Making speaking exam preparation authentic & meaningful

Rachel Appleby, IATEFL Hungary, 2018



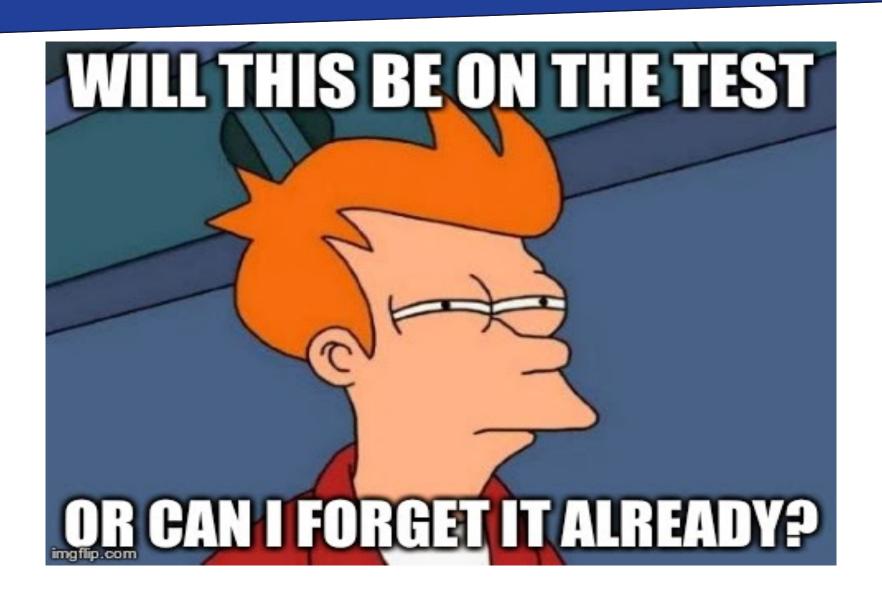
Getting started ...





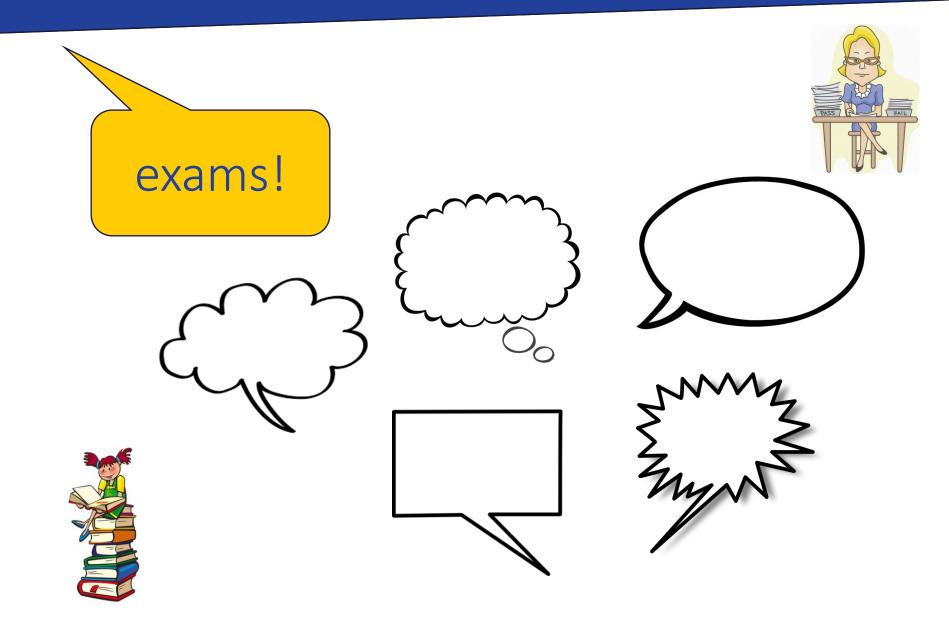
Familiar?





"exams": What words come to mind?





What do you think?



As a teacher or student ...

What words come to mind when you think of exams?





Recent findings ...





Recent 'Shock stories' ...



