How do we balance statistical evidence with expert judgement when aligning tests to the CEFR?

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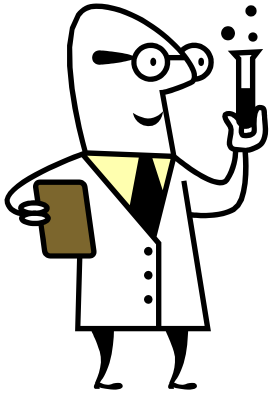
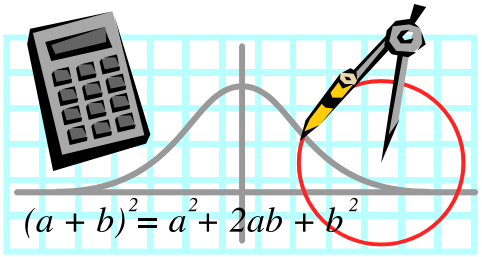
ALTE - Paris

Potential sources of evidence

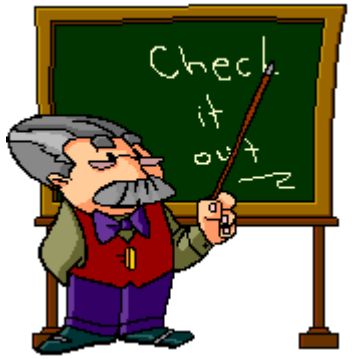
Item writers



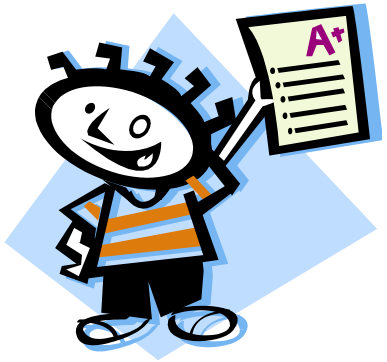
Expert judges



Statistics



Teachers



Test takers

Case Study

The Oxford Test of English B

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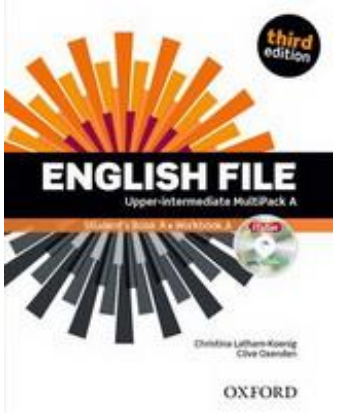
www.oxfordtestofenglish.com

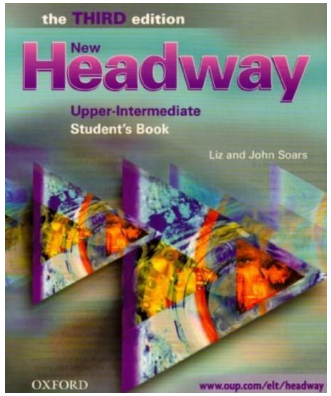
What is the Oxford Test of English B?

- General proficiency test
- CEFR A2, B1, and B2
- Part of OUP's CEFR aligned assessment and course provision

Place your students in the right class

Placement test





Learning materials

What is the Oxford Test of English B?

General Proficiency Test CEFR A2-B2

- Institutional use
- 100% online
- On-demand
- Algorithm-driven
- Flexible format

The Oxford Test of English B

Four modules

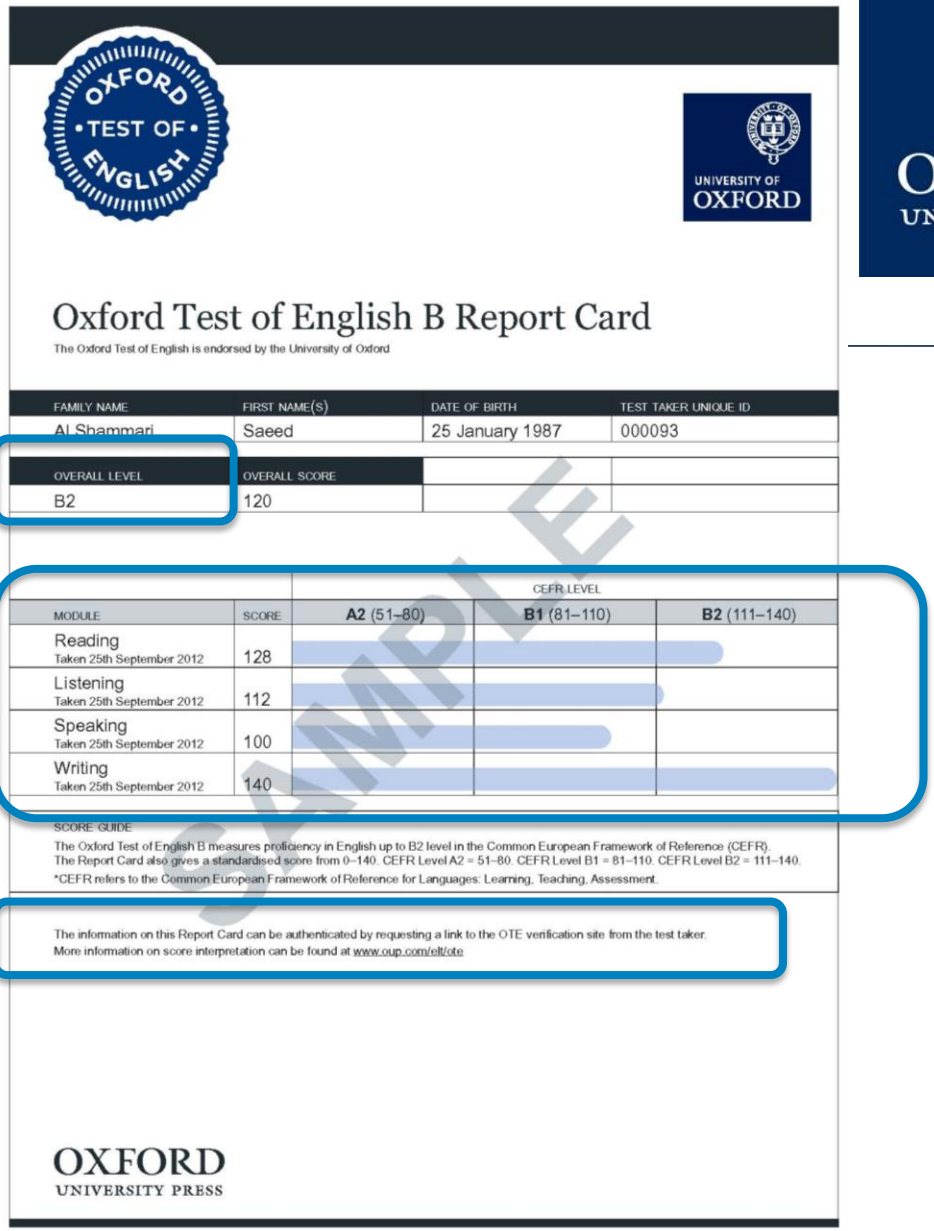
Module	CEFR	No. Parts	No. Tasks	No. Items	Timing
Reading	A2, B1, B2	4	9	22	Approx. 30 mins
Listening	A2, B1, B2	4	12	20	Approx. 30 mins
Speaking	A2 - B2	4	6	15	Approx. 15 mins
Writing	A2 - B2	2	2	2	Approx. 45 mins
TOTAL			29	59	Approx. 2 hours

Results
Linked to CEFR

Overall CEFR level

CEFR level for each skill

Online verification



Oxford Test of English B Report Card

The Oxford Test of English is endorsed by the University of Oxford

FAMILY NAME	FIRST NAME(S)	DATE OF BIRTH	TEST TAKER UNIQUE ID
Al Shammari	Saeed	25 January 1987	000093

OVERALL LEVEL	OVERALL SCORE
B2	120

		CEFR LEVEL		
MODULE	SCORE	A2 (51–80)	B1 (81–110)	B2 (111–140)
Reading Taken 25th September 2012	128			
Listening Taken 25th September 2012	112			
Speaking Taken 25th September 2012	100			
Writing Taken 25th September 2012	140			

SAMPLE

SCORE GUIDE

The Oxford Test of English B measures proficiency in English up to B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).
The Report Card also gives a standardised score from 0–140. CEFR Level A2 = 51–80. CEFR Level B1 = 81–110. CEFR Level B2 = 111–140.
*CEFR refers to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.

The information on this Report Card can be authenticated by requesting a link to the OTE verification site from the test taker.
More information on score interpretation can be found at www.oup.com/elt/ote

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Linking Options

Sources of evidence for aligning tests

Starting points

Oxford Test of English B (OTE-B) and the CEFR

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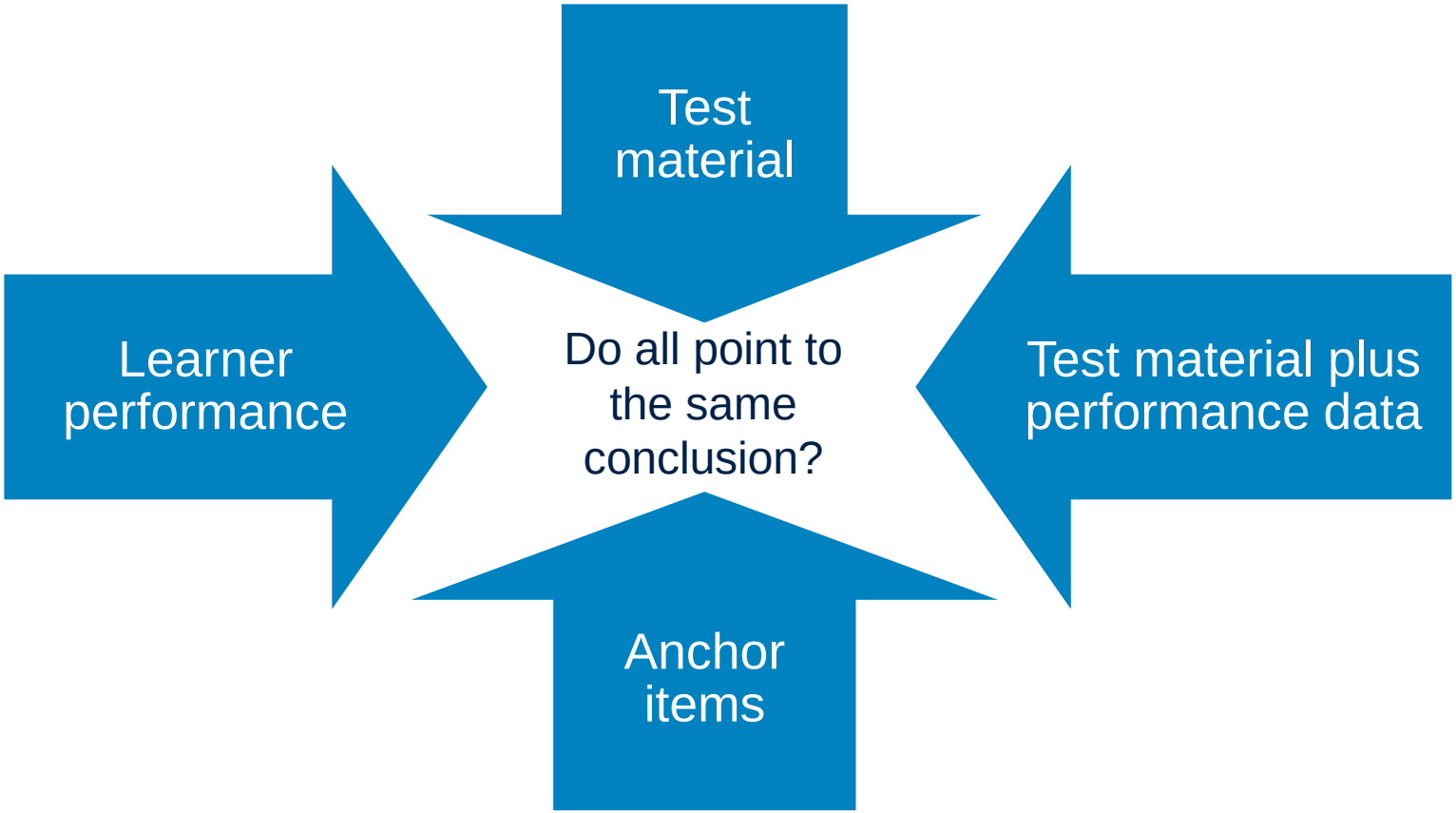
- OTE-B based on the CEFR: embedded in test development process
  - Items designed to target a CEFR level
- Need for coherence within the Oxford product range: common interpretation of levels across tests
  - Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT) previously linked to CEFR
- International test: broad coverage for diverse test taking population
  - Linking to take account of diversity

