OCR
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GCSE (9–1)
Teacher Guide

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Preparing learners for their Spoken Language assessment

Version 1

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The Spoken Language assessment in the GCSE English Language (9-1) qualifications is a separately endorsed component, for which candidates will be graded Pass, Merit or Distinction. Candidates who do not achieve a Pass grade, or those who do not take the component, will be given Not Classified.

Tasks

Learners must undertake a prepared spoken presentation on a specific topic. The key requirements are:

- Presentations must be formal but may take a wide variety of forms, including talks, debates, speeches and dialogues.
- Presentations must be planned and organised. The subject for the presentation must be decided in advance and agreed with the teacher.
- Learners may use pre-prepared notes, PowerPoint etc. to assist them during their presentations but this is not a requirement.
- As part of, or following, the presentation, learners must listen to and respond appropriately to questions and feedback.
- Where the audience is the teacher only, the presentation and dialogue must be designed in such a way that it could have a potentially wider audience than just one person (e.g. it replicates a television interview).

Learning and assessment objectives

There are three assessment objectives for the Spoken Language endorsement:

AO7: Demonstrate presentation skills in a formal setting.

AO8: Listen and respond appropriately to spoken language, including to questions and feedback to presentations.

AO9: Use spoken Standard English effectively in speeches and presentations.

Learners should have a number of opportunities to develop the skills necessary for their Spoken Language assessment. In order to provide learners with enough time to develop their skills, it is recommended that this assessment should not take place until the later stages of the GCSE English Language course.

The skills being developed are:

· Expressing ideas and opinions in a formal setting
· Organising a presentation for maximum impact on an audience
· Achieving the purpose of the presentation
· Listening carefully and responding appropriately to questions.

These skills can be developed by giving learners opportunities to present ideas and opinions when studying other aspects of their GCSE English Language and English Literature courses. Offering wide opportunities to present, discuss and debate will develop these skills naturally as part of their English studies. It will also build up their confidence about presenting to the rest of the class.

Suggestions for appropriate activities for skill development

1.   Developing independent reading skills – 'unseen passage speed dating'

Put the class into groups of six.

Place 5 different reading passages on tables around the room. The passages should be stuck in the middle of a large sheet of paper and coloured pens provided on each table.
Each group starts at a table and has 5 minutes to read the passage and write notes/questions about the writer's intentions and to provide an overview of the passage.

After 5 minutes the teacher should signal to move the groups to the next table. They then have 5 minutes to read that passage and add to the comments and questions of the last group. They should add to them by looking at how the writer uses language and techniques to achieve the purpose.

When the groups move back to the table they started at, they have 15 minutes to study the comments written on the passage and they will then present that passage to the rest of the class offering an interpretation of the writer's intentions and an overview of its meaning and purpose.

2.   Studying literary techniques

Put the learners in pairs.

Ask them to write down a metaphor that describes them as a learner (they should do this individually).

Ask them to read their metaphor to their partner and explain the thinking behind their choice. They can ask one another questions to clarify the thinking and probe further.

Ask each member of the class to introduce their partner, read their metaphor and explain their partner's view of themselves as a learner.

3.   Studying a 19th-century text

When studying the context of a 19th-century text (a non-fiction text as part of the GCSE English Language course or a novel as part of the GCSE English Literature course), put the class into groups of three.

Each group is given a particular aspect of the context to research.

They should design a poster/diagram for their research findings and present it to the class.

The posters can then be displayed in the classroom.

4.   Studying Shakespeare

Put learners into groups of three to study a character from their Shakespeare play (as part of their GCSE English Literature course).

They should prepare a presentation, including a PowerPoint on their assigned character.

In groups they present their character to the class.

Studying effective communication and presentational skills

When preparing for the final assessment in Spoken Language, it will be necessary to focus on more specific presentational skills and rhetorical devices.

A good starting point is to watch some talks and discuss how and why they are effective for the audience.

There are a number of talks on the following website that are likely to interest teenagers:

http://teen.allwomenstalk.com/ted-talks-every-teen-should-watch

Cameron Russell – on being a model is a good example:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM4Xe6Dlp0Y

After watching a talk, focus on general impressions first:

- Was it interesting?
- Did it hold their interest?
- Did they learn anything?
- Did it change or develop their views and opinions?
- Did they think the speaker had personal involvement in/experience of/knowledge of the subject?

When you have discussed their impressions, ask learners to identify any rhetorical devices/ techniques that the speaker used such as:

Rhetorical questions
Response to audience
Using anecdotes or stories to prove a point
Humour
Emphasis on individual words/phrases
Eye contact/body language
Gesture
Emotive language
Pace and use of pauses
Change of tone.

Make sure that they relate their experiences as the audience to the aims and purpose of the talk.

The Assessment

The Spoken Language assessment requires learners to create a spoken presentation followed by questions from the audience. As a guide, the duration of the whole assessment should be no more than 10 minutes, which can be divided into 4-5mins presentation and 4-5mins questions and feedback from the audience. Learners can choose any topic to speak on, but to achieve the higher grades their topic needs to involve a level of complexity. Make sure that the learners understand that their choice of topic could limit the potential of their presentation, particularly in terms of expressing straightforward/challenging/sophisticated ideas and information.

