

Making speaking exam preparation authentic & meaningful

Rachel Appleby, IH Kyiv: 'Changing Minds', 2018

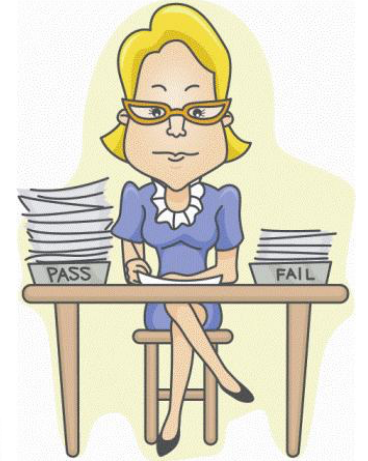
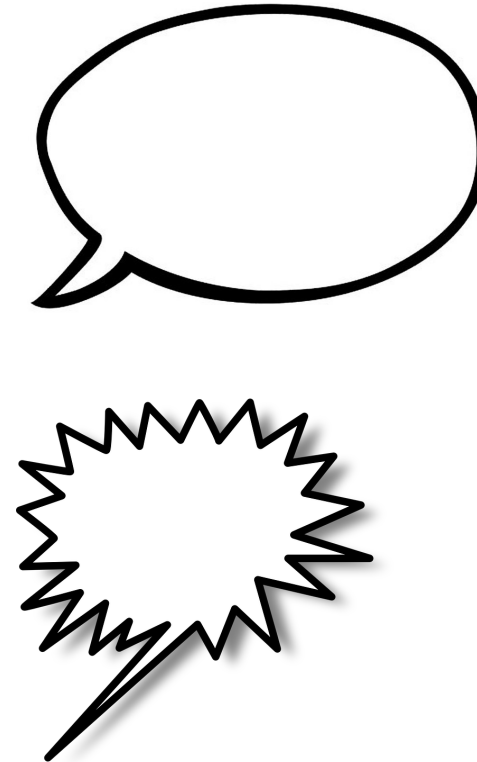
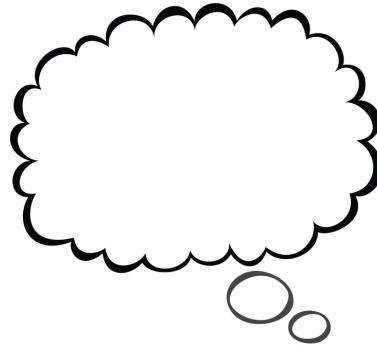
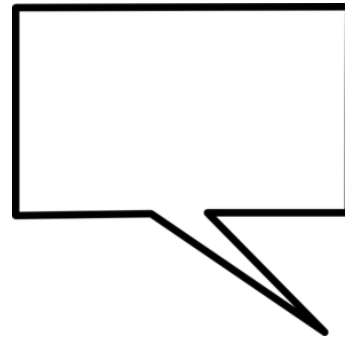


Getting started ...

