

DEVELOPING LISTENING TEST TASKS

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ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

- Why test listening?
- Starting point
- Construct :: task formats
- Formats with selected response
- Formats with produced response



The assessment of listening abilities is one of the least understood, least developed and yet one of the most important areas of language testing and assessment. (Alderson & Bachman, 2001)



THE SEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF EALTA, THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS, 27TH - 30TH OF MAY, 2010



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR LANGUAGE TESTING
AND ASSESSMENT



CEFR

In listening activities the language user as listener **receives** and **processes** a **spoken** input produced by **one** or **more** speakers.

Listening activities include listening (L):

- to public announcements (info, instructions, warning, etc.)
- to media (radio, TV, recordings, cinema)
- as a member of a live audience (theatre, public meetings, public lectures, entertainments, etc.)
- to overheard conversation, etc.



LISTENING FOR:

- gist;
- specific information;
- detailed understanding;
- implications, etc.

Illustrative scales are provided for:

- Overall L comprehension;
- Understanding interaction between native speakers;
- L as a member of a live audience;
- L to announcements and instructions;
- L to audio media and recordings.



CEFR: WHICH LEVEL TASK

- Can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for him/her to assimilate meaning
- Can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes
- Can follow extended speech even it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly
- Can catch the main points in short simple clear messages and announcements



CEFR: WHICH LEVEL KEY

- Can **follow** speech which is **very slow** and **carefully articulated**, with **long pauses** for him/her to assimilate meaning **A1**
- Can **understand most TV** news and current affairs programmes **B2**
- Can **follow extended speech** even it is **not clearly structured** and when relationships are only **implied** and **not signalled explicitly** **C1**
- Can **catch** the **main points** in **short simple clear** messages and announcements **A2**



CEFR → COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Listening skills (gist, specific, detailed)
- Themes, background/topical knowledge, needs analysis
- Text (discourse) types (announcements, interviews, lectures, etc.)
- Text complexity (linguistic: vocabulary range, grammar complexity, rhetorical organisation)
- Input text characteristics (length, rate, intonation pattern, accent, etc.)
- Input text delivery/ presentation (live, recorded, video, quality of recording, time of task, number of repetitions)



COURSE OBJECTIVES →

TEST CONSTRUCT



FORMATS TO CHOOSE FROM

- Multiple choice questions
- True / False
- Gap-filling (sentence/summary completion)
- Short answer questions
- Information transfer (table completion)
- Note taking



FORMATS :: SKILLS

- MCQ
- T / F
- Gap-filling
- SAQ
- Information transfer
(table completion)
- Note taking
- gist;
- specific information;
- detailed understanding;
- implications;
- OTHER SKILLS (???)



“... we need to be very careful in **labelling** items in terms of their knowledge, skills and abilities we design them to measure. Processing language will always require a **whole range** of linguistic knowledge and processing skills, including phonology, vocabulary, syntax, discourse variables as well as inferencing ability...

This does not mean that we should give up designing tasks to address particular aspects of language competence. ... We will simply **emphasise** the things we think are important.”

(Buck, p.132)

