

Italian (Continuers)

2 0 1 0 A S S E S S M E N T R E P O R T

Languages Learning Area

ITALIAN (CONTINUERS)

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: ORAL EXAMINATION

This year, 194 students presented for the oral examination.

Section 1 – Conversation

In the conversation section, most students were well-prepared and familiar with the topics and general questions, offering appropriate responses. Some candidates gave formulaic, rehearsed answers, but more successful students were able to elaborate spontaneously, offering additional interesting information to maintain the conversation. Students should be prepared to expand as much as possible on the topics and questions from the exemplar as this information is familiar.

Most students were able to list their subjects accurately, although some subjects were incorrectly pronounced (for example, pronouncing 'biologica', 'psicologia' with an English-sounding 'l'). Most students were able to discuss which subject(s) they found most interesting, challenging, or difficult, giving interesting and detailed answers. The majority were able to speak reasonably well about their future plans (such as a gap year, university plans, or choice of course). In more successful conversations, candidates offered opinions and justified responses, while in less successful conversations students did not elaborate, pick up on cues, or handle words and phrases outside of their prepared structures. There were some English pronunciations of words such as 'celebrare' (with an 's'), errors with the auxiliary in the use of the present perfect tense, non-agreements of verb/subject/adjective, and the use of 'piacere' and prepositions was not always accurate. While some students used unconjugated verbs, or were unable to vary their tenses, most examiners were pleased overall with the solid responses offered. Some examiners, however, were a little disappointed with the overall standard and felt that some students needed to be better prepared for this section.

Some candidates used aspects of the subjunctive mood successfully and it was noted that the future tense was well-handled by many students. It is recommended that students learn to use connectives such as 'quindi', 'allora', and 'insomma' to connect their ideas and allow the conversation to develop naturally. Many students were able to self-correct, some were able to ask for clarification, and only a few were very hesitant in this section.

Students are encouraged to use their lesson and homework time effectively over the course of the year to practise answering the exemplar questions in detail and in a variety of ways and to become familiar with the topics of the conversation. The average mark for this section was 15 out of 20, with 37% of students achieving an A, 33% a B, and 25% a C.

Section 2 – Discussion

In the discussion most students were prepared to introduce their topic with confidence, using the time to their advantage. Successful discussions included interesting reasons for the student's choice of topic, with pertinent information and opinions on the topic chosen.

In this section many students relied on rehearsed segments of information, but the more successful discussions included answers about resources and what students had learnt or discovered about their topic, and comfortably dealt with the oral presentation and the written pieces in Italian and English. Some students were prepared and able to deal well with

unexpected questions, while others found it difficult to expand on the dot points they had written on their In-depth Study outline sheet. This sheet is important to the discussion and students should fill it out carefully, with guidance from their teacher, and should be prepared to discuss each listed aspect of their topic, remembering that not all aspects may be covered in the examination because of time limitations.

A variety of interesting topics were presented, but teachers and students are encouraged to select topics that allow for depth of treatment and a genuine interest on the part of the student, which can be conveyed in the discussion. Students should be wary of topics that are too broad and general, for example, famous people (unless they can focus on specific achievements or aspects of their life) or a region of Italy. Several students brought in objects such as photographs and pictures, which enhanced the discussion and were a good focus for students and examiners.

While most students were able to describe clearly each task for the Italian written response, the English response, and the oral presentation, only a few included their personal reflections on the process and the topic. Students used and described a range of resources. Some students did not treat the chosen topic in the depth and detail required at this level, and that others were not able to sustain the discussion. Most students should be able to convey some enthusiasm about their chosen topic without relying on the direction of the examiners or on rehearsed passages, and it was pleasing to note that many did convey a genuine interest in their topic. Students should expect interaction with the examiners in the discussion, and being thoroughly prepared is the key to success in this section.

Overall, the level of accuracy and the degree of fluency were lower in the discussion than in the conversation and the average mark for this section was 7.3 out of 10. Twenty-eight per cent of students achieved an A, 38% a B, and 18% a C. Teachers and students need to keep in mind that the In-depth Study needs to reflect detailed research and knowledge and a personal reflection on the topic.

Examiners commented that the oral examinations were a positive, enjoyable experience.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: WRITTEN EXAMINATION

Section 1: Listening and Responding

Fifteen per cent of students achieved 17/20 or better, with no student gaining full marks, and 60% achieved 10/20 or above. This section remains the most challenging for most students. Students and teachers are strongly encouraged to devote more time to the development of active listening skills across Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Text 1

Fragmented understanding caused confusion and misinterpretation of the instructions provided. Students were asked to identify what Davide was asked and why. Successful responses identified and related information appropriately and accurately.

