# Choosing a topic

**Grade:** GESE Grade 9 (CEFR B2.3)

**Focus:** The Topic phase

**Time:** 2 x 45 minutes

**Aims:**
◗ To choose individual topics
◗ To develop topics through mind maps
◗ To choose the best mind map points for generating the language of the grade

**Materials needed:**
◗ Pictures of famous people/place/object/activity/ambition/social problem – 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 9

## Preparation

1. Prepare a selection of pictures of famous people/places/objects/activities/ambitions/social problems. These could be either printed out, or on the computer and projected.

2. Make copies of Worksheets 1 and 2, enough for one per student. Worksheet 1 can be shown on the board instead.

## In class

### Session 1 – Thinking of ideas for a topic

#### Thinking of questions for the teacher's favourite things (10 minutes)

1. Show on screen or hold up some large pictures of an object that's important to you/a person that you respect or dislike/a place that's important to you/an important social activity in your life/an ambition/a social problem. Please note, these are only suggestions for generating ideas. You can choose alternative themes or objects if you think they are more productive and stimulating for your class.

2. Tell the class that they are going to think individually of questions they would like to ask you about the pictures. The questions can be either factual (eg '*What are the three most important facts about this object/person?*') or personal (eg '*If you could meet the person what would you say?*' '*If you could change the object or situation, what would you do?*').

3. Use a strong student first to demonstrate a couple of questions. Give the class 2 minutes to write their questions down. After 2 minutes, put the students in groups of three to compare questions and discuss grammatical accuracy. Give them another 2 minutes to discuss their questions. 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:

   ◗ An object that's important to me: my guitar, a special concert ticket
   ◗ A person that I respect/dislike: sports person, humanitarian, politician
   ◗ A place that's important to me: my school, London, the USA
   ◗ An important social activity in my life: clubs, the people I meet, etc
   ◗ An ambition: future career, fantasy career, a competition I'd like to win
   ◗ A social problem: a problem in my city/country, in a different country

4. The students continue brainstorming in their groups.

### Collecting information, and choosing a topic (20 minutes)

1. One student from each group comes up to write all their ideas on the board. When they have finished, look at the suggestions and diplomatically cross out ideas on the board that are not appropriate or useful, giving a reason (eg the topic is not personalised, it's too complex, or it's exactly the same as the grade's subjects for the Conversation phase. Trinity strongly recommends that students do not choose topics such as 'my family', 'my best friend' or 'my pet'. In our experience, these are not communicative or productive topics).

2. Tell the students that they have to choose a topic. It can be one from the board, or it can be another idea that they have. Give the students some time to choose their topic.

## Session 2 – Using mind maps to develop topic ideas

### Making/showing/explaining a mind map (20 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 of possible ideas to add to the mind map. After 2 minutes, tell the students that it is now their turn to complete a mind map for their own topic.

2. Give every student a copy of Worksheet 1 and tell the class to make a mind map with as many ideas (words and phrases) as possible on their topic. Remind the students to use as much variety of language as they can (eg not just the present tense) and encourage the students to collaborate and help each other.

### Choosing the best topic points: matching ideas with the language of the Grade (20 minutes)

1. Put the students into groups (maximum three students per group).

2. Give each group a photocopy of the functions and language of their grade (see Worksheet 2). Explain that this language must be demonstrated in their topic.

3. Ask the students to discuss together which mind map points seem to be the most interesting. How can they change these points to show language of the grade? Tell the students to decide on just five points maximum that they think will generate the most language of their grade.

### Summary (5 minutes)

Invite the students to summarise to the class what makes a good topic. Tell the students to continue developing their mind maps at home.

