



GCSE
Italian

8633/SF Paper 1 Speaking Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination

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Introduction

Students and teachers are once again to be congratulated on a successful speaking examination season in 2024. It is pleasing to report that there seemed to have been fewer problems than in the past.

It was again noted that there were very few incidences of poor-quality sound recordings and very few technical issues.

However, there are always ways to do better and the following examples of what went well and what did not, will hopefully help teachers and students when preparing 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, one in the Photo Card and two in the General Conversation. 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 significant penalty was applied. Fortunately, this happened only rarely.

This year there seemed to be a greater confidence in the way students talked about technology. They were very comfortable talking about favourite apps and the uses and dangers of their phones. They were still more tentative about social issues, homelessness, and volunteering etc. As always it is essential that students are familiar with all topics in the specification as they can occur in any part 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 very few teachers re-worded a question in order to elicit an answer. In the Role Play this is not allowed. Teachers must stick to the script.

It is also not allowed to ‘re-present’ a question if the student incorrectly starts or has given an incorrect answer. Even if the student subsequently had given an appropriate response, it did not count.

On very rare occasions teachers used the set questions as a basis for a general role play conversation or occasionally omitted one or more of the questions. This resulted in a significant loss of marks.

It was very noticeable that students sometimes gave what sounded like good responses, but which did not actually answer the question asked. An example would be in Role Play 6 the stimulus was ‘Studiare all’università – importanza e ragione’. The question asked was ‘Secondo te, è importante studiare all’università e perché?’ Many gave answers saying what subject they wanted to study but did not really answer the question. Similarly, when asked ‘Quali materie sono obbligatorie?’ they answered with something like ‘Mi piace la storia....’ etc. Again, this did not answer the question.

There were often problems of manipulation of verbs from second to first person, eg: ‘Ti piace’ to ‘mi piace’ and ‘il tuo amico’ to ‘il mio amico’ etc. This is a technique which could be practised.

The ! task

It was also noticeable that in many cases the -!- question proved to be problematic. This is understandable as the students had not been able to prepare an answer. Often students were unable to grasp the essence of the question, possibly not recognising the key question word or form of question. Very few could answer in Role Play 1 ‘Da quanto tempo siete amici?’. Some gave an unlikely answer to ‘A che ora vai a letto?’ A good number replied ‘[Dormo] otto ore’, which means they probably answered how many hours they sleep.

The ? 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 on the card. This did not count. Students should be reminded that the question must be based on the given stimulus in some way.

A few did not seem to be aware that ? meant that they had to ask a question.

Again, this year, some asked a question with flat intonation, so it sounded like a statement so ‘Ti piace il tuo lavoro’ rather than ‘Ti piace il tuo lavoro?’ Again, this did not count.

Role Play 1

A number of students gave no **physical** description of a friend – just something like ‘simpatico e divertente.’

In task 2, instead of saying ‘why they get on together’, some gave a list of what they did together which then was asked in task 4. Many, however, did this task well.

As above the ! question was not answered well.

Role Play 2

Many could not answer the ! question ‘Chi cucina a casa tua di solito? They gave a description of the rooms in the house or said why they liked the kitchen. They missed the key question word ‘Chi?’

They described their favourite food and drink well, giving reasons even when not requested.

Role Play 3

Native speaker students had some confusion about where home their region was – UK or Italy – and some swapped allegiance part way through the Role Play. It followed that the tourist attractions also depended on where ‘home’ was.

Most could say what they liked about their region.

Role Play 4

The main issue here was the ! question as above.

Most had opinions about alcohol – task 2 - and physical exercise – task 4.

Role Play 5

Few students had much idea about how many students were in the school.

When asked about sport facilities available in school, some just said what sports they liked to do. This did not answer the question.

Most understood the ! question about the time school ends.

Role Play 6

The first task about opinions of university was not well done.
Most could explain why they did or did not want to work in Italy.

The Photo Cards

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 2-minute time limit was reached and sometimes the final question/s were not assessed.

Many students had realised that the best 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. However, some students did not seem to be aware of the requirements of the Mark Scheme and gave briefer answers, so did not score as highly.

Very few students were asked only the first three prepared questions and not the remaining two unprepared questions. This resulted in a significant loss of marks.

Some questions involved a 'Perchè?' and some students were not prompted by the teacher to answer this part of the task.

Teachers are allowed to slightly re-phrase 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 given did not count. An example would be in Photo Card E – rather than 'Com'è il preside della scuola?' if the teacher gave the name of the headteacher, it made the question much easier.

Students did better when expecting a non-present tense question within the first 3 prepared questions and a non-first-person question somewhere. This latter question form did cause many problems, for example 'Cosa fanno i tuoi amici per guadagnare i soldi?'. Many found it difficult to use non-first-person verbs.

Photo Card A

Students managed task 3 well in the past but could not always get 'Con chi abiti?'
Some forgot the 'Perchè?' part of task 5.
They were better at describing somebody in task 4.

Photo Card B

The first three questions were generally well answered.
Students did less well about why sport is important.

Photo Card C

Students described the picture well giving lots of details but were less comfortable talking about volunteering.
Surprisingly, few could say anything they bought in a charity shop.

Photo Card D

Again, students described this picture well.
They found task 4 the most difficult to answer.

Photo Card E

Students related well to the picture describing it with many details.
They had difficulty saying how they would change the school.

Photo Card F

The first three questions were answered well by students.
Not many knew 'paghetta' so struggled with task 4.

The General Conversation

Once again, most 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 and this is fine. However, sometimes they were not able to adapt the verb to the appropriate ending – 'Ti piacerebbe sposarti?' sometimes resulting in the inappropriate 'Sì, mi piacerebbe sposarti.'

In most cases it was clear that teachers knew and prepared their students well using material they would be comfortable to discuss. However, a significant number of students seemed to be reliant on pre-learned answers, but they sometimes did not remember a correct response.

Question types

Most students, but certainly not all, were asked questions at a suitable level of difficulty and based on the appropriate designated themes. However, once again, in some cases the 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' of the conversation was almost always compromised when using only these questions. These are just exemplar questions and not intended to be a script.

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

Students had been well taught to give reasons for almost every answer. However, some students answered too many opinion questions at the expense of narration and use of different tenses.

Use of tenses

Many students were not sufficiently challenged to answer in a variety of tenses. Some were asked just one or two 'tense' questions towards the end of the time available. Teachers should be encouraged to give students as much opportunity as they need to successfully use past and future time frames if they are able.

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 to a lesser extent environmental and social issues. They generally 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 significant penalty was applied.

Asking a question

It was noted that many more students 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 abiti?’ student, after the answer, ‘E tu?’ fits well. However, it does not work if for example a teacher’s question is something like ‘Descrivimi la tua casa.’

A few students had a way around this. They said a statement like ‘Abito in campagna’ - then added E tu?’ This meant that they had control of the question.

A few still asked a question with flat intonation so it was a statement and not a question, for example ‘mangi la colazione’ rather than ‘mangi la colazione?’ This did not count. If a question word had been used it would have become a question ‘Che cosa mangi?’

Teachers should remind students that the question must be based on one of the General Conversation topics to count. It should also sound like a question.

Timing of the Conversation

The timing of the test remained an issue for a significant number of students. Some General Conversations exceeded the 5 minutes allowed and nothing was assessed once any utterance started before the limit was completed. This included any question asked by the student after the time limit.

On very few occasions the first theme was too long and so did not allow the minimum 1½ minutes for the second theme before the 5-minute time limit was reached.

In both of the above cases, a penalty was applied.

Conclusion

In general, most students did as well as they were able and will achieve the grades they deserve. Well done to all.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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