'terminology-itis': There is no evidence whatsoever that teaching kids things like subordinate clauses benefits their writing. MICHAEL ROSEN, The Guardian

[the current exam system] ... does not foster the skills and talents that are needed in higher education or in employment or the attributes that will be valued in future citizens. 'Exam factories?' NUT Report

"Assessment is closely linked to accountability [...] the high stakes system can negatively impact teaching and learning" OFSTED

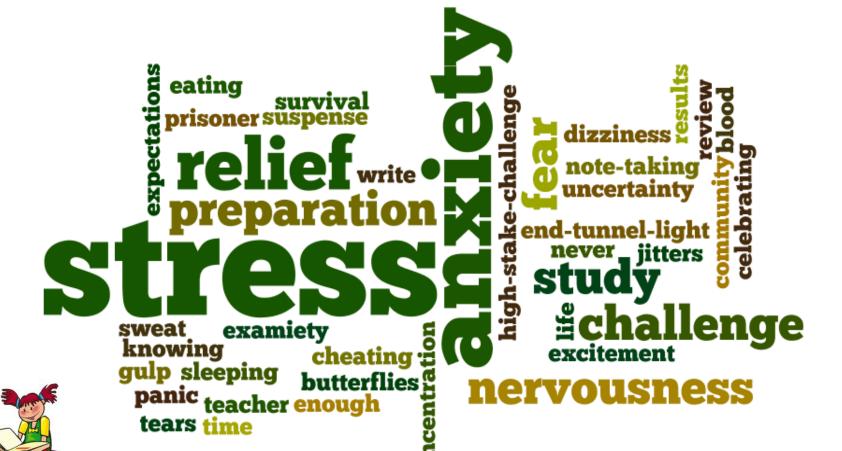
Please can we just do practice tests?

The fu

The **fun has gone** out of teaching ... hectic ... unmanageable ... overload ... never-ending JENNI BEDFORD

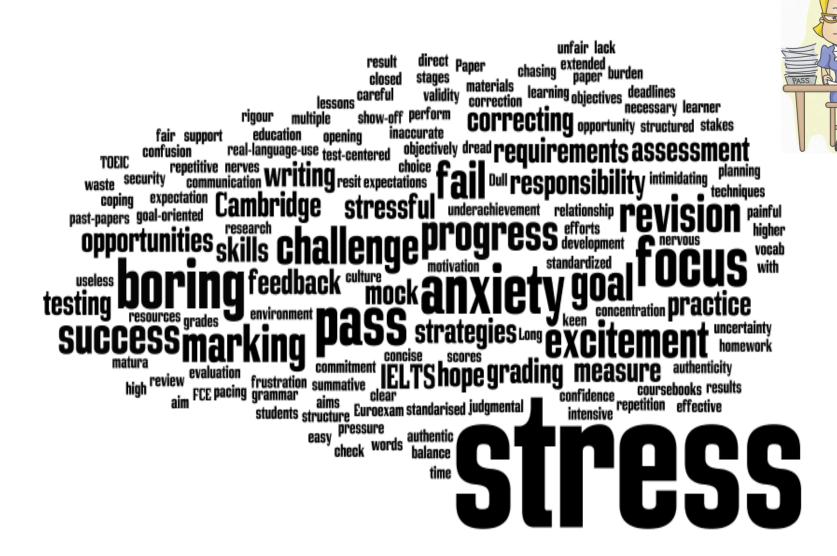
What students say (+/- 20)





What teachers say (+/- 50)





Terminology



Washback:



the influence of testing on teaching and learning

* see handout for many more definitions

Negative washback



Teachers "teach to the test"



- Teachers ignore input not relevant to test
- Students only study when there is a test
- There is **no sync** between what is taught and what is performed
- Over-test-familiarity and practice: focus on passing the test, not learning subject
- Curriculum driven by assessment: high-stakes testing

Positive washback



- Students are motivated ... to perform well / to achieve learning goals
- T / Sts can identify areas which still need work on
- T / Sts can set learning objectives
- T / Sts can keep track of **progress**
- When classroom activities support real-life learning, as well as test success



Effects on the learner



Find 1 positive, 1 negative (could be both)

