

Language Cert



LanguageCert Young Learners ESOL Fox (Pre-A1) & Owl (A1)

Handbook for Teachers

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Document Revision History

Version	Date	Description of Change
3.1	01/08/2024	Minor formatting updates in Sections 1.1 The Fox exam and 1.2 The Owl exam
3.0	18/04/2024	Update of 2024
2.0	21/06/2022	Update of 2022
1.0	02/12/2020	Initial version

About LanguageCert

LanguageCert is an Ofqual recognised Awarding Organisation responsible for the development and award of language qualifications. LanguageCert's mission is to offer high quality language qualifications that are truly fit-for-purpose for the markets/candidates they serve.

LanguageCert International ESOL Qualifications (Entry level, Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3, corresponding to CEFR levels A1 to C2) are regulated by Ofqual.

1 The LanguageCert Young Learners ESOL exams

Description

The Young Learners ESOL suite of exams are qualifications for primary-school, non-native English language learners. The exams are offered at two levels: Fox, which is approximately pre-A1, and Owl, which is approximately A1. The Young Learners ESOL exams aim to:

- establish that a child has reached a certain recognised, standardised level of English
- provide an exam which supports the child; more specifically,
 - all listening parts are heard twice
 - each task has an example so that children know what they are expected to do; the YL Interlocutor, who is conducting the Spoken Exam, will repeat a question or ask the question in a different way if the child doesn't understand the first time
 - texts and tasks are based on topics which are familiar to children, for example home and family life, school, everyday and leisure activities.
- encourage further language learning by providing an exam that is fun, motivating, and gives children a sense of achievement.

Marking

In the Young Learners ESOL exams, the teacher assesses the child's performance following the assessment guidelines for the Written and the Spoken exam. To view the assessment guidelines, please visit www.languagecert.org. For the Young Learners Spoken exam, the teacher in their capacity as YL Interlocutor will also need to use the Marksheet for Speaking to fill in the candidate's awarded marks. To view the Marksheet for Speaking, please see [Appendix A](#).

Results

There is **no pass or fail**. All children receive a certificate, which shows the performance achieved per skill with a number of foxes or owls. The maximum number of foxes or owls a child can receive is four. To view the correspondence between the marks awarded per skill and the equivalent number of foxes/owls, please see [Appendix B](#).

Support material

To help prepare their students for the Young Learners ESOL exams, it is recommended that teachers refer to the **Grammar Syllabus** and the **Vocabulary List**. In these documents, teachers will find the grammatical structures, word lists and name lists that the children sitting the Fox and Owl exams need to know. It should be noted that the grammatical and lexical content of these documents may appear but is not necessarily tested in the exam. Please visit www.languagecert.org to download the **Grammar Syllabus** and the **Vocabulary List**.

1.1 The Fox exam

1.1.1 Level

The Fox exam is at approximately pre-A1 level. This means that the child taking the exam:

- will have studied English for approximately 100 guided learning hours
- will have a vocabulary of approximately 450 words (please see the **Vocabulary List**)
- will be familiar with some basic English grammatical structures, for example 'He lives in ...', 'They don't like ...', 'What are you playing?' (Please see the **Grammar Syllabus**)
- will be able to demonstrate English language ability in listening, reading, writing and speaking.

1.1.2 Skills

The Written exam of Fox (pre-A1) consists of:

- **Listening** (3 parts), lasting approximately 10 minutes
- **Reading** (4 parts) and **Writing** (2 parts), lasting 50 minutes

The Spoken exam of Fox (pre-A1) consists of

- **Speaking** (3 parts), lasting approximately 5 minutes

1.1.3 Overview

Fox (pre-A1)			
Skill	Part	Task	What the child does
Listening	1	Listening to a recording of simple short statements	Chooses and ticks a picture
	2	Listening to a recording of two speakers describing people	Matches a name to a picture and draws a line
	3	Listening to a recording of a short dialogue and answering written questions	Writes a number or a simple spelling
Reading	1	Showing knowledge of vocabulary	Matches a word to a picture and draws a line
	2	Identifying whether simple written statements about a picture are right or wrong	Makes a tick or a cross
	3	Reading and filling in the gaps in a short text	Chooses the correct word from a box and copies it into the gap
	4	Reading simple questions about a detailed picture	Writes one-word answers
Writing	1	Writing sentences on a given topic about themselves or their daily lives	Writes 3 sentences
	2	Writing sentences about a picture which shows a scene from daily life	Writes 3 sentences
Speaking	1 - 3	Interacting with the YL Interlocutor, answering simple questions about themselves, their daily lives and their likes and dislikes; answering some simple questions about some pictures	Answers questions

