

Graded Examinations in Spoken English

2007-2010

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All additions and improvements to this syllabus and a wide range of support for teachers and learners can be downloaded from the Trinity website at www.trinitycollege.co.uk

If you have any questions about this syllabus, please email esol@trinitycollege.co.uk

Foreword

Welcome to this revised edition of the syllabus for Trinity Graded Examinations in Spoken English for speakers of other languages. It will apply to all examinations undertaken from 1 April 2007 until 31 March 2010 and replaces all previous versions.

This latest revision has been undertaken to take into account the results of the extensive research which has been conducted into the linking of our examinations to the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR). The research project has followed the procedures laid down by the Council of Europe in the Pilot Manual – *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference*. You will find references to the linking of the grades to the CEFR at the end of each grade section.

This syllabus is a working document which is widely used in the classroom as well as in the examination. It is a very important document for teachers and learners.

Guidance to teachers is provided in the introduction to each stage which provides advice about preparation for the examination and how it will be conducted. Further support can be found on our website and in books available through a range of publishers. A DVD showing examples of all examinations at all grades with accompanying notes is available to registered centres.

This syllabus can be downloaded in full and grade by grade from the Trinity website at www.trinitycollege.co.uk

If you wish to register as a centre for Trinity examinations, contact esol@trinitycollege.co.uk

Thank you for your interest in Trinity examinations, and I wish all those who enter them a positive and rewarding experience and, of course, every success.

Sheila Needham

Chief Examiner ESOL

General introduction

Trinity College London has been conducting examinations internationally since the 1880s. Trinity is accredited in the United Kingdom by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority as an independent award-giving body.

English language examinations and qualifications

Trinity examinations in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) are organised into four inter-related suites. These share a common philosophy but provide different learners with the opportunity to choose a qualification which most suits their individual needs.

- **Graded Examinations in Spoken English (this syllabus)**
- **Integrated Skills in English examinations (see our separate syllabus)**
- **ESOL Step 1 and Step 2 examinations for students living in the UK**
- **ESOL Skills for Life examinations for adult students living in the UK, accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority**

Entry for the first three examination suites is open to anyone aged seven and over whose first language is not English. There is no upper age limit. Candidates do not have to be following a course of study but must enter for the examinations at a registered Trinity centre.

Trinity also provides teaching qualifications. The Trinity Certificate in TESOL is an initial qualification for those wishing to enter the profession, while the Licentiate Diploma in TESOL is for practising teachers wishing to further their career.

About Trinity's Graded Examinations in Spoken English

Aim

Trinity's Graded Examinations in Spoken English provide a reliable and valid scheme of assessment through which candidates, teachers and parents may measure progress and development, whether for educational and vocational purposes or as a leisure activity. The grades provide a continuous measure of linguistic competence from absolute beginner to full mastery.

Framework

This series of twelve progressively graded tests is designed for speakers of languages other than English and sets realistic objectives in listening to and speaking with other English speakers. The grades take the learner from a very low level of proficiency (Grade 1) to an advanced level of proficiency comparable with first-language ability (Grade 12).

A major benefit of a graded examination system is that it provides a motivational tool with which to encourage learners to develop and progress by acknowledging small steps. All learners make progress at different rates, and a graded system ensures that at every stage of their development there is an opportunity for them to mark that progress. There is a Trinity graded examination in spoken English appropriate to all learners, whatever their level of ability in communicating in English.

The progress is marked by:

- greater linguistic demands categorised under grammar, lexis and phonology
- increasing evidence of the use of communicative skills and the expression of functions
- an increasing degree of independence which allows the candidate to initiate and take control of the interaction.

The twelve Graded Examinations in Spoken English are organised in four development stages. The four stages are designed to give a framework to the teaching and learning progression and the tasks in the different stages are designed in such a way as to allow candidates to demonstrate their abilities in a number of different discourse types.

The strong support provided to the candidate at the Initial stage is gradually replaced throughout the other three stages by the encouragement for them to take responsibility for the interaction.

General introduction

From Grade 1 throughout the four stages, the examinations take the form of a one-to-one, face-to-face interview between the candidate and an examiner who is a native speaker of English. The examination at each stage, and with increasing demands at each grade, replicates real-life exchanges in which the candidate and the examiner pass on information, share ideas and opinions and debate topical issues.

The four stages

At **Initial stage** (Grades 1-3), the conduct of the examination is initiated by the examiner. Grades 2 and 3 have been mapped to the first common reference level (**Basic User**) in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (2001).

