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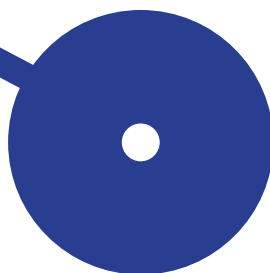
MESTRADO

Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo do Ensino Básico

YLE Preparation and the Development of Verbal Competence in 21st-Century Primary English.

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**The Role of YLE Preparation in Developing Verbal Competence in
21st-Century Primary English**

Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo do Ensino Básico

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Nobody can build the bridge for
you to walk across the river of life,
no one but you yourself alone.

There are, to be sure, countless
paths and bridges and demi-gods
which would carry you across this
river; but only at the cost of
yourself; you would pawn yourself
and lose. There is in the world only
one way, on which nobody can go,
except you: where does it lead?

Do not ask, go along with it.

- Friedrich Nietzsche

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At last, to my grandmother, who sadly could not have seen this moment, but was my first and most important teacher.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Generative AI tools were used only to support editorial tasks (language polishing, spelling and grammar checks, formatting consistency, reference checking, and organisational suggestions) and to assist with coding interview data at a preliminary stage. All ideas, analyses, interpretations, and final wording are my own, and I take full responsibility for the content. Sources were verified and cited independently by the author. No AI tool was used to fabricate data or to replace critical or analytical work.

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RESUMO

Este relatório procura analisar o modo como os exercícios dos exames Cambridge Young Learners English YLE e as respetivas práticas de preparação contribuem para o desenvolvimento das competências verbais dos alunos, preparando-os para as exigências comunicativas do século XXI. O estudo decorreu numa instituição particular do norte do país, com alunos do 3.º ano do 1.º CEB. O estudo combinou a análise da prática em contexto de estágio, num enquadramento de investigação-ação, com entrevistas semiestruturadas a examinadores YLE, permitindo a triangulação de dados sobre o impacto das tarefas (ex., Listening, Speaking). Os resultados indicam que a preparação para os YLE favorece as competências verbais e a confiança comunicativa e reforça competências transversais como pensamento crítico, comunicação, colaboração e criatividade. Este enquadramento confirma a relevância pedagógica dos YLE no ensino primário do inglês e clarifica mecanismos e condições que sustentam ganhos efetivos nas competências verbais.

Palavras-chave: Exames Cambridge YLE, Competência Verbal, TBLT, Investigação-Ação, Competências do Século XXI

ABSTRACT

This report examines how tasks from the Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) examinations, together with the associated preparation practices, contribute to the development of pupils' verbal competences, equipping them for the communicative demands of the 21st century. The study was conducted in a private school in the north of the country with Year 3 pupils (1st cycle of basic education). It combines practicum-based classroom analysis within an action-research framework with semi-structured interviews with YLE examiners, enabling triangulation of evidence on the impact of task families (e.g., listening, speaking). The findings indicate that YLE preparation supports oracy and communicative confidence and strengthens transversal competences such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. This evidence base confirms the pedagogical relevance of YLE in primary English and clarifies the mechanisms and conditions that underpin effective gains in verbal competences.

Keywords: Cambridge YLE examinations; verbal competence; TBLT; action research; 21st-century competences.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4Cs – Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity

A1, A2 – Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) proficiency levels

CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLT – Communicative Language Teaching

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

ET – Extended Turns/Fluency (analytical code)

IM – Interactional Management (analytical code)

INTEL – Intelligibility/Pronunciation (analytical code)

L1, L2, L3, L4 – Lesson 1, Lesson 2, Lesson 3, Lesson 4 (case study references)

LD – Listening Discrimination (analytical code)

Pre-A1 – Pre-A1 CEFR proficiency level (beginner)

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SLA – Second Language Acquisition

STT – Student-Talk Time

TBLT – Task-Based Language Teaching

TPR – Total Physical Response

TTT – Teacher-Talk Time

YLE – Young Learners English (Cambridge examination suite)

ZPD – Zone of Proximal Development

INDEX

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| PART I: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK | 5 |
| CHAPTER 1: VERBAL COMPETENCE: DEFINING THE CONSTRUCT FOR 21ST-CENTURY ENGLISH EDUCATION..... | 5 |
| 1.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK..... | 5 |
| 1.2. DEFINING VERBAL COMPETENCE: IMPORTANCE AND CONCEPTUAL ORIGINS | 6 |
| 1.3. ESTABLISHING THE DISTINCTION: FROM ORAL SKILLS TO COMMUNICATIVE VERBAL COMPETENCE. | 7 |
| 1.4. CONCEPTUALIZING STRATEGY: THE ROLE OF PRACTICAL APPROACHES IN VERBAL DEVELOPMENT. | 9 |
| 1.5. SYNTHESIS OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS | 10 |
| CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALIZING PRACTICE: ALIGNING YLE ASSESSMENT WITH TBLT AND THE CEFR..... | 13 |
| 2.1. THE YLE EXAMS: OBJECTIVES AND DIFFERENTIATION FROM TRADITIONAL PRACTICES | 13 |
| 2.2. THE TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) FRAMEWORK AND VERBAL COMPETENCE ENHANCEMENT..... | 20 |
| 2.3. THE TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) FRAMEWORK AND VERBAL COMPETENCE ENHANCEMENT) | 25 |
| PART II: METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK | 26 |
| CHAPTER 3: OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN: CONTEXT, STRATEGY, AND PARTICIPANTS. | 26 |
| 3.1. THE RESEARCH DESIGN: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH WITHIN AN ACTION RESEARCH FRAMEWORK..... | 26 |
| 3.2. CONTEXT OF THE EMPIRICAL COMPONENT..... | 27 |
| 3.3. OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS: INTERVIEWS, OBSERVATION, AND DOCUMENTATION | 29 |
| PART III: ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION | 33 |

| | |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS FROM THE EXPERT INTERVIEWS: THE YLE EXAMINER PERSPECTIVE | 33 |
| 4.1. THE IMPACT THAT YLE PREPARATION HAS ON LEARNERS' VERBAL COMPETENCES (LISTENING AND SPEAKING). | 33 |
| 4.2. DIFFERENTIATING YLE PREPARATION FROM TEXTBOOK-BASED SPEAKING AND LISTENING. | 34 |
| 4.3. CLASSROOMS STRUCTURES FOR YLE-ALIGNED SPEAKING AND LISTENING | 35 |
| 4.4. YLE TASKS FOSTERING 21ST-CENTURY COMPETENCES (CRITICAL THINKING, COLLABORATION, CREATIVITY) | 36 |
| 4.5. YLE TASKS AND THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH CEFR (PRE-A1/A1/A2) FOR YOUNG LEARNERS. | 36 |
| 4.6. THE CONSTRAINTS WHEN DEVELOPING VERBAL COMPETENCES VIA YLE PREPARATION | 37 |
| 4.7. LONGER-TERM BENEFITS FROM YLE TASKS IMPLEMENTATION. | 37 |
| 4.8. EXTENDED EVIDENCE MATRIX (INTERVIEW EXCERPTS WITH TIMESTAMPS) | 39 |
| CHAPTER 5: INTEGRATED DISCUSSION: TRIANGULATION OF DATA AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS. | 40 |
| 5.1. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS: LINKING EXPERT VIEWS AND PRACTICAL OUTCOMES TO THEORY | 40 |
| 5.2. CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH | 41 |
| 5.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLASSROOM CONTEXTS | 44 |
| CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE: THE CASE STUDY FINDINGS | 45 |
| 6.1. CASE STUDY DESIGN AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH FOR LESSON OBSERVATION | 45 |
| 6.2. LESSON 1 ANALYSIS: DEVELOPING VERBAL COMPETENCE THROUGH LISTENING TASKS IN YLE FORMAT. | 46 |
| 6.3. LESSON 2 ANALYSIS: DEVELOPING VERBAL COMPETENCE THROUGH SPEAKING TASKS (A1) | 48 |
| 6.4. LESSON 3 ANALYSIS: THE IMPACT OF SPEAKING AND COLLABORATIVE TASKS (A2) | 50 |
| 6.5. LESSON 4 ANALYSIS: THE PROGRESSION OF LISTENING PRACTICE SET 2 (A1) | 51 |
| 6.6. CROSS-LESSON SYNTHESIS OF OBSERVED PRACTICES AND CONTRAINSTS AND LIMITATION FOUND. | 53 |
| 6.7. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND PROGRAMME DESIGN | 55 |

| | |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS..... | 58 |
| 7.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD..... | 58 |
| 7.2. FINAL REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH | 60 |

FIGURES AND TABLES

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Figure 1 | 6 |
| Figure 2 | 21 |
| Table 1 | 24 |
| Table 2 | 32 |
| Table 3 | 39 |
| Table 4 | 57 |

INTRODUCTION

The increased status of English as the lingua franca of the world justifies its immediate introduction into formal school curricula around the world. English is now considered not only as an academic subject but also as a necessary skill for intercultural communication, professional development, and civic engagement. This need places heavy responsibilities on educational institutions to offer extensive English language education, particularly in the primary level of education, during which basic linguistic skills are shaped. The Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) exams have, therefore, become one of the vital tools to promote linguistic skills matching the academic and practical demands in this context.

Verbal competence, encompassing the ability to articulate ideas fluently and engage effectively in spoken interactions, is a cornerstone of successful communication. It underpins not only linguistic proficiency but also broader cognitive and social capabilities. Despite its critical importance, verbal competence often receives inadequate attention in traditional English language curricula. The prevailing emphasis on reading and writing, driven by the ease of assessment and the structured nature of these skills, tends to overshadow the development of speaking and listening. This discrepancy creates a significant gap, leaving students underprepared for real-world communicative demands.

Cambridge YLE exams address this gap by prioritizing speaking as a core component of language assessment. Unlike conventional tests, these exams integrate task-based activities designed to reflect authentic communication scenarios. Situations that almost mimic Role-plays, interactive dialogues, and descriptive tasks are not merely exercises but simulations of real-life interactions, encouraging students to apply language meaningfully and contextually. This approach not only improves linguistic accuracy but also builds confidence and spontaneity, traits essential for effective augmenting verbal competences.

The integration of verbal proficiency within the framework of YLE assessments corresponds effectively with the requirements of the 21st century. Contemporary education goes beyond conventional literacy and numeracy; it includes transversal competencies that prepare students for a fast-changing global environment. Skills such as problem-solving,

adaptability, collaboration, and cultural awareness have emerged as must-haves, therefore requiring an educational model that nurtures these qualities from an early stage. YLE preparation exemplifies this paradigm by integrating communication-focused activities that cultivate both linguistic and interpersonal skills.

Furthermore, the adaptability of YLE tasks to diverse educational contexts makes them a versatile tool for teachers worldwide. In classrooms with varying resources and learner profiles, these exams provide a structured yet flexible framework to address individual and group learning needs. By focusing on verbal interaction, teachers can create dynamic learning environments that encourage participation, collaboration, and critical thinking. These environments not only prepare students for the specific demands of YLE exams but also equip them with the confidence to navigate diverse linguistic and cultural settings.

The overarching goal of this research is to analyse the intersection of Cambridge YLE exam preparation and the development of verbal competences and 21st century skills in young learners. The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. Investigate the theoretical underpinnings of verbal competences within the framework of YLE exams and their alignment with 21st-century educational goals.
2. Analyse how task-based activities and pedagogical strategies tailored to YLE preparation enhance verbal competences in primary learners.
3. Evaluate the practical implications of integrating YLE preparation into classroom instruction, focusing on transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication.
4. Provide actionable recommendations for teachers and programme leaders on leveraging YLE preparation as a holistic approach to language teaching that meets academic and real-world communication needs.
5. Document and reflect on the challenges and successes encountered during the implementation of YLE-aligned practices, informing future research and refinement.

To comprehensively explore the objectives this report is organized into three parts:

Part I - Foundations of verbal competence and 21st-century learning, this foundational section contextualizes verbal competence as a critical facet of language education. It explores theoretical constructs underpinning effective communication, linking them to the competencies highlighted by 21st-century education paradigms. By synthesizing established literature, it underscores the transformative potential of verbal competence in fostering adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative skills.

Part II - Enhancing learning through YLE pedagogy, this chapter bridging theoretical insights about what defines the YLE and their speaking and listening components, this section examines how Cambridge YLE tasks, such as interactive dialogues and role-playing, serve as a catalyst for immersive language acquisition. It highlights the pedagogical strategies that optimize student engagement and verbal fluency, offering educators a blueprint for creating dynamic, task-based learning environments.

Part III - Practical implementation and reflective analysis, the final chapter focuses on the research methodology and findings from classroom applications of YLE preparation. It explores successes, challenges, and practical insights derived from integrating YLE preparation into teaching practices. The chapter concludes with a reflective analysis of the translation of theory into practice, while as well delving into the results of conducted interviews about the importance of YLE exams and the verbal competence and my personal internship at private institute located in the North of Portugal. encompassing a constructivist and experiential paradigm, this part seeks to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do task-based activities and pedagogical strategies used during YLE preparation contribute to the development of learners' verbal competences (listening discrimination, extended turns/fluency, interactional management, intelligibility)?
2. How does the integration of YLE preparation in classroom practice foster 21st-century competencies in primary learners (critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication)?

3. Which design principles and organizational conditions enable effective, scalable use of YLE-aligned preparation, and how can these be translated into actionable recommendations for teachers and program leads?
4. What challenges and enabling conditions emerge during the implementation of YLE-aligned practices, and how do teachers adapt in response (reflexive accounts and reported adjustments)

This tripartite structure ensures analysis of the topic, providing educators, researchers, and policymakers with valuable information into the intersection of theory and practice in language education, the overarching goal of this research is to explore the intersection of Cambridge YLE exam preparation and the development of verbal competences in young learners.

PART I: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 1: VERBAL COMPETENCE: DEFINING THE CONSTRUCT FOR 21ST-CENTURY ENGLISH EDUCATION.

1.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Verbal competence is at the core of effective communication and is indispensable in conducting meaningful exchanges between individuals. In the context of English language teaching, particularly at the primary level, the development of verbal competencies extends beyond the acquisition of linguistic abilities: it fosters self-confidence, cultural adjustment, and the enhancement of critical thinking. But what exactly is meant by "verbal competence"? How does it align with the new educational landscapes of the 21st century? What frameworks support its development, and how do they inform practices in instruction?

This chapter explores these questions by examining the conceptual underpinnings of verbal competence. It explains its definition, discusses its relevance within the broader framework of language teaching, and situates it in regard to the demands of 21st-century education. Additionally, the discussion reflects on how verbal competence is acquired through task-based instruction, communicative approaches, and assessments such as the Cambridge YLE tests.

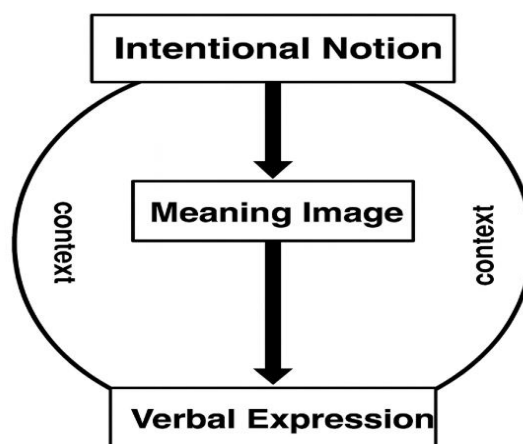
Through an examination of these fundamental themes, this chapter establishes a foundation for comprehending the critical significance of verbal proficiency in the context of English language instruction and its effects on fostering inclusive, preparedness-oriented educational environments.

1.2. DEFINING VERBAL COMPETENCE: IMPORTANCE AND CONCEPTUAL ORIGINS

Verbal competence refers to the comprehensive bundle of abilities needed to talk in an effective manner, this embraces fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and the appropriate meaning conveyed during the transmission in context. Thus, a very crucial distinction is required between verbal competence and oral skills. Whereas the oral skills only refer to aspects related strictly to the mechanical and functional characteristics of speaking, which embrace fluency, clarity, and correctness in pronunciation, verbal competence comprises an all-encompassing set of abilities. According to Dai and Li (2014), verbal competence extends beyond linguistic structures to include the mental and psychological processes involved in transforming ideas into coherent verbal expressions. These processes integrate the speaker's personal experiences, cultural awareness, and intentional notions, culminating in effective and meaningful communication.

In their framework, Dai and Li (2014) present a conceptual model (see figure 1) that highlights three core dimensions of verbal competence: intentional notion, meaning image, and verbal expression, all situated within a contextual boundary. This model provides a dynamic view of how verbal competence operates:

Figure 1 – Reconstructed and adapted from model of *the Conceptual framework of the core dimensions of verbal competence* (Dai & Li 2014).



Note. Adapted from "On verbal competence" by Z. Dai and H. Li, 2014, *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3(3), 17-22. Copyright 2014 by the authors (Z. Dai & H. Li). Licensed under CC BY 3.0 Adapted with permission.

The starting point of verbal communication, the intentional notion where the speaker's intentions, thoughts, or experiences originate, as well as what was previously understood (listened as well) and decoded. This represents the cognitive process of forming a communicative goal, deeply influenced by personal context and cultural background. The intermediary step, meaning image, involves the mental representation of the intended message. It transforms abstract notions into structured concepts that can be expressed verbally. These meaning images are dynamic and flexible, adapting to the specific communicative context. The final stage, verbal expression where the structured meaning is externalized as spoken language. This stage requires fluency, accuracy, and the ability to adapt linguistic choices to the situational context.

The entire process is framed by context, which plays a crucial role in shaping the intentional notions, meaning images, and verbal expressions. Contextual factors include the social, cultural, and linguistic environment in which communication occurs, highlighting the adaptability required in effective verbal competence.

1.3. ESTABLISHING THE DISTINCTION: FROM ORAL SKILLS TO COMMUNICATIVE VERBAL COMPETENCE.

Orally, skills refer to the competencies involved in expressing ideas through spoken language, namely pronunciation (intelligibility), fluency, and overall clarity of speech (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024a, 2024b). Most of these competencies pertain to the mechanical aspects of language production and deal with how well a speaker articulates words, phrases, and sentences. Conversely, verbal competence goes beyond the mechanical dimensions in that it includes cognitive, strategic, and contextual elements that enable meaningful communication. While oral skills are typically associated with speaking ability, verbal competence includes listening comprehension, cultural adjustment, and the ability to express and interpret meaning appropriately in different contexts. This distinction also finds support from Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence model through

which grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences interplay to result in confident and efficient communication.

The communicative competence model, put forward by Canale and Swain in 1980, offers a great insight into this differentiation. Verbal competence corresponds to the four components of the model: grammatical competence the knowledge of linguistic structures; sociolinguistic competence, the appropriateness of the use of language in given social situations; discourse competence, the logical ordering of ideas; strategic competence, the ability to manage failures in communication. Such an inclusive approach permits students to engage with both verbal and written communication confidently, flexibly, and purposively.

Equally important is the ability to listen, which is closely linked with verbal abilities and allows learners to process, interpret, and respond to spoken language effectively. These competencies jointly form a base for meaningful interactions and active participation in communication. This is of even greater importance for listening competence at the primary stage of education, given young learners are augmenting their capacities to decode information heard and bring meaning in a real-time situation. This will help in developing verbal skills by exposing students to the use of natural language, varied accents, and authentic intonation patterns. Listening serves as a model for spoken production and reinforces vocabulary acquisition, syntax, and pronunciation.

Historically, verbal and listening competences have been undervalued in language education due to challenges in assessment and a focus on written skills.

Nineteenth-century textbook compilers were mainly determined to codify the foreign language into frozen rules of morphology and syntax to be explained and eventually memorized. Oral work was reduced to an absolute minimum, while a handful of written exercises, constructed at random, came as a sort of appendix to the rules. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.3)

This historical marginalisation of speaking and listening underscores the need for assessment constructs and classroom methods that capture interactive performance rather than only written accuracy.

1.4. CONCEPTUALIZING STRATEGY: THE ROLE OF PRACTICAL APPROACHES IN VERBAL DEVELOPMENT.

The contemporary shift from a narrow focus on oral skills to a broader construct of verbal competence is grounded in two complementary frameworks. First, Canale and Swain's (1980) model redefined language ability as the coordinated deployment of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. This move foregrounded appropriacy, cohesion/coherence, and breakdown-repair as core to communicative success, thus legitimising listening–speaking coupling, interactional management, and reasoning as learning targets rather than peripheral “extras.” Second, the Common European Framework of References (CEFR), operationalised this orientation through an action-oriented approach that specifies what learners can do at each band across reception, production, interaction, and mediation (Council of Europe, 2001, Council of Europe, 2020). At A1/A2, for example, descriptors emphasise short, intelligible turns with support, basic information-exchange, and comprehension of simple spoken texts precisely the profile cultivated in YLE task families.

Within this report, these frameworks function as design and calibration tools. They justify treating verbal competence as an integrated construct that includes listening comprehension, purposeful speech, and strategy use; they also provide level-appropriate guardrails that prevent both over-pitching (which induces breakdown) and under-pitching (which reduces output to single words). Consequently, classroom tasks and assessment moments are aligned with CEFR A1/A2 “can-do” statements and interpreted through the lens of communicative competence, ensuring that pupils' progress reflects not only accurate production but also context-sensitive, meaning-bearing communication in authentic, age-appropriate activities. However, frameworks like the CEFR (2001, 2010) and the communicative competence model Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980) emphasize their significance by addressing the broader scope of language use in authentic and practical contexts. By fostering verbal competence, educators not only prepare learners for academic success but also equip them with the tools to navigate real-world communication challenges confidently, for this reason we cannot overlook the theoretical models and pedagogical frameworks of language education that helped shift

1.5. SYNTHESIS OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The Communicative Competence Model, proposed by Canale and Swain in 1980, is a fundamental framework in the field of language teaching and learning, viewing communication as a complex and multifaceted process. This model expresses language proficiency through four interrelated dimensions: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. Taken together, these components provide a comprehensive view of what constitutes effective communication in a second language and stress the importance of not just linguistic correctness but also the ability to navigate various social and contextual interactions with ease.

Grammatical competence is knowledge of syntax, morphology, vocabulary, and phonology that is necessary to produce grammatically correct sentences. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to the social and cultural norms so that communication matches situational expectations. Discourse competence refers to the ability to produce coherent and cohesive language, to structure sentences effectively into meaningful units of discourse. Ultimately, strategic competence highlights the importance of using strategies for dealing with communication breakdowns or to clarify messages, such as rewording or seeking clarification.

Munby (1978) claims that the view that communicative competence includes grammatical competence is to be preferred to the view that it does not since the former view logically excludes two possible and misleading conclusions: first, that grammatical competence and communicative competence should be taught separately, or the former should be taught before the latter; and second, that grammatical competence is not an essential component of communicative competence. We find his first reason unconvincing since even if one adopts the position that communicative competence includes grammatical competence, it is still possible to maintain that the teaching of grammatical competence could be separate from or precede the teaching of sociolinguistic competence. Munby's second reason, however, is to us both convincing and important. Just as Hymes (1972) was able to say that there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use,

so we feel that there are rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar. For example, one may have an adequate level of sociolinguistic competence in Canadian French just from having developed such a competence in Canadian English; but without some minimal level of grammatical competence in French, it is unlikely that one could communicate effectively with a mono lingual speaker of Canadian French. (Canale & Swain, 1980, p.5)

The Communicative Competence Model becomes very important and is well exhibited in the structure of Cambridge Young Learners English, YLE examinations. These tests have been designed with the aim of testing the complex features of communication as identified in this model. Tasks in the Speaking section of YLE tests, for instance, will often require candidates to engage in conversation, description of pictures, or respond to open-ended questions. Each of these test items simultaneously evaluate grammatical accuracy, contextual appropriateness, and the ability to construct reasonable responses.

In the speaking part of the exams, there are moments where students are asked personal questions such as, “What’s your favorite hobby?” or “Can you tell me about your family?” This task exemplifies grammatical competence through accurate sentence formation and sociolinguistic competence by requiring polite and contextually appropriate answers. Similarly, one finds a mix of activities involving an interactive information-gap exercise where the examiner and the student exchange information related to two similar pictures. This activity develops discourse competence through coherent linking of responses and strategic competence in handling clarifications or ambiguities.

Although some YLE speaking tasks do not strictly adhere to a typical role-play frame, they nevertheless incorporate the core characteristics of role-play, such as the purposeful exchange of information and conversational dynamics. The pre-arranged exchange between the interlocutor and candidate is a kind of scaffolded space where young learners can get authentic communication experience under controlled conditions

Apart from the above-mentioned, there are other supplementary theoretical frameworks that, during the research, have been underlined as fundamental in shaping

language pedagogy and informing the design of tasks such as those used in Cambridge Young Learners English exams. These frameworks have either served as foundational principles, built upon earlier models, or provided direct insights into language learning and assessment.

The Socio-cultural theory, inspired by the works of Lev Vygotsky in 1978, places emphasis on the role of social interaction and cultural context in developing cognition. It centres on a concept he identifies as the Zone of Proximal Development, which he defines as the distance between independent performance and guided performance of tasks. Consequently, it would, for that matter, propose that language is best learned through collaborative activities which provide temporary support from the teacher, peers, or anyone at a higher developmental stage, thereby providing scaffolding. Even though YLE tasks are generally done individually, preparation bears a lot in common with many of the principals involved. Guided Practice-whereby teachers model responses, provide feedback, and then gradually release the responsibility onto students, is essentially scaffolding. The examiner-student interaction during speaking tasks follows this procedure in the form of structured scaffolding whereby students approach the tasks with confidence because of the use of prompts and guided questions that assist them.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) extends Sociocultural Theory through a focus on the real-life functional use of language. CLT followed on from perceived weaknesses in traditional language teaching methods, including some foundational ideas proposed by Dell Hymes in 1972, which set out the notion of communicative competence, arguing that learners need to know more than just the grammar; they must know its sociocultural contexts. Canale and Swain (1980) synthesized these ideas into the components of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. Further ideas from other contributors to current CLT thought include Christopher Candlin (1976) and Henry Widdowson (1978), who each argued for an approach that placed emphasis on communicative skills and functional language use, while the work of D. A. Wilkins on language functions and notions exerted an influence on the design of the CLT syllabus. CLT stresses, at least in its initial period of language acquisition, that fluency precedes accuracy, and communicative function precedes rote memorization. This is reflected in YLE exams by presenting candidates with tasks that simulate naturalistic situations. For instance, speaking tasks across all levels require the candidates to describe

pictures, answer questions, or narrate a story, which provides for eliciting pragmatic language. Emphasis on interaction and communication contextualized to situation and purpose as per CLT therefore provides an easy match with the aim of the YLE tests in respect to language in use. The emphasis on interaction and context-driven communication of CLT tallies with the goals of the YLE tests, thus enabling the learners to perform in real-life situations.

More powerfully, the Interaction Hypothesis by Michael Long (1983) supports the use of interaction in language acquisition. The hypothesis postulates that the development of language occurs best in conversational exchanges where conversationalists negotiate meaning. In such events, learners receive modified input-that is, language which has been regularized to their proficiency level-and opportunities to produce output. As a matter of fact, these are the YLE Speaking tasks. Especially in information-exchange or question-and-answer formats, learners get to practice the comprehension and production of the language in a manner that invites internalization of the linguistic structures through structured interactions with examiners.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALIZING PRACTICE: ALIGNING YLE ASSESSMENT WITH TBLT AND THE CEFR

2.1. THE YLE EXAMS: OBJECTIVES AND DIFFERENTIATION FROM TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

The Cambridge YLE tests are internationally recognized among young learners, building confidence by measuring the developing language skills of young candidates. Developed by Cambridge Assessment English, this set of tests concentrates on providing an easily accessible and enjoyable examination experience for young learners, ensuring confidence and motivation among students. YLE has three levels: Starters, Movers, and Flyers, each more challenging than the others, fully aligned to the CEFR.

YLE tests are characterized by child-friendliness in design, made up of colours, interactive tasks, and themes that will best suit young learners. Such assessments create a possibility for the development of the core skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Emphasis is placed on practical communication, with test tasks taken from everyday life, like descriptions of objects or simple conversations, therefore the language learning via YLE will be relevant and closer to real situations. A reflection of that commitment to inclusivity and accessibility is found within the very structure of the YLE exams themselves. The scoring system, using shields instead of pass/fail grades, offers achievement versus failure, promoting a growth mindset. This will not only reduce test anxiety but also engender a general positive attitude toward language learning-a gateway to future academic and personal development.

Cambridge Young Learners English exams are well-regarded international tests designed for primary young learners to assess and improve their English language skills. At Cambridge Assessment English, these exams have been carefully developed to ensure primary students have an efficient but unthreatening way into testing-a route which will take them a little beyond pre-teens' pre-teen attitude towards the English language. There are three stages in the YLE framework: Starters, Movers, and Flyers. These YLE tests have been made as attractive as possible for children, using bright colours, engaging activities, and themes that appeal to them. The four major language skills that are tested include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, much more emphasis has been directed toward practical communication. YLE exams ensure that language learning is useful in real life by setting its focus on everyday situations like describing objects or having a basic conversation. One of the rare structures of the YLE exams is its commitment to being all-inclusive and accessible. The key focus of the YLE tests is to develop and then assess those practical language abilities of young learners in English that would help them to effectively communicate. Emphasizing listening and speaking, the tests targeted two crucial parts of verbal competence that involved the ability not only to understand language but also to produce it in meaningful ways.

The Speaking test should offer the candidates ample opportunity to reveal how well they can use English to express themselves clearly and communicate confidently. Candidates describe pictures, answer questions and have brief dialogues. The activities are natural-like and require students to be spontaneous as well as contextual. For example, taking Starters,

candidates are supposed to name things in a picture, and in Flyers, a candidate is supposed to talk about what they like or describe something that happens in turn.

The YLE examinations test a student's ability to understand different accents and contexts through various sets of listening tasks: identifying information, following instructions, and responding to simple dialogues. The YLE examinations allow the students a wide range of audio materials for them to learn the crucial strategies in listening, making a prediction about the content, recognizing some key phrases, contextualizing. Since the ability to listen is the very foundation needed to be able to communicate, it will enable learners to process input and respond accordingly.

This focus on speaking and listening within the YLE framework attachment to the broader scope of 21st-century education-organized communication, collaboration, and flexibility-finds these skills increasingly crucial not just for success in academics but also in confronting the world in its global perspective. In integrating these elements within assessment, YLE examinations ensure that language learning transcends the theoretical frontier to the construction of competencies tailored to realistic challenges.

The use of YLE exercises and exam preparation activities, including mock exams, provides a highly effective approach to developing verbal competences. Homayounfar et al. (2019), in their comparative analysis of Cambridge exams and IELTS, highlight that Cambridge exams are uniquely designed to evaluate students' linguistic proficiency in real-life, practical contexts. Unlike traditional assessments, these exams focus on authentic communication scenarios, which significantly enhance students' verbal abilities. This practical emphasis ensures that students are not only prepared for exams but also for real-world communication.

Mock exams mirror the format and expectations of the actual YLE exams, allowing students to familiarize themselves with the structure while practicing spontaneous and meaningful communication. Taylor (2003) stresses that tasks imitating real-life interactions in Cambridge exams compel students to demonstrate their communicative abilities in authentic situations, ensuring that they develop the necessary tools for future language use.

Moreover, the immediate feedback provided during mock exams is crucial in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. As Barker et Al. (2004) found in their investigation of students' attitudes towards Cambridge exams, consistent and structured practice for these exams builds confidence and enhances students' communicative abilities. The iterative process of practice, feedback, and refinement helps learners internalize language structures and become more adept at using English in diverse settings. The alignment of YLE preparation activities with real-life communication skills underscores their value as a pedagogical tool for developing verbal competences and preparing students for broader academic and social contexts.

YLE exercises and preparation activities distinguish themselves from traditional speaking and listening exercises through their focus on authentic, contextualized, and interactive language use. Traditional methods often rely heavily on scripted dialogues, isolated vocabulary drills, and teacher-led recitation, which can limit opportunities for meaningful communication. In contrast, YLE tasks prioritize real-life scenarios that engage learners dynamically.

The integration of multimodal materials is another significant distinction. While traditional exercises may involve textbook-based dialogues or repetitive listening activities, YLE exams incorporate visuals, audio prompts, and collaborative tasks that require learners to actively engage with the content. Taylor (2003) explains that the Cambridge approach to speaking assessment ensures students demonstrate their skills in meaningful and realistic contexts, which promotes not only proficiency but also confidence in using the language actively. YLE tasks encourage active participation and learner-centred approaches. Hawkey and Barker (2004) note that preparation for Cambridge exams fosters institutional changes by integrating real and meaningful communication opportunities into the curriculum. This shift promotes a classroom environment where language is treated as a tool for interaction rather than a subject to be memorized.

It is noteworthy that Coronha (2023) suggests that exam preparation, being rooted in the school curriculum, can lead to an increase in students' verbal competences. Through exam

preparation, subjects that require regular and intensive verbal practice are fundamental to the development of students' communicative competence in basic education institutions.

There is an imperative need to provide a strong theoretical grounding for making informed understandings of the principles and practices underlying verbal competencies' development. Though there was a definition of verbal competence above and distinguished it from oral skills, the main focus of this chapter shall go on an in-depth investigation into theoretical models and pedagogical frameworks that have prefigured present-day approaches in language teaching.

A strong theoretical framework is essential for the deep understanding of the advancement of language teaching. One can trace the development of verbal competences in language teaching, its development, and assessment by examining the main theoretical models. Models such as Canale and Swain's communicative competence framework (1980) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001, Council of Europe, 2020) have focused on the multifaceted nature of communication and have practically guided teachers in their efforts to improve verbal skills in learners. These frameworks contain key dimensions of language use, including grammatical accuracy, social appropriateness, discourse coherence, and strategic flexibility, in the preparation of learners to take part in different contexts of communication.

Pedagogical frameworks act as intermediaries, transforming complex theoretical principles into concrete strategies applicable to the classroom. For instance, task-based approaches (Ellis, 2003) and sociocultural theories (Vygotsky, 1978) provide teachers with the tools to develop dynamic learning environments that facilitate interaction, collaboration, and meaningful communication. Correlating theoretical principles with practical application, these frameworks enhance the effectiveness of language teaching and ensure that learners achieve competencies that are both academically robust and practically useful.

The historical development of language education and the importance of modern teaching methodologies have been explored previously. A shift from traditional grammar-based methods, as typified by the Grammar-Translation Method (Richards and Rodgers,

2001), to approaches focused on communication marks an increasing recognition of the role of practical use in language learning. This development highlights the need for approaches that prioritize verbal skills, so learners can adapt to the very complex linguistic and cultural demands of the 21st century. The theoretical models and educational frameworks presented in this chapter form the basis of Cambridge YLE exams. The YLE examinations are structured to evaluate and enhance verbal skills, incorporating concepts derived from communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980) as well as task-based language instruction (Ellis, 2003) to establish a genuine assessment experience focused on the learner. By adhering to established frameworks such as the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, Council of Europe 2020), YLE examinations prioritize practical communication, thereby ensuring that learners are adequately prepared not only for academic achievement but also for successfully engaging in various linguistic and cultural environments.

The communicative competence model, through its focus on grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences, directly informs the structure of YLE assessments. Each module is reflected in tasks that require learners to put their language into action in meaningful and contextualized ways, whether in describing a picture, answering questions, or taking part in short dialogues. It reflects the multidimensionality of verbal competence, fostering fluency, adaptability, and confidence in communication.

In this way, CEFR underpins the design of YLE exams, emphasizing the practical use of language. It gives a clear indication that learners will be tested in their ability to interact, interpret, and produce language in a particular context, thereby not simply listing vocabulary or grammatical rules, hence avoiding mere memorization but truly acquiring skills that have the potential to manifest themselves in real communication. The correlation to CEFR levels, Starters, Movers, and Flyers, provides a successive development path for learners, facilitating motivation and growth in their verbal competences.

This integration of theoretical frameworks into practical assessment design highlights the role of YLE exams as both a pedagogical tool and a measure of language proficiency. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, these exams exemplify how language teaching frameworks play a crucial role in the creation of these exercises, and how we need to

contextualise them to understand how they foment new century skills. The Communicative Competence Model, developed by Canale and Swain (1980), is a foundational framework in language education that conceptualizes communication as a multifaceted process. This model defines language proficiency through four interconnected components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive understanding of what it means to communicate effectively in a second language, emphasizing not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to navigate varied social and contextual interactions.

Grammatical competence encompasses the knowledge of syntax, morphology, vocabulary, and phonology required to construct accurate sentences. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to social and cultural norms, ensuring that communication aligns with contextual expectations. Discourse competence involves the capacity to produce coherent and cohesive language, organizing sentences into meaningful stretches of discourse. Finally, strategic competence highlights the importance of employing strategies to overcome communication breakdowns or enhance the clarity of messages, such as rephrasing or seeking clarification.

The relevance of the Communicative Competence Model is clearly reflected in the design of Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) exams. These assessments are structured to evaluate the multidimensional nature of communication as outlined in the model. For instance, speaking tasks in YLE exams often require students to engage in conversational exchanges, describe visual prompts, or answer open-ended questions. These activities simultaneously test grammatical accuracy, contextual appropriateness, and the ability to construct coherent responses.

In the speaking part of the exams, there are moments where students are asked personal questions such as, “What’s your favourite hobby?” or “Can you tell me about your family?” This task exemplifies grammatical competence through accurate sentence formation and sociolinguistic competence by requiring polite and contextually appropriate answers. Similarly, we see exercises that incorporate an interactive information-gap activity, where the examiner and the students exchange details about two similar pictures. This task fosters

discourse competence by encouraging logical connections between responses and strategic competence when addressing clarifications or uncertainties. Although some YLE speaking tasks may not fully align with traditional role-play scenarios, they mimic key elements of role-play, such as information exchange and conversational dynamics. The structured interaction between examiner and student serves as a scaffolded experience, allowing young learners to practice real-world communication within a controlled environment. However, one of the pillars of modern education has become the utilisation of tasks in learning contexts, in the next segment we will explore how they can contribute to verbal competence enhancement.

2.2. THE TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) FRAMEWORK AND VERBAL COMPETENCE ENHANCEMENT

The most influential frameworks in modern language education include the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, proposed in 2001 (updated in 2020) by the Council of Europe, which presents an integrated approach to assessing, teaching, and learning languages, with quite a strong focus on real-life communication and the effective use of the language. The CEFR establishes six levels of competence, from A1 for the beginner to C2 for the competent user. This gives clear, transparent benchmark levels of language ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners must learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively (CEFR, 2001, p.1

Figure 2 – Common Reference Levels: Global Scale

| | | |
|-------------------------|----|---|
| PROFICIENT USER | C2 | Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. |
| | C1 | Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. |
| INDEPENDENT USER | B2 | Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. |
| | B1 | Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. |
| BASIC USER | A2 | Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. |
| | A1 | Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. |

Note. Adapted from *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (p. 24), by Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge University Press. Copyright © 2001 Council of Europe

The Cambridge Young Learners English Tests are designed upon principles of the Common European Framework of Reference, YLE tests correspond to A1 and pre-A1 levels in that pre-defined terminology and offer a coherent development in the learning process for young learners. Finally, by including appropriate descriptors from the CEFR, YLE will be able to introduce real-life communication situations into its test tasks, together with a more integral assessment of a candidate's competencies.

The speaking tasks of the YLE exams test the ability to communicate effectively in everyday contexts. For example, in there are exercises in the speaking parts of the exams where students answer questions on familiar topics, such as hobbies or families, in ways that again confirm the emphasis of the CEFR on situational appropriateness. Similarly, the format of the listening tasks corresponds with the CEFR emphasis on interpreting information provided in speech within pragmatic contexts, following directions, or locating objects based on spoken descriptions. YLE exams present learners with authentic opportunities for self-expression through language. Compatibility with the levels of the CEFR means that such assessment provides not just a measure of proficiency but orients the learner to actual effective communication. This basically illustrates the view on language competence represented by the CEFR: it is in principle congenial to the general conception underpinning the development of the YLE exams-to develop confident and competent communicators who are well-equipped to continue learning and using the language in everyday contexts.

The theoretical models reviewed in this chapter the Communicative Competence, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and the CEFR converge on verbal competence as an integrated performance across listening, intelligible production, interactional management, and strategic communication. Cambridge YLE operationalises this integration through age-appropriate task families (e.g., distractor-rich listening with placement/actions; picture-based description and dialogue; short narrative sequencing) that sample precisely these dimensions at Pre-A1/A1/A2 (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024a, 2024b). At beginner levels, the CEFR Companion Volume emphasises intelligibility over native-like accuracy, short but coherent turns, and supportive interlocation, principles mirrored in YLE specifications and examiner procedures for young learners (Council of Europe, 2020). In this sense, YLE does not

merely “test” verbal competence; it operationalises CEFR-aligned constructs in child-friendly ways and thereby provides a coherent focus for instruction.

From a pedagogical standpoint, TBLT explains why these tasks can function as engines of growth: meaning-focused, problem-centred activity (information gaps, picture sequencing, constrained role-play) compels learners to process input selectively, mobilise functional language, and manage turns, conditions under which form is noticed because meaning must be made (Mudinillah et al., 2024). When such tasks are embedded across the school year in communicative lesson architectures (brief pre-task focusing → task cycle → short reflection), the attentional routines and interactional moves sampled by YLE, gist/detail selection, justification of choices, clarification/repair become normal classroom habits rather than last-minute exam drills (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024a, 2024b; Council of Europe, 2020).

Finally, the relationship to 21st-century competences is best understood as pedagogy-mediated rather than test-driven. Cambridge’s framework on 21st-century skills stresses that skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity emerge when tasks systematically elicit reasoning, joint decision-making, and reflective talk; labels alone do not guarantee impact (Suto & Eccles, 2014). In YLE-oriented practice, these transversal outcomes appear when teachers deliberately stage information-gap/problem-solving cycles, structure peer interaction, and prompt learners to explain and reconsider choices. Accordingly, this thesis advances a calibrated claim: YLE contributes to the development of verbal competences and when orchestrated through CLT/TBLT routines aligned to CEFR for children can simultaneously nurture selected 21st-century competences in developmentally appropriate ways (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024a,2024b; Council of Europe, 2001 and 2020; Mudinillah et al., 2024; Suto and Eccles, 2014).

Table 1 – Mapping YLE Tasks to Verbal Competence and 21st-Century Learning Outcomes

| YLE task family | Verbal-competence focus (CEFR Pre-A1/A1/A2) | Typical classroom move | 21st-century hook |
|--|---|---|---|
| Listening with placement / actions (Starters Part 2; Movers/Flyers variants) | Listening discrimination; following multi-step instructions; intelligibility in brief responses | Pre-teach key lexis → listen with distractors → justify placement → micro-feedback on rationale | Critical thinking (choice justification); self-regulation (following constraints) |
| Picture description & Q-A (Movers Speaking; Flyers Speaking Part 1–2) | Functional chunks; extended turns; interactional management; pronunciation | Model frames → pair Q-A → swap roles → quick criterion feedback | Collaboration (pair routines); communication (audience awareness) |
| Picture sequence storytelling (Flyers Speaking Part 3) | Discourse organisation; cohesion; prosody; strategic communication | Sequence ordering → guided retell → freer retell → peer questions | Creativity (narrative choices); critical thinking (coherence fixes) |

Note. CEFR = Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; Q-A = question-answer. The arrow (→) indicates a recommended sequence of classroom moves. Author-created table, informed by YLE task specifications from Pre A1 Starters, A1 Movers and A2 Flyers: Handbook for Teachers and Pre-A1 Starters Digital and A1 Movers Digital: Handbook for Teachers (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024a, 2024b).

2.3. THE TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) FRAMEWORK AND VERBAL COMPETENCE ENHANCEMENT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a learner-centred approach that emphasizes the use of meaningful tasks to develop language competences.

The use of tasks in SLA has been closely linked to developments in the study of second language acquisition (SLA). In the early years of SLA (the late sixties and seventies), researchers were primarily concerned with describing how learners acquired an L2, documenting the order and sequence in which the grammar of a language was acquired. (Ellis, 2003, p.21)

While its roots can be traced back to early work by scholars such as Breen (1987), Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985), Long and Crookes (1986), Prabhu (1987), Nunan (1989), Skehan (1996), and Lee (2000), it was later popularized and extensively detailed by Ellis (2003). These earlier contributions established foundational ideas about tasks as tools for language learning, with definitions ranging from structured classroom activities to real-world communicative scenarios. Ellis built upon these foundations, emphasizing tasks as goal-oriented activities designed to engage learners in authentic language use. “Tasks, then, hold a central place in current SLA research and also in language pedagogy.” (Ellis, 2003, preface).

In TBLT, tasks are defined as activities requiring learners to use language meaningfully and purposefully, focusing on the completion of objectives rather than solely on linguistic accuracy. This approach fosters interaction, problem-solving, and critical thinking, ensuring that learners engage with language in ways that are both contextually relevant and goal oriented. Moreover, TBLT aligns with modern educational paradigms that prioritize 21st-century skills, such as collaboration, adaptability, and effective communication, making it particularly suitable for young learners.

The principles of TBLT are clearly reflected in Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) exams, which integrate tasks that simulate real-world communication scenarios. These assessments emphasize meaningful interaction, encouraging young learners to use language

purposefully in both receptive and productive skills. For instance, in Listening exercises, children listen to spoken instructions and place objects in specified locations within a picture, such as “Put the ball under the table.” This task requires students to process auditory input and respond with appropriate actions, closely mirroring practical listening scenarios encountered in real life. Similarly, speaking tasks across YLE levels encourage learners to describe, compare, and narrate, fostering the development of practical verbal competences.

The alignment between TBLT and YLE exams can be observed in specific examples across the levels. In Starters exercises, children demonstrate their ability to comprehend spoken instructions and act upon them, reflecting the core principles of TBLT. Other speaking exercises, where students ask and answer questions based on picture prompts, exemplifies real-world information exchange and encourages interaction while developing sociolinguistic and discourse competences. Similarly, Speaking Part 3 in Flyers involves storytelling based on a sequence of pictures, which requires learners to organize ideas coherently and communicate them effectively, reflecting the task-based emphasis on purposeful and meaningful language use.

PART II: METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 3: OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN: CONTEXT, STRATEGY, AND PARTICIPANTS.

3.1. THE RESEARCH DESIGN: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH WITHIN AN ACTION RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Building on the theoretical consolidation of verbal competence in Part II, drawing on Communicative Competence, CEFR, and TBLT, this chapter advances to the empirical dimension. Its aim is to examine how YLE-aligned practices are implemented and experienced in primary English, to generate evidence capable of informing pedagogical decision-making,

and to support reflective improvement in classroom design. The theoretical groundwork has already been established and is not reformulated here as an empirical question; instead, the focus is on how practice realises, adapts, and tests those principles in authentic teaching–learning ecologies.

The empirical work concentrates on four interrelated lines of inquiry that structure data collection, analysis, and reporting. First, it investigates the effects of sustained YLE-oriented preparation on learners’ verbal competences, specifically the development of listening comprehension and spoken production in third grade, to characterise the scope and nature of observable gains. Second, it examines the pedagogical designs and enabling classroom conditions that most effectively promote those competences, including interactional architecture, task sequencing, and scaffolding routines, while attending to the ways teachers adapt design and delivery in situ. Third, it analyses the alignment between YLE task families and CEFR A1/A2 can-do descriptors for young learners and considers the extent to which enacted tasks foster 21st-century competences such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Fourth, it documents the constraints that arise in the development of verbal competences through YLE preparation, logistical, affective, and assessment-related and the reflective responses that mitigate these challenges over time. Taken together, these foci ensure a coherent line of sight from theoretical constructs to practice, from practice to evidence, and from evidence to implications for pedagogical action.

3.2. CONTEXT OF THE EMPIRICAL COMPONENT

The empirical component is divided into two complementary parts. Part A presents a qualitative, semi-structured interview study with experienced teachers and examiners of Cambridge YLE (Starters, Movers, Flyers). This strand aims to elicit practitioners’ perceptions of how YLE preparation influences listening and speaking development, how tasks are adapted in situ, and how these practices intersect with CEFR descriptors and 21st-century competences. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent (attachment B), transcribed verbatim, and analysed (attachments C-H) through thematic analysis with codes inductively

generated from the data and subsequently related to the theoretical constructs defined in part I chapter 1 and 2. Credibility was supported through iterative coding, constant comparison across cases, and triangulation of themes.

Part B reports a classroom-based practitioner inquiry conducted during supervised teaching at a private institution in my internship. This strand adopts a case-study orientation (with elements of action research) to document how YLE-aligned speaking and listening tasks were planned, implemented, and refined in a real classroom. Multiple forms of naturally occurring data were considered: lesson plans, field notes, reflective memos, observation records, samples of learner work, and informal assessment evidence. The analytic focus here is not on generalization by enumeration but on analytic transferability that is, on how detailed descriptions and theoretically informed interpretations can help readers understand the conditions under which similar outcomes might be expected elsewhere.

Together, these two strands create a methodological triangulation: semi-structured interviews (Part A) provide professional perspectives on principles and constraints across contexts, while classroom-based evidence (Part B) grounds those perspectives in concrete pedagogical practice. This design is consistent with the study's guiding paradigm: knowledge is co-constructed with participants, meaning is situated, and the value of evidence lies in its explanatory power and resonance with the realities of primary English education. Ethical considerations anonymity or confidentiality upon request, informed consent, secure data handling, and participants' right to withdraw were observed throughout.

This empirical component translates the conceptual claims advanced in the theoretical chapters into systematically gathered evidence from practice. The study is grounded in an interpretivist–constructivist stance: knowledge about language learning is understood as co-constructed in situated contexts, and its value lies in illuminating mechanisms and conditions that make outcomes plausible across comparable settings rather than in statistical generalisation. Within this orientation, the chapter focuses on practitioners' perspectives regarding how preparation for the Cambridge YLE exams contributes to the development of verbal competences in young learners operationalised as the interplay of listening comprehension, spoken fluency, interactional management, intelligible pronunciation, and

strategic, context-appropriate use of language and how such preparation intersects with 21st-century competences such as collaboration, critical thinking and adaptability.