Linking the OTE-B to the CEFR

Stages in development and linking evidence

- Test specifications
- Trial materials
- Item writer guidelines
- Item writing process (Writing, Editing, Vetting)

Four perspectives
on the OTE-B: CEFR relationship



A priori evidence from test material

Evidence from item writers

- Item writers familiarised with CEFR
- OTE-B items developed to operationalise CEFR descriptors
- *Item Writer Guidelines* specify language and functions at each level
- Materials written to target a CEFR level: A2, B1 or B2

A priori evidence from test material

The panel of expert judges

- Selected range of Reading and Listening tasks with known difficulties
- Recruited a group of 12 ‘Expert’ Judges from 3 backgrounds:
  - EFL Testing Academics
  - EFL Teachers
  - EFL Materials Writers

- CEFR Training Exercise

A priori evidence from test material

Evidence from expert judges

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- Expert judges rate difficulty of test material

  To which performance level description (i.e. CEFR level or category) are the knowledge, skills and cognitive processes required to respond successfully to this item most closely matched?

- Angoff-type methods: Cut score for B1 = sum of items that CEFR B1 test taker is judged to be able to answer

A posteriori evidence from test material and test taker performance

Bookmark type methods: IRT methods

- After empirical item difficulty becomes known (post-pretest anchoring)
- Items ordered according to difficulty
- Standard setting panel judges for each item whether the probability of a 'borderline person' giving a correct answer is at or above a set 'probability threshold' (e.g. ⅔)
- Test based: cut score set at point in the test at which experts judge probability of a correct response falls below the threshold
- Score based: cut score set at point in the threshold range (e,g. where items judged at A2 and at B1 overlap).

Test material and test taker performance

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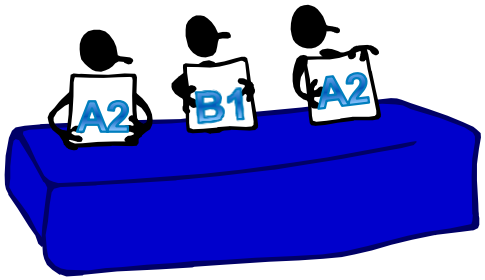
1. Judge difficulty
2. Give test

Item difficulty **NOT** known to judges

Threshold range

B1
B1
A2
B1
A2
A2
B1
A2
A2



0.44
0.42
0.39
0.37
0.34
0.33
0.31
0.28
0.24

1. Give test
2. Judge cut point

Item difficulty known to judges

B1

A2

Evidence from anchor items

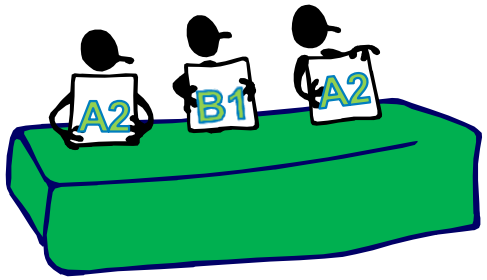
Linking with the *Oxford* perspective

- Oxford Online Placement Test previously aligned to CEFR via student Can Do and teacher ratings
- OOPT in operation for 5 years: stable difficulty, stakeholders satisfied with interpretation of CEFR
- Selected OOPT items of known difficulty seeded into the OTE-B as anchor items
- Pre-test administered to a representative sample across mix of L1s
- Cut score for OTE-B can initially be set according to the levels determined for OOPT through Rasch scaling