At **Elementary stage** (Grades 4-6), the candidate introduces a topic of his or her own choice. The examiner directs the discussion using the points prepared by the candidate. Then the examiner moves on to the conversation phase, selecting two subject areas for discussion from the list provided. Examinations at Elementary stage provide a bridge from the first to the second common reference levels (**Basic User to Independent User**) in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

At **Intermediate stage** (Grades 7-9), the candidate initiates and maintains a discussion on a topic of his or her own choice. This is followed by an interaction initiated by the examiner and then maintained by the candidate, and the examination ends with a conversation on two subject areas selected by the examiner from the list provided. Examinations at Intermediate stage have been mapped to the second common reference level (**Independent User**) in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

At **Advanced stage** (Grades 10-12), the examination begins with a formal presentation of a topic leading into a discussion of the presentation. The candidate-controlled interaction is followed by a listening task, and the examination ends with a conversation on two subject areas selected by the examiner from one of the lists provided. Examinations at Advanced stage have been mapped to the third common reference level (**Independent User to Proficient User**) in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

What each stage involves

Initial	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
<i>Grades 1-3</i>	<i>Grades 4-6</i>	<i>Grades 7-9</i>	<i>Grades 10-12</i>
<i>5-7 minutes</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>15 minutes</i>	<i>25 minutes</i>
			Topic presentation
			Topic discussion
		Candidate-led discussion of topic	Interactive task
	Topic discussion	Interactive task	Listening task
Conversation	Conversation	Conversation	Conversation

The above timings include time for the candidate to enter and leave the room and for the examiner to complete the individual Report form.

About the tasks

Conversation

This is an opportunity for a realistic exchange of information, ideas and opinions.

The conversation phase involves a meaningful and authentic exchange rather than a formal 'question and answer' interview. The examiner selects two of the subject areas provided in the syllabus for the particular grade. The subject areas have been carefully selected to offer a progression from the familiar to the less familiar and from the 'concrete' to the 'abstract'.

At each stage, the candidate is expected to take more responsibility for initiating and maintaining the conversation. One of the ways in which this is expected to be actioned is by the candidate asking the examiner a number of questions. The assessment of this phase takes into account the ability of the candidate to find out relevant information using the language of the grade: for example, fact-finding questions at Grade 4 (*What kind of food do you like?*), requests for personal opinion at Grade 6 (*What do you think of Sorrento?*), and discussion prompts at Grade 11 (*What's your opinion about genetically-modified food?*). These questions are expected to arise naturally out of the conversation and will be used to further the interaction.

The topic

Before the examination, the candidate prepares a topic and in the examination this is used as a basis for the interaction.

Trinity's philosophy is that candidates should be given every opportunity to demonstrate to the examiner what they *can* do in English. This includes giving them the opportunity to talk about a topic which is of interest to them and which they feel confident talking about.

Candidate choice is important and in selecting their own topic, candidates from the earliest grades have a degree of autonomy and control over this phase of the examination.

This task allows candidates to demonstrate the range of structures, functions and lexis at their command and of the grade. It provides the candidates with the opportunity to show they can link sentences together to talk about a subject at some length.

The interactive task

An initial prompt from the examiner gives rise to an interaction controlled by the candidate.

All the examination phases are 'interactive' but this is the phase in which the candidate's own initiating skills are of paramount importance in determining the successful outcome of the task.

This phase provides the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate his or her ability to take control through the use of questioning techniques and functions associated with requesting information, seeking clarification and encouraging further detail.

At Intermediate stage, candidates start to demonstrate their independence as users of English. This autonomy is further developed at the Advanced stage. The task requires the candidate to initiate 'turns' in the conversation and control the direction of the interaction. Tasks require an authentic exchange of information and opinions, with the language functions listed at each grade arising naturally out of the task.

The listening task

Three short spoken passages prompt the use of the skills of deduction, prediction and inferring.

A listening task is introduced at the Advanced stage. The passages are non-specialist and do not relate to the specific subject areas provided for the conversation phase. It is considered important at this stage to introduce an unknown element into the examination for which the candidate cannot prepare specifically in terms of language content.

The listening task is intended to be solely a test of listening. The candidate is required to give only very brief verbal responses indicating comprehension achieved through the use of high level listening skills.