Less successful responses did not include enough details, with an incorrect deduction that a new computer or mobile phone was to be purchased, instead of repaired, and that Caterina was the one going on holidays.

Text 2

More successful responses demonstrated students' good judgement; these students listened, noticed, and understood the text by thinking about it carefully. So, they demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the details of the announcement and the implications for getting to Milan by 9.00 a.m. They focused on the relevant information from the text and used

it to support their answers appropriately. Only 25% of students achieved full marks for this question; a significant percentage (22%) of students did not identify a single piece of information to support their answer. Students needed to recognise:

- that the 24-hour time system is used in Italy – so, a time given as ‘at 11.00 p.m.’ is expressed as ‘alle ventitrè’
- false friends such as ‘banco’ which means ‘counter’, not ‘bank’
- iconic places in Italy, for example, ‘Stazione Termini di Roma’, ‘Milano Centrale’
- verbs (‘prelevare’, ‘to pick up/collect’), and the future tense (‘partirà’, ‘it will depart’; ‘arriverà’, ‘it will arrive’).

Text 3

Thirty per cent of students achieved 4/4. More than 70% of students achieved 3/4 or above for question 3. They demonstrated a good understanding of Mr Fosco’s suitability for the job. Most students appeared to be familiar with the topic and language of the world of work. They took note of the number of marks and lines allocated to this question and were able to support their answers with sufficient evidence from the text.

Effective responses noted Mr Fosco’s vast experience in the retail industry. Although less successful responses demonstrated some understanding of Mr Fosco’s job position, they did not provide adequate detail and depth.

There were some basic errors, for example, in identifying numbers and duration, cities, products sold, and international clientele.

Text 4

For questions 4 (a) and (b), approximately 85% of students gained at least 3/6 marks, of which 15% achieved a mark of 5 or 6. In question 4 (a), successful students clearly understood the radio announcement and described the target audience in detail; that is, the announcement is aimed at Italian citizens in South Australia who enjoy cooking and making special dishes. Most students supported their answer with at least one piece of information from the text, although less successful responses did not mention that those interested in undertaking the culinary course needed to be Italian.

In question 4 (b), most students demonstrated an understanding of the purpose and context, and were able to elaborate and support their answer with at least two main points from the text. Particularly attentive students included information about the credibility of the organisers and how this contributed to making the course more appealing to its target audience. Successful responses elaborated by including details about participants’ learning, and the range of classes. The Policy-making class was confused in many cases with a Politics class.

Less successful responses showed lack of familiarity with the adjective ‘gratuito’ (‘free, free of charge’) and mistakenly interpreted the word as the cognate ‘graduate’. Students are strongly encouraged to check entries in their dictionary before drawing conclusions. Also, it is vital for students to look at words in context to make meaning.

A significant number of students could not identify numbers accurately. The number of course participants (‘quaranta’, 40); the hours of theory (‘quattrocento’, 400), and the hours of practice (‘ottanta’, 80) caused unnecessary confusion.

Text 5

More than 30% of students achieved 5/6 or above; approximately 40% gained at least 3/6 marks for questions 5 (a), 5 (b), and 5 (c) collectively.

In question 5 (a), successful responses demonstrated comprehensive understanding of why Alessandra loves learning languages. Students appropriately described Alessandra's passion for languages and the numerous benefits associated with languages learning: languages are seen as enabling travel, to know the world better, to meet young people, and as an opportunity to work and study in a different environment. Most responses included at least one piece of information from the text.

A number of students did not attempt question 5 (b), and many did not translate the Italian expression 'starò più attenta'. Successful responses demonstrated a clear understanding of both the expression and the reason for its use. These students appropriately took Alessandra's statement less literally and interpreted it as 'I will know better next time' or 'I will be more careful'. Detailed responses also described how Alessandra used the term 'mother tongue' to refer to her Chinese teacher. According to the text, the term has become politically incorrect as it excludes men, specifically fathers. Alessandra needs to use the term 'native speaker'.

In question 5 (c), successful responses demonstrated a clear understanding of Alessandra and Samuele's plans for the weekend. Less successful responses showed uncertainty over who is going to the restaurant or to watch the film, and where and when the film is showing. The genre of the film was also not made clear in some responses, with some describing a film on art and culture.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A

Sixty per cent of students achieved a C or better in this section. Seventy-two per cent scored a C or better in questions for Text 6, while 48% scored a C or better for Text 7.

Question 6 (a)

This question highlighted the importance of reading the question carefully. Many students lost marks as they described 'cibo locale' instead of defining it as the question asked. As a result, irrelevant information was included, with details of how the food is fresher and benefits local communities, instead of saying that the food is sold directly to the public on the farms where it is produced.

