

**Topic Task:
Choosing your Topic task**

At a glance

Level: ISE II

Focus: Topic task

Aims: To speak about a topic from different viewpoints

Objectives: To brainstorm ideas about a topic, to talk about the positive and negative aspects of the topic and to find interesting points about a topic

Topics: Hats, phones, books and films, comics and exercise in a gym

Language functions: Talking about advantages and disadvantages and making suggestions

Grammar: Present simple active and passive

Lexis: Positive and negative adjectives

Materials needed: Blank paper, pictures/or realia of a cap, a helmet, a crown, a sun-hat, a woman's hat, a scarf and a fur hat.

Timing: 45 minutes

Procedure

Preparation

1. Make three columns on the board with the headings: Positive, Negative and Interesting.

Positive	Negative	Interesting

2. Get pictures or realia of a cap, a helmet, a crown, a woman's hat, a sunhat.
3. Draw a table on the board.

In class

1. Tell the class that they are going to practise talking about different topics from different points of views. They are going to think about topics and what the good things are about the topics, what the negative things are about the topic and what is interesting about the topic*. Tell the class that this is to practise the first part of the ISE II Speaking & Listening exam, the Topic task, where they will talk about a topic they have chosen before the interview.
2. Tell the class that, to start with, they are going to talk about 'Hats or Headwear'. Ask the students to name different kinds of hats or headwear. They could say:

Helmets, caps, a crown, sun-hat, a hat for a wedding, a scarf or a fur hat

Show students the pictures or realia that you prepared before the class and ask them to identify each kind of hat/headwear. Write up the answers on the board.

3. Tell the class that now they must think about this topic:

From a positive point of view for example the good things about hats or headwear

From a negative point of view for example the negative things about hats or headwear

What is interesting about hats or headwear

Direct the students to the table you have drawn on the board:

Positive	Negative	Interesting

For example, ask the class:

What is positive about a helmet? They can answer:

It protects people from injury/accident because it is very hard.

It's also colourful so people can see it from a distance.

What's negative about a crown? They can answer:

It's very expensive.

It's heavy.

Only a few people can wear a crown.

An expensive crown could be stolen for the jewels.

What's interesting about caps? They can answer:

Old/ young people all wear caps.

There are thousands/ millions of different kinds of caps in different colours, with different writing.

Some caps are used by companies for publicity.

4. Now elicit and teach some positive and negative adjectives that can be used when the students talk about hats or headwear. For example:

Positive adjectives:

Protective, elegant, sporty, warm, shady, pretty, universal and colourful

Negative adjectives:

Expensive, unattractive, heavy, strange and concealing

Write up some of the ideas on the board in the correct category.

5. Then ask the students what kinds of comments or questions they could put in the interesting column. The interesting column is for comments or questions that are neither positive nor negative but are related to the topic. For example:

Crowns must weigh several kilos

Where does the straw for some sun-hats come from?

Men and women both wear scarves on their heads in different ways.

6. Now put the students in pairs and give each student a piece of blank paper. Ask the students with their partner, to add to the ideas on the board under the different columns. Give the class 8 minutes to talk in pairs and write down their lists.
7. Get information from the class and write it on the board under the three columns. After the class has looked at the board, rub out the columns.
8. Tell the students to turn over the paper they made their notes on, so they can't see the ideas on the sheet and tell them to practise talking to their partners about hats/ headwear from the three different viewpoints. Each student takes a turn and tries to talk about the topic for one minute without stopping.
9. Now tell the class that they have to use the Positive, Negative and Interesting analysis on two other topics. Write up the following topics on the board:
- mobile or cell phones
 - doing regular exercise in a gym
 - turning a book into a film
 - reading comics

Tell the class they can work in pairs and choose two topics and think about the analysis. Give the class eight minutes to write down their notes about the two topics they have chosen.

10. Tell the class that in pairs, each student must choose one of the two topics and speak about it for at least for minutes to his/ her partner. Give the class some feedback on what they have said and tell them that in the examination they need to talk for four minutes on a specific topic.

Extension activity

For those students who finish their analysis of two topics early, they can do a third topic and talk about three topics.

Further support activity

Less able students can be supported with some ideas for the further analysis of mobile phones, for example: mobile phones mean we can easily get in touch with our friends; we can change appointments easily; we can speak to people from our cars, from the middle of the countryside; we can use them in emergencies to get help/mobile phones cost money; mean that people talk less in real life; interrupt people when they are doing other things/mobile phones seem to be a necessity of life in every country even if the country is poor; mobile phones are like extensions of people's hands.

After class

Students choose a further topic that they are personally interested in and make a mind map of five areas related to the topic that they want to talk about. They must bring it to the next class to talk to their partner about. Tell the students that this is what they will have to do in the examination.

Original source:

* From Edward de Bono (1982) PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting)