

## **Zmiany w ustnym egzaminie maturalnym z języka angielskiego**

### **Changes in the oral final secondary school exam In English**

Within the scope of the regulations in force, the final secondary school exam in English consists of two parts: the oral exam and the written exam. Up to 2011 students have been able to choose the level at which they want to take the exam. It could be either a basic or an extended level.

The written exam is bound to be changed in 2015 but the oral exam is due to be changed in 2012. It will be a demanding challenge for both students and teachers for a number of reasons. The aim of the article is to present the new structure of the above-mentioned exam and to suggest a few ways of preparing for its particular parts.

To start with, let me make a few comments about the old version of the exam. According to its structure, at the basic level students are expected to act out three dialogues with an examiner and to describe a picture. Each conversation includes three bullet pointed instructions to be followed by both a student and an examiner. The first conversation concentrates on asking for and giving information. In the second one a student has to report a past event using past tenses. The last one is called negotiating but it has nothing or very little to do with business negotiations. A student is expected to solve a given problem and reach a compromise with an examiner.

As for describing pictures, a student ought to focus on three main areas: who is in the picture, what he or she is doing and where he or she is. After the student describes a picture an examiner asks two questions referring to the topic shown in the picture. A student is not allowed to see the questions as they are attached to the examiner's set only. A student has got five minutes for preparation and making notes. The exam lasts ten minutes.

As far as the new oral exam is concerned, it is not divided into two levels and does not provide scope for any exam preparation. A student enters the examination room and then an examiner starts the lead in. It is called an "introductory conversation" which lasts about two minutes and can relate to any of fifteen topics included in the catalogue, published by the central institution dealing with final examinations (compare the list below the article). It is treated as a warm-up activity and that is why it is not marked. The purpose of the first part is to provide an examiner with the overall impression about a student's level. From the student's point of view it is intended to familiarize them with the exam situation. It is obvious the other three stages of the examination are marked.

As for marking, it is done in two separate areas: communication skills (max 18 points) and language skills (max 12 points). It is also interesting to note that all three tasks include four key elements. However, it is equally important to refer to all of them and to develop them at the same time. Language skills are marked in the following categories: the range of grammar-lexical structures, accuracy, pronunciation and fluency. The maximum number of points to be collected is 30. A new thing, which has never been used before, is a possibility to give penalty points (up to 6 points altogether).

In the first marked task a student discusses four different issues with an examiner. They concern one given topic. For example, it can be travelling. In this case a student might be asked about the following things: an itinerary for a trip, equipment needed, dates and costs of transport. A student is given 30 seconds to have a look at the task. The instructions are written in Polish in the form of speech bubbles. No other things are included in a student's set. An examiner's set includes a few guidelines for the conversation.

When it comes to the second task, everything a student can see is a picture. The usual phrase which is used by an examiner at this stage is "please describe the picture". After about 10 seconds an examiner may ask if a student can start but it is not necessary. A student is expected to talk for about one minute. Then he or she is asked three questions referring to the picture. They are to be found in an examiner's set only. It is estimated that it would take about three minutes to answer examiner's questions. The third question has always something to do with retelling a past event. At this stage a student should remember that they will lose points if they answer in one sentence and that is why it is necessary for them to avoid short answers (the same is true about task 3).

The third task comprises three different elements called stimulus-based material. A student is given about one minute to get prepared and about two minutes to talk about one particular element he or she chooses. For example, they can be asked to choose a watch for their friend's birthday. They are also expected to express their opinion about all three watches shown in the pictures. What is more, it is also important to give reasons why they have chosen a particular watch and why they reject the other two suggestions. One of the reasons can be a price

of a watch as it is shown under each picture. Then an examiner asks two questions (he or she chooses 2 out of 4 given in their set). One of the questions can be connected with giving or receiving gifts. For this stage two minutes are given. In fact, it is the final part and the exam is supposed to finish.