The empirical design centres on a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers and examiners of Cambridge YLE (Starters, Movers, Flyers). Participants were recruited through professional referrals and direct invitations to ensure relevance of expertise and variation in role (classroom teacher, examiner, coordinator/trainer). In total, more than twenty interviews were conducted during data collection. Following a principled screening process assessing the credibility of claims, the substantive depth of responses, and potential sources of bias six interviews were retained for analysis as the information-rich cases that best supported rigorous cross-case synthesis. This purposive inclusion maximises analytic depth while preserving diversity of vantage points. To protect confidentiality, all identifying details are withheld and pseudonyms are used in reporting.

3.3. OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS: INTERVIEWS, OBSERVATION, AND DOCUMENTATION

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to preserve comparability across participants while allowing depth and follow-up probing. Prompts targeted seven domains aligned with the study's research questions: perceived impact on verbal competences; contrasts with common materials and practices; classroom strategies for speaking and listening; links to 21st-century competences; perceptions of CEFR alignment for young learners; challenges and enabling conditions; and long-term benefits and transfer. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom, with prior informed consent for audio recording. Sessions typically lasted sixty to ninety minutes. At the outset of each interview, the operational definition of "verbal competences" was clarified to secure a shared construct. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and timestamps were retained to enable auditable citation in chapter 5. The inclusion of six information-rich cases from a larger pool strengthens analytic focus but necessarily narrows breadth. Self-selection and professional affiliation with YLE may

introduce sympathetic perspectives; this is addressed through explicit reporting of reservations and limits expressed by participants, and by attending to disconfirming evidence where present. The study is time-bounded and context-specific; its contribution lies in explanatory adequacy and analytic transferability rather than in statistical generalisation. Credibility was supported by an explicit audit trail (versioned interview guide, consent materials, coding notes, theme memos), by iterative engagement with the transcripts, and by thick description of thematic categories and their evidentiary basis. Where appropriate, paraphrased summaries or quotations were checked with participants to ensure accuracy of representation. Dependability and confirmability were pursued through systematic recording of analytic decisions and reflexive notes acknowledging the researcher's practitioner background and the attendant risks of confirmation bias; counter-instances were actively sought during theme development. Transferability is aimed for through sufficiently detailed accounts of participants' roles and task types such that readers working in analogous contexts can judge the plausibility of applying insights. Ethical principles guided all stages of the study: participation was voluntary, informed consent (attachment A) was obtained prior to recording.

The interview corpus was analysed through qualitative thematic analysis. Following transcription, close readings established familiarity with each case while preserving the integrity of participants' phrasing. Initial open coding proceeded line-by-line to mark salient ideas and practices, including distractor handling in listening, extended turns in speaking, pre-teaching of lexis and patterns, student-talk-time targets, affective and logistical constraints, and perceptions of CEFR calibration. Codes were iteratively refined and grouped into higher-order themes aligned with the research questions and the theoretical constructs established earlier (communicative competence, task-based learning, CEFR descriptors, and 21st-century frameworks). Constant comparison across interviews supported the consolidation of convergences, the identification of productive contrasts, and the surfacing of outliers. Short, representative verbatim excerpts were then selected to illustrate each theme, with timestamps preserved to support traceability. Although the broader project will later reference classroom-based evidence, the analysis presented here draws exclusively on the interview data; connections to classroom practice will be made only in subsequent chapters where strictly necessary.

Codes were iteratively refined and grouped into higher-order themes aligned with the research questions and the theoretical constructs established earlier (communicative competence, task-based learning, CEFR descriptors, and 21st-century frameworks). Constant comparison across interviews supported the consolidation of convergences, the identification of productive contrasts, and the surfacing of outliers. Short, representative verbatim excerpts were then selected to illustrate each theme, with timestamps preserved to support traceability. Although the broader project will later reference classroom-based evidence, the analysis presented here draws exclusively on the interview data; connections to classroom practice will be made only in subsequent chapters where strictly necessary.

To ensure comparability across cases while allowing for depth and probing, the semi-structured interview followed the 7 core questions below. Each prompt operationalises “verbal competences” as the integrated development of listening comprehension, spoken fluency, interactional management, pronunciation/intelligibility, and strategic communication, and relates these to the theoretical constructs defined earlier (Communicative Competence, TBLT, CEFR, and 21st-century competences), however the full interview guide had two sections (attachment B), the first section was mainly necessary to confirm credibility of the interviewee.

Section B: Main Interview Questions

- I. In your experience, what impact does YLE exam preparation have on students' verbal competences (speaking and listening)?
- II. How does YLE exam preparation differ from traditional textbook-based speaking and listening activities?
- III. How do you structure your classroom activities to prepare students for YLE speaking and listening components?
- IV. Do you believe that YLE tasks help students develop transversal skills, such as critical thinking, adaptability, or collaboration?
- V. From your perspective, how well do YLE exam tasks align with CEFR levels for young learners?

- VI. What challenges do you encounter when preparing students for the YLE exams, particularly in developing verbal competences?
- VII. In your opinion, what are the long-term benefits of incorporating YLE speaking and listening preparation into regular classroom instruction?

This chapter reports the interview findings organised by the study's main objective. To preserve confidentiality, interviewees are referenced by codes. The table below pairs each code with a brief anonymised descriptor to contextualise quotations while maintaining anonymity. Quotations are cited as (Code, interview, timestamp); following APA 6th, these personal communications are cited in-text only and do not appear in the reference list. Timestamps support auditability without compromising identity.

Table 2 – *Codified participants and role descriptors alongside respective attachment reference.*

| Code | Role descriptor (anonymised) | Primary authority/relevance |
|-------------------|---|--|
| AL (Attachment C) | Primary English teacher/trainer with sustained YLE preparation experience | YLE classroom design; speaking/listening progression |
| SL (Attachment D) | Primary English teacher and YLE examiner/trainer | Exam-room practices; logistics; interactional routines |
| LB (Attachment G) | Academic coordinator and YLE examiner | Curriculum alignment; Student Talking Time (STT) benchmarks; assessment literacy |
| HV (attachment F) | Primary English teacher/ Director with mixed-resource settings | Materials selection; pacing; exam readiness |
| AO (attachment H) | Primary English teacher with experience across levels | Multimodal tasks; breadth of production |

PART III: ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS FROM THE EXPERT INTERVIEWS: THE YLE EXAMINER PERSPECTIVE

Each subsection formulates an analytic claim, substantiates it with convergent evidence from interviews and targeted classroom episodes, and offers a brief account of underlying mechanisms and enabling conditions. Representative quotations are used to evidence the claim, and counterexamples are noted to delimit its scope. Each subsection closes with an explicit pedagogical implication.

4.1. THE IMPACT THAT YLE PREPARATION HAS ON LEARNERS’ VERBAL COMPETENCES (LISTENING AND SPEAKING).

Across interviews and classroom evidence, sustained, year-long YLE-aligned preparation systematically strengthens listening discrimination and spoken output quality in tandem, with learners progressing from fragmentary clauses to short, coherent turns. Practitioners describe the shift “from isolated sentences ... [to] construct[ing] a complete sentence ... in a very ... fluent way” (AO, 00:08:13–00:11:07, see attachment H), and repeatedly link listening gains to managing distractors and mapping input across interviews and classroom evidence, sustained, year-long YLE-aligned preparation systematically strengthens listening discrimination and spoken output quality in tandem, with learners progressing from fragmentary clauses to short, coherent turns. Practitioners describe the shift “from isolated sentences ... [to] construct[ing] a complete sentence ... in a very ... fluent way” (AO, 00:08:13–00:11:07,) and repeatedly link listening gains to managing distractors and mapping input to action; end-of-year YLE practice “validates outcomes; the year’s teaching does the heavy lifting” (HV, 01:20:28–01:21:28, see attachment F). Attention to phonemic contrasts and functional chunks “feeds straighter, more confident speaking” (CA, 01:18:49–01:26:17, see attachment C).

Two interacting mechanisms account for the pattern: (i) engineered excess information with child-scaled distractors trains selective attention during listening; (ii) scaffolded perception-to-production conversion, pair rehearsal plus a visible frame (There is/are → In A ... but in B ... → I think ... because ...) lowers performance load and enables coherent turns. The trajectory aligns with CLT/TBLT (meaning-first, outcome-driven tasks) and CEFR A1 priorities (intelligibility; supported interaction). We should admit that listening families function best as formative engines when followed by a brief justify-your-choice move, when pair rehearsal precedes public turns, and when micro-phonology is immediately “spent” in use; the external exam therefore confirms growth produced by these classroom routines rather than generating it in isolation. Having established the nature of impact, the next section contrasts YLE-aligned work with textbook speaking/listening to specify what is distinctive in task architecture.

4.2. DIFFERENTIATING YLE PREPARATION FROM TEXTBOOK-BASED SPEAKING AND LISTENING.

The distinctive feature is task architecture, not the “exam” label. YLE-style work routinely embeds excess information, multimodal prompts, and elimination with justification, shifting activity from recall to reasoned selection and sustaining meaning-focused talk at beginner levels. AO notes that children are often given more items than needed, “ten words and only five spaces to fill”, which encourages critical thinking and builds confidence (AO, 00:12:16–00:14:10). HV observes that international series already integrate stories, visuals, and multiple-choice listening with distractors, and cautions against importing ad hoc exam audios with uncontrolled lexis for eight- to nine-year-olds (HV, 00:44:44–00:48:50; 00:32:29–00:36:08, see attachment F). CA highlights that exam-aligned courses (e.g., Kid’s Box, Power Up) prime these task families from the start, establishing different routines and expectations than grammar-first local series (CA, 00:06:14–00:11:31; 00:17:25–00:21:45). AO adds that YLE listening/speaking are typically multimodal and elicit a wider range of forms than tightly scripted comprehension tasks (AO, 00:21:28–00:25:49).

This leads to the conclusion that adopting task families with controlled lexis and a required rationale invites meaning-making that naturally extends verbal competence; defaulting to decontextualized comprehension or grammar display reduces speaking to low-information responses. The architectural contrast motivates a closer analysis of how effective classrooms are structured to enact these routines in practice.

4.3. CLASSROOMS STRUCTURES FOR YLE-ALIGNED SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Effective YLE-aligned lessons share a stable interactional architecture: brief modelling of lexis/patterns, short cycles of controlled practice, and release into purposeful tasks with sustained student-talk time. LB proposes a benchmark “60% of the lesson has to be the students producing ... I keep [teacher talk] to a minimum” (00:21:33–00:22:11, attachment G) which is also echoed in AO’s sequencing of 90-minute lessons that touch all four skills and enforce complete sentences from the outset (00:31:23–00:39:36, attachment h). HV argues that YLE visuals should consolidate rather than introduce language and be paired with learner-to-learner questioning so Student speaking time (STT) dominates (00:20:11–00:22:38; 00:38:25–00:41:38). CA details a scaffolded progression, chants/songs modelling connected speech; pre-teaching lexical sets; picture prediction; brief role-play before freer production (00:47:24–00:51:14; 00:53:19–01:02:39, attachment e). SL complements this with short rotations, total physical response (TPR), and role assignments that compress transitions in primary settings (SL, see attachment D, 00:27:20–00:33:34).

Mechanistically, pair rehearsal before public turns lowers performance load, distributes participation, and stabilises intelligibility; safe-correction norms preserve fluency without sacrificing clarity. We can interpret that codify pair-prep → public-turn sequencing, maintain concise modelling, script transitions, and treat visuals/task families as vehicles for rehearsal and consolidation rather than first exposure. With interactional design in view, we now consider how these enactments rehearse 21st-century competences alongside verbal competence.

4.4. YLE TASKS FOSTERING 21ST-CENTURY COMPETENCES (CRITICAL THINKING, COLLABORATION, CREATIVITY)

Cross-case evidence indicates that YLE-aligned preparation cultivates critical thinking and collaboration when task design makes reasoning and joint problem-solving structurally unavoidable. Distractor-rich prompts and excess information oblige learners to justify selections and revise initial hypotheses (AO, 00:41:21–00:42:37; HV, 00:41:46–00:47:31). Creativity at A1 emerges as recombination and reformulation connecting features, paraphrasing, proposing alternatives rather than open-ended invention, which is developmentally consonant with the level. A minority caution is salient: transversal gains should be attributed to pedagogy around the tasks, not to the certificate per se; design choices role rotation, pair rehearsal, required rationale expand opportunities for collaboration and analytic flexibility (HV, 00:50:13–00:53:22; CA, 00:41:21–00:42:37). We can imply that the Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity (4Cs) can be authentically rehearsed at beginner bands when reason-giving and joint checking are baked into task routines. We next examine how these tasks families map onto CEFR expectations for young learners.

4.5. YLE TASKS AND THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH CEFR (PRE-A1/A1/A2) FOR YOUNG LEARNERS.

Interviewees concur that YLE was purpose-built to operationalise beginner-band CEFR performance for children, with scoring profiles that render intelligibility, short coherent turns, and supported interaction visible to teachers. AO's one-word verdict, "Brilliantly", captures the prevailing view (AO, 00:43:11–00:43:12). Examiners describe finer-grained assessment (production, pronunciation, interaction) that tightens the mapping between descriptors and observable behaviour (SL, 00:37:17–00:43:27); (AL, see attachment C , 00:46:31–00:50:04). HV notes that Flyers can brush against A2 receptively without demanding sustained A2 production (00:54:50–01:00:58). CA underscores child-appropriate interlocution and task

design in speaking assessment, lowering performance load while still sampling target behaviours (01:15:22–01:18:49). CEFR provides reliable guardrails to calibrate task demand and interpret growth at Pre-A1/A1/A2. Alignment notwithstanding, real classrooms face constraints; the following section identifies those and the reflexive responses that mitigate them.

4.6. THE CONSTRAINTS WHEN DEVELOPING VERBAL COMPETENCES VIA YLE PREPARATION

Constraints cluster around classroom logistics, talk distribution, and assessment-related affect. Layout and transition time condition participation; in 50-minute lessons, repeated furniture shifts are prohibitive and dampen momentum (SL, 00:52:29–00:55:47). Overlong teacher talk narrows the speaking cohort, whereas compressing instructions and foregrounding STT expands opportunities (SL, 00:50:16–00:50:47). Exam-specific affect matters: anxiety rises with unfamiliar interlocutors, suggesting that entry into Movers/Flyers should match age and prior exposure to interview-style turns (HV, 01:00:58–01:06:15). Under pressure, phoneme-level slips increase (e.g., /j/ vs /tj/ in church), warranting explicit, brief phonemic-awareness work tied to immediate use (CA, 01:06:32–01:13:17). We can consider gains hinge on managing enabling conditions; where logistics, talk-time, and affect are controlled, YLE preparation yields reliable improvements in listening and speaking. Finally, we turn to longer-term outcomes and transfer effects beyond the immediate unit.

4.7. LONGER-TERM BENEFITS FROM YLE TASKS IMPLEMENTATION.

Cross-case testimony and classroom records point to durable gains in confidence, connected speech, and exam literacy (gist/detail tracking; distractor handling) that consolidate across the year and carry forward to subsequent cohorts. Practitioners report that regular YLE-style practice “builds confidence, fluency, and efficient test literacy,” including the

ability to filter noise in listening (AO, 00:49:14–00:52:05), while YLE at year’s end primarily validates growth produced by interaction-first pedagogy (HV, 01:20:28–01:21:28). Where pronunciation, phonemic awareness, and functional language are integrated systematically, compounding benefits “accumulate across years” (CA, 01:18:49–01:26:17). It becomes rather evident that long-term outcomes depend less on episodic exam practice than on year-long orchestration of YLE-aligned design; the external exam functions as a summative mirror of habits established in class.

4.8. EXTENDED EVIDENCE MATRIX (INTERVIEW EXCERPTS WITH TIMESTAMPS)

Table 3 – *Extended Evidence Matrix with participants anonymised*

| Q | AO | SL | LB | HV | AL | CA |
|----|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| Q1 | "From isolated ... to complete sentences ... fluent" (00:08:13–00:11:07) | "Integrates skills; mirrors real communication" (00:11:37–00:14:15) | "Huge impact... criteria push longer turns" (overview) | "Validates outcomes; teaching does the heavy lifting" (01:20:28–01:21:28) | "Richer production than standard L/C" (00:13:58–00:20:00) | "phonemic awareness + chunks → confident speaking" (01:18:49–01:26:17) |
| Q2 | "More info than needed → elimination" (00:12:16–00:14:10) | "intl books structured by skills" (00:16:44–00:22:09) | "Local materials grammar-first; Cambridge embeds use" (overview) | "intl series embed YLE-like tasks; avoid uncontrolled lexis" (00:44:44–00:48:50; 00:32:29–00:36:08) | "Multimodal input in YLE listening" (00:21:28–00:25:49) | "Kids Box/Power Up prime exam-type tasks from the start" (00:06:14–00:11:31; 00:17:25–00:21:45) |
| Q3 | "four skills; complete sentences from day one" (00:31:23–00:39:36) | "short rotations, TPR, roles" (00:27:20–00:33:34) | "STT ≈ 60%; pre-teach" (00:21:33–00:22:11) | "use visuals to practise/revise; learner–learner Qs" (00:20:11–00:22:38; 00:38:25–00:41:38) | "hands-on prompts" (00:32:40–00:42:55) | "chants → predict → role-play → freer" (00:47:24–00:51:14; 00:53:19–01:02:39) |
| Q4 | "elimination fosters reasoning" (00:41:21–00:42:37) | "collaboration/turn-taking" (00:34:46–00:36:02) | "analysis + collaboration are inevitable" (00:41:46–00:47:31) | "don't over-attribute; pedagogy matters" (00:50:13–00:53:22) | "reasoning via task variety" (00:43:00–00:46:01) | "distractors require justifying choices" (00:41:21–00:42:37) |
| Q5 | "Brilliantly" (00:43:11–00:43:12) | "standardisation; skill profiles" (00:37:17–00:43:27) | "alignment via trialing/research" (overview) | "labels basic but fair; Flyers brushes A2" (00:54:50–01:00:58) | "1–5 grading for production/pronunciation/interaction" (00:46:31–00:50:04) | "supportive interlocution; child-appropriate mapping" (01:15:22–01:18:49) |
| Q6 | "routines mitigate" (00:44:30–00:45:07) | "layout/time; reduce TTT" (00:52:29–00:55:47; 00:50:16–00:50:47) | "planning + Special Needs Education (SEN) awareness" (overview) | "anxiety with unfamiliar assessors; choose entries wisely" (01:00:58–01:06:15) | "metacognition/dictation links" (00:50:14–00:58:27) | "stress → phoneme slips; target phonemic awareness" (01:06:32–01:13:17) |
| Q7 | "confidence + test literacy" (00:49:14–00:52:05) | "durable outcomes via holistic focus" (~01:01:55) | "foundation for later A/B results" (overview) | "external validation; progress from consistent pedagogy" (01:20:28–01:21:28) | "counteracts grammar-heavy routines" (01:09:39–01:16:46) | "pronunciation + functional language compound across years" (01:18:49–01:26:17) |

Note. Participants are anonymised: AO, SL, LB, HV, AL, CA denote interviewees. Timestamps are hh:mm:ss–hh:mm:ss from the audio recordings. Ellipses (⋯) indicate truncation; quotation marks denote verbatim excerpts lightly edited for readability. → indicates sequence; ≈ indicates approximate value. Author-created table from primary interview data.

CHAPTER 5: INTEGRATED DISCUSSION: TRIANGULATION OF DATA AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS: LINKING EXPERT VIEWS AND PRACTICAL OUTCOMES TO THEORY

The interview evidence indicates coupled gains in listening decoding and spoken fluency when YLE-aligned work is embedded across the year. Teachers describe a progression from telegraphic output to sentence-level production and short, coherent turns as learners improve at mapping auditory input to response: “from isolated sentences ... into actually ... construct[ing] a complete sentence and then ... us[ing] it ... fluently” (AO, interview, 00:08:13–00:11:07). This pattern is consistent with Communicative Competence (integration of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic knowledge) and with TBLT, where meaning-focused tasks drive form noticing. Listening tasks that engineer excess information and distractors train selective attention and justification of choices, thereby lowering cognitive load during production, “kids are given more information than they need ... ten words and ... only five spaces” (AO, 00:12:16–00:14:10). Gains in pronunciation arise where programmes explicitly target phonemic awareness and connected speech, because stress and novelty can trigger phoneme-level slips (e.g., /j/ vs /tj/ in church), which are mitigated by coupling micro-focus with immediate communicative use (CA, 01:06:32–01:13:17; 00:47:24–00:51:14; 00:53:19–01:02:39). Practitioners also emphasise the validating rather than causative role of the exam event: “end-of-year YLE-style practice validates outcomes; the year’s teaching does the heavy lifting” (HV, 01:20:28–01:21:28). These mechanisms align with CEFR’s integrated reception–production view at beginner bands (Pre-A1/A1/A2), where intelligibility and interactional management are central.

YLE adds beyond many grammar-first textbooks by baking in multimodal prompts, narrativized visuals and elimination-style activities across the year, normalising extended turns and interactional moves (CA, 00:06:14–00:11:31; 00:17:25–00:21:45). Participants caution against importing decontextualised exam audios with uncontrolled lexis for younger cohorts, arguing that principled task sequencing matters as much as task type (HV, 00:44:44–00:48:50; 00:32:29–00:36:08). Regarding 21st-century competences, the data support a

nanced claim: distractor-rich tasks that require learners to explain choices, reconsider assumptions, and negotiate interpretations can foster critical thinking and collaboration (HV, 00:41:46–00:47:31; AO, 00:41:21–00:42:37), but transversal outcomes are not automatic. They arise primarily from pedagogical design, how teachers stage tasks, structure peer work, and prompt metacognitive talk, rather than from exam preparation per se (HV, 00:50:13–00:53:22).

5.2. CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Feasibility is shaped by class size, room layout, transition time, and teacher-talk time. A 50-minute lesson cannot absorb multiple whole-class rearrangements; routines must minimise reconfiguration and preserve interactional density (SL, 00:52:29–00:55:47). Targets such as STT \approx 60% and using visuals mainly for practice/recycling rather than first presentation help maintain momentum (LB, 00:21:33–00:22:11; HV, 00:20:11–00:22:38). Anxiety associated with unfamiliar assessors argues for gradual familiarisation and age-appropriate entry to Movers/Flyers (HV, 01:00:58–01:06:15). For younger learners, a standing phonology strand mitigates stress-related perception/production lapses (CA, 01:06:32–01:13:17). Within these constraints, teachers report stronger verbal-competence growth where routines are firm, transitions are planned, reinforcement is positive, and SEN aware grouping is in place.

Alongside logistical and pedagogical constraints, feasibility is bounded by concrete features of lesson ecology that have immediate procedural implications. Class size and spatial configuration determine whether pair and small-group work can occur without prohibitive noise and movement costs; in larger groups, seating plans that pre-form stable triads or quads reduce transition time and protect interactional density. A 50-minute lesson cannot absorb repeated whole-class rearrangements, so routines need to front-load materials, fix turn-taking patterns, and script micro-transitions between stages. Teacher-talk time must be disciplined so that student-talk time approaches the target proportion, for example approximately 60 percent, especially during practice and recycling phases. Visuals and manipulatives are most efficient when reserved for consolidation rather than initial presentation, which minimises

cognitive load and time lost to explanation. Where mixed-attainment and SEN profiles are present, planned heterogeneity within groups, predictable roles, and positive reinforcement lower anxiety and sustain participation. Methodologically, the action-research frame adds limits that qualify inference. The practitioner-researcher position is vulnerable to allegiance and expectancy bias; the single-site, small-sample setting restricts external validity; and the observer effect can modify participation patterns simply because classroom processes are being studied. These risks can be tempered by triangulating artefacts, learner products, and interviews, by keeping a reflexive audit trail, and by informal member-checking, but they cannot be eliminated. Conclusions are therefore best framed as analytically transferable to comparable contexts rather than statistically generalisable.

Evaluation and contextual constraints further shape both pedagogy and how evidence is interpreted. Alignment to pacing guides and accountability calendars creates pressure for coverage and predictability, which compresses task diversity and privileges familiar formats that map onto examinations. As proximity to assessment increases, classrooms tend to narrow towards test-like tasks and timing, a pattern that can generate negative washback by crowding out exploratory talk, creative language play, and productive risk-taking. The interpretive weight attached to exam results must therefore be moderated by a construct-validity argument. Movers and Flyers provide constrained samples of early L2 micro-skills and routine interactional moves; they offer reliable information about accuracy, recall, and brief responsive exchanges, but they only partially represent broader twenty-first-century competences such as collaboration, strategic self-regulation, integrated problem-solving, creativity, and, where relevant, digital and intercultural literacies. Claims about growth in verbal competence should be embedded within a wider evidence set that inspects content alignment, the cognitive and interactional processes elicited by tasks, coherence across instruments, and the educational consequences of assessment use. In practical terms, exam-aligned routines should be deliberately paired with project-based and cooperative tasks, portfolio artefacts, and formative rubrics that elicit those wider competences while maintaining coherence with the assessed construct, thereby mitigating negative washback and preserving the breadth of learning the curriculum intends to cultivate.

Equity and access also constrain feasibility and the interpretation of outcomes. Private examination fees can exclude or discourage participation among some learners, producing self-selection effects and limiting the generalisability of results to those who can afford certification. Where preparation materials or tutoring are unevenly distributed, apparent gains may partly index access to resources rather than instructional impact. A pragmatic response is to decouple classroom evidence from external certification for evaluative purposes, to offer fee support where possible, and to maintain parallel, classroom-based documentation of progress so that judgments do not hinge on ability to pay.

Cultural and linguistic bias in standardised materials further affects cue salience and task fairness. Visuals, names, and pragmatic routines are often anchored in Anglophone, middle-class schemas; for some pupils, the cultural load competes with the linguistic one, depressing performance on otherwise attainable items. Local calibration helps pre-teaching cultural scripts that are integral to item comprehension, selectively localising task content without altering its construct, and allowing limited bilingual glosses for culturally dense lexis in pre-task phases while keeping target-language demands intact during assessment.

Curricular narrowing remains a salient risk when exam preparation becomes the governing logic of lesson design. As assessment nears, time budgets shift toward format rehearsal and away from broader communicative work; over time, this displaces open tasks that cultivate initiative, curiosity, and problem-finding. To protect breadth, programmes should ring-fence a proportion of weekly time for tasks not isomorphic with the exam, maintain project-based cycles that require collaborative planning and reflection, and use formative rubrics that value reasoning and interactional moves alongside accuracy.

Finally, an over-emphasis on assessment-driven learning can crowd out exploratory play, which is pedagogically significant for young learners' oral development. Structured play episodes, free-choice centres with language prompts, and short improvisational dramatizations support spontaneity, self-regulation, and risk-taking in ways that tightly scripted exam formats do not. Incorporating such episodes on a predictable cadence sustains motivation, mitigates anxiety, and supplies complementary evidence of competence. Taken together, attention to cost barriers, cultural bias, curricular breadth, and the role of

exploratory play strengthens the validity argument for inferences about verbal competence and aligns assessment practice with the wider profile of twenty-first-century learning.

5.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLASSROOM CONTEXTS

At lesson level, keep pre-task language focusing brief and immediately follow with purposeful tasks that require learners to use the targeted forms to achieve a concrete goal; repurpose exam visuals for consolidation rather than first presentation. Build a weekly phonology micro-strand (salient segmental contrasts; simple connected-speech features) and “spend” it in communicative use within the same session. Plan for high STT via structured pair work and prompts with manageable distractors and calibrate feedback to the verbal-competence dimensions a task targets (listening discrimination, extended turns, interactional moves, intelligibility). At programme level, adopt or adapt materials that integrate YLE-like task properties across the year, rather than compressing exposure near the exam window, so attentional and interactional routines are normalised in everyday lessons. Strengthen assessment literacy by operationalising a shared profile of verbal competences mapped to Pre-A1/A1/A2 for children, and by converting YLE task families into formative checks: listening with distractors for discrimination + rationale; picture-based dialogue for turn management + formulaic language; storytelling from sequences for cohesion + prosodic control. This reframes the exam interface from external imposition to instructionally useful feedback while preserving learner wellbeing and developmental appropriateness.

Implementation fidelity and sustainability constitute an additional constraint set that conditions both outcomes and transferability. Fidelity is vulnerable to task substitution, drift in timing, and dilution of oral practice when unexpected events compress lessons; dosage is likewise sensitive to cancellations and uneven weekly timetables, which can erode cumulative gains if spacing is irregular. Minimum conditions for viability include predictable scheduling, rapid access to materials, and brief co-planning time where classes are shared or supported, so that micro-transitions and grouping are prepared rather than improvised. Teacher

assessment literacy also functions as an enabling constraint: without shared criteria and routines for interpreting Movers and Flyers evidence, feedback risks collapsing into score reporting and loses formative value. Communication with families is pertinent, because unmanaged expectations can amplify exam pressure and inadvertently reduce space for exploratory talk. Finally, equity considerations intersect with feasibility: learners with special education needs, newcomers with emergent L2, or pupils with limited out-of-school exposure require adapted pacing, scaffolded prompts, and alternative evidence of progress; absent such adjustments, the same routines can widen participation gaps.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE: THE CASE STUDY FINDINGS

6.1. CASE STUDY DESIGN AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH FOR LESSON OBSERVATION

This chapter triangulates the interview-based results with classroom evidence gathered during the supervised practicum at a private educational institution in Porto. The aim is to examine whether the mechanisms identified in previously such as distractor-aware listening, extended turns, interactional management, intelligible production, and light justification are observable in situated lessons designed with YLE-style tasks and CEFR-aligned targets for young learners at A1.

The lessons were taught to mixed ability third graders (A1/A1.2/A2). Activities were embedded within the school's ongoing scheme of work and used child-appropriate visuals and task formats. No personal learner data were collected; pupils were anonymised in all notes and artefacts; participation was routine classroom participation with opt-out available through the school's standing protocol. Classroom notes and lesson artefacts were stored securely and are reported here in aggregate to protect confidentiality.

The mini-corpus comprises four information-rich lessons: two listening-focused revision sessions built around Movers-style task families and two speaking-centred sessions rehearsing picture description, differences, and light reasoning. Evidence was recorded through structured field notes, lesson plans, and learner artefacts (worksheets and projected materials). Analysis followed a pragmatic qualitative procedure: open coding during and immediately after each lesson, then axial clustering against the study's verbal-competence dimensions: listening discrimination (LD); extended turns/fluency (ET); interactional management (IM); intelligibility/pronunciation (INTEL); and a transversal behaviour, simple justification/collaboration (4C). The same codes organised in previous, allowing direct comparison between practitioner testimony and classroom observation.

Across the four lessons, tasks were intentionally drawn from Cambridge YLE families adapted for A1: "listen and draw lines," "listen and write," "listen and tick," "listen/colour," picture description ("What can you see?"), picture comparison and difference-spotting ("How is picture B different from A?"), and game-based formats such as Guess Who and Odd One Out that require short justifications. Lessons followed a light TBLT arc: brief language focusing; task cycle; short reflection. Phonology received micro-attention (e.g., /ð/ in there/than, plural endings, connected speech in there are), typically tied to the lexis that immediately surfaced in tasks.

6.2. LESSON 1 ANALYSIS: DEVELOPING VERBAL COMPETENCE THROUGH LISTENING TASKS IN YLE FORMAT.

This revision lesson (attachment I) was delivered to the same third-grade cohort of approximately twenty-four learners and ran slightly over the scheduled hour by about five minutes. The pedagogic aim was to refresh high-frequency countryside and routine vocabulary and to familiarise pupils with exam-style listening under conditions that mirror Cambridge A1 Movers. The lesson opened with a short flashcard-based (attachment K) vocabulary review aligned to YLE lexis, followed by a multi-part worksheet (attachment J) covering the canonical task families: listen and draw lines, listen and write, listen and tick, and

listen and colour. The lesson plan explicitly framed the session as a confidence-building rehearsal for the forthcoming listening test and identified visual flashcards, PowerPoint prompts, and a worksheet as the core materials.

Implementation adhered closely to exam pacing while keeping routines predictable. Each audio item was played up to three times at natural speed; no slow replay was required. Pupils worked individually and then moved to whole-class checking led by the teacher rather than pair-checking. This choice preserved momentum and ensured that criteria and exemplars were modelled consistently during review. The worksheet sequence replicated the Movers format, which allowed pupils to practice locating information in pictures, writing short items from dictation, and selecting among minimally contrasted options. The plans rationale for flexible timing proved pertinent, since explanation and answer verification are time-sensitive in revision contexts and can otherwise displace actual listening practice.

Evidence from learner performance concentrated around Exercises 2 and 3. In the listen-and-write activity, slips clustered where auditory cues were not reinforced by strong visual anchors; pupils hesitated with gap-fills that required accurate decoding without contextual props. In the family-weekend mapping task, difficulty centred on identifying who did what and aligning aural references to the correct individual in the scene. These patterns were expected in a first explicit rehearsal of exam-style listening because item formats require reliable cue selection and immediate mapping to written or pictorial fields. Although extended oral turns were not targeted, brief read backs during correction surfaced segmental issues that can be addressed in subsequent micro-focus work. Accuracy stabilised most clearly where the lexical field overlapped with the initial countryside and routine warm-up, which supports the decision to front-load that vocabulary.

From a practitioner perspective, this was the first lesson I taught fully within a YLE listening frame and that standpoint shaped both pacing and support. The exam-like structure was advantageous because it provided a clear diagnostic lens; I could see, in real time, which sub-skills were secure and which required targeted attention, particularly cue selection and rapid alignment to response formats. At the same time, adaptation costs were visible. Several pupils needed careful explanation of exemplars before settling into the rhythm of the sets;

the absence of pair-checking made the room quieter but placed more responsibility on teacher-led clarification; and the forty-to-fifty-minute window felt tight once explanation, three replays, and whole-class checking were all included. Because this was my first full listening rehearsal, I made no mid-lesson adjustments. In later sessions I intend to keep instructions lean, protect a short verification pause before plenary, and use minimal prompts in write-in items to prevent time loss without diluting the listening demand.

In code terms, listening discrimination improved when pupils encountered repeated natural-speed exposure within a fixed three-replay ceiling and then verified during teacher-led review; extended turns were not a design focus and appeared only as short read-backs; interactional management relied on a stable listen–write–teacher-check cycle rather than peer routines; intelligibility issues surfaced episodically during read-backs on items with limited visual support; and simple justification was emergent only when pupils were asked to explain choices during correction. These outcomes are consistent with an accuracy-oriented revision whose primary function is to stabilise cue selection and task familiarity ahead of assessment.

6.3. LESSON 2 ANALYSIS: DEVELOPING VERBAL COMPETENCE THROUGH SPEAKING TASKS (A1)

This lesson (attachment I) was taught to a regular third-grade class (≈24 pupils). The pedagogic aim was to move learners from single lexical items to short, coherent turns in picture description and comparison, referenced to CEFR A1 expectations (intelligibility and short supported turns) and to the YLE Movers Speaking Part 1 task family. After a two-minute model and a brief controlled practice of there is/are with basic prepositions, pupils worked in pair rehearsal (60–90 seconds) before giving public turns. A frame ladder remained visible throughout, There is/are → In A ... but in B ... → I think ... because ..., so that discourse progression was externalised. Participation was distributed with name sticks. I made the success criteria explicit: intelligibility (salient segmental such as /ð/ in there and plural –s),

extended turn (two to three linked clauses), and interactional management (clear entry plus a brief follow-up move).

Learner output reflected these targets. One excerpt (attachment m) is illustrative: “In picture A there are two cows, but in picture B there is one.” Another pupil produced: “There is a river and there are four sheep.” When I briefly removed the pair-rehearsal step in one cycle, participation narrowed to the most confident voices and turns shortened; reinstating pair prep reopened the floor and restored clause chaining. A 60–90 second micro-focus on /ð/ and plural –s, immediately “spent” in speech, lifted intelligibility at the point of use.

In this lesson I observed a marked improvement across the cohort, including pupils who typically hesitate in whole-class talk. Two features seem to explain this. First, cognitive offloading through visible scaffolds: the frame ladder reduced the planning burden, allowing weaker speakers to allocate attention to pronunciation and message rather than clause design. Second, affective safety through routine: knowing that pair rehearsal always precedes a public turn lowered performance anxiety and normalised risk-taking. These enabling conditions translated into broader participation (more names drawn yielded completed turns) and qualitatively better turns (more A/B contrasts followed by a justification). I also noticed that brief phonology “bursts” are only productive when immediately followed by use; when delayed, gains in /ð/ and plural marking faded quickly. This confirms a principle I will carry forward micro-focus must be embedded in the interactional sequence, not appended as a detached drill.

Analytically, two mechanisms appear to underpin the gains. The frame ladder materialised discourse structure, converting visual noticing into extended turns. Pair rehearsal reduced performance load and strengthened interactional management, giving quieter pupils a rehearsed entry to speech. This pattern aligns with CLT/TBLT (meaning-focused, outcome-oriented tasks) and with CEFR A1 expectations (short, intelligible, supported turns).

In immediate response, I made pair rehearsal non-negotiable before all plenary turns, kept the frame visible throughout, and added a 10-second “because ...” nudge after each stated difference so that justification became integral rather than optional. These adjustments

broadened participation, lengthened turns, and stabilised intelligibility. Conceptually, the lesson operationalised CLT (interactional management and purposeful use) and TBLT (task with a communicative product), functioning as direct rehearsal for YLE Movers Speaking Part 1 at A1.

6.4. LESSON 3 ANALYSIS: THE IMPACT OF SPEAKING AND COLLABORATIVE TASKS (A2)

With the same third-grade cohort (≈ 24 pupils), this lesson (attachment p) aimed to elicit quick descriptive turns with justified choices, linking comparison language to simple reasoning. Target performance was referenced to CEFR A1 (short supported turns, intelligibility, basic interactional moves) and rehearsed functions typical of YLE Movers picture description and comparison. I ran two short cycles: in Guess Who (attachment q), one pupil described a character through stacked features while peers inferred and checked; in Odd One Out, pupils selected which item did not fit a visual set and then justified the choice. Roles rotated to distribute talk, and a compact scaffold remained visible He/she has... \rightarrow X is adj-er than Y \rightarrow ... because.... Each round included pair preparation (30–45 seconds) immediately before public turns, with tight timeboxes to maintain pace. Success criteria were explicit: intelligibility (salient segmental and endings), extended turn (a description or comparison plus a reason), and interactional management (clear turn entry; brief peer challenge/acceptance).

Learner output showed movement toward the target profile. During Guess Who (attachment q), one pupil produced, “She has long hair, she’s young/she is younger than X, and she has glasses,” prompting peers to hypothesise and then self-correct. In Odd One Out, a pupil stated, “The father is older than the children, so he is the odd one out,” followed by a short peer exchange, “Do we agree? Why?”, that generated reformulations and clearer comparatives. Where pair prep was skipped, reasons dropped out and responses collapsed to one-word selections; reinstating the pre-turn rehearsal restored fuller sentences and justifications.

This lesson convinced me that integrating CLT and TBLT principles did more than raise participation, it improved learning conditions. The interactional design (role rotation, pair rehearsal, brief peer challenge) created a low-stakes, high-talk environment that supported hesitant pupils and sustained focus. Crucially, the visual organisation of the tasks mattered: rich, discriminable images anchored meaning and reduced planning load, so learners could invest effort in verbal competence (linking propositions, providing a rationale, managing turns) rather than merely producing isolated forms. I saw the difference between verbal production (e.g., “taller”) and verbal competence (e.g., “The father is older than the children, so he is the odd one out”), and the lesson design nudged pupils toward the latter. Aligning CEFR A1 descriptors with YLE-type task families also acted as a guardrail: it kept demands at an appropriate grain size, intelligible short turns with support, so the work was neither over-pitched (leading to breakdown) nor under-pitched (inviting one-word answers). In short, the combination of CLT/TBLT routines, purposeful visuals, and CEFR-informed task selection enabled pupils to reason aloud within their developmental band, which is the profile they will need for YLE speaking.

6.5. LESSON 4 ANALYSIS: THE PROGRESSION OF LISTENING PRACTICE SET 2 (A1)

This was a deliberately calmer session (attachment n) with the same third-grade cohort (≈24 pupils), designed to consolidate listening discrimination and to make the link from receptive processing to brief, purposeful output. The task followed the YLE Starters/Movers Listening Part 2 family (attachment o): a scene picture plus multiple object cards, engineered with excess options and child-scaled distractors (near-synonyms; minimal pairs; spatial contrasts such as in/on/under/next to). I used a restrained replay ladder (natural → slow only if needed) and required partners to whisper the action before placing, followed by a short justify-your-choice prompt (10–15 seconds). Target performance was referenced to CEFR A1 listening (short utterances for gist/detail; supported understanding) and to the same success criteria as in Cases 1–2: intelligibility (for brief micro-outputs), extended turn (here, a clause + rationale), and interactional management (listen–decide–explain within a timebox).

The class proceeded smoothly and, more importantly, revealed clear transfer from earlier lessons. Pupils demonstrated noticeably faster decoding of instructions and fewer random placements; when errors occurred, they were typically resolved during the active-listening phase of correction, where learners attended to the slow replay and adjusted based on the critical cue (e.g., shifting from next to to under). What had begun as passive listening earlier in the term now behaved as two-stage listening: first, quiet individual decoding; second, short, pair-mediated explanation tied to action. Representative micro-episodes captured this: a pupil whispered “under the chair... not next to... because he says under” before placing correctly; another moved a card from near to in the box after the slow replay and a partner’s prompt. These routines, repeated across items, produced fewer replays and steadier accuracy by mid-set.

I read this lesson as evidence that prior YLE-aligned work had primed pupils for both passive listening (silent parsing of cues) and active listening (listening to correct, to justify, and to instruct a peer). Embedding CEFR A1 descriptors alongside YLE task families gave me a reliable calibration frame: I could see, in real time, whether pupils were meeting the band expectations (understanding short utterances with support; producing an intelligible one-clause rationale) and adjust the replay ladder or lexis accordingly. Crucially, the short dialogic inserts, “What did you hear?” / “Why here?”, did double duty. They converted listening into accountable reasoning (a 21st-century critical-thinking move), required concise communication of the rationale, and, in pairs, fostered collaboration through micro-negotiation of placement. On a few items, pupils proposed alternative solutions based on visual evidence, which, in miniature, exercised creativity as recombination rather than invention, which is appropriate for A1. In sum, the session confirmed that a calm tempo with tight routines can cultivate 4Cs without leaving the developmental band.

Analytically, the enabling conditions mirror those in the speaking cases but in receptive form: engineered distractors trained selective attention; the replay ladder supported verification without flooding working memory; and pair micro-output bound perception to production, preventing listening from remaining inert. Because tasks and criteria were CEFR/YLE-aligned, the challenge level neither over-reached (which would have produced guessing) nor under-reached (which would have yielded one-word placements).

In immediate response, I standardised the 10–15 second justify-your-choice move after every item, trimmed my instructions to preserve momentum, and staged object cards to minimise transition loss. I also logged brief CEFR-noted observations (e.g., “A1, intelligible rationale with support; needs cue for under vs next to”), which gave me a concise record of progress and needs. Overall, the lesson confirmed that year-long orchestration of YLE-style listening, paired with CEFR-referenced criteria and short dialogic moments, yields measurable improvements in decoding, active correction, and the communication–collaboration–critical thinking triad essential to 21st-century learning.

Having examined each lesson individually, we now turn to the mechanisms that operate across these cases and the pedagogical principles they highlight.

6.6. CROSS-LESSON SYNTHESIS OF OBSERVED PRACTICES AND CONTRAINTS AND LIMITATION FOUND.

Across the four lessons (attachments L through O), gains in verbal competence were conditional on a stable interactional architecture that matched the purpose of each lesson type. In the speaking lessons (6.3 and 6.4), brief modelling, visible frame ladders that externalised discourse moves, and mandatory pair rehearsal prior to plenary created predictable entry points and reduced planning load; when this choreography was intact, participation broadened beyond confident speakers, intelligibility stabilised at point of need and turns lengthened with minimal cognitive drag. In the listening lessons, progress depended on predictable exposure and accountable verification. The revision class (6.2) used a fixed three-replay ceiling at natural speed followed by teacher-led checking, which consolidated task familiarity and cue selection for learners new to YLE formats. The calmer consolidation session (6.5) paired a restrained replay ladder with a whisper-and-justify micro-output, which converted passive reception into selective attention plus brief reasons. Wherever an element was temporarily removed, performance contracted: skipping pair rehearsal in 6.3 narrowed participation and shortened turns and omitting justification in 6.5 increased guessing and

replay requests. These patterns indicate that routines are not ancillary but constitutive of progress in LD, ET, IM, INTEL and 4C.

Links between listening and speaking were also evident. Engineered distractors and bounded replays trained selective attention during listening, while swift justifications bound perception to production. The same attentional discipline then resurfaced in speaking as clause chaining supported by frame ladders and as reason-giving embedded through an explicit “because” move. The pathway remained consistent across lessons: calibrated input, selective attention, micro-output with rationale, and then a coherent public turn. From a practitioner perspective, the first full YLE-style listening rehearsal (6.2) made adaptation costs visible. Learners needed explicit modelling of examples and reassurance about pacing, and the lesson window felt tight once explanation, three plays, and whole-class checking were included. Even so, the exam-like structure provided a clear diagnostic lens that helped prime specific sub-skills and gave a reliable sense of each learner’s profile within the A1 band.

Anchoring tasks in CEFR A1 descriptors alongside YLE families kept the challenge at an appropriate grain size: short intelligible turns under support, child-scaled interactional moves, and bounded but genuine reasoning. Within that band, design choices made the 4Cs structurally unavoidable rather than incidental. Critical thinking appeared as elimination and justification during checking and comparison; communication was exercised through concise and intelligible clause chaining; collaboration was normalised through pair rehearsal, peer prompts, and brief uptake moves; creativity emerged as recombination and reformulation appropriate to A1 rather than open-ended invention. The Classroom Evidence Matrix summarises these outcomes: Lesson 1 contributes primarily to LD with limited ET by design; Lessons 2 and 3 show sustained gains in ET, IM and INTEL under frame-and-rehearsal conditions; Lesson 4 strengthens LD while eliciting consistent 4C micro-justifications. Collectively, the four lessons specify the boundary conditions under which verbal-competence growth is most likely to appear and to be shared across the cohort.

Implications for practice. The results point to design, not certification, as the engine of growth. For assessment and planning, embedding CEFR-noted observations in lesson records

(e.g., “A1: intelligible one-clause rationale with support”) provides a concise calibration tool and guards against both over- and under-pitching.

The analysis privileges explanatory adequacy over breadth. No quantitative attainment data were collected; evidence rests on field notes and artefacts. Whole class speaking can still concentrate turns among confident pupils unless equity tools (pair rehearsal, role rotation, non-volunteer cold calls with preparation time) are used consistently. Time constraints in 60-minute blocks limit depth of feedback across multi-part listening sets; focusing whole-class feedback on common confusable is a pragmatic compromise. These boundaries do not weaken the claims but specify the enabling conditions under which YLE-oriented pedagogy best supports A1 learners.

6.7. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND PROGRAMME DESIGN

At lesson level, keep pre-task focusing brief and move quickly into purposeful tasks; embed a weekly phonology micro-strand tied to the language immediately needed; require a short justify-your-choice move in listening review; and protect pair rehearsal before whole-class turns. At programme level, integrate YLE-style task properties across the year rather than concentrating them near the test window, so attentional and interactional routines are normalised. Finally, treat YLE tasks as formative samples: picture-based dialogue to monitor turn management and formulaic language; difference-spotting to sample cohesion; listening with distractors to check discrimination and rationale. In this way, assessment ceases to be an external event and becomes a continuous source of instructionally useful feedback while keeping demands developmentally appropriate for young learners.

To synthesise the classroom corpus at a glance, a matrix was created (see table 4) to help map each lesson’s YLE task families (e.g., Movers-style listening sets; picture description and A/B differences; game-based Guess Who and Odd One Out) to CEFR A1 targets for young learners and the five analytic dimensions of verbal competence employed in this study, listening discrimination (LD), extended turns/fluency (ET), interactional management (IM), intelligibility/pronunciation (INTEL), and simple justification/collaboration (4C). The entries

provide a qualitative summary of observed outcomes alongside a concise “key implication” that translates evidence into an actionable micro-adjustment for teaching (e.g., replay ladders, pair “why this?” turns, brief phonology bursts, frame ladders, safe correction). Read alongside this chapter, the matrix serves as a triangulation device, showing how the same mechanisms identified by practitioners manifest in situ without reliance on test scores, thereby linking task design to verbal-competence behaviours and light 21st-century affordances in A1 classrooms.

