

It's the end of the semester in many countries around the world and many English teachers are conducting their final tests. Most English skills classes are divided into two; Listening/Speaking, and Reading/Writing classes. In countries such as [Korea](#), Japan, and [China](#), in the university context, English teachers conduct their classes and tests according to their pedagogy and the materials, which usually include a [textbook](#) prescribed by their university and teacher's supplementary materials. Now, when it comes to testing (final and midterm), most universities leave it to teachers and how they want to conduct their testing. Usually, university teachers in the [EFL](#) context conduct their Speaking/Listening final tests either through interviews, presentations, and/or pen-and-paper tests. In this article, we are going to focus on interviews and presentations.

Table of Contents



- [Interviews](#)
- [Presentations](#)
- [Conclusion](#)



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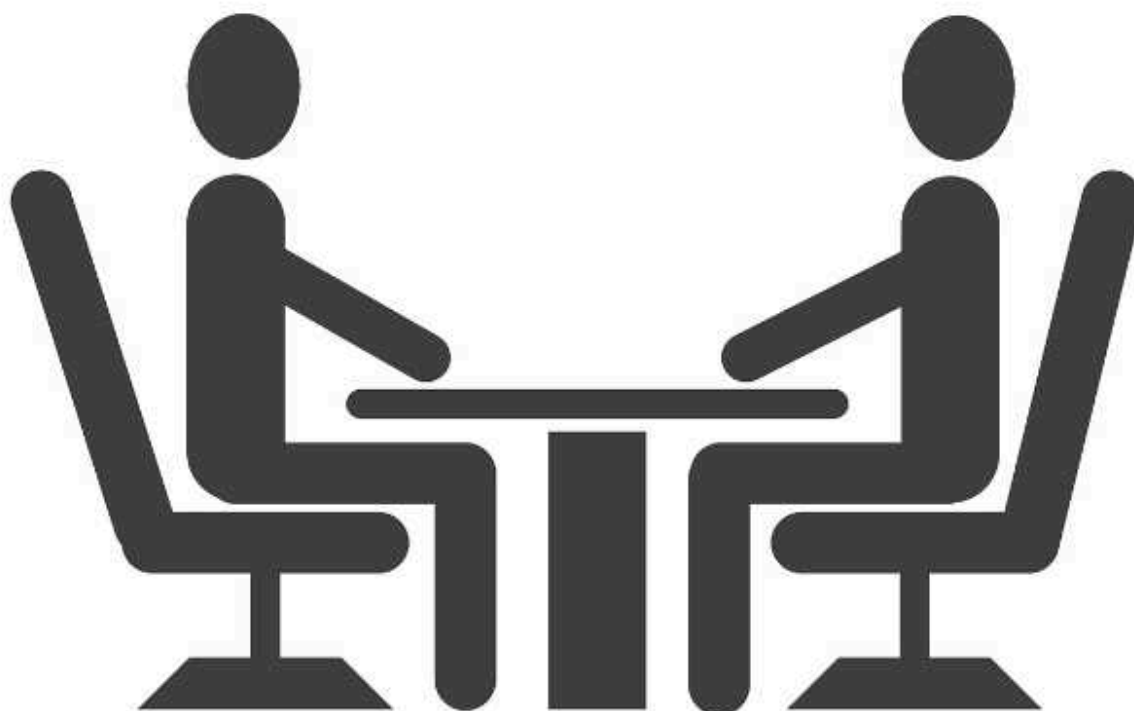
What teachers test and how they inform their students what they are going to be tested on and how tests are going to be conducted are important information that needs to be communicated effectively promptly. When conducting English-speaking tests in an [EFL context](#), teachers need to remember

that they are doing an achievement test, which is very different from diagnostic or placement tests, to be able to accurately and properly assess their students' abilities learned in class. There are a few key things to keep in mind when doing so.

Interviews

Test materials covered in class

Make sure the test is appropriate for the level of the students. There is no point in administering a test that is too difficult or too easy - it will neither accurately assess the students' abilities, nor be fair to them. What should be tested on the speaking test is the materials covered in class. It could be lessons and tasks from the textbook and supplementary materials. Make sure the test is well-designed. The questions should be clear and concise and cover all the relevant points that need to be assessed. There should also be a variety of question types so that students can demonstrate their skills in different ways. Now, a teacher can draw questions from a box or pick questions randomly from the list of questions that were covered in class. The questions/topics to be asked on the test should be the same questions/topics practiced in class. We need to keep in mind that midterm and final tests are achievement tests.