It is worth pointing out that the greatest challenge and the difference in comparison with the old version of the examination is lack of time for preparation. Therefore it is unavoidable to increase students' fluency and ability to work under pressure of time. One of ideas to boost students' awareness in terms of spoken language is to ask students questions referring to all fifteen general topics in the catalogue as the topics have not been changed. As each of the topics is done in the lessons, students can be asked relevant questions which they have not seen before. The idea seems to work better if the questions take them by surprise. Afterwards their answers can be marked according to the system used in particular schools. Penalty points can be given if they do not understand questions. Apart from that, some games can be useful as well, e.g. Discussion Wheel and Values Topics (Cambridge University Press 1984). Both of them are board games which are played in teams by means of a dice and counters. Another similar game is Say 4 things which comes from: [www.bogglesworld.com](http://www.bogglesworld.com). I am convinced that Taboo Game can be beneficial, too. However it is important to invent head words based on the vocabulary included in the coursebook. There is no doubt that a well-devised game would boost students' confidence in spoken English significantly.

To get students prepared for the first marked part of the exam some games can be suggested as well. The Friends Board Game seems to be extremely valuable (VERITAS-Verlag 2005). It stimulates both fluency and accuracy. It is also helpful in terms of vocabulary revision. Another helpful game is Snakes & Ladders (Cambridge University Press 1984) but I believe it should be used on condition it encourages students to give thoughtful, complete answers. It is advisable to have students new versions of the game prepared as it also gives them a lot of satisfaction and develops creativity. If a teacher wants to develop accuracy in speaking, they can use grammar cards with certain expressions and phrases. Students pick them up at a random order and either translate them into English or make sentences with them. It is obvious it is not the only way to practise grammar. For this purpose a number of games can be adapted such as Grammar monopoly or Grammar draughts. In the game called Talking Cards which was invented by Michael J. Brown (The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. IV, No. 8, August 1998 <http://iteslj.org/>), each group of cards represents certain area of speaking skills; spades refer to describing things, hearts relate to what questions, clubs stand for mixed questions and diamonds involve if clauses.

Task 2 concentrates on one picture, so to get students prepared for this stage, it is necessary to refer to a variety of materials in colour. In the new version of the exam it is still important to describe three elements in the description (as above). It seems to be a reasonable idea to collect as many pictures as possible from magazines, newspapers, leaflets, brochures etc. For example, leaflets about Welsh castles can be used to talk about imaginary holidays and to teach about Welsh culture (compare **KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES**). Another way to improve students' fluency regarding picture descriptions is a group of activities called jigsaw tasks. Some of them involve exact description of the material shown: The same or different?, Twins, What are the differences? Other activities involve describing the position of puzzle pieces (Partner puzzle) or describing actions or situations shown in pictures (Ordering – all to be found in "Keep Talking", Cambridge University Press).

If you want to put an emphasis on task 3, it is advisable to prepare more than one picture for each activity. If one of the topics from the catalogue is natural environment, three different issues can be shown, e.g. three different endangered species such as dolphins, seals, porpoises. In this case I would also recommend authentic materials, e.g. published by the Wildlife Trusts which are the UK's largest voluntary organization dedicated to protecting wildlife and wild places. Another suggestion is a series of books called Horrible Histories. They are illustrated history books published in the United Kingdom by Scholastic and contain a lot of funny cartoons. In addition to that, flash cards and other card games should be recommended as well.

To sum it up, the new format of the exam is more demanding for both students and teachers. It is definitely more difficult for weaker students that balance on the brink of passing and failing. It is clear they will not succeed if they treat the final exam as a lottery. From a teacher's point of view, it is beyond any doubt that a strong emphasis should be put on speaking skills and communication games might stimulate them at different levels. Let us hope the task we are all faced up with will prove to be challenging but achievable.