- practising
- studying
- conversation practice
- reading widely
- listening widely
- using test-taking strategies
- doing extra test-prep courses
- requesting guidance / FB on performance
- requesting extra test prep courses or tutorials
- skip classes to study for test





Outline



- awareness of what's at stake in **test choice**
- how we can address these issues
- communicative exam tasks, & what they test
- ideas for preparing students with meaningful activities > leading to > exam success &
- ensuring we are also **preparing students** for ...
 - further study
 - employment, +/or
 - contributing to society



Key issues to address



- Grammar for a meaningful purpose
- Exam .. tasks which reflect what we do in life!
- .. which prepare sts for study / work / life
- Meaningful / relevant content.



What makes a good test / exam?



- focuses on a single skill
- measures the performance of doing sth through language
- uses a task-based approach
- defines and limits criteria [criterion-referenced; using language to communicate meanings]
- reflects and encourages good classroom practice

... And if an exam is good, ...



- students enjoy the tasks in their own right
- the tasks reflect **real-world** language needs
- the exam provides good teaching material





 Euroexam Level B2 – SPEAKING – Transactional Dialogues, Task Three

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

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

You have had a drink at a café. You are in a hurry to leave.

Ask the waiter for the bill.





Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Dialogues, Task 3

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

A What language / skills is this task testing?

B What **activities** could you do in the classroom to help prepare students for this?





• Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Dialogues, Task 3

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

A What language / skills is this task testing?

- ✓ Ability to identify the situation (in/formal)
- ✓ ... to say something appropriate
- ✓ ... to respond (very briefly) to interlocuter's comment
- ✓ Familiarity with everyday English in typical settings
- ✓ Ability to solve a small problem quickly and simply







Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Dialogues, Task 3

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

B What activities could you do in the classroom to help prepare students for this?

- Audio: Who are the speakers? Where are they?
- Rewrite conversation more or less formal
- Choose a picture with 2 people. Write a 5-line dialogue;
 swap / mix up / match / compare / etc.
- Give just one side of dialogue; students write other side
- Handout 3 x 3-line dialogues, jumbled. Sts group & order.
- Look at the 3-line dialogues: underline stressed words



Practical English Restaurant problems



IN THE NEW YORK OFFICE



- a (28)) Watch or listen. Mark the sentences T (true) or F (false).
 - 1 The New York office is smaller than the London office.
 - 2 Barbara is the designer of the magazine.
 - 3 Rob has never been to New York before.
 - restaurant because she's hungry.



2 VOCABULARY restaurants

Do the restaurant quiz with a partner.

RESTAURANT QUIZ

What do you call ...?

- 1 the book or list which tells you what food there is
- 2 the three parts of a meal
- 3 the person who serves you
- 4 the piece of paper with the price of the meal
- 5 extra money you leave if you are happy with your meal or with the

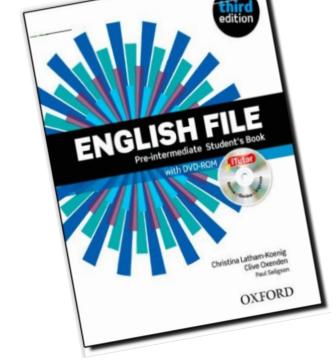
What do you say ...?

- 1 if you want a table for four people
- 2 when the waiter asks you what you want
- 3 when you are ready to pay

3 M AT THE RESTAURANT

- a 29)) Cover the dialogue and watch or listen. Answer the questions.
 - 1 What do they order?
 - 2 What problems do they have?





OUP English File 3rd edition: Pre-intermediate (2012)



Practical English Restaurant problems 2



3 M AT THE RESTAURANT

- a 29) Cover the dialogue and watch or listen. Answer the questions.
 - 1 What do they order?
 - 2 What problems do they have?



29))

Waitress Are you ready to order?

Jenny Yes, please.

W: Can I get you something to start with?

Jenny No, thank you. I'd like the tuna with a salad.

W: And for you, sir?

Rob I'll have the steak, please.

W: Would you like that with fries, or a baked potato?

Rob Fries, please.