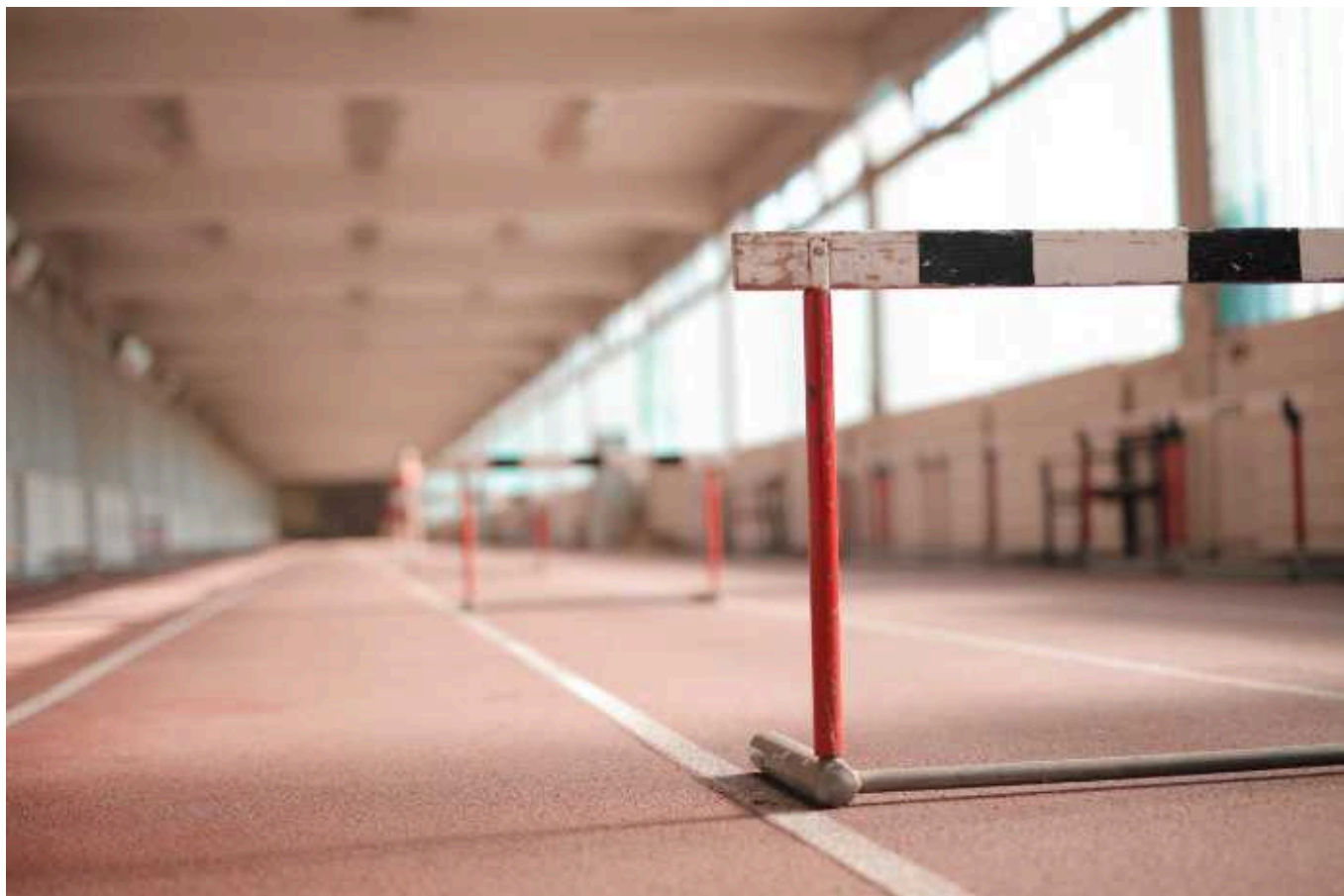


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Test expectations

Make sure the test contents are clearly defined and understood by both the teacher and the

- The students must know exactly what is expected of them and that they understand the task.
- The tasks should be realistic and achievable.
- Students should also be given enough time to complete the tasks.
- Weight of the test (i.e. 30% of the final grade)



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Time allocation and fairness

Make sure the test is conducted fairly and consistently. All students should have the same opportunity to demonstrate their skills, as there may be materials concentrated on [pronunciation](#), description, personal experiences, etc. All students should be tested on each of the segments. A teacher should not ask one question i.e. personal experiences, and then judge the student based on that one segment. Make sure the test is graded fairly. All students should be given the same opportunity to demonstrate their skills and should be assessed according to the same criteria. Students should not be rushed through the test, but at the same time, they should not be given too much time either, as this can lead to confusion and frustration.

