Improve your surfing skills

or

How to ride the waves of positive washback

Rachel Appleby, ILSB17
Getting started ...
Familiar?

WILL THIS BE ON THE TEST

OR CAN I FORGET IT ALREADY?
“exams”: What words come to mind?

exams!
Recent reading ...
9 May 2017: Sats exam for 10-11 year olds

This morning, more than half a million primary children will take a test that may ask them to identify the grammatical label for the two-word phrase at the start of this paragraph. Could you do it? If you are unable to recognise...

‘terminology-itis’

There is no evidence whatsoever that teaching kids things like subordinate clauses benefits their writing

MICHAEL ROSEN

www.theguardian.com/education/2017/may/09/fronted-adverbials-sats-grammar-test-primary
Shock story 2

NUT Report, 2015

[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? The impact of accountability measures on children and young people’

'High-stakes' testing harming teaching and learning in primary schools

Assessment is closely linked to accountability [...] results used to hold schools and teachers to account [...] the high stakes system can negatively impact teaching and learning, leading to narrowing of the curriculum and ‘teaching to the test’, as well as affecting teacher and pupil wellbeing.

Washback - the Effect of Assessment on Teaching & Learning

“The fun has gone out of teaching ...

... hectic ... unmanageable

... overload ... never-ending

JENNI BEDFORD

www.researchgate.net/publication/242692354_Washback_-_the_Effect_of_Assessment_on_ESOL_Teaching_and_Learning
Teaching IELTS to groups of Chinese students in the UK

“Please can we just do practice tests?”

[freelance colleague]
I have people come to me asking for lessons, and their exact words are ‘I want to get the B2 certificate’ NOT ‘I want to learn English’.
I mark leniently. My students know that. But I don’t want to be responsible for them not being able to apply for a scholarship, or continue their studies.

[University colleague]
Frank Furedi (aka Füredi Ferenc) – on Outcomes

“When the end acquires such significance the means becomes subordinated to it.”

via Harmer 1/6/17 ILSB17, via Thornbury, via THE 2012
www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=421958
What students say (+/- 20)
What teachers say (+/- 50)
Terminology

Washback:

"the influence of testing on teaching and learning"

* see handout for many more definitions and subtleties

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

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

Washback – 3 dimensions

- Participants (teachers / learners)
- Products (course materials)
- Processes (what happens in the classroom)

Effects on the learner

Find 1 positive, 1 negative, 1 – ?? (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

• more awareness of what’s at stake in **test choice**
• how we can **address** these issues
• **communicative exam tasks**, & what they test
• **ideas for how to prepare students** with meaningful activities > leading to > exam success

&

• ensuring we are also **preparing students** for ...
  • further study
  • employment, +/-
  • contributing to society
Key issues to address

- Grammar – for a meaningful purpose
- Exam tasks which reflect what we do in life!
- Meaningful content – English for study / work / life
- The ‘means’ of achieving success
Key issues to address (1/4)

Grammar * e.g.

“No smoking” vs. “Please don’t smoke”

* Relevant for sentence transformation exercises?

http://michaelrosenblog.blogspot.hu
Key issues to address (2/4)

Life, e.g. 21st Century Skills

including:
- complex problem solving
- critical thinking
- co-ordinating with others
- emotional intelligence
- etc.
Meaningful content, i.e. ensuring we are also preparing students for ...

- further study
- employment, +/- or
- contributing to society
Key issues to address (4/4)

The “means” – Frank Furedi on Outcomes

• Ensuring classroom exam preparation / activities are relevant and valuable in themselves, as well as for achieving success
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**

“... creating an exam for teachers, by teachers”
JIM SCRIVENER
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.
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?
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

You have to arrange a meeting to discuss something with a colleague. Suggest a meeting tomorrow at 3pm, in room 671.
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 text: 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. Students group, & order.
- Look at the 3-line dialogues: underline stressed words
Exam preparation with a coursebook?

3 AT THE RESTAURANT

a) 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

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You Hear</th>
<th>You Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you ready to ______?</td>
<td>Yes, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I get you something to ______ with?</td>
<td>No, thank you. I'd like the tuna with a green salad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And for you, sir?</td>
<td>I'll have the steak, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like that with fries or a baked ______?</td>
<td>Fries, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you like your steak? Rare, ______, or well done?</td>
<td>Well done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK. And to ______?</td>
<td>Water, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______ or sparkling?</td>
<td>Sparkling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tuna for you ma'am, and the steak for you, ______.</td>
<td>I'm sorry, but I asked for a green salad, not fries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No problem. I'll ______ it.</td>
<td>Excuse me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, sir?</td>
<td>Sorry, I asked for my steak well done and this is rare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm really sorry. I'll ______ it back to the kitchen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

Look at one of the other sample tasks on the handout:

Speaking: Picture Story (B2)

or

Listening: Making Notes (B1)

A What language / skills is this task testing?

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

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

**NB:** Students should not read from notes; they should focus on the story, not individual pictures
Euroexam Level B2 – SPEAKING – Picture Story, Task Two

B Activities to help prepare students:

- Use any (series of) pictures; encourage students to invent a story
- Before / after stories (1 picture); compare
- Give students 5 words: make a story
- Round-the-class stories
- Groups get set of linking words: in turn, add to story & use word
- ‘consequences’: group stories, line by line
- Re-order jumbled stories
-
Euroexam – sample listening item

Euroexam Level B1 – LISTENING – Making Notes, Task Two

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____.
Euroexam Level B1 – LISTENING – Making Notes, Task Two

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

- Listening for key information
- Being tolerant of not understanding every word
Euroexam – sample listening item

Euroexam Level B1 – LISTENING – Making Notes, Task Two

B Activities to help prepare students:

- Hand out text title +/- or picture: students predict content
- Sts guess missing information; listen to check
- Discuss abbreviations, e.g. information, about, including, etc.
- Underline words probably stressed in text; listen to compare
- Hand out complete text: sts underline key info; compare
- www.euroexam.com/exam-preparation-classroom-activities
Exam prep – classroom activities

www.euroexam.com/exam-preparation-classroom-activities
Exam preparation with a coursebook

Praha 7/6, Brno 13/6
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!
To summarise,
Bibliography / References


Improve your surfing skills

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