Evidence based on learner performance

Person-based: contrasting groups

- Test takers of known ability
- Compare performance of B1 level learners with A2 level learners
- Cut score is located at the intersection between the two groups



Judges are teachers

1. Judge student ability
2. Give test

Threshold range

A2 A2 A2 B1 A2 B1 A2 A2 B1 A2 B1 B1 B1

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Balancing the evidence

Where should we locate the cut points?

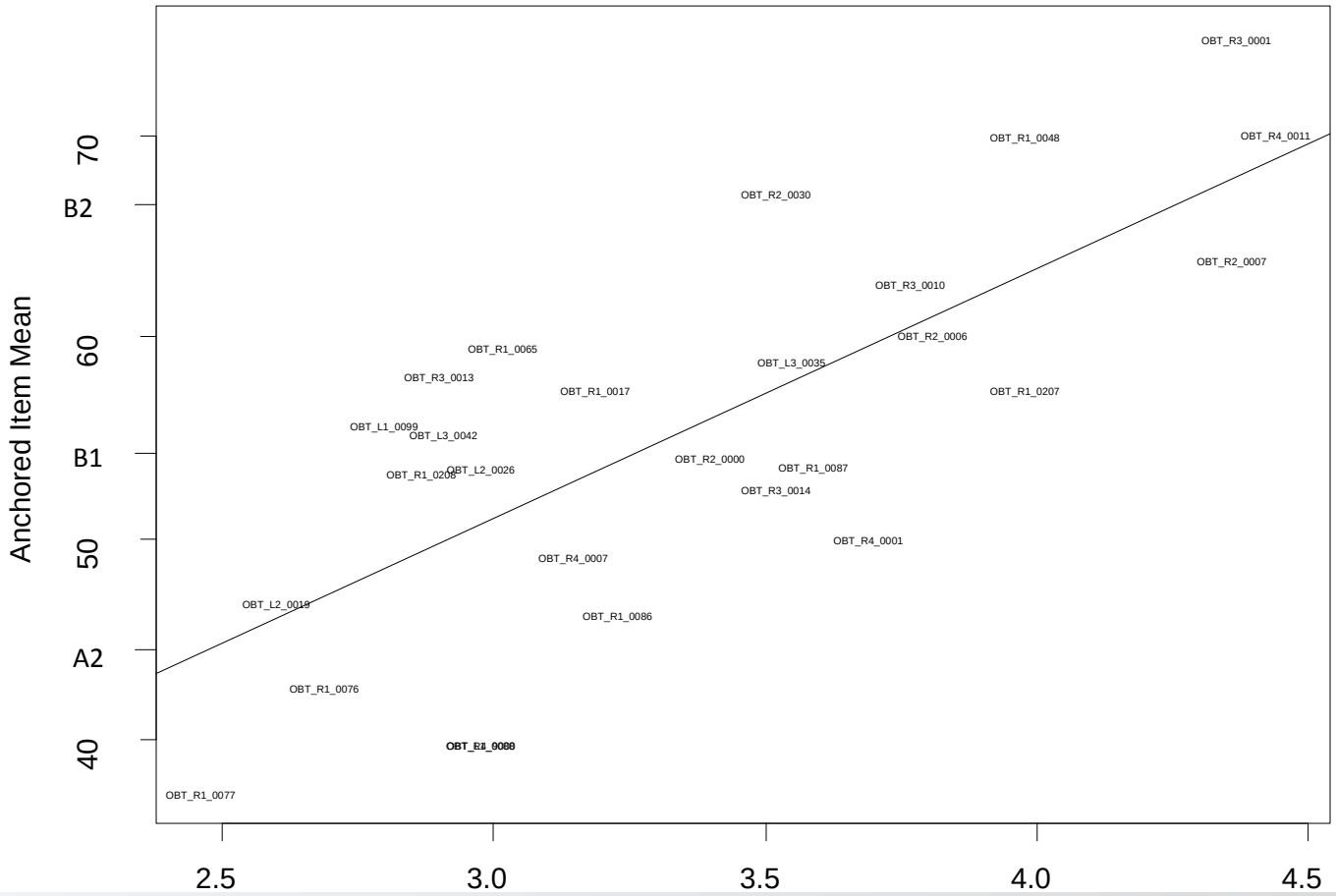
Correlation between expert judgement and anchored values