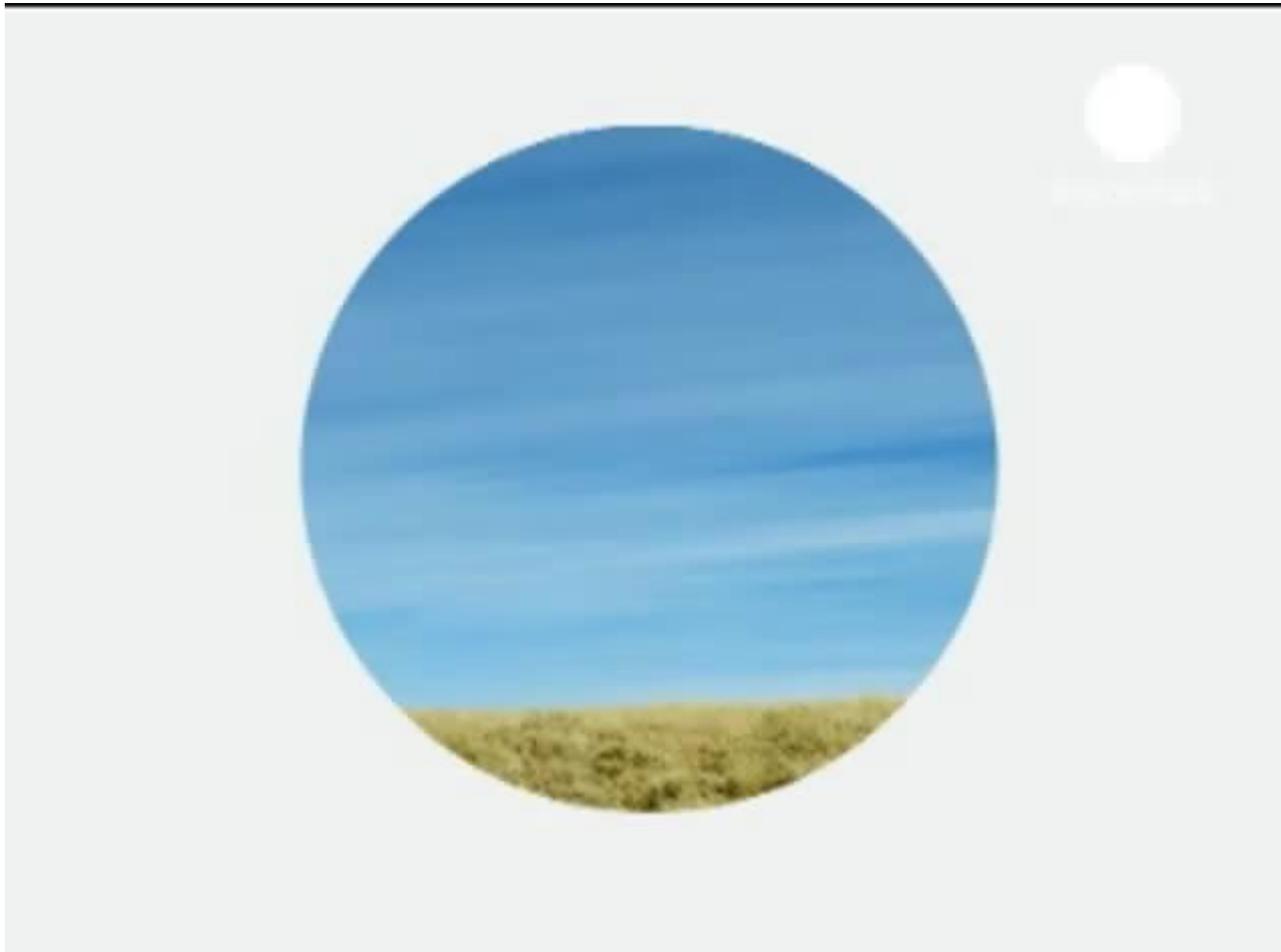


ROMAN BRONZE HORSES'S HEAD FOUND IN GERMANY(EURONEWS, SEPTEMBER 2, 2009)



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True / False

Mark the statements as true (T) or false (F) according to what you have seen (5 points).

1. The finding proved the long-term Roman presence on German territory.
2. The horse's head was found during a construction of a new town.
3. But for being kept in water, the artifact wouldn't have survived.
4. The status of the horseman was determined by his footwear.
5. The finding dates from the first century BC.

Short answer questions

Answer the questions (1-7) below in a maximum of three words (7 points). Write your answers next to the questions:

1. What is the finding made of?
2. How far from Frankfurt was the horse's head found?
3. Since when have the excavations in the area been carried out?
4. How much does the horse's head weigh?
5. How large is the horse's head?
6. What was it originally decorated with?
7. What was the name of the horseman?



STATEMENT COMPLETION

- Complete the statement in no more than **10 words**
(2 points)
- The horse's head is unique
because _____



TRANSCRIPT: ROMAN BRONZE HORSES'S HEAD FOUND IN GERMANY(EURONEWS, SEPTEMBER 2, 2009)

(Voiceover) A life-sized bronze horse's head has been found at the bottom of a well in Germany which, archaeologists believe, could have come from a statue of the Roman Emperor, Augustus. The cast-bronze head, which weighs 25 kilos, is one of the best preserved Roman bronzes in the world and suggests the Romans had a much more established presence in ancient Germany than historians have thought.

The discovery was made at a site near the town of Waldgirmes in the central German state of Hessen – 40 kilometres more to Frankfurt.

Archaeologists have been excavating a former Roman town there since 1993. Recently they found what is believed to be the foot of the figure once mounted on the horse. The horse's head is particularly significant as it is extremely well preserved.

(Eva Kuhe-Horman, Hesse's State minister of science (translation)) We really have found something that does not exist anywhere else in this form and this quality. It is in such good condition because it was found in a well. It was preserved decently by the water than it wouldn't have been by air or if it had been somewhere else.

(Voiceover) Experts believe the statue represents a famous and important man – a general perhaps or a former military leader, politician. The foot discovered near is embedded in a sandal indicating the warrior's status as a senator, which some archaeologists believe could be that the statue depicts Emperor Augustus himself.

(Egon Schallmayer, Professor of Archaeology) The importance of this discovery lies in the fact that there has been nothing like that found on Germanic grounds before. These relics could be classified as artifacts from the high art of Roman empire around the time of Christ.