About this syllabus

Layout

The syllabus is divided into the four stages. At the beginning of each stage there is an introduction which outlines the candidate profile expected by the end of the stage. These profiles relate to the common reference levels in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (Council of Europe 2001). The introduction to each stage is followed by individual grade pages which give details of the requirements of the particular grade. These are set out for ease of use in the classroom. Examination regulations are set out from page 54. The appendices contain supporting documentation such as Topic forms, Report forms and a summary of the language items of each grade, to assist candidates and those preparing them for the examinations.

The contents are organised as follows:

Introduction to each stage

Candidate profile – describes what the candidate can do by the end of the stage

Format – gives the content of the examination

Procedure – describes the way in which the examination will be conducted

Assessment – gives general information on the assessment relevant to the stage

Guidance – offers advice on preparation for the examination including samples of tasks

Individual grade pages

Format – gives examination phases and timings

Candidate performance – describes what the candidate should demonstrate under these two headings:

- **Communicative skills** – requirements, subject areas, language functions
- **Language production** – grammar, lexis and phonology

Examiner and candidate language – gives examples of the kind of language that might be used by the candidate and the examiner

Regulations

See pages 54 to 61

These give advice on entry requirements, the appeals procedure and arrangements for candidates with special needs. In entering candidates for Trinity Graded Examinations in Spoken English, centres agree to abide by Trinity's regulations and, therefore, they must ensure that they and the candidates are completely familiar with the regulations set out in this syllabus.

Appendices

See pages 62 to 68

- 1 **Completed Topic forms for Grade 4 and Grade 6** – These are provided as examples to show the way in which candidates should fill in a Topic form.
- 2 **Sample Report form** – An Intermediate stage Report form is provided to show how the Report form is completed by the examiner.
- 3 **Summary of language items for each grade** – This table provides a summary of the requirements at each grade in terms of language functions, grammar, lexis and phonology, and subject areas for conversation. This can be used, along with the lists of communicative skills on the grade pages, to decide which grade candidates should be entered at and as a checklist to ensure that all required items have been covered before the examination itself is taken.

The outcomes for each grade assume mastery of the outcomes of the previous grades. It is therefore important, when preparing candidates for a particular grade, that attention is paid to the content and coverage of all previous grades. Although these will not be examined explicitly, the examiner will be looking to the candidate to demonstrate a repertoire of language items which includes items from the current grade and preceding grades.

About the assessment

How the candidate is assessed

The candidate's performance in the examination is measured by means of one overall criterion, **Task fulfilment**. This is assessed in each phase of the examination.

The assessment of each Task fulfilment criterion is based on the following factors:

- coverage of the communicative skills listed, including the language functions
- coverage of the grammatical, lexical and phonological items listed
- accuracy in the use of the grammatical, lexical and phonological items listed
- appropriacy of the grammatical, lexical and phonological items used
- fluency and promptness of response appropriate for the grade.

The examiner assesses the candidate's performance by selecting one of four levels of performance and awards a letter grade, A B C or D. In simple terms, these levels can be classified as follows:

- A – Distinction
- B – Merit
- C – Pass
- D – Fail

More detailed descriptions of task fulfilment are available to show how the examiner assesses all examination phases at Initial, Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced stages, with separate descriptions for the Listening phase at Advanced stage. These descriptions can be consulted on the Trinity website.

In every examination, the examiner assesses the use made of the language of the particular grade and that of all preceding grades.

All phases of the examination at each stage are given equal importance in the overall assessment.

Reporting the assessment

Report forms

An Individual Report form is completed by the examiner immediately after the examination has taken place and before the next candidate enters the examination room. The Report form gives the following information:

- an assessment of the candidate's **overall** performance in each phase of the examination under the Task fulfilment criterion
- an indication of the key areas where the candidate could make **improvements**
- an indication of the overall **result** of the examination stated simply as Pass or Fail.

The Report forms for all the candidates are given to the centre representative at the end of the examination session. In the case of examination sessions lasting more than one day, the Report forms will, therefore, not be issued until all candidates at that session have been examined.

The Report form provides an **indication** of the result of the examination. This is not a confirmed result and candidates should either check the result on the Trinity website or await the arrival of the actual certificate before making any claims about the result of the examination.

Centres wishing to confirm the examiner's indication of pass or fail or who wish to find out the level of pass may use the look-up tables provided on the Trinity website.

A sample Report form for the Intermediate stage is provided in Appendix 2.

General introduction

Marksheets

The examiner also completes a composite centre marksheet with the Task fulfilment assessments for each candidate. This marksheet is for internal Trinity use only and cannot be issued to centres for reasons of data protection. This marksheet is returned to Trinity College London and the results are entered onto the Trinity database.

