

Choosing a topic

Grade: GESE Grade 5 (CEFR B1)

Focus: The Topic phase

Time: 3 x 45 minutes

Aims:

- ▶ To understand what topics are suitable for GESE Grade 5
- ▶ To choose individual topics
- ▶ To develop topics through mind maps
- ▶ To write individual topic forms

Materials needed:

- ▶ Pictures of famous people/place/object/sport/activity – to be used to stimulate ideas at the beginning of the class
- ▶ Worksheet 1 – a simple mind map (one per group or shown on the board)
- ▶ Worksheet 2 – functions and language of GESE Grade 5 (one per group)

Preparation

1. Prepare a selection of pictures of people, places, objects, sports and activities. These could be either printed out, or on the computer and projected.
2. Make copies of Worksheet 1 and 2 (enough for one per group). Worksheet 1 can be shown on the board instead.

In class

Session 1 – Generating topic ideas

Warm-up activity (10 minutes)

1. Show on screen or hold up some large pictures of a favourite person/place/object/activity. Tell the class that they are going to think individually for 2 minutes of questions they would like to ask you about the pictures. They should write their questions down. The questions can be either factual (eg '*When was she born?*') or personal (eg '*When did you last see her in a film or on television?*').
2. After 2 minutes, use a strong student first to demonstrate a couple of questions. Then put the students in groups of three to compare questions and discuss grammatical accuracy. Give them another 2 minutes to discuss their questions.
3. Then invite the class to ask you questions about the pictures for 4 minutes.

Brainstorming (15 minutes)

1. Ask the class how doing an interview can be more comfortable for us. Try to lead the students to the answer which is to choose something to talk about that you're interested in.
2. Put the students in groups of three. Each group must write down at least five topics that they are interested in and they would like to be interviewed about for 5 minutes. The subjects should be personal, not factual, and they must not be too difficult for the students' level of English.
3. To start the brainstorming, write a few ideas on the board. For example:
 - ▶ my football team
 - ▶ my favourite sport
 - ▶ my favourite player
 - ▶ my favourite actor
 - ▶ my favourite film
 - ▶ different film genres
 - ▶ my favourite book/writer
 - ▶ my school
 - ▶ my favourite musician
 - ▶ my dance club
 - ▶ the instrument I play
 - ▶ my favourite city
 - ▶ my judo club
 - ▶ my favourite country

4. The students continue brainstorming in their groups.

Choosing the best three possible topics (20 minutes)

1. One student from each group comes up to the board to write all their ideas on the board. When they have finished writing, look at the suggestions and congratulate the students on suggesting so many ideas.
2. Now, tell the students that some ideas are better than others. Tell the students (diplomatically!) that we need to cross out some of the ideas on the board that are not appropriate or useful, giving a reason (eg the topic is too complex; or the students have to learn too much new vocabulary; or the topic is exactly the same as the grade's subjects for conversation). Trinity also strongly recommends that students do not choose 'my family', 'my best friend' or 'my pet' as their topic. In Trinity's experience, these are rarely communicative or productive topics and the students only use the present simple tense.
3. Next, tell the students that they must choose three possible topics which they think are interesting and which they could do in the exam. They can be suggestions on the list of class ideas on the board, or they can think of other ideas. Give the students 3 minutes to discuss what they're interested in with a friend. After 3 minutes, tell them to write down their three possible topics. Check around the class to make sure that each student has three possible topics.

Session 2 – Working with mind maps to develop topic ideas

Demonstrating a mind map and brainstorming (25 minutes)

1. Show a very simple mind map on the board (see Worksheet 1 for an example shape). Ask the class to suggest one topic to use on the mind map. Then do a class brainstorm – in English – of possible ideas to add to the mind map.
2. Collect 10–12 suggestions from the students and write them on the mind map. After about 2 minutes, stop the activity.
3. Tell the students that it is now their turn to complete a mind map for their own three possible topics. Tell them that they have 5 minutes to brainstorm – in English – a mind map for each topic. 15 minutes in total.
4. Either give every student photocopies of Worksheet 1 or tell them to draw the mind map in their own exercise books. Tell the students to think about topic 1. They have 5 minutes to think of lots of ideas – in English! After 5 minutes, tell the class that they must change to a new piece of paper and a new mind map. Now they must brainstorm topic 2. After 5 more minutes, repeat the same instructions and start topic 3. After 15 minutes, stop the activity.

From three possible topics to two possible topics (20 minutes)

1. This activity is important because it teaches students that the first idea (eg football) is not always the best idea. Put the students in pairs. Tell the students they have 5 minutes each to tell their partner about their three ideas – in English. Allow one student in each pair to start, and after 5 minutes, tell them it's the other student's turn to describe their three possible topics in English.
2. After 10 minutes, stop the class and ask them to think about these questions:

- ▶ Which of their three possible topics is the most difficult to talk about in English because they don't know the vocabulary or grammar?
- ▶ Which of the topics do they find least interesting to talk about?

It is important in the exam not to have to learn and memorise lots of new words, because when we feel nervous, we forget and we don't want to forget the vocabulary and grammar in the exam. Also, it's very difficult to talk about something boring in an exam and answer questions from the examiner. If you're not interested, you won't know what to say!