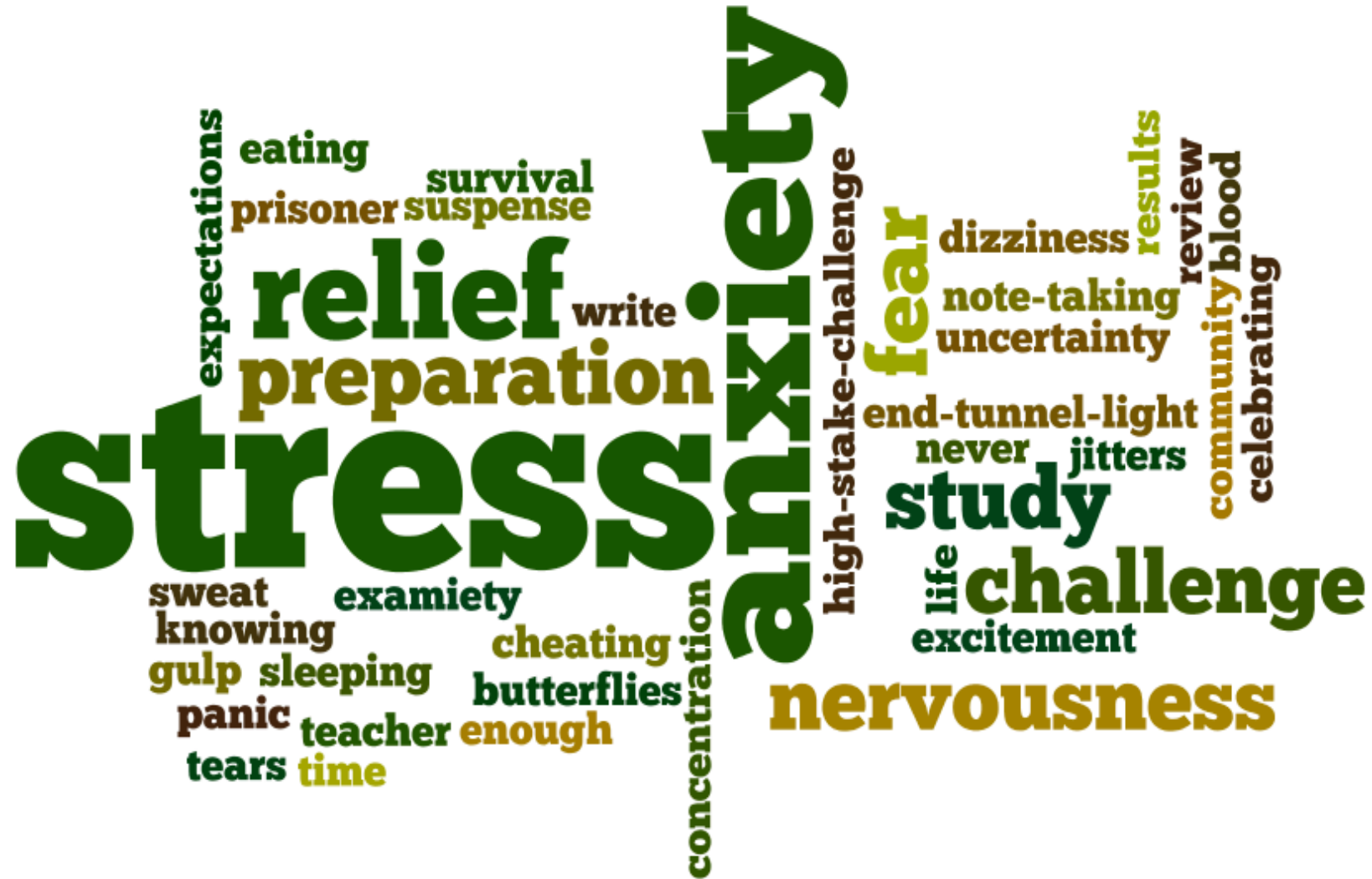


“exams”: What words come to mind?

