

Classroom activity 2 – Preparing for the Topic discussion phase

Grade: GESE Grade 12 (CEFR C2)

Focus: The Topic discussion phase

Time: 85 minutes

Aims:

- ▶ To review the functions of GESE Grade 12
- ▶ To review the exam format
- ▶ To practise discussing the topic
- ▶ To watch an example of a topic presentation
- ▶ To match GESE Grade 12 functions to example questions
- ▶ To practise asking and answering questions about a topic

Materials needed:

- ▶ A copy of Worksheet 1 for each student
- ▶ Access to the example video of Zoe's speaking test available on the Trinity website at trinitycollege.com/GESE-advanced or the free Trinity DVD

Preparation

1. Make copies of Worksheet 1 for all students.
2. Get the video cued up to play the topic presentation and discussion phases.

In class

What do you know about the topic discussion? (5 minutes)

1. Tell the students you are going to focus on what happens in the topic discussion phase. Write the following questions on the board and give them 3 or 4 minutes to discuss in pairs or small groups.
 - a. Who is responsible for leading the discussion – the examiner or you?
 - b. Does the examiner give their own opinions or ideas?
 - c. How long does the phase last for?
 - d. What kind of language do you need to use in this phase?
2. When they finish talking, go through each question. You can find information about each one in the answers section of this Classroom activity.
3. For question **d**, make sure they understand the information in the specifications about Communicative Skills and Phonology. There is no need to go into too much detail about functions at this point as this will be covered later in this activity.

Introduction to the topic in the video (10 minutes)

1. Tell the students they are going to watch an example of a formal topic presentation about immigration.
2. Give them a few minutes to discuss whether they think this is a good topic choice for GESE 12. Remind them that the topic needs to be discursive and encourage them to try and think about arguments for and against immigration.
3. After, elicit and write their suggestions on the board – you will need them for the next task.

Watching the presentation (15 minutes)

1. Play the topic presentation phase of Zoe's example exam on the Trinity website: trinitycollege.com/GESE-advanced.
2. Ask the students to listen and notice how many of the points on the board Zoe mentions in her topic, and to note down any other points she makes which the examiner could discuss with her in the topic phase. You may need to play the video twice, or pause every 30 seconds or so to support your group if they struggle to understand her. You can find some main points she makes in bullet point form in the answers section of this activity.

- When the students have finished watching the video, give them a few minutes to compare their answers in pairs and then elicit and write their suggestions on the board. Point out that this was a successful discursive topic as Zoe was able to put forward several arguments on both sides.

What will the examiner say? (10 minutes)

- Remind the students that the examiner takes notes during the presentation, and that they will ask the candidate questions and make comments about their presentation in the discussion phase.
- Ask the students to look at the points from Zoe's presentation on the board and think of two or three questions/ comments the examiner could ask/make. This will probably be quite difficult for them as the topic is not discursive. Tell them they will be able to see what the examiner asks in a few moments.
- After, get them to compare their answers in pairs and then elicit and write examples from each group on the board. At this point, do not comment on their ideas – you can do this in the feedback to the next task.

Watching the topic discussion (up to 15 minutes)

- Play the topic discussion of Zoe's exam. After each question the examiner asks, pause and allow time for the students to note down what she says. Tell them they don't need to write exactly what she says, just the main idea.
- After, get them to compare their notes with their partner and see how many of the ideas written on the board were used by the examiner. Elicit their ideas and make sure each bullet point in the answers, below, is written on the board.

Why does the examiner ask what she asks? (10 minutes)

- Remind students that in the topic discussion phase, the examiner is trying to get the candidate to use the language of the grade, and that each comment they make, or question they ask is usually focussed on one of the functions.
- Give them a copy of Worksheet 1, and give them 5 minutes to complete the table with the bullet points written on the board. The bullet point could be used to elicit more than one function.
- Tell students that there is not necessarily a right or wrong answer as we can't be sure how the candidate will respond.
- After, get them to check in pairs and confirm the answers. See the answers section for a suggestion of how it could be completed.