Approximately 50 centimetres long, the head was once adorned with gold leaf. It was intricately carved with a depiction of Mars – the god of war - on the horses halter.



- “One useful way of focusing on what particular tasks are measuring is to identify the **necessary information**. This is the information in the text that the test-taker must understand in order to be sure the task has been done correctly. It is more than just the basis for a good guess; it is the information that would tell us whether the guess was correct.”
(Buck, p.129)



TEXT MAPPING TECHNIQUE

Stage 1: LISTEN to the text 2-3 times (important!). Then write in up to 20 words what the text is about.

Stage 2: compare your notes with 2-3 more people. Common things are key concepts (gist).

Stage 3: identify key words / synonyms.

Stage 4: decide on a suitable test method.



FINDING AN APPROPRIATE SOUND FILE

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/programmes/formats/bulletins>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/womans-hour/archive/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qps9> (You and Yours)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006slnx> (Feedback)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qjlq> (From our own correspondent)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006r5jt> (The Film Programme)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007vzr2> (Afternoon Reading)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qgvj> (Any Questions)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qmmj> (Any Answers)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00jkr1q> (The Report)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/default.stm>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/> (Children's BBC)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/cbbc/>



BBC Learning English

Words in the News

6th April 2011

Japanese disasters hit UK car production



BBC Learning English

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6th April 2011

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JAPANESE DISASTER HIT UK CAR PRODUCTION: TEXT MAPPING RESULTS

1. **problems** , **British** car industry, **shortage** of *Honda* spare parts, **supplies cut by 50%**, earthquake and tsunami, **on-time delivery**
2. **Southern England**, **reduced**, production of cars, **shortages** of **key components**, **power shortages**, earthquake and tsunami, **problems**, **supply chains breakdown**, “just-in-time” production systems

3. *Honda*, Japan disaster hit **world** car production, **shortage** of **power supply**, production **reduced by 50%**, depend on Japanese spare parts

4. accidents on Fukushima, **world** companies **relied on components** , **cut production by 50%**, **problem**, exacerbated , just-in-time production systems, **on time**, prone to disruption.



- **What?** – problems in Honda car industry/
production of cars/ world companies/ production
reduced/ cut by 50%
- **Where?** – British/ Southern England
- **Cause of problem 1?** - shortage of spare parts/
parts/ key components/ components
- **Cause of more global problem?** - power shortage
in Japan/ shortage of power supply, earthquake and
tsunami, accident on Fukushima
- **Cause of problem 1 again?** on-time delivery,
supply chains breakdown, “just-in-time” production
systems, depend on just-in-time production
systems, on time



TRUE / FALSE

Mark the statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 1 The car factory in the UK cut its production shortly after the earthquake.
- 2 After the disaster Japanese car industry is out of action.
- 3 Japanese car production worldwide is reduced due to the supply chains being broken.
- 4 Japanese key parts suppliers are closed down because of nuclear hazard.
- 5 “Just-in-time” delivery scheme proved to be unreliable.



T/F. THE KEY:

- 1 – F;
- 2 – F;
- 3 – T;
- 4 – F;
- 5 – T



SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING TRUE-FALSE TEST ITEMS

- Base true-false items upon statements that are **absolutely true or false**, without qualifications or exceptions.
- Express the item statement as **simply** and as **clearly** as possible.
- Express a **simple idea in each test item**.
- Include **enough background information** and qualifications so that the ability to respond correctly to the item does not depend on some special, uncommon knowledge
- Avoid **lifting statements from the text** so that memory alone will not permit a correct answer.



Avoid using **negatively stated item statements**.

Avoid the use of **unfamiliar vocabulary**.

Avoid the use of specific determiners which would permit a test-wise but unprepared student to respond correctly ("**all,**" "**always,**" "**none,**" "**never**")

Statements including such terms are likely to be **false**.

On the other hand, statements using qualifying determiners such as "**usually,**" "**sometimes,**" "**often,**" etc., are likely to be **true**. When statements do require the use of specific determiners, make sure they appear in both true and false items.

False items tend to discriminate more highly than true items. Therefore, **use more false items than true items** (but no more than 15% additional false items.)



SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Give answers to the questions below in no more than THREE words.

