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# GCSE ITALIAN

8633/SF & SH: Speaking Foundation & Higher  
Report on the Examination

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8633  
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## **Introduction**

After two years without a speaking examination in this format, it was once again good to give students the opportunity to show what they could do in a more formal speaking test setting.

Doubtless the lack of individual and face-to-face teaching time over the last two years will have made the preparation for this test more challenging but teachers and students are to be congratulated for the way in which they embraced the experience. In the majority of cases, the students were able to perform to the best of their ability and they will achieve an appropriate result.

The lack of life opportunities during the last two years did not seem to impact on the answers to questions in certain areas. For example, questions around holidays and festivals, going to a concert and part time jobs etc. Students used their imagination and 'played the game'.

However, there are always ways to do better and the following examples of what went well and what did not, should help teachers in the preparation of students next year.

## **General comments on themes and topics**

The sequence chart worked well and students were given the opportunity to talk on all three themes almost without exception.

How well a student coped with any given theme or topic seemed to depend on the preparation they had done in that particular area so this was very variable.

The more 'familiar' themes of family, holidays and school were generally handled confidently – but not always.

The more recent additions to the specification, such as some of the global issues and technology sometimes appeared more challenging but many students were very confident and competent to discuss these matters too.

During the general conversation, the teacher can ask anything within the theme and to some extent avoid some less popular areas. However, for the Role Play and Photo Card, which are prescribed, there may be questions based on any area of the specification. It is therefore essential that students are familiar with all themes and topics even if they do not like them.

## **Role plays**

There were many excellent role play performances across the range of role plays and students generally did as well as they could.

Some students, and indeed some teachers, sometimes found it difficult to get into and stay 'in role'. This was particularly evident in Role Play 3 which is based in a tourist office in Italy. Many Italian nationals did not identify as a non-Italian visiting an Italian town. The lack of role was also true in some other role plays.

There was a lack of precision evident in some student responses. Sometimes students failed to pick up key question words. Examples include the following:

In Role Play 1 question 2 – *Quante ore al giorno guardi la televisione?* A typical response to this was - *Sì, guardo la televisione ogni giorno or mi piace guardare la televisione.*

In Role Play 12 - *Lavorare e studiare, secondo te è un vantaggio o uno svantaggio per gli studenti, e perché?* One example of how some responded to this is: – *Un vantaggio è i soldi ma uno svantaggio è che sono stanco*

There were many occasions when students could not manipulate the person of the verbs. If the question was *Preferisci....?* they answered *preferisci* rather than *preferisco*.

Sometimes students answered part of a question and were not prompted to complete it. This was often the case in *Perché?* questions. Also in questions such as in Role Play 6 question 1 where more than one detail was required. Another example was Role Play 12 question 1, *Dove e con chi?*

Vocabulary which was not recognised included *alloggia* in Role Play 3 and *orario* in Role Play 9. There was also a problem being able to express the time as in Role Play 6. Just a number was not sufficient as it was ambiguous.

### **The ? Question**

This caused problems for very many students. They did not always seem to realise that they were to **ask** a question. Some just said something about the stimulus clearly not noticing the ? eg: Role Play, 2 - *Mi piace la mia famiglia.*

Others offered a totally random question which had nothing at all to do with the stimulus.

A good number asked something with totally flat intonation and no question word – so it was considered to be a statement and was not allowed. An example would be Role Play 6 *Ti piace la scuola.* -

### **Photo Cards**

Unlike the role play, the photo card has a time limit of 2 minutes for Foundation and 3 minutes for Higher. This was generally not a problem, apart from the very few who appeared to overlook the prescribed time limits

There were many excellent descriptions of the pictures with a variety of interpretations of what they saw – which is fine. The only photograph to cause a problem was Photo Card D/J which students did not always recognise as a charity shop. This was not a problem in itself but it meant that the remaining questions which were based on volunteering and social issues might not have seemed appropriate. The students, however, did not seem to notice or to have been unsettled by this.

As expected, the first three questions were generally better handled than the unseen ones.

The main problem with the photo cards was the non-first person question. Students did not seem to be expecting to hear this type of question and found it difficult to answer appropriately. They sometimes answered as if it were themselves. An example would be Card J - *Dove sono andati in vacanza i tuoi amici l'anno scorso?*

A good number of excellent and often native-speaker students did not score the highest marks due to lack of details. It would be prudent for students to be aware that in at least three questions they

must answer with at least three clauses with verbs in order to access the highest band of marks. The mark scheme provides additional clarification of this.

As in the role plays, the points about precision also applied. In Photo Card 2 question 2 students did not always note the *questo* in *questo lavoro*. Similarly the *dove* in question 3 often went unnoticed. Many students struggled with *assaggiare* in Photo Card G.

The point about part answers also applied when answering some questions on the photo card, especially the *Perchè?* questions; for example: *Ascolti la musica mentre studi? Perché?* The teacher could have asked the question in two parts or prompted the second part if the student did not answer it.

### **General Conversation**

The majority of the conversations went well and students were well prepared. In general, students were asked a good range of appropriate questions and performed as well as they could. There were quite a few interesting and engaging conversations.

A few considerations:

The list of 'Example Questions' on page 52 of the Teacher's Booklet is just that – examples – and is not intended to be a script for this part of the test. In some cases it may be appropriate to use these questions as a basis for the conversation.

In general it was better if the questions asked were as appropriate to the student as possible. Asking follow up questions also allowed for spontaneity.

Students were given more opportunity to answer and gain marks, if the questions asked did not repeat those which had already been asked in the role play and photo card.

### **Asking a question**

Some students did not attempt a question and were not prompted.

Most students, however, did attempt to ask a question but once again, a good number asked something with totally flat intonation and no question word. This was considered to be a statement and was not allowed.

The question *e tu?* was an acceptable question but only in the correct context.

If the teacher asked something like '*Com'è la tua scuola?*' and the student responded to this question with '*e tu?*' it would not be grammatically appropriate. If the question had been something like '*Dove vai in vacanza di solito?*' then '*e tu?*' would be a suitable option.

A very small number of students asked a question outside the two conversation themes so again, this did not count.

Some asked a question at the end of the test and outside the maximum time, so again this did not count. See also timing issues below.

## **Timing**

Quite a few marks were lost due to inappropriate timing of the general conversation. Quite often the tests were longer than the maximum of five minutes for Foundation and 7 minutes for Higher. There is also a minimum time per theme of 1 ½ minutes at Foundation and 2 ½ minutes at Higher.

A particular issue was that if the first theme was discussed for too long, it did not leave enough time for the second theme before the total maximum time was reached. This attracted a penalty.

In addition, if the student's question was asked 'after time', it was not assessed, attracting a further penalty.

Many teachers encouraged the question to be asked during the first theme and this worked well and avoided students running out of time.

## **Conclusion**

In general, the students performed well under the circumstances and are to be congratulated for what they achieved.

Well done!

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.