1.2 The Owl exam

1.2.1 Level

The Owl exam is at approximately A1 level. This means that the child taking the exam:

- will have studied English for approximately 200 guided learning hours
- will have a vocabulary of approximately 900 words (please see the **Vocabulary List**)
- will be familiar with some basic English grammatical structures, for example 'They like ...', 'I went ...', 'You mustn't ...' (please see the **Grammar Syllabus**)
- will be able to demonstrate English language ability in listening, reading, writing and speaking.

1.2.2 Skills

The Written exam of Owl (A1) consists of:

- **Listening** (4 parts), lasting approximately 15 minutes
- **Reading** (4 parts) and **Writing** (2 parts), lasting 60 minutes

The Spoken exam of Owl (A1) consists of

- **Speaking** (4 parts), lasting approximately 7 minutes





1.2.3 Overview

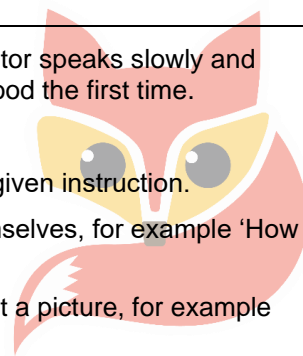
Owl (A1)			
Skill	Part	Task	What the child does
Listening	1	Listening to a recording of simple short statements	Chooses and ticks a picture
	2	Listening to a recording of two speakers describing people	Matches a name to a picture and draws a line
	3	Listening to a recording of a short dialogue	Answers a question by choosing and ticking a picture
	4	Listening to a recording of a short dialogue	Writes a word, a number or a simple spelling
Reading	1	Identifying whether simple written statements about a picture are right or wrong	Writes 'yes' or 'no'
	2	Reading and filling in the gaps in a short text	Chooses the correct structural word and copies it into the gap
	3	Reading and filling in the gaps in a short text	Chooses the correct lexical word from a box and copies it into the gap
	4	Reading a very short, simple story and answering questions about it	Writes one-word answers
Writing	1	Writing sentences on a given topic about themselves or their daily lives	Writes 4 sentences
	2	Writing sentences to tell a simple picture story (3 pictures)	Writes 6 sentences
Speaking	1 - 4	Interacting with an examiner, answering questions about themselves, and about some pictures	Answers questions, follows instructions

2 Can-Do statements





The following tables provide can-do statements per skill for the Young Learners ESOL exams. The statements describe what the child should be able to demonstrate in each part of the exam, so it is advised that they are read together with the corresponding practice material.

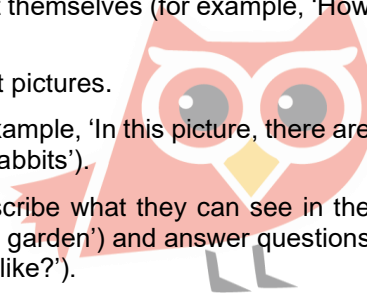
Fox (pre-A1)

<p>Listening</p> 	<p>Can listen to and understand simple sentences about everyday life. Can match the most important word in the sentence to the correct picture.</p> <p>Can listen to and understand a short conversation between a child and an adult who are describing people in pictures. Can match the person's name to the correct picture.</p> <p>Can listen to and understand a short conversation between a child and an adult about everyday life. Can pick out numbers and simple spellings in the conversation and write them down.</p>
<p>Reading</p> 	<p>Can read and understand the words for some things in everyday life and match them to the correct picture.</p> <p>Can read and understand some sentences describing a picture and put a tick or a cross to show whether each sentence is correct or not correct.</p> <p>Can read and understand a short text about everyday life which has some missing words. Can find the missing words (for example, 'its', 'lives', 'of') in a box and copy them into the correct place in the text.</p> <p>Can read and understand some questions about a picture (for example, 'What colour is the woman's skirt?') and write one-word answers to the questions.</p>
<p>Writing</p> 	<p>Can write simple sentences about themselves and their life, for example 'I live in a small house.'</p> <p>Can write simple sentences about a picture, for example 'The children are watching television.'</p>
<p>Speaking</p> 	<p>Can have a conversation in English provided the interlocutor speaks slowly and clearly, and repeats any information that was not understood the first time.</p> <p>Can politely greet and say goodbye to another person.</p> <p>Can ask for help if they don't understand a question or a given instruction.</p> <p>Can understand and answer simple questions about themselves, for example 'How old are you?' and 'What's your favourite animal?'</p> <p>Can understand and answer some simple questions about a picture, for example 'What's this?' and 'What colour is it?'</p>