W: How would you like your steak?

Rob Well done.



Practical English Restaurant problems 2



3 M AT THE RESTAURANT

- a 29) Cover the dialogue and watch or listen. Answer the questions.
 - 1 What do they order?
 - 2 What problems do they have?





[...]

W: The tuna for you ma'am, and the steak for you, sir.

Jenny I'm sorry, but I asked for a salad, not fries.

W: No problem. I'll change it.

Rob Excuse me.

W: Yes, sir?

Rob Sorry, I asked for my steak well done and this is rare.

W: I'm really sorry. I'll take it back to the kitchen.



Practical English Restaurant problems 2



Watch or listen again. Complete the You Hear phrases.		
))) You Hear	You Say 💭	
Are you ready to?	Yes, please.	
Can I get you something to with?	No, thank you. I'd like the tuna with a green salad.	
And for you, sir?	I'll have the steak, please.	
Would you like that with fries or a baked?	Fries, please.	
How would you like your steak? Rare,, or well done?	Well done. Nothing for me.	
OK. And to?	Water, please.	
or sparkling?	Sparkling.	
The tuna for you ma'am, and the steak for you,	I'm sorry, but I asked for a green salad, not fries.	
No problem. I'll it.	Excuse me.	
Yes, sir?	Sorry, I asked for my steak well done and this is rare.	
I'm really sorry. I'll it back to the kitchen.		

- In pairs, roleplay the dialogue.
- A You are in the restaurant. Order a steak or tuna.
- **B** You are the waiter/waitress. Offer **A** fries, a baked potato, or salad with the steak or tuna. You begin with *Are you ready to order?*
- A There is a problem with your order. Explain it to the waiter/waitress.
- **B** Apologize, and try to solve the problem.

OUP English File 3rd edition: Pre-intermediate (2012)



Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Picture Story, Task Two

TASK:

Think about something you did last weekend. On a piece of paper, draw it (NO WORDS!) (1')

- c. In pairs (3s), ask + answer Y/N questions to find out what your partner did.
- a. Ask 2-3 more questions to get more details about the activity.
 - b. Give the pictures and text to your teacher
 - d. Choose the best story.
 - f. Add "interesting vocabulary"
 - g. Look at all the pictures and texts, and try to match them
 - h. Write 1-2 sentences for each picture.
 - i. Write a new, clean draft.



Possible answer: (e), c, a, b, d, h, f, i, b, g



Euroexam 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)



Euroexam 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."



A What **language / skills** is this task testing?

B What **activities** could you do in the classroom to help prepare students for this?



Euroexam 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."



NB: Students should not read from notes; they should focus on the story, not individual pictures A What **language / skills** is this task testing?

- ✓ Ability to produce continuous speech with a cohesive, logical story
- ✓ Use of appropriate past tenses
- ✓ Use of linking words
- ✓ Use of descriptive language
- **√**
- **√**



Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Picture Story, Task Two

B What **activities** could you do in the classroom to help prepare students for this?

TASK:

What are your favourite story-telling activities?

e.g.

story in a bag: include familiar words, as well as words to revise, e.g. 5 words per bag / per pair.







Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Picture Story, Task Two



B **Activities** to help prepare students:

- Use pictures; students to invent a story
- Before / after stories (1 picture); compare
- o Give students 5 words: make a story
- Round-the-class stories
- Give groups a set of linking words to add, in turn, to story
- Re-order jumbled stories



THE READER

Posted on February 18, 2015 by kierandonaghy



This EFL lesson plan is designed around a moving short film commissioned by Bells and directed by Greg Gray. In the lesson students write a narrative, watch a short film and discuss literacy strategies.



http://filmenglish.com/2015/02/18/t he-reader/

Picture story



FILMENGLISH

Step 2

Give them the document with the six screenshots from a short film. Tell them the screenshots are taken from a short film and are in chronological order. In their groups invite them to imagine what story the film tells, and to write a naarative based on the title of the film and the six screenshots. Walk around the class and provide help with language as necessary.









Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Discussion, Task Four

- What are some issues you have to deal with when you start a new job?
- e.g. new colleagues
- •
- •
- etc.