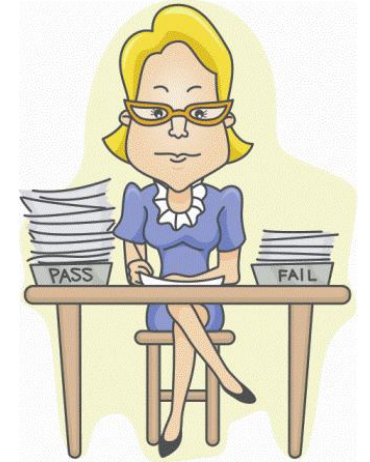
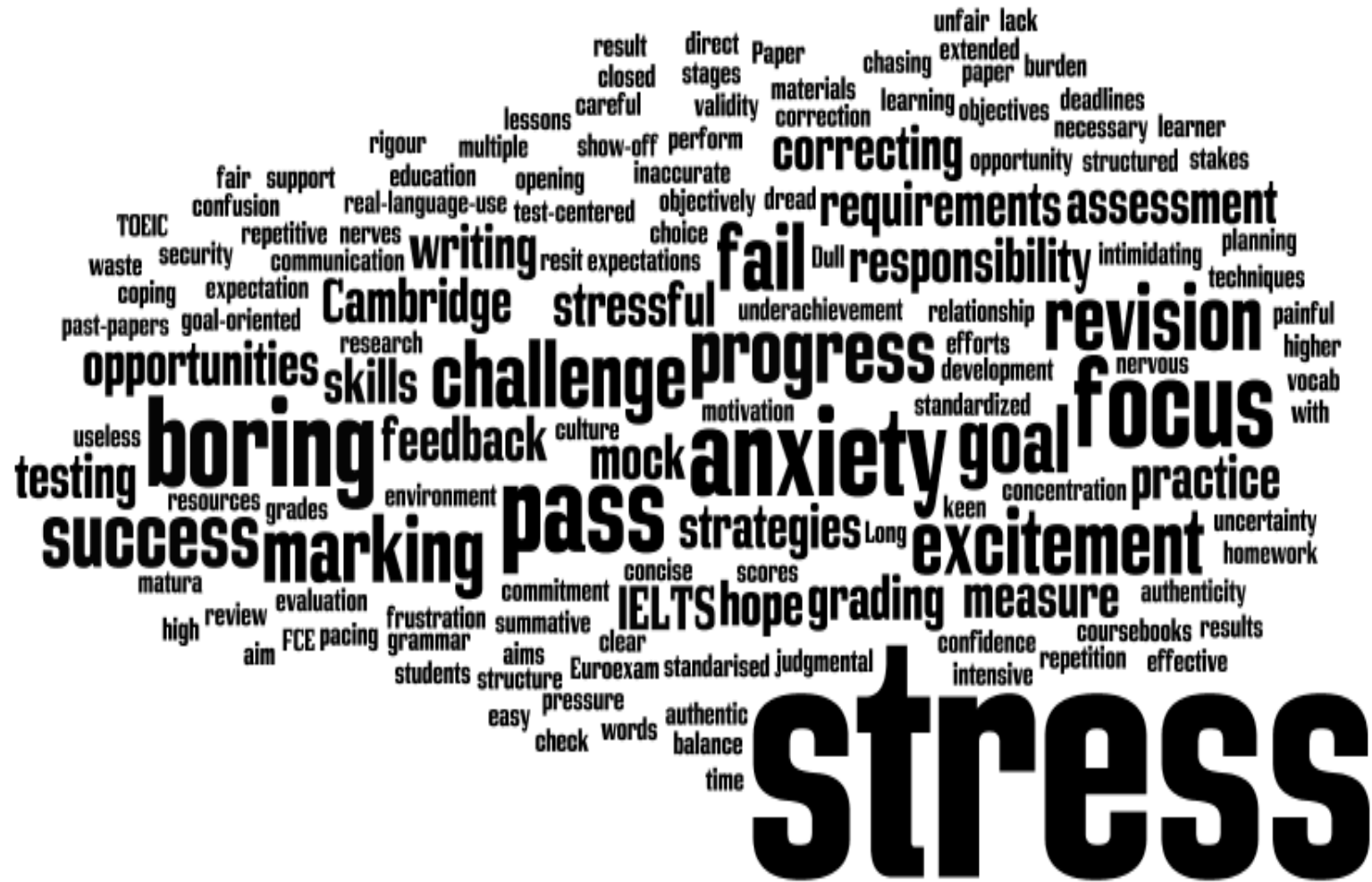
exams!



What students say (+/- 20)



What teachers say (+/- 50)



- Why are exams stressful?
- What can we do about this?
- Sample speaking exam tasks
- Classroom activities



Recent findings ... words + phrases

‘terminology-itis’
– using terms for the sake of it, e.g.

‘Exam factories’
– institutions simply getting students to take exams to make money

‘high stakes testing’
– where the consequences (pass / fail) are very important to the test-taker (+/or the school)

Recent 'Shock stories' ...

'terminology-itis': There is no evidence whatsoever that teaching kids things like **subordinate clauses** benefits their writing.

MICHAEL ROSEN, The Guardian

'Exam factories?'
[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**.
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?

Chinese student preparing for IELTS

“ the influence of testing on
teaching and learning

Kathleen Bailey, (1996). 'Working for washback: a review of the washback concept in language testing' *