Table 4 – Classroom Evidence Matrix: YLE task families x verbal-competence dimensions (A1, third grade)

| Lesson | YLE task families used | CEFR A1 targets (child-friendly) | LD – Listening discrimination | ET – Extended turns / fluency | IM – Interactional management | INTEL – Intelligibility / pronunciation | 4C – Justification / collaboration | Key implication |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| L1 – Listening Revision | Listen–draw lines; listen–write; listen–tick; listen–colour (Movers/Starters families) | Understand short instructions; recognise familiar words; locate items in pictures | Improved under a fixed three-play ceiling at natural speed; strongest in Parts 1–3; weaker where items lacked visual anchors. | Minimal by design (confirmations only) | Individual completion; teacher-led plenary verification; no pair-check in this lesson | Surfaced only during read-backs in checking; slips with time expressions and familiar nouns when visual support was weak | Latent; brief rationales appeared only when prompted during plenary. | Model one exemplar live; keep a three-play ceiling; add a short verification pause before plenary; if time allows, 30–45 s pair 'why this?' to convert ticks into accountable choices; defer micro phonology to follow-u |
| L2 – Speaking (There is/are) | Picture description; A/B differences (PB/AB p.16) | Produce short, coherent turns on familiar scenes; respond to simple questions | – (supporting) | Sentence-level output stable; some clause chaining (and/but) | Better with pair rehearsal; public correction reduced willingness | /ð/ in there; plural -s; linking in there are need micro-drill | Simple reasons when frames included because | Use safe correction (pair whisper → public turn); show frame ladder A→B→C; 90s phonology burst before board |
| L3 – Whole-Class Speaking Games | Guess Who; Find the Differences; Odd One Out (comparatives) | Describe people/scenes; use comparatives; answer and justify choices | Selective attention to multiple descriptors; reject plausible wrongs | Many multi-feature turns; comparatives + reason in Odd One Out | Game structure supported broad turn-taking; add role rotation for equity | Occasional /ð/ and comparative endings under excitement | Strong: because... + peer evaluation ("Do we agree?") | Keep timeboxes, role cards, tally grid; mini-drill /ð/, are, -er; require justification for every choice |
| L4 – Listening Set 2 | Full Movers set (Parts 1–5) | Follow 2–3-step instructions; identify specific details | Clear within-lesson gains with slow → natural → slow replays | Emerging via brief rationales in review | Pair compare before plenary broadened voices | Slips on numbers/finals; fix before answers revealed | Short why-not prompts led to revised choices | Repeat speed ladder; pair-justify frame; micro-phonology tied to Part 2; focus whole-class feedback |

Note. LD = listening discrimination; ET = extended turns/fluency; IM = interactional management; INTEL = intelligibility/pronunciation; 4C = simple justification/collaboration. The arrow (→) indicates a recommended sequence; the tilde (≈) indicates an approximate value. Lesson labels (L1–L4) refer to the four case-study lessons described in Chapter 6. Author-created table from classroom observations.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

7.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

This study examined how preparation for the Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) exams can enhance young learners' verbal competences, listen comprehension and spoken production, while rehearsing 21st-century capacities such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and, to a developmentally appropriate extent, creativity. Grounded in Communicative Competence, CEFR, and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), the inquiry combined practitioner interviews with a classroom-based practitioner case series. The analytic thread throughout was not whether an external certificate "teaches" children to speak and listen, but how specific task architectures, interactional routines, and enabling conditions cultivate verbal competence across a school year and how the external exam subsequently validates rather than creates that growth.

The theoretical review a composite of intelligibility, the production of short coherent turns, effective interactional management, and adaptive meaning-making in context. Within this frame, CEFR A1/A2 provides guardrails for calibrating demand and interpreting growth, and TBLT/CLT supply design principles that prioritise meaning, outcome, and interaction.

The empirical findings consolidate that frame. Across interviews, practitioners converged that sustained YLE-aligned work strengthens listening discrimination and stabilises sentence-level speech that progressively extends into short, cohesive turns. Classroom cases clarified the mechanisms: (i) engineered excess information and child-scaled distractors train selective attention in listening; (ii) perception-to-production scaffolds pair rehearsal and visible "frame ladders" lower performance load and enable coherent turns; (iii) brief, immediately "spent" phonology supports intelligibility. Where these mechanisms are systematically orchestrated, 4Cs moments emerge naturally at beginner levels (reason-giving, peer checking, hypothesis revision), and the CEFR mapping is developmentally tight: tasks

elicit what descriptors reasonably expect at pre-A1/A1/A2, with occasional receptive reach toward A2.

The most consequential conclusion is straightforward: the year's teaching does the core developmental burden; the exam validates it. YLE task families function as formative engines and summative mirrors. Their value lies less in proximity to a certificate and more in how teachers enact them: controlled lexis, justification requirements, pair-prep before public turns, high student-talk time (STT), scripted transitions, and child-appropriate interlocution. When these enabling conditions are in place, learners practise intelligibility, short coherence, and interactional moves repeatedly and with purpose; when they are absent, "exam practice" collapses into low-information display.

For pedagogy, three corollaries follow. First, pedagogical design outranks mere drill: the architecture of the task and the interactional routines enacted by the teacher, rather than simply the task label, are the strongest predictors of verbal-competence gains. Second, timing matters: micro-focus on sounds or forms only stabilises when spent immediately inside a meaning-bearing move. Third, calibration protects growth: CEFR guardrails help avoid both over- and under-challenge, preserving confidence and stretch in equal measure.

Conceptually, the thesis sharpens the distinction between oral skills and verbal competence and operationalises the latter for primary EFL through observable success criteria (intelligibility; short coherent turns; interactional moves) aligned with young-learner CEFR bands. Empirically, it specifies mechanisms of effect that travel across materials and contexts: excess-information listening, visible frames for clause chaining, pair-rehearsal architecture, and immediate "spending" of micro-phonology. Practically, it offers a design-ready repertoire: justification-requiring listening/speaking tasks; rehearsal-then-public sequencing; scripted transitions that protect STT; and child-appropriate examiner talk that lowers performance load without diluting demand.

7.2. FINAL REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The evidence base is qualitative and context-bound: interviews with experienced practitioners and a bounded practitioner inquiry in one institution and year group. No claim is made to statistical generalisation. Instead, analytic transferability is supported through thick description of routines, tasks, and success criteria, enabling readers to judge fit in their settings. Future iterations should triangulate against systematic classroom audio/video corpora, add learner-progress artefacts sampled longitudinally, and examine SEN-informed adaptations more explicitly.

Three strands invite further work. (1) Micro-genetic studies of perception-to-production conversion could trace how pair rehearsal and visible frames redistribute cognitive load at Pre-A1/A1. (2) Pronunciation-in-interaction at beginner levels warrants closer attention: which micro-bursts (segmental vs. suprasegmental) most efficiently “spend” into intelligibility? (3) Task-family calibration studies could test which combinations of distractor density, visual support, and justification moves best elicit CEFR-aligned behaviours without overloading young learners. As a practitioner-researcher, I occupy the dual role of designer and analyst. This proximity afforded granular access to enactment decisions but carried risks of confirmation bias. To mitigate this, I triangulated interview testimony with classroom records, kept an explicit audit trail from claims to data, and foregrounded counterevidence where it emerged. The reflexive gain is not neutrality but accountable positioning: stating how pedagogical choices shaped the very outcomes assessed.

In sum, YLE preparation enhances young learners’ verbal competences when and because teachers enact task families as structured opportunities for reasoning, rehearsal, and supported interaction, calibrated by CEFR expectations and protected by high-leverage routines. The external exam then recognises the behaviours the classroom has already built. Designing for that everyday building rather than teaching to a terminal performance. it offers the most credible route to confident, intelligible, and collaborative communication in the early years of English.

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INDEX – APPENDIX

| | |
|--|-----|
| A. CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS | 65 |
| B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE AND GUIDE..... | 66 |
| C. AL INTERVIEW FOR MASTER'S THESIS ON CAMBRIDGE YLE EXAMS TRANSCRIPTION AND CODIFICATION | 80 |
| D. SL INTERVIEW FOR MASTER'S THESIS ON CAMBRIDGE YLE EXAMS TRANSCRIPTION AND CODIFICATION | 110 |
| E. CA INTERVIEW FOR MASTER'S THESIS ON CAMBRIDGE YLE EXAMS TRANSCRIPTION AND CODIFICATION | 130 |
| F. HV INTERVIEW FOR MASTER'S THESIS ON CAMBRIDGE YLE EXAMS TRANSCRIPTION AND CODIFICATION | 167 |
| G. LB INTERVIEW FOR MASTER'S THESIS ON CAMBRIDGE YLE EXAMS TRANSCRIPTION AND CODIFICATION | 208 |
| H. AO INTERVIEW FOR MASTER'S THESIS ON CAMBRIDGE YLE EXAMS TRANSCRIPTION AND CODIFICATION | 230 |
| I. CLASS 1 LISTENING PRACTICE LESSON PLAN | 247 |
| J. CLASS 1 LISTENING PRACTICE WORKSHEET | 251 |
| K. CLASS 1 LISTENING PRACTICE COUNTRY SIDE FLASH CARDS..... | 257 |
| L. CLASS 2 SPEAKING PRACTICE LESSON PLAN | 266 |
| M. CLASS 2 SPEAKING PRACTICE WORKSHEET..... | 274 |
| N. CLASS 4 LISTENING PRACTICE LESSON PLAN | 279 |
| O. CLASS 4 LISTENING WORKSHEET | 286 |
| P. CLASS 3 SPEAKING PRACTICE “WHOLE CLASS” LESSON PLAN | 292 |
| Q. CLASS 3 SPEAKING PRACTICE WORKSHEET | 299 |

APPENDIX

A. Consent Form for Interview Participants

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Researcher: Fábio Alves

Institution: Escola Superior de Educação do Politécnico do Porto

Supervisor: Prof.^a Doutora Ana Patrícia de Magalhães Ferreira

This research aims to explore how Cambridge YLE exam preparation contributes to the development of students' verbal competences in English and prepares them for effective communication in the 21st century. You will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approximately 60-80 minutes. The questions will relate to your teaching practices, experiences with YLE exams, and observations about students' communicative development.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

All data collected will be treated confidentially. No identifying information (such as your name, institution, or personal details) will appear in the final report. A pseudonym will be used to preserve your anonymity, and any identifying information will be removed during transcription. If you agree to be quoted directly, quotations will still be anonymized. Only the researcher and academic supervisor will have access to the original recordings.

I have read and understood the information provided. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

B. Interview Questionnaire And Guide

P.PORT

ESCOLA
SUPERIOR
DE EDUCAÇÃO
POLITECNICO
DO PORTO

M MESTRADO
Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo do Ensino Básico

**Interview
Enhancing
Competences
YLE Preparation.**

**Guide
Verbal
Through**

Fábio Alves



INTRODUCTION FOR INTERVIEWER:

Thank you for participating in this interview, which forms part of my final internship report focused on how preparation for Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) exams enhances students' verbal competences and prepares them for the demands of 21st-century communication. This study is grounded in theoretical and pedagogical frameworks related to communicative competence, CEFR, and task-based teaching. Your experience and perspectives as a teacher are invaluable to understanding how these concepts translate into classroom practice.

Before we begin, may I ask a few brief background questions to contextualize your responses?.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

- Name and current teaching role:
- How long have you been teaching English at the primary level?
- Have you had any specific training or experience with Cambridge YLE exams
- What year levels do you usually teach and how frequently do your students engage in speaking or listening tasks?

SECTION B: MAIN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your experience, what impact does YLE exam preparation have on students' verbal competences (speaking and listening)?

- Follow-up: Can you describe specific improvements you've observed in students?
- Follow-up: Do these improvements carry over into other areas of language use?
- Follow-up: Do weaker students show the same kind of development?

2. How does YLE exam preparation differ from traditional textbook-based speaking and listening activities?

- Follow-up: Do you find the YLE tasks more engaging or effective?
- Follow-up: Are students more motivated during mock exams or preparation tasks?
- Follow-up: Can you give an example of an activity that worked particularly well?

3. How do you structure your classroom activities to prepare students for YLE speaking and listening components?

- Follow-up: Do you use roleplays, group work, games?
- Follow-up: How often do you simulate exam-style tasks?
- Follow-up: Do students receive individualized feedback during these tasks?

4. Do you believe that YLE tasks help students develop transversal skills, such as critical thinking, adaptability, or collaboration?

- Follow-up: Have you noticed students improving in their ability to work together?
- Follow-up: Do they apply strategies like asking questions or reformulating answers?

- Follow-up: In your view, does this support 21st-century skill development?

5. From your perspective, how well do YLE exam tasks align with CEFR levels for young learners?

- Follow-up: Do the tasks reflect real-world or age-appropriate communication?
- Follow-up: Are there areas where you feel CEFR alignment could be stronger?
- Follow-up: Have you used the CEFR descriptors in your lesson planning?

6. What challenges do you encounter when preparing students for the YLE exams, particularly in developing verbal competences?

- Follow-up: Is it more difficult to assess speaking than writing or reading?
- Follow-up: Do students experience anxiety during speaking tasks?
- Follow-up: What support would help you improve this part of your teaching?

7. In your opinion, what are the long-term benefits of incorporating YLE speaking and listening preparation into regular classroom instruction?

- Follow-up: Do students show increased confidence in speaking English?
- Follow-up: Do parents or other teachers comment on student progress?
- Follow-up: Does it change your approach to general English instruction?

1. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERVIEW QUESTION DESIGN

This section articulates the theoretical and methodological justifications for the construction of the interview protocol employed in the practical component of the internship report, titled "How YLE Cambridge Exam Exercises and Their Preparation Enhance Students' Verbal Competences While Preparing Students for the 21st Century." Each question is carefully designed to elicit insights into the pedagogical realities, instructional practices, and professional reflections of primary school English teachers. The rationale behind each inquiry ensures that the data collected aligns with the overarching research objectives, theoretical frameworks, and educational implications explored throughout the study.

1.1. QUESTION 1: IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT IMPACT DOES YLE EXAM PREPARATION HAVE ON STUDENTS' VERBAL COMPETENCES (SPEAKING AND LISTENING)?

This question seeks to initiate a broad reflection on the teacher's experiential understanding of verbal competence development through YLE-focused instruction. It is grounded in the communicative competence framework and aims to uncover qualitative indicators of progression in fluency, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and spontaneous oral production. The follow-up questions are designed to probe whether perceived improvements are generalizable across different learners,

including those who may face linguistic challenges, and whether these skills transfer beyond test situations into general language use.

1.2. QUESTION 2: HOW DOES YLE EXAM PREPARATION DIFFER FROM TRADITIONAL TEXTBOOK-BASED SPEAKING AND LISTENING ACTIVITIES?

Here, the intent is to generate comparative data that highlight the pedagogical and methodological shifts introduced through YLE practices. This line of questioning aims to explore the degree to which exam-oriented tasks (such as information gap exercises, roleplay simulations, and scaffolded dialogues) are perceived as more authentic, engaging, or communicatively effective when juxtaposed with traditional workbook or scripted drills. This comparison contributes to assessing the added pedagogical value of YLE preparation within task-based or communicative paradigms.

1.3. QUESTION 3: HOW DO YOU STRUCTURE YOUR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR YLE SPEAKING AND LISTENING COMPONENTS?

This question aims to examine instructional design at the micro level. It reveals whether teachers integrate components such as pre-task planning, performance assessment, and immediate feedback—elements considered integral in task-based language teaching (TBLT). The responses will also demonstrate how frequently and in what form mock examinations,

roleplay exercises, and listening drills are embedded into classroom routines. This question ultimately aims to identify congruence between theoretical models and actual teaching practice.

1.4. QUESTION 4: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YLE TASKS HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP TRANSVERSAL SKILLS, SUCH AS CRITICAL THINKING, ADAPTABILITY, OR COLLABORATION?

This question expands the scope beyond linguistic development to assess whether the YLE exam format fosters the broader competences associated with 21st-century education. By exploring the acquisition of transversal skills, the responses help assess the impact of YLE activities on learners' cognitive and social functioning. These responses may also reveal whether the format encourages teamwork, problem-solving, or metacognitive strategies such as self-monitoring and peer feedback.

1.5. QUESTION 5: FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, HOW WELL DO YLE EXAM TASKS ALIGN WITH CEFR LEVELS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS?

The purpose of this question is to evaluate how practitioners perceive the relationship between YLE benchmarks and the CEFR descriptors for oral communication and listening comprehension. The responses may provide insight into the perceived developmental appropriateness, authenticity, and linguistic scaffolding of YLE tasks. Moreover, it invites participants to

reflect on whether CEFR-based objectives inform their lesson planning and evaluation practices.

1.6. QUESTION 6: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU ENCOUNTER WHEN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE YLE EXAMS, PARTICULARLY IN DEVELOPING VERBAL COMPETENCES?

This inquiry seeks to surface structural, institutional, or instructional challenges that inhibit the optimal development of verbal competences. These may include time constraints, curricular limitations, assessment difficulties, or learners' affective barriers such as anxiety and low confidence. This question is instrumental in forming a holistic view of classroom constraints and helps to inform actionable recommendations.

1.7. QUESTION 7: IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF INCORPORATING YLE SPEAKING AND LISTENING PREPARATION INTO REGULAR CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION?

The final question turns to the sustainability and longitudinal impact of YLE integration within the general curriculum. It prompts the interviewee to consider whether verbal competence gains are retained over time, whether they translate into broader language mastery, and how these benefits influence teaching philosophy or institutional feedback. It further

ties into the broader theoretical assertion that authentic communication tasks enhance not only immediate exam performance but also future communicative confidence and capability.

2. METHODOLOGY FOR THE ANALYSIS AND CLASSIFICATION OF INTERVIEW DATA

This section outlines the strategy for analyzing the qualitative data gathered from interviews with primary school English teachers. The interview component is an integral part of the practical dimension of the report titled "How YLE Cambridge Exam Exercises and Their Preparation Enhance Students' Verbal Competences While Preparing Students for the 21st Century." The data analysis methodology aims to ensure rigor, transparency, and alignment with the theoretical framework underpinning the research.

2.1. TRANSCRIPTION AND INITIAL FAMILIARIZATION WITH THE DATA

Prior to any coding or thematic categorization, all interviews will undergo a process of verbatim transcription. This ensures that every detail—lexical, structural, and paralinguistic—is preserved, thereby enhancing the reliability and depth of the subsequent analysis. The researcher will engage in multiple close readings of the transcripts to achieve a thorough familiarization with the data. This iterative immersion in the corpus facilitates the identification of preliminary patterns, key terminology, and nuanced perspectives that are crucial for valid interpretive analysis.

2.2. THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS: A METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

To interpret the interview data in a systematic and replicable manner, the study will employ thematic content analysis, a qualitative method widely used in educational research for extracting patterns and constructing meaning from textual data. This analytic approach allows for flexibility while maintaining coherence with the study's theoretical constructions.

a. Open Coding

The first phase involves open coding, wherein the transcripts will be parsed line-by-line to identify salient segments that represent discrete ideas, concepts, or practices. Each segment will be assigned a provisional code reflecting its content. These codes will serve as the foundational units of analysis.

b. Thematic Categorization

In the second phase, the generated codes will be collated into thematic categories that reflect higher-order constructs related to the research questions. These categories may include (but are not limited to):

- Verbal competence development
- Task-based instruction
- Alignment with CEFR benchmarks
- Instructional challenges
- Development of transversal skills

c. Cross-Comparative Analysis

Once thematic categories are established, a cross-question and cross-participant analysis will be conducted. This comparative approach seeks to identify converging themes, areas of divergence, and unique insights across the sample population.

d. Integration with Theoretical Frameworks

The final stage of analysis involves synthesizing the emergent themes with the theoretical models elaborated in the earlier chapters of the report—namely the Communicative Competence Model, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and the CEFR framework. This alignment ensures that the qualitative insights are analytically robust and theoretically grounded.

2.3. CLASSIFICATION STRATEGY BY QUESTION

To ensure a coherent structure for analysis, the following table summarizes how each question will be treated in terms of expected data type and intended thematic classification:

| Interview Question | Expected Data type | Thematic Classification |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Impact of YLE prep on verbal competences | Descriptive, narrative | <i>Identify verbal gains such as fluency, comprehension, and pronunciation.</i> |
| Comparison with traditional methods | Comparative, evaluative | <i>Extract differences in engagement, authenticity, and learning outcomes.</i> |
| Classroom strategies | Descriptive, procedural | <i>Document teaching practices and the frequency/use of mock exams, roleplays, and</i> |

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| | | <i>drills.</i> |
| Transversal skills | Reflective, exploratory | <i>Collect evidence of 21st-century competences such as collaboration and critical thinking.</i> |
| CEFR alignment | Perceptual, critical | <i>Gauge opinions on the relevance of CEFR descriptors and their classroom application.</i> |
| Challenges | Narrative, diagnostic | <i>Identify systemic and pedagogical barriers to verbal competence development.</i> |
| Long-term benefits | Reflective, forward-looking | <i>Explore the sustainability of YLE benefits on verbal confidence and curriculum alignment.</i> |

Interview for Master's Thesis on Cambridge YLE Exams - AL

List of Main Topics

1. **Interview setup and background** — key timestamps: 00:03:09–00:07:31, 00:09:40–00:09:52
2. **Impact of Cambridge YLE prep on speaking and listening** — key timestamps: 00:13:58–00:20:00, 00:23:51–00:29:43
3. **Comparison with traditional textbook approaches** — key timestamps: 00:21:28–00:25:49, 00:29:43–00:32:26
4. **Classroom structuring and activity design** — key timestamps: 00:32:40–00:35:24, 00:37:32–00:42:55
5. **Transversal skills developed via YLE-style tasks** — key timestamps: 00:43:00–00:46:01
6. **CEFR alignment and evolution of YLE assessment** — key timestamps: 00:46:31–00:50:04
7. **Challenges in developing verbal competencies** — key timestamps: 00:50:14–00:55:36, 00:56:05–00:58:27
8. **Long-term benefits and systemic issues in Portuguese ELT** — key timestamps: 00:58:51–01:05:59, 01:09:39–01:16:46, 01:18:33–01:21:22

Topic 1: Interview setup and background

Timestamps: 00:03:09–00:07:31, 00:09:40–00:09:52

Summary: The call setup clarifies audio-only recording and the interview structure (background, then seven core questions). AL identifies as Director of Studies at a language school, teaching since 1996, and a Cambridge examiner since 2012 with ongoing training and assessment.

Keywords: background, role, Cambridge examiner

Topic 2: Impact of Cambridge YLE prep on speaking and listening

Timestamps: 00:13:58–00:20:00, 00:23:51–00:29:43

Summary: YLE preparation emphasizes chunks, expressions, and functional language, promoting authentic communication and interaction. Listening tasks train detail-oriented comprehension and handling distractors; speaking tasks build vocabulary-based

production without explicit early grammar, mirroring L1 acquisition.

Keywords: functional language, chunks, listening distractors

Topic 3: Comparison with traditional textbook approaches

Timestamps: 00:21:28–00:25:49, 00:29:43–00:32:26

Summary: YLE-style listening is more naturalistic and multimodal than typical textbook tasks, integrating varied tenses and visual support. Portuguese publishers are improving slowly; effectiveness depends on teacher use, with group/pair work prioritized over teacher-fronted, grammar-heavy methods.

Keywords: multimodal, textbook vs. YLE, pair/group work

Topic 4: Classroom structuring and activity design

Timestamps: 00:32:40–00:35:24, 00:37:32–00:42:55

Summary: Activities are scaffolded from modeling to hands-on practice, leveraging strong students to support peers and rotating whole-class, group, and pair formats. Examples include flashcards, projected images, tactile “mystery bag” tasks, “I have, who has,” and Uno-style card games to elicit target language naturally.

Keywords: scaffolding, hands-on, game-based learning

Topic 5: Transversal skills developed via YLE-style tasks

Timestamps: 00:43:00–00:46:01

Summary: Sorting, categorizing, and ranking tasks foster critical thinking, deeper processing, and memory. Varied modalities (movement, making, singing) support diverse learner profiles and increase engagement, contributing to adaptability and collaboration.

Keywords: critical thinking, categorization, engagement

Topic 6: CEFR alignment and evolution of YLE assessment

Timestamps: 00:46:31–00:50:04

Summary: While CEFR was designed for adults, YLE aligns to it (e.g., Pre-A1, A1, A2) and has evolved to expect longer spoken production with finer grading (1–5) across production, pronunciation, and interaction. Adjustments reflect realistic communicative expectations for young learners.

Keywords: CEFR, assessment criteria, production length

Topic 7: Challenges in developing verbal competencies**Timestamps:** 00:50:14–00:55:36, 00:56:05–00:58:27**Summary:** Listening poses greater difficulty due to distractors and limited vocabulary; solutions include replaying items, metacognitive reflection, and dictation to link sound–spelling. Large classes complicate speaking assessment; continuous assessment with group work and entry/exit questions helps monitor progress.**Keywords:** listening challenges, metacognition, continuous assessment**Topic 8: Long-term benefits and systemic issues in Portuguese ELT****Timestamps:** 00:58:51–01:05:59, 01:09:39–01:16:46, 01:18:33–01:21:22**Summary:** Integrating YLE-style prep brings richer listening and communicative practice, countering grammar-heavy, worksheet-driven instruction. Concerns include declining oral proficiency, overreliance on L1, repetition of topics/grammar across grades, and low expectations; increased exposure (media, games) historically boosted outcomes.**Keywords:** communicative focus, systemic reform, oral proficiency

Transcript

Interviewer: [00:01:56] Yeah. Nothing. Came from. Nothing. You know. Hello. Hello. How are you doing?**Director Teacher AL:** [00:03:09] I'm fine. I can't see you.**Interviewer:** [00:03:12] Oh, I'm on the desktop. It doesn't have a camera. There was a lot of mishaps with my previous laptop. So for safety concerns and my own sanity of having to reschedule the meetings because the data kept getting lost, I switched from a desktop.**Director Teacher AL:** [00:03:28] Okay. Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:03:29] But don't you worry. Audio recordings are allowed regardless. So even if I had a laptop, I would have I wouldn't have the the webcam because I can't record the video. But how are you doing? Is everything okay?.

Director Teacher AL: [00:03:43] I'm okay, I'm okay. Thank you. And yourself?

Intreviewer: [00:03:46] I'm doing fine. You know, besides the heat, you know?

Director Teacher AL: [00:03:49] Yes.

Intreviewer: [00:03:51] I can tell you. Suffering the same.

Director Teacher AL: [00:03:54] Yes. And I just came from outside, so I have to cool down now.

Intreviewer: [00:03:59] Okay, so I believe I, I always send the email explaining the the contents of this interview and whatnot, but I always try to make sure to, to give a general scope of what we're talking here. Okay. So there's going to be two sections. Okay. But the first one is lightning fast. It's just a background questions. Whoever wants to read the transcript is able to have the idea of everyone's background and that I didn't, you know, lie about who I was interviewing. But, yeah, they are very basic questions. We we get around them in 2 to 5 minutes. Then we have the, the section B or which will be compiled of seven main questions.

Director Teacher AL: [00:04:53] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:04:54] These questions will obviously have a much bigger impact on your answer, obviously, but by no means whatsoever, I will try to lead you in some way to a certain answer. I will lead you in the sense of I want you to explore the answer. I will not lead you to an bias right now. The way I do these interviews is very organic, meaning that it's different from person to person. I have some interviews where the person was very short and straight, which I quite like, you know, as well you know, direct to the point where I may have asked 1 or 2 follow up questions, but we still we stick to some sort of one question to the next sort of thing. Now, there are some people that are big on talking. And, you know, I, I like those people as well. And they will. I will

ask him the first question, and they will answer me the first, the second, the third, the fourth.

Director Teacher AL: [00:05:59] Okay. It's all interrelated.

Intreviewer: [00:06:01] Yes, I will then I will then say, look. Wonderful. Now let's just pull back to what you said and then refer to the second question. Now all of them are okay. It's your own preference. You are all doing me a favor, so don't worry. I will try to make this as much fun as we can have.

Director Teacher AL: [00:06:21] Alright.

Intreviewer: [00:06:22] Okay. So for section eight, the background questions. The first one will obviously be our name and current teaching role.

Director Teacher AL: [00:06:30] [00:06:30]My main current teaching role I am the Director of Studies of a language school. [00:06:36]

Intreviewer: [00:06:38] [00:06:38]Wonderful. And how long have you been teaching English? To the primary level. Or have you had the experience in the primary? [00:06:46]

Director Teacher AL: [00:06:47] [00:06:47]Yes. I've had experience not only here as a language school, but in actual Schools and primary level since 96. Other levels. [00:06:59]

Intreviewer: [00:06:59] [00:06:59]Longer 96 is already in a lot of experience. Have you had any specific training or experience with Cambridge? Y I e exams? [00:07:11]

Director Teacher AL: [00:07:12] [00:07:12]Yes, I'm an examiner, so I'm a Cambridge examiner since 2012. And so of course, to become an examiner you need training. And you're assessed every year and you're observed every other year. [00:07:29]

Interviewer: [00:07:31] [00:07:31]And what are your levels do you usually teach and how frequently are would you say you make activities are directed to the speaking and listening component. [00:07:45]

Director Teacher AL: [00:07:46] [00:07:46]Okay. Well Every year. What I teach is a little bit different, but I would say I specifically like young learners, so I try to to have them. I had a group this year. And as far as speaking and listening, it's a component that's used in every single lesson. If it's directed at okay, what what the Cambridge exam examines is general knowledge. So the general skill of being able to comprehend and being able to communicate. So whenever whenever I'm teaching at primary level, it's more based on vocabulary. And even though they have structures, it's not taught explicitly. And whoever does it I don't agree with that, but it's taught implicitly. So then, of course For students to be able to understand, not to understand, but to learn like they would their L1. Of course, this needs practice. And of course that practice is through lots of different exercises with scaffolding. Until they're, until they're comfortable and, and then it's extended. And of course, within that also, not only are they listening to me, they're listening to each other. And of course, there's always some listening exercises that that come along the way. So I would have to say every, every single lesson. [00:09:27]

Interviewer: [00:09:28] [00:09:28]Wonderful. And that's mainly what I wanted really to to highlight. We don't we didn't answer one question. [00:09:35]

Director Teacher AL: [00:09:35] [00:09:35]Okay.

Interviewer: [00:09:35] [00:09:36]But I think it just forced you. [00:09:38]

Director Teacher AL: [00:09:38] [00:09:38]So ask me. [00:09:39]

Interviewer: [00:09:40] [00:09:40]Yes. No, I asked you but it was just name. We didn't get your name on the record. [00:09:46]

Director Teacher AL: [00:09:47] [00:09:47]No. You didn't. So my name is AL. [00:09:50]

Intreviewer: [00:09:52] Wonderful. That's just it. Now we're going to go to the to the meatier part of this.

Director Teacher AL: [00:09:58] Okay?

Intreviewer: [00:09:58] Of this interview. The interview questions. Now, this is the one I'm conducting. Is, you know, it's part of an internship report focused on how preparation for Cambridge young learners English enhances students verbal competencies and by verbal competencies. I mean, detrimentally listening and speaking because I am not focused on verbal production only. So I want a verbal competency, meaning that they are able to understand what is being told to them, decode it, and then, you know, create meaningful verbal production that, you know, results of, of decoding what is being told to them. That's why I said verbal competence and I will exclude, and everyone always talks in the interviews about the other components. But my aim really isn't writing or reading. I believe we have a really good understanding that those regards, but mainly the speaking and listening. And why did this come along? When I was in internship at **REDACTED** I already had the before. So it's two years of experience. I noticed that they obviously, you know, have primed the students for the while the books were priming the students for the YLE, we had tasks that aligned with preparing students for the YLE, you know, all these, you know, ecosystems. And I realized that in comparison to let's say, students from public education or other private sectors that were not inclined for the YLE, this didn't seem to be producing meaningful language at a higher pace and higher quality. So to say. And it employs.

Director Teacher AL: [00:11:52] So which one's I'm sorry, the ones that were prepared or not prepared.

Intreviewer: [00:11:56] The ones that were prepared, obviously.

Director Teacher AL: [00:11:57] Okay. But.

Intreviewer: [00:11:59] But Why you know, it was not even I mean, it was not even comparable how well they were. Okay. I obviously, you know, have a lot more to say about what could be the answer. But my main understanding is that given that I find that we often are neglectful of the speaking and listening components .

Director Teacher AL: [00:12:27] Unfortunately.

Intreviewer: [00:12:29] Exactly. And especially in the primary levels I believe that, you know, the introduction of the YLE exams, given that we aim to explore skill sets to the whole less than, you know, teaching just some grammar. We we we try to explore the skills because, you know, the students will be evaluated on the skills and there is no way to, you know, prepare a student for the yleexcept, you know, teaching a full skillset. I believe the students were better prepared. Hence, you know, for why this topic came to be.

Director Teacher AL: [00:13:04] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:13:05] [00:13:05]Now, this is a, you know, theoretical and pedagogical framework. On the communicative competencies, you know, I believe that with task based teaching and and preparing, you know, classes around, you know, the format of while even if the students are not going to take them, even if they are not going to take them, given how well YLE is preparing students to have these sort of skills, the students will always be, you know, receiving an augmented education. That's my belief. So this leads me to the first question is, in your experience, what impact does YLE the exam preparation. So the exams and the preparation for the exams and tasks that you know, you may do with the students that align with the exam, have on students verbal competencies, speaking and listening. [00:14:03]

Director Teacher AL: [00:14:04] [00:14:04]Okay, so I think okay, let me see. One thing that I find is good about the exams is that it has it has set vocabulary skill vocabulary list. Sorry. Which okay, for example, students at pre A1 are supposed to know students at A1. And for the starters, movers and flyers. Now, I think that what is good about the program, and I concur with it, is that it teaches students the language, English. It teaches students the language as a chunk, okay, or as chunks or as expressions. English, unlike many other languages, is is a memorized language. That's what I say. It's a memorized language because we do have lots of set expressions, and we don't have to analyze those expressions. We have expressions with two words. We have plenty of expressions with three words and so forth. And I think that's what Cambridge uses it uses these expressions and it teaches it teaches students how to communicate

for a purpose. So we can also say that it uses functional language. Okay. And so you know, we're going to teach them I like chocolate or do you like chocolate? Yes I do, no, I don't. One of the things that I see in in Portugal, which I disagree with, with the teachers, is that at primary school they are actually teaching grammar, No, languages, foreign languages, and L2 and L3, I, I, in my opinion, should be picked up as if it is an L1. And so that in the sense that's what Cambridge is doing. It's introducing it's introducing language. And it's introducing what do you do with that specific language. Okay. And then it encourages it encourages students to actually interact with each other because that's what they need. Language is alive. You it's, you know, you you use it to communicate. And of course, there's tasks to complete. [00:16:56]

Director Teacher AL: [00:16:57] [00:16:57] And then also the listening. Listening. Okay. So they're not only using it, but they're also listening to it being used for those same tasks. And there's always plenty of practice. So. Okay. When I actually take it further. But as far as Cambridge exams I think that it helps teachers to have that structure. It helps teachers to teach their students. The language, that set of vocabulary and why and how and when we use it. Okay. So for example, the prepositions. Why? Why do students have to learn the prepositions? And what I like about it too is that there's a lot of recycling of vocabulary. So whatever's taught at the beginning of the year, everything is sort of recycled, because that's the way it has to be. We can't learn vocabulary in isolation. And yes. Okay, so the, the, the listening listening skills are practiced. The speaking is practiced the productive reproductive skills. Okay. The listening is probably easier. And I think it's important that children are exposed to it and as, as as they start to practice the listening they're also taught how to listen for detail. And they also practice knowing when it's a distractor. Okay. So I think that's important instead of just listening and the listening has very specific information. And we know I don't know. We're looking for the blue sweater. It's very direct. I think that one of the things that Cambridge starts to practice, even at a, a pre a1 is that there's a whole conversation and students then have to decipher or decide what information they need for the specific task. And because they start with that right away it it helps to it helps students to learn to train their understanding. I don't know if I made myself clear with that or not. [00:19:48]

Intreviewer: [00:19:48] No, no, no, you were.

Intreviewer: [00:19:50] Extremely clear with.

Intreviewer: [00:19:51] It. Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:19:53] As I said, you know, we

Director Teacher AL: [00:19:55] It's sometimes it's hard to explain, but. Yeah.

Intreviewer: [00:19:58] No, no, it's.

Intreviewer: [00:20:00] The first questions are, are very I would say it's it's descending so it's very broad and then we get very specific. Okay. So it's very easy that in the first 1 or 2 questions you answer a lot of things that is going to still come up. Yeah. And it's completely it's completely fine because they were designed for me to get a lot of information on the first questions. So then I can color code you guys better later, because the first interviews were, really hard to color code. We're talking about 2 or 3 hours of of transcribing.

Director Teacher AL: [00:20:38] Yeah.

Intreviewer: [00:20:39] So I, I started to adapt a little bit better.

Director Teacher AL: [00:20:42] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:20:43] [00:20:43]But don't you worry because the second question is not extremely related, but it's going to touch on the second pillar of, of this. That is how does the YLE exam preparation or you know, just exercises that resemble wildly differ from for example let's use the case I wrote here, traditional textbook based speaking and listening activities. What I mean by this is for example, the public curriculum uses a traditional textbook based learning some of them which, you know, uses a Portuguese publishers. How do they differ? Is there a difference? [00:21:27]

Director Teacher AL: [00:21:28] [00:21:28]I actually prepare material for Portuguese Publisher. [00:21:32]

Interviewer: [00:21:32] You do and that's and that's okay.

Director Teacher AL: [00:21:34] [00:21:34]But just speaking and writing activities and I, I have written a book for a Publisher, okay for English okay. Now but unfortunately teachers are sometimes very stuck to their ways. And it's difficult to change. And change has change has to be steady but slow. Okay. Now let me see. What do I think? I think that With Cambridge preparation. Or similar tasks. As I said, I think the listening tasks are not as perhaps as direct. So. So in a sense, I think that sometimes listening tasks or listening comprehension is almost like the reading comprehension where the answer is directly, you know, well in the text. And the same goes for so the same applies to the listening, for example, in the first part of a YLE listening test for starters movers. And I think if I'm not mistaken for flyers students will have a whole bunch. They have an image and they're going to listen and they're going to listen to a person describe another person. But that person or is not only being described it, they're, they're being described, but the language that is used is more varied in the sense that okay, there may be descriptions present. Simple is being used. Present continuous is being used. So there's more of a range of language being used, which is only natural because when I speak to you, I don't just use one verb tense, but I'm going to be using several verb tenses. [00:23:51]

Director Teacher AL: [00:23:51] [00:23:51]And if we're talking about the present, of course, you know, imperatives present simple, present continuous and so on. So in that sense It really gets them to think. And they've got so they've got it's a listening, but at the same time it's multi modal because they have the image. Then another part of the listening. So they have, as I said in the first In my previous answer they have three images and they have to answer a question. And funny enough this type of listening activity is not only done in the very in the young learners exams, but it's also done in the main suite exams. But of course, the distractors are greater. Okay. And here is the section where all of the three objects in that one question may be. Well, no, they actually are used, but the student really has to listen to the message. So why is it A and not B or C. Okay. So again it's not just very specific language but they are actually listening to very natural language. And then of course, at the end in the last part, I can't remember part two. Funny enough, in the last part they're asked to color. Okay. Which is usually you'd think it's probably the easiest one, but not necessarily because again, location description. The one in front, the one behind on the left. On the right. [00:25:49]

Director Teacher AL: [00:25:49] [00:25:49] So again it's very natural language that we actually use every day. So I would say that the language that they acquire, the language that they understand because it doesn't necessarily mean that they're able to use it, but the the language that they understand it is much broader. Okay. If you use the Cambridge exams or even if you don't, but if you use a similar methodology or so the communicative methodology where they actually go beyond that, just very specific language because you can't really you can't really put a language into a box and just say, okay, you, you know, we only teach this because language is organic. So we can go to other areas. And okay, even though this is not related to to Cambridge young learners exams. So for example in with my primary students and not only I like to do cross curricular activities, so I like to bring in I like to bring in science. I like to bring in arts, lots of different things. So perhaps we're we're we're okay. So we're talking about a specific topic, and I actually even go beyond what's in the book because with with primary students if you make the activities enjoyable, if you have hands on activities, they are able to actually learn quite a lot. Okay. Now perhaps in, in as we know, reproductive skills are more difficult than receptive skills. So the receptive skills, they should have easier time with now to actually being able to produce certain words. [00:28:06]

Director Teacher AL: [00:28:06] [00:28:06] That's going to depend on each individual student. But if you're if you're exposing students to all of this through the listening, then they're going to understand. And even though they might not be able to produce it right away. Certain students, it's still there. So they will eventually be able to produce that kind of language. I had this year third graders, and I can tell you that they didn't do the Cambridge exam, but of course I tested them and they all you know, they were able to to pass with flying colors. And then the difference is, when, you know, if you have students who have a certain ease in acquiring vocabulary with some students, you ask them a question and they'll point and they'll say, here. While other students who acquire language more easily are actually able to say, oh, it's here up on the wall, or it's between this and that. Okay. So I think that this type of approach does help students to acquire Language more naturally and more successfully. We know the language. We just teach it. They're the ones who have to practice. So there has to be a lot, quite a substantial bit of listening and a lot of speaking practice. It is a language. There has to be noise. They have to be speaking. [00:29:41]

Intreviewer: [00:29:43] [00:29:43] So do you believe in general or that perhaps it's time? Times have changed. And perhaps Portuguese publishers are catching up to, you know, Macmillan, Pearson and Cambridge, Texas. [00:29:57]

Director Teacher AL: [00:29:58] Slowly. Yes. Yes.

Director Teacher AL: [00:30:01] Slowly. Slowly.

Intreviewer: [00:30:04] Right.

Director Teacher AL: [00:30:06] [00:30:06] Yeah, I, I would say slowly and I, I do like, I do like the fact that Portuguese publishers they actually provide a lot to the teacher. Too much, I think. But they do have now the speaking cards, which come in very handy. Now the case is does the teacher actually use it? You know, because when we I think the problem to here and this is maybe beyond what your, your scope of the of what you're trying to find out, but I think that one of the problems is also that a lot of teachers are still using the very classical or traditional way of teaching where it's just, you know, I'm transmitting the language and that's it. And students are all facing me. I really like to work with group work. Pair work. It's. They're the ones who have to be practicing, not me. And. Okay, I'm going to give them sample language, but then there has to be lots of interaction between them because then you have how are you going to work? Pronunciation. There are students who are very good in picking up good pronunciation, but I've also had students who have a hard time and I don't understand why they have a hard time. So this has to be practiced. Okay. Okay. Do teachers have a hard time because it's a language and they've got 30 in a class? Yes, yes. It's not ideal. They should have a lot less. But then I think one of the things that teachers have to know how to do is to actually get their students to work in pairs, to work in groups and get everybody working. Group work is very important. And this way, she or he is, they set a task. Students are speaking and she is then or he is able to go from table to table to listen. Okay. And to to see okay. Are they on target? Are they doing what I, you know, asked them to? Can they perform or not? [00:32:22]

Intreviewer: [00:32:26] I agree, and you know, you remember when I said earlier that.

Intreviewer: [00:32:30] Like how the questions often go in one and then you would answer more. You will notice in a bit that you have answered some of them. But don't you worry.

Director Teacher AL: [00:32:39] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:32:40] [00:32:40] Well, the third question, you might already know this. So how do you structure your classroom activities? To prepare students for the while speaking and listening components. [00:32:49]

Director Teacher AL: [00:32:50] How do I structure them?

Director Teacher AL: [00:32:54] Okay.

Director Teacher AL: [00:32:57] [00:32:58] I would say That I analyze the type of language and then I see the type of activities that I can use for them to practice that That language. There's always an element of scaffolding. Okay. Where together we practice. And then it's the activities. If it can be hands on activities where they're doing something fine. Could be a game where they have to perform. It might be if, if it's possible, a whole class activity or a whole class game, or then I put them in groups of four or into pairs. So because my challenge is to get them to practice as much as possible when I'm explaining if I want to demonstrate the activity, of course, I'm always going to demonstrate it with a strong student who I know will be able to to help me in the demonstration. I also ask stronger students to help the weaker ones who might be struggling. Yes. And I, I really do try to make lessons very with, with different variety of, of of activities. So in the, so you know, I often hear, oh, we have to go already. It's the end of our lesson. We just started. Why. Because they're enjoying it and. Okay there might be lessons that perhaps they have to get down to work. And they have to do a worksheet. But it can't always be worksheets. That's the problem. It can't always be worksheets. And sometimes we have worksheets, but we can adapt those worksheets to different type of activities where they're actually thinking about the language. [00:35:22]

Intreviewer: [00:35:24] No, I do understand, especially the the worksheet dilemma I had running. I had to run into that dilemma as well because I was, you know, I had to

give like 12 classes and I really wanted to prepare them for the YLE. But, well, there were two issues. One, making a worksheet for speaking is a little bit redundant.

Director Teacher AL: [00:35:49] Yeah, exactly.

Intreviewer: [00:35:50] And second, if I kept giving them more and more mock tests and worksheets, I think they would start to despise whenever I would, I would follow them into thinking I was very boring. So I ran into the same issue. And I didn't I didn't give you the example, but, for example, I structured my classrooms for the for the speaking component and listening in in a sort of a fun way. So I, I had the same issue of I had a lot of students, not too many. I had 20, which it's it's okay. It's an okay number.

Director Teacher AL: [00:36:29] Still not. Yeah, but still quite a bit.

Intreviewer: [00:36:31] It's not perfect, but it's okay. It's manageable. So I had 20 students, and I was like, well, how am I going to explore what I want and prepare them? But making sure that they are, you know, they have already some background information when they go to the exam. So what I did was I made a whole cloth type situation where instead of going one on one to me, I gave them all like 20 flashcards. So each student had a flashcard and I would asked him you know, randomly I would pick a student or I would say a number and that person would have to tell me what was in the flash card that they have. I would then ask them a personal question. Imagine they have a dog. I would ask, do you have dogs at home or do you like dogs or something of that genre? Not to, you know, heavy you know, because they are little. I will not ask them. So do you understand what type of.

Director Teacher AL: [00:37:32] Yes yes yes yes yes.

Director Teacher AL: [00:37:35] [00:37:35] And now and now I think that's what we have to do to for the speaking. So it does have to be multimodal. So with images we have well, most schools have computers, we can have a, we can have a projector where we project certain images and then as, as a whole group, they can talk about it depending on depending on the structures of the vocabulary that we want to practice. And then. Yes. And then going, going either into pairs, into to groups into pairs or or individually and getting getting them all. I think the important part is that they all have a

chance to speak, because we have to consider that we have very enthusiastic students who are, you know, always ready to answer. But then we have those more the shyer ones, more introverted students who are perhaps a bit more reluctant to speak. Sometimes they're reluctant, and sometimes they're just shy. For example, I can tell you that I was doing what were we were doing, like, objects in the classroom. And then we actually went into materials. And this is where I went a little bit into cross curricular cil. And we, I actually taught them natural materials and man made materials. And then we talked about texture. How they felt. And one of the activities that I did is that I brought in objects which I would put in the bag in which they would feel. [00:39:17]

Director Teacher AL: [00:39:17] And they talked about the texture, and they they talked about what materials the object was made of. So, of course, I took a bit of care in, in choosing specific objects. So then they would say, oh, I think this is plastic. It's round. And of course, it was difficult to, to guess what it was. So that element there of curiosity, they, they really they really like that and like your cards. That's fine. I think that's very good. That's very motivating because they all get a chance to to practice and sometimes with, with certain card games. You can they have lots of fun, very simple card games. It doesn't have to be. Doesn't have to be anything over elaborate or complicated. Sometimes very simple. Simple activities. Are are excellent. I have I have a game that I actually shared with some students from. Yes, there in Porto, which I made for my students and which I prefer prepare for different lexical sets, which is I have who has and I, you can play it with with large groups of, of students. And they're not only practicing that lexical sets. And, you know, it shouldn't really just be lexical sets. You should keep that to a minimum. But they were also practicing a structure I have who has okay, without actually knowing because they're doing it in a game.

Director Teacher AL: [00:41:08] They do it automatically. It comes to them naturally and then you know it. They're learning the language as it is. Just like, for example I like to I've also I also have games that I've made like Uno and it could be with, for example, classroom objects and I make a whole bunch of like pencil and different colors. So it's basically the same rules for Uno. But then they have to say, oh, I have a blue pencil. You know, and as they're putting their cards down, they also have to produce language. Of course, this type of activity card activities work best with smaller groups. It's a little bit hard this this Uno one to to use with very large groups, unless you have them into smaller groups. But it is a bit more difficult to to manage, but there's always some way

around. And I think that with young learners I think one of the most important things is to make them curious and to make them like the language that's the most important. So lots of different activities. Lots. Okay. Of course, listening songs fun, fun activities, hands on activities. I think that's that's important. And it's memorable making things. And then they explain how they made it. Things like that.

Interviewer: [00:42:55] I, I completely agree. We we going to the fourth question.

Director Teacher AL: [00:42:59] Okay.

Interviewer: [00:43:00] [00:43:00]Which you already answered but it's okay. Okay. We have to reinforce. Do you believe that while it asks. And when I'm in exam preparation exercises, I like help students develop transversal skills such as critical thinking, adaptability and collaboration. [00:43:16]

Director Teacher AL: [00:43:17] Oh, yes.

Director Teacher AL: [00:43:17] [00:43:17]Definitely. Definitely. Because the the the type of activity okay. The type of activities that you use. Okay. They're in the preparation tasks, they have to be in paper formats, okay. Because that's the way they sell it. But you can very easily use those activities cut out and have students how should I say this? Sorting. Okay. So any type of activity where they're sorting, where they're categorizing, which are a lot of the activities, actually these these are used in a lot of the, the Cambridge preparation books when we're, when, when students have to sort, if they have to categorize, if they have to rank. This is making them think. And if they're thinking. So it's deeper learning. If they're thinking about everything it actually makes learning more memorable. So this this I think is one of the, the, the changes that's needed in, in our educational system, not only in Portugal, in other countries, too, in Spain. So the type of activities we can't just have repetition. Okay. The type of activities, although even recall is good and it's necessary, but there has to be other type of activities where we are engaging the students, where they are thinking about it. And we also have to consider that we have to have different type of activities because not all our learners learn in the same way. So it's always good to have activities, perhaps where they're singing, where they're making things and they're touching where they're moving around. Okay. As I said, we're not all the same. So I think it's important to contemplate

that when we prepare our lessons and Okay. Yes, it does take a bit of extra work to prepare, but, hey, it's already done. It's there for the the following year. So there you go. And if you know that if you see that your students enjoyed it, and if they acquired the language to be to then be able to produce it. Well, there you go. There's their success. [00:45:58]

Intreviewer: [00:46:01] I completely disagree as well. But obviously, you know, I already have taken discretion, but obviously I always follow the structure. Now we're going to a question which is something that we haven't talked about.