1 Where is the car factory described situated?

2 By how much will the car production be reduced?

3 What caused cutting Japanese cars production worldwide after the earthquake and tsunami?

4 What is putting Japanese car factories out of action now?

5 What production system proved unreliable?



SAQ: THE KEY

- 1.(the) UK/ (Southern) England/ Swindon;
2. (by) 50%/half;
3. parts/(key) components shortage(s)
OR shortage(s) of parts/(key) components
OR supply chains disruption
4. power shortage(s)/ devastation
5. just-in-time

READ MORE ABOUT SAQ IN:

- Гнаповська Л.В., Квасова О.Г. Оцінювання вмінь читання: з досвіду пілотування тестових завдань в межах Проекту незалежного тестування з іноземних мов // Іноземні мови. – 2007. – № 2. – С. 3-10.



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1 A UK-based Honda car factory will

- A close down next week
- B halve its production
- C reduce 3000 workers

2 Supplies problems are caused by ... in Japan.

- A nuclear accident and hazard
- B earthquake and tsunami
- C devastation and power shortage

3 Manufacturers worldwide tend to

- A receive parts when in need
- B store parts in big quantities
- C depend on parts made on site



MCQ. THE KEY:

- 1 – B;
- 2 – C;
- 3 – A.

READ MORE ON MCQ in READING IN:

O. Kvasova. Constructing valid classroom test tasks (multiple choice questions) for university students (note on a workshop). – IM. – №4 (84). – **2015.** – C. 40-47.



SUMMARY COMPLETION

Fill in the gaps (1-4) with one or two words. There is one example (0) at the beginning.

Honda says it's cutting car production (0) at its UK-based factory by 50% from next week because of shortages of _____ (1) from Japan.

After the disaster Japanese industry cannot work at full capacity due to _____ (2).

The devastation caused by the earthquake and tsunami resulted in disruption of _____ (3) of many world companies that rely on Japanese made components.

The prevalent production system accepted worldwide relies on _____ (4) which proved inefficient in the time of difficulty.

Score: 4 points



SUMMARY COMPLETION. **THE KEY:**

- 1 - key components;
- 2 - power shortage(s);
- 3 - supply(ies) chain(s);
- 4 - timely/ on time / just in time delivery

READ THE PAPER:

О.Г. Квасова. Розробка тестових завдань для розвитку і контролю умінь англomовного аудіювання у вищому навчальному закладі// **Іноземні мови.** – 2013. – №2 (74). – С. 19-23.



WHAT ABOUT CREATING AN IDEAL TEST TASK???



TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT ASSESSING LISTENING (COOMBE ET AL., 2007)

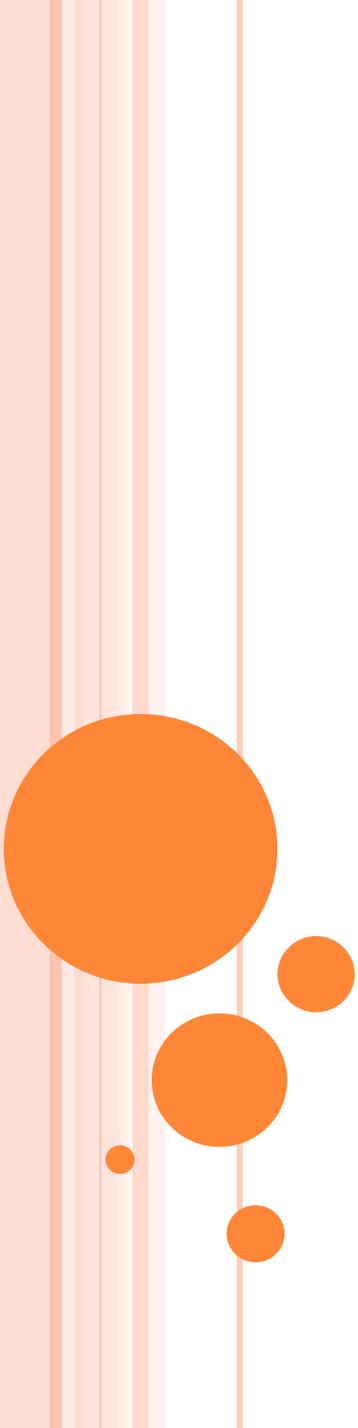
- 1 Assess L even though it is difficult to assess.
- 2 Reading texts must be converted into L texts.
- 3 Give credit to what students know.
- 4 Don't forget the importance of background knowledge.
- 5 Don't just test what is easy to test.
- 6 Give students a reason for listening.
- 7 Don't expect full comprehension.
- 8 Accept that skill combination will occur.
- 9 Accept all types of listening (top down, bottom up and general/academic).
- 10 Don't forget the cornerstones of good testing practice.



USEFUL REFERENCES

- Coombe, Ch. et al (2007). *A Practical Guide to Assessing English Language Learners*. The University of Michigan Press.
- Into Europe. *The Listening Handbook*. Series editor: J. Ch. Alderson. Teleki Laszlo Foundation.
http://www.examsreform.hu/Media/GL_Listening.pdf





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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