



GCSE

ITALIAN

8633/SH Paper 3 Speaking Higher Tier
Report on the Examination

8633/SH
June 2023

Version: 1.0

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Introduction

Students and teachers are to be congratulated on a successful speaking examination season in 2023. There seemed to have been fewer problems than in the past.

It was pleasing to note that there were very few incidences of poor-quality sound recordings and very few technical issues.

However, there are always ways in which to do better and the following examples of what went well and what went less well will hopefully help teachers when preparing students for future examinations.

General comments on the themes and topics.

Using the sequence chart in the Teacher's Booklet allowed for students to cover all three themes during their test. On the very few occasions when one of the themes in the General Conversation was the same as the theme of the Photo Card, a penalty was applied.

This year there seemed to be a marked improvement in the way students handled topics such as technology and environmental and social issues. As always it is essential that students are familiar with all topics in the specification as they can occur in any of the elements of the test.

Role plays

In general, the students did well but here are a few points which caused difficulty to be considered for future examinations.

Some teachers seemed to be setting a timer but this element of the test is not timed.

A small number of teachers re-worded a question in order to elicit an answer. In the Role Play this is not allowed. Even if the student subsequently gave an appropriate response, it could not be credited. Teacher-examiners are not permitted to ask a question for a second time after a student has given a complete but incorrect response.

It was noticeable that in many cases the unpredictable question proved to be problematical. Often students were unable to grasp the essence of the question, possibly not recognising the key question word or form of question. You will see examples of this below.

There were often problems of manipulation of verbs from second to first person, eg: a question using 'Preferisci...' a significant number answered with 'preferisci' rather than 'preferisco'.

The question task

There was a marked improvement in how students asked questions though not all were successful. Some asked a random question unrelated to the stimulus. A few did not seem to be aware that ? meant they had to ask a question. Again, some asked a question with totally flat intonation so it sounded like a statement so 'Ti piace viaggiare,' rather than 'ti piace viaggiare?'. This could not be credited.

Role Play 7

The students did not always pick up the meaning of 'Tu sei un buon amico/una buon'amica?' They sometimes just described a good friend. Some of the 'Perchè?' elements of tasks 1, 2 and 3 were omitted and not prompted.

Role play 8

This option did not occur very often but it was mostly well done. Some found it hard to get the verb correct in 'non mi è piaciuto'.

Role Play 9

Surprisingly students did not seem able to easily describe their local area. However, it was the -!- question and they had not been able to prepare it.

For task 4, they had some interesting ideas and also generally managed to manipulate the required verbs.

Role Play 10

Some found 'personale' difficult.

Again the -!- question caused difficulty in task 3. Many students could not think of anything good about the hotel. Many correctly suggested things like the restaurant, pool, gym, situation etc but forgot the 'why?'.

Role Play 11

This was a generally well-prepared topic.

Some forgot to give both a positive and negative description of school and were not prompted to do so.

For task 3 there were some imaginative unfair school rules.

Some struggled to find an activity for task 4 and cited free time activities which might also be school clubs. They scored unless they said something like 'con la mia famiglia...'

Role play 12

There was sometimes confusion over 'lavoretto' as they seemed to be talking about the sort of job they might do in the future – teacher, doctor, lawyer, etc unlikely to be part-time student jobs. This then caused further confusion in task 2 when asked about future career.

The Photo Card

There were many interesting and imaginative descriptions of the photos.

The Photo Card test is timed and when students were very slow to respond or were allowed to continue with long answers, the 3-minute time limit was reached and sometimes response to the final question was not credited.

Many students had realised that the highest marks required at least three verb clauses in at least three responses. As they could prepare the first three responses, many did appropriately extend these first three answers, also including the required justified opinions. Some high attaining

students did not seem to be aware of the requirements of the mark scheme and so did not score as highly as they could have done.

A very small number of students were asked only the first three prepared questions and not the remaining two unprepared questions. This unfortunately resulted in a loss of marks. Some questions involved a 'Perchè?' and some students were not prompted to answer this part of the task.