Owl (A1)

<p>Listening</p> 	<p>Can listen to and understand simple sentences about everyday life. Can match the most important word in the sentence to the correct picture.</p> <p>Can listen to and understand a short conversation between a child and an adult who are describing people in pictures. Can match the person's name to the correct picture.</p> <p>Can listen to and understand a short conversation between two people about everyday life. Can answer questions about the conversation by choosing the correct pictures.</p> <p>Can listen to and understand a short conversation between two people about everyday life. Can pick out important information in the conversation (for example, numbers, simple spellings, other simple words like days of the week) and write it down.</p>
<p>Reading</p> 	<p>Can read and understand some sentences describing a picture and write 'yes' or 'no' to show whether each sentence is correct or not correct.</p> <p>Can read and understand a short text about everyday life which has some missing words. Can choose each correct missing word (for example, 'having', 'the', 'at') from three options and copy it into the right place in the text.</p> <p>Can read and understand a short text about everyday life which has some missing words. Can find the missing words (for example, 'tired', 'ride', 'vegetables') in a box and copy them into the correct place in the text.</p> <p>Can read and understand a very short story and some questions about the story. Can write one-word answers to the questions.</p>
<p>Writing</p> 	<p>Can write sentences about themselves and their life (for example, 'I like my classroom because it's big').</p> <p>Can write sentences to tell a simple picture story: two sentences about each of three pictures.</p>
<p>Speaking</p> 	<p>Can have a conversation in English provided the interlocutor speaks slowly and clearly, and repeats any information that was not understood the first time.</p> <p>Can politely greet and say goodbye to another person.</p> <p>Can ask for help if they don't understand a question or a given instruction.</p> <p>Can understand and answer simple questions about themselves (for example, 'How old are you?' and 'Where do you learn English?').</p> <p>Can understand and answer simple questions about pictures.</p> <p>Can say how two similar pictures are different (for example, 'In this picture, there are three rabbits, but in the other picture there are two rabbits').</p> <p>Can have a conversation about a picture. Can describe what they can see in the picture (for example, 'The children are playing in the garden') and answer questions about the picture (for example, 'What's the weather like?').</p>



3 Teaching & Assessment for the Young Learners ESOL exams

3.1 Teaching for the Young Learners ESOL exams

3.1.1 Skills development

The Fox and Owl exams for Young Learners of English test all four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. It's important that teachers develop children's ability in these four skills at the same time.

Listening

Teachers should ensure their students get a variety of listening practice. Children should be accustomed to listening to the teacher:

- listening to and following instructions (e.g. 'Look at ...,' 'Listen to ...,' etc.)
- listening to and answering questions
- listening to the teacher reading stories and other short texts and responding in a variety of ways (e.g. drawing a picture, completing sentences, etc.)

Children should also be accustomed to listening to their fellow students:

- listening to students answering questions, giving short descriptions, stating their opinions and preferences, etc
- listening and responding to students as part of a co-operative task (e.g. categorising and ranking activities, solving puzzles, telling picture stories, etc.)

Children should also get practice in listening to recorded speech on topics relevant to their everyday lives and interests:

- listening to single sentences and to short dialogues and responding in an appropriate way (e.g. choosing a relevant picture, writing down a spelling, number or a word, etc.)

Reading

Teachers should ensure their students get a variety of reading practice. Children should read single words, single sentences and very short stories, and other short descriptive or informative texts on topics relevant to their everyday lives and interests. Children should have practice responding to what they read in a variety of ways: for example, matching a word to a picture, answering a question, choosing the correct word to fill a gap in a text, etc.

Writing

Children at the level of the Fox and Owl exams are not expected to have fully developed writing skills. However, teachers should ensure students have practiced writing single words and single sentences building up their ability to write very short stories (based on pictures) and short descriptive texts. The ability to convey meaning in a simple way is the goal and this will include:

- the correct spelling of frequently used words
- a range of vocabulary to write about their everyday lives and interests and familiar situations
- using basic grammar (e.g. basic verb forms, pronouns, prepositions, etc.) correctly
- textual features like simple linkers (e.g. and, or, but, etc.)
- basic punctuation (e.g. full stop, question mark)

It is also important that children can copy words accurately.