## **MAN - CZŁOWIEK**

1. What is your best friend like?
2. Which is more important for you in your partner: appearance or personality?
3. What do you look for in a friend?
4. What kind of clothes do you like wearing on special occasions?
5. What kind of people do you admire most?
6. What kind of people do you detest?
7. What qualities do you value most in people?
8. What sort of people annoy you?
9. What sort of things make you feel happy or sad? Why?
10. Have you ever been in a situation when you were very frightened? Tell us about it.

## **HOME & HOUSE - DOM**

11. What household chores do you usually do at home?
12. Would you like to live in the city or in the country?
13. What would you like to change in your room and why?
14. What kind of flatmate would you like to share a flat with?
15. What are advantages and disadvantages of a flatshare?
16. If you were looking for a flat to share, what things would be important to you? Why?
17. What's your neighbourhood like?
18. What's your room like?
19. What's your idea of a perfect flat or house?
20. What does your bedroom look like?

## **SCHOOL - SZKOŁA**

21. What is your favourite subject at school and why?
22. How do you usually prepare for tests and exams?
23. What do you do to relax before tests and exams?
24. What would you like to do when you pass all your exams?
25. Do you enjoy going to school? Why?/ Why not?
26. Have you ever needed a tutor? Why?/Why not?
27. How did you prepare for the school-leaving exams?
28. What was your last day of school like?
29. What qualities should a good teacher have?
30. Would you like to learn Chinese? Why?/Why not?

## **WORK - PRACA**

31. What is your dream job for the future?
32. Which is more important for you: a great career or a great personal life?
33. Would you like to work part-time as a university student and why?
34. What kind of boss would you make?
35. What are the most important things to consider when choosing a job??
36. Do you think schools prepare students well for their working lives? Why?/Why not?
37. Have you already had a job of some sort? Please tell us about it?
38. Is it better to have a well-paid job or an interesting job? Why?
39. Which do you think is more important: good qualifications or a lot of experience? Why?
40. Do you think it's better to do one job all your life or have many different jobs? Why?

## **FAMILY & SOCIAL LIFE - ŻYCIE RODZINNE I TOWARZYSKIE**

41. What is your favourite family celebration?
42. What do you enjoy about being a young person?
43. Who is your closest relative and why?
44. What are your hobbies and interests?
45. Do you keep in touch with your old friends? Why?/Why not?
46. What is your favourite part of the day?
47. Could you describe your family, please?
48. How did you meet your best friend?
49. What do you like doing in your free time?
50. Where do you usually go with your friends? Why?

## **FOOD - ŻYWIENIE**

51. What kind of food you couldn't live without and why?
52. What would you like to change about your diet?
53. How often do you eat out and why?
54. What does your usual breakfast consist of?
55. Do you always have breakfast? Why?/Why not?
56. Do you like any foreign food? Which and why?
57. What is your idea of a healthy diet?
58. Can you cook? If not, would you like to learn to cook? Why?/Why not?
59. What is your favourite café, bar or restaurant and why?
60. Did your parents let you eat junk food when you were a child? What was it?/ Why not?

## **SHOPPING & SERVICES - ZAKUPY I USŁUGI**

61. How often do you shop online and why?
62. What kind of shops do you visit most often and why?
63. Would you like to work as a shop assistant and why?
64. Which do you prefer, shopping centres or supermarkets, and why?
65. Tell us about your last visit to a supermarket or a shopping centre.
66. Where do you usually shop for clothes?
67. What is your favourite shop? Why?
68. What sort of shops do you dislike? Why?
69. Is it important for you to follow fashion trends? Why?/Why not?
70. Do you wait for bargains and sales or it doesn't matter to you?

## **TOURISM & TRAVELLING - TURYSTYKA I PODRÓŻOWANIE**

71. What's your ideal holiday destination and why?
72. How do you prefer to spend your holiday: on your own or with other people?
73. Which do you prefer: planning your holiday in advance or just going and having fun?
74. What is your favourite holiday accommodation and why?
75. Which do you prefer: sightseeing or hiking? Why?
76. Do you buy souvenirs? Why?/Why not?
77. What's your favourite means of transport?
78. Do you prefer travelling with your parents or with your friends? Why?
79. Where did you spend your summer holidays as a child?
80. Please describe the worst trip in your life. What happened?