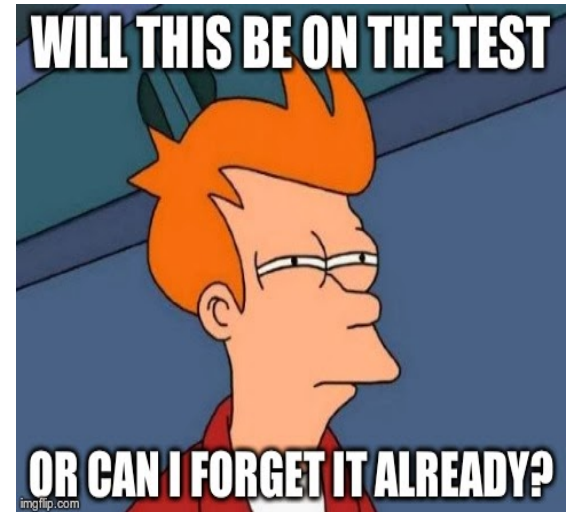
The **fun has gone** out of teaching ... hectic ...
unmanageable ... overload ... never-ending
JENNI BEDFORD

** see handout for
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**





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

Based on: Kathleen Bailey, (1996). 'Working for washback: a review of the washback concept in language testing'

What makes a good test / exam?

- focuses on a **single skill**
- **measures** the **performance** of **doing sth** through language
- uses a **task-based** approach
- marking is objective through use of a **scale of descriptors**
- 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 – sample speaking item

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

You meet your friend after your English class.
Suggest you go for a meal somewhere.

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 meet your friend after your English class.
Suggest you go for a meal somewhere.

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

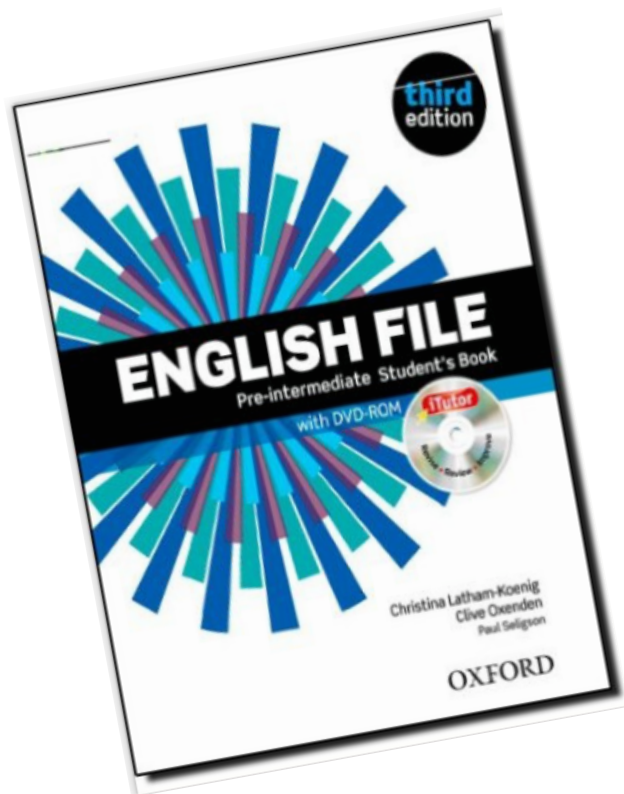
You meet your friend after your English class.
Suggest you go for a meal somewhere.

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
-

Exam preparation with a coursebook?

Practical English Restaurant problems EPISODE 2



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

1 IN THE NEW YORK OFFICE

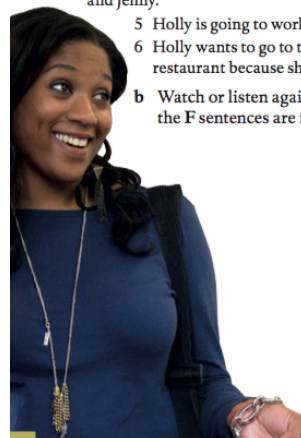


a 28 Watch or listen. Mark the sentences T (true) or F (false).

- 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.
- 4 Barbara is going to have lunch with Rob and Jenny.

- 5 Holly is going to work with Rob.
- 6 Holly wants to go to the restaurant because she's hungry.

b Watch or listen again. Say why the F sentences are false.



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 service

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 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?



Exam preparation with a coursebook?

Practical English Restaurant problems

EPISODE 2



3 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.

Exam preparation with a coursebook?

Practical English Restaurant problems

EPISODE 2



3 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.

Exam preparation with a coursebook?

Practical English Restaurant problems EPISODE 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.

Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Discussion, Task Four

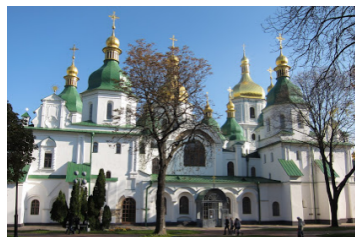
- What things could you recommend a visitor for a weekend in Kyiv?