Most students identified some of the required keywords in the text, and stated the food was grown on local farms. A small number of students referred to it as food sold directly to the farms instead of on the farms. In some cases the information for this response was included in their answer to question 6 (b). Students are encouraged to study keywords in questions carefully and ensure that their answers address them.

Question 6 (b)

Most students were able to identify some keywords and make a general statement about 'food getting a face'. More successful responses included an interpretation of the message that direct sales to the public allowed people to associate the produce with the farmer, creating a connection with that person. A small number of students misinterpreted the phrase, explaining that food gives a face to people or farmers. Some students wrote about peasants and countrymen instead of farmers. The false friend 'fattoria' was problematic only for a small number of students and led to claims which were not supported by the text, such as 'other products are made in factories'. Students must ensure their responses make sense rather than just rely on translations.

Question 6 (c)

This question was generally answered satisfactorily and most students identified the key information required about the importance of local food. Many students relied on literal

translations of particular passages without considering the correct English word order, resulting in poor expression.

Students are reminded that describing something is not the same as explaining its importance. It is crucial to study the keyword(s) in each question.

Question 7 (a)

Most students were able to identify the key words which form the acronym STG ('specialità tradizionale garantita'), but few translated them in the correct English order ('guaranteed traditional specialty'). Most students explained that it was a label or trademark that protects traditional foods, although many students were confused by the word 'legate' (tied). This was frequently incorrectly translated as 'legacy' or 'legal', or left in its Italian form, which demonstrated a lack of understanding of the fact that the award of the STG label is tied to production methods and the traditions of particular areas.

There were a number of incorrect translations of 'unione europea' as 'Union of Europe', 'Union in Europe', 'Unions of Europe', or 'a european union'. In some cases the translation of 'marchio' as 'brand' became problematic, with students referring to STG as a brand or company which makes products in its own right. Again, students must ensure their responses make sense rather than just rely on literal translations. Students are reminded to consult their dictionaries and use them carefully, remembering that adjectives will only be listed in the masculine singular form, so the word endings given in the original text should be considered.

Question 7 (b)

This question created some confusion although most students were able to identify at least some of the key information required. More successful responses identified the author's main message, and made connections between the language used and its purpose. Many students noted the 'urra!' in the heading and explained that it conveyed the author's happiness or excitement, but then did not proceed to explain why the author was happy. Similarly, many students highlighted the phrase 'una grande battaglia vinta' without explaining that Italy has struggled to protect its gastronomical traditions from imitation, and the word 'battaglia' emphasises the difficulty of this achievement.

A number of students mentioned the author's alleged use of modality or modal language, but did not support their statements with appropriate examples from the text. Some students also mentioned the author's use of persuasive and descriptive language without actually referring to the text. Students must ensure that they provide evidence from the text as required by the question and avoid making blanket statements about language use from previous tasks which may be irrelevant.

Less successful responses generally explained the content of the article and referred to quotes by the Minister (an authority figure and voice) and to the features of a real Neapolitan pizza, but did not focus on what was particular about the language used and how it conveyed the author's message. A small number of students were confused by the phrase 'pessime imitazioni', resulting in incorrect translations such as 'pest-like imitations'. The false friends 'morbido' and 'degustazione' were problematic for only a small number of students.

Question 7 (c)

Most students were able to identify the common topic(s) of the articles, but few were able to compare and summarise the viewpoints presented in the texts. The importance of reading the question was again apparent as many students only mentioned one common view when the question called for more than one. The question also specifically requested supporting evidence from the text but this was often not provided.

Summary

The instruction words in questions are crucial; students must read questions carefully to ensure their answers are appropriate.

English expression was often rather clumsy and relied on literal translations and, as a result, often did not convey information accurately. Students are reminded to proofread their responses to ensure they are clear, concise, logical, and coherent.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B

Seventy-one per cent of students achieved a 9 or more out of 15 in this section, with 42% gaining an A or B grade.

Examiners noted that the majority of candidates wrote more than 180 words and incorporated the online advertisement and the question into their response. The task allowed students to demonstrate their understanding of the original text as well as give relevant information about themselves. Although formal language was not required, most students suitably and logically addressed the letter to 'Caro Signor Cavalli'. Some included inappropriate phrases such as 'scusami che non ho scritto prima', as there was no indication that it was a private message.

Most candidates understood that they had to write an application in response to an advertisement for an exchange program. Most, however, did not acknowledge that the exchange was two-way and that they were expected to go to Italy in return. Few students mentioned that the exchange student coming from Italy would be in Adelaide during the winter and so they could not take them for a swim at the beach. Again, few candidates commented on the fact that, in exchange, they would get to enjoy winter and Christmas in Italy.