Speaking

Teachers should ensure children have speaking practice while interacting in English both with the teacher and with each other. For additional information, refer to the 'Listening' section about responding to the teacher's instructions and questions, and about engaging in co-operative tasks with classmates.

Teachers should introduce children to language useful for classroom interaction like 'Hello,' 'Sorry,' 'Can you say that again?' 'Let's do ...,' 'What do we do now?', 'How do you spell ...?' etc.

3.1.2 Building blocks

Grammar

Teachers should introduce basic structures which will form a foundation for future learning, for example verb forms with positive, negative, interrogative, imperative and short answer forms, including contractions. Singular and plural differences in nouns, pronouns and verb forms should also be introduced. Structures which are frequently used in communication can be taught as language chunks without being analysed, for example: 'I'd like ...,' 'Me too,' 'So do I,' 'Here you are,' 'What's the matter?' 'Good idea!' For a full list of structures used in the Fox and Owl exams, see the **Grammar Syllabus**.

While it's important to encourage children to use structures accurately, don't over-emphasise accuracy to the extent that children lose confidence and become unwilling to try and communicate their ideas in the language.

Vocabulary

The vocabulary used in the Fox and Owl exams covers topics which are of interest to children, including words which are useful for communication in the classroom and for dealing with and talking about everyday life situations.

Many words can be learnt as topic sets, for example colours, animals, food, toys, transport, sports, days of the week, etc. For a complete list of words used at each level, see the **Vocabulary list**. This list also includes the first names (e.g. Anna, Ben, Dora etc.) that are used in the exams and it will be useful for children to become familiar with them.

Teachers will probably want to also teach words (e.g. for fruit, vegetables, animals, sports, etc.) which aren't included in the list, but which form part of the children's lives.

It is recommended to teach the meaning, pronunciation and spelling of words at the same time.

3.1.3 Classroom activities

It's good to use a variety of classroom activities which are fun to do and which motivate children to learn. Children respond well to stories, games, puzzles and songs.

Children also enjoy activities which make use of pictures. Such activities may include listening to and reading descriptions of people (e.g. their appearance, clothes and actions), animals, places, events etc. Children will also benefit from speaking and writing a few sentences in relation to pictures.

Listening to and writing down numbers (numbers 1 – 20 are required for Fox candidates, and numbers 1 – 100 for Owl candidates) and spellings are also useful activities. In addition, Owl candidates need practice in picking out key information (e.g. colours, days of the week) from a listening text and writing it down.

It's useful to practise time management, which can be difficult for children, so set time limits to some tasks, but not so that children get stressed.

3.1.4 Practice of exam tasks

It can be counter-productive to do too much specific exam practice. However, it will give children confidence if they know what tasks to expect in the exam and have done a **Practice Paper**.

It's helpful to point out to children that they should listen to and/or read the instructions for each exam task carefully. They should study the example and look at the pictures and questions for the task on the paper before they start to answer.

Point out that there is only one correct answer for each question, but that with multiple choice questions some of the other options may also seem attractive (although wrong), so children should think carefully before they choose.

In the Listening section, children will hear each listening text twice, so it's good to help them develop strategies for dealing with the second listening.

In the Spoken exam, the examiner will repeat an instruction or question, or ask a helpful back up question if the child doesn't understand something. It's a good idea to teach them the language to use in this kind of situation in case they need it: for example, 'Sorry?' or 'Can you say that again?'

It's a good idea to encourage children in the habit of checking all their answers.

Children are given plenty of time to do each part. They don't have to rush but, on the other hand, they shouldn't get distracted, as it's important to finish. Some children will finish more quickly than others.

3.2 Assessment for the Young Learners ESOL exams

In the Fox and Owl exams, ability in the four language skills is tested: listening, reading, writing and speaking.

The exam tasks are similar to those done in Young Learners' classrooms worldwide and the task format is always the same so that children know what to expect. The exam tasks are fun to do and they all have colourful illustrations. Most tasks are based on the illustrations, while in others the illustration is there to set the context of a listening or reading text. Texts and tasks are short, with most tasks only having five or six questions each. The emphasis is always on what the child can do, not what he or she can't do. The objective is that the child will feel a sense of achievement on completing the exam and will be motivated to continue learning the language.