Confirmation of results

The computer programme works out and checks the final result and the Certificate is generated if the candidate has achieved a pass level. The Certificate states the level of pass as follows:

Pass with Distinction

Pass with Merit

Pass

Grade 6

Format

Total time: 10 minutes

The examination consists of two assessed phases:

- Discussion of a topic prepared by the candidate (up to 5 minutes)
- Conversation with the examiner on two subject areas selected by the examiner (up to 5 minutes)

Candidate performance

In performing the required tasks, the candidate is expected to demonstrate the following communicative skills and use the language items listed below.

Communicative skills

In the **Topic phase**

- Show understanding of the examiner by responding appropriately to questions
 - Give information and opinions about the prepared topic in a series of sustained turns under the six headings on the Topic form
 - Make the sequence of events clear by referring back to previous events and forward to forthcoming events
 - Answer questions on the prepared topic, and participate in informal discussion of the topic, responding to the examiner's requests for more information, facts or details
 - Ask the examiner at least one question about the topic area
 - Take the opportunity provided to include samples of the functions listed below, where appropriate
-

In the **Conversation phase**

- Show understanding of the examiner by responding appropriately to questions
- Provide information and offer opinions where appropriate
- Start to play a limited part in initiating and maintaining the conversation
- Ask the examiner at least two questions about the subject areas

Two subject areas for discussion will be selected by the examiner from the list below:

- **Travel**
 - **Money**
 - **Fashion**
 - **Rules and regulations**
 - **Health and fitness**
 - **Shopping**
-

Functions

- Expressing and requesting opinions and impressions
- Expressing intention and purpose
- Expressing obligation and necessity
- Expressing certainty and uncertainty

Language production

The candidate is expected to demonstrate the ability to use the items listed below, in addition to the items listed for the previous grades.

Grammar

- Open and first conditional, using *if* and *when*
- Present continuous tense for future use
- Past continuous tense
- Modals connected to functions listed above, e.g. *must*, *have to*, *need to*, *might*
- Infinitive of purpose

Lexis

- Vocabulary specific to the topic area
- Vocabulary specific to the subject areas
- Further expressions relating to future time, e.g. *the day after tomorrow*, *in a year's time*

Phonology

- The correct pronunciation of vocabulary specific to the topic and subject areas
- Sentence stress to clarify meaning
- Basic intonation and features of connected speech at sentence level
- Intonation patterns of more complex question forms

Examiner and candidate language

The sample exchanges below show some ways in which examiners and candidates might express themselves during the conversation. These are only examples, not models to be learned.

Examiner	Candidate
<i>Can I have your Topic form, please?</i>	<i>Yes, here you are. I'm talking about 'Ancient Egypt' for my topic.</i>
<i>I went to Cairo last year.</i>	<i>What did you think of the pyramids?</i>
<i>If I come to your country, can I get health treatment?</i>	<i>If you are a foreigner and you come to my country, you can have free health treatment.</i>
<i>What do you intend to see when you travel to Scandinavia?</i>	<i>I want to go to the north to see the midnight sun.</i>
<i>What are the regulations about smoking on trains here?</i>	<i>If you want to smoke, you have to sit in a special carriage. Do office-workers have to go outside to smoke in England?</i>
<i>What was your family doing while you were shopping for clothes?</i>	<i>They were waiting for me in a cafeteria.</i>
<i>What do you think of boys' fashions today?</i>	<i>I don't think there's a lot of choice for boys. What do you think?</i>
<i>Do you have to help your mother in the house?</i>	<i>No but if I don't, she doesn't give me any pocket money.</i>
<i>And what do you spend it on?</i>	<i>I use it to buy clothes and magazines.</i>
<i>Have prices gone up a lot recently?</i>	<i>Yes, since the introduction of the Euro a lot of shopkeepers have put up their prices.</i>
<i>So if Britain joins the Euro, what do you think will happen?</i>	<i>We have to wait and see but probably prices will rise. Is that what you think?</i>

Grade 6 communicative skills and functions have been mapped to B1.2 in the Common European Framework.

Graded Examinations in Spoken English
Elementary topic form – Grade 6

Candidate name: ... *Dario Costa*Centre: ... *Anyschool*Date of examination: ... *23 May 2006*Title of topic: ... *Computer games***Main points for discussion**1. ... *Why I became interested in computer games*2. ... *What I think of different types of games*3. ... *What skills you have to have*4. ... *Which is the best game and why*5. ... *How often I play, where and who with*6. ... *What my parents think of my hobby*

The information on this form must be presented to the examiner during the examination.