Director Teacher AL: [00:46:13] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:46:14] But I believe I always call this question the the break.

Director Teacher AL: [00:46:18] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:46:18] Given that it's impossible, it's physically impossible for anyone to give me more than, let's say, 2 or 3 sentences than most if you really want to talk about it, because it's almost mostly a yes or no question.

Director Teacher AL: [00:46:30] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:46:31] [00:46:31]From from your perspective, how well do the exam tasks align with the CFR levels for young learners? [00:46:38]

Director Teacher AL: [00:46:40] Well.

Director Teacher AL: [00:46:41] The CFR levels weren't really developed for young learners, were they? They were developed for adults.

Intreviewer: [00:46:47] Yes. But for example, the A1 to the A1 and A2 levels in this case.

Director Teacher AL: [00:46:56] [00:46:57] I get well I think they're aligned because I know that Cambridge. If I'm not mistaken Cambridge do base their, the curriculum on the CFR levels. [00:47:11]

Intreviewer: [00:47:11] You are correct. Yes you are. Yes they.

Director Teacher AL: [00:47:13] Were. Okay. So I would say yes, just like any other book. I think they're all aligned. Maybe the can do statements? Yes, I think they're aligned.

Intreviewer: [00:47:29] It's normally has been the least controversial question. I think there was only one person that was a bit like a bit like you. That didn't give me the I asked right away because. Because they said something in my interview, which is the CFR levels didn't really have children in mind, because how are you going to really evaluate what the A1 level is? A1 is starting. It's really hard to evaluate him. It was.

Director Teacher AL: [00:47:58] Yeah, but but and it's true. As I said in the beginning, the CFR levels were made for adults and not for children. So I think maybe perhaps for children there, there there has to be some adjustment. And I guess that's why then then they said that the starters is free. A1 and mind you the actual exams, the speaking exam or how we grade or what we're expecting in the in the Cambridge changed in recent years. So it's actually become a bit harder. Harder in the sense that in the past we weren't expecting as much produced language as we expect. Now, harder in the well it. What the case was that in the past, it was very easy for a student to get a three, because in the past for speaking exams, they would either get a one, 2 or 3. So it was very easy to assess. Now they can get a one, two, three, 4 or 5. And they actually have well they always had the different categories. So production pronunciation and interaction. But now we're actually looking more for longer, longer productions. So complete sentence sentences to communicate things mind you, in the pre a one, if they can just reproduce one word okay. And it's acceptable maybe not as a 5, but they would, they would get a 3. Yeah. Okay, I think I okay.

Intreviewer: [00:50:02] Yes I.

Intreviewer: [00:50:03] Agree, I agree.

Director Teacher AL: [00:50:04] Yeah. You start talking about.

Director Teacher AL: [00:50:06] Something and then you just ramble on to.

Director Teacher AL: [00:50:08] Something else.

Intreviewer: [00:50:09] Something completely fine.

Intreviewer: [00:50:14] [00:50:14] Okay, now we move on to almost our last question, which we already talked about a little bit, but we're going to go again, which is what what challenges do you encounter when preparing students for the exams, particularly in developing verbal competencies? [00:50:31]

Director Teacher AL: [00:50:33] In developing verbal competencies.

Intreviewer: [00:50:38] The listening and speaking skills.

Director Teacher AL: [00:50:42] I would probably say maybe the.

Director Teacher AL: [00:50:44] [00:50:44] Listening skills are a little bit. It shouldn't be. Perhaps the listening skills are a little bit harder in the sense that if you have if you have students who have a hard time comprehending, I think that is harder. It's harder to help them especially at lower levels than it is with speaking. With speaking, I find okay with speaking with enough practice they're able to do it. They might, they may struggle with the pronunciation. But generally speaking Portuguese speakers usually have very good pronunciation. I think that with my experience, the ones that have have problems with actual pronunciation, it's because there's something there, something physiological, you know physical. The listening. Yes, I think I think the distractors might be a little bit harder to overcome. And what I usually do is whenever we do a listening test, when they have, when they get an answer wrong, we listen to it again. And I actually asked students to tell me what did they understand? Even if they tell it to me in Portuguese and the L1, it doesn't matter. Okay. Because what we're doing is we're actually talking about their learning process. So I think that it's also very important when we're preparing students, that students also think about and talk about how they learn best.

Okay. Because as I said before, everybody learns differently. Some students are able to pick it up right away, no problem. Others do have a hard time. So students, even at this age, even in primary and I'm thinking here of metacognition, even at primary, they do know how they're better able to learn. And then we have to take advantage of that and help them. Does it mean going through the listening and listening for the different sections and getting to see. [00:53:23]

Director Teacher AL: [00:53:23] [00:53:23]But what did you understand? Why? Why didn't you choose this one? Is it is it the lack of vocab? Oh. So maybe perhaps we have to go back and we have to do vocabulary did perhaps they didn't understand the structure. Why didn't they understand it? Do they not know the structure? Perhaps. Okay, so all of this to gives us an opportunity. So it's formative assessment, of course, gives an opportunity for us to go back and to perhaps review structures, review vocabulary with regards to speaking. I think if they're unable to do it, it just means that we have to make up more speaking practice. And the speaking practice, as I said, could be games, could be different activities. I think there's a lot of a lot of different ways to do speaking practice, for example, also in listening, something that helps my students quite a bit with their listening comprehension is actually using a different skill is actually doing a very old technique, which is dictation, because sometimes the problem too is that students don't recognize the word. So the word what I mean by that is the word may look one way, but it sounds another way. That's why when we teach a language, all the skills are integrated. Okay. Okay. So you kind of need all it's. We can't really separate them. And this is one one of the reasons sometimes. Yeah. Like I said, that students have to they have to recognize the shape of the word to actually be able to use it and to know it. It's it's part of actually owning that word or the vocabulary. [00:55:34]

Intreviewer: [00:55:36] [00:55:36]I tend to agree the same. Many people are have, for example, consider that one of the biggest challenges was in the speaking saying that, well, it was hard for them to evaluate him because, you know, there are so many students. How could you manage that has been one of the most, you know, common complaint, not complaints, but challenges that teachers occur. [00:56:04]

Director Teacher AL: [00:56:05] [00:56:05]Well, again, I would say again, having them. The problem is that when we think about and when teachers think about students, they think about their whole class. How am I going to assess 30 students? Well, the

idea here is that you're not going to assess the 30 students all at the same time because it's difficult. So again, getting them to do group work. And while everybody is working on a specific task, this gives you the teacher the opportunity to go from group to group and to actually assess each of the students. And of course, we also have to think of continuous assessment. So it's not just going to be one activity that you're going to assess, but it has to be something that's that's continuous. Okay. All right. So one for example entry entry questions. Exit questions. Okay. That's something that I always did. That's something that I always do. So depending on the number of my students in class I might start a few minutes earlier. So while they're getting everything ready I tell them to line up, and as they're going, as they're leaving, I have maybe 3 or 4 questions, and I choose one question, and I ask the student to answer that questions before they leave. And I can tell you that has actually helped very much with a dyslexic student that I had who had a very, very hard time learning a language. She had very hard time knowing how to pronounce the words. And I can tell you that by the end of the year. So every single lesson I did, this, those key questions she was always able to answer, like, where do you live? Have you got a brother or sister? What's your favorite color? Have you got a pet? She recognized. So I think the the, the important thing is for them to recognize the sound, to understand it, and then to be able to answer naturally. [00:58:24]

Interviewer: [00:58:27] [00:58:27] And that leads us to our final question, which is what do you believe are the long term benefits of incorporating YLE speaking and listening preparation into, let's say I will say regular classroom, but for the sake of understanding classroom and I'm in a regular classroom. I mean, one that is not priming students for the wild. [00:58:50]

Director Teacher AL: [00:58:51] Okay.

Director Teacher AL: [00:58:51] [00:58:51] I think that it brings a variety of different activities. So you're giving your students a more varied they're more varied activities, things that they like. So if I think it gives you more opportunities for listening practice, which they need and they also veer away or they excuse me, they try to veer away a bit from the, the more traditional traditional type of activities. Of course the storytelling that's also important. Perhaps we don't tell our students. We don't read that many stories to to to any of them really, not just primary them being able to then being able to to actually tell a story. This is one of the problems with also the CFR I think that it looks

at language that it looks at language that perhaps students don't need and doesn't look at language that students do need and may use. And for example, also a problem with the, the curriculum is that even even at older levels, fifth, sixth, it looks at certain language that for them it's very difficult to acquire. And it's been proven that those concepts can only be acquired at a later stage. And there are things that that they really don't need for communication. Okay. So I think that the, the Cambridge exams does look at being able to communicate and not all Portuguese books for English looks at that. I think everybody's very concerned with grammar. You can't communicate with grammar. You can only communicate with vocabulary. And I think it's shameful that you actually have to teach grammar. Explicitly in primary. I would whip anyone if I caught them doing that because students don't need it. They acquire they should be able to acquire the language. [01:01:25]

Director Teacher AL: [01:01:27] [01:01:27] Naturally. And for example, even though you're not asking me this, I noticed that students used to be slightly smarter in the past, so they were better at English than they are now. And the reason being that in the past, there were a lot of kids shows here in Portugal that were in English. So students were listening. They were being more exposed to the language than they are now, where a lot of things, thankfully it's in Portuguese and not Brazilian Portuguese, but where things are all translated. And I think that it's been very apparent that their level has decreased. For example, I can tell you that after there was a certain time where I noticed that boys were becoming much better at English because of video games, and many of these video games were in English. And so that's really helped them again, because they were more exposed. I'd have things like, oh, skin, skin, oh, skin. That's in one of my games. I know that word. They knew how to pronounce it. Okay, so I think that the more exposed kids are to the language. And of course, there we go, the listening. Which then gives you the vocab. I think that this helps. This really helps children to acquire the language and to be able to use it. And we also do have situations where they're very, very quiet students who maybe are not producing right away. But there will come a day where it just changes and they won't shut up and they'll be able to use the language. Okay. That's my experience anyway. [01:03:24]

Interviewer: [01:03:25] And that brings us to the end. You know, the last part that you talked about is the main focus of my of my masters, then it's probably going to be something I want to study for my doctorate. It's not on. So those words as students are

getting worse at English compared to the previous years. My my dilemma is that I believe Portuguese students are becoming worst speakers instead of better because, yeah, it's it's becoming quite noticeable. And then it they arrive at university, the level is already low, and then it keeps getting, you know, it's a snowball that doesn't seem to to stop. And I believe it's going to create an avalanche of very well trained English readers and writers, perhaps, I believe, but very poorly trained English speakers and listeners. That's my belief.

Director Teacher AL: [01:04:31] Writers maybe not, because I think they have a hard time with writing too. But I, I, I agree, I think that students, for example, I can tell you that students in the past primary levels were able to get always exceptional students 90s, 80s and we actually now have students who struggle. And I don't understand that. And for example I don't see how I don't see how students in their first year when they learned their first year of English, how they cannot succeed if it was just 1 or 2. Okay. But we often see that students are having a hard time with English in the first year, the first year of exposure. Now it's the third grade. Before it used to be in the fifth grade. I think Personally, I think there's too much emphasis on there's too many worksheets. It's all very text based, text based, text based. And it can't be and perhaps too much emphasis on grammar. And I think a lot of some of the teachers are to blame because, okay, you've got the book, you've got the syllabus, but there's always ways around it.

Intreviewer: [01:05:59] I, I am not I, I do not disagree with that opinion at all. I however, find that while there are ways to make it and, you know, times are evolving, technology is evolving. It's ever evolving. Always. I believe we have reached a point when where even someone who doesn't know how to write can figure out very well with technology and know.

Director Teacher AL: [01:06:25] Yeah.

Intreviewer: [01:06:26] I don't believe we have we have any way to fake being able to speak a language in real time that doesn't exist. Or to understand it yet. Yet. Let's give it. Let's give it time. But yeah, it's it's become my concern. We are now obviously the the questions are we are now just having a casual chat, but my intent for a masters is was able to I want to develop this so I then can concentrate in a bigger issue, and I want to reach my doctorate. My, my issue was that I analyzed in my first years of university that

I and I love my classmates, I always did, I love them, but I analyzed that they were ill prepared to speak English and ill prepared with me being very, very generous.

Director Teacher AL: [01:07:21] Yes. That I think.

Director Teacher AL: [01:07:23] That's the main problem. Is that. Okay, first of all, you go in. Okay. I can tell you that in the past. In the past. Okay. How am I going to say this? I, I have had complaints from parents when we only speak English in class. How are you going to learn a language if you do not speak English in class? I am not saying I am not a person who goes against using the L1 to explain. If you can explain something in two seconds, why take a whole minute? Okay. So yes, there is a place for L1 for translanguaging all that in, in school. But the majority of your lesson, it has to be in English. And now and and I've had people I've had I can remember this year a parent complaining that a grammar point was not translated when there was no need to translate because there was no translation possible. Okay, this was the auxiliary verb. So I think that certain children aren't learning as well because also they're not being asked to think. Okay. So this is why perhaps some of the when, when you have, when you have an exam, like whether it could be Cambridge, it could be Trinity because we used to also have Trinity oral exams where you're actually practicing the language for specific purposes with students. This really helps. Okay. And I think that a lot of the component or a lot of the things that teachers are teaching, as I said, it's all text based. And this is the problem. It shouldn't be text based. It has to be oral. It's a language. So I think a lot of speaking activities are missing.

Director Teacher AL: [01:09:39] And even is listening actually being practiced as much as it should? I don't think so. I think just like writing isn't really practiced. When do you actually practice writing? I know this is not part of your of your thesis, but just that just as we're, we're we're just talking when do students actually learn how to write on a sentence based. No, they're actually asked to, to produce things on text based. But it starts with the sentence, do they actually know how to put string a sentence together? Many students don't, and I don't understand that. They don't know how to string a sentence together. So how are they expected to actually write a paragraph and then to write a text? And this has to start from the very beginning. Okay. So I think that the writing element is also missing because when do they write? They write in the test. But have they practiced? So what are you how are you supposed to be? How are you

supposed to learn writing? Writing is is a practice skill. It's not something that you that you know right away you have to practice it. How how do good writers become. Okay? They have a certain skill, but they have to practice. Nobody is a perfect writer. You can't write a book in one go. No, there are several drafts. So I think that a lot of what the kids learn is more receptive than it is productive, and they're all intertwined. And perhaps there should be less text and more, more type of activities where it's not the teacher speaking, but where it's the student who is producing.

Intreviewer: [01:11:29] I believe so, but I also think we are not focusing nearly as much as we should on On on verbal competencies and speaking and which is a shame because we didn't make the so the Minister of Education did make the suggestion that English should be now be given 12 years of education. So since the first.

Director Teacher AL: [01:11:59] Yeah, I've heard that.

Intreviewer: [01:12:00] The first grade however I don't I haven't seen any meaningful change. We are just seeming to be repeating vocab or grammar where the students will.

Director Teacher AL: [01:12:14] Exactly. That's the problem. That's the problem. We don't we can teach the language. We don't have to teach the grammar. I think that the language had. And I think that's the problem with a lot of primary teachers. I don't know why. Why if you look I don't. Okay. Yeah. I only know one, one primary book for morale. But if you look at some of the other books from Macmillan, from Cambridge you can have a little bit of structure, but it's, it's very minimal and, and but you, you really don't have to teach. You don't have to explain the why. Oh, this is present. Simple. Who cares? Native speakers don't know what present simple is.

Intreviewer: [01:13:04] That's true.

Director Teacher AL: [01:13:05] Right. So so I think sometimes it's the approach and languages. Okay. Yeah. You learn a language by, by using it by making mistakes. So and students have to be given. Students have to be given the opportunity to make mistakes, be in a safe environment, to be able to make those mistakes. So they're not ashamed of it. They have to. They have to try it out. And I think the teachers are the ones who have to give them the opportunities to try it out. And and I think that. Okay in

your case, with, with the exams, with your, with the exams, perhaps there are more opportunities to do the speaking.

Intreviewer: [01:13:55] Oh, my, I will, you know, I will spoil you because you might you probably won't be there for my masters, but one of the sentences of my presentation is I am not aiming to give a permanent solution. I am basically exploring how even a minimal temporary solution would be better than the current set of new solutions that we have in the present.

Director Teacher AL: [01:14:23] Exactly. For one, okay, I agree, the class sizes are too big, but okay, what can be done, especially for a language. But there are teachers who manage, and I think teachers have to be resourceful and manage imaginative and think a little bit outside of the box and do different types of activities. It can't. I don't think that learning a language is sitting at a desk and doing worksheets.

Intreviewer: [01:14:56] No, I don't think that.

Director Teacher AL: [01:14:57] For any of the subjects, not just languages, but specifically for languages, and I think that's one of the main problems. There has to be noise. Good noise. And that's one of the things that I'm, I, I'm always there's so many things that when I do presentations for, primary B through projects, through crafts. Kids love crafts. As long as you know there's always a purpose, a language purpose. So I think I think that's that is a possible answer to actually getting them to to use language and to enjoy it. Because once you get them to enjoy it, then they want to learn more.

Intreviewer: [01:15:48] And as long as we actually try to. And it's been my goal to actually, you know, try to find a I just want to find a solution to to the issue that we have right now, which is I believe we are not giving too much focus on on the speaking activities.

Director Teacher AL: [01:16:11] No.

Intreviewer: [01:16:13] And why not why not give him too much focus? We also we're also neglecting him, obviously, but we are creating a different set of issues, which is university professor saying that the students do not meet the criteria of English, that

they should. And then we get to a master's degree in teaching and then it's we are we are allowing teachers that don't have the, the, the ability to fully speak yet to teach other children. And we are going to create an even bigger issue. I believe.

Director Teacher AL: [01:16:46] You know, one of the things I can I can share with you. Okay. So I've, I've written I've written cilil worksheets for ADL, for Serrano, and I've written speaking and speaking activities, and I've written, speaking and writing activities for. Okay. And when I mean writing activities, I mean writing activities, I don't mean worksheets. And one of the things that kind of upset me was that they kept saying, oh, this is too difficult. Oh, you have to simplify this. So I think in a sense that we're dumbing our students to. Okay. Yes, fine. Our classes are not homogeneous. They don't all have the same level. But I also think that sometimes we're really not expecting as much from our students as we should accept or expect.

Intreviewer: [01:17:47] I believe that I completely agree with you on that. I have found the same issue. Or that you have only by internship, which is I felt like I felt the two opposites. I felt like sometimes especially when I was I think I once commented like, I isn't this a little bit too advanced for children? And then I, I then at the same time, when I was in the public sector, I was like, isn't this way too too easy? Yeah, like they won't be challenged by this at all. I don't think they will even learn a lot about it. So it seems to be something that it does have to change.

Director Teacher AL: [01:18:33] I also think, yes, and in primary, it really has to change. I know that, I know that this year there was some changes in the field. I think the ministry are trying to change things, but one of the things that kind of shocks me and I haven't really seen it yet, is that okay? Students start English third fourth grade. So by the fifth grade, it's their third year and they should actually know something. But it's not always the case. Sometimes it's like you have to review every single thing. It's almost like it's almost as if it's in the past where they just start English in the fifth grade. Do you see what I mean?

Intreviewer: [01:19:15] Yes. They are called that in an interview. The reset, which is kids will learn careers and professions. Well, not all, but most of them in the in the fourth, third grade, whatever it is. And then they reach fifth grade and then we give them

again. Yeah. And then at seventh grade because, you know, we are afraid that they somehow forgot their entire existence. We give them again. And then in the ninth grade.

Director Teacher AL: [01:19:41] And then you know what I hear from my students in the fifth grade or sixth grade, they're they keep teaching the present continuous. Oh, yeah. Of the present. They say, what are you. So what are you learning at school? Present continuous again. But, you know, I think. Why why why are they, you know, why are they always teaching the same thing if they don't get it? Move on to different things sometimes they can learn that in the, in, in, in primary. I think that there's too much focus on grammar, in my opinion, too much focus on grammar and not enough focus on vocabulary and actually using the language as you're saying, you know, why have such an extended curriculum when perhaps it should just be worked better with different with different topics because true. The topics. Okay. We, I, we can understand that their comprehension is, is limited. So maybe okay, we do a certain theme in the third grade and then it's broadened later on. But still I think there's a bit too much repetition, too much repetition of themes. I think I think that that should change. That's why I personally also like cross cross curricular approach and the use of cilil approach in the classroom.

Intreviewer: [01:21:22] Yeah. And I completely agree. In this case, I will have to go running because I have.

Director Teacher AL: [01:21:28] Yes, yes, yes. Me too.

Intreviewer: [01:21:30] Because I have to work. But it has been lovely chatting with you. Thank you.

Director Teacher AL: [01:21:34] Okay. I hope it was useful.

Intreviewer: [01:21:36] No. It was. And as I promised you, other other people I interviewed once, it's done. So the final version, one I will defending. I will send everyone a digital copy for you to check. Okay. And and if you want, if you don't want to, it's okay, so don't worry. But it has been truly been a pleasure.

Director Teacher AL: [01:21:59] Okay. Likewise. And good luck with everything.

Intreviewer: [01:22:03] Oh, thank you, thank you.

Director Teacher AL: [01:22:04] Okay. Alright then. Okay. So bye bye.

Director Teacher AL: [01:22:08] Bye bye bye.

Director Teacher AL: [01:22:09] Bye.

Interview on Cambridge YLE Exam Preparation - SL Audio

List of Main Topics

1. **Purpose and structure of the interview; thesis focus on YLE and verbal competencies** — key timestamps: 00:02:15–00:07:36, 00:10:07–00:11:37
2. **Impact of YLE-style preparation on speaking and listening skills** — key timestamps: 00:11:37–00:14:15, 00:58:06–01:01:55
3. **Coursebook approaches: international (Cambridge/Macmillan/Pearson) vs. Portuguese national** — key timestamps: 00:16:44–00:22:09
4. **Classroom strategies and management for YLE speaking/listening** — key timestamps: 00:27:20–00:33:34
5. **Development of transversal skills (critical thinking, collaboration) via exam-like tasks** — key timestamps: 00:34:46–00:36:02
6. **Alignment of YLE with CEFR and assessment evolution** — key timestamps: 00:37:17–00:43:27
7. **Challenges in preparing young learners for verbal competencies** — key timestamps: 00:45:05–00:57:12

Topic 1: Purpose and structure of the interview; thesis focus on YLE and verbal competencies

Timestamps: 00:02:15–00:07:36, 00:10:07–00:11:37

Summary: Interviewer outlines a two-part interview and explains his thesis: YLE-aligned tasks and exam preparation appear to enhance young learners' verbal competencies (listening and speaking). He clarifies he's focused on comprehension-decoding and responsive production, not general language skills, aiming to offer teachers a practical model.

Keywords: thesis focus, YLE preparation, verbal competencies

Topic 2: Impact of YLE-style preparation on speaking and listening skills

Timestamps: 00:11:37–00:14:15, 00:58:06–01:01:55

Summary: SL argues exam-oriented preparation promotes a holistic skill view, ensuring attention to pronunciation, sequencing, and the structured flow of speaking tasks. Incorporating YLE-style activities integrates skills beyond grammar/vocabulary and benefits children by mirroring real communicative use.

Keywords: holistic skills, pronunciation & sequencing, skill integration

Topic 3: Coursebook approaches: international (Cambridge/Macmillan/Pearson) vs. Portuguese national

Timestamps: 00:16:44–00:22:09

Summary: International coursebooks typically structure units by skills (receptive to productive) and align closely with exam formats, aiding comprehensive coverage. Portuguese national books have improved, moving away from grammar-heavy content due to ministry guidelines, but still have room to better embed skill-focused, holistic practices.

Keywords: skill-based units, exam alignment, national vs. private

Topic 4: Classroom strategies and management for YLE speaking/listening

Timestamps: 00:27:20–00:33:34

Summary: Effective prep depends on proximity to exams and tight classroom management: short, varied activities, TPR, play-based tasks, and simulated exam scenarios. SL uses games, flashcards, small-group work with class marshals, and adapts to learner profiles to maximize engagement and practice opportunities.

Keywords: TPR, game-based learning, small-group scaffolding

Topic 5: Development of transversal skills (critical thinking, collaboration) via exam-like tasks

Timestamps: 00:34:46–00:36:02

Summary: YLE-style speaking/listening tasks naturally cultivate turn-taking, negotiation, respect, and critical thinking. These interaction skills are later explicitly assessed at higher levels, making early practice valuable within a supported classroom environment.

Keywords: turn-taking, negotiation, 21st-century skills

Topic 6: Alignment of YLE with CEFR and assessment evolution

Timestamps: 00:37:17–00:43:27

Summary: SL affirms strong alignment with CEFR, noting Europe-wide standardization enables skill-based assessment and comparability. She highlights the shift from pass/fail to skill-profile reporting, time-limited validity at higher levels, and reliability through standardized examiner criteria.

Keywords: CEFR alignment, skill reporting, standardization

Topic 7: Challenges in preparing young learners for verbal competencies

Timestamps: 00:45:05–00:57:12

Summary: Key obstacles include encouraging peer-to-peer English use, large class sizes, monitoring constraints, and the myth that classrooms should be quiet. Practical

barriers—room layout, limited time, transitions, and coursebooks with minimal speaking slots—reduce practice; teachers must lower TTT and prioritize communicative tasks.

Keywords: peer interaction, class size & layout, reduce TTT

Intreviewer: [00:01:36] Hello. Hello. Hello? Can you hear me? SL?

SL: [00:01:45] I can hear you. I can't see you, but I can hear you.

Intreviewer: [00:01:48] Okay. Wonderful. I know, Tom, I had some issues with my laptop. I have to be on my desktop. My desktop does not have camera. I'm so sorry for that, but Can you hear me? Fine.

SL: [00:02:01] Yes I can. Yes, sure.

Intreviewer: [00:02:03] Wonderful. Good morning. SL, how are you doing?

SL: [00:02:06] I'm fine. And you? Thank you.

Intreviewer: [00:02:08] I'm doing well. Thank you so much for asking.

SL: [00:02:12] So how can I help you this morning?

Intreviewer: [00:02:15] Okay. So are you going to do an interview today? There are two sections to the interview, so all the first section will be section A, which is which is the background questions. You know, given that this will only the audio is admitted to be recorded. What I'm going to ask are basic questions that, you know, okay state your competencies on the matter. You're obviously you're experiencing your experience within the role and the relevance to the to the thesis. Then we have the section B, which are the main questions. There are seven of them, and I tend to do the interview organically, so. Oh, given that it has been already four that I have done all everyone that I interview is a little bit different. Some, some like to talk a little bit more, others a little bit less. I don't I don't want to or restrict anyone's way of thinking or line of thought. So I try to do them organically. But are 7 questions sometimes I need to ask follow up questions

to, you know, squeeze some juice out. Other times not as much. You guys answer them as you go along and I don't need them very well. But what I tend to do is I normally ask the section questions, then then we go to section B, but before that I, I do try to explain because, you know, I do say it, but saying it does differ from me explaining what is my thesis? What is the purpose, what what I'm what I'm trying to do? What is all of this? So my thesis, the nuclear point is, while I was in **REDACTED**, I identified that we were preparing students for the YLR exams. Not only be mock tests, activities, but even the coursebook, the the power up, which I am unsure if it's by Macmillan or by Cambridge. I think it's by Cambridge, but both of them obviously follow the

SL: [00:04:41] Follow exam format style.

Intreviewer: [00:04:43] Yeah.

SL: [00:04:43] Exam format.

Intreviewer: [00:04:44] Stuff. Yeah, yeah. Exam format style that closely aligns with the YLE. So while I was, I was there I thought it was interesting that the the students in the skills relevant to listening and speaking, they were showing great improvements and they were rapidly progressing in those areas. So my thesis is really about that is I believe that YLE the tasks and exam preparation and what I mean, exam preparation, I mean, you know not necessarily they have to do them, but because we are doing exercises that closely resemble while we consider exam preparation. So those types of exercises enhance the listening and speaking components and skills of students. And I am only focused on those two skills. We it's going to be normal that in the interview you're going to speak of all skills. And that's okay I understand. And while they are closely connected, I don't want to speak about all the skills. Unfortunately, that's not my my main goal here. But I mainly am interested on speaking and listening because I believe, and this is going to be it for the future, that we have a deeper problem in, in terms of balance with students. From early age or an early age until let's say let's say faculty, students where all the speaking components is not as good as it should be in comparison to the reading and writing component. Given given that that's my main nuclear point, which I believe I do, I do understand it's a very it's I am not reinventing the wheel. It's it's normal to think that the exams and preparation is helping, given that the exams were very were constructed were and were done by professionals with tons of

experience. We had an interviewer not long ago even tell us why the exams were built, because they were the they we were seeing. Why? A lot of students, I believe, were failing. So we decided to make an exam. Previous to that, the while. So I understand that I am not, you know, pointing anything new, but I'm trying to give is an alternative to teachers to perhaps, you know, we can follow this module to enhance these competencies.

SL: [00:07:36] That's okay.

Intreviewer: [00:07:37] That's the main goal. And with that, we, we reach section A of the background question, which is which is very simple. We start with name and current In teaching our role.

SL: [00:07:52] So I am currently so my name is SL and currently I teach both at **REDACTED** and at **REDACTED**. And I am also a Cambridge exam speaking examiner. And I write material book materials for a publisher here in Portugal.

Intreviewer: [00:08:14] Oh, okay. Wonderful. We're going to have a lot of talk about especially on the second part. You just said it's going to go wonderfully to the south, to one of our questions. Thank you so much, SL. And how long have you been teaching English? At a primary level, if you ever have or you haven't

SL: [00:08:35] I've, I yes, I have, and I've taught everything from three year olds onward. 30 years I've been teaching for 30 years. And I believe that for most more than 20 I worked with with young learners and with very young learners.

Intreviewer: [00:09:00] Wonderful. Okay. The third question you already kind of answered, but I will say it again. Have you had any specific training or experience with the Cambridge exams?

SL: [00:09:13] Yes. Yes, I've had training specific training for speaking examiners. And then experience in preparing and teaching even even though not all students take Cambridge exams. The the young learner exams. But yes, as you know, in private schools there is a tendency for for them to be very exam oriented. So it's only natural that we've all been there.

Intreviewer: [00:09:45] Okay. Well, SL, we answered all of them. There isn't another question or another question, but we don't really have to worry because you you answered it. As I said organically, it happens all the time. So we, we reach section B, which is the main questions.

SL: [00:10:05] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:10:07] I'm so sorry. My my throat today is is not. It has been like this since it's morning it's in your experience, what impact does YLE the exam preparation have on students verbal competencies and verbal competencies? I'm referring to speaking and listening. Why I put them in the same sort of category is because I distinguish in my work that I am talking about verbal competencies and non-verbal production. I won't, because verbal production, especially at a young age can happen. By just mimicking or just saying sounds. What I want is verbal competence. I want him to be able to listen, decode the message. And then verbal prediction based on decoding that that's that's what matters to me is that they are able to understand what is being asked or being told to them, and then decode the message and produce English. That's that's what I mean by verbal competence. I wrote it very complicated on my thesis for no reason at all. But that's what I mean. So in your experience, what impact does the exam preparation have on students verbal competence. So when we do exercises tasks we aim to prepare students what tends to happen?

SL: [00:11:37] Well, I strongly believe that we teach students, not exams. That's the the first thing. So one of the the things that is extremely important. Before I move on to answering your question, if one of the things that I believe is the most important is that we do not press these children, and that we do not make them feel stressed about taking an exam, because that is absolutely anti Cambridge view, right? There are a number of exams. It's not just Cambridge while exams that we have there are Pearson, there are Trinity. There are a number of exams out there. So through all of them, what I do believe is that when we prepare students for exams, we tend to think about skills differently than when we are just working with a coursebook and that we have a syllabus to, to complete according to the aprendizaje. And what I feel is that because of that, because teachers are more aware of the different skills that are involved, we do tend to look at children in a more holistic way and tend to look at teaching and learning,

and the exercises are also the exercises also go more in that direction. So because of that, because of all these things, I believe that the impact for children is quite positive. As I said, we're not just focusing on the reading and the writing and the vocabulary we're focusing. We know because we teach we're preparing them for the exam. We know we have to address things such as pronunciation. We have to address things as sequencing. Also the exam format, the fact that we are introducing them to this exam format, especially in the part of the speaking that there is a specific sequence. All of this contributes to to them getting a better sense of how skills work and how they are directly related to one another. You speak about verbal communication skills, but yes, speaking and listening. Even the one is productive and the other one is receptive. They are absolutely interlinked, so it's not possible to have one without having the other. I hope I answered your question.

Interviewer: [00:14:15] No you did, and wonderfully. Really. We had another interviewer that said something that I found interesting, which was on the why when we are chased teaching students we are not teaching we are not teaching for the exam. We are preparing students and then they will take the exam. Our focus obviously is on preparing students. And then she said something that I found really funny is that And it will lead us to our next question. She was. I'll do. We are preparing we are preparing students, and then they will take exams. When we take into consideration the YLE, we are mostly taking consideration on balancing all the skill sets, the writing, reading listening and speaking. So we are focusing on developing those skills as opposed to only teaching, for example, grammar or or vocabulary. That's, that's what differs the most on a YLE approach of teaching. And I really quite like that because I believed it to be we, we are developing the skills as we go along in a balancing manner. I actually stick with and and that does lead us to our second question. And the second question is quite pertinent to you because is how does for example, the textbooks from Macmillan or Cambridge that includes tasks that align with YLE OR even an approach that aligns with the exam preparation or, or tasks differ from, for example, a classroom which tends to focus on traditional textbooks, ways to a traditional textbook from Portugal or that doesn't really align with the it doesn't have it in mind. How how does it differ, especially in connection to the listening and the and, and the speaking component.

SL: [00:16:44] Well, you know, having been in, in teaching for 30 years, you can imagine that I've seen quite a few course books, both national and international. And

obviously, we all have our favorite publishers or favorite books. And, and different teachers tend to value different things in, in course books in Portugal. And if we compare private schools to the public system schools, the, the, the difference is quite noticeable. And, and there is a reason for that. Public school teachers need books to be approved by the ministry. So there is there are fundamental items that need to be respected, and the most important of which is that they follow and that they are in line with the documents, the legal documents that the Ministry prescribes. Private schools and course books that are chosen, usually at private schools, do not have this constraint. And their focus is yes to teach exams, yes to teach children in a more holistic way. But that conditions the type of exercise and the type of structure. For a course book in, in terms of a national course books. There has been a progression over the years, and there has been a tendency to make them less grammar oriented. And this is also because of the documents that that the legislation and all the reference documents that teachers have.

SL: [00:18:40] Whereas in private or, well, publishers such as Macmillan or Cambridge or Pearson the tendency has been to go with the the any changes that have been made to exams and books are mainly divided by skill. So in each unit you will clearly have a structure that that follows all the skills and make sure that you follow it, that you cover all the skills. Generally you will start either with listening or with reading. So you're going to start with a receptive skill and gradually move on to productive skills. So this is the traditional so to speak The approach in in course books that focus more on, on exams. And obviously the reason for this is that they want to help teachers make sure that all skills are covered, right? Teaching, listening or teaching speaking is quite hard when compared to teaching grammar or teaching vocabulary, right? You do not have a set of words that you're going to teach. You do not have grammar rules to follow, right? You're training skills more than just training content or training structure. And when it comes to teaching speaking, this is quite complex because you need to be able to go from the go from the what children have learned on a textbook, on the board, on paper, to make it natural in their speech.

SL: [00:20:44] This this is the hardest part to do. And this is quite, quite challenging. And this is what I believe is lacking in some coursebooks produced in Portugal. So I believe that there even though there are constraints, because of all the ministry documents, I believe that there is still room for improvement. There's still a lot to be

done in terms of making our national coursebooks more in line with this holistic approach of teaching skills rather than teaching content. I think we're we're moving there. And the last batch, this last generation of course books that was out for primary school is already trying to be more in line with this, with this tendency. And I believe that when we start the next generation of books, which I believe is going to be in about two years for young learners, then we're going to see more of this incorporated. So there's room, but there's room for advancement. But there has work been done in this in this field as well. Did I answer?

Intreviewer: [00:22:09] You answered it beautifully.

Intreviewer: [00:22:11] Especially because this answer has to be and answer this question has been it it wasn't as controversial as I thought it was gonna be. This is probably statistically not the. Well, no, it's there is going to be another one, which the answer has been quite the same. But I think this won't even be this one. Everyone kept giving me the same answer. You explained it very more eloquently, and we we went to what I really wanted people to touch were bought. It was beautiful. I don't even have a question. It was very, very well done. But it did not prove a certain bias that we have been which was Pearson, Macmillan and Cambridge textbooks are above and Portuguese way below. I don't want I don't want a complete bias in my statistics. Hence why I was really looking forward to having an interview with you. However, that does get us to the to the third question. And this one is quite fun. So how do you structure your classroom activities to prepare students for the YLE speaking and listening components? Now, when I mean prepare, I mean developed your skills, having in mind what's going to happen in the yle, for example **REDACTED**, or in various exercises. What, for example, I did was One one of the exercises that I like to talk to you about, and I even wrote my thesis, was I couldn't possibly do an individually speaking assessment for them.

Intreviewer: [00:24:08] It's I could not do that in one lesson. Because I have 20, 24 other students to go by. So what I did was a speaking, whole class type of situation where I displayed an image on, on the projector and I printed out 22 or 24 flashcards. I think I even printed out more, or in case there was like one student that really didn't like the flashcards for for whatever reason, it can happen. And I had the resources and the time so I did all that. And I, I distributed them and we did this whole you know, this kind

of whole speaking class. What I asked him to do is I would randomly think of a number, or there was another class which was a random number generator, which would generate a number, but it could not generate a number that was previously already generated. That could not happen. And what would happen was I would asked him first, you know, to tell us what the flashcard was. It's it was going to be vocabulary that we have already worked on. Okay. So we were not teaching him through YLE we were revising through YLR. And it's an important de facto thing to have to be mentioning. Nothing was being done by teaching on the first hand. We were really revising and they were described to me, the flashcard.

Intreviewer: [00:25:48] I would normally always try to put in a personal question. For example, if it was a horse, I would ask them, have you ever have you ever seen a horse in real life, or have you ever ridden a horse? Something like that. In those regards, very simple. I just make them talk a little bit more. Then I would ask them to come to the ward, place the horse in a specific area, ask for the horses in relatives so to something. And then I would even ask them something more, you know, in case they were very energized. That's how I sorted it. Now, obviously I'm not. I don't even have half of the half of the experience as any as any person I have interviewed so far. This was obviously, you know, my attempt at first time doing it. I have a lot of fun. And I really did cover because we were doing we covered prepositions and at the same time, country vocabulary. So I just asked him do you do you, do you like going to the lake? And many of them said, no, I never went to the lake. So I had a lot of fun. But I knew obviously someone with way more experience in a professional. How do you prepare how do you structure your classroom to prepare a student for a while, specifically the speaking and listening components.

SL: [00:27:20] It really does depend how close we are to the exam if we really are going to be doing the exam, because, for example, if with children and you know this, even though you say you don't have a lot of experience, but you already have in-service experience. So you know what I'm going to say? Children's attention span is quite limited. And if you do not engage them throughout, then it's going to be quite challenging. Then you're going to see a lot of issues rising. So classroom management and I keep telling this to every trainee I have, classroom management has to be your Bible. Knowing exactly who you have is going to dictate how your lesson roles. You can prepare two lessons and you can have the same lesson plan. However, once you get

there, things are very likely to go differently in both classes. So you need to have either a plan B or to have some sort of awareness of what could go wrong and how to fix it. Right now, the key for me with any class, especially with young learners, is that activities are short and there's a mix of fast paced activities and slow paced activities. A little bit of movement. So TPR total physical response is quite important, quite relevant, but at the same time give them some moments to settle down, to calm down and to kind of integrate what we're doing.

SL: [00:29:22] So for speaking specifically, flash cards work marvelously. Movement games work very well. Any sort of game will work well with children because they're engaged. They're motivated. It plays to their intrinsic motivation. Naturally. So games for me, games are the main resource in when teaching children, regardless if we're teaching exam or not. If we're very close to the exam, obviously we need to be more careful and we need to try and create situations that simulate exam scenario just for the child not to be completely thrown off when they get to the exam because that is something that you use as an examiner. You very quickly pick on once you start examining a child, you can clearly see the ones who have been prepared and well prepared and the ones who have just been having lessons. And at some point someone said, okay, you've covered a coursebook that is exam oriented. So off you go. Do the starters or the movers or any of the other exams, and you can clearly see the difference. So if we're close to the exam, speaking and listening need to be more exam like if not then there are a number of activities, usually through play. But this is me personally through play where we can try to engage children. I also enjoy working with class marshal. So I've got little students who are kind of teacher assistants.

SL: [00:31:34] And these are not necessarily the best students. These are not necessarily the best students. Sometimes these are actually children who have a tendency to be either, you know, a bit more challenging in terms of behavior or need a little bit of extra support in terms of, of content covering. But get them into little groups and have little activities and have one of them monitoring. Because sometimes, especially if you have a student who struggles more with speaking, it's going to be better for them to work in small groups than to work in open class groups. So again, it's about really knowing your class, knowing that there is no one size fits all formula. The things are going to depend on the class that you have, on the students that you have on on the feeling you get once you step into the classroom. And playing. Playing is part of

growing up. We all learn through play. All of us inside and outside the classroom. So when a child is developing, play is their main form of understanding the world around them. So if we incorporate that, if we take that inside the classroom, we're mimicking real life and we're making learning interesting. We're making learning, engaging. And for me, more than exams, more than anything else, that should be the main focus at any level, let alone with, with young learners.

Interviewer: [00:33:34] I completely agree. I have you I'll see you soon.

Interviewer: [00:33:38] Game gamified?

SL: [00:33:42] Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: [00:33:44] See, I, I normally try to extract the exercises from the exam because I believe they were very fulfilling, especially to the, the revisions and try to gamified even a little bit. So then we were getting best of both worlds. We were keeping students engaged, but at the same time, we were using a defacto strategy that we knew was working their and your skill sets and, and, you know, at the same time also preparing him for the exams. Yeah. This does all get us to the fourth question, which is so we are preparing the students. We are doing these tasks exercises because they are very fulfilling. Now, do these tasks help students develop transversal skills? And what I mean by this is critical thinking, adaptability and collaboration. What do you think, SL?

SL: [00:34:46] Absolutely. Regardless of your aim, with an activity we can never forget that we are teaching young people. So respect for others. Critical thinking time, you know, turn taking negotiating an outcome. All of these skills are really important. And if they move on to, to other exams at higher levels, these are things that are going to be assessed. For example, the ability to negotiate towards outcome or turn taking or the ability to interact with others. So you cannot dissociate one thing from the other. Everything needs to be included and actively we will with either with listening or with speaking. We are going to be allowing children the opportunity to practice these these skills in a safe environment and with guidance from adults.

Interviewer: [00:36:02] Oh, and I completely agree. Normally the discussion was quite controversial because some of them believed you know, the exercises itself and how

you prepare for them really do not matter. In developing the skills, you should focus on just teaching them. I personally found that the exam itself are really aligned with what of this 20th or 21st century skills? Skills? Yes, I believed it to be so. So I quite like the question. Now we're going for my favorite question. Because normally this is answered only with one word, but I always are not always. I do have to ask because I do reference this a lot. And it's especially important to to, well, to our country as well, given that we use a lot of this guidance. So from your perspective, how well do the exam stars align with the CFR levels for young learners?

SL: [00:37:17] Very well.

Intreviewer: [00:37:18] Exactly.

SL: [00:37:20] But that is not you see, the the CFR was, was created to try and unify and make things a little bit more standardized across Europe. It may seem hard for us here in Europe to understand that, for example, people in the United States or people in the Middle East or in Asia have no idea what the CFR is. They they have no idea what we're talking about when we when we speak of a B2 or an A1 or a Pre-a1 this this means nothing to them. So when this was created and this kind of standard started to, to be implemented by, by By European, European schools and Coursebooks and so on. It was very important because it meant that exams more specifically, I'm talking about the ones that that I know the most. Like I told you, there are many of them, but Cambridge and Pearson and Trinity that they try to align themselves with this. Right. What we are saying and, and in the past few years, we've seen that this has become more important because you went from a pass or a fail. So in the past, Cambridge exams would have three three scores. So you would either pass with merit or pass or fail. And nowadays that is not the case. So the case has shifted. So the, the the point has shifted. Not to say you are this or you are that, you passed or you failed, but at this moment in time, on that day, the score you achieved shows that you are this or that.

SL: [00:39:33] And in terms of, of the certificate that is issued again in the past there would be one grade, global grade. And nowadays we see that grades are awarded by skill. So you can clearly see when you look at a at a report, you can clearly see that this person A has got their listening skills more developed than their writing skills, for example, or their speaking is. Their speaking skills are much, much better than their

listening skills, which is quite, quite, quite unusual, by the way. I don't think I've ever seen that, but so you can you can see this. Therefore, the exams have moved in the sense that we are no longer assessing new knowledge. We are looking at skills always with the key purpose of improvement. So do exams align? Yes they do, because they want to make people move through the scale, feel more confident. That is why a lot of the higher levels not at young learner levels, but at higher levels. That is why the majority of these exams have a timestamp. So after two years they are no longer considered valid. And why is that? Because in two years a lot can happen. Maybe you've moved to a part of the of the world where you do not need to to use your English language skills.

SL: [00:41:31] And if you know the saying is old, if you if you don't use it, you lose it. So all of these things have been I'm rambling now, but yeah, all of these things have been designed so that the student feels progression, the person that people can understand, that they started somewhere. Yes, but there is a scale they can move through and it helps standardize things, which is also very relevant. You know, one of the reasons I like exams in this setting is that you know, exactly this person in a speaking test will have to have more or less the same result as somebody else doing as that person if that person did the exam with another examiner. So there there are limits. There are boundaries right. We, we know that this person needs to fall into that. So it's real. It's accurate. It's not as if you, you for example if you, have an exam with me. You have a speaking test with me, I'll give you a 20, and then you go off and you have it with somebody else who has different criteria, and they're going to give you a 15, right? That cannot happen on an exam that is based on skills, that is based on the CFR. That will not happen.

Intreviewer: [00:43:27] I agree. I actually I'm enjoying this interview because you are giving really in-depth questions, answers to the questions. I normally have very little information. This shift question the normal reply I have the statistics. The normal reply was about one sentence which okay, no, no please please go on.

SL: [00:43:53] This means you're going to have to do a little bit more of transcript.

Intreviewer: [00:43:57] Oh no. No, it's it's completely fine, but no one can see the lines because the exams are built, built to Match it. And I'm like, well, yes, you are not wrong

in that. But to be honest, this question is just to confirm it's well registered within the information that they make the exams to follow. It's, it's, it's it's more in the perspective of people that know the exam, work with the exam if they think it aligns. It should be very odd, if any, if anyone said it's like Which brings us to our sixth question, almost the last one, which is what challenges do you encounter when preparing students for YLE exam? Or you know, doing tasks that are like the YLE exams, for example, the ones that I mentioned before in particularly in developing the verbal competencies.

SL: [00:45:01] Could you repeat the beginning of the question? Of course a cut here and I didn't hear.

Intreviewer: [00:45:05] Oh of course, of course. What challenges do you encounter when when preparing students for exercises like, like the YLE ones or even doing tasks like the YLE ones, specifically the ones that focus on verbal competencies?

SL: [00:45:24] Okay, so the the major, the major challenge and again focusing on speaking. And I don't know if anybody has told you this, but Portuguese students tend to excel in listening skills. So listening skills is usually something we know that students will get good results in. However, this has been changing. I've got my own theories as to why, but this has been changing in in the last few years. But for the time being, we see Portuguese students are still regarded to having very not not having issues with with listening. Speaking is a different thing. And the, the biggest challenge, I believe, with any English language teacher either at elementary or secondary level, is getting the students to speak in English to each other because it's the kids will understand that they need to speak in English to the teacher. It is harder for them to speak in English to each other because they're both fluent in another language. Therefore, it's not natural for them to be addressing each other in English. And that is challenging for me. Why? Like I said, we teach children, we don't teach exams, we don't teach exam skills per se. Our goal is to use the exams and to use the activities in order to get children to improve their skills overall. So if I want a child to understand that communication is important, I need to be able to get her to understand that, pass the exam. So it has to be something that we're not doing this because the exam is going to happen in three weeks and you need to do this. We're doing this because we're working on communication. And this is going to be important for you to communicate.

SL: [00:47:51] So that is my number one challenge is, is getting children to. Get into the role play. Get into the to the mood of of speaking in English. Then it is different if you work with private, the private system or the public system, the number of students in class is an issue. And this is a complaint that a lot of teachers Have, which is I've got too many students in class. It is very difficult to do speaking activities and be able to monitor what the students are doing and with children to topple it all, to monitor behavior as well and prevent disruptive behavior. There's also this notion that a classroom should be a silent place, and nothing could be further from the truth when you're working with children. Classroom with children, if things are happening correctly, then there's a lot going on. There's a lot of noise. There's a lot of communication happening, and it is difficult. And we need to acknowledge that it is difficult for a teacher to be able to be on top of everything, to make sure that the students are working on what they should be working to be able to, to look at, to look at the the specificities of the exam, but also at students needs to be able to make notes. It is extremely, extremely hard. Remember that in the past we used to have, or I was lucky to have trainers who would really instruct us on how to pay attention to the students and to what students were listening, were saying, and to really listen. And I think that. To do you know, what T-t-t is.

Intreviewer: [00:50:16] Is I know I know it because we spoke about it. So it's teaching or.

SL: [00:50:24] Talking time.

Intreviewer: [00:50:26] Exactly, exactly.

SL: [00:50:27] Yeah. Teaching talking time is is something that we need to cut inside a class so that we allow the children to speak. So the balance between all of these things.