The child is supported throughout the exam:

- Example answers are given for each task, so the child knows what to do.
- In the Listening section, the child listens to a recording. Each text is heard twice, so the child has two opportunities to listen and respond to each question. On the recording, a range of adult and child voices is used. The speakers speak clearly and slowly, but not unnaturally, with standard British and US accents.
- In the Spoken exam, the examiner is an approved LanguageCert YL Interlocutor, who may also be a teacher. Speaking examiners are trained by LanguageCert to deliver the exam in a standardised, fair and sympathetic way. They speak at a speed appropriate to the child's level and will repeat instructions or questions, or ask helpful back-up questions, if necessary.

3.2.1 Marking

In the Listening and Reading sections, children are awarded one mark for each correct choice or response. They aren't penalised for minor spelling mistakes in Reading Part 4.

In the Writing section, children read instructions and look at pictures before writing a set number of separate sentences. They are not expected to write long or complex sentences. However, their sentences should be relevant to the task and grammatically accurate. Children will be awarded one mark for each relevant and accurate sentence. Punctuation or capitalisation errors and minor spelling or grammar errors (that do not impede meaning) will not be penalised. Please refer to section 4 for more details on marking the Writing tasks.

In the Spoken exam, the YL Interlocutor follows a script which has instructions and questions for the child. There are also pictures for the child to look at and respond to. The interaction between the YL Interlocutor and the child lasts about 5 minutes (Fox) or 7 minutes (Owl). When the test is completed and the child has left the room, the YL Interlocutor reflects on the child's overall performance and the relevance and quality of the language he or she has produced and awards a scale mark on four different performance criteria: task fulfilment, grammar, vocabulary and fluency, and pronunciation. The child is expected to respond to each instruction/question in a simple but relevant way. He or she is not expected to produce extended or completely error-free language.

4 Marking the Writing Section: Sample scripts

The following section provides sample responses to the writing tasks of the Fox and Owl practice papers. In order to assess the writing section, the teacher should be familiar with the assessment guidelines. The same guidelines apply to both levels and are as follows:

 **One** mark is awarded:


- for each correct sentence that is relevant and accurate
- for each relevant and accurate sentence that has minor punctuation or capitalisation mistakes
- for each relevant and accurate sentence that has one minor mistake (spelling or grammar slip) which does not impede understanding of the candidate's message

 **Half** a mark is awarded:

- for each relevant and accurate sentence with minor mistakes (spelling or grammar slips) which do not impede understanding of the candidate's message
- for each relevant and accurate sentence with only one serious mistake (vocabulary or grammar error) that does not impede understanding of the candidate's message
- for each correct sentence that is being repeated with a single word substitution

 **No** mark is awarded:

- for incomplete sentences
- for irrelevant sentences
- for sentences with several mistakes that impede understanding of the candidate's message
- for sentences that are identical to a previous sentence

 The total mark should be rounded up (e.g. 4,5 → 5).

In the Fox and Owl exams, teachers should focus on the extent the message is communicated through the children's writing in terms of relevance to the topic and the pictures (depending on the Writing Part). Misformed words or lack of capitalisation may naturally occur in these writings – and may (even) be repeated consistently within a writing part – but the children should not be penalised for these types of errors and it is important that teachers assess their performance holistically.

4.1 Fox (pre-A1) Writing Part 1

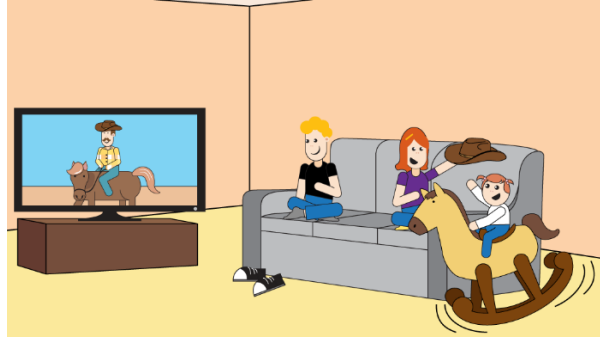
Write three sentences about your home.