Method

- 12 expert judges rated 27 common items across three CEFR levels A2, B1, and B2
- Each item rated at low, mid, high within the CEFR level
- Analysis of expert judges
- 7 ‘best’ expert judges selected for correlation exercise with Pretest anchored values

Correlation of expert judgements with pre-test values

Correlation = 0.76



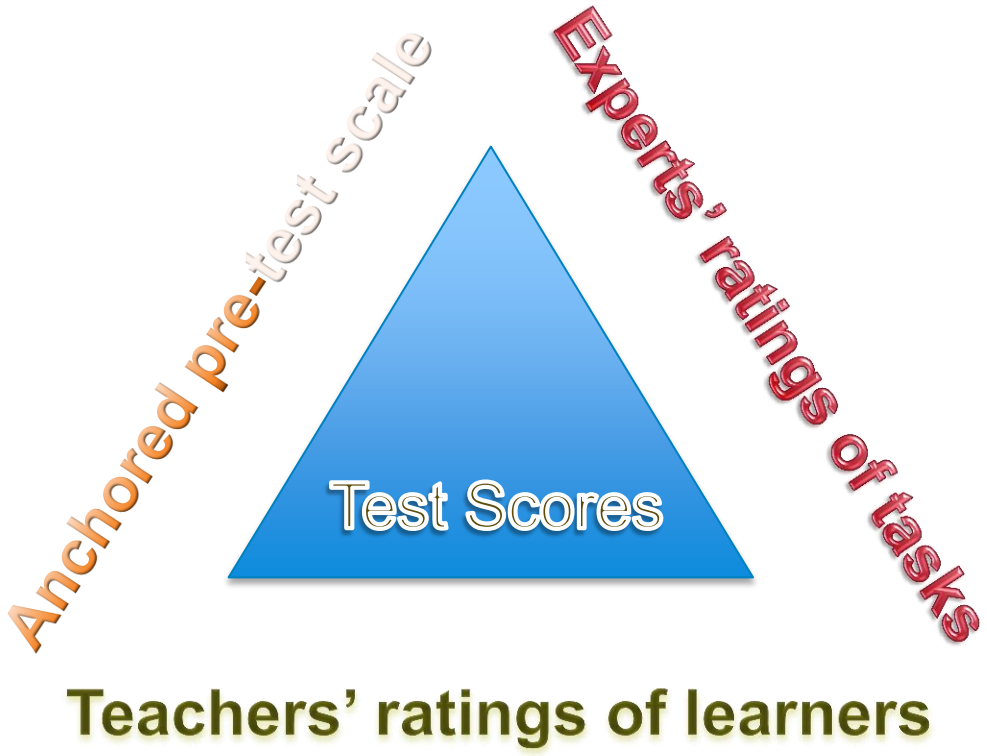
Alignment Issues

Reading and Listening scale

- Expert ratings suggest CEFR cut points for A2, B1 and B2 could be revised downward by ¼ to ½ a CEFR level.

- Which scale do we trust?

Balancing Evidence – Triangulation



Pilot Stage

- Pilot full test with 300+ test takers
- Teacher ratings
- Correlation of teacher ratings with test performance data
- Triangulation: Anchored Pretest, Expert Judgement and Teacher ratings of learners

- Which scales most closely align?
- Are results consistent across skills?
- Is there any evidence of bias?

Summary

- Different sources of evidence can provide different answers
- Need to evaluate and balance three perspectives:
  - People interpret the CEFR to arrive at cut points
  - Test results provide an order of difficulty
  - Piloting grounds the scale in the learning environment

Thank you

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For more information:

www.oxfordtestofenglish.com