can access higher the marks for longer and more developed responses. Teacher-examiners in some cases interrupted students unnecessarily before they were able to deliver their response. Although very long monologues should be discouraged, students should be able to give detailed responses.

Students must be able to give opinions for level 4 and 5 and one opinion for level 3.

Range and Accuracy of Language out of 10

Various elements were considered: complexity and range of structures, vocabulary, use of verbs and time frames and level of accuracy and severity of any errors.

Vocabulary was usually adequate but better when discussing technology and other topics with specific vocabulary. When answering a *perchè?* question or explaining an opinion, the variety of

adjectives tended to be very limited: most things were *divertente, noioso* or *interessante* and always *molto*. Some variety would be useful to practice.

Some students were not given much opportunity to talk in different time frames even when clearly able to do so. This is a requirement in Range and Accuracy for level 5 at Foundation. Teachers are recommended to include a range of questions referring to past and future events if appropriate to the student.

The use of appropriate verb tenses was very variable. Most could manage *sono andato*, *ho fatto* and *era* as a past time frame and *mi piacerebbe* and *vorrei* which counted as a future time frame. In the perfect tense, the auxiliary was commonly omitted and quite often an infinitive was used rather than a conjugated verb. However, many responses were better than that.

The level of accuracy was also very variable from excellent to unintelligible. Common errors included: incorrect word order, agreements, possessives, genders and omission of some words and use of non-Italian vocabulary.

Range and accuracy are two different things and in a good number of conversations, the student demonstrated a better range of language and structure but with poor levels of accuracy, or vice versa. In these cases, a 'best fit' mark was awarded.

Pronunciation and Intonation out of 5

Pronunciation was generally quite good even in students not achieving high marks overall. Students found some non-English sound combinations difficult, for example: gl as in *famiglia* presented as 'famig-lia'. Intonation was slightly less good and particularly in the question asked to the teacher or where students depended on pre-learned material. Teachers are recommended to practise asking questions with students with an interrogative intonation, especially when no question word is included.

Spontaneity and Fluency out of 5

The performance in this category was again very variable depending on how confident and in control a student sounded. This is about pre-learned material, flow and unnatural hesitation. Some pre-learned material did not sound very spontaneous. Teachers are recommended to refer to the assessment grids for the gradations of the descriptors.

Timing issues

Students are required to converse for between 3 and 5 minutes at Foundation tier. They must talk about the two themes not discussed in the photo card. They must talk for at least 1.5 minutes at Foundation on each theme. Most teacher-examiners did manage the timing well.

However, a common problem was that the first theme was much too long which did not leave available the minimum time for the second theme before the maximum total time allowed was reached. When this was the case, a 'short topic' carried a deduction of -2. The deduction was also applied when the topic was discussed for less than the required time but within the total maximum.

In addition, in many conversations the teacher did not prompt the student to ask a question until towards the end of the second theme and this sometimes fell outside the time limit. This carried a

further deduction of -1. Teachers should consider introducing this element earlier in the test and perhaps during the first theme. A few teachers used up too much time with unnecessarily long answers to the student's question.

Themes

Students were generally well prepared in all themes and especially the less traditional topics such as technology where they demonstrated better specialist vocabulary. Some of the environmental topics were much less well done.

Asking a question

Again, students found it hard to ask an appropriate question. A deduction of -1 was applied when the student did not ask a successful question or it was not within the time allowed.

Teachers should consider the issue of questioning intonation. If a supposed question was delivered with 'flat' intonation and could have been understood as a statement it did not score…*Hai un fratello* is not the same as *Hai un fratello?.*

Many used the *E tu/Lei?* question which was fine but not in all circumstances. When the teacher said *Parlami della tua famiglia* and after a response the student said *e tu?* this was not always an appropriate question. When a teacher asked *Ti piace la tua famiglia?* and the student replied and added *e tu?,* this was an appropriate question. Incorrect register when asking a question was not penalised.

Choice of questions by the teacher

Students should have had no prior knowledge of the exact questions they are to be asked in each theme. Whilst teachers and students will have prepared a wide range of likely questions, in some centres, all students were asked the same limited range of questions. This is not within the spirit of this test which should be rather more unprepared and natural, but also on familiar topics.

In a number of centres students were asked more or less the same questions that they had been asked in the Role Play, presumably as that was what they student had prepared on that theme.

Students are allowed to nominate the first theme of the General Conversation but not a particular topic within it, eg, Theme 2 just holidays.

Most teachers used a good questioning style but a few students were asked too many closed questions with no follow-up which limited the possible answer they could give. This had particular implications for Communication marks.

Teachers should try to word questions in an accessible way and suited to the ability of the student. Some students were asked very complicated questions beyond their ability.

Students may ask for a repetition of a question and many did. They should do this in Italian. Teachers may repeat or re-word a question but only if the student has not already given an incorrect answer. If the student subsequently answered correctly at a second attempt, this answer was not credited. This did happen routinely in some centres.

Time frames

As mentioned, some students were not given much opportunity to talk in different time frames. This is a requirement in Range and Accuracy for level 5 at Foundation. Teacher-examiners should make sure to offer at least one opportunity for answering questions relating to the past and future tense, as well as the present.

Advice to teacher-examiners

General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.

- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.

- The *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document is in the Secure Key Materials (SKM) area of e-AQA, available via the AQA website. If you do not have access to SKM, ask your examinations officer to download the document for you. It is *essential* that you follow the instructions in that document.

- In the *Instructions* document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every student:

  GCSE Italian examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number _____, candidate number _____, student name _____. Role-play number _____, photo card letter _____, general conversation theme chosen by student Theme (1, 2 or 3).

- Everything said by the teacher-examiner must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to AQA.

- Use Italian throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her role-play and photo card combinations and the nominated theme for the general conversation in English.

- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.

- Practise pronunciation as often as possible. It can be a good use of the Foreign Language Assistant's time, if you have one.

Role-play

- Keep to the script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.

- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.

- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.

- If there is a two-part question in an unprepared task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so often leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.

- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.

- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the two-minute maximum time, you may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.

General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on. In order to introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives and verbs.

- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.

- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.

- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Do not ask all students identical questions.

- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.

- Announce the change of theme in Italian.

- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 1'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.

- The maximum length of the general conversation is five minutes. Everything after that will not be marked.

- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they do not do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you do not forget to do it later on.

- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

Lastly, please discourage students from 'rehearsing' the answer 'sotto voce' before saying it aloud as some do, as it could sound like whispered help. Teachers are also reminded that during the test no non-verbal communication must take place. Examiners heard a number of occasions when this

may have been happening. Page 24 point 37 of *the Instructions for the conduct of the exams* is a useful reminder of many such things in this report.

Advice to students

- Use the 12 minutes' preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the role-play tasks and in response to the three prepared questions on the photo card.

- For the photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.

- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the role-play and photo card and to all questions in the General conversation.

- Make sure you know common question words.

- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Italian.

Conclusion

This year this examination has been a new experience for all concerned and it has gone well. It has been a positive experience and students will be rewarded with an appropriate grade for their performances. Teachers should build on the experience of this year and apply it to next year's success. Thank you.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.