Practising the topic discussion (10 minutes)

- Move the students around and get them working with a new partner. Get them to practise this phase by asking and answering the questions on the board. Encourage them to try and use as many of the functions as possible in their answers. Give them an opportunity to be the examiner and the candidate.
- As they talk, monitor and note down good examples of language used, and anything else you'd like to focus on in feedback. When they finish talking, ask them about the conversations they had. Were they interesting, etc.

Feedback (10 minutes)

- Note down any examples of interesting language or errors you'd like to focus on with your students on the board, and give them about 5 minutes to decide if it's a good example or an error, and to correct any errors.
- After, elicit the answers and correct any errors on the board. Support them with the meaning, form and pronunciation of any challenging language. Try to focus their attention on good use of language of the grade as well as mistakes.

Extension activity

In the 'Practising the topic discussion' task, more advanced students could think of their own questions and comments.

Further support activity

Weaker students could be given the answers in the 'Watching the presentation' task but in a different order. As they listen, they number them in the order they hear them.

After class

Students can watch the video again and note down any examples of complex grammar and vocabulary they hear the candidate use.

Answers

What do you know about the topic discussion?

- a. The discussion is led by the candidate – it's important that they initiate and encourage the examiner to comment and give their opinion. This is part of the way they are assessed at this phase and is equally important to the vocabulary and grammar they use.
- b. Yes, they do – they will challenge the candidate's opinions and views. This is not personal, it's so the candidate has the chance to use the functions of the grade.
- c. Up to 5 minutes.
- d. Refer candidates to the specifications for Grade 12 – make sure they don't just focus on grammar and vocabulary. Focus their attention on Communicative Skills, Language Functions and Phonology too.

Watching the presentation

- ▶ Immigrants are experiencing many problems
- ▶ It's difficult for them to get well paid jobs
- ▶ People exploit immigrant labour
- ▶ Some people are just racist
- ▶ There are some cases of negative examples
- ▶ London is a cultural melting pot
- ▶ It has been easy for me to feel comfortable in the city and find a job
- ▶ A society can only benefit from immigration
- ▶ It can only be a positive thing

Watching the topic discussion

- ▶ You mentioned fear of loss of employment etc. What makes you think that's an issue for people?
- ▶ Are you saying that basically immigrants work in conditions that are damaging to the society they are living in?
- ▶ So, what you're saying is 'people's fears are justified'?
- ▶ Yes, but you're sort of admitting to the fact that we know economies benefit from immigrant labour... surely people are justified?
- ▶ It sounds as if you're saying that Greek people are not ready to admit the fact they quite like the benefits...
- ▶ I probably agree with what you're saying, however, people would say that's a nice, kind, tolerant attitude.
- ▶ There are people who think you are being soft, silly, no sort of long-term view that sort of thing.
- ▶ True but they're vociferous and quite unpleasant.

Worksheet 1 answers

Language functions	Example sentence
Asserting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Yes, but you're sort of admitting to the fact that we know economies benefit from immigrant labour... surely people are justified? ▶ There are people who think you are being soft, silly, no sort of long-term view that sort of thing.
Denying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Yes, but you're sort of admitting to the fact that we know economies benefit from immigrant labour... surely people are justified? ▶ There are people who think you are being soft, silly, no sort of long-term view that sort of thing.

Softening and downplaying propositions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Are you saying that basically immigrants work in conditions that are damaging to the society they are living in? ▶ It sounds as if you're saying that Greek people are not ready to admit the fact they quite like the benefits...
Contradicting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Yes, but you're sort of admitting to the fact that we know economies benefit from immigrant labour... surely people are justified?
Implying	
Affirming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You mentioned fear of loss of employment etc. What makes you think that's an issue for people?

Worksheet 1 – The Topic presentation

Which function was the examiner focussing on?

Language functions	Example sentence
Asserting	
Denying	
Softening and downplaying propositions	
Contradicting	
Implying	
Affirming	