**Worksheet 1 – A mind map**
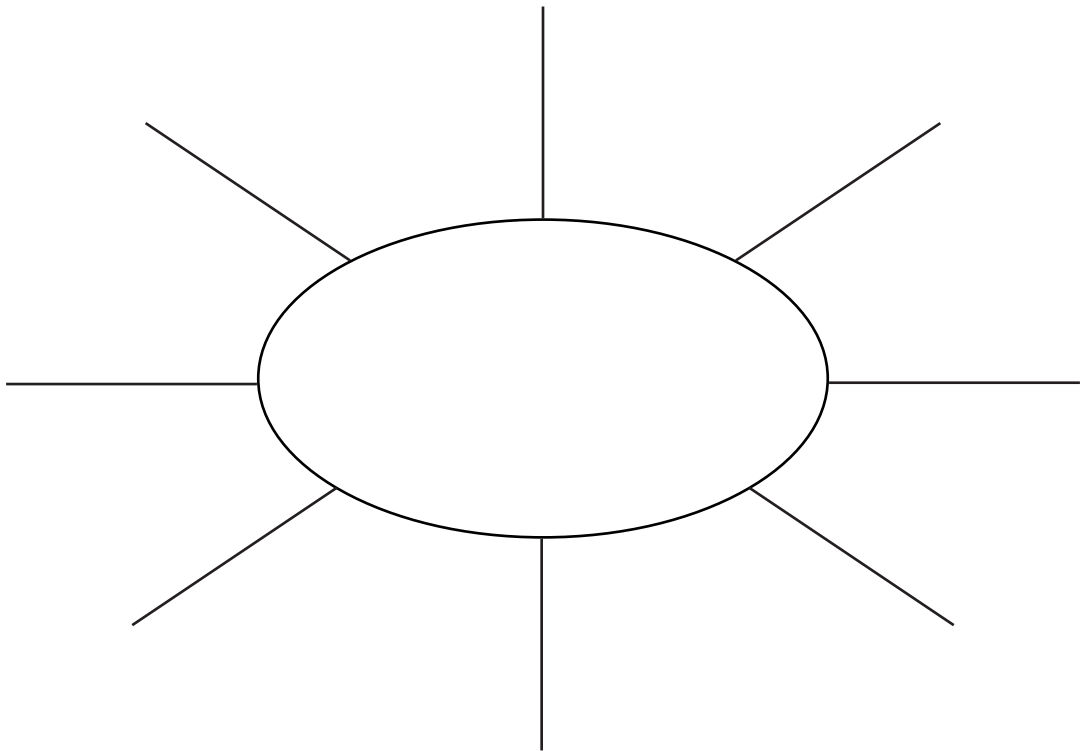
# Worksheet 4 – GESE Grade 9 language

## Example language:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Paraphrasing and recapping:* | *In other words...* |
| | *What I mean is...* |
| | *What I'm trying to say is...* |
| | *Anyway, as I was saying...* |
| *Regrets, wishes and hopes:* | *I wish I could/had/hadn't...* |
| | *I wish I could have done...* |
| | *I regret ...ing / not ...ing.* |
| | *I hope I will be able to... / I hope to...* |
| *Expressing assumptions:* | *Presumably, this is right.* |
| | *I'm not sure, but my best guess is...* |
| | *I assume the reason is...* |
| *Hypothesising:* | *I suppose one reason could be...* |
| | *In theory, if I did X, Y might happen.* |
| *Evaluating options:* | *I'm not sure what to do.* |
| | *On the one hand... but on the other hand...* |
| | *I can see benefits on both sides.* |
| | *If I do X then I might learn something, but if I do Y, it might be quicker.* |
| *Evaluating past actions/events:* | *It might have been better if we hadn't...* |
| | *Thinking about it now, I probably shouldn't have...* |
| | *I wouldn't have been late if my alarm had gone off.* |
| | *It must have been a difficult decision.* |
| | *It can't have been easy.* |
| *Verbs + gerunds and/or infinitive* | *I remember thinking that was a bad idea.* |
| *remember, stop, forget* | *I remembered to bring some money.* |
| | *I forgot to bring any money.* |
| | *I remember locking the door when I left.* |
| | *I think I should stop studying maths.* |
| | *I stopped to buy a magazine.* |
| *Mixed conditionals:* | *I would be in London now if I hadn't missed my plane.* |
| | *If I were poor, I would never have bought this car.* |
| *Should/must/might/could* | *It must have been wet in London!* |
| *+have + infinitive* | *It can't have been sunny!* |
| | *I might have made a mistake.* |
| | *He could have won the lottery!* |