- e.g. *visit the St Sophia's cathedral*

-

-

-



INTERLOCUTOR:

“You’re going to talk to each other about a topic I’ll give you.

First, make a spoken list of 4-5 things.

Then, when you’ve done that, discuss which one is the most important.

Remember to give reasons for what you say.

You have 3’ altogether.”

Euroexam B2 – SPEAKING – Discussion, Task Four

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



On your phone, go to
menti.com
Type in the code.



Mentimeter

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*:
“Would you like to...” / “Thanks, I’d love to!” / “Sorry, I’m busy.”

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

- ☐ Make a list of useful phrases on cards.
- ☐ In 3s, two students have a discussion; a 3rd student ticks off phrases, or ..
- ☐ .. a 3rd student indicates who used them during the conversation.

(re-order):

phrases Jumble in words. then re-order Students.

- 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

taste

market
stall

ladle
/leidl/

jam
jar

fist

(bucket
of)
cream

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

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



NB: Students should not read from notes; they should focus on the story, not individual pictures

- ✓ 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?



story in a bag: include familiar words, as well as words to revise, e.g. 5-6 words per bag / per pair.

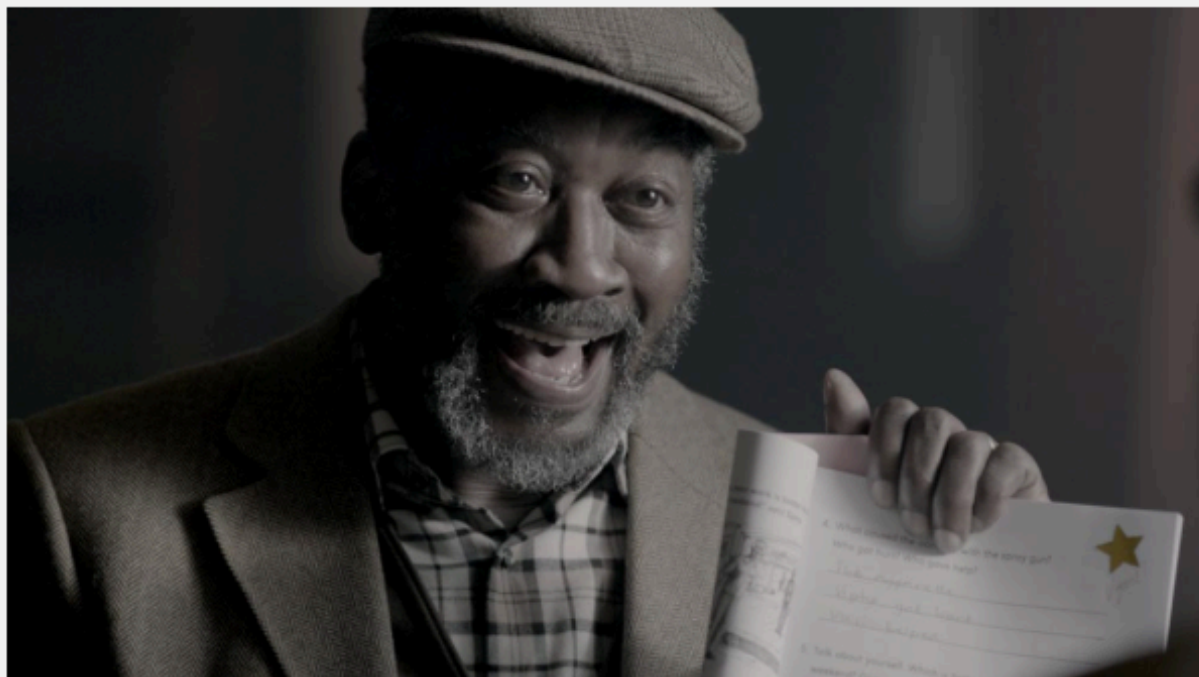
- Use pictures; students invent a story
- Before / after stories (1 picture); compare
- Give students 5-6 words: make a story
- Round-the-class stories
- Give groups a set of linking words to add to a story
- Re-order jumbled stories
- Collect a list of phrases for every day activities
-



Picture story: another source for practising

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.