Intreviewer: [00:50:47] We one of the topics that you referred to are we? I think everyone has answered the same thing. Well, not the same thing, but it has given one of the points, which was the number of students restricts and limits the ability to conduct better exercises for the speaking ability, which is not an excuse. It is the truth. I personally felt the same thing. Have have a have I not been so passionate about the speaking component as I am because I, I very well think we have an issue with the speaking component. Not so much in the younger stages, I thought even younger

stages, it's not as deeply rooted as it goes on until, well, much later, and especially when you arrive at high school and then university, I believe it's already a really settling problem, but I haven't I not been so obsessed almost in developing these skills. I would maybe fall in the in the same issue as many other educators found, this is how to work on the on the speaking component when the time is a concern. And you only have so many, so many ways to to organize a class for 20 students on a task. And sometimes you need your full devotion to one. So I completely understand it's it's going to be one of my major talking points on the difficult and.

SL: [00:52:29] And, and one of the things that you can you can also note is the following is the classroom setting itself the way the desks are arranged. How free is the teacher to be able to move things around because you know the configuration of a classroom. The influence directly influences the dynamic that you're going to have, and not all teachers are allowed or are able to have a setting that is conducive, that is appropriate for speaking tasks, especially if you think about teachers who have, for example, a 50 minute class. Right now, if you get into a 50 minute class and there's always those five ten minutes of greeting the class, and then if you need to rearrange the desks and do the speaking, and then you need to go back to putting all the desks in the position that they, that they used to be. All of this takes time and effort. And then sometimes the teacher thinks they may think, well, I'm going through all this trouble. And then is it worth it? So is what the students is. It is what the students are getting from from the activity really worth all the hassle, right? Because it's not it's not always possible to go in beforehand and have the, the the room organized for our class.

SL: [00:54:12] Sometimes the teacher before us really finishes on the dot and then you don't have time and then ten minutes. If you do have those ten minutes to try to organize the room, they're not always enough for all the changes that need to be to be done. Obviously, we can say that there are alternatives, and there are lots of different ways that we can move around in a classroom. But again, this this is this goes to play with classroom management again, right? It's all about classroom management, which is something that in my opinion, is not addressed enough. So the transitions, the the structure of the lesson itself, anticipating problems, understanding who your students are, who the troublemakers are going to be, the the children that have additional needs that are going to have to to have other things, either fast finishers or the ones who, who are ADHD or the other neurodivergent students. So all of this, you know, you have a

little planet inside the classroom. That's how I see it. You have a little planet inside a classroom, and sometimes you have wars. Sometimes you got really bitter wars, even among children. So all of these things are going to condition how you do a speaking activity and the course books.

SL: [00:55:47] And just just one more point and I'll and I'll move. We'll move on to your next question. But the course books are also going to dictate how much speaking activity is done in clubs, because if a course book only has one opportunity for speaking to be implemented in the class per unit, and if it is in a very far fetched way, or on the other hand, in a very light mannered way, there there is a tendency for teachers to look at it as something that is additional. You don't really have to do it. You could do it if you have time, but there's never enough time. So you naturally jump and you do something else, and you move on to the grammar because you have a feeling that the grammar is what's going to be important, and you forget that they may understand the grammar, they may know the verb to be, but that doesn't mean they're going to be able to use it in a conversation, which is the ultimate goal of learning a language communication. Right. Thank you. We could stay here talking about this for hours.

Intreviewer: [00:57:12] You know.

SL: [00:57:15] But we don't have time for it.

Intreviewer: [00:57:16] You you can go on. Really, I, I completely do not want. I have to be silenced because, well, my the my anything that I produce in this interview will be relatively the same with what I have said. So I just want to hear each interview. And to me you can go on as much as you like. This question is by far the one that provokes the most discussion. Normally, you know, you're asking. You're asking for a weakness. Everything. Every time you ask for a weakness, you're kind of going to get a lot. But then we end on a good note with this with the seventh question, which is, in your opinion, what are the benefits of incorporating YLE speaking and listening preparation into the regular classroom?

SL: [00:58:06] And we go back to the beginning.

Intreviewer: [00:58:09] Yes.

SL: [00:58:10] If you look at teaching as a whole. So if you think that you're teaching a language, and teaching a language means teaching a lot of things. It means teaching. Reading skills, how to read, reading skills. How do you read something fast. How do you read for specific information? How do you read for detail? How do you read for general understanding? And the same thing applies to listening, right? How do you not just listen, but how do you teach a child to listen so that they focus on something specific while they're listening? And this is additional. And then there's added challenge when you have neurodivergent children in your classroom. And once you look at this as I am not just teaching grammar, I'm not just teaching vocabulary. I am teaching skills. And skills are much more than just grammar and vocabulary. Something that you've noticed that there are no Grammar exercises on an exam, right? You may have exercises that focus more on knowledge of the language, how the structure of the language works, right? But there's no exercise on any Cambridge exam or any exam of young learners.

SL: [01:00:00] That said, complete this sentence. Complete the gaps with the verb to be. That does not exist. Why? Because that's not how we learn language. You know, language is learned through skills, through everything incorporated. So if we focus on exams that are on their own, also focused on skills, obviously all of this is going to be more integrated, and in the end, it's the child that benefits. Because language is going to be seen as something that is much more. Far reaching than just the verb to be on the notebook. It's used to communicate where something is on a picture. So. And I do believe that we don't just teach language. We teach cross-curricular skills. Right? We teach respect, we teach empathy, we teach turn taking. All of these things are taught through language. And that's why cil is also so interesting. So all these things are taught through language, for language, but also for the development of the child as someone who can speak in a different language, which is the goal here. So we'll go back to the beginning.

Intreviewer: [01:01:55] And I agree. Okay, SL, we did answer all the questions before I stopped the recording. Do you have anything that you want to add? Because after the the interview is done, I'll give some minutes where we can freely talk. When I mean we, I mean me that I can freely talk. And I'm not constricted to the the interview guidelines. If you have anything that you want for it, tell me. No.

SL: [01:02:28] That's it.

Intreviewer: [01:02:29] Let me end then. The recording.

Interview on Cambridge YLE Exam Preparation - CA

Audio

List of Main Topics

1. **Interview setup and timing** — key timestamps: 00:00:43–00:03:16, 00:59:50–01:00:08
2. **YL (Cambridge YLE) exam focus and thesis premise** — key timestamps: 00:04:36–00:06:14, 00:37:56–00:39:01
3. **Teaching context, materials, and book selection** — key timestamps: 00:06:14–00:11:31, 00:17:25–00:21:45
4. **Methodology: speaking and listening preparation (scaffolding, tasks)** — key timestamps: 00:47:24–00:51:14, 00:53:19–01:02:39
5. **Training, credentials, and professional background** — key timestamps: 00:25:02–00:36:13, 00:56:14–00:59:07
6. **Comparison: exam-prep vs general ELT practices** — key timestamps: 00:42:23–00:47:24, 01:04:47–01:05:22
7. **Challenges in YLE speaking and listening** — key timestamps: 01:06:32–01:13:17
8. **Alignment with CEFR and exam design intent** — key timestamps: 01:04:47–01:05:22, 01:15:22–01:18:49
9. **Long-term benefits and curriculum critique (Portugal)** — key timestamps: 01:18:49–01:26:17, 01:26:17–01:29:53

Topic 1: Interview setup and timing

Timestamps: 00:00:43–00:03:16, 00:59:50–01:00:08

Summary: Participants confirm audio-only recording, holiday availability, and session length (60–90 minutes). Screen-sharing permissions and platform logistics are handled to facilitate material review during the call.

Keywords: logistics, timing, screen-sharing

Topic 2: YL (Cambridge YLE) exam focus and thesis premise

Timestamps: 00:04:36–00:06:14, 00:37:56–00:39:01

Summary: Interviewer's thesis posits that YLE exam preparation notably enhances young learners' speaking and listening. REDACTED cautions that gains stem from

holistic yearly instruction rather than the exam alone, noting pressure and age-related maturity factors.

Keywords: YLE, speaking, listening

Topic 3: Teaching context, materials, and book selection

Timestamps: 00:06:14–00:11:31, 00:17:25–00:21:45

Summary: Discussion contrasts Power Up vs. Kids Box and how private schools prime students with exam-oriented materials. REDACTED outlines unit themes and how books integrate exam-like tasks and phonics/spelling components to build familiarity from early grades.

Keywords: Kids Box, Power Up, exam-oriented materials

Topic 4: Methodology: speaking and listening preparation (scaffolding, tasks)

Timestamps: 00:47:24–00:51:14, 00:53:19–01:02:39

Summary: REDACTED details scaffolding: pre-teach vocab via chants/songs, model pronunciation/connected speech, and use prediction from pictures before audio. Speaking is practiced through contextualized role-plays (e.g., waiter/customer), lines facing each other, and gamified flashcard descriptions.

Keywords: scaffolding, connected speech, role-play

Topic 5: Training, credentials, and professional background

Timestamps: 00:25:02–00:36:13, 00:56:14–00:59:07

Summary: CA is a primary teacher by degree with CELTA and partial DELTA (Module 2), Cambridge examiner experience (B2/C1), and extensive work in language institutes and a private primary school. She references IH, webinars, conferences, and key ELT authors (Scrivener, Thornbury).

Keywords: CELTA/DELTA, Cambridge examiner, professional development

Topic 6: Comparison: exam-prep vs general ELT practices

Timestamps: 00:42:23–00:47:24, 01:04:47–01:05:22

Summary: Exam-prep materials are tightly aligned to targeted constructs and task types, systematically priming learners; general ELT series focus more on broader language fruition and require teacher supplementation to become authentic/organic. Alignment with CEFR is inherent in Cambridge design.

Keywords: task alignment, priming, CEFR

Topic 7: Challenges in YLE speaking and listening**Timestamps:** 01:06:32–01:13:17**Summary:** Key issues in CAude learner anxiety (affective filter), shyness in speaking, and phonemic awareness gaps in listening (e.g., distinguishing /f/ vs /tʃ/ in “church”). Under exam stress, learners may misperceive sounds or conflate spellings despite prior practice.**Keywords:** affective filter, phonemic awareness, exam anxiety**Topic 8: Alignment with CEFR and exam design intent****Timestamps:** 01:04:47–01:05:22, 01:15:22–01:18:49**Summary:** YLE tasks are built from CEFR scales for young learners, targeting specific can-do descriptors. Speaking exams are designed to be supportive and low-stress, with trained interlocutors fostering a positive, confidence-building experience rather than a high-stakes grilling.**Keywords:** CEFR, interlocutor, low-stress design**Topic 9: Long-term benefits and curriculum critique (Portugal)****Timestamps:** 01:18:49–01:26:17, 01:26:17–01:29:53**Summary:** Integrating YLE-style speaking/listening prep cultivates phonemic awareness, pronunciation, and functional chunks, leading to confident, fluent users; benefits compound over time. CA critiques national curricula for overemphasizing reading/writing and treating listening as mere comprehension, hindering oral proficiency development.**Keywords:** functional language, pronunciation, curriculum gap**Intreviewer:** [00:00:43] Hello. Hello.**CA:** [00:00:45] Hello. How are you? Intreviewer? Are you okay?**Intreviewer:** [00:00:47] I'm doing fine. Thank you so much for joining me.**CA:** [00:00:51] It's fine, don't worry.

Intreviewer: [00:00:52] I am so sorry about my camera. Earlier today. We have a little bit of an accident. And the camera? Well, just to, you know, fool me a little bit has gone missing. It is not currently working. I'm so sorry.

CA: [00:01:06] No. It's okay, don't worry.

Intreviewer: [00:01:07] I mean, we're only gonna record the audio. So. Wait if you if you are in a wondering why it's a black screen, all the camera, you know it's fine for a holiday.

CA: [00:01:21] It's fine. It's not a big deal.

Intreviewer: [00:01:23] Well, first of all, first and foremost, thank you so much for being here, especially on a holiday.

CA: [00:01:30] I'm working today, so it's not a big deal.

Intreviewer: [00:01:33] I am as well.

CA: [00:01:34] Just another day of the week.

Intreviewer: [00:01:36] I am as well. So I have tons of respect for people that are working. But thank you as well. You've been. You have been so fast. Or I have sent out many invitations. You were. You took less than a couple of hours to get everything set up. I'm very thankful for you. And for the opportunity, of course. **REDACTED** spoke highly of you. Said you were. Would be one of the best people to to take part of this interview. And And she was not wrong. You were very fast, and I thank you very much for it.

CA: [00:02:07] It's because I have to always I have to be online most of my day, and things just drop either on my computer or on my phone, and I guess I guess I'm a bit of a workaholic, so as soon as it it drops, I just tend to answer very, very quickly because I know that people possibly need an answer soon because, I mean, if it were the other way around, I would also need an answer as quickly as possible. So it's just part of of a day's work, I suppose. And I do take my, my job very seriously. So it's just as it is. You

don't need to thank you. Thank me. Sorry, but Anyway, it's very kind of you. It's very kind of you. So just so I understand, because I have another meeting afterwards, I have to help another student getting prepped for exams. And I was just wondering, how long do you think this is going to take Interviewer?

Interviewer: [00:03:06] I would say 60 minutes.

CA: [00:03:11] An hour, an hour.

Interviewer: [00:03:12] Okay. Could you do an hour if you can't.

CA: [00:03:15] Sure, sure, sure.

CA: [00:03:16] If an hour. An hour and a half. I mean, it's whatever you need, because let's be honest. This is for your thesis. This is for your masters. So if I'm available now and I can answer your questions and then get you through the difficult sort of moment, and then that helps you advance, I prefer to help you because then you can do whatever you have to do later on. I've been where you are so twice. So I know, I know how difficult it is. And so Yeah, whatever you need. As for my colleagues, it will all depend on what I understand this whole meeting is about. And then I'll be able to point you in the right direction. Because as you can imagine, there are lots of us. And each person is specialized in a specific area. And from what I understand, this is about wildlife. YLE - so young learners. And taking that into consideration I have to understand exactly what this entails so that I can give you some names, talk to them beforehand, and let them know that you're going to contact them. And then, you know, get things in motion from, from that point onwards.

Interviewer: [00:04:36] Well, I am very thankful for that, truly, because I've been contacting a lot of them. You are right. This study entails the wild exams and you know, I really like to preface this is because I am an honest man. My thesis, the core of which it has a very basic notion. I am saying that the YLE exams are very well prepared and because they are so well structured, I believe that when students are preparing for them, they actually gain better verbal competencies. They are speaking and listening. Actually is gets really better. From the experience that I had with students, and I believe those types of exercises actually help students get on a much better level or in, in verbal

competencies. That's that's my focus, which I, I know that you can say, well, of course, it's an exam made to evaluate students for the people in Cambridge or it does make sense that they get better. But I, I wanted to.

CA: [00:05:46] It's not always like that. It's not always like that because it doesn't always work that that way. But but please keep on going.

Intreviewer: [00:05:52] No, no, no. And I want to take.

CA: [00:05:54] Notes as you speak and then I'll be able.

Intreviewer: [00:05:56] To. No, no, no. And I want you to obviously disagree and we'll have some questions about it. But that's my main notion that some some of those exercises, not all of them obviously are actually in my experience or in my opinion do help the students. And they are allowing with some things

CA: [00:06:14] Students for YLE.

Intreviewer: [00:06:15] Yes, I prepare them. I had the I say I did six CAasses out of the 12 that I had to do, and six of them I prepared students for their YLE.

CA: [00:06:26] Okay. What years? Which ones that says movers or flyers, I would imagine movers or flyers? Movers or starters?

Intreviewer: [00:06:33] Starters.

CA: [00:06:34] Okay, okay. And with what year did you do this?

Intreviewer: [00:06:37] Oh. Third grade.

CA: [00:06:39] Third grade.

Intreviewer: [00:06:40] Yes.

CA: [00:06:41] Okay. And another question. What type of school setting? Public or private?

Intreviewer: [00:06:48] Private, obviously.

CA: [00:06:50] And you're doing it? No, it doesn't have to be private. With. With public schools? No no, no. Third grade.

Intreviewer: [00:06:57] Yes, I we did it in third grade. Yes.

CA: [00:07:01] Okay. And another question that I want to ask you is, so you are doing this or you did this third grade and you did this in with six lessons out of 12.

Intreviewer: [00:07:12] Oh yes, we are our internship only allow like a an allotted number of lessons obviously. Yeah we couldn't do more. And I did six of them on the exams. Okay.

CA: [00:07:31] And what did you use exactly.

Intreviewer: [00:07:34] So I used many of the exercises of oil, but then what? I also did what I thought was fun. Is that what.

CA: [00:07:41] Book was the school using?

Intreviewer: [00:07:43] Oh. Oh, it was the Cambridge one which I would have to get it up. It's a green one.

CA: [00:07:55] Let me show you.

Intreviewer: [00:07:57] I'm sorry, I don't have him at hand because I had to

CA: [00:08:01] I have to allow me to share your. To share the screen. Can you give me permission, please?

Intreviewer: [00:08:06] Yes. Yes. All participants. There we go. You should be able to now.

CA: [00:08:14] Let me take a look. It's because I'm using the the the browser instead of using Instead of using my app. Because. Oh come on. Because I unless because if I use the app, it goes straight into the school zoom. And it's so much of a hassle to have to, like, use my own credentials instead of using the school credentials. And it usually goes through the school credentials and then it's a big mess, so I just prefer to use it like this.

Intreviewer: [00:08:49] So the first.

CA: [00:08:50] One, it's this one.

Intreviewer: [00:08:51] Yeah. Yes, yes.

CA: [00:08:53] So you are basically using exam books. You're not using like a book to prep them. So this which school are we talking about?

Intreviewer: [00:09:03] Redacted.

CA: [00:09:05] Okay. So you are at **REDACTED. REDACTED** and third grade. And what book were they using for English CAasses? Can you tell me?

Intreviewer: [00:09:17] I might I might be mistaken, but I believe it's the one that you're showing me, or it's a very similar one. But I can ask

CA: [00:09:27] Let me show you. What happens usually Intreviewer, is that these kids, they are using a specific book with their teacher. Okay. And usually when they are in these private schools, they go for kids books. Why?

CA: [00:09:48] Because these books.

CA: [00:09:49] Is so they either using this one which I doubt they probably using the the orange one which is this one. Have you seen this book?

Intreviewer: [00:09:59] It looked something like that. Yes. I cannot go by colors because I'm colorblind, but it looks something like that. Yes.

CA: [00:10:07] Okay. So this one is orange. And what happens is that they usually use this book and the, the activity book, because this book already has several exam prep activities incorporated in the book. And the students sort of get used to the mechanics of the whole exam from the beginning of the year. Okay. Then obviously you can then do some work on speaking.

Intreviewer: [00:10:39] Or.

CA: [00:10:39] Like.

Intreviewer: [00:10:41] I don't want to interrupt you, but I found the book. I was able to get it. It's power up. Book. So by Cambridge power up is the one that you were using.

CA: [00:10:53] Wow.

Intreviewer: [00:10:57] I am sorry for taking so much time, but I know I didn't have the heart. I didn't have the hard copy, and I had to find the files. So they were using this one.

CA: [00:11:09] They're using power up. Okay. I'm not familiar with this one. I am familiar with the power up for for the the higher levels, like level six. And I mean, I'm going to be really honest, this sounds like a very hardcore book. Just a minute.

Intreviewer: [00:11:31] For third grade. Yes. There were some, there were some things that I thought were a little bit too Too harsh on them. And there is no way they would be at that level.

CA: [00:11:47] Yeah.

Intreviewer: [00:11:47] But somehow they managed. Somehow they managed. I was proven incorrect. But I do believe it's more of the environment than the actually

CA: [00:11:58] No, the thing is, Interviewer, I mean, you, when you choose these books, they have to cater, obviously, for the level the students are when it comes to their language proficiency and the language development. And at the same time, they also should be able to cater for the student's needs and be tailored to the student's needs. Because it's not just about you getting a book. The parents pay and then the kids use it during a year. It's about what they can get out of that book. Okay. Most of the time they are being sort of primed for a very specific exam, which is what we are talking about, right? They are prepping and they are being primed For a Cambridge Starters exam. Now the Cambridge Starters exam in the in the schools I teach in are usually. Are usually done in the second grade. Why? Because students I mean it's not it's not my personal opinion. If it were for me, they would start. They would only do it in the, in the second in the third grade. But the school I'm teaching at, I mean, they believe it's the best option to start doing it in the second. Well yeah, second grade instead of the third. Obviously when it comes to students maturity, that counts quite a lot because if kids are too young, too immature, they might not grasp everything that the book has to offer and that the materials have to offer. And that doesn't even start to talk about how they will deal. Let's imagine with certain concepts that are in the book then not to mention, obviously, their anxiety when it comes to having to explain or answer questions in the exam and their anxiety when it comes to the exam per se.

CA: [00:13:51] Right. Because that has a lot of impacts on how the students are going to favor in the exam or sorry, not favor fair in the exam. Now, from what I've noticed, for example, in my group, my second year group that I'm prepping for for the starters exam, which is going to be now on the 18th of June I've got a CAass of 20 students, second grade students at **REDACTED** if you want to, to make notes. And what happens? Oh, sorry. Take notes. And what happens is of of a CAass of 20. I've got ten enrolled in the in the exam and many of them are quite jittery about it. They're quite nervous about it because it's a big deal for kids who are, I mean, shy, over seven years old. They're very tiny, right? Obviously they're tall and they eloquent, and they can make themselves understood, but they're still very, very tiny. Now, if they did this exam a year later, they would probably be more in charge of their own selves. Right? Their personality. And they wouldn't feel so nervous when it comes to certain parts of the exam. There are certain structures that would come more naturally to them. Exactly. Because they had so much time to prep beforehand, they had an extra year to prep, right? But that's not

the question right now. The question right now is that they are basically eight days away from taking the eight days away from sitting the exam.

CA: [00:15:36] And the prep that we've been doing is based on how I perceive their learning journey. So it's sort of like a needs analysis that I've done that I did in the beginning of the year. And then I gauge their development as, as time goes by. And obviously the ten students that were sort of proposed to take the exam or the prospect, ten students students who have an understanding of the language that is let's say, more fluid and fluent in comparison to their colleagues. Okay. So probably their colleagues either maturity wise aren't prepared. They probably are too young. In terms of concepts, these, these ten students have been able to assimilate and accommodate the information in a in a better way or in a more positive manner. Students who who have a natural innate ability to, to grasp these, these meanings or these, these concepts and, and that's why they, they were sort of selected. And then obviously their parents choose if that's what they want to do. Now, when it comes to the book, it seems like this book is similar to the book I use. Okay, so I use kids books, which is a family, and this one is also a family. And then in terms of units, they're more or less the same, not exactly in the same order as the ones I teach. So the order is a little bit different, but that has to do with the story. Okay.

CA: [00:17:25] So each book has a story to start from and it begins in level one, and then the story carries on up to level four. Okay, so when it comes to Kids Box, which is the material I'm using they have at the end of the unit, they have a sounds and spelling bit, which I would believe the other one, the one you use at **REDACTED** is the same. And then they have a little video. This one about the kids toys. So all of these little characters are characters in the book that come, well, they, they follow up from the from the first book, from level one. They're the same characters that carry on up till the end. So these characters are basically the kids toys. So the younger members of the families toys and the students create a very CAose bond to these characters because of the stories that they tell and how they appear, etc., etc.. So this is like acted out. It's a little video and then it's got very catchy tunes in the beginning. And it's also got the whole story and the well, you know, they get sort of enthused in the whole story. Now, when it comes to the actual practice for exams and the reason why I'm so let's say why I'm always, always mentioning the book is that the thing is fabulous in these contexts where both you and I are teaching or the one where you did your traineeship or you're on job

training, what happens is that because they are being primed for a very specific exam, they use specific materials to help out because as you can imagine, if you start by giving students Oh.

CA: [00:19:31] Come on. If you start by giving students these exams in the beginning of the year without any context, it's going to be very difficult for them to, to, to reach the results or reach the goals that you want them to reach. Do you understand? So as you might also know, this is another one that is very good to be used in schools. As you might also know everything has to be contextualized at this age, right? So the more authentic the information is, the more significant their learning is going to be. It's going to be more meaningful. So that being said, they they come up with topics that are meaningful in a sense that they appeal to the students. So imagine you have the hello again for September. And this is sort of like a revision. And then you if the first year was well prepared.

CA: [00:20:25] Sometimes the first years isn't well prepared. And then this. That should only last. You or I don't know, maybe two weeks is going to end up being a whole month of revisions because it's not revisions anymore. It's basically teaching these topics which the students have no idea from the beginning. So this should take you about two weeks and then back to school is October, basically. But because students start in September in these private schools they get sort of used to what's going on. And then you have playtime with the toys, and then you have at home and meet the family and dinner time, which basically talks about food and the structures are, would you like I've got things like that or can I have or blah, blah blah. And then you have at the farm I love, I don't love or I dislike or I don't like or whatever. And then you have town for prepositions, but obviously you can add in the prepositions here at home, for example. It's not a big deal. The idea is that they are getting used to the exam type activities right from point zero. And I'm going to show you how because either through chance, either through the actual activities that are done in the book.

CA: [00:21:45] Well, sorry, it's the wrong book. They get used to this. So for example, listen and color. This is the type of activity where they are forced to use two skills at the same time. So they have to be able to identify what they are hearing. Right. And then they have to produce, which is when they put their listening into practice. So they're listening has to have meaning the moment that they listen the first time. Okay. So I'm

going to need Yellow, red and green. And then they listen again. And the yellow has to go to S and the green N, and then the I don't know, the red m for example. So these skills have to be used sort of at the same time simultaneously, something that's also going to happen in the exam. And then this begins. So you have the starters reading and writing where this example is exactly the same as the one starters Cambridge Exam PDF. I think it's on I think it's this one I'm not sure. No it's not this one. It's for pre A1 sorry. Here we go. And so basically it's very, very similar. Oh it's not this one. I can't remember which sites I use. There's one I use that has the whole book. Are you there?

Intreviewer: [00:23:42] Yes I am, yes I am. I've been here the whole time. No, I am letting you. We actually doing a little bit more organic because the first section, I was going to ask you some background questions, but you actually answered them very organically. Oh, so I am letting you speak not only because it helps me because you're giving me your perception, but you actually answered already four questions of your background. So everything is within and obviously I'm jotting down. But while the everything is doing, you know, we already answered the, the background section. And we kind of answered my first question out of seven. I, I will only innovate, you know, I'm letting you settle in because it's very important to first listen and then talk. I have learned that along the way. Because not only are you giving me information and you're being kind, you actually, you know, teaching me something, and you're giving me some while I will still ask questions. And don't worry. You giving me some information for the seven questions that I have. You're just doing in a more organic way, and I do prefer it over me having to ask the background questions because they are a little bit too state your name and current teaching role. You understand, it's very it's a bit forced. You already answered me this.

CA: [00:25:02] I stood, understood, but but I can then go back and and give you more info on that. Basically, what happens is that I'm. I teach at a language institute here in Ovar, and it's called Royal School of Languages, and I've been working here for it's going to be eight years in September. But then what happened was that along the way, while I was living in Brazil, I got certified as a Cambridge Examiner. And so at the time I was working with pets and KEY exams. But what happened was that the school I was working with, which was called Casa, was then later on sold to, I think it was Group 11. I might be wrong, but what happened was that it was sold and then I couldn't get my docs back because, well, I had my Cambridge examiners number, but I couldn't get certified

in the same level because, well, some years had passed and I didn't do the refreshes because you have to do these refreshes every once and again. Now going back. So here at Royal School, what I do is we are a very small team. It's myself and the, the. The pedagogical director. But in, in the UK they have a different name. Now I forgot it's the director of. So it's you've got senior teachers and then you've got the director of Jesus Christ. It's my brain, it's in a bit of a mush so.

Interviewer: [00:26:44] No worries.

CA: [00:26:45] let me see

CA: [00:26:49] Director of studies. Exactly. So he's basically the director of studies. But I mean, we we we both have more or less the same years of experience. And we both work very CAosely when it comes to whatever happens here at the school. But students come here after CAasses, and obviously then we also have companies and online CAasses. And it's it's a busy schedule because it can start from any time in the morning until very late at night. Now that being said. Last year. Yeah, last year I also worked online as, as an online tutor on a platform called Learn Light. And I worked with them for about six years. But then I got ill, and it was a bit difficult for me to, to juggle so many hours of, of, of teaching. And so I ended up leaving learn light and, and I still I miss it quite a lot, but, I mean, the type of work I was doing there was very let's say directed, very specialized at the students needs at a certain time. So then after leaving learn, I stopped for a while, I was resting and. And then I got my motors running again. Because last year while I'm also a Cambridge Examiner for B2 and C1 one of the teachers or one of my colleagues asked if I would be interested in taking up a role with a private college, a private not not college, sorry, a private school, private primary school in San Diego, which is called **REDACTED**.

CA: [00:28:36] And so they asked if I would be interested at the time, you know, some extra money, wouldn't you know, you won't say no to extra money. And I was sort of feeling like I was stuck in a rut because I was always doing the same thing and I, I missed doing something different. And I missed meeting new faces, and I missed the thrill of the challenge. Right. And so I thought, yeah, let's give it a try. I'm feeling a bit stronger now. Probably I'll be able to do it. And so I've been working there. I started working there in September last year and hopefully if all goes well, I should continue in

the next following school year. And so in Santa Eulalia I'm working with a third grade and a second grade. The second grade is comprised of about 20 students 11 girls, 11 girls and nine boys, and the other CAass, the third year CAass is comprised of 19 students now, and I would say there are about 12 girls and you know, seven boys. I think the math is okay.

Intreviewer: [00:30:00] I have two questions. Two specific questions, because those have to be answered. And I'm sorry to interrupt, but it's just because you're going to go there. Yeah. Yeah. So I just need you to confirm if you had any specific training. I know you have experience, but I will say again, if you have any training or experience with the Cambridge while exams and. Okay. Yeah, I understood that you had I just needed that to be registered and you said many years, but I just want to get confirmation. What levels do you usually teach and how frequently do your students engage in speaking or listening tasks?

CA: [00:30:40] What?

CA: [00:30:41] Okay, let's go from the beginning. So the first question you asked me was if I have any training. Yes. So I. Wow. This is going to be a long one. So I'm, I'm, I'm a primary school teacher by degree. Okay. So I my my degree is in in primary school in Darfur. And then what happened was I was away from teaching for a few years, maybe 6 or 7 years. And then I went back to teaching in later on when one of my contracts ended. And what happened was I started working with X, y, because at the time, I had the only thing I had in my favor was the fact that English is my first language, which doesn't really mean anything. And the fact that I had a proficiency certificate. Okay. Then from then on I enjoyed teaching so much during those years. So I did it for about, I don't know, a year, year and a half. And I enjoyed it so much that I found that I needed some extra training in English, this time in English. And I found this master's degree in is called English. And at the time the time, the government had said that this masters would, because English was going to become curricula at the time. So we're talking 2011 that it was going to become curricula and that this masters was going to give us the code, the recrutamento that we needed to be able to apply for the national the national application period or whatever you want to call it. And so I said, yeah, cool. So I did that. Masters. And in 2013 when I finished I then moved to Lisbon and I worked

in Lisbon because I found that with all the money I had invested, just working with it wasn't going to pay off how much I had invested in the Masters.

CA: [00:32:49] So I thought, well, you know, I need to do something about this. And at the time, we were going to move to Brazil because my husband is Brazilian. And so we decided, okay The only way I'm going to get my let's say academic background recognized isn't going to be by them recognizing all my docs. It's going to be by having an international certificate. So then I went and did Celta in Lisbon. So then in Celta we talk about YLE and we talk about YLE and the exams, but not in the same depth as we do for Delta, because then after I did CELTA, I, we moved to Brazil. I worked in Brazil for about four years and then we when we returned, oh no. Sorry. And during that period I felt that I really needed to study more. And so I went to London and I took Delta during two, two months. And I didn't do the whole thing, but I did M2, which is the the teaching practice, sort of like what you were doing, you were doing teaching teaching practice as well. And so by now we are talking about my third teaching practice, because every few years I renew my teaching practice and I do a bit of a revision. I really like being evaluated. Not so what happens was, was I did my delta or part of my delta, and I returned home. And then we left Brazil.

CA: [00:34:24] And in Delta, we talk a lot about YLE, and it's one of the specializations. I just didn't do my specialization at the time because to be honest with you I just had so much on my plate already and it was all about moving back and getting adjusted, and it was a bit of a culture shock. Even though I was coming back home. It was a huge culture shock. And and, you know, at that time, my it was very difficult to adjust. I missed Brazil every single day, and I missed Rio every single day. And it was very hard. Now it's easier, but I still miss it very, very much. Anyway, then what happened was I started working with Royal School. And during that time, I was always trying to get in contact with Cambridge so I could renew my speaking examiner sort of number, but it didn't work out, and I only got it sorted probably two years ago. Three years ago. But during that period and working in, in a language institute, you have to find information. And the books you work with are usually well, sort of organized in a way that you are doing the prep. So I, I did a few webinars online. I, I went to a few training courses as well by Abi and the, the conferences, the yearly conferences that he does does were also very, very helpful because if I choose the young learner sections, obviously they're

going to give me much more insights as to what I'm supposed to do next. And so yeah, that's the experience bit. And it's been a few years. Yeah.

Intreviewer: [00:36:13] And, you know I really like an extensive answer because I, I have to call it because these interviews and I have to, to dig deeper. But I prefer that you just.

Intreviewer: [00:36:29] No, no, no, no, do it for you. No, don't do it on your own.

Intreviewer: [00:36:33] No, but I like that someone would give me, like you said, you gave me a very personalized answer. Like you gave me your whole background, you know, and this will speak loads about the next questions that I'm going to ask you. Because one of my main fears is I was going to ask this to people, and I know that I'm speaking with a lot of people very connected to Cambridge, and my one of my fears is that everyone was just going to be a yes man to me. They would cyCAe to me and say, yes, you are very right. Everything you said about Cambridge is correct and I don't want that. Well, I you know, my first question, you know, we'll see that I am biased towards them for some reasons. Well, only two specific reasons, but we'll talk more about that. I don't want to just, you know, indulge me in this kind of a yes man mentality. Yes, you are correct. No, I don't want that. And that leads me to my first to my first real question. So the main interview question. So we discussed already wild exams and you told me, you know hey, be careful. You know, this puts pressure on the students that the exams have some pressure onto it. And I already know that, you know, some new teachers don't really think about this or, and, you know, they are following guidelines and.

Intreviewer: [00:37:53] Yeah, but but.

CA: [00:37:54] You are teaching humans.

Intreviewer: [00:37:55] You are.

Intreviewer: [00:37:56] Exactly, exactly. And I'm not teaching robots. However. Well, I and I believe everything about is. My first question is mostly about something which is I to me identified there are some weaknesses in the Cambridge exams. There are some strengths. One of the strengths that I found is that the preparation for these exams, in

my opinion, made the students be able to have better competencies in speaking and listening. Now, I want you to.

Intreviewer: [00:38:30] But.

CA: [00:38:30] How how do you gauge that?

Intreviewer: [00:38:33] That's what I'm going to ask you first.

Intreviewer: [00:38:35] Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:38:37] In your experience, what impact does the exam preparation, not the exam itself, but the preparation for them have on students speaking and listening competencies? Do you think it makes them better? Do you have Do you think that this preparation actually, you know, augments their their skill, hones it, refines it. What's your opinion?

CA: [00:39:01] I guess it's it's I guess the question shouldn't be that question. And I'll explain to you why. If it's the same thing as you asking me if an English test that you did in school, or Portuguese test that you did in school, how did that make you a better speaker, or better listener, or better reader in the end? It's always an exam. In the end. It's trying to understand how you are able to better understand better, read better, write better, listen better, speak about a very, very specific topic which came up in that specific setting. The way I see it, it's not that the exam prepares you better. It's not the exam. It's the whole school year. It's the fact that you are talking and you are working with very child appropriate materials, child appropriate topics, and the fact that you are providing the student with functional language, that they are then able to transcribe and use in different situations. That is what's getting so sorry. Or giving the students the abilities and the skills that they need. For example, when you are working with Back to school, for example, and you start introducing functional language such as how many blah blah blah, this how many is going to be used throughout their curricula? This how many is going to show up several times during this year? It's how many desks, how many pens, how many this, how many that.

CA: [00:40:54] Then towards the second term. Third term when they talk about food, how many apples, how many bottles of water. So this basically has to be looked at in a holistic manner. Interviewer it can't be looked at as in the the YLE exams or prepping the students better than Rocky or easy peasy English. No, it doesn't work like that because a student who is working with Easy Peasy English or Rocky has has a very actually, in my opinion, I think it's in comparison the materials that are used with easy peasy or or. Or Rocky are more intense and have much more material than the kids books do. Why? Because kids books are specifically oriented towards an exam, whilst the other materials are basically for language fruition and for general use. Do you understand what I mean?

Interviewer: [00:42:01] Now I understand, and you know, this is very funny because you are actually answering the second question. I'm going to ask this because you're going to answer there. How does while exam preparation differ from, for example other textbook based speaking and listening activities that are not so focused on tasks like the exam?

CA: [00:42:23] It's because they are looking for different things, as any test would. Each test has an aim or many aims, right? They want to understand if the student is able to understand and use the verb to be. Let's imagine. And so they are going to use texts and contextualize the language in such a way that students are sort of impelled to use that language focus or that language point, right, or that grammar point in this case, because we're talking about the verb to be the same thing happens for a YLE exam. A YLE exam is looking at very specific things. It's looking at are students able let's I want to open one so I can show you. But the problem is I mean you're familiar with it as well, but it's just for the sake of our conversation.

CA: [00:43:13] It's practice starters. Oh, shush. For Cambridge PDF.

CA: [00:43:25] Let's see what comes up. I think it was this one. Yeah. This is the one I've been using at school. So basically in this case, what is it interested in doing? I'll send you the link in case you don't have it, because this one is really cool because it has the answers and it has the audio.

Interviewer: [00:43:41] I actually have one of these. I think I even still stole quotations. This is an interview I borrowed some of the exercises to use in my CAass.

CA: [00:43:53] Because they're really good.

CA: [00:43:54] And so basically it's got the key over here and you've got the audio over here, I've got the actual book. But then when I project projected on the board, it's easier for the students to all have the idea from here as opposed to a book, which is an interactive. Right. Kids are used to the whole interactive bit. So in an activity like this, what are they looking for? What is the examiner trying to assess? Well, basically what they're trying to assess is that first they are able to nominate.

CA: [00:44:23] Second they are able to follow an instruction I'm not giving you the order. I'm just you know doing this. Third they want them to be able to understand the descriptions and from the descriptions find the person and then link them. Right. So the boy eating a mango, the boy fishing the boy flying a kite. Now, all of the language that is here is going to be all sorry. Wrong tense. All the language that they hear in this audio should have been taught during the year. If this. The teacher was using the book, which is sort of prepping them for Cambridge, so they will hear the monkeys on the tree, they will talk about lizards. Most mostly they will talk about lizards. Specifically they will talk about kites specifically, they will talk about fishing and octopuses and the guitar and baseball and taking photos. They will talk about this because it's all in their book. Do you understand what I mean?

CA: [00:45:35] So they when I told you a few a you if you minutes ago that they were being primed. It's exactly that they are being primed for this exam. So everything that they do is with this in mind. So you see, the baseball shows up here in unit ten, and then the taking photos shows up in unit two. Unit three, maybe with the toys. Unit two. Unit two. The the octopus shows up here in unit 12 with the holiday and so on and so forth. Do you see? So it all when I said it was holistic, that's exactly what it is. It's all sort of going towards a very specific aim. That is the exam.

CA: [00:46:26] When we talk about the regular books they don't do that. They are providing students with language and it's less directive. It's less I mean.

Intreviewer: [00:46:39] More organic in a sort of sense.

Intreviewer: [00:46:41] No.

CA: [00:46:42] I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't say it's not more organic because you can't assess what each student learned.

CA: [00:46:49] Sometimes it's more organic, sometimes it isn't. I guess it depends. It depends on how you prep the lesson. Because if you are doing everything by the book and you don't supplement, it's not organic at all. It's teaching by the book. The moment you start supplementing and inCAuding things that make sense in the student's world, then it starts to become more organic. If you provide students with examples of where they can use this language, then it becomes authentic and organic, or else it's just, you know, it's just stuff from the book. It doesn't make any sense in their lives. Does this make sense to you, Intreviewer?

Intreviewer: [00:47:24] Yes. And I know this will, you know make me segueway into question three, because now I want to know you. You know, because you will have to prep some students. Well, some most of them for the YLE exams. Right. So how so how do you structure your CAassroom activities to prepare students for the speaking and listening components? I am very specific on those two. Okay. Those are my main topics the speaking and listening. I understand there is more, but those are the two that I chose for the for my work. So how would you structure your.

CA: [00:48:08] When it comes to listening and speaking? They, I structure in, structure them in a form or in a way that makes them relevant for the students. And how do I do that? By using, as you said organic ways of by doing it organically. So basically when it comes to listening, Probably I've started with a song beforehand, a chant or something that's going to have some vocab over there that they can, that they are then going to recognize when they do the listening. And basically that is vocab that has already been taught. Okay. In a different setting, might it be with pelmanism or missing flashcards or whatever you can imagine? And then from there, the next step would be to revise that in the form of a song, because then they have the rhythm, and because language is very rhythmic and English, it has a different modulation to Portuguese. I work on using the

song to then work on their pron. Okay. And then obviously as it's receptive, then their production is going to be altered as well, because then they already have

CA: [00:49:36] Oh, Jesus.

CA: [00:49:39] So the word isn't role model, but I can't remember the word I'm looking for. So they have me as the first model. That's it. It's model. So they have me as the first model, and they have the song as a different model. And then they adjust their usage to whatever model makes better sense for them. Right. Okay. So then we've got the singing and the chants and, and they're making sense of the listening bit. And this isn't listening comprehension. This is just listening. Okay. And then when it comes to speaking, what I do is I make it authentic. So imagine that we are trying to use expressions such as would you like? Yes, I would or yes please or something like that. So I would, I would place them in two lines. Okay. So one line on this side and they're facing each other. Okay. And then what I would this is just one example. And then what I would do would be with the flashcards, make that one be a waitress and the other one is the customer. And then they swap at the end. And so then would you like some water. And the person says, yes please. And then they swap the flashcards, something like that, something along those lines. And that's how they would then practice this.

Intreviewer: [00:51:00] I am so happy to hear this actually because it makes me have a little bit of faith because many of the things you said, I did them as well. So it makes me happy that I am not completely lost.

CA: [00:51:14] I doubt you are. I mean, if you have the students needs in in at heart, right? If you have the students best results or that they need to learn something at heart. Then you can't go wrong. Intreviewer. Why?

Intreviewer: [00:51:30] Why are you so negative?

Intreviewer: [00:51:32] No no no no no. But I did something. What I tried to do is I

CA: [00:51:38] Contextualize.

CA: [00:51:39] Everything. You have to give them a context, or else they're not going to know what to do. I mean, why is she making us sit in a line or stand in a line and talk to each other? Why? You have to explain the whole thing or else, like, it's it's not it's not gonna it's not going to sink in, is it? They're not going to really use it for anything. And associated to that I then teach them lots of, of details in language such as connected speech, which was something I worked on during my master's because I was very interested in, in the listening bit, in connected speech and how students perceive language and how what they hear isn't what they have to say. And so then there's a hiatus, because what they hear has nothing to do with what? With what they read. And then suddenly, why can't I say this? Well, you can't say this because there's no bridge and you need to bridge things so that students then understand. So then we talk a little bit about connected speech, and I teach them how to say things, how they hear them, like how natural language is, is, is heard or is spoken. Let's put it that way is spoken, not heard, is spoken. And then what you hear is a bit of a jungle. And so I help them prune things so that it makes sense in their ears. And we work a lot of we work a lot on connected speech. Now when it comes to listening comprehension, usually what I do is I, I use the picture. Oh no.

Intreviewer: [00:53:16] No worries. It happens to me all the time as well.

CA: [00:53:19] I use the picture and I'm only using the picture. All right. And we do listening comprehension and prediction activities even before they listened. So I'm prepping them beforehand to what they are going to hear later on.

Intreviewer: [00:53:35] Oh this is very smart. This is very smart because I found some for example, in speaking I gamified some. For example, there is that those tasks of the flashcards I gamified, I gave I, for example, I printed like 22 flashcards and I gave them and we would I would ask students random to describe the flashcard to me, and then I would ask them to go to the board. And they really like the concept. And it was almost like one of those tasks for the speaking but listening. I really struggled to because I felt like I was in a bit of a box because listening is so I mean, it seems so one dimension, like, how can I improve more than just playing an audio, even if I explain the image. But what you're doing. What what you just told me, it's, you know, it's very fascinating. I didn't think about that possibility of exploring the picture before I even introducing. So, like, prepping them for the listening. That's that's brilliant actually.

CA: [00:54:37] So that's basically what we do. So when, when we take courses like Celta, they, they help us set the stage. They teach us to set the stage. They teach us to stage things. They teach us to scaffold things. The word is scaffolding. This is called scaffolding. If you want to read more about this you can check out Scott Thornbury. You can check out I don't know, it's a wealth of information. But if you look up online books for Celta, you will find several author James Brown. Is it James Brown? No, James G. Brown. Wait. Seltzer?

CA: [00:55:27] It's an H. I think it's Howard G. Brown. Teaching.

CA: [00:55:34] Learning to teach English. This one. This is one of the most interesting ones, to be honest. This one is about Peter Hawkins. And then there's this one. This one, this one. I just missed it. This one. Learning, teaching. And this one is about Jim Scrivener. That's the word I wanted. You don't need to buy them. I have them all either on PDF or whatever. And Jim Scrivener is probably the god of of teaching English in, in these settings for because CELTA means Are you familiar with seltzer? Do you know what it is?

Interviewer: [00:56:08] I have heard the concept, but I, I haven't delved too much into.

CA: [00:56:14] CELTA.

CA: [00:56:14] Is certificates in English language teaching to adults of other countries. That's what it means. And then Delta is the diploma. So you've got the certificate and the diploma. And then you have the supplements, which in the past, I mean, if you go on international House, which is basically the school to take these things and you've got international house organization, but you can go through the Portuguese one.

Interviewer: [00:56:42] I know, I actually know international houses. I have asked all three of their institutes yesterday for an interview as well.

Interviewer: [00:56:52] Okay.

CA: [00:56:52] You can you can find there's one that he's my sort of my friend which is the director of studies of Porto Porto FOZ, which is Steven Stevenson. And he's the director of studies is really, really cool. And he's also got a wealth of information about this. And he works very, very closely with the lady from Viana do Castelo, who's also got a school. Her name is Anna. Well. Don't worry.

Interviewer: [00:57:31] Oh, no, no, no.

CA: [00:57:34] Not that.

Interviewer: [00:57:34] Name.

CA: [00:57:35] But I'll send it to you in a minute. Let me.

Interviewer: [00:57:37] Just because I also am going going to contact someone from Villareal as well.

CA: [00:57:44] Vila real is probably REDACTED Peixoto.

Interviewer: [00:57:48] No, I, I am actually going to speak with the director. Really?

CA: [00:57:52] And both the sisters, they have a school in Vila real.

Interviewer: [00:57:56] Yes, yes, I know. I know her son and her son. Between contacts? Yes.

CA: [00:58:03] Okay, okay. So. So basically they have. Let me see. Here we go. So You've got. You've got lots and lots and lots of different things. And they have this certificate because then Cambridge stopped doing the young learners appendix so to say. And so now only international House does it. And you can do the young learners and you can do the teaching young learners and teenagers. But at the moment you take a master's degree in Portugal. I'm not really sure you need to do this, but, you know, I guess I guess it all has to do with what you want to do with your life later on. But what I was trying to.

CA: [00:58:46] Show you is this.

Intreviewer: [00:58:50] By the way, just so it's registered while you shoot me because the meeting was still Well, to 1230, if it goes off, I will just link.

Intreviewer: [00:59:01] You back on. Yeah, I'm.

CA: [00:59:02] Used to it. Don't worry.

Intreviewer: [00:59:04] I don't think it's going to, but just in case.

CA: [00:59:07] Here we go. It's this one. So this is Stephen. Or maybe I've got the name wrong, But let me see. They've got all of these. Centro britanico. Anabela Reis Alves. She's, I think, from Canada. I would imagine, and he's from the United States. It's sure not Steven. It's Shawn Stevenson, that's his name. He's an international expert. So I'll send you these links and you can take a look. They've got a podcast. Very interesting podcast, for that matter. And they talk about very interesting things. And you never know if there's something that they are doing that you might want to use. Right. So yeah, these two, they quite nice. They do have a very, very busy schedule. So yeah, that's the.

Intreviewer: [00:59:52] Problem.

CA: [00:59:53] So let's go.

Intreviewer: [00:59:55] Ahead.

Intreviewer: [00:59:56] Okay. So we are on our fourth question.

Intreviewer: [01:00:01] But I.

CA: [01:00:01] Didn't explain how I use the picture.

Intreviewer: [01:00:02] Thing.

Intreviewer: [01:00:03] Oh, no. No, you did not. Please. I'm sorry. I even I was on a tangent now.

CA: [01:00:08] So what happens is that during these training teacher training courses, they teach us to get as much information from the student as possible. So it's it's going to lower your teacher talking time. And so what happens is that if you show them the picture and you ask them questions, that they're always the same, the questions are basically going to be, who can you see a boy and his teacher. And how do you know it's the teacher? Because she's bigger, for example. And over there you can correct comparatives. And where are they? Oh, they are at a football field. Are. And what type of sport are they playing? Are they playing football? How do you know? Because he's got a ball in his hand. Again you can correct prepositions or work on prepositions are. And what else can you see? How's the weather? Or they can just tell you, oh, it's a sunny day. How do you know? Oh, there are two CAouds in the sky. I mean, even if you ask them to describe the picture, it's already very, very good. And then from there on, you can just ask, okay, now how old do you think Alex is? And they guess, but it's already here.

