

Preparing for the Topic Discussion phase – GESE Grade 11

Grade: GESE Grade 11 (CEFR C1.2)

Focus: The Topic Discussion phase

Time: 75 minutes

Aims:

- ▶ To review the functions of GESE Grade 11
- ▶ To review the exam format
- ▶ To practise discussing the topic
- ▶ To watch an example of a topic presentation
- ▶ To match GESE Grade 11 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 video of Saprina's topic presentation and topic discussion tasks on the Trinity website at www.trinitycollege.com/GESE-advanced

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 (5 minutes)

1. Tell the students they are going to watch an example of a formal topic presentation about a famous festival.
2. Give them a few minutes to discuss whether they think this is a good topic choice for GESE Grade 11. Remind them that the topic needs to be discursive and encourage them to try and think about arguments for and against festivals. It is unlikely that they will be able to think of many ideas as this is a poor topic choice for this grade.
3. Write any suggestions they may have on the board.

Watching the presentation (10 minutes)

1. Play the topic presentation phase of Saprina'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 Saprina mentions in her topic, and to note down any other points she makes which the examiner could discuss with her in the topic discussion phase.

3. 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.
4. You can find some main points she makes in bullet point form in the answers section of this activity.
5. 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.
6. It is very important that they understand that this is a descriptive topic, not a discursive one so it is very difficult to identify points to pick up on. If your students struggle to understand why, you might find Classroom activity 1 on planning a topic at GESE Grade 11 useful.

What will the examiner say? (5 minutes)

1. 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.
2. Ask the students to look at the points from Saprina'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 the what the examiner asks in a few moments.
3. 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)

1. Play the topic discussion phase of Saprina's exam. After each question or comment the examiner asks/makes, 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.
2. After, get them to compare their notes with their partner and see how many of the ideas written of 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.
3. In feedback, draw their attention to the fact that the examiner sometimes pauses, and even signals with her hand for Saprina to take the lead. Remind them how important this is by referring them to the communicative skills requirements for this phase.

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

1. 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.
2. Give them a copy of Worksheet 1, and give them 5 minutes to complete the table with the bullet points written on the board. Not all of them can be matched to the function. This is largely because the topic wasn't discursive so it was difficult for the examiner.
3. Point out that the bullet points 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.
4. After, get them to check in pairs and confirm the answers. See the answers section for a suggestion of how it could be completed. Encourage the students to think about questions/statements the examiner could have used to elicit the other functions.

Practising the topic discussion (10 minutes)

1. 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.
2. 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?

Feedback (10 minutes)

1. 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.
2. 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 11 – 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

- ▶ The festival is really violent.
- ▶ Tourists make a great economic contribution to Venice.
- ▶ Authorities wanted to ban the festival.

Watching the topic discussion

- ▶ You said this started in the late 19th century, but what were the beginnings of this?
- ▶ It sounds to me as if this has always been an elitist carnival.
- ▶ So, they were segregated from the aristocrats?
- ▶ You said it was going to be banned at some point, and then they decided not to for financial reasons?
- ▶ Right so decadence pays...? [Signals with hand gesture...]
- ▶ And from what I've heard it's a bit of a rip off.
- ▶ I think it would be a bit too crowded for me.
- ▶ What were the reasons that they managed to ban it?
- ▶ They didn't like parties?

Worksheet 1 Answers

Language functions	Example sentence
Justifying an argument	It sounds to me as if this has always been an elitist carnival (Saprina could justify why she likes it so much...)
Inferring	Right so decadence pays... I think it would be a bit too crowded for me.
Expressing caution	
Expressing empathy and sympathy	I think it would be a bit too crowded for me.
Challenging arguments and opinions	It sounds to me as if this has always been an elitist carnival, and from what I've heard it's a bit of a rip off.
Evaluating different standpoints	It sounds to me as if this has always been an elitist carnival, and from what I've heard it's a bit of a rip off.
Expressing reservations	I think it would be a bit too crowded for me.

Worksheet 1 – The topic presentation

Which function was the examiner focussing on?

Language functions	Example sentence
Justifying an argument	
Inferring	
Expressing caution	
Expressing empathy and sympathy	
Challenging arguments and opinions	
Evaluating different standpoints	
Expressing reservations	