 **FILM ENGLISH**

<http://film-english.com/2015/02/18/the-reader>

Picture story

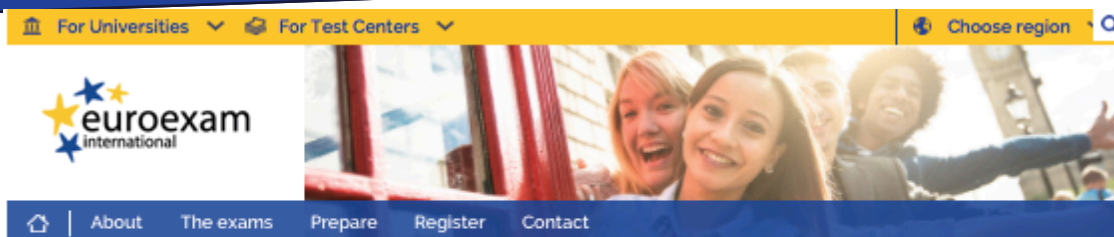
FILM ENGLISH

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 narrative based on the title of the film and the six screenshots. Walk around the class and provide help with language as necessary.



Exam prep – classroom activities



Exam Preparation - Classroom Activities Euroexam Level B2

SPEAKING (Task 3) – Transactional Dialogues



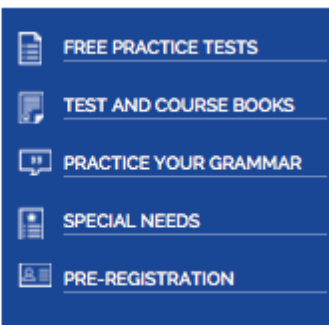
"-AND CAN YOU DESCRIBE THIS ELEPHANT, SIR?"

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/exam-preparation-classroom-activities

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!



Bibliography / References

- Bachman, L. & A. Palmer. (1996). *Language Testing in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
<https://octovany.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/language-testing-in-practice-bachman-palmer.pdf>
- Bailey, K.M. (1996). 'Working for washback: a review of the washback concept in language testing':
<http://ltj.sagepub.com/content/13/3/257>
- Bedford, J. (2003). 'Washback – the Effect of Assessment on ESOL Teaching and Learning':
[www.researchgate.net/publication/242692354_Washback -
the Effect of Assessment on ESOL Teaching and Learning](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/242692354_Washback_-_the_Effect_of_Assessment_on_ESOL_Teaching_and_Learning)
- Donaghy, K. Film English <http://film-english.com/2015/02/18/the-reader/>
- Hutchings, M. (2005). 'Exam factories: The impact of accountability measures in children and young people':
www.teachers.org.uk/files/exam-factories.pdf
- Pap, T. (2017). 'Exams, exams, exams': <https://theodorapap.blogspot.hu>
- Morrow, K. (1991). 'Evaluating communicative tests'. In: Anivan, S. (Ed.), *Current Developments in Language Testing*. RELC, Singapore, pp. 111-118.
- Rosen, M. (2017). 'Battle on the adverbials front: grammar advisers raise worries about Sats tests and teaching':
www.theguardian.com/education/2017/may/09/fronted-adverbials-sats-grammar-test-primary
- Rosen, M. (2017). 'A few notes on what teaching grammar to 9-11 year olds could be like (in my dreams!)':
<http://michaelrosenblog.blogspot.hu/2017/05/a-few-notes-on-what-teaching-grammar-to.html?spref=tw%C2%A0>
- Shawcross, P. (2007). 'What do we mean by the “washback effect” of testing?':
www.icao.int/icao/en/anb/meetings/ials2/Docs/15.Shawcross.pdf
- Taylor, L. (2005). 'Key concepts in ELT: Washback and impact'. *ELTJ*, 59/2. Oxford: OUP
- Common European Framework of Reference, www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf
& *English File* 3rd edition. Pre-Intermediate: Oxendon, Latham-Koenig, Seligson. (2012) OUP.

Making speaking exam preparation authentic & meaningful

Rachel Appleby, IH Kyiv: 'Changing Minds', 2018

rachel.appleby @ euroexam.org

[http :// rachelappleby.edublogs.org](http://rachelappleby.edublogs.org)

@rapple18 