CA: [01:01:21] But if you just show them the picture, they won't know. And then you can ask how many people are on the field at two. Okay. And sort of you're prepping them for what's coming next. And it's by doing that, obviously if you've read this before, you can do a little bit of prep beforehand with a little game in the beginning of the lesson. Okay. What's your first name? Joanna. And your second name or your surname or your family name? Simon. Okay. And then if they say what if you ask what's your family name, then you can ask family name. Is there another way of saying family name? And they can say one says surname and the other one says second name or second name wouldn't do, but you get the gist and you just try and get as much information from them beforehand. And then you play the audio because you've already prepped it. You've already scaffolded the whole sort of activity before they listened. So when they listen, they are ready to pay attention to where they live. What's his sister's name? Da da da da. Because you've already talked about that before. That scaffolding. You can also read it like that with Scrivener.

Intreviewer: [01:02:39] No.

Intreviewer: [01:02:41] This is brilliant. It brings me to the question for us, which I, I actually am interested to know your your opinion. Do you believe that while the exam and the exam preparation. So the exercises that you do to get to exam help students develop love trims versus skills such as critical thinking, adaptability and collaboration.

CA: [01:03:11] Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. Why? Because it's contextualized and it gives students the reasons for the whys. Okay. So let's imagine they if they are using a specific structure, they know that they're using it because it's used in that specific context. Okay. Then because they have to think about a picture. Let's imagine this one. And they have to think about where everything is and how they are connected to each other. There's another one. This one is a bit more prescriptive, but this one, for example, that has a lot to do with, with spatial spatial. It's not spatial spatial awareness because of how every where everything is and how that ties into the whole CAassroom thing. Do you understand? So. Absolutely. Absolutely. And collaborative. Because when they are doing the practice, they are obviously working together to achieve a specific goal or to to get to a specific aim. So yes. Yes, absolutely.

Intreviewer: [01:04:29] I am glad we agree on that. This next question, I sort of expect a quick answer as well. But you never knew from your perspective, how well does while exams, tasks and preparation align with the CFR levels for young learners?

CA: [01:04:47] Well, it's it's built exactly right. So CFR levels see and and Cambridge exams, they are sort of they have to be aligned because the Cambridge exams are sort of built from the CFR scales or the other way around. But I do think it's CFR. Scales. And then you have the exams. So absolutely, absolutely. There are a number of things that or topics or themes that students should be able to to produce at a specific level, and it caters for that. Yes.

Intreviewer: [01:05:22] Absolutely no. The question six, I believe, will probably be the one where we will talk more because we have already talked about this, the whole interview you have, and I really liked it very much. I'm being completely honest. I really liked it because I felt like this question, I had to put it in so I didn't have so much you know simulated data. So my data would not be all all the same, I needed this question, which is, what challenge do you encounter when preparing students for the exams in particularly in developing their speaking and listening competencies.

CA: [01:06:05] Okay. So again, the challenges I encounter when prepping for speaking and listening. In YLE.

Intreviewer: [01:06:17] In YLE. Yes.

CA: [01:06:19] So can you read it again?

Intreviewer: [01:06:21] Yes. Of course. What challenges do you encounter when preparing students for the YLE exams, in particular in developing their listening and speaking competencies?

CA: [01:06:32] In particular.

Intreviewer: [01:06:34] In particular?

Intreviewer: [01:06:35] Yes.

CA: [01:06:35] When when preparing for this. Speaking and listening.

Intreviewer: [01:06:38] Okay, I don't mind.

Intreviewer: [01:06:39] I don't mind when any interviewer speaks. And I understand that reading and writing has a very big focus. And my omission of those parts is not unbiased. I even.

Intreviewer: [01:06:52] Because you.

CA: [01:06:53] Are working on speaking and listening.

Intreviewer: [01:06:55] Yes. I identified that Portugal has a really bad issue right now in the next generations that people are not the younger one, but the one the later ones have where they have a lot of difficulty speaking and and listening correctly. Hence why these masters will serve for a future doctorate on this topic, which I identified. But yes, I am very particularly keen on those two areas at the moment.

CA: [01:07:25] Okay, so I would say that the challenges I encounter with speaking.

CA: [01:07:44] The thing is, it's not that it's a challenge, per se. It's the fact that I would probably sum this up to To high effective filters. So I would say that even with children, they are very scared of making mistakes. And although some of them are are very keen on, on sharing their opinions and participating etc., there are still a few that have issues with talking about a subject. Might it be familiar or unfamiliar? Because then when you are analysing what they do, you have to have take into consideration starters speaking criterion. You have to take into consideration their the assessment scales. Okay. I don't have mine here. They at home. But basically what happens is you you need to understand. Stunned. Oh, this thing is now going to CAose.

CA: [01:09:02] Doo doo doo doo doo.

CA: [01:09:03] Just a minute.

Intreviewer: [01:09:05] Oh, no.

CA: [01:09:06] Where is.

CA: [01:09:07] It? Preparation. Teacher essentials, exam preparation and book.

CA: [01:09:16] Yeah, maybe this one. Maybe I'll get it from here.

CA: [01:09:35] Okay.

CA: [01:09:36] Now.

CA: [01:09:40] Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo. They don't have the scales here.

Intreviewer: [01:09:52] I know the skills that you were talking about, and I know this because the same thing that you're doing right now. I felt the same thing because I couldn't find the skills online the first time around.

Interviewer: [01:10:05] So it could.

CA: [01:10:06] Be somewhere around here. It's because they changed the materials every now and then, and they're not here. But basically, it's this. This is what I'm looking for. So the thing is, sometimes what I notice is that either the students, they get so nervous that when they are listening for things, and this happened to me last week that they are so nervous that when they listen, they don't hear the letters properly. So we were doing this exam over here, I'll show you. So we had already done this one and this one and this one and this one. Yeah, we were doing this one. And was it. No it wasn't. What's this one? We were doing this one, and they were supposed to write the name of the street, and the street's name is Church Street. And we had been doing some work because this is where listening is so important. We had been doing some work about the diphthongs and the how the sound sh, as in sheep, is different from the sound ch as in chip. And so I gave them a mnemonic which is s and r, because then if you go a ching has the ch sound. We were working with this and they got to write the word church. And so some of them wrote the word church correctly, and then others wrote the word church with a T behind it.

CA: [01:11:37] And I was like, okay, so this is this is getting CAose. And then there were others that just couldn't write to save their lives. So the thing is, I suppose, I suppose that some of the challenges that you encounter have to do either with the fact that they are very nervous when they are doing it and there is some anxiety or that certain certain sounds when it comes to listening, haven't been sort of assimilated properly. They still need more time. They still or they need different types of activities, activities to help them probably because they don't hear it as they should. It could be a situation of phonemic awareness. It could be related to that. When it comes to speaking, it's about being shy. It's about being nervous. And so they muddle everything up. Yeah, mostly that I would say now that I'm thinking about it, I, I don't know, it doesn't really have much to do with how you set up the task, Because for that, you just have to go to your teacher's resource backpack and you just come up with ideas that work well, unless you're really stuck. And then you ask ChatGPT or something for some CAues. But yeah, I guess that's it. I can't really think of anything else. What have other teachers said?

Intreviewer: [01:13:08] Well, as a matter of fact, the first interview with this question is yours, I imagine.

Intreviewer: [01:13:15] Okay. Yeah.

CA: [01:13:17] I mean, I, I would have to maybe if, if I wrote down, for example, on, on a AI based app or platform, something like challenges you encounter in speaking. And I read it and I saw if it had anything to do with my situation in particular, but right now I guess that's it, because in most cases or in all cases, students are quite keen on the activities they want to participate. They are cooperative. They work well. They just need sometimes a little bit more practice. But when it comes to the actual exam, we know that this is between. And I was just looking at it here and I wanted to show you it's basically the speaking part of the exam is between an interlocutor and and the student. So there might be a little bit shy and uneasy and not know how to, you know how to describe the whole thing. They might feel a little bit nervous. But as for the preparation, no, because it's cooperative. Everybody is joining in. Everybody is preparing at the same time.

Intreviewer: [01:14:24] You know, and I'm glad I see the smile. And, you know, because while I do believe for there are the rating and and the reading part of of the wild and the preparation is very different. I, I know it's more intense. My idea, and because we are getting to the last question, I can, you know, better explain. When I made my work, I, I really believe that the wild exam and the tasks that they provide and the materials they do to prepare the the listening and the listening and or and speaking were very good. And I found them to be engaging. Now it's hard for me, and that's why I wait until the end of the interview to explain this. I know that when you guys see while you think of the whole exam and the trauma that the students go through, and I don't blame you.

Intreviewer: [01:15:21] Oh, no.

CA: [01:15:22] There's no trauma because it's it's usually a very I mean, let's get this straight. It's not traumatic at all because Cambridge exams are not designed to be that way. They aren't even traumatic for, for older learners, let alone the younger ones. I mean, as a speaker, examiner speaking examiners examiner myself and to higher levels. And even as a monitor and an invigilator, I make it or try to make it as stress free

as possible. The idea is that you have fun with the whole situation. You're going to be there. Sorry. You're going to be there the whole bloody day. So you have to make it as, you know, light as possible. And I'm known for, well, myself and others. It's not only a thing that happens with me, but I'm known for for making a lot of fun. I'm, I'm known for for teasing the students and and joking around with them and letting them blow off a little bit of steam because there's a lot at stake. Many of them want to get a very high grade, and nobody knows what's going to be in that exam, because it's new to everybody, right? You you can prep your whole life for it. If a topic comes up that you have no idea what it's about, you're going to feel a little bit lost and you might draw a blank. But basically the idea is that students, even especially the little ones, it has to be a very light environment. And if you take a look at the videos, you will see that they're supposed to to bring some complicity. So the, the, the interlocutor with the candidates, the idea is that it's, it's in a stress free environment. It's it's done with with a lot of respect for the student. And the idea is not to grill the student. Like, how don't.

CA: [01:17:11] You know this? My God, how did your teacher prepare you? She's BAD. No, the idea is.

CA: [01:17:18] That you make it a light type of situation. Show you a picture. Tell me about the picture. What can you see? How many this? How many? That. And you know, it's supposed to be fun. And keeping that in mind, the people that are speaking examiners for young learners are very specialized in young kids. They and most of them don't even want to do adults. They prefer doing little ones. So that comes to show that it's not supposed to be traumatic. It's supposed to be something. And even the way it's the way it's designed and the way it's explained to students is that it's a moment where they can show off their skills, as opposed to being a moment where they are showing that they are going to dread and never want to do another one again. You have to keep in mind that when Cambridge does these things, they they need these students to want to come back and take more. Do you understand? So the idea isn't that the first exam that they do, which is start, is they're going to be so scared shitless that they're not going to want to come back. So it's it's just the opposite. The idea that it's supposed to be lots of fun, that they're going to show off their skills and that they're going to do brilliantly. And even the certificate. It's got those shields. They don't really, you know, understand that it's something like super serious. It's not supposed to be. It's not supposed to be.

Interviewer: [01:18:49] And that brings us to our last question, which is, in your opinion, what are the long term benefits of incorporating wild speaking and listening preparation into regular CAassroom instructions? So even, you know let's imagine even students or or schools that do not have them in the curriculum for the students to go to while or, you know, they don't have many students that will go there or what would be the long term benefits of, you know, taking some of these exercises, some of these tasks and integrating them in in the CAassroom?

CA: [01:19:32] Well, I guess that They've got I would say that probably they the benefits are exponential because the moment you start priming students and working with students on these areas that are usually areas where they struggle more in regular school and in general English, the more you work and you are very incisive on the type of work that you you are doing with them, the better results you'll get in the end, right? So the way I see it, it should be part of what students do at school. Because when I was doing my master's, I analyzed the, the. Curricula and the essentials and I was appalled. It isn't even shocked. It's a pool. To understand that the type of activities that the students were doing didn't really take into consideration at all at all. So the listening that they do is listening comprehension. It's not listening as a receptive skill that they will then use as a productive skill. And it doesn't work on their phonemic awareness. It doesn't work on their pronunciation. It doesn't pronunciation isn't even mentioned. And so what what happens is that the more you expose students to these things, the more you raise their awareness towards these things, the better language speakers you're going to. You're going to have the better language listeners you're going to have. Because our language well, our language gives us the possibility of being able to speak many other languages at a proficient level. Our phonemic what do you call it? Our phonemic alphabet, so to say. But I'm not using the right word, so don't don't quote me on this.

CA: [01:21:55] It's so broad that we are able to listen to many different sounds that probably other languages aren't able to do. Think about Spanish, for example. And that being said, if if we are exposing students to these types of activities where they understand well, first and foremost they have to understand why they are doing it. But if they are able to understand that by doing X, they will achieve Y and then become a better Z. Let's imagine they will then see that there's some significance in what they're

doing. It becomes meaningful, right? If this is done holistically with listening, having speaking in mind, the results are going to be amazing and things are done in a more organic fashion, which is what I was advocating in my master's degree. And it was what I wanted to work on in my doctorate. But then I wasn't very happy with the person I got, and so I didn't continue. Maybe next year. And so basically that's it. I mean, the long term benefits I think they, they, they aren't even palpable yet because it's it's the difference between you having a speaker who is confident to share their point of view and a student and knows the hows and the whys and speaks English bilingually. And a person who struggles because they don't feel confident, because they don't understand the hows and the whys and they struggle here, which then is going to impact here.

Interviewer: [01:23:44] III And now this is just out of curiosity. You were appalled about you know, the lack of listening. What about speaking?

CA: [01:23:56] No, it's it's the same. It ends up being the same because then the listening is listening comprehension. You don't have listening to improve your speaking. So what I was defending in my, in my thesis was that how are you supposed to teach students to. It was one of the things I was defending because I think I wanted to. I was biting much more than I could chew, but basically I wanted students to or I wanted the community to the teaching community to, to think about how are you supposed to teach students speaking if you're not working on their listening first? And why isn't this done from a very young age? Why aren't you providing students with the chunks that they need, like the would you like and how many? And the I like this. Do you like that? So do I, you know, providing these chunks of language. Okay. You provide them in general English with the easy pieces and the Rockies and whatever. But how is this then, how does it enter into fruition? Where is the where's the end game? Where does this blossom? It just stays there with a. So do I know where are they using this. How are they using this. And that's the thing. It's something that I saw just was in existent.

Interviewer: [01:25:18] Funny enough we do we do a line on one topic very much. But this would have to be a private conversation because we are allowing for example, the problem that I identified, identified in my last year before that, I had big complaints that at least my perspective is that the reading and writing in most already university students is very high. However not so much speaking speaking, not so much listening, but speaking was or was it was not even in the same level. It was, you know, complete.

It's it's a downward spiral. The speaking. And, you know, I, I made that much suggestions about it, and I, I really want to work on a doctorate about that because I believe we have a flawed system in that regard, where I believe we are giving too much emphasis on reading and writing.

CA: [01:26:17] But that's just how it all began. Because if you think about it in Portuguese, because it's our first language. And what I noticed was that they designed a curriculum that was supposed to be bilingual, but it was based on Portuguese principles. So how are you supposed to teach a second language as if it were their first language? It's not going to work because you're not using the same. The same. You're not using them. You can't teach English as a second language, as a first language, where English is not categorized or considered a second language. First language. You can't do it because then the students aren't exposed to language on a daily basis, 24 hours in English. So if that's why the emphasis shouldn't be on on writing and on reading, because those aren't. I mean, obviously writing is a productive skill, but it's a productive skill. That is an automatic. It gives you time, doesn't it? Listening and speaking. Don't. It's happening at the moment of speech and you either able to answer and answer what you're hearing or you have to continuously interrupt. Oh, sorry. Can you say that again? Sorry. Do you see what I mean? And then you're interrupting a conversation and the flow of thought is interrupted and everything is interrupted. So. So. Yeah, it's it's a bit of a pickle, I suppose, but the problem starts. At its core.

Intreviewer: [01:27:54] Exactly.

Intreviewer: [01:28:21] Of my intent. And I am really smiling because everything you said is what I believe. We are going in a different way, or I identify the problem in university students. So I, I couldn't find why they were writing and this was before AI, so I knew they were writing. Why would they be writing so well and not be able to produce half?

CA: [01:28:46] They can't extend. They can't produce stretch long stretches of language, let alone short stretches of language. Some of them I identified were somewhere between a B1 level.

Intreviewer: [01:28:58] Exactly.

CA: [01:28:58] And, and then these people are required to then teach other kids who are a1's. Okay. Fair enough. But then where is their how are they modeling language? How are they modeling pron? How are they modeling lots of different things. But you see, that's a whole different kettle of fish. And the moment you get into something like that, you're going to get lots of lots and lots of people who you're going to sort of find lots of enemies because it's very how can you justify that? The teacher in university past, that student at a C1 level with a ten, right, that says that that student is C1, they gave him a ten. So they passed that student at C1 level. That person is going to argument. Well, listen, I got a ten. Sorry I've got C1 level. And in the end they producing language. That's a B2 to B1 level. Do you see what I mean.

Intreviewer: [01:29:53] I see. REDACTED this ends our intreview for now. We may proceed off record now.

Interview on Cambridge YLE Exam Preparation - HV Audio

List of Main Topics

1. **Interview setup and participant backgrounds** — key timestamps: 00:04:16–00:06:30, 00:11:29–00:14:26
2. **Scope: YLE prep's impact on verbal competence** — key timestamps: 00:08:32–00:10:24, 00:23:45–00:25:42
3. **Teaching approach: using pictures and tasks to practice, not teach** — key timestamps: 00:20:11–00:22:38, 00:38:25–00:41:38
4. **Listening preparation: alignment, techniques, and vocabulary control** — key timestamps: 00:32:29–00:36:08, 00:53:22–00:56:02
5. **Speaking preparation: question types, age-appropriate scope, and timing** — key timestamps: 00:39:47–00:41:38, 01:41:38–01:43:01
6. **Coursebooks and YLE alignment vs Portuguese publishers** — key timestamps: 00:44:44–00:48:50, 01:33:20–01:37:18
7. **Transversal skills and limits of exam prep** — key timestamps: 00:50:13–00:53:22
8. **CEFR levels for Starters/Movers/Flyers and practical relevance** — key timestamps: 00:54:50–01:00:58
9. **Challenges, anxiety, and student readiness for YLE** — key timestamps: 01:00:58–01:06:15
10. **Long-term benefits, public vs private practices, and resource constraints** — key timestamps: 01:08:53–01:16:29, 01:36:03–01:38:27

Topic 1: Interview setup and participant backgrounds

Timestamps: 00:04:16–00:06:30, 00:11:29–00:14:26

Summary: Technical issue with Interviewer's webcam leads to audio-only interview. HV outlines her role as owner/director of CAA (Cambridge-accredited), extensive experience across ages, CELTA/young learners specialization, teacher training, and teaching in a private school setting. She emphasizes long-standing work with Cambridge exams but clarifies she uses exam materials primarily for training/testing, not initial teaching.

Keywords: CAA, Cambridge accreditation, teacher training

Topic 2: Scope: YLE prep's impact on verbal competence**Timestamps:** 00:08:32–00:10:24, 00:23:45–00:25:42

Summary: Interviewer defines the thesis focus on how YLE (Young Learners) exam preparation enhances verbal competencies (listening and speaking) rather than overall proficiency. He argues listening and speaking are intertwined and often under-emphasized in Portuguese curricula, advocating for “active listening” via dialogic tasks. HV agrees listening is foundational for speaking and supports English-only classroom routines to build input.

Keywords: verbal competence, active listening, English-only instruction

Topic 3: Teaching approach: using pictures and tasks to practice, not teach**Timestamps:** 00:20:11–00:22:38, 00:38:25–00:41:38

Summary: Both describe picture-based activities (placing items, prepositions, eliciting vocabulary) mirroring YLE speaking tasks. HV stresses these tasks are best for practice/revision of taught language rather than introducing new content; students should also ask peers to maximize speaking. This approach improves fluency and classroom interaction without relying solely on exam-specific materials.

Keywords: picture description, practice vs teaching, student-centered tasks

Topic 4: Listening preparation: alignment, techniques, and vocabulary control**Timestamps:** 00:32:29–00:36:08, 00:53:22–00:56:02

Summary: HV notes many modern coursebooks embed YLE-style listening tasks aligned to unit themes; the task types (e.g., multiple-choice with distractors) are useful if vocabulary is controlled. Pre-teaching and picture walk-throughs before audio improve comprehension and train elimination strategies. She warns against importing random exam audios with unfamiliar lexis for 8–9-year-olds.

Keywords: pre-teaching, distractors, vocabulary control

Topic 5: Speaking preparation: question types, age-appropriate scope, and timing**Timestamps:** 00:39:47–00:41:38, 01:41:38–01:43:01

Summary: For speaking, any suitable pictures can be used; later parts of YLE involve personal questions (likes, family, city) that should match current coursebook themes. HV typically reserves formal exam materials for end-of-year once core vocabulary and structures are covered, then gauges interest in taking the exam. Peer Q&A cycles are

emphasized to boost output.

Keywords: personal questions, end-of-year mock, peer interaction

Topic 6: Coursebooks and YLE alignment vs Portuguese publishers

Timestamps: 00:44:44–00:48:50, 01:33:20–01:37:18

Summary: HV favors international publishers (Cambridge, Macmillan, Pearson, Oxford) whose units include YLE-like tasks, finding Portuguese-published books limited in context, visuals, and skills integration. She argues strong coursebooks supply rich stories, visuals, flashcards, and assessment-like tasks that naturally prepare students without “teaching to the test.” Cost and access remain barriers for public schools.

Keywords: international coursebooks, exam-like tasks, materials quality

Topic 7: Transversal skills and limits of exam prep

Timestamps: 00:50:13–00:53:22

Summary: On critical thinking, adaptability, and collaboration, HV contends these can be developed through varied classroom activities and do not require exam prep specifically. While YLE-style tasks can help, broader pedagogy and materials design are more decisive. She cautions against over-attributing gains to exam preparation alone.

Keywords: transversal skills, pedagogical design, exams

Topic 8: CEFR levels for Starters/Movers/Flyers and practical relevance

Timestamps: 00:54:50–01:00:58

Summary: HV views CEFR labels at YLE stages (Pre-A1 Starters, A1 Movers, A2 Flyers) as very basic and of limited practical significance for young learners. Alignment is generally fair, with Flyers involving A2 grammar (past simple/continuous, present perfect), affecting listening/reading comprehension. She prioritizes CEFR more at higher levels (B2+).

Keywords: CEFR alignment, A2 grammar, young learners

Topic 9: Challenges, anxiety, and student readiness for YLE

Timestamps: 01:00:58–01:06:15

Summary: HV reports minimal classroom challenges if the year’s teaching is solid; occasional weaker students may be advised to take Starters instead of Movers. Anxiety

appears mainly during the external exam with unfamiliar assessors, not during classroom prep. She recommends age- and experience-appropriate exam choices to ensure positive experiences.

Keywords: exam anxiety, differentiation, readiness

Topic 10: Long-term benefits, public vs private practices, and resource constraints

Timestamps: 01:08:53–01:16:29, 01:36:03–01:38:27

Summary: HV argues long-term gains stem from consistent, interactive teaching (listening-speaking first), not exam prep per se; many public-school students arrive with limited speaking despite early English, suggesting classroom practices and class sizes are key. End-of-year YLE-style practice helps assess progress and can validate outcomes via external assessment, but materials cost and limited resources hinder broad adoption.

Keywords: interactive pedagogy, public vs private, external assessment

Interviewer: [00:04:16] Hello. Hello. Hi, Miss HV, how are you?

HV: [00:04:25] I'm very well. I cannot see you, but.

Interviewer: [00:04:28] Oh, I will tell you why. I was setting up the meeting and I think my webcam died. I I have to go buy a new one. I'm so sorry. I was setting up the meeting earlier, like, five minutes previously. I was like, okay, my girlfriend is working. I was checking the meeting, was recording the audio. Everything was going great. And then I tried to set up the webcam and I realized it had died. But to be honest, it's not really a well, obviously, maybe to you it's a little bit weird not seeing me, but in the overall sense of things, I can only record audio. Audio is the most important things to It's not it's not going to, you know, make anything difficult in in regards to to to the interview itself or because what I really needed was for for the audio to be clear. And that's working at least. But I'm so sorry. I almost went to my company's laptop, but the issue there is that the zoom that they have there is the is different. It's for enterprises. So we are stuck with my webcam doing black. I'm so sorry, miss. Miss HV.

HV: [00:05:41] Okay. It's all right. It's okay, I don't mind.

Intreviewer: [00:05:45] Oh, well, first of all, how are you? Are you doing great?

HV: [00:05:48] Yes. Always good. Today is a holiday in Vila real. It's a local holiday because Vila Real celebrates S. Antonio. And so I'm actually working from the the house today. But everything is okay. Yes. Having a relaxing day I hope.

Intreviewer: [00:06:03] Well oh me, I actually am going to work after this. I, I work well, I work a 9 to 5. I work from 1 to 10 or pm. But after this meeting, I go prepare some stuff, and I go to to my office, and I'm getting good work. But besides that, it has been relaxing. I woke up and had a lovely day so far. Thank you so much for asking.

HV: [00:06:30] All right, so the I don't know if you want to proceed with the interview. If you want me to talk about the exams.

Intreviewer: [00:06:38] You know, imagine is very organically. I really don't believe in forcing anyone into any sort of rhythm. You know, I want people to be as comfortable as they can be. As such to me to be able to have the most, you know, realistic answers because I'm trying as although the, the people that I choose could be seen by a jury as a little bit biased. I don't want biased answers. So it's we we I'm gonna begin the only section which is has some questions that that are a little bit forced because we need to know who you are, the, the people that for me to make the script, the transcript, I we need to know who you are. So I'm going to ask your name, your current teaching role, your experiencing teaching primary level, the experience that you have with while the young learners exams of of Cambridge. What level do you usually teach how frequently students engage? Those are the sort of basic questions. Then I have seven questions. The number seven sons a lot. It's not you know, in all my interviews, what tends to happen is that people like to talk about their experiences. And then these questions, they go through them very fast. Because I believe, I believe, I try to go very nuclear into them so I can get most information out of them without, you know, needlessly repeating myself. The only thing I'm going to talk about right now is because there will be this concept, I am, I my my theme is how the preparation. So the exams and the preparation for these exams.

Intreviewer: [00:08:32] The YLE young learners. Cambridge enhances verbal competence. What I mean by verbal competence, I mean listening and speaking ability. So these both of these competencies I will not I am not tackling the wild as a whole. That's. That was not my idea. It will never be my idea. What I seen when I was teaching in REDACTED. Well, teaching is a strong word. No, it was an internship. When I was internship there, I, I believe that the students had a really high level in listening and speaking and after, you know, trying to figure out why. Because I don't believe the idea that public versus private school or well, you know, it's they are better because they are in a private school. No, I don't believe that concept. I need to understand what we are doing in certain schools. That works better than, you know, other schools. I have seen public schools that are amazing. I have seen private schools that are amazing. I believe it all comes down to what strategies we are employing with the students much rather than we, you know, No doing that black and white comparison. That one institute is better because it's being you are paying for then another one that is free. So I thought, and I still believe that given that the students are being primed for the exam their listening and speaking abilities are by far higher than, you know, let's say the median student in Portugal I believe it was because of those exams, but mostly because of the preparation for those exams. Now.

HV: [00:10:24] More that.

Intreviewer: [00:10:25] Yeah, the preparation. No, but my my, my my thesis is really on the preparation, not on the exams itself. And that brings us to I will explain in the, in the, in the transcript to my teachers. Don't think I just, you know, randomly search a upon you. The reason I knew you is actually by a colleague of mine.

HV: [00:10:49] Yeah. Yes.

Intreviewer: [00:10:52] Obviously, he's a friend of Jay, and I am as well. But you had this experience where he got to experience firsthand some Cambridge exams. And I was really happy for him. And I told him, look, if you do not mind, explain to me how the experience went. Especially, you know in your mind. And he said, look, he he liked it. The he they seem very engaged. And then, you know, that all led us to the, to this interview. And that's where I'm going to begin. If you could state your name and current teaching role.

HV: [00:11:29] Well, I'm the owner and also director of **REDACTED. REDACTED** stands for **REDACTED** It's an English school that opened in 1994. 34. So I've been with the school since it opened. Since 90. Actually, it opened in 1993, but I was still studying in 1994. I was still studying, but still. I've been working the school since it opened, so for many years, as you can see now we've been accredited by Cambridge Assessment English. We've been accredited for many years. So we are an official preparation centre for these Cambridge exams. So we've been working with exams for many years. As you can see, I'm an English teacher. I teach in our schools, but I also teach in another private school in Villarreal called **REDACTED**. Not that I had contacted them. They were the ones contacting us so that **REDACTED** could teach there. So **REDACTED**, our school is also teaching this private school. Another one. So I have a lot of experience with all ages. All ages. I've got my Celta. I think that, you know what? Celta is a certificate in English language teaching to adults. I've also got the sale tool which is the the specialist exam to teaching the younger learners. So I did my CELTA'S in London, so I've been teaching. I can't stop teaching because I love teaching. And still today, I don't teach a lot of children because I have other teachers that can do it.

HV: [00:13:06] But I'm teaching right now. Eight year olds, eight year olds. I'm teaching ten year olds right now this year. And I'm teaching more advanced students like 16, 17. I'm also preparing them for more advanced exams than these that we are talking about young learners. So basically that's it. I've done a lot of things. I'm a teacher trainer as well. I train teachers every week. Our teachers, we have meetings every week. So I have to to train them. And I have, you know, as you can see, a lot of experience with these exams. I don't particularly use them to teach. I only use them to test or train. I don't use and why? Because these exams what you can get in order to teach, if you're talking about the speaking part, you use the pictures. But the pictures for the exams are not in a context. You have to create a context. So the same pictures that you have in these books of exams, you have in their course books, in the students course books. So and I don't know exactly. I didn't get that. What age group you are teaching or this would be for is it only for primary the first cycle? Is it for the first cycle and second cycle?

Intreviewer: [00:14:26] So only the first. Only the first cycle.

HV: [00:14:28] Only the first cycle. So we talk about starters.

Intreviewer: [00:14:31] Yes yes yes.

HV: [00:14:32] Basically starters because the movers and the flyers that would be a little bit more advanced. Even though there are some things that you could probably get like the pictures.

Intreviewer: [00:14:40] So in the REDACTED or they do. I believe starters and movers and some of them are able to go to flyers. I think by the fourth grade or fifth grade, some of them are able to. But I believe that's that's I at least thought it was a little bit too much, but mainly starters and movers. Yes.

HV: [00:15:05] I find even movers hard. Not so much the speaking. And I think this is more directed to the speaking. Not so much the speaking, but for instance, the reading. I find it very hard, you know, for for students that are eight, nine. I find it very hard, but they can do it. You know, students that go to international schools, for instance, students that have their all their subjects in English, taught in English of course, they can do all of them. They should be able to do all of them because they have the practice, they have the understanding so they can do it. But the students that go to Portuguese schools that only have English twice a week, even if they complement with private schooling, another, you know, twice a week. It's very hard from my experience. But this regarding passing an exam, passing the exam, not so much using the exam to teach. Okay, that's a different matter. If you're just thinking about using the the existing sample tests to teach, that can work with maybe starters and movers, Flyers might be a little bit too much because in movers and flyers they have to make stories.

HV: [00:16:18] Students have to make stories. And usually they don't have the the grammar to do it. They don't have the chunks of grammar to do it. They it would be very, very simple. Now could they take the exam? Probably they wouldn't get the five shields. I think, you know, from my experience because I have a lot of experience with these exams and usually we have starter students do at the age of eight, nine. So it's very difficult to have movers students at this age. But another thing is to use the exams to teach that this can happen, but it's a bit limited. Still, it's a bit limited because what you would be using from the exams regarding speaking, I'm not talking about the listening, but regarding speaking you would use probably the pictures, isn't it the pictures that

come with the exam to be to elicit the the conversation? Again, I don't know exactly what you had in mind, you know, because but you are familiar with the exams, right? You are familiar with the exams.

Intreviewer: [00:17:28] And I did even do many I gave, I believe like six classes on the exams, and I did. And we're gonna go. We're gonna get to this. But just a spoiler. I did do some exercises with him for the speaking components, especially using the exam. So one of them that I use is, for example we're talking about the pictures. You know, one picture that they have to describe. One thing that I did, it was the following. So we had 20, 22 students, right? I, I got a really big picture of the same style as the Cambridge. And I wanted to do that exercise with the flashcards where they go and I say, look, put the flashcard in in the spot in the picture. But, well, you know, if I wanted to do it for real, I every student had to have the opportunity. So I printed out 22 flashcards. I even, you know, plastic folding and whatnot. And we did it and we did a mock up. So first of all, I would, you know, say a random number. That random number would correspond to one of the students. Then I would just ask them to describe their card. Their object would be vocabulary that you have been studying. Then then with in a ask them to go to the, to the board. And I was and before I tell them to place the card in a specific spot, I would ask them, you know, one of those sort of personal questions. For example, if they had a cat, I would be like, do you have any pets? And they'd be like, oh, yes or no. You know, like, do you like so obviously not as extensive as the real exam would be, but a limited version of it. And I found, I found that they really liked it and it really helped them, you know, I, they would and that's that sort of thing that so.

HV: [00:19:25] These are the kind of activities that you're talking about again, that you're not using them to teach. You are using them to test. Correct.

Intreviewer: [00:19:34] Well I would say both it would test your abilities, but also as well to teach. Many times they will be like, oh, I don't remember. And but and we would and they would revise.

HV: [00:19:46] Revise.

Intreviewer: [00:19:46] Yes. So not they would not be used in the sense to teach them new language. It would be. Sure. Consider it new language to teach like the first

approach to language or to understand the first a word that they didn't know. That would be hard, but to consolidate and make them actively use language. I found it to be very good.

HV: [00:20:11] Yes, yes, yes, but but you're right about that. That is nice. I use activities that are similar to that. To practice, to train, not to teach, not to teach. So that that is the difference here that I was making. It's like I don't use the pictures to teach of course, that we end up revising some vocabulary? We have to because what is it can be new to some students. It can be new to some students. Not all students know the same things because they get a lot of English from the exterior. That is not part of the classes. So some students know, some other students don't know. So yes, you end up at the same time that you are practicing the language. You end up teaching. Oh yes, for sure, for sure. But yeah, it's one of the things that I said from the beginning, I don't use them to teach, to start teaching. No, to start teaching the language. And has to be something different with their course books, with flashcards, with other visuals, because of course these exams will be a bit limited. But the same thing that you are saying regarding the Cambridge exams regarding these pictures of I do an activity that is I project these pictures on the whiteboard, so that's quite big.

HV: [00:21:27] And then I have the little cards and also printed, and I ask a student with blue tag, can you please place, for example, this this pie, the between the oranges and watermelons, you see. So I'm testing all this language. I'm testing the fruit and I'm testing the the spider. So I have all these pictures very similar to what happens in the exam, actually. But I am testing. I'm not teaching, basically I'm testing. And then that student does what I did to another student in class. Okay. Can you see the clock? Can you please put the clock on the wall. So but then the students take turns. I'm not the one saying the student say so that they practice the speaking. So you have a lot more speaking going on. Yes. This is good. This is good. And I do it often with the Cambridge exams. But to practice language that has already been taught prepositions is very good. You know, to teach prepositions the on in and between behind. I think with prepositions is also works very well. You you also. Besides this you would also talk about using listening tests. Or do you?

Intreviewer: [00:22:38] Yes. And I will get to that in a second. First of all, let me just say we we already went through the section A of the question. So the background

questions, this always happens okay. Because it's very organic. So all the questions we I had to ask about your background, they were already answered. So in a bit we're going to go to the well to the main interview questions. That's why I said, you know, it sounds a lot, but it's not because in one sentence or you know, everyone speaks. But before that you are right in a sense that I am not in this in my thesis. I am not you know trying to say that you are able to teach or the children, so, you know, the first moment of of learning through the exams. No, I'm saying that It enhances. So my, my theory is that these preparations, while we are testing them and, you know, are reminding them and revising it, enhances their verbal competencies. In what I mean by, by the following is that they, they get better than normal because we are actually priming them in a, in a subset of skills that sometimes in normal curriculum, it gets forgotten because I believe, for example, in Portugal we, we give a lot of emphasis on on writing and reading and and we tend to forget, you know, for me, the most important thing about the language speaking.

HV: [00:24:07] Sure. But visuals are great with children, visuals, any visuals, any visuals could be these pictures could be others.

Intreviewer: [00:24:15] And and why I believe that. Why YLE is not like the the final answer to to the issue that we have in English teaching. I believe it's very good. It's a very. It's It's a very good way of making sure we have a balanced curriculum and this the and that speaking and listening part is actually enhanced. Now, you did ask something. Why do you say why are you putting speaking and listening are in the same competence. And what I mean by this is because they both go into what I call verbal competencies. So, so for you to be able to speak, you also have to be able to listen correctly and well. Although, you know, listening sometimes gets learned more passively. And I and I believe in the Portuguese curriculum, we have a lot of emphasis on listening in the primary level. Active listening sometimes gets forgotten. So we normally have listening in terms of I'm going to play an audio. You retain the information, you then write, but we don't have a lot of active listening in terms of you are speaking to a student and they have to understand we only have those in classrooms where we say, hey, hey, class. You know, those types of interactions while in a dialogue, you have to have active listening and, you know, active speaking. That's what I refer to here.

HV: [00:25:42] Well listening from is the from me and it should be for everyone. It's the first skill for the child to speak. They need to listen.

HV: [00:25:52] Definitely. It's like a baby. The baby is not going to speak if the baby doesn't listen. So they have to listen. It's very very important. For instance in our classes in CAA our teachers cannot speak Portuguese to the students. So since they are three years old, we have classes. We start with three year olds. We're not teaching at the creche at the moment. There are some schools that teach, but we start only with the three year olds that already know their first language. And they need to listen. If they don't listen, it's impossible to speak. So if from the very first state, we only speak English to them and they can, you know, if you show them a picture with the with a card and you say card, they are going to understand each card. You don't have to use translation. One of the things that I think they use in Portuguese schools from my knowledge and from the teachers that I've been talking to me these years, is that teachers in Portuguese schools, English teachers still use a lot of Portuguese, and so they are not allowing the students to be in contact with the language during that hour that they are with them, which is a shame. And that listening, yes, I think is missing in some schools, the schools where they do not speak English to the students because anything that you speak to them is good, such as sit down, stand up on the open the book, close the book, open the window, close the door.

HV: [00:27:19] You know, all these actions. The classroom language is very good because then they apply it to other contexts. So the lesson is extremely important. And the students can only be successful at the Cambridge. The young learners exams listening if they actually have the vocabulary, if they don't have the vocabulary, they are not going to be able to answer the questions. So they need to listen. They need to listen. They need to acquire a lot of vocabulary and not just lose words. Because it's another thing that I get a lot from some schools, it's loose words. They can't just talk with loose words. They have to learn sentences using phrases, using chunks of language. Which is something that is very rare for me to to get from some schools. I usually compare our school, which is a private school, CAA, to public schools. Okay. So I'm comparing and also in my reality here in Vila real in the north of Portugal. Okay. Because in other places in Portugal it might be a little bit different, but but even talking to one of my teachers, the other masters in the University of Minho I remember that she had to teach a little bit in Portuguese because even her tutor told her to do so.

HV: [00:28:41] Oh, because it's easier. But I don't agree, I don't agree, I think the students in class, when they are having an English class, an English or Spanish or French, a language class, they should have that class always in the language. And English is no exception. So in our school they always have it in English and more. We encourage the students to use it. So we give them the examples and we ask them to use the examples. So it has to be very interactive and students and not a lot of teacher talking time as well. The teachers are supposed to give the input. Okay. The input. Give the example, give them the example and then allow them to do it like I. The example that I gave you with the me giving the example of the student putting the picture between those two, like put the spider between this and that and then giving the students the opportunity to do it himself or herself. So I think that it has to be more centered in the students than in the teacher. And also allowing the students to use the language, use the language. So all these techniques prepare the students to be successful at the different skills all the skills. But the listening for me is the first one. It's listen, listen, listen to be able to speak. If they don't listen, they're not going to speak.

Intreviewer: [00:30:07] 100% agree, because that's one of my my arguments in in my thesis where what I say. I am not going to incorporate only the speaking in verbal competencies because I believe that would be an just saying verbal production and not and not speaking in itself because any, any child can produce but not any child can can conversate. That's my main point. And that's why I highlight verbal competencies, because the child first needs to listen, decode, understand and then encode again. To speak. And that whole process is what we actually want because they all can say okay or yes, they understand that. Yes. Is is seeing that that connects to them very easily, but for them to actually understand and be able to listen and then speak which is very hard, you know, for the child which their primary language is not, is not English. That's the, the biggest challenge that we even adults face. How can we decode something in, in English? And then many of us are not able to speak to think in the second language. Most of us aren't, and then decode it and produce language. That's the very hard part. And that's why listening and speaking. But that does go. We already talked about my first question, but I always have to ask. So in your experience, what impact does young learners exam preparation have on students verbal competence. So speaking in listening does it have a good impact. Does it not have any impact at all. Do you believe that preparing for them not teaching through them. We we are we are already argued.

And I'm 100% with you that it is impossible to teach any notion of language by using a model exam, no matter what, but preparing for them. What what impact does it have on Verbal Competencies? Do they get better? Do you find that it is more easily balanced to, you know, to identify the a classes weaknesses or a student's weakness and then help them or get better at it?

HV: [00:32:29] Well, these exam, I don't know if you've seen them in your teaching, but the exam preparation is already included in some of the course books.

Intreviewer: [00:32:40] Yes, yes, yes.

HV: [00:32:41] It's already part of some of the course books that at least the course books that we teach. So that we use and we don't use from Portuguese publishers, we only use the from, from Cambridge, from Macmillan, from Pearson, and not from Oxford right now. But in these books, they already have some of that preparation for the exams related to the themes of that unit. Okay. So we have to see exactly how we are doing this because it's not just getting an exam online or from a book of exams and bring it to the class. Okay, so because it's not going to test exactly or train or practice the language that we are teaching the students. So we have to see what language we are teaching the students because we are talking about I think eight, nine year olds.

Intreviewer: [00:33:33] Yes. About that.

HV: [00:33:35] Okay. So we're talking about language. It is a bit limited. So the language that you use, for instance in a coursebook, depending on the units, that's what they are going to learn. So if you bring a listening test from one of these exams, that test is going to have that is not part of the books. Let's say that is not part of their course books. This listening test is going to have a lot of vocabulary they don't know.

HV: [00:34:02] So we have to be careful with that. Now the kind of exercise, the kind of exercise that is in the exam is good, is good, and it helps a lot with their listening skills, for instance, to multiple choice when they have to listen and select ABC of course, that they have to listen carefully because they have to use a process of elimination. It's not this, it's not this. So it has to be that. So it does help them a lot with the, the listening, but we just have to be careful with the selection of the exercises, because we are a bit

limited to the vocabulary that the students have. So basically it's at now do do they help? Yes, of course they do. When students have the vocabulary to do it and enough vocabulary to do it. Then yes, it helps from the experience that I have. I go over the question because, for instance, going back to the multiple choice one they have to answer a question. Okay. So what is Joanna doing? What is Joanna doing? This is a very common question. What is Joanna doing? And then you have three pictures.

HV: [00:35:13] Okay. And then they have to see the three pictures. She's playing in the bedroom. She's having dinner. She's playing with the dog in the garden. So what I do sometimes is to help them even more. I ask them before they listen. Before they listen. What can you see in the pictures? What can you see in the pictures? Tell me what you see in the pictures. And so they have to tell me what they see in picture A in picture B in picture C okay. So we do have a little bit of the pre-teaching. And then they listen and they tell me which one it is. Because of course they have distractors in the listening. Sometimes they say oh she's doing this. Oh no no no she's doing something else. So they have some distractors and so they have to learn also to work with distractors. So yes this is good. This is good to practice their listening. We just have to be careful with the materials that we, that we use in class. Or we have to do the pre-teaching.

Interviewer: [00:36:08] For example, I, I had I had those issues when I started to do the, the my internship because one of my first classes was actually if I'm not if I'm not incorrect, it was actually a listening class for the YLE. So my, my professor at the time, she said, look, prepare a class where we are going to revise some vocabulary, especially listening but in a wild format, because she already knew that was going to be my my project. And she's like, well, it also helps me because, you know, I have cramming for the exam. And that was one of my challenges. My, my class kept getting postponed and rejected because she's like, I understand what you're doing, but you are forgetting that you cannot just bring any material. Because if the if the if the children are unable to understand or they don't even have the vocabulary that you are trying to transmit in this listening. What are you really evaluating them or revising them on all the vocabulary? Well, not let's say one word could not be in your vocabulary to be given 90% of the of the vocabulary in the listening they have to have already had, or they are, or it's the cover that we are going to revise. And that's sort of exercise that I had to I basically did a whole Listening myself, like in terms of, well, obviously it was not officiated by the exams, but it was almost the same. Or took some extracts here and

there. And that exercise really made me realize, you know, how much effort goes into all this type of things. But I was able to do it. My question now is we talked about about listening. And I am glad because many other interviews, we were focused only on speaking. And and I was like, well, I will have to have someone save me in the listening competency. So I'm glad. But what about speaking? Do you do any exercises in to prepare and revise students into speaking components that are alike? The YLE exam in the classroom.

HV: [00:38:25] Any picture? Oh, do you have any pictures? Any pictures will do.

Intreviewer: [00:38:29] Exactly.

HV: [00:38:30] Picture. You just get pictures. Get pictures. Look, I have a folder I know on my computer. I have a folder with lots of pictures. And in order to prepare them for the exam. Okay, again, not to teach, but in order to prepare them and to revise some vocabulary. You can get any pictures. Doesn't have to be from the exam, from books of exams, from exams that you find online because you have them in the on the Cambridge Assessment English platform. Any pictures will do in order to prepare them for that part of the pictures, because then you have other parts of the exam. You have the first one. We have the pictures because the very beginning is what's your name? How old are you? But then after the pictures, you do have some other questions about them, about their family. So not talking about the pictures because pictures, like I said, any picture will do. But after the picture, you have another part where they have to answer questions about their likes and dislikes, their family they have their, their, their city where they live. They have lots of different possible questions that include a lot of vocabulary. So we have to see what we are practicing in class.

HV: [00:39:47] Okay. And then develop that a little bit in the context of the, the course book as well. And and then yes, ask those questions related to the exam. Because if you are talking about a family, you are not going to ask them questions about food. So it's like and this you have in the exams as well. So we have to be a little bit consistent here. So we have to be extremely careful selecting because we're talking about eight nine year olds. If I was talking to you about advanced exams it would be something else. Okay. We're talking about eight nine year olds. And usually we test with these ages. We test what we teach, and we practice more what we teach. We don't want to

bring a lot of material that they don't know because they will get frustrated. All right. So Yeah. So the kind of questions that you have in the exam, if we're asking them, what's your favorite food? What food you don't like? Then it has to be part of the context that they have in the book that is being taught in the book, in their exam, in their the coursebook. So basically I would use the material in the coursebook. Okay. To reinforce that, okay. To continue asking questions. And it's not just us asking the questions. You need to have the students asking questions to each other. It's very important for them to do it, you know, for them to ask and answer, ask and answer, ask and answer to promote the speaking here. But I would say that the preparation I've been teaching all these years and I only use the young learners exam materials in the end of the school year.

HV: [00:41:38] And why? Because you wait until you teach the coursebook, you give them enough material you need, you give them a lot of vocabulary in context different themes and you know, the themes that they have in the books, all these basic themes. And then in the end of the school year, I used the exams, I used material for the exams, and that's when I make them think if they would like to take the exam or not. I don't use the exam material in the beginning of a school year, for example, because they don't know what is there. They don't know the material that is there. It's very difficult for them also to understand. So they have to understand to be able to speak. And so there are some questions, especially in the end of the exam, that for them to really know what to say, they need the input. You have to do the input throughout the year. So the preparation takes a long time. If we're talking about taking the exam itself now, asking these questions. Yes, I think that you know, regarding the pictures, because the exam is divided into pictures and then these kind of questions that I was talking to you about. Yes, the preparation, but we just have to see when it's appropriate to do it. But yes, yes it helps.

Intreviewer: [00:43:01] So if I if I understand it correctly. So for example, the exams materials like the for the I would assume you are talking about like mock tests and or things like such. You only use it at the end of the school year, you know, when you are wanting to give them the idea if they would like to take the test or not.

HV: [00:43:20] But this age. For this age.

Intreviewer: [00:43:22] Yes. But for throughout the year, every time you are able to, you do some sort of activities that reflect what they are currently studying, what they are currently being taught. You just you every time you can do activities like pictures or listening that are like the while you are preparing them, you're priming them, but not directly to, to help them learn English.

HV: [00:43:49] And that is already in the books, already in the books, in our course books.

Intreviewer: [00:43:54] And that brings us to my third question. It's going to it's actually it's really beautifully made for this point is how how does the exam preparation differ from traditional sorry, not traditional, textbook based speaking and listening activities because I think you know that, for example, the books that you are seeing that you're using Macmillan in Cambridge, they they already align with the exams for, for they already priming. But there are other textbooks that you can use that do not. How does it differ from the ones you know, that you're already using? Because I know that Cambridge and Macmillan, they are already priming the students for the.

HV: [00:44:44] Pearson and Pearson.

Intreviewer: [00:44:45] And Pearson and Pearson.

HV: [00:44:47] And Oxford.

Intreviewer: [00:44:48] All of them.

HV: [00:44:50] Except for the Portuguese.

Intreviewer: [00:44:52] For the Portuguese, think.