Teachers are allowed to paraphrase a question in this part of the test but in so doing, some gave away key vocabulary or meaning, perhaps by giving alternatives or suggestions, so that any subsequent appropriate answer could not be credited. An example would be in Photocard C task 4: 'Perche gli spazi verdi sono important in una città?'. Some teachers added something like 'parchi e giardini ...?' supplying key vocabulary.

Students did better when expecting a question in the past and another in the future, one of which is within the first 3 questions and also a non-first person question somewhere. This latter question form did cause occasional problems, for example 'Secondo i tuoi amici, tu sei sempre un buon amico/una buon'amica?'.

Photo Card G

The grammar required for task 4 some found difficult. They were well prepared to answer with their own opinions, 'Secondo me...' or 'Penso che...' but not this kind of third person reply.

Photo Card H

There were some very interesting 'best gifts' but they found it harder to say why they liked it. Similarly, they could give a favourite festival in task 5 but not why they liked it.

Photo Card I

This topic had been carefully prepared by most students so they coped well. A few struggled to think how they had saved electricity this week. Most played football in the green spaces but a few talked about mental health and environmental issues.

Photo Card J

Task 4 proved problematical as it was not prepared but most managed to say something appropriate.

Photo Card K

This was generally well done but task 5 proved difficult – not language-wise but just not being able to think of a reason.

Photo Card L

In task 4 sometimes it was not absolutely clear that both an advantage and a disadvantage were required especially as 'e' in the question could sound like 'o'.

The General Conversation

The majority of students were well prepared and were able to engage in an interesting and meaningful dialogue. In general there were many genuinely interesting conversations. Many students skilfully 'recycled' vocabulary from the questions asked but sometimes were not able to adapt the verb to the appropriate ending. In most cases it was clear that teacher-examiners knew their students well and the kinds of material they would be comfortable to discuss and this was fine.

However, a significant number of students seemed to be reliant on pre-learned answers, sometimes remembering the incorrect response.

Question types

Most students were asked questions at a suitable level of difficulty and based on the appropriate themes. However, once again, in some cases teachers simply used the 'exemplar' questions given in the Teachers Booklet. These are unrelated examples of question types which may or may not have been at an appropriate level of difficulty for any given student. The 'flow' was almost always compromised when using only these questions.

Occasionally students were asked closed questions which did not allow for able students to give full replies and others students were asked unstructured questions beyond their ability. Students did best when they were answering questions at an appropriate level and on a topic which interested them.

Given that students are required to offer and explain opinions to score for Communication, some students answered too many opinion questions at the expense of narration and use of different tenses. It was pleasing that almost all students did give explained opinions.

Themes and topics

The full range of topics was covered, some in imaginative ways. This year students seemed much more comfortable answering about topics such as technology and environmental and social issues. They knew more of the topic specific vocabulary and answered well. A small number of students were asked questions on the same theme as the Photo Card and a penalty was applied.

Asking a question

It was noted that many more student were asking their question during the first theme of the conversation so this meant that there were fewer occasions of questions being timed out at the end of the second theme.

The 'E tu?' option was popular and in many cases worked perfectly when the question previously asked by the teacher made it grammatically suitable, eg teacher: 'Dove sei andato in vacanza l'anno scorso?' the student then replied with where they went then 'e tu?'. In some cases it did not work: 'teacher: 'Com'è la tua casa?' – student answer + 'e tu?'.

A good option for some was for the student to give a statement followed by 'e tu?', eg: 'Ho due sorelle, e tu?'. This usually worked well. A few still asked a question with flat intonation so it was a statement and not a question. 'Abiti a Bristol' rather than 'Abiti a Bristol?'. This could not be credited.

Timing of the Conversation

The timing of the test remained an issue for a few students. Some tests exceeded the 7 minutes allowed and nothing was assessed once any utterance started before the limit was completed. This included any question asked by the student. On a few occasions the first theme was too long and so did not allow the minimum 2½ minutes for the second theme before the time limit was reached.

In both of the above cases, a penalty was applied in line with the mark scheme.

Conclusion

In general, most students did as well as they were able and will have achieved the grades they deserved.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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