Overall, most students sequenced their response in a logical manner, using complete sentences and paragraphs. Many included an introductory paragraph stating their interest and applying to become a part of the exchange. Most included a concluding paragraph with an overall statement of their candidacy. Some did not write in paragraphs, which is essential for showing the thought sequence clearly; it is also important to meet the word count of 200 to 250 words.

The most successful responses covered all of the criteria, but many students included only some of them. It is important that students highlight all cues in the reading and planning stages of this section. Many students were able to describe their family, house, and interests, but made little attempt to connect these to the question; it was left for the reader to infer. A large number of students interpreted the 'authentic Australian experience' as going to Sydney or Melbourne and visiting the 'icons'. Students who were able to describe their family's way of life, Adelaide pastimes, and visiting local places, engaged better with the question and these responses were more realistic.

More successful responses demonstrated competent handling of a variety of tenses (present, future, some conditional, and some examples of the subjunctive), although the verb 'piacere' caused a number of problems and was rarely used correctly. There were common problems with, for example:

- 'interessante' (adjective) and 'interessato' (past participle)
- 'prendere' used to mean 'portare' (to take someone to do something)
- spelling of numbers (age) such as 'diciassette'
- use of prepositions ('ho studiato italiano da 5 anni')
- 'a' and 'in' with cities and countries and articulated prepositions
- 'in giro' cannot be used for the English 'around', so 'portarti in giro Adelaide' did not read well

- 'vivere' (way of life) instead of 'abitare' (place)
- indirect and direct object pronouns ('vogliamo darli un'esperienza unica' should be 'dargli' (to him)
- verb errors such as 'sono scrivo' (I am writing) for 'scrivo'/'sto scrivendo'
- 'circa' used for 'about', as in 'about something'
- 'intorno' and 'in giro' incorrectly also used for 'about'
- 'popoli' used incorrectly for people as in 'tre popoli nella mia famiglia'.

In most responses, spelling was sound but it was surprising to see simple words such as 'scuola' spelt incorrectly and it is suggested that dictionaries should be used with more care. Students should be encouraged to use alternatives for 'sono eccitato', 'sono emozionato/a', 'sono contento/contentissimo', 'mi piace un mondo', 'vado matto', and 'mi piace moltissimo'. It was important not to translate English expressions literally, for example, 'vedranno una buona volta' ('they will have a good time').

This task allowed students to use personal and familiar information and some were able to manipulate this information well to suit the question and task.

Section 3: Writing

Twenty per cent of candidates chose question 9, 15% chose question 10, and 65% chose question 11.

Question 9

Students needed to include a heading for the article, discuss the aspects (characters, plot, theme, and setting) of the film, and say how it informed or inspired them. They also needed to include their recommendation and a final comment or conclusion. Some responses were persuasive, informative, and varied. Twenty-one per cent of candidates achieved an A in this section, with 28% achieving a B, and 19% a C.

Question 10

Some stories were very amusing and creative, with only a few not including the necessary phrase in their narrative. Most did include an apt climax or resolution. Twenty-six per cent achieved an A, 26% a B, and 22% a C.

Question 11

Generally the speeches were soundly written, acknowledged the person, included stories of the past, and were entertaining and informative. Students needed to include an introduction or opening; describe the person's qualities, personality, or admirable achievements; say how the person has influenced their life; and write a concluding comment or toast. Not all speeches concluded with a toast, although most included some sort of acknowledgement. This task required students to talk about influences or reasons for admiration, yet this was interpreted as memories and experiences shared. This task was the most widely chosen, with 14% of students achieving an A, 6% a B, and 32% a C.

Summary

The majority of responses were relevant to the task and students coped well with the text type. It was pleasing to see some humour (which is very difficult when using a foreign language). Most students included paragraphs and tried to write in a logical way. The more successful responses provided greater depth and breadth, expressing mature thoughts,

information, and opinions through extended vocabulary and complex language structures, and addressed all aspects of the task requirements.

Students are advised to be careful of the following:

- tenses and conjugations
- adjectival agreements
- agreements of pronouns and verbs
- pronouns used correctly and in the right position in the sentence
- relative pronouns
- the subjunctive mood
- auxiliary verbs
- punctuation and spelling.

Discussing age was problematic – not all students knew to use the verb ‘avere’ instead of ‘essere’. There was some use of ‘notte’ instead of ‘sera’. There was also some confusion between the verbs ‘sapere’ and ‘conoscere’, and ‘divertire’ and adjective ‘divertente’.

Chief Assessor
Italian (continuers)