Marking rubrics

The marking rubric should be made available to the students in advance so that they know what they need to do to get a good grade. One of the best ways to source your grading rubrics is the [CEFR \(Common European Framework of References\)](#). First of all, the textbook you are using most likely has the [CEFR](#) Book level on the front or the back of the page. Once you find the level of the textbook you are using, then find a [CEFR document](#) that you may use to generate your marking rubrics. If your book is marked with the CEFR level, then the descriptor in the CEFR marking rubrics will fit your level and what you are marking for.

Some may say that using rubrics from CEFR or [IELTS](#) is more of a proficiency test. Yes, the two tests share some similarities. However, if CEFR grading rubrics are used adequately, and adjusted to the textbook level and materials covered, they could be a great help in creating efficient marking rubrics for interviews.



Pexels by andy barbour

Prep for the test

Before the test, students should be given enough time to practice all the questions that are going to be on the test. At least two to three class hours of pair and group talk ([SST: Student Talking Time](#)) should be allowed to give students enough practice time and time to ask questions about the test. Also, students need to be told what behaviors on the test are expected of them. For example, in

what order are students tested (i.e. who goes first, second,...), what criteria the students are going to be assessed on (i.e. fluency, grammar,...), and are all criteria worth the same number of points,...? This kind of information should be shared with students before the test.

Teacher's Behaviour during the test

During the speaking test, the teacher should follow certain behaviors too. If you are close with your students and have developed a good rapport during the semester, then try to put it aside during the test. By doing this, you are giving your students a taste of a real-life English test. Try not to engage in unnecessary comments and dialogues that are not related to the test. The teacher should ask the questions and take notes as the student responds in real time. If necessary add a sub-question. However, during the test, the teacher should only be asking test questions.

Feedback

Finally, it is important to provide [feedback](#) to the students after the test. This will help them understand their strengths and weaknesses, and allow them to improve for future tests.



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Presentations

PPT

Presentations are a great way to test students' skills and the knowledge they acquired in your class. What I mean by presentation here is a ppt presentation using slides and a screen to present in class, an item or items learned in class over a certain period. How to use a presentation to conduct the tests is in large part very similar to the interviews. Communicating what is going to be tested and to what criteria is of the essence. However, there are a few things a teacher needs to keep in mind when using a presentation for testing in an EFL/ESL classroom.



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How to communicate instructions for presentations

First, tell your students ahead of time, or put it in your course outline that they will be tested by presenting in front of the class. This will give students enough time to mentally prepare for such a way of testing. Next, tell your students, ahead of time, what the presentation should or can be about. You may have the same topic for all students (more appropriate for low-level classes), or you may allow students to choose their topic (more appropriate for high-level classes). Let's say that all students should do a presentation on the same topic. Now, you need to provide a PowerPoint template for your students. In the template, you need to add sections and headings on what to include in the ppt, what information to put in each section, and how to reference sources (i.e. textbooks, images, etc.). Tell students not to put their speeches on the slides. The text on the ppt slides should be no more than 5% of the entire presentation speech. On the slides, they should have examples, images, and information of interest they are presenting. Ideally, a teacher should have a model presentation shown to students (either by showing an example video or doing it him/herself), but students should see what their presentation should look like (i.e. more images and less text) and what is expected of them during the presentation.

Marking rubrics

Now the grading rubric should be a little bit different than the one for the speaking test, but parts can be sourced from the same document. Grading rubrics should be a mix of both the CEFR grading

rubric and giving presentation behavior. From the CEFR grading rubrics, you may source the speaking, pronunciation language, fluency, etc. Now for the presentation behavior rubric, the teacher may add their criteria from personal experience or source it from other publications. But generally, presentations should include confidence, eye contact/looking at the people around the room while presenting, delivery, answering any questions, and quality of slides.

Feedback

A teacher can give [feedback](#) right after the presentation in front of other students or a day or two later in a one-on-one session. It is also helpful to ask students right after they do the presentation to write down what part of their presentation went well, and what part of their presentation did not go well. This helps students self-reflect on their performances. Most of the time students' and the teacher's comments are the same or similar, and this helps with grading and further feedback.

Conclusion

Testing in an EFL context in a university setting can be challenging for both teachers and students, but if planned and executed properly it could be a celebration of knowledge advancements a group of people achieved over 15 weeks or so. Before, during, and after the testing teachers should keep in mind that their course is not the only course their students are taking in the semester, and perhaps not the most important one either. Communicating the test structure and expectations well ahead of time is crucial for students to successfully complete the class. If students know what they are going to be tested on, to what extent, and under what conditions they will adjust and prepare accordingly.

Cite this article

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