- What are some of the things you could do to be environmentally friendly
- e.g. use less water at home
- •
- •
- etc



Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Discussion, Task Four

A What **language / skills** is this task testing?

- turn-taking
- agreeing / disagreeing/ etc.
- appropriate register + intonation
- clarification / circumlocution





Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Discussion, Task Four

B **Activities** to help prepare students:

Group phrases according to function, e.g. 3 groups: inviting / accepting / declining.

Put useful phrases on cards. Share them out. Student turn them over when they use them.

☐ Make a list of useful phrases on cards.	
\square Ask a 3 rd student to tick them off, or	
$oldsymbol{\square}$ indicate who use them during the conversation	•

(re-order):

phrases Jumble in words. them re-order Students.

Discussion tips



- Candidates receive a card with a sentence describing a problem or situation. After thinking of a few ideas, the candidates discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various options before coming to an agreement about the most suitable solution or option.
- This is a 3-minute improvised discussion about a given topic. By the end of the discussion, we would like to see you and the other candidate come to an agreement. In the course of the discussion, you will collect the main points of argument about the topic (e.g. What characteristics make a good parent?) and then you will agree on which the best option is...
- Collect some typical expressions used for expressing an opinion, asking for an opinion, agreement, disagreement, compromise etc. Take a piece of paper and draw a small table drawn with 6-8 columns. Start each column with one of the following words 'I think', 'I don't think', 'What do you think', 'I agree', 'I disagree', 'As a conclusion', 'Can we say that...' Then try to expand your vocabulary by collecting 4-5 synonyms into each column, e.g 'I'm not quite with you here', 'I'm afraid...'.This will enable you to enter the discussion armed with expressions and you won't have to keep repeating the same phrases.
- Be prepared to say something if your partner remains silent, e.g. 'What do you think?' or 'How do you like this idea?' The same goes for dealing with a partner who is too talkative e.g. 'Can I say something here?'.
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/radio/specials/1756 how to discuss/index.shtml

Exam prep – classroom activities





Exam Preparation - Classroom Activities Euroexam Level B2

SPEAKING (Task 3) - Transactional Dialogues



"-AND CAN YOU DESCRIBE THIS ELEPHANT, SIR?"

Classroom activities to help prepare students for this task-type:

The ideas below are very brief and basic, so think carefully about each stage of the activity, and how you're going to set it up.

Note that many of these activities can be done with extracts from the coursebooks you use!

- Teacher gives one prompt (e.g. sample exam task card): students come up with as many possible responses as possible.
- Rewrite a mini conversation as if between different people, e.g. boss *
 employer; 2 neighbours; 2 friends, etc. (focus on formality, style etc.). First,
 define situation, then brainstorm functional language, and then build dialogue
 around phrases.
- . Handout 3x3-line dialogues, jumbled. Students group, & order them.
- Students read a 3-line dialogue, and underline the stressed / important words.
 Practice the dialogue in pairs, exaggerating the stressed words.
- Students brainstorm and write down every day transactional situations and
 places (e.g. asking a co-traveller in the city the best route to ...; trying to find a
 specific book in a shop; checking the ingredients of a meal in a restaurant), &
 then improvise dialogues. (Weaker students could write notes, then role-play.)







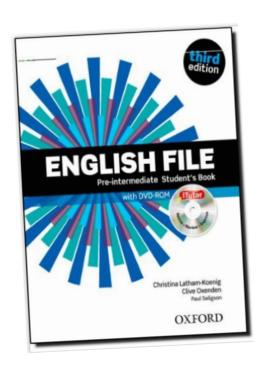




www.euroexam.com/exa m-preparation-classroomactivities

Tips for the Euroexam Level B2 exam







http://www.euroexam.com/preparetips-for-the-speaking-test/tips-for-the-euroexam-level-b2-exam

To summarise:



- Focus on tasks which reflect real-world language needs
- Use coursebook material to support exam prep
- Prepare students for
 - further study
 - work
 - contributing to society
- Students will enjoy the tasks in their own right!











https://twitter.com/UofGlasgow/status/990945964822233089

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