3. Tell the class to reject one of their topics – the most technical one with lots of new vocabulary, or the least interesting one. They now only have two possible topics.

Session 3 – Choosing the best topic: which topic generates the language of GESE Grade 5?

Looking at the language of GESE Grade 5 (10 minutes)

1. Explain to the class what Worksheets 3 is: it is a list of example language that the students will have to understand and use in the exam. This is the language that the examiner will use in his/her questions, and it is the language the students must use when they are discussing their topics. Explain that this language must be demonstrated in their topic. Give each group a photocopy of Worksheet 2 showing some of the functions and language
2. Put the students in pairs. Tell them to look at Worksheet 2 and check if there is anything they don't understand. Explain to the class any examples that they are not sure about.

GESE Grade 5 language and the example mind map (10 minutes)

1. Now return to the example mind map on the board.
2. Ask the students to think of things that they can say about the example topic, using the language on Worksheet 2. Try to get from the students multiple examples of the language of GESE Grade 5 for each point. Very quickly, it will become clear that some points are better than others, and some points don't attract many examples of the language.
3. After you have examples of the language of the grade for most points, stop the demonstration activity. Tell students that it's normal for some topic ideas to be better than others.

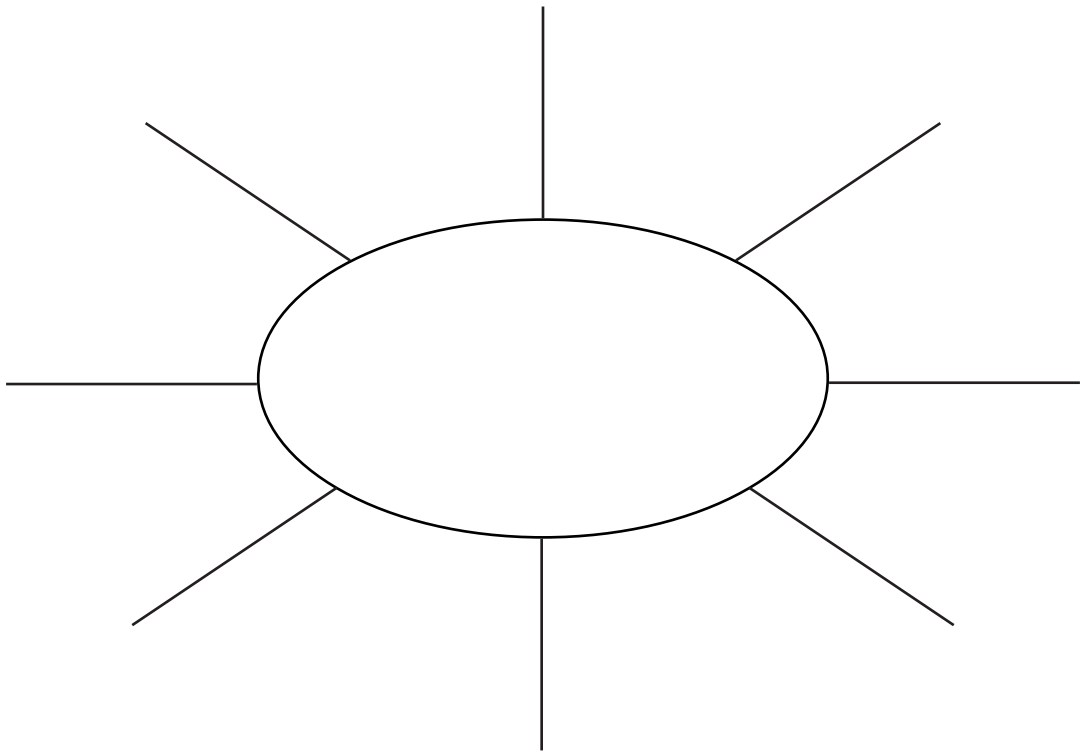
Students use GESE Grade 5 language on their own mind maps (20 minutes)

1. Tell the students that now it's their turn. Tell the students to take their two remaining mind maps from the exercises above. Tell them they have 5 minutes for each mind map to think of as many ways as possible to use the language of the grade. (Remind them every 5 minutes to change mind map.)
2. Tell the students to use as much variety of their language as they can.

Choosing the best topic (5 minutes)

1. Tell the students that now they must choose only one of the mind maps to use as their exam topic and reject the other. Tell them that they have to choose the mind map which generates most of the language of their grade.
2. Let the students tell each other which mind map they have chosen to be their exam topic and why.

Worksheet 1 – A mind map



Worksheet 2 – GESE Grade 5 language

Example language:

The present perfect:

Have you had a holiday this year?

Yes, I've had two holidays!

Have you ever been to London?

Yes, I have.

How many times have you been there?

I've been twice.

The future using 'will':

What do you think you'll study next year?

I think I'll study medicine.

Do you think life will be different in future?

I think life will be very different.

How long? 'For' and 'since':

How long were you there for?

For 3 weeks.

How long have you lived here?

Since I was 10.

Preferences:

What type of music do you like?

I like rock, but I prefer pop.

Giving reasons:

Why do you like rock music?

Because it's very energetic.

How much/how many:

There are always lots of people at the festival.

I don't have much free time.

You don't see many bicycles in my city.