## CULTURE - KULTURA

81. Which do you prefer, watching films at the cinema or on DVD and why?
82. What kind of music/books/films/art do you enjoy most and why?
83. How often do you visit museums and art galleries and why?
84. How often do you watch the news on TV and why?
85. Do you read tabloids? Why//Why not?
86. Tell me about a book you've read recently.
87. Tell me about a film you've seen recently.
88. Which TV programmes do you like?
89. Do you like going to museums and art galleries? Why?/Why not?
90. Why do you think talent shows are so popular?

## SPORT - SPORT

91. What are your favourite sports to watch/ practise?
92. What sporting event would you like to win a ticket for and why?
93. Which sports celebrity do you admire most and why?
94. Would you like to take part in the Olympic Games and why?
95. What sports do you enjoy playing? Why?
96. What sports do you enjoy watching? Why?
97. What sport would you like to try in the future?
98. Which winter sports do you like? Why?
99. Would you like to be a professional athlete in the future? Why?/Why not?
100. Would you like to try a new sport? What would it be/ Why?/Why not?

## HEALTH - ZDROWIE

101. How do you keep fit?
102. What do you do to reduce stress in your life?
103. How often and when do you visit a doctor?
104. What bad habits would you like to give up?
105. Are you a member of a gym? Why?/Why not?
106. Would you like to work in health care? Why?/Why not?
107. Describe the last time you or your friend were ill.
108. Have you ever visited a patient in hospital? Talk about your visit.
109. Which addiction do you think is more dangerous than shopaholism? Why?
110. Why is it important to teach people about addictions?

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - NAUKA I TECHNIKA

111. How do you usually use your mobile phone/the Internet?
112. Which contemporary invention is your number one and why?
113. How often and when do you use modern technology to study/do the housework?
114. What sort of gadgets you couldn't live without and why?
115. Do you often use a scanner? Why?/Why not?
116. What do you use your mobile phone for?
117. How often do you use the Internet?
118. Do you enjoy playing computer games? Why?/Why not?
119. Did you like science lessons in primary school? Why?/Why not?
120. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using computers?

### **NATURE & ENVIRONMENT - ŚWIAT PRZYRODY**

121. What do you do to be eco-friendly?
122. What`s your favourite animal and why?
123. What`s your favourite holiday weather and why?
124. What natural disasters are you most afraid of and why?
125. What is so special about your favourite season of the year?
126. Have you got a pet? Tell me about it. If not, would you like to have one?
127. How does the weather affect your mood?
128. What do you do to protect the environment?
129. What can schools do to promote environmentally-friendly living?
130. Should animals be used in experiments to test new medicine and cosmetics? Why?/Why not?

### **STATE & SOCIETY - PAŃSTWO I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO**

131. What kind of crime do you find the most dangerous and why?
132. What do you think about cheating in exams?
133. Would you like to stand for elections and why?
134. Which politician do you admire in particular and why?
135. Are you interested in politics? Why?/Why not?
136. What are the worst social problems in your country these days?
137. Have you ever seen anyone commit a crime? Tell me about it?
138. Is there a lot of crime where you live?
139. Do you think prison is an effective form of punishment? Why?/Why not?
140. Do you think it's important to give money to charity? Why?/Why not?

### **BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES - -ELEMENTY WIEDZY O KRAJACH ANGLOJĘZYCZNYCH**

141. Would you like to live in London and why?
142. Would you like to live in New York and why?
143. Which English-speaking country would you like to visit and why?
144. Which British customs and traditions do you find interesting and why?
145. Would you like to visit an English speaking country? Why?/Why not?
146. Which American customs and traditions do you find interesting and why?
147. Would you like to spend Christmas in the UK?
148. Would you like to spend Christmas or Easter in the US?
149. What do you know about Halloween celebrations?
150. Are you happy that you are in the EU? Why?/Why not?