HV: [00:44:53] I think it's difficult to see the Portuguese books, the Portuguese publishers, this kind of exam preparation, but all the others they include for each unit that we teach. And this, for instance, I can give you the example of the the tiger from Macmillan. Each unit that we use with that we do with the students, they have exam like

exercises with the vocabulary that that unit is teaching. So this yes, this is very good. Now, if you talk to me about the Portuguese like what you say.

Intreviewer: [00:45:29] Any any of them, I will not I will not include names.

HV: [00:45:34] Or something because those books I can't compare those books to, to the books that we use. They are very poor in context, put in context, putting all sorts of vocabulary dialogues, you know, if you were familiar with the tiger, for instance, that we use, it's a book that is a bit expensive, but you do have so much material there that you can use to prepare them for the exams that you don't have in the other ones. The other ones are extremely simple, very simple. So basically, these books would have to be if you're thinking about exam preparation, you would have to bring material. You would have to bring material to the class that is not always appropriate during the school year, because it doesn't have much to do with the thing that you are teaching. So that's why I said in the end of the school year, after teaching a different unit with different vocabulary, then in the end of the school year, they would have more vocabulary to do the kind of exams that we're talking about, exam material, exam exercises that we're talking about. Right. Because those Portuguese books that you use Portuguese, I mean, from Portuguese publishers, because they are books to teach English, but I don't think they are ready to to prepare the students for the exams.

Intreviewer: [00:46:58] Yes, and I agree. I don't think they are ready to prepare the students for exams, but also in here is one. I like to make this reference. You don't you do not use them. You prefer to use the Cambridge and the Macmillan.

HV: [00:47:11] We don't use any from Portuguese publishers. No books from Portuguese publishers. They don't have the content that we that we need. We need more content. If you if you have experience with them you will see what I mean.

Intreviewer: [00:47:24] No, I do, I do, I actually refer to them in the this is what my, my question here and I think it will be pertinent. The content is not appropriate, but do you also believe the fact that they do not have activities that are like the YLE and are priming the students for the while is a disadvantage, but because you believe that, you know, those sort of activities that are priming the YLE students for the rally are not only

useful for the exam, but they are the the exercise itself is well constructed. It's so well constructed that you can use it in classes.

HV: [00:48:01] Yeah.

Intreviewer: [00:48:02] Yeah.

HV: [00:48:03] The idea of it. Yes. Yeah. The kind of exercise. Yes. You as a teacher, you can adapt. You can adapt. The any exercise that you have in the book, I think, you know, teachers have to be creative. And so you can use that idea and ideas from the exam. You can use some of the ideas, like the idea of the exam that we're talking about of the pictures.

HV: [00:48:27] Okay. You can use with any pictures that you have in the book.

HV: [00:48:32] So yes you can use that. You can use that material to practice with the students in class. The material that you want and the themes that you want with any pictures that they have in the books, I just don't know if the books come with good pictures.

Intreviewer: [00:48:50] No, I in my. I believe that because those books that we talk about. Macmillan. Pearson Cambridge, they were priming the students for the exercises because they obviously, you know, were corresponding to the exams. They seemed very well, enhancing, very full, very capable very well constructed. And the I believe it was easier to sometimes make a class through those exercises. Then it would be in a traditional textbook from Portugal made by Portuguese authors. Obviously. I believe that's But I believed it. And it brings me to my fourth question, which I, you know, I believed until now I had 100% rate with this question. Everyone agrees with but you know, I'm still waiting for someone to disagree. Do you believe the YLE tasks? So the exam preparation and even the exam itself, but more the preparation help the students develop transversal skills. And what I mean by that are critical thinking, adaptability and collaboration.

HV: [00:50:13] I don't know.

HV: [00:50:16] Okay. So I'm going to agree. I'm going to be the first one.

HV: [00:50:21] And I there are all.

HV: [00:50:24] Because I've been teaching, you know, in so many different ways. I am so creative with all sort of activities that I do in the classroom. I don't need an exam to do that. I don't need I think that you have alternatives. You can adapt a lot. The exercises sizes that that you want to do with the students. You can adapt them. You can students can have access to all this adaptability that you're talking about. Easily. It depends on the material that you use with them. Doesn't have to be this kind of material, the exam preparation material. Because like I said, our students have been very successful throughout the years and they only do a little bit of exam preparation in the end. And the majority of them don't take the exam because they don't need to. The parents don't want them to take the exam. And our students communicate extremely well. They adapt extremely well to different contexts. They use the language in different contexts different skills as well. So they, they bring all the that understanding, the listening and the speaking. They use it also in their reading skills, the The understanding of the reading, because the order should be that one. The order should be listening, speaking, reading and writing. Okay, so the order should be this. And so they use a lot what they learn from the listening activities, the speaking.

HV: [00:51:55] They also apply it to the reading and the writing and not necessarily with the exams. Now can the exams help the if they can help they can help a little bit. I think anything can help. You know students I bring you know the the children they are like sponges. They they learn easily. They also forget easily, but they learn very easily. So they can learn from any activity that that you bring to class. They can but doesn't have to be necessarily from the exam preparation. There are other materials that you can use with them. Like I said, for instance, the the speaking, the pictures you could see doesn't have to be a picture from these exams can be a picture from anything in the book, even, you know, pictures from Some dialogues, you have a dialogue, and from that dialogue you can create a lot of speaking, a lot of speaking elicit a lot of vocabulary. So from a dialogue, I mean with the bubbles and pictures. Okay. So pictures, pictures. Because students that are eight nine, they need a lot of visuals. Now back to the young learners. Preparation. I think they help. Yes. The exams, the preparation, they help the students.

We just have to see when the most appropriate part of the year. It is, and I correct. Use them. But I think everything helps. Yes. Everything helps. These students.

Interviewer: [00:53:22] It always happens. I saw this question is is like moths to flame, you know, because I always say it's 100% because in the beginning, everyone has a different opinion, but they all end up saying, yes, it helps. I believe this question. No, but it's my fault. This question is a little bit badly formulated because anything helps in the 21st century to develop these skills.

HV: [00:53:43] But it doesn't mean that you have to use it. You have alternatives. You have alternatives.

Interviewer: [00:53:48] I think my point in this question, and I believe we already covered it before, so I'm not very worried, is that the exercises that we do that are influenced in the, in the YLE help prepare students for these skills. And you have already said that you used many things that are like, for example, or you explore a picture like for example, they will do in a YLE and things like such. But I understand what you're saying. Like it doesn't have to be everything can help. It doesn't have to be necessarily. But it's a very fun question nonetheless, because I think this is one of the questions that always gets answered beforehand. This is the question that never gets answered beforehand. But it's very it's it's a big part of my project. So I think you are familiar with the, the common. Exactly. From your perspective, how well do the exams tasks? So the exam itself, the preparation exercises align with the CEFR levels for young learners.

HV: [00:54:50] Well, I don't worry.

HV: [00:54:51] About that that much because they're too young. The students are too young. Doesn't really matter much because they can do all the exams, the starters, movers and flyers. But the levels are so basic still, that doesn't. I don't really think about. Okay, this is A1, that is A1 plus, that is A2. For me it doesn't really make a big difference, you know, because if a student that is even flyers, let's think about flyers. That is the last level of these exams. If a student that is flyers level stops stops their English lessons, they're going to forget everything because students need to reach a higher level of English. So that doesn't really I don't really pay much attention to that,

not at this level. I start thinking more about this with advanced students because I teach advanced students and when students get to level B2, then yes, then yes. For me that is important because they are already preparing for the future, their future career, future studies their future work. So yes, but in the beginning I don't think it's relevant.

Intreviewer: [00:56:02] But you believe they are very well aligned. Like for example you believe that for example, starters aligns with let's say A1 level.

HV: [00:56:13] Which is pre.

HV: [00:56:13] Pre A1. Yeah.

HV: [00:56:14] Yeah.

Intreviewer: [00:56:15] So you know they, you think at least they are very well aligned. They are not like big discrepancies. Because one of the things that the exams want you to do is make sure that the corresponding level of the CFR was rightfully so with your demands for the student to pass the exam so they would correspond like a ladder. Like for example, let's say flyers was A1. If the student was able to pass flyers, they would correspond to the needs of the European common references of A1. That's what they tried to do. Do you believe that? That's more so true. Or no?

HV: [00:57:00] Like I.

HV: [00:57:00] Said I these these common European framework of reference letters, they don't tell me much from my experience.

Intreviewer: [00:57:10] Oh, no. No, it's it's okay. You can.

Intreviewer: [00:57:11] Completely disagree I.

HV: [00:57:14] They.

HV: [00:57:15] Because if you see the status would be pre A1.

HV: [00:57:20] Pre A1 so it's extremely basic. And if you think about flyers so movers would be like A1, A2 and flyers A2. They're extremely basic levels. So for us to think about Okay. Does this mean anything? Yes. It can mean that they have a basic elementary level of English, which is a very low level still. That's why a lot of parents decide not to pay for the exams. The exams are not very cheap. They cost about 70 something euros. Parents decide because, you know, doesn't mean much. Now. Are they aligned to. They correspond. Exactly. You know, if you think about more like flyers. Flyers, which is an A2, it's more like elementary Pre-intermediate elementary pre-intermediate level. Okay. So that can give you a better idea of what the student can do if you are familiar, but you don't use flyers with eight nine year olds.

Intreviewer: [00:58:18] Exactly.

HV: [00:58:19] Yeah.

HV: [00:58:19] You you wouldn't use flyers with the movers, for instance. Okay. That is more like a1, a2.

HV: [00:58:26] Okay. A1 A2 students in the movers exam. If you are familiar with movers exam. Even for the listening. Also, because you do have this in the listening component, you have questions in the past. It's very difficult for them to understand a question in the past. You know, eight, nine year olds again, the age we have to take so many things into account. But they have questions in the past. So 8 to 8 two is elementary is elementary level. Elementary level is so elementary level already with some knowledge of the past, even though they don't have to use it, but they have to understand it. Well to be able to do the listening and to do the reading exercises more these two more, these two. Because in the speaking they can still use the present most of the time. So we don't have to use the past. Yes. The I could say yes, that they are, you know, thinking like this. What do they see? What do they require in the level they want, what they require in the level two? Yes, they are, they are. I would say they are aligned. Yes, I would say.

Intreviewer: [00:59:33] And

Intreviewer: [00:59:35] This question, to be honest, I it's more for me to understand each, you know, teachers relevance to it. Some teachers, for example, I can tell you some teachers pass this question very, very, very frank and very fast and said, well, yes, because, you know YLE he are correctly aligned to follow the CEFR, but some of them have the same reaction as you did is like, well they are, but it's very basic level, so it's hard to say. So I really liked

HV: [01:00:09] We just have to see to see what is required for each level.

HV: [01:00:13] What is required for each level and for each level, you know, you have to see, okay, the Pre-a1, for instance, Pre-a1 and A1, they don't require the past simple for instance. But A2 already requires the possible. So basically you have to see what they require in each level. And if you think about flyers Wires. You have past simple, past continuous and present. Perfect.

Intreviewer: [01:00:33] Yes.

HV: [01:00:34] In terms of grammar. And that interferes with the understanding. Because then in the listening they also have that they have to understand what questions are asked in order to answer correctly. So it can be flyers is A2 and A2. You can already have the past simple and the present perfect. So yes, I would say they are okay. They correspond fairly.

Intreviewer: [01:00:58] Well.

Intreviewer: [01:00:58] We arrived to the almost last question, which is what challenges do you encounter when preparing students for the exams? In particular, developing what you already are saying is verbal competencies. In this case the challenges are is like when you prepare the students, like doing those types of exercises that are like while but even exam preparation, it can be fit here. Like is it is it more difficult to assess speaking and writing. The students experience more anxiety in these exercises that are, like, wildly more than they do during other speaking tasks, which I find it difficult but can be. What support will help you improve this part of teaching? What challenges do you encounter? If you encounter any of you can say no, not many.

HV: [01:01:55] No, we don't actually have a lot of challenges because we do prepare the students very well throughout the year. And the preparation that we do throughout the year doesn't include the exam materials. We do the preparation with our course books, the course books of our choice. So and with all the techniques that we use with the students, all the preparation that we do with them during the year, usually in the end, we don't have a problem using the exams, the preparation material and recommending the exams to them. Usually we don't have now. There is always a student that is a little bit weaker than the others. But if that happens, I might not recommend movers, for instance, and I'll recommend starters. See we manage. I don't recommend the movers okay. I recommend movers to the majority, but there's one that I think is having a little bit more difficulties because not everybody is good at languages. So sometimes you do get one that is a little weaker. So I recommend a different exam. Now in terms of the preparation anxiety, usually we get a little bit more anxious when they do the speaking test. But this speaking test not in class during preparation. I don't feel any anxiety. No I think the students are just fine doing it. Now, when it gets to the exam itself, when they are being assessed by an external person that they don't know then they get a little bit more anxious, but that is only during the exam itself, not during the preparation.

HV: [01:03:31] During the preparation, usually it's it's fine. I sometimes feel the need to pre-teach a word or so that I think they're not going to know if I'm using pictures, and I think that they're not going to know that picture. I might say what I said before to you. Okay, tell me what you see in the pictures. I don't give them. First I ask, what do you see in the pictures? Because if one of the students in class knows, then that student is going to be the one saying, not me. So I do try to elicit some of the vocabulary when I think they're not going to know according to what we saw during the year. But I don't have a big challenge now. You know, if you prepare your students well throughout the year with good speaking activities, good listening activities, reading as well, starter students don't have to write much. They only have to write basically in the writing part of the starters. It's a one word. It's a one word sentence they have to complete. What is the girl doing? They have to put swimming something like that so they don't have to write much. At this level with starters. I mean like I said, I find movers a little bit difficult for eight, nine year olds especially that only have English at public schools.

HV: [01:04:52] I find it a bit hard, the students that have a complement with the private teaching in English schools like ours, they are, you know, better understanding the language and understanding a little bit of the past, because they do need the past in reading, in the reading exercises. So we do have to see what which exam we are preparing them for. Okay. If you are talking about eight nine year olds starters, It's not. I wouldn't recommend movers unless the students have a lot of experience. Unless the student started when they were like 5 or 6 years old, and they already have some experience understanding the past because I believe that they should take the exam when they are ready. It should be a good experience for them. Again, talking about this age group, we're talking about an age group that is a bit sensitive. We want them to have a good experience. We want them to enjoy the language. We want them to continue motivated. And so I recommend the exam that they should take at that age and for that level. And if this happens usually I don't have any challenges. I can tell you, I think they our students are very well prepared. The you know, if they do, according to what I've said here today.

Intreviewer: [01:06:15] Which we arrive at the end. By the way, I completely agree with you. And I, I really liked what you said that like during preparation, you don't feel any anxiety during the exam. They might be anxious. That's. That would be relevant to something that I wanted to write on, but I can't in my in my doesn't allow it, which is the construct and pressure of anxiety in, in exams. You know, it's I think we are pre-building anxiety in the students and it's very hard to do it. For example, I think and I really think this that why YLE is very fun exam. It's not the funnest thing in the world. Obviously the child could have much fun activities, but in terms of being constructed is not I don't believe it's the harshest thing that could be created. But the way we have shifted around society, the pressure on on exams itself it gives students more anxiety. Then we should want him to feel I remember the first time he took an exam. I still had no social construct on how important an exam was. I was very carefree and maybe a bit too carefree. I had to. I had to be alarmed how carefree I was, but I, I remembered and I think that kids nowadays come with that notion of the importance of the exam very early on.

Intreviewer: [01:07:39] In all stages of education, in all levels, in all manners. But that's a completely different point for a completely different issue that I hopefully don't have to tackle in my thesis, which we reach our seventh question and loss, which is, in your opinion, what are the long term benefits of incorporating widely speaking and listening

preparations into the classroom? Into into a regular classroom, into a regular lesson? What are the long term benefits? Besides, obviously, you know, preparing them for the exam. That's an obvious one. That's that I can. But how does did this exercise is different from any other other that you could have chosen, and how can they help students in the long term? My idea of this is to give you why, for example, I believe that by following some of the exercises that align with the I saw that students were were able to speak more with more confidence. They were able to their general English level was increasing by a tremendous rate. They were they became more engaged in some of the activities.

HV: [01:08:53] But you know that for me, it's difficult to believe that that comes from the preparation for the exam. It it has to do with activities that you do with them because the kind of exam tasks that they have is the exam tasks that you do already with the students with any material. I don't think that, you know what you're saying, the how comfortable they are with the speaking comes from just preparation for the exam. It's not just preparation for the exam, because the kind of activities that you have for the exam are the kind of activities that you already do in class with them, unless the teachers don't do it, unless teachers don't do this kind of because we have to see what are the teachers doing in the classroom? Yes, I cannot. Isn't it because I cannot see myself teaching without visuals, without asking students what you see without flashcards? A lot of repetition of vocabulary and chunks of language and phrases and so on. This is the way that we teach. So are the teachers teaching the right way? That I don't know.

HV: [01:09:57] That I don't know, is the.

Intreviewer: [01:09:58] Question which I unfortunately uncover to be. Maybe we are not because I believe when I was using this in the classroom, they became more engaged. Unlike, for example, traditional methods that we employed of chunks of vocabulary. Very much repetition. Not much exploration giving them exercises and the exercise book not exploring a lot of the speaking component classes being fairly unbalanced, where it's like an entire class is only about writing and you see.

HV: [01:10:35] No, no, I.

Intreviewer: [01:10:36] Understand that you're particularly context is very different. I understand that, yes.

HV: [01:10:41] Yes, totally.

HV: [01:10:42] Totally from the.

Intreviewer: [01:10:44] But I have here to my general broad opinion, is that perhaps some some of these other contexts where I believe maybe English speaking component and listening component are being overlooked the incorporating these exercises, which, you know, and you made in your own sense of you made sense, like, well, they don't differ a lot from other things that I could be doing. I agree, but for many others, they are never being done.

HV: [01:11:12] Yeah. And that is.

HV: [01:11:15] The difficult thing for me to.

Intreviewer: [01:11:17] Obviously.

HV: [01:11:18] To.

HV: [01:11:19] Compare, to compare, because I don't teach in public schools.

HV: [01:11:22] I don't.

HV: [01:11:23] I don't teach with Portuguese books. So I can only tell from my experience with the exams. And the Cambridge assessment has been my life. Basically, I've always used Cambridge assessment, always Cambridge assessment. So that is always present. The kind of activities that we're talking about is always present in our lessons.

HV: [01:11:44] So maybe this is what is missing in the school. A lot of speaking. You know I cannot start the class without with children. If it's not with speaking has to be speaking listening and speaking listening and speaking listening and speaking. So the

reading and writing I use maybe the last let's say towards the end, 15 minutes in the end of the class, maybe to complement what we were speaking because the first skills are always listening. Exactly. You are right. You know in what you know, your masters. I quite like that idea of the listening and the speaking. Listening and the speaking because that is missing, you know, that is missing in class.

Intreviewer: [01:12:29] For example, I will give you a harsh reality, although I'm older. Yes, obviously. I did begin in the, in that program that was adopted by, by Maia, which is the students were able to get English in the third grade already, which is a lot better than most of my classmates that only began having English in the fifth or seventh grade. If I tell you that the first time I was evaluated in my speaking component. So I began in, like I even say second grade, I think second grade, we had something. So from second grade until I believe 10th grade, I was never evaluated on my speaking ability. Not once did I have to present speak or anything. Well, now I understand. Now it's a little bit different. Okay. Now it's more balanced. Or I began when I began learning English, it was still in the primordial stages of of what was going to be English was not yet added to the curriculum to be obligatory. But many of of people, many of the students and other contacts that I was able to get and even at university level, their experiences much were much alike in that sense where speaking was very was not very it was forgotten. It was not a component that it was really cared for or.

HV: [01:13:53] But, you know, I think I understand why I understand that teachers have a lot of students, and if they have a lot of students speaking, obviously it's going to be a bit noisy. Teachers get a little tired. It's not easy to deal with this. We have to see that my in my, school, the maximum number of children that we have is 12 per class, so working with 12 is a lot easier than working with 20. And another thing that you said regarding the teaching now, you know, in the past, but this has been going on now for a long time since I remember with the students having English in the third and fourth grade. The thing is, teachers are doing it wrong. Teachers are not doing it properly because students come to us and we get the students from public schools, and they only learn basic words that they can learn on YouTube.

HV: [01:14:49] So that's not what the school should be doing. Schools should be doing what we are talking about here. Talk to the students. Talk to the students. Let the students listen. Let students talk to you with chunks of language with complete

sentences. Because I think the the kind of activities that we have with the exams. And I can tell you, as you know, I have a lot of experience with exams, the kind of activities that you can do with the exams, you can do with other materials in class, you can do with other materials. Now, teachers are not doing it. I don't think teachers are doing it because the same issues, if you ask me. For instance, do you see any difference between those students that didn't have English in primary school with these students that now have English in the third and fourth? I can tell you, no, I think it's even worse. I see no difference in level. The students are coming to us, some of them when they're ten, because the parents believe that in the third and the fourth they are actually learning English. It's not happening. They're coming to us with very these students that do not come to us, to our school in primary levels, even when they are ten. The discrepancy is so big between our students and these that we sometimes have a need to separate their listening skills are not the same. The speaking? No way. So is it better? It's not better. So I think that people have to talk a little bit, and they have to discuss this and try to improve. Maybe with your help with these masters, try to emphasize more on the listening and the speaking. Maybe it will help.

Intreviewer: [01:16:29] Oh, and I and hopefully with the doctorate, I will take a doctorate on this as well. But regarding what you just said, because it's super useful and we get into the more my nuclear point of this, you said that when students come from, let's say, public education or other schools, you see, like these really huge huge is huge is a little bit excessive.

HV: [01:16:56] But it is, it is, but it is huge. It's a.

Intreviewer: [01:16:59] Huge.

Intreviewer: [01:17:00] Difference in skill sets, which I believe. And I agree 100%. Percent coming from the reality because I had one student in REDACTED. He he came from a public school in the middle of the year. And he was like light years behind the other students. And it was actually a good public school, by the way. And my idea is, do you believe the fact that, yes, in private schools or even in your context, you are using many many different methodologies? Yes. But do you believe the fact that you are using these coursebooks that are primed for YLE the tasks that align with YLE as well? And you're always having this in mind, this this balance between skill sets and you are doing

these tasks that you have, you know, you've been given experience all your life by Cambridge. Do you believe this has a significant impact on how you teach and how you prepare students for the speaking component and the listening component. It helps them or. No, it doesn't have nothing to do.

HV: [01:18:13] No. Doesn't have.

HV: [01:18:14] No, it doesn't have.

HV: [01:18:15] No. Because, look, it's the way that we teach. It's the way that we teach. It's not doesn't have to include exam preparation because, you know, Cambridge assessment also says that we cannot teach for exams, that we have to teach them English. Cambridge Assessment says that all the time. And to all the conferences that I go to, we have to teach students English. It's the way that people teach. It's the way teachers are teaching. You know, I have I use different techniques, a lot of techniques to teach children that are not part of the exams. We we I use repetition a lot. I use memory games. I use chunks of language. You know, I use a lot of different contexts that don't include the exam preparation. You know why? You know, a we.

HV: [01:19:03] As a school.

HV: [01:19:04] I like when the students are assessed by different teachers so that parents also understand that it's not just us saying they have this level of English. I like in the end of the year, after a good year of English teaching, to suggest, look, why don't they take the exam? Let's allow them to be assessed by a different assessor, an external assessor, completely different from our school. Because the assessor doesn't know me, doesn't know the school, doesn't know the student. So to see what level they reach. So this is the only reason why I recommend students for the exam. And if I recommend students for the exams, I have to prepare them a little bit. I have to show them a sample copy. Look, this is what you have. This is what you have. And for them, after a year of with us they are okay with at this. They're okay because they're not different, you know? Activities are very different activities from the ones they did during the school year. But the only reason why I recommend students for exams of Cambridge is this one, for them to be assessed by external teachers so that other teachers assess and see their levels. Otherwise, I wouldn't be doing the preparation

because our teaching includes this. Our teaching includes the kind of activities that you have in the in the exams.

Intreviewer: [01:20:28] I, I agree, and I really like the way you you put that in words. But you also said something that, like you said, the activities that we do throughout here are not very different from the ones in the wild. So in the sense you're telling me that, well, you are employing tasks that are unlike them.

HV: [01:20:49] Yes. Because when you teach a theme, to start a theme, you have to pre-teach the vocabulary.

HV: [01:20:58] Sometimes you pre-teach the vocabulary looking at pictures. And what do the exams have.

HV: [01:21:04] Pictures. Pictures.

HV: [01:21:05] The pictures. So basically if during the year you are eliciting what you see in the pictures, what can you tell me in the that that is in the picture. So basically you are preparing them to look at pictures and to talk about pictures so the activities can be a little bit different, but they prepare them in a way for these exams.

Intreviewer: [01:21:27] Okay.

HV: [01:21:27] But what you.

HV: [01:21:28] Do, what you do in class.

Intreviewer: [01:21:29] But then you we get to what I'm what I was trying to say. It's when I say while preparation, I don't mean only exam preparation. I mean taking the juice, let's say from the the tasks that are created for the exams and building mock ups for your own class. It doesn't have to be exactly the same, obviously, but using those types of exercises, do you believe that it helps? Students like those types of exercises are very well done. And you are able to actually get productivity out and enhancing the student skills. That's my main point here is not very it's not the end goal of the exam is how the exams are constructed. And the exercises are constructed in a way that you

can use them in your everyday teaching. Well, not 100% like you don't have to do like an exam, but the way they are modeled, like for example picture exploration or listening or that personal dialogue part that you can incorporate with, with a student that is useful to enhance the verbal competencies or not.

HV: [01:22:37] You have to see that, for instance the coursebooks, because we're teaching children, so we have to be careful, we have to be careful with the vocabulary. If you are familiar with some of the coursebooks that I mentioned here today, before, they get to the dialogue to the story. We call them a story. It's not a dialogue because it's stories. They have stories. They are wonderful stories. Our books, we have to pre-teach the vocabulary.

HV: [01:23:06] Correct.

HV: [01:23:06] I cannot, I cannot see a story with them without pre-teaching the vocabulary. So some of that vocabulary that they see in the pictures has already been taught. So basically I'm using the story to, to ask them, okay, what can you see in the pictures so that they use vocabulary that they learned before. The only issue here about just bringing material from exams is that what kind of vocabulary do you have on the picture? This is the only situation that we have to be careful. Do we have vocabulary in that picture that the students know or they don't know anything that is in the picture? So basically it's that you have to be careful with the kind of material with these eight nine year olds so that they don't get frustrated because you can get the most beautiful pictures. But then from that picture, they don't know anything. If they've never seen the parts of the house. And you bring up a nice kitchen with cupboards and and so on, and they cannot tell you what they see, you know, because they don't know the names, then that picture is not going to be effective. So we we have to be selective. If you get pictures related to the theme that you are teaching, then you're going to be successful. But has to be. But it's not so much the Cambridge material. It's what you do. It's the way that you do.

HV: [01:24:33] You know it's it can be good if they know the material that is in the picture. Yes it can be good.

Interviewer: [01:24:40] So I think I would like to end the interview with something that you said, which I agree. And I think I'm going to incorporate it even in my thesis. And I will credit you for don't worry. That is using the exercises to prepare the students for the YLE. So not exercises like it's impossible to teach them utilizing them, but it's very good on preparing and enhancing skill sets with them. So you said, like, you cannot teach vocabulary like the first time they're hearing something through exams. It's impossible. They would get frustrated. It's not even remotely feasible, but preparing them and like, for example the, the idea that you just gave him, like, for example, they have a story. Okay. And then you will work out vocabulary with them, like through repetition, maybe flashcards, whatever it might be. You teach them vocabulary and then then let's say second class, or you take the picture from the, the story and then you explore it. You're doing like a same type of exercise as in a while, Sort of, but. But in this case, you're not teaching, but you are enhancing your you're you're making them or let's say, work a skill set around. Do you agree with this?

HV: [01:26:01] Yes, totally. Totally. Because with this age group you cannot test what you don't teach with eight age group. You start that when they are b1, b2 but with this age group, no, you do have to try to give them the vocabulary before and then train and then test and then practice the pronunciation and so on. But to bring a picture out of nowhere and ask them, okay, what can you see? Or put the picture here without them knowing the pictures or knowing the big picture there, where they're going to put the little ones. So they need to know the vocabulary. They need to know not everything. It's like, okay, maybe there's one word or maybe two. They don't know, okay, maybe 1 or 2. Don't know. One of Is this the pictures there? You know, that doesn't matter if it's because you always have different students, and students know more than others, but you do have, as a teacher to pre-teach the vocabulary that you are going to test. And so that's why the exams. When I think about exam starters, I think about doing it in the end of the school year.

HV: [01:27:10] After all the vocabulary, the basic vocabulary has been covered. So the the example that you gave is a very good one. It's like in a second class, use one of those pictures to revise the material. And then yes you can be very successful with your speaking increasing the number of words they have in a sentence. Yes. Then it's very good. It's very good like that. But again, we don't need the exams. We don't need the exams pictures.

HV: [01:27:39] We don't we.

Intreviewer: [01:27:40] Don't need the exam pictures itself. But we are using the strategies of the. Why?

HV: [01:27:46] Because they've always existed. The exams are based on things that you do before. We don't use the exam and I to to teach. It's like we have we follow a certain number of techniques.

Intreviewer: [01:27:58] That.

HV: [01:27:59] Are included.

HV: [01:28:00] That are going to allow them to take an exam later.

Intreviewer: [01:28:04] And you know, this last question was amazing because it really incorporated a lot of what I'm trying to say. The interview in terms of questions is by the way, I have to preface this. We don't we don't have anything now. It's more of a loose talk now, but it's exactly what I'm trying to get with this. With the Masters. I am not saying by any means, and and and to be honest, I have to be honest. My my point of this is very basic. I am saying that. Hey, look, if we utilize tools that were done by Cambridge on when they created this exam the students will be successful, which is very basic because when you study the wild, they are constructed in very methodologies that you should use in 21st century. So we have scaffolding. We have task instructions. We have all of these. What I'm saying is like if we utilize some of the material, it doesn't have to be specific to the exam, but explore it in the same sense as the exam explores it. To enhance, not to teach. The students will be better. It's very basic premises. I have to first and foremost say it. It's very basic. I am basically saying, oh, look, if we do what Cambridge studied for and aligned it for, we might have students which are rather than speaking English. I understand it's very basic, but my idea is not to uncover this. My idea is to significantly alert people to how sometimes I mean, sometimes, but majority of times teachers because they don't have you know, many of them don't opt for the child, and that's completely fine.

Intreviewer: [01:29:52] My idea is not to to to be sponsored by Cambridge. Nothing like that sort of thing. My idea is that I believe that although it can be improved 100%, I believe Cambridge already recognized how to balance out each skill and their way of incorporating. And the exams we can, you know, kinda utilize ourselves in the classroom, for example. Obviously you have been doing that for many years, but I don't believe that the whole of Portugal and many teachers have been doing it. So my idea and it has to be basic. That's why I'm, you know, I am only talking about how it enhances students verbal competence. It's very basic. But what I really wanted in maybe in a doctorate be able to do is how we can improve the way that we teach to to enhance students verbal competence. But in here, I had to be basic and be restricted to what I saw in my internship and what I saw in my internship. Maybe, you know if I, if I had more experience, I would understand it better than how you explain it. It's just that I am not really using things from the exams. I'm using preconstructed notions that were very well studied and that Cambridge used as well in my exams. But I'm using in my classroom because I believe it's correct. That's where I will want to get in my doctorate.

Intreviewer: [01:31:27] What for my master thesis that is limited in pages, and I had to do with something that I saw in my internship more or less hence why I got here to the while preparation, which is something feasible. Infeasible. But the notion that you said like look, it doesn't have to be pictures from the exams. And the way that we explore that I explore the pictures isn't necessarily because of the exams. It's it's the same way that I believe it should be through the methodologies that I believe to you know, we have to make sure there is an equilibrium, so to speak, in the skill sets. I believe, for example, my context the REDACTED, I don't think that the classes were unbalanced in terms of speaking and reading and writing, maybe they were more classes that there were a class or two that was more writing based, but it was because it was necessary or an activity of some sort. But I, I do believe in the Portuguese curriculum. I don't think the speaking skill set is even being explored at it all, and because of that, I tend to agree on that. If we cannot change everything in a in a hurry, maybe if we try to tell some teachers, look, maybe look at the books, boy. Cambridge and Macmillan. And see the exercises there and maybe try to adapt your classes to them. Although the, the the books are priming students for the YLE not you don't have to necessarily get them to do it.

HV: [01:33:20] But the books.

HV: [01:33:21] The books don't prepare them for the exam. The books don't prepare. The books contain some exercises.

HV: [01:33:27] Yes.

HV: [01:33:28] Usually in the end of a unit that are similar to the ones that the exam has.

Intreviewer: [01:33:33] Yes, yes. Maybe by using some of these methods, we can have a more balanced skill sets. And finally, you know, enhancing the Portuguese Portuguese students skill set in speaking and listening, obviously.

Intreviewer: [01:33:51] That's my idea. In the doctorate I have a large construct idea more.

HV: [01:33:56] Because.

HV: [01:33:56] The young learners exams, if we talk about using them in the end of the school year, they are more successful in in that respect in, in helping them improve their listening and speaking but has to be done more towards the end. Thinking about why the Cambridge exams? Why am I saying this? For the same reason. I'm just repeating myself because they have a lot of different vocabulary.

HV: [01:34:23] And so we have to wait until the students see most of it to be able to, to practice with it. And once they have all this vocabulary then using the exams to do a little bit more listening and speaking. Yes it will, it will help them to.

HV: [01:34:39] I really like.

Intreviewer: [01:34:40] It, and I agree with your idea that doing it in the end makes more sense than constantly trying to adapt material to fit the a certain vocabulary that they have learned. For example, I had a difficulty where I had to go through, I don't know how many exams to find exercises with only vocabulary that they have learned.

And I always thought, well, this is very difficult, and if I was not in an internship, I wouldn't have the time to do this if I had like 8 or 9 classes at a time.

HV: [01:35:09] You use.

HV: [01:35:10] Good.

HV: [01:35:10] Books, use good course.

HV: [01:35:12] Books.

HV: [01:35:13] Good course books.

HV: [01:35:14] They have a lot of nice pictures that you can explore with students.

Interviewer: [01:35:18] Exactly, exactly. And I think it's a little bit difficult and but I like your idea because then you don't have to worry because, you know all the vocabulary that you have, you know, using the books for Cambridge and all the vocabulary that you have done will be equivalent to what's going to be on these exams preparation. And you don't have to worry. You don't have to, you know? I mean, you have to double check that it might be a word or two, which is normal. Sure. But you do not have to worry. And that makes sense, because then at the end, you're also doing something else that you are you are making sure that by the end of the year, you're also like getting them to their best, best skill set possible. And you and you and you can very much see their level clearly. I think at least.

HV: [01:36:03] It helps you. It helps you to see if.

HV: [01:36:05] You were successful in your teaching.

HV: [01:36:06] Exactly. They.

HV: [01:36:08] Yeah. If they improved the skills and the content. Because when you talk about skills, you're talking about the listening, the speaking, the reading, the writing. But we have to see the content of the language, which is the grammar and vocabulary. And

so you can test them in the end of the school year using these exams. And for that the exams are better. That's why I tend to use the exams towards the end of the school year, and I recommend it for that reason for the students to be assessed externally. That I think is very important. You know that another situation that we have here is that the schools that I would like to bring, even though it's not so important for you, but the materials that I'm talking about are expensive materials that schools are not going to be a public schools are not going to be using. I can tell you that two books of the tiger that we use for this level two books, the activity and the students book cost more than €60 now. So when you think about materials like this, I don't think public schools are going to opt.

HV: [01:37:17] For.

Intreviewer: [01:37:18] Possibly, possibly. But with even with all those books, I believe they would be able to. Or perhaps given that my understanding is that it's not being explored much, they could do what? Like what I did, which is have a picture, Maybe do some flashcards and you are exploring a picture in like in the same way as you are as the while. And at least you are having some significant impact on the speaking ability.

HV: [01:37:48] It's not very teacher friendly. I can tell the materials that the schools the public schools have, because if we think about this and I'm not selling Macmillan, okay. I don't get any money from this. So I don't think that I'm selling the the books. But our materials, for instance, they come with all that that you're talking about, with all the extra pictures, the extra flashcards, word cards. Let's not forget that after the listening and speaking, it's not part of your project. I've understood. But after the listening and the speaking, you have the reading and the writing. So we are we also have to talk about word cards and writing the words and practice the spelling. Okay. That I don't think you are working.

HV: [01:38:27] No, no, no.

HV: [01:38:28] But that also comes with all these materials that we're talking about. So it involves a lot and for them to pass an exam. Again, I don't think that is part of the project. You're not encouraging students to take exams. You are just thinking of using the exams to prepare students or to improve their listening and speaking skills. So it's

not exactly the same thing, but the exams, they include a lot more than just this, the exam. So the students that are going to take exams, that's why I say that movers and flyers are very difficult for these students because movers and flyers, besides the listening and speaking that actually end up being the two skills that are slightly easier for them when they are better prepared, they still have the reading and the writing, the movers and the flyers. They already have some good writing even they have to make complete sentences that are not easy for them. They're not easy movers and flyers. They're not. You can use some pictures in The end of the school year to check vocabulary, but still they are more advanced. And it's not easy for eight nine year olds to be using these two exams. Okay, but we have to think that teaching a language has to include the four skills and the content.

Interview on Cambridge YLE Exam Preparation - LB Audio

List of Main Topics

1. **Webcam/setup and interview context** — key timestamps: 00:14:45–00:15:31, 00:18:05–00:19:12
2. **Participant background and qualifications** — key timestamps: 00:19:12–00:21:00
3. **Teaching methodology: student talk time and skills focus** — key timestamps: 00:21:33–00:22:13, 00:41:12–00:41:46
4. **Rationale and design of Cambridge YLE exams** — key timestamps: 00:26:55–00:29:56, 00:52:13–00:58:01
5. **Impact of YLE prep on speaking and listening** — key timestamps: 00:25:08–00:27:09, 00:31:44–00:33:46
6. **Comparison: Cambridge/Macmillan materials vs local textbooks** — key timestamps: 00:33:46–00:37:35
7. **Critical thinking, flexibility, and collaboration in YLE** — key timestamps: 00:41:46–00:47:31, 00:49:21–00:51:33
8. **Classroom implementation challenges** — key timestamps: 00:59:19–01:06:51
9. **Long-term benefits and outcomes of early YLE pathway** — key timestamps: 01:08:43–01:14:58

Topic 1: Webcam/setup and interview context

Timestamps: 00:14:45–00:15:31, 00:18:05–00:19:12

Summary: Initial setup issues with Interviewer's webcam lead to an audio-only interview. Interviewer outlines the interview structure (background and main questions) and explains the thesis focus on speaking and listening within Cambridge YLE preparation.

Keywords: webcam, interview structure, thesis focus

Topic 2: Participant background and qualifications

Timestamps: 00:19:12–00:21:00

Summary: LB has taught and trained teachers since 1996, formerly a Cambridge exam center owner and presenter, and is trained as a Young Learner speaking examiner.

Currently, she delivers CELTA and independent Cambridge-related training.

Keywords: teacher trainer, Cambridge examiner, CELTA

Topic 3: Teaching methodology: student talk time and skills focus

Timestamps: 00:21:33–00:22:13, 00:41:12–00:41:46

Summary: Lessons should target 60% student production, minimizing teacher talk and emphasizing practice for skill development. Effective YLE-style activities require pre-teaching vocabulary and structures rather than ad hoc execution.

Keywords: student talk time, skills-based, pre-teaching

Topic 4: Rationale and design of Cambridge YLE exams

Timestamps: 00:26:55–00:29:56, 00:52:13–00:58:01

Summary: YLE was introduced to address weak B2 writing outcomes by building foundational grammar and vocabulary in stacked, confidence-building stages. Cambridge aligns YLE tightly with CEFR, employing rigorous trialing, pre-testing, and a large research unit to calibrate tasks and inform CUP materials.

Keywords: CEFR alignment, pre-testing, research-driven

Topic 5: Impact of YLE prep on speaking and listening

Timestamps: 00:25:08–00:27:09, 00:31:44–00:33:46

Summary: Both speakers observe significant gains in learners' speaking fluency and listening through YLE-style tasks (e.g., picture description, role-plays). Activities that require decoding visuals and producing extended language foster real-world communicative competence.

Keywords: fluency, listening comprehension, picture tasks

Topic 6: Comparison: Cambridge/Macmillan materials vs local textbooks

Timestamps: 00:33:46–00:37:35

Summary: Local publishers prioritize grammar/vocabulary and sales-driven simplicity, limiting skills integration; Cambridge materials embed language within communicative skills aligned to exam demands. Result: learners using Cambridge methodologies use language more effectively, not just “know” it.

Keywords: skills integration, materials design, communicative use

Topic 7: Critical thinking, flexibility, and collaboration in YLE

Timestamps: 00:41:46–00:47:31, 00:49:21–00:51:33

Summary: YLE tasks necessitate analysis, flexible application of knowledge, and collaboration via speaking activities. Examples include distinguishing non-stereotypical images (brown cows vs “horse”) and following counterintuitive instructions (coloring unusual colors); dual voice recordings target varied child receptivity.

Keywords: critical thinking, flexibility, collaboration

Topic 8: Classroom implementation challenges

Timestamps: 00:59:19–01:06:51

Summary: Large classes, noise control, limited materials, insufficient planning, and growing special needs without classroom support hinder speaking/listening prep. Nevertheless, with strong classroom management, targeted materials, teacher training, and disciplined planning, effective prep is achievable even with 1–2 hours weekly.

Keywords: large classes, teacher training, classroom management

Topic 9: Long-term benefits and outcomes of early YLE pathway

Timestamps: 01:08:43–01:14:58

Summary: Early, skills-led YLE preparation builds a robust foundation, fostering confidence, fluency, and potential bilingual benefits, which translate into high success rates at advanced levels (e.g., A/B grades at CPE). Incorporation in mainstream curricula better matches 21st-century communicative needs than reading/writing-heavy approaches.

Keywords: foundation building, confidence, advanced outcomes

Intreviewer: [00:14:09] But what am I doing? Oh, God. I.

LB: [00:14:45] Can't see you.

Intreviewer: [00:14:47] Oh, I am so sorry. It's it's a long story with this webcam. This computer has went to repair, like.

LB: [00:14:57] Oh, no worries.

Intreviewer: [00:14:58] Like, 5 or 6 times in the last three months. It's been a disaster. Really? The webcam doesn't work because I'm using a desktop, and I don't have an integrated webcam. I normally well, the images are going to be seen. Obviously. I'm only. I'm only recording the audio. The the video, I automatically delete. But everyone says that when they begin, I can't see you. And I'm like, well, it's it's it's not really my fault, to be honest, but. Hello, LB. How are you?

LB: [00:15:31] I'm very well, very well. Sorry I'm late, but it's. It's okay. A lot of traffic getting out of port today for some reason.

Intreviewer: [00:15:39] No. It's okay. I sent you an email because something could have happened, or I saw.

LB: [00:15:44] I saw it now as I was getting in.

Intreviewer: [00:15:46] But please don't take it harshly. It's because many people there has been a lot of setbacks with these interviews, with some people really having some issues. One of one of the professors really had a personal issue happening, and I'm being more, you know, look, if you can't do it, it's okay, obviously, for another time, it's all the same to me. But I'm actually very I have a lot of time. We'll get that in a second. I, I delayed because this my master's was going to be defended on the in less than a month, I have I have postponed it a lot of issues, don't worry. But that means I have a lot of time. I'm more relaxed. But the main reason why one of the reasons why I postponed is because I really wanted to have an interview with you and another one and someone else and another professor. I am, trust me, I am not trying to to butter you up. Okay? It's just because your level of expertise and the other professor are very high. So I have, you know, I have some teachers who do the exams. I have some people that schools and have, like, 20 years of experience with exams. Okay. But I needed people that are were working intensely and almost not exclusive, but, you know, had a lot of experience with exams as a whole. So I decided I should I told my supervisor, look, it doesn't matter to me or when I'm going to, you know, present it. What does matter to me is I need those two interviews or they are so cruel because it doesn't matter how many teachers I have that you know, are, you know, tell the students and the parents, look, you should take the exam or they have the training certificate. I need those two

heads, as I like to call it, to segment or else I am missing, in my opinion, critical critical feedback. So thank you so much, LB, and I'm so sorry to short notice.

LB: [00:18:00] No, no. My pleasure. Anyway, I can help just.

Intreviewer: [00:18:05] Oh, yeah. We're going to get through there. Every interview has been a little bit different in the sense that I will ask. I have two sections. I have background questions. Well, obviously, you know, for the recording I know your credentials, but someone from the jury that wants to see the full transcript they need to know. And then we have the main questions, which are seven by any means. I will try to force to you any bias. And I don't want to at any point. Sometimes you may see me doing a lot of questions and some follow up. It's not that I'm trying to get you to answer in a certain way is I need to understand your rationale behind it. But because I need to. Because the first interviews I realized I was transcribing this by hand, and I realized, okay, I need to be a little bit more specific because then we, we, we go in a cycle and, and in a circle and it's a little bit difficult. So the, the background questions that I like to ask are the first one's name and current and current teaching role okay.

LB: [00:19:12] LB currently not teaching so much, but teacher training teacher trainer.

Intreviewer: [00:19:20] Wonderful. And how long have you been in a or a teacher training for the primary level or any level?

LB: [00:19:29] Well, basically since 19. God, I'm showing my age now. 1996.

Intreviewer: [00:19:39] Oh, that's 1996. That's not so long ago. I'll give yourself credit. And well, you already said that you had a specific training. But I will ask again. Have you had any specific training or experience with the Cambridge while exams?

LB: [00:19:57] Yeah. As an owner of a Cambridge exam center we not only have to know the exam inside out, but we have to be able to train people or schools or teachers who are aiming to provide these for their students. So apart from teacher training that I got when I was preparing students, I was also a Cambridge presenter for many, many years. Doing Iberia and I think I went to Turkey as well. So doing teacher training on, on that front for Cambridge I don't do that anymore. So I just do my own training now for

Cambridge. I only do the Celta, which is the the teaching qualification. But yeah, we had to have apart from the fact that I also have training as an examiner for the young learner speaking exams.

Speaker3: [00:21:00] Okay, so in.

Intreviewer: [00:21:02] Short, you're more than qualified, I would say. Okay. Oh, the last question that I have here is not it doesn't fit your profile very well because it would be what year level do you usually teach and how frequently do your students engage in speaking or listening tasks? This doesn't it applies to you, but it's not going to be the main concern. This was for more of the, you new teachers that are preparing students but don't have training.

LB: [00:21:33] But I think, I think I think that is a very important question, though, because as Celta and Delta trained, 60% of the lesson has to be and I'm also Celta tutor. So when I'm observing students or observing lessons, 60% of the lesson has to be the students producing. So even though, you know, I'm not in the classroom now, but that's how my, my lessons work, it's literally I keep it to a minimum, which is the teacher talking time. And I give students the opportunity to practice because that's how they learn.

Speaker3: [00:22:11] Right? That's fantastic.

Intreviewer: [00:22:13] Really is I this question engages a lot of my of the people that I interviewed on not because anyone answer very differently than I expected, but it was the main point. No, I understand that. I have sent you an email, but that was quite a long time ago. So I will try to explain. What is the, you know, the nuclear point of more of my thesis? It's not something. It's not something. You know, I am not. I'm not reinventing the wheel, I am it's not going to be the greatest discovery known to man. But I was internship at **REDACTED** question of them all. And they they are not obligated to, but they normally push students to do the YLE exams, starters, movers and and even.

LB: [00:23:04] Well, sorry.

Intreviewer: [00:23:05] **REDACTED**.

LB: [00:23:07] Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Intreviewer: [00:23:08] They are not obligated, but most students go however, they use a lot of material by Cambridge and Macmillan that, you know, the exercises tend to prime students for the type of exercises in the exam. So I found in, in in my always and because also, you know does a lot of exercises to practice for the exams. I found that the YLE exams, the exercises and the preparation had a huge impact on enhancing the student's capabilities in speaking and listening. Now I want to paraphrase I those two only not because I don't believe it doesn't help the other ones, but my thesis is only about these two topics. So the the the listening and the speaking. Why? Because I believe, you know, the verbal competencies are are only met. So the student is only able to actually produce language if he's able to understand what he's being, what he's being told, you know.

Speaker3: [00:24:11] Exactly.

Intreviewer: [00:24:12] Only when he decodes and then produces via decoding, he's able to actually have a, you know, a full competence of speaking or else he's just mimicking or producing very short language, which is can be something, but it's not quite what I'm after here. Yes. And I believe that it helps. I believe that if some other schools were to implement some some of the exercises of while or even practice or even use the books that, for example, Macmillan or Cambridge that have some exercises for it, some strategies that correspond I believe they would be able to produce much better English, they would be able to speak more fluently and so on. That's my belief. And that's that's where you come in here, LB. Now, you can disagree entirely with me, and I will be okay. You can agree entirely with me.

LB: [00:25:08] I have to agree because I know I, I see it on a daily basis. I currently I'm, I'm doing young learner exams every day morning. I've just come from a a young learner session actually and I, I literally June and July do young learner sessions morning and afternoon. I have two different sessions every day. Tomorrow I'm in S. Francisco and then in the afternoon I'm in Paredes, and then Friday I'm somewhere else and then I'm off to Entroncamento. So, you know, I have young learner sessions every day. And I agree with you that that this does have a huge impact on students who

are preparing for the YLE exams because the exams are structured that way. They're structured to work the skills. And speaking in, in this case more so because there are certain criteria that students have to adhere to to be able to get a good mark in the speaking. So fluency is one of them. So coming back to what you were saying about, you know, short phrases or speaking a little bit more or etc., it's one of the demands from movers and flyers at least that they speak more fluently, that they use linkers, etc.. And I think schools that are using while it's inevitable that these kids will start producing decent chunks of language through the use of, of linkers and, and being able to because the thing is these I don't know if you know the, the background to the YLE exam, you do you know the background to the YLE exam.