The assessment criteria table is concise and easily explained to learners – it can be put on a whiteboard and discussed with them. It is a competency-based assessment, which means that learners must fulfil all the criteria necessary to achieve a particular grade.

Assessment criteria

To be awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction a Learner must –

- be audible, and
- use Spoken Standard English which, for the purposes of the spoken language assessment, means that a Learner must –
- be intelligible, and
- generally use language appropriate to the formal setting of the presentation.

You may wish to use some of the recorded standardisation material provided by the awarding bodies at this point. These are available on the GCSE English Language webpage under the 'Candidate exemplars' tab. You could show the learners two of the assessments and ask them to discuss them in pairs using the assessment criteria. Explaining the grades that they were actually awarded will ensure that learners understand the implications of a competency-based assessment, where they must satisfy all the criteria in a grade level to be awarded that grade.

Pass	Merit	Distinction
In addition to the general criteria, to be awarded a Pass a Learner's performance in his or her spoken language assessment must meet all of the following criteria – • expresses straightforward ideas / information / feelings, • makes an attempt to organise and structure his or her presentation, • makes an attempt to meet the needs of the audience, and • listens to questions / feedback and provides an appropriate response in a straight forward manner.	In addition to the general criteria, to be awarded a Merit a Learner's performance in his or her spoken language assessment must meet all of the following criteria – • expresses challenging ideas / information / feelings using a range of vocabulary, • organises and structures his or her presentation clearly and appropriately to meet the needs of the audience, • achieves the purpose of his or her presentation, and • listens to questions / feedback responding formally and in some detail.	In addition to the general criteria, to be awarded a Distinction a Learner's performance in his or her spoken language assessment must meet all of the following criteria – • expresses sophisticated ideas / information / feelings using a sophisticated repertoire of vocabulary, • organises and structures his or her presentation using an effective range of strategies to engage the audience, • achieves the purpose of his or her presentation, and • listens to questions / feedback, responds perceptively and if appropriate elaborates with further ideas and information.

Choosing topics

Learners will have 4-5 minutes to speak on a topic or a theme that most interests them. They should be very aware that they need to select a topic which allows them to:

- prepare and organise appropriate and interesting material
- be aware of the range of suitable presentational styles
- display awareness of their audience
- employ a range of language devices
- select content which lends itself to further discussion through questions from the audience.

Discuss possible topics with the learners. This is a suggested list which can be adapted to suit different schools and learners:

- Conspiracy theories
- Beauty and cosmetic surgery
- Racism and prejudice
- Whether footballers wages can be justified
- The positive and negative development of social media
- Should we spend money on space programs or could it be better spent?
- Is image too important?
- Is excessive wealth ever justifiable?
- Why reading is so important
- Whether driving at 17 is too young
- Why young people need to be interested in politics

Try to avoid topics that involve hobbies, or literary texts being studied, unless the learner needs more support. In some cases it may be appropriate to allow a more straightforward topic to be chosen. More straightforward topics could include:

- Why I love sport
- Keeping fit and healthy
- My favourite film
- My favourite football team
- My favourite hobby
- What I enjoy doing in my leisure time
- My family
- My hopes for the future

Planning the presentation

It is important that learners plan their presentation carefully to ensure that they think about its purpose, its intended effect on the audience and its structure. They also need to research their subject if possible, to ensure that they can make their presentation informative and interesting, and know enough about their topic to answer the questions that they may be asked by the audience. Spending some time doing research in the school library or IT room is a good idea, but do stress to learners that finding material to read aloud or learn off by heart may not enable them to access the higher grades.

Learners can use a PowerPoint presentation or other supporting documents in their presentation, although there is no requirement to do so. If any learners do intend to use a PowerPoint or supporting notes they should be encouraged to think about the best way to use this material i.e. be careful not to include too many words on the slides so they will be tempted to just read aloud. It may be sensible to limit them to 3 – 5 slides.

Learners should not be encouraged to work to scripting a speech and learning it; they are better to work towards planning a presentation by breaking it into small sections and using a planning grid. Using cue cards to remind them of key points will help them with this.

Breaking down the preparation into sections will help ensure that the presentations are structured effectively. For example, initially ask them to plan a 1 minute introduction to their topic, designed to arouse the audience's interest and curiosity. Get them to practise their introductions to a partner and ask them to give each other feedback. When their introduction is ready, they can move on to the first idea they want to explore in their presentation.

An example of a planning grid:

Name:	Topic:
Introduction	
First idea/area	
Second idea/area	
Third idea/area	
Conclusion	

Preparing for audience questions and feedback

If the assessments are going to take place within a classroom setting, ensuring that the topics of the presentations are varied is the key to achieving a positive audience response. It will also ensure that the presentations are individual and reflect the interests of each learner.

The teacher will need to have a clear idea of the content of each presentation to ensure that appropriate questions have been planned. The questions should extend the presentation rather than invite the learner to repeat parts of it. Open questions should be used that encourage the learners to think more deeply about their topic, but should not expect them to have extensive knowledge that has not been covered in their talk. If a learner struggles with a question try to rephrase it more simply, or quickly move on to the next one.

Questions and prompts can be used to extend a presentation where a learner has found it a challenge to sustain the assessment for an appropriate length of time.

A proportion of the centres' entries will need to be video recorded for moderation purposes; this sample must cover all the grade levels as advised in the instructions from the awarding bodies.

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