

# Improve your surfing skills



or

## How to ride the waves of positive washback

Rachel Appleby  
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### BASIC DEFINITIONS

Match a term on the left with its definition on the right.

- |    |                          |  |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| 1  | <i>Backwash</i> – C      | A 'statutory assessments', Sats 1, Sats 2 (ages 7 + 11), carried out in primary schools in England, within the UK Nat. Curriculum  |
| 2  | <i>CEFR</i>              | B 'the accuracy with which' an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure  |
| 3  | <i>direct testing</i>    | C can be used interchangeably with washback  |
| 4  | <i>impact</i>            | D measures students' knowledge and ability in what lies beneath the skills, e.g. grammatical knowledge   |
| 5  | <i>indirect testing</i>  | E requires the learner to actually perform a communicative skill / authentic task  |
| 6  | <i>negative washback</i> | F how test use affects society, an education system, and individuals; <b>macro</b> level: in terms of the societal or educational system; <b>micro</b> level, in terms of the individuals (e.g. teachers, students)            |
| 7  | <i>OFSTED</i>            | G the Common European Frame of Reference – a proficiency scale from A1 (Basic user) to C2 (Proficient user); includes 'can-do' statements  |
| 8  | <i>positive washback</i> | H the consistency of scores or test results; e.g. if a student took the same test the following day, would the test results be the same?   |
| 9  | <i>reliability</i>       | I the harmful consequences of a test, e.g. instruction is based too heavily on test preparation at the expense of content learning   |
| 10 | <i>Sats</i>              | J the influence of testing on teaching and learning  |
| 11 | <i>validity</i>          | K when a test encourages 'good' teaching practice, e.g. as well as preparing for an oral proficiency test, students also develop improved speaking skills; when a test promotes a connection between standards and instruction |
| 12 | <i>washback</i>          | L the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills: school inspections & the regulation of educational services   |

**OVER TO YOU!**

Look at one of the three tasks below / opposite:

- a) What language / skills is it testing?
- b) What activities could you do in the classroom to help prepare students for this?

**Euroexam Level B2 – SPEAKING – Transactional Dialogues, Task Three**

In this part of the test you must say something that is appropriate to say in a situation. Read each card and follow the instructions.  
[Each candidate receives 3 cards, one by one.]

"< Candidate A's name > Read this card. When you are ready, please start a conversation with me. I am your friend (a colleague / the waiter / the nurse / etc)."

[For each, the interlocutor gives a fixed response. The candidate then responds again.]


You have to arrange a meeting to discuss something with a colleague. Suggest a meeting tomorrow at 3pm, in room 671.

You have had a drink at a café. You are in a hurry to leave. Ask the waiter for the bill.

You are in a hospital and are looking for the x-ray department. Stop a nurse in the corridor and ask for directions.

**Euroexam Level B2 – SPEAKING – Picture Story, Task Two**

The story starts like this: "As usual on Mondays, Tim's alarm clock went off at 7 o'clock."



(+ 6 more pictures, not included here)

**You will hear a talk about a language school.**

- Look at the notes. The notes contain nine gaps.
- You have one minute to read the notes.
- Now listen to the speaker and fill in the gaps on your Answer Sheet with a maximum of 3 words.
- Do not write more than 3 words in one gap.
- You will hear the recording twice.

## Language School



### History of the school

- The school has been open since \_\_\_7\_\_\_.
- At the beginning there were \_\_\_8\_\_\_ courses.
- A lot of students \_\_\_9\_\_\_.

### The courses

- Not just English offered. It's possible to learn French, Spanish \_\_\_10\_\_\_.
- The courses begin \_\_\_11\_\_\_.
- There are never more than \_\_\_12\_\_\_ people in each class.

### Free-time activities

- Good restaurants and \_\_\_13\_\_\_ are close to the school.
- The good pubs are \_\_\_14\_\_\_.

### Other information

- Look on the internet for \_\_\_15\_\_\_.

### Extract from Audio script:

[...] The school offers courses in a variety of languages, and not just English. Here you can also study French, Spanish, Japanese and Korean – and all the courses are taught by native speakers. You can also choose the course that is best for you. It's possible to study on short intensive courses or on longer half-day courses. You can also join a one-year intensive course, but this course is not available to students who don't have a visa. If you're interested in improving your grammar or speaking then there are special courses for that too. All our courses start in the summer.

On most courses, there are four lessons each day. Lessons are always 90-minutes long and the maximum number of students in each group is 13, but the average is eight. At the end of the day you can do some extra studying as the building is open all day. [...]

## What makes a good test / exam?

### “A good test” ...

1. **focuses on a single skill** [i.e. don't mix reading and writing]
2. **measures the performance of doing sth** through language [e.g. using CEFR 'can-do' statements]
3. uses a **task-based approach**, whereby participants carry out a task [e.g. negotiating meaning]
4. **defines and limits criteria** [criterion-referenced; i.e. how well a candidate can use language to communicate meanings]
5. reflects and encourages **good classroom practice** [specifically related to washback]

(KEITH MORROW)

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rachel.appleby @ euroexam.org  
<http://rachelappleby.edublogs.org>  
@rapple18