Script 1	1. <i>I like my rom.</i>	1	Marks
	2. <i>it's a big.</i>	0,5	
	3. <i>has got two twoalet and kithen.</i>	0,5	

Script 2	1. <i>My house is beatiful.</i>	1	Marks
	2. <i>My house has got a garden.</i>	1	
	3. <i>My house has got white windows.</i>	1	

4.2 Fox (pre-A1) Writing Part 2

Look at the picture. Write three sentences about the picture.



Script 1

1. *One boy is wathing television.*
2. *Television is black.*
3. *the babie ride a horse.*

1

1

0,5

Marks

Script 2

1. *The baby is playing with horse.*
2. *The girl has got yellow socks.*
3. *The boy has got black shoes*

1

1

1

Marks

4.3 Owl (A1) Writing Part 1

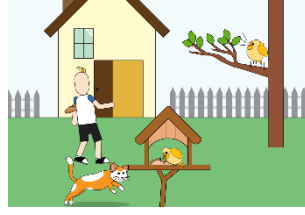
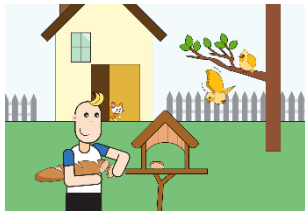
Write four sentences about your classroom.

Script 1	1. <i>I like my classroom because it has a big board.</i>	1	Marks
	2. <i>My classroom has got three windows.</i>	1	
	3. <i>In my classroom all here are my friends.</i>	0,5	
	4. <i>I like my classroom because it has many laptops.</i>	1	

Script 2	1. <i>My classroom it has smalls window.</i>	0,5	Marks
	2. <i>My classroom it has a dig TV.</i>	0,5	
	3. <i>In my classroom we are all boys.</i>	1	
	4. <i>In my classroom was 8 childs.</i>	0,5	

4.4 Owl (A1) Writing Part 2

Look at the pictures. They tell a story. Write two sentences about each picture.



Script 1	1. <i>A bird is going to eat the bread.</i>	1	Marks
	2. <i>The boy is smiling.</i>	1	
	3. <i>The cat is going to skare the bird.</i>	1	
	4. <i>The bird is going to him home.</i>	1	
	5. <i>The bird on the tree is singing.</i>	1	
	6. <i>The boy is laughing.</i>	1	

Script 2	1. <i>A bird was flying.</i>	1	Marks
	2. <i>The cat is in the door.</i>	1	
	3. <i>The bird is eat apiece of bread.</i>	0,5	
	4. <i>The cat is running to the garden.</i>	1	
	5. <i>The bird is play music.</i>	0,5	
	6. <i>The boy is smile.</i>	0,5	

Appendix A: Marksheet for Speaking

School:

Interlocutor's full name:

Date:

Level of test:

No.	Candidate's full name	Task Fulfilment	Accuracy and Range of		Fluency and Pronunciation	Total
			Grammar	Vocabulary		
		The extent to which the response produced by the candidate addresses the task in a direct manner and provides an answer that is relevant and meaningful.	The extent to which the response produced by the candidate is grammatically accurate, appropriate and adequate.	The extent to which the response produced by the candidate is lexically accurate, appropriate and adequate.	The extent to which the responses produced by the candidate are intelligible, with appropriate pausing and intonation.	Total marks awarded out of 16
1.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
2.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
3.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
4.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
5.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
6.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
7.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
8.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
9.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	
10.		□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □	

The Interlocutor conducting the Young Learners ESOL Spoken exam is also responsible for marking the candidate's performance. The assessment criteria for the Spoken exam are included in the above table. For each assessment criterion, there are four levels of candidate performance: (4 marks: Excellent), (3 marks: Very Good), (2 marks: Satisfactory), (1 mark: Below level). If the candidate does not provide a sufficient sample of language or does not attempt the tasks, zero marks are awarded. The maximum total marks a candidate can receive are 16.

Appendix B: Conversion of Marks to Results

Fox (Pre-A1) Written Exam



Skills	Listening	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 15
	Reading	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 16	17 - 20
	Writing	0 - 1	2 - 3	4 - 5	6

Fox (Pre-A1) Spoken Exam



Skill	Speaking	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 13	14 - 16
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Owl (A1) Written Exam



Skills	Listening	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 16	17 - 20
	Reading	0 - 7	8 - 13	14 - 20	21 - 25
	Writing	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 10

Owl (A1) Spoken Exam



Skill	Speaking	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 13	14 - 16
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