Intreviewer: [00:27:09] What do you exactly mean? The background.

LB: [00:27:11] Why they were why they were instituted. Why they why they started doing YLE exams.

Intreviewer: [00:27:19] I have the like. I have everything from the rules, from what is being evaluated, that criteria. But I didn't quite get well. I didn't necessarily need to, but I didn't get why they were instituted. I just assumed you knew your Portugal shoes. Cambridge given, you.

LB: [00:27:39] Know, because this wasn't this wasn't an exam that was already in the Cambridge portfolio because they used to just do from key onwards. These were introduced because I would a few decades ago, they did a research on why students, why 43% of students failed the B2 first writing. And they figured it was through lack of a range of grammar and a lack of vocabulary. So what did they do with the young learner exams? Apart from using them to encourage kids to love English and and see progression, etc.? Is each exam has, as you will know, a set of vocabulary and a set of grammar that they have to know by the time they do the exam.

LB: [00:28:41] And that's what they brought in. They brought in a structure which is what I call the foundation to be able to then build the language on to get to a B2 and perform better. So that was the real reason they brought in the young learner exams is to give it a solid foundation of language that students could then build on, because these are what we call stacking exams. So they'll, you'll find stuff in movers that they'll

have come across and starters you'll find Activities and flyers that they will have done in Movers and so on and so on and so on. So what they're doing is they're creating confidence from day one through all of the exams, so that students can perform better at the higher level exams. So what you're trying to prove is I think a consequence of YLE exams is precisely that, is that they have a good solid base so they can build up and perform better on the exams that are good for curriculum purposes. That is the foundation of the exams.

Intreviewer: [00:29:56] I well, first of all, thank you so much. You also answered the first question. And in this first question, I had like I had some follow up questions for it. Still in the first one, you answered all of them, by the way. Sorry. No, no, no, it's it's wonderful. It's wonderful. All interviews are different. Some people are need to, you know, guide them a little bit more or you obviously, you know, you have more experience than most probably will have in a long time with these exams. So you want to what I wanted out of this? I believe so as well. Obviously. But I'm not trying to prove my bias. I, I simply thought when I was at CNN and I understand that CNN is a private institution, which, you know, has certain standards that need to be met. But I disconnected from that part. What I observed, what I found, you know funny is not really the word, but I found interesting was the level of their proficiency in speaking because I've been with them, you know, like a term and a half, more or less. The proficiency in speaking was increasing a lot. And I did a lot of I didn't do mock exams. I did let's, for example, use some of the material that Cambridge does or you know there is in Cambridge books to prepare for. I took that off and I made some whole classroom kind of version, because I only have so much time in the 20 students, but I did a lot of them, and I realized that, well, you know, it's it's a practical skill, obviously people. I had some people say, oh, well, how practical really is asking a student to describe an image? Well, they're not really describing any image.

Intreviewer: [00:31:44] They're describing an image that can be seen any day. And, you know, are they are they are doing a lot. They are listening to me. They are observing, observing a picture. And then they have to put their own input and there is no words there. So all the vocabulary has is being decoded internally in their brain. So I believe a lot is being done. It's almost the same concept that many people study that when when you put someone in a foreign country, they tend to learn a foreign language faster while you're being stimulated so well. Obviously, we cannot put students in

London for half a year, but we can give them an image and no, no help, no words there. And, you know make them produce language and that will help. Now, what made me, you know, the second question will be about what made me do this. So how does why why exam preparation differ from, you know other other traditional textbooks, textbook activities. So there are we discussed a lot heavily with this, with other professors that there are some textbooks that don't have they have different exercises, mainly those created by Portuguese publishers. They don't they don't follow activities that are structured for while normally yes, they all agree this one. We all agree on that. And and I believe that. Well, I don't think anything is worse. I'm not qualified yet to say that I believe they were clustering in comparison, for example, to Cambridge books or to Cambridge or to Macmillan or even others. For example, I used Power Up. I believe they were a little bit lackluster. However, what do you find?

LB: [00:33:46] Personally, I think we have two different aims. And in all fairness, I mean, I wrote a book for the fifth and the sixth for the and in all fairness, we don't really have the liberty. So for the people who are writing their, their, their They lack luster. I wouldn't even say lackluster. I think the objectives are different. They basically want to sell a lot of books. And we were told at the time that the books couldn't be too complicated because teachers wouldn't use them, so they wouldn't buy them, so they wouldn't have sales. Because I was all for getting you know Y li type exercises in the books. And we're very limited to what we can do by publishers. For very simple reason. They say that teachers want it simplified. They want everything done for them. The focus is normally grammar and vocabulary. Sorry, that was my cat. The focus is normally grammar and vocabulary and not so much the skills. I think with the Cambridge manuals and and the Cambridge exams. And this is why you notice the difference. And when I talk to parents, I always say there's these two ways of learning a language. One is knowing a language and one is knowing how to use it. And I think the Cambridge method shows you how to use it. So you learn the grammar and vocabulary in contexts of the aptitudes of speaking and listening, reading and writing. And it's all in a context. Whereas what I find with the published, the local publishers, there's very huge emphasis on grammar and vocabulary. They're trying to change it and put it more in context, but even then they're still pages and pages and pages of grammar and vocabulary. And I always say there's the difference between knowing a language. I mean, I know French, I know the grammar, I know vocabulary, but I cannot use it. Whereas with the Cambridge method, because you're working the skills at the same

time as you're working the grammar and vocabulary. And I think this is where what you're finding is that the students are progressing a lot more rapidly is because they have to use those skills.

Intreviewer: [00:36:26] Exactly.

LB: [00:36:28] And I think that's the huge difference between the, the, the books that I think the objectives are different. The Cambridge books are very much geared to a Cambridge exam where by you're going to be tested through skills and not through implicit grammar exercises. You're going to be tested through reading, through writing, through listening, through speaking, etc.. Whereas, you know, you have a if you look at the tests done locally, a lot of them are very much grammar focused. So fill in the gaps and, and and that sort of nonsense of where you actually having to regurgitate grammar or vocabulary. But that knowing grammar and knowing vocabulary doesn't mean you can actually use the language. And I think that's what you noticed with the kids from **REDACTED**, is that they're actually using the language, because that's what the book makes them do. Yes, because that's what they're going to be tested on.

Intreviewer: [00:37:35] Exactly. I think that was one of the things that I found, I, I, I don't regret only being only limiting myself to speaking and listening because this is a personal at the end of the interview, I will explain to you, but it's a personal thing that I want to, and I, I really want to follow up this in a doctorate, but I, I was mainly flabbergasted by how how rapidly progressed your speaking mainly because in the the first time I remember the first time that I did with him first of all, they were very they were so excited to do it. So they were not very much afraid, which was nice. It's always nice, but they were struggling the first time around. I remember I remember my internship supervisor said, look, it's normal for them to be like this flustered the first time, but do it again and see what happened. And the second time it went better the third time. And it got to the point where they every time it was, you know, me giving a lesson, and they knew that we were going to do something about speaking or related to the exams. They were excited. Yeah. And it takes, you know, some some kind of, you know, hard work to get them excited.

Intreviewer: [00:38:55] You know, there were role plays. There were group work. I did I did a lot of things. So for example, I could not have them come up to me and and and

give them a flash card individually. That's not a classroom, but it is a classroom. If I give them 20 flash cards and every one of them is going to the board, they are switching the cards. They are describing me to me, the flash card. They are putting it in a place that I want them to describe where they put the flash card. That's a class. And I found that it was a fun class and we did a lot. We revised all the vocabulary that was needed for them to revise in a fun way. But we also did something that I think sometimes it's lacking in some schools, which is practicing the, the speaking component and the listening one. I believe sometimes we only practice the listening skill passively while listening to the professor or during a test. But that's not real. That's not how listening works in real life. You are. Before you speak, you must listen. Right. It's a UK rule even. Listen.

LB: [00:40:07] It's it's sad, but it's true.

Interviewer: [00:40:10] And and and it's worked. And I really had a lot of fun. Hence why my Hence why I explore this team. And overall, you know, not everyone is agreeing, you know, with me 100%. But we have reached an agreement that Yes, it does work. This preparation, which I will skip. The third question. Not it you can answer. I will tell you just because you might want to answer, but I don't think it applies too much to you at the moment is how do you structure your classroom activities to prepare students for the while the speaking and listening components? We already talked about this. You could, if you have anything that you want to add, you can. But given you know what you told me before and your expertise, I believe it's a little bit redundant. But if you want to, you can add anything.

LB: [00:41:12] No, basically is you know, the problem is sometimes people just go into these activities. I think that they activities that you need to prepare for. It can't just be done willy nilly. You know, you have to pre-teach the vocabulary. You have to pre-teach the, the the structures of what you want them to say or what you want them to practice. You can't expect kids to just know it. But but that, I think, is basic knowledge. For most teachers, I hope.

Interviewer: [00:41:46] Yes. But that's what I said. The third question. I don't think it really applies to you, but however, the next one, the next three questions are very extensive and I really want your input. So my belief is that the YLE tasks help students

develop transversal skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, and collaboration. And why do I made this question important? Because there are there is a bias that these exams actually reduce critical thinking and our exams only that make the students nervous. And and people think, you know, nowadays exams are getting outdated. We need new ways of teaching. I didn't find this to be true for the while, not because I am biased, and certainly not because Cambridge is paying me to say this, but I believe the exam was made in a fun or modern way. And I don't mean the colors, I don't mean the pictures, I mean how well it's put together. Obviously it's still an exam, yes, but as many of the other people describe it, you know, the exam takes a lot of hours and no one there is, you know, wants to spend the day making students life harder. You guys try to be engaging. You guys try to distance, to have fun. I believe although it's an exam, it is reaffirming the skills, the critical thinking, adaptability and collaboration. Or. What do you think, LB?

LB: [00:43:18] Yeah, I think the thing is, kids, when we're teaching these, collaboration is inevitable because we need them to do speaking activities in class. So the collaboration, I think, is, is the normal common practice of an EFL classroom. Because we like I said, 60% of the thing has to be the kids doing something together. And the tests themselves do require some sort of critical thinking. It's not. They're very colorful and they're very engaging. But, you know, the There is a lot of thought required for for a speaking, for example, where they have to look at something and analyze it. I'll give you an example. And and you know, this this there was a speaking test where there were two cows, three cows, two are brown and one was black and white. And I, I tend to believe that sometimes what we use in class is what makes them less critical thinkers. The the example here is because I don't know if you know the I presume you know, the starter speaking where they have the, the the picture.

Intreviewer: [00:44:47] Oh, no, I know all of them.

LB: [00:44:50] Okay. So that and I and I said to him, what is this. So I pointed to the brown cow, and you won't be surprised. The number of kids who said horse. And then I pointed to the black and white cow, and I said, what's this? And they said, A cow. So I think we need to be cautious of what we're using in class. That's stereotyping the kids into believing that all cows are black and white. Because it wasn't just one kid who said that the brown cow was a horse, we had like three. So that does require a bit of thinking

on their part to, to distinguish what things are and and to give you the right answer. But I also think we need to be more cautious about the preparation and the materials we use for preparation of these kids, which I find what happens a lot in schools is a lot of spoon feeding.

LB: [00:45:57] And with a Cambridge exam you can't really spoon feed them because they need to be able to do things for themselves on the exam day. And nothing is the thing is you don't know what is going to be tested. What happens normally with state school tests is and very often I get asked, you know, what is going to be in the test. I said, I don't know what's going to be in the test. Everything you've learned until now. So they either know it or they don't. It's, you know, it's crystal clear that if they don't know it, they're not going to do well. There's no Heads up on what's going to come out. So these kids do have to be able to think on the spot. They have to be able to get to all the knowledge that they've acquired in, in the two years they've been preparing, for starters, or for a movers or for a flyers, and be able to get that knowledge and use it flexibly in the context that they're going to use it. So yes, I do think that these sorts of things, if the problem is with the state school tests, very often the teachers will say, study this, this and this. This is going to come in the test. You know, what about the rest? So yeah, these students have to be flexible. They have to be able to use their knowledge flexibly because they have to use it all. Everything that they've acquired in the time they've been studying and preparing for that exam. So simple as that.

Intreviewer: [00:47:31] I agree. I actually really found your your little story about the the horse and the horse as if it's horse like I thought you you they were going to say it's a bull. Because that happened to me almost the same thing. There were three cows, but this one was my mistake. I am color blind and I painted one of the cows in a different color. And the others are black and white. And I said, what are these? And they said, cows. And I'm like, what's this next to the cows? And like a bull? And I'm like, well, first I was surprised that they knew the vocabulary. I will be honest. I was very happy. And then I asked him, but why? It's like, well, because bulls are a different color. They didn't say it in so many words, but I understood. I was like, well, you know, I'm happy. It was not my intent. And bulls are definitely a bit different. But I was happy of that. When you were telling the joke, I was like, they are going to say bulls. It's going to happen the same time.

LB: [00:48:32] They said horse, because it must be the color that they see. The flashcards of the horse is that brown color. So it was very, very interesting because I thought maybe it was just one student. But no, all the examiners had the same experience. Which was very, very interesting. And coming back to the flexibility and and critical thinking. For example, the coloring part of the exams, I can see sometimes that that throws students because, for example, there was a one today was color. The rabbit, was it a rabbit. And the kids, because they're always I don't know why. Do you know why? They always have a kid's voice and a grown up voice?

Intreviewer: [00:49:21] Is it is it so it's easier for them to distinguish who he's talking?

LB: [00:49:26] No. It's that some kids are more receptive to kids voices, and some kids are more receptive to adults voices. That's why they have the two in in in the test. It really depends on your upbringing. Kids who are brought up with other kids tend to and kids who have a tendency to be surrounded by adults will react better to adult voices. So that is the the thinking behind the voices of the but for example, they had to color the rabbit red. And I could see some kids look at me and say red. So they have to do what? What basically they told, even if it goes against everything that they know. So flexibility is imperative to being able to complete the exam successfully. Because that that last part of the coloring, very often what they have to do is and what they have to color or really odd colors. And sometimes they have to really think about what color they, they I see a lot of faces look at me sometimes if they really just, you know, just ignore them and just listen to the listen to this, the the the audio.

Intreviewer: [00:50:47] I actually thought it was for him to be easier for them to make the separation. I read, I read it was for them to identify, but probably I did not read enough about. Oh no.

LB: [00:50:59] Oh, no. I'm I'm sure I'm sure that that is one of the reasons. But the main reason at the time when they were launching it, when they had the, the the focus groups with, with teachers and they came to Lisbon I remember somebody asking them and that's, that's the reason that they gave is that some kids will be more They will they will do better, perform better, listening to an adult voice. And some will perform better. Listening to a child's voice.

Speaker4: [00:51:33] Okay. Okay.

Intreviewer: [00:51:35] That's all. That's fine. I didn't know that. Definitely going to add that to my work. Thank you. Okay, so this fifth question, You're going to, you're going to smile and you're just going to agree. But I have to put it into it because it's it's not clear for, for. Well, I will say us, although I don't have half of the half of the half of the experience that you have. But it's, it's very easy to agree on. From your perspective, how well does the YLE exams, tasks and tasks and exams align with the CFR levels for young learners?

LB: [00:52:13] Are they perfectly aligned? Yeah, they're perfectly aligned. They do exactly what what kids should know at that particular level. I mean, these exams are written. I mean, Council of Europe was was conceived by, by Cambridge and and the University of Salamanca. So they know what they're doing. In that respect and even the books that are produced for example, Kids Box kids box was entirely produced for preparation of the Cambridge exams. So if you do like Kids box one and two, by the end of book two, they'll have covered all of the grammar and vocabulary that's required on their list for students to do the exam. If they do kids box three and four, they'll have covered all of the grammar and vocabulary they need to be able to do a movers, for example. So they've got it very well structured and very well laid out. And we can't forget that, you know, these these exams, the Cambridge exams actually take years to come from, you know, written format to, to a live version because they, they trialed and then they pre-tested to make sure that they're at the right level. If the tasks are too difficult or too easy, they either scrapped or they are rewritten. So only once they've been tested pre-tested and trialed, etc.. Do they actually create live versions? So after the pre-testing they set the score and they set the key? Because from Pre-testing you might get answers that you hadn't thought of.

LB: [00:53:59] Cambridge always keeps the the answer key as a live document. And they will accept anything that is correct grammatically within the gap that is produced. So their keys are always working documents, live documents. But that is sort of set at after the pre-testing. And then trialing is normally done six months before students take the exams. And so this whole process of writing, making up the paper. Pre-testing. Setting the the the key. Tweaking or throwing away tasks that didn't work or Or just rewriting them so that it fits the Council of Europe criteria. They are very, very, you

know, picky about that. And then it goes to trial with kids who will do the exam in, in six months to see that it's at the right level and the right standard for, you know, pre-a1 A1 or A2. So, yeah, it's a long process. And, and one that, you know, makes them the leaders in, in, in assessment for, for a reason because there's a lot of quality assurance behind and I don't know if you know, but the books are actually created from the exams. You will have seen perhaps in some of the manuals they have. And this is something that here they don't have that Cambridge has a huge research unit. So every single test. So from young learners, from starters right up to proficiency, every single test, every single component of a test for every single candidate globally is recorded.

LB: [00:56:09] So they have lists of thousands of words and expressions that are incorrectly used recurrently in all of these exams. Now you're talking a million exams, millions of exams annually. And they they study every single answer. So what do they do with this? And this is where the publishers here are lacking and Cambridge University Press are the only ones who have access to this database. No other English publisher has access. They have this huge database of words and phrases that are inaccurately used in all of the exams. And this they add to it every year. Which Cambridge University Press has access to? So when they create their books, they create their books knowing full well the areas that need to be worked on for students to succeed in an exam. So that that is a huge plus for Cambridge University Press. Having that research unit behind that does all of that hard work of and because of this and because they also know where students are writing the exam, they can create proper books for Now Spain has different books to Portugal. South America has different books to Europe so that they they are they are very, very meticulous in their research. And they pride themselves in that. And, you know, I trust the Cambridge exams because of that, because I know they know what they're doing.

Interviewer: [00:58:01] Completely agree with you. But again, I could not be more biased. And we we only have two questions remaining. The seventh is going to be the the most important of all of them are important. Obviously. I already knew what you were going to answer this one. I only think I only had one person. They didn't disagree. They just said, well, they align, but A1 and A1 specifically at Specifically. The beginning can sometimes be tricky, but mainly almost anyone agreed. The sixth question is well, we have been agreeing a lot on, you know, how this can be useful, how people should implement it. However, nothing is without your challenges in life. So what challenges

can we encounter when preparing students for the exams or doing exercises that have that are aligned or primed for the exams? Particularly in developing, listening and speaking. What challenges can we encounter?

LB: [00:59:19] Okay, so I mean, with the young learners specifically Teachers have. What I find is that teachers have classes that are perhaps too big. I think with with it's easier in a language school because we know we have a limited number of students per class. So it's much easier to work those skills, especially the speaking. However it's not impossible. You know, there are ways it requires a lot of classroom management. If teachers are willing to put in the work. I do think it can actually work in our favor when we have a lot of students. The problem is, if your class gets rowdy, you're going to have the teacher next door complaining. It's also materials making sure that you have the right materials that will Enhance the listening and the speaking, making sure you have enough of them. One of the things that I think teachers don't do enough of is allowing. And I think sometimes. It's teachers who limit students capability. I mean, I remember when they had the project in the state schools here where they did key in the ninth grade. And, you know, I am I know that private schools have a different form of teaching, etc., but you cannot tell me that the kids in private schools are much better than kids in public schools. It's just a different way of teaching. And I feel that. We don't take advantage enough of students capabilities, and sometimes the teachers hinder that capability. Where students could actually be flying and they could be, you know doing so well. But I think in terms of listening and speaking is one, having the right materials to having really good classroom management to be able to deal with classes of 28 plus in some cases.

LB: [01:02:11] I mean, I know a teacher here who who has classes of 30-40 and she manages to get her kids doing speaking because kids love speaking, you know, they love speaking activities. My students used to love speaking every time I said, we're are going to do writing or something, it was like, oh, God. So give them any speaking opportunity. I think we could provide more speaking opportunities outside the classroom, like mini debate clubs or Toastmasters or things like that. I don't think we work enough on that spectrum. But coming back to the classroom, I think lack of materials sometimes is an issue. And class size and controlling the noise. And also what I find more and more these days as, as you probably also see in, in, in the study that you do, there are more and more special needs students and teachers don't really

have assistance in the classroom to be able to to support them. I know I had that case in in I followed the project with them, but this was a state school. But they were hoping to implement you know, young learners. And I said to them, I said, it's really hard for a teacher to teach a class when you have two kids that are running around complete havoc. Nobody can control them. And the teacher's trying to keep them still all the time. It's a huge disadvantage to the other students, of course, but I think things need to be looked at, and I don't think at college of the mind that is much of an issue because they tend to have a lot of support, but not all schools do.

Intreviewer: [01:04:16] So obviously, for example, or the main thing that everyone talked about the most difficult one was. Yeah, the number of students. Yeah.

LB: [01:04:31] It's doable.

Intreviewer: [01:04:32] Exactly. And I, I obviously said, look, I understand many, many students is definitely an issue. But I, I believe we could adapt some exercises, but it is too many students.

LB: [01:04:48] Requires work, requires work, and teachers don't want to plan. This is the problem.

Intreviewer: [01:04:55] Yes. Unfortunately, I can. I cannot fit that in my master's thesis. I cannot say, well, teachers do not want to work.

LB: [01:05:04] Yeah, exactly.

Intreviewer: [01:05:05] I cannot fit that. I the other thing, other than too many students was too little time. They some some.

LB: [01:05:18] Yes, but what is too little time? Because I have somebody who prepares kids for Cambridge exams from starters to proficiency with one hour a week.

Intreviewer: [01:05:29] Well, they were saying two hours a week, so one hour a week. But that person is very is very disciplined.

LB: [01:05:37] She's disciplined. And when she goes into class, it's bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. She knows exactly what she's going to do with them. And she works the problem areas because she knows the exam inside out like I do. So, you know, it's also a lack, I think, here a lack of teacher training is perhaps a way to get round, you know, these sort of things. But for example, we have conferences every year where we do training free of charge for our schools. And a lot of teachers don't show up, you know it is what it is. But teacher training, I think, would be fundamental to make. But, you know, if if people knew that and I'm talking one hour a week and passing successfully, you've got KPIs are passing with A's and B's. So if she can do it in an hour, you can't tell me that two hours is not enough, especially for the lower levels. The lower levels up until B1. It's easy to prepare kids in two hours.

Intreviewer: [01:06:51] This leads us to our last question. And after this last question, I allow some time because, you know, then I can also speak freely and be, you know limited by my by my interview script. So in your opinion, what are the long term benefits of incorporating while speaking and listening preparation exams or even inducing them to to take the exam into our regular classrooms? Because why I say this? Not all. No one is obligated to. You only draw in the wild if you want. Is is. It's not mandatory. I am not trying to make it mandatory. I just believe in the current system that we have is way too focused on writing and reading. And we are. We are not. We are not producing. We are producing good English students. If this was the the 18th century and no one had to speak however, in the 21 century, especially with everything written in the writing. Writing is becoming I don't I want to I don't want to say less necessary because it's always necessary, but it's becoming easier. And I believe students are losing the ability to speak progressively. So which is a little bit weird, given that we now have more English hours than ever. Well.

LB: [01:08:20] Well, they do it because they I mean, they don't talk anymore. They text everything.

Intreviewer: [01:08:26] That's also true. That's that's completely true. But my my question is what what do you believe are the long term benefits of incorporating while speaking and listening to the, you know, the contrast of not having them?

LB: [01:08:43] I think it comes back to exactly what I say to parents. And to me, very often people say, oh, you know, CPE and CEE are the most important exams. I personally and honestly feel that the young learner exams are a lot more important because it is the foundation of where they're going to build their language or their English language learning. I always say you cannot have a good house if you don't have a good foundation. And I do feel that the methodology used and I'm not talking about the exam, but the methodology used in preparation for these exams, which is using the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking and honing in on those and working on those, and then bringing in the language as part of those has huge benefits. The kids tend to be a lot more fluent. It does have an effect on the brain, whether people like it or not. Students who start younger will tend to be later on have a much greater possibility of being bilingual. And we all know the benefits of bilingual on the brain. It's more than researched and proven. So yes, I do feel that this type of methodology of working on the skills and. And then everything else comes around it. Can only be beneficial for students. And I always say, you cannot have a good house if you don't have a good foundation. And that's why I find these exams, apart from the fact that I love examining them because the kids are so unpredictable. Oh, we get such funny ones. But the fact that they really do create, I see it on kids who do start as movers and flyers once they get to flyers.

LB: [01:10:53] These kids are so confident already. I mean, I had one who walked into the exam room, sat next to me, and he goes, yo, he had done starters, movers, he was doing flyers, and they just so comfortable and confident that to me, it doesn't make sense that not all kids get this opportunity to to be fluent, to do well in English, to be motivated to like English because this is their future. Now more, more than ever. And I always say, you know, you can have a great he can be great at maths, he can be great at science, but he will go nowhere if he doesn't have English. So more important than ever now is implementing a good level of English. The sooner the better. And this is why I would defend this kind of methodology in starting in primary school. In, in first year primary one. Because it just makes sense. And you can see it, you can see the kids evolving from one year to the next and not doing colors in year one and year two. Colors in year three. Colors in year four. And they're still doing colors in year five. It's ridiculous, you know, and like I said, kids in in private education who invest in these kind of projects are very, very fortunate. But they are not better than most of the kids at

public schools. Have you? The kids at public schools just haven't had the opportunity to be taught with a different methodology.

Intreviewer: [01:12:47] I agree.

LB: [01:12:49] You know, and it makes me a little sad because, you know, every child should have this opportunity to to excel and to because I know that these exams open doors. I know they do. And and students who go through, you know, the stacking exams and it's evident. I'll give you proof for the first. The first year, the first school I did this with that I started with starters and went through to proficiency was. Their first CPE candidates who came through the whole system, who started with starters, did movers. They didn't do flies. They went in and did key pet first advanced and and proficiency. These kids when they got to proficiency there were 23 in the class. Of those 2313 got A's and the rest got B's at proficiency. This is almost unheard of. So there is proof that if they start young and they start with this type of methodology young, they creates a confidence in these kids that is hard to shake later on. But that's my personal vision of how I see kids going through. Because, you know, I see kids doing starters, and then I see them doing proficiency. Well, I had another one in Brazil who who went up the the oldest was going to get his CPE certificate, and the youngest was going to get his starters. They were brothers. And again, the oldest got proficiency with an A because he had done starters movers. So it's it's it's proven that that this methodology, the sooner they start with with it, it works. You know, if it's implemented correctly, it works.

Intreviewer: [01:14:58] That's that was our last question.

H. Ao Interview For Master's Thesis On Cambridge YLE Exams Transcription And Codification

Interview on Cambridge YLE Exams - AO part 1

List of Main Topics

1. **YLE exam preparation and impact on verbal competencies** — key timestamps: 00:08:13–00:11:07, 00:03:01–00:04:44
2. **Differences between YLE-focused materials and traditional textbooks** — key timestamps: 00:12:16–00:14:10
3. Interview setup, background, and logistics — key timestamps: 00:00:12–00:01:28, 00:04:44–00:08:13
4. **Classroom strategies for YLE speaking and listening** — key timestamps: 00:31:23–00:39:36, 00:33:04, 00:36:41
5. **Transversal skills and critical thinking via YLE** — key timestamps: 00:39:36–00:43:12, 00:41:21
6. **Challenges in preparation and classroom management** — key timestamps: 00:43:44–00:47:52, 00:46:40–00:47:49
7. **CEFR alignment of YLE tasks** — key timestamps: 00:43:11–00:43:44
8. **Long-term benefits of embedding YLE prep in regular classes** — key timestamps: 00:49:14–00:52:05

TOPIC 1: YLE EXAM PREPARATION AND IMPACT ON VERBAL COMPETENCIES

Timestamps: 00:08:13–00:11:07; 00:03:01–00:04:44

Summary: Interviewer outlines his research focus that early YLE preparation boosts students' listening and speaking beyond peers not primed for exams. AO concurs, explaining YLE's cumulative, skills-based approach exposes learners to meaningful, sentence-level vocabulary use, progressing from isolated utterances to fluent, natural speech; prior YLE stages (Starters, Movers, Flyers) smooth the transition into higher main suite exams.

Keywords: verbal competence, listening and speaking, skills-based learning

TOPIC 2: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YLE-FOCUSED MATERIALS AND TRADITIONAL TEXTBOOKS

Timestamps: 00:12:16–00:14:10

Summary: AO contrasts Cambridge-aligned materials with traditional texts, highlighting integrated exam preparation and tasks that promote critical thinking and common-sense reasoning. Exercises intentionally provide excess information (e.g., more options than gaps), training elimination strategies and boosting confidence for exam conditions.

Keywords: exam-aligned materials, critical thinking, elimination strategy

TOPIC 3: INTERVIEW SETUP, BACKGROUND, AND LOGISTICS

Timestamps: 00:00:12–00:01:28; 00:04:44–00:08:13

Summary: The session begins with audio issues and device troubleshooting before transitioning into the interview framework. Background details confirm AO's role and extensive Cambridge exam experience (Key to Proficiency; YLE for 25 years), and the call concludes with a switch to Zoom to continue.

Keywords: interview logistics, teaching experience, technology setup

Topic 4 : Classroom strategies for YLE speaking and listening

Timestamps: 00:31:23–00:39:36; 00:33:04; 00:36:41

Summary: AO structures every 90-minute lesson to include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, keeping activities dynamic and purpose-driven. She promotes complete sentences from day one, uses only English, leverages peer support, and transforms real environments (classroom, playground, canteen) and images into “scenery cards” focused strictly on syllabus targets (e.g., present continuous, prepositions, WH-questions). Repetition across skills builds natural production and reduces last-minute pressure.

Keywords: lesson structure, scenery cards, complete sentences

Topic 5: Transversal skills and critical thinking via YLE

Timestamps: 00:39:36–00:43:12; 00:41:21

Summary: AO argues YLE fosters critical thinking through tasks that require elimination of distractors and association (e.g., story gap-fills with extra, irrelevant words). She links this reasoning practice to broader cognitive gains, noting a correlation between strong English and math performance in her experience, due to stimulating both brain hemispheres and focusing on what learners can do.

Keywords: critical thinking, elimination strategies, cognitive transfer

Topic 6: Challenges in preparation and classroom management

Timestamps: 00:43:44–00:47:52; 00:46:40–00:47:49

Summary: While large classes and limited time are common, AO reframes challenges as matters of teacher approach, modeling “monkey see, monkey do,” firm expectations, and positive reinforcement. She mitigates mixed-ability issues through peer tutoring, clear purpose, strict on-topic time use, and autonomy, asserting that effective management minimizes perceived constraints.

Keywords: classroom management, peer support, time-on-task

Topic 7: CEFR alignment of YLE tasks**Timestamps:** 00:43:11–00:43:44**Summary:** Both speakers agree YLE tasks align well with CEFR for young learners, having been designed with CEFR levels in mind. Divergent views are rare and typically resolved by clarifying specific misunderstandings.**Keywords:** CEFR, alignment, validity**Topic 8: Long-term benefits of embedding YLE prep in regular classes****Timestamps:** 00:49:14–00:52:05**Summary:** Regular YLE-style practice builds confidence, fluency, and efficient test literacy (skimming for gist, scanning for specifics, filtering noise). It strengthens interconnected skills—listening exposure supports spelling and numbers; speaking boosts writing quality—and prepares students for future accredited exams useful in and beyond Portugal.**Keywords:** confidence, exam literacy, skills integration

Transcript

AO: [00:00:12] Hello.

Intreviewer: [00:00:14] Hello. Hello. Hi.

AO: [00:00:16] Hi. Good morning.

Intreviewer: [00:00:17] Good morning.

AO: [00:00:21] I can't hear you very well.

Intreviewer: [00:00:22] You can't hear me very well.

AO: [00:00:25] Nope.

Intreviewer: [00:00:26] Give me one second.

AO: [00:00:30] Okey dokey.

Intreviewer: [00:00:36] Okay. What about now?

AO: [00:00:39] Better. Much better. Sorry about this, Intreviewer, but I think my computer is asking for retirement.

Intreviewer: [00:00:45] No, that's completely okay. I completely understand.

AO: [00:00:50] I'm going to just try because it's just finished updating. I'm going to see if I can try the zoom, but it's just extremely slow.

Intreviewer: [00:01:03] Of course, if you have any preference, you can you can even log in on, on zoom through your phone if you would like, but it's it's it's.

AO: [00:01:13] I need to keep one one available than the other because. I am still in classes and doing Cambridge exams.

Interviewer: [00:01:24] Of course. No problem.

AO: [00:01:28] Let me just see how this works. So, Interviewer, tell me, what do you need from me, sir?

Interviewer: [00:01:37] We'll have a couple of questions.

AO: [00:01:40] Okay.

Interviewer: [00:01:41] It will go through. I believe so, organically. Obviously my master's degree. Hopefully. Some. I had to shed some light in the previous emails, but if not, it's This interview will be about how we can enhance verbal competencies through YLE preparation. So both preparing for the exam or utilizing exam like exercises in class to prepare students. That's that's my idea. So my idea is that while I was internship **REDACTED**. And then I did some research. I was fond of the idea that the students that were being prepared for the exams seem to show that the that the verbal skills of listening and speaking were way above the average or the expected in comparison to students that were not being primed. So, for example, a school in in the public sector.

AO: [00:03:01] Right.

Interviewer: [00:03:02] And obviously I did I did a lot of research. We have like already 8 or 9 interviews, something crazy of the sorts. And I and everyone has a different opinion, but we all are. We all arrive at a common theme here. So. But my point is that I believe it helps. Now, if I believe it helps, because when we are preparing students for the exam we are developing their skills rather than you know, teaching him those vocabulary or grammar. That's what I'm gonna put on my report. You don't have to worry. But why were you recommended? You know, it's also important to understand why you are recommending one of the questions that is going to be coming up is going to be the, you know, what challenges do we encounter preparing classes, classes that, you know, focus on preparing students for the while or with while like exercises. And I would say 90% of the interviews said the same thing or, well, time management. And then one professor actually mentioned your name where she's you, you have you know, you didn't have a lot of time, but you were still able to do that. And we got curious, you

know, you were a big part of one interview and after, you know, much asking and how much coordination here we are because we I want to hear all of that from you as well. But before that we have some couple of questions.

AO: [00:04:44] So of course, Interviewer.

Interviewer: [00:04:45] The section A is the background questions, which is it's not terribly important in the fact that I just want it just to be stated on the record your profession and and your personal details. And people know that I did not just, you know, make up an interview. So the first question is name and current teaching role.

AO: [00:05:15] Well, my name is AO. I am 51 years old and I have been teaching Cambridge exams for 30 years from start. No, I lie from Key to proficiency 30 years and YLE for 25.

Interviewer: [00:05:34] Now that's that's great. That's all. Then we the second question was already answered is how long you have been teaching English to the primary level? We can skip that one. The second one is normally answered very easily. Have you had any specific training or experience with the Cambridge or the exams? You also answered yes, but if you want to, you can explore.

AO: [00:06:00] No.

Interviewer: [00:06:00] And what levels do you usually teach and how frequent do your students engage in speaking or listening tasks?

AO: [00:06:10] So I teach all the Cambridge levels. I also prepare students for other exams like the B maths and the IELTS and the TOEFL exams, but predominantly my core basis in fact is five year olds to adults. And it's always with regards to the Cambridge exams themselves. Fabulous. And some kids I'm in contact with once a week, which is an hour and a half block and others as much as three hours per week. Wait.

Interviewer: [00:06:47] Okay. Wonderful. And that is mostly our our background questions. I normally don't spend too much time on them because it's only for the jury or

anyone that has the needs to check for the transcription that I'll then, you know, make have or have the qualifications of the person being interviewed. I really don't need too much here. The section in question. Now, this is what really matters. This is going to be seven questions. I tend to adapt to the interviewer choice, meaning that there are there are people that I interview that prefer to be blunt, direct and short. So they they give me the answer, and that's okay. Some of them prefer to have a dialogue, so they will ask the question and they will answer like 6 other questions in the process. And we'll have like back and forth. I'm okay with them, and some of them tend to be more organically where I give them one question and then they skip around, tell me something else, and then I will kindly gently lead them to the second question. But so they can follow the flow so you don't have to worry. Now there is no, you know, right way to do this at all.

Intreviewer: [00:08:13] I really don't mind. So in the first question will be, in your experience, what impact does the exam preparation have on students verbal competence, speaking and listening. Now, before I let you talk, why are we talking about verbal competencies as a whole? First of all, I understand that while the exams can further help students in other components predominantly speaking, reading, writing I only started speaking and listening because my main focus for my for my master's is that I believe that students that were taking the exam were showing a high proficiency level and being able to express themselves and, and when, I mean, express themselves, I don't mean only just producing loose language with what I call my masters, meaning that producing sounds without understanding the meaning. And that's why I was listening and speaking. So they are able to understand what is being told to them, and they are being able to express that's what I, I meant, and I define as a verbal competence. So given such what impact does early exam preparation or exam like exercises have on students verbal competencies?

AO: [00:09:38] Well, maybe from I've clearly understood that you've done your research and you've understood the the gist and the specific information on these exams. So these are stacking exams. Yeah. So everything is tested in all the levels. So who does movers and flyers and needs to revise the starters to. So clearly the impact it has because kids become more exposed to language in the sense of vocabulary. And we don't teach them like vocabulary lists. Everything we do is in a sentence so they know the meaning, and that's the reason why they use it so well. So if the child has exposure

to this amount of vocabulary the immediate impact is that child can start producing isolated to complete sentences, they can start interacting more confidently. And the fluency and like you've said so correctly, students that have taken from starters to proficiency, usually when they get to the main suites, our students of A. So you very rarely have students struggling at main streets if they've done starters, movers and flyers. So the impact itself is the fact that they're they're able to go from isolated sentences that are just, like you say, loose language into actually fundamentally being able to construct a complete sentence and then being able to use it in a very, very natural and a very, very fluent way.

Intreviewer: [00:11:07] Wonderful are very, very direct, very straightforward. I like it I normally have some follow up questions for each of the seven questions this first one, there is no need. We did carry on to answer what I need to I just always like to make this remark, and I likely will do it again along the way. Don't worry, I am not I, I just needed to make sure that by no means whatsoever. I want you to influence your answers to please me. There might be a question that it seems that I'm trying to pursue an avenue. That's mostly likely because I want to be able to get your exact opinion on something. But you do not have to by any means walk on eggshells. We have had some interviews where the person was completely in disagreement with me, and I loved it. It was okay. But I just always, I always make sure to leave this on on, on a recording so people are aware that there is no issue if you disagree with me whatsoever.

AO: [00:12:13] Oh, of course, Intreviewer, you know.

Intreviewer: [00:12:16] Oh, this is a this is a very controversial question, especially because many people that I interview are had, you know, different opinions or they worked on this field. So how does why All exempt Yle so and when I mean, YLE Exam preparation here. I mean I'm sure you're familiar with Macmillan or Cambridge. I give those to you, but there are more Pearson as well. School books that, you know, they have in their own school books. They are already preparing students for the wild. It's some of them are more direct than others, but we can tell by the type of the exercise that they are following the YLE criteria. So how do these exam books differ from the traditional text books or from, you know, Portuguese publishers? Especially on the speaking and listening activities?

AO: [00:13:18] Well the reason why I'm a huge Cambridge fan is because obviously the books themselves are geared to exam preparation. So in a very, very natural way, kids are coming into contact with exam preparation per se. But more importantly, it's the idea of encouraging critical thinking and common sense. Because all Cambridge exams, the kids are given more information than they need in any given exercise. So if you're doing a gap filling, there's ten words and there's only five spaces to fill. So they are encouraging critical thinking, and they are encouraging the kids to use their common sense in an elimination style to make them more confident on the day of the exam.

AO: [00:14:06] And I'm on zoom if you'd like to join me on zoom. Sorry, my computer is up and working.

Intreviewer: [00:14:10] Wonderful. I will then get to you on zoom. I will just terminate here. Recall. Give me like two, two minutes.

AO: [00:14:19] Certainly, certainly.

Intreviewer: [00:14:20] Thank you. Thank you. One second.

Intreviewer: [00:28:42] Do you want to start over the interview or follow for more? We had

AO: [00:28:48] If you don't mind following on, that would be superb.

Intreviewer: [00:28:52] Oh, I don't mind at all. It's okay. I already had the other one saved. I can then convert to files and it's the same. It's the same to me.

AO: [00:28:59] You want me to disconnect my camera?

Intreviewer: [00:29:01] Intreviewer, it's the same. Your image will never be recorded. On my My video is not currently recording. Not because I have anything to hide, but because my my main PC, the one that had the camera, has died in the following in the previous weeks. So I'm using a desktop that does not have a webcam

Interviewer: [00:29:33] Wonderful. Now we are reaching the questions that are, you know, every particular candidate took these questions, had what I like to call a set of a key question or quick questions that I mainly want to, to extract for them. Because, you know, I had like eight people. So for every, every one of them, you know, took around like an hour, an hour and a half, some two hours. So all of them, you know, had different I had different questions that I really wanted him to answer. Now, this is one that I believe is very interesting. Well, in my for my project that I want to listen from you, which is how do you structure your classroom activities to prepare students for the YLE speaking and listening components? We had a lot of debates surrounding this question. Little resources or little time. It's hard to prepare. It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of preparation. When I was teaching in REDACTED, I did a lot of activities in the speaking component with the students the main one that I like to highlight all these in this interview was speaking whole class. So obviously, as any professor will tell you, it is impossible that throughout normal school year to have individual oral assessments in the middle of the class so I could not do that. I could not simulate that exam like scenario individually. What I did instead was simulate the, the oral scenario, but in group.

Interviewer: [00:31:23] So I printed out, I believe, 22 to 21 flashcards that are like the ones from the exam. I gave the students of each one of them and I told him, you know, to to not open until I, I said, then I open and I ask all of them to describe to describe them. And once they have described them to come to the board and place the flashcard in the, in a, in the spot where I told him to also, you know next to the barn or next to the waterfall or whatever it would be. And and then I would always ask him a personal question related to the flash card or something. That was my way. Obviously still quite inexperienced way of adapting the waiālae guidelines of for oral in a fun little task for them. Now, that's how I did. However, I speak with a lot of people, many of which are way more experienced than me, obviously, and they all had the the ways. However, in one one of the last interviews, as you may recall, obviously you were suggested as, as an individual with really, really high potential in these sort of situations, especially dealing with managing a class and structuring a classroom. So I want to know, how do you prepare your students for the speaking and listening components during the class? How do you manage that?

AO: [00:33:04] Well, for me the time is really irrelevant because, as I've told you, the majority of my exam classes and content classes with my students are in fact an hour and a half per week. The thing is, is that you need to work on your purpose from the very beginning of the year and you need to add value every minute of the lesson. So you can have as much fun as you want and you can have as many exam practice exercises as you want, as long as it is adding value to the purpose, which is preparation for speaking and for listening. The classroom management is of the essence because if your students know what the purpose is they work very, very, very well because everyone in life, as far as I'm concerned, needs to be working with a purpose. Right? So my kids from day one know what level they're going to be prepared for, and they know what is going to be done in the beginning of the lesson. So I divide the lesson into listening, speaking, reading and writing every single lesson. And the students are aware of the fact that it's not going to be a whole lesson of reading and a whole lesson of writing. So their attitude and posture is usually very on board, because when a child knows they're going to have an hour and a half of just writing or just listening, they fall into the, oh, get me out of here, I don't want to be here. So with regards to the speaking, I encourage complete sentences from day one. So September school year 2025 to 2026.

AO: [00:34:44] They know that they have to produce complete sentences. I only speak in English. I rely on other students to help the weaker students because every child needs to feel special and every child is recommended for the exam. I don't leave children behind, special needs included. So we work as a team because together everyone achieves more. And if I was doing, for example, like you, you mentioned part one of the starters exam where they have a scenery card. Teachers have a tendency to make excuses, but even using the classroom itself can in fact be a scenery card. Even using the students themselves can be a scenery card. And if I were, for example, to be revising classroom objects I would use the students and the objects in the classroom. So where is the desk? Here is the desk. Put you stand in front of the desk. Yeah. Put your pencil under the chair. So the lessons are very, very interactive. And I think many a times teachers forget that one single resource can be used and used and used again. All right. With regards to the actual physical scenery card when we encourage the kids to identify vocabulary, then tell me about the vocabulary. They have to identify a present continuous sentence. They have to tell me about things. This is something that I incorporate in every single skill. So when they eventually are on the spot to produce it in

a speaking exam, it becomes very, very it comes very naturally to them. It's not hard work, and they're not put under pressure a month before to be able to perform brilliantly, because when kids are rushed into things, they don't do it naturally and it will sound very rehearsed.

AO: [00:36:41] And I don't like rehearsed speech. I like my kids to what what they produce. They need to understand. Okay, so when I'm using an actual scenery card there too you can use nowadays we have loads of images that you can use on Google images, for example, you can use in the course books or activity books, or you yourself can have a scenery card. The thing is, is you need to know the syllabus. I'm not going to waste my time revising and talking about things that are not going to be tested in the exam. So when I look at a scenery card, if I don't have a physical starter senior record, but if I go to a Google image of a classroom and I see that there are testing something that has nothing to do with the exam, I ignore that. So I'm just doing what I know the kids will be tested on. And this where you're building confidence. I think it's super important that we realize that the final exam is a day of celebration, and the kids can only celebrate if they think they've done a good job. And when a child is questioned about, for example, things that the kids struggle with, we know that it starters. They struggle with prepositions. They they they struggle with present continuous. They they they struggle with wh You're going to do that from the very beginning of the year with what you have on hand.

AO: [00:38:02] For example, when it comes to the playground, I take my kids outside to the playground, and and you must remember, I work with 28 kids at a time, so everyone is out in the playground. You're going to divide them into groups, and you're going to use the playground as a scenery card. Same thing with the canteen. You've got to make the lessons very, very dynamic and you have to keep changing skills. In my personal experience and I'm learning every day, I feel as though many a times I know nothing. And I'm constantly searching and researching and trying to upskill and trying to learn is because kids themselves are changing too. And I want them to learn the language the same way they learn Portuguese, because when they learned Portuguese, they absorbed Portuguese and their parents made up nicknames for for certain things. And eventually a child starts doing what once they've absorbed the language, they start producing the language. And as soon as they start producing the language, I'm encouraging complete sentences. I'm encouraging to put that into context. And also, I'm

challenging my kids constantly when I, for example, if I want to introduce food vocabulary I'm never going to show a flashcard and expect the kids to say, this is an apple. I'm going to say, this is red, this is round, this is yummy for my tummy. And I'm expecting at least one child in that class to say Apple. And everyone's going to repeat Apple. This is an apple. Talk about the apple. So the kids are constantly being challenged.

Intreviewer: [00:39:36] I can't answer the question is will skip thank you so much. Leads us to the to the fourth question, which is do you believe that YLE courses help students develop Of transversal skills. Now, what I mean by transversal skills is are critical thinking, adaptability, collaboration, etc.. What do you think?

AO: [00:40:06] Yes. As I as I've mentioned before, this whole exam is about critical thinking using your common sense. In part two of the Reading and Writing with the kids are looking at a story and they have to. Sorry. Part three of the exam where the kids are looking at a story. And it's about shells, and they've got they've got nine words to put into spaces of five. And there is the word, for example, arm. What you're trying to encourage the kids is what is the relation between arm and shell. Nothing. So clearly that's the what I usually say. That's the word. That's the trap. Yeah. So eliminate it. Just like with the shell. They're talking about sand and beach. Clearly the story will include the sand and the beach. Swimming boy. Perfect. But if the word jellyfish, for example, perfect, it could be related to the story of a shell. But for a pencil, what is a pencil got to do with the story of a shell? So you are constantly and and in my experience, I can go a step further for you, sir. Because kids, that's you remember learning language. You're stimulating the left and the right hemisphere of the brain. So kids are good at English, naturally are good at maths and vice versa.

AO: [00:41:21] My best English students are usually the best math students at school. Attention Intreviewer. This is 30 years of experience. This is in my personal experience. I don't know what it's like for other teachers and other public schools, other colleges and other language schools or homeschool children. But in my experience, the critical thinking, the common sense that these kids are subjected to from the early age of six, turning seven and then throughout all Cambridge exams, even up into proficiency, you've always got more All information then you need. Hence the reason why we need to focus on what kids can do and what what they can't do. We need to ignore in the

sense that if you if you, if you ask a kid what do you do in the morning? And they don't respond, you'll say, do you eat cereal in the morning? And the child will then automatically. Well, breakfast is related to morning and cereals related to food. And they will naturally just say yes. And that is accepted as a correct answer. Back up questions that are correctly answered are accepted. Why? Because the kids are doing association and they're eliminating what they don't need, focusing on what they can and not what they can't, and not on what they can't. Excuse me.

Intreviewer: [00:42:37] That that is, is clearly in my regards to you and I. And I'm very thankful. Are we going to go to the number five question? But I like to think of all this question as a, as a solid one word answer type because it's a very simple question. From your perspective, how well do while the exam tasks align with the CFR levels for young learners?

AO: [00:43:11] Brilliantly,

Intreviewer: [00:43:12] Exactly. I don't need to to spend too much time in this question, I really don't. I, I think anyone that is familiar with them will say it's it aligns. They they were constructed especially for with them in mind. So there is not much to talk. It's just in case someone disagrees, I need to understand why they are disagreeing with. So far, only one person calling that disagrees with we. At the end, we understood what seems to be the issue.

Intreviewer: [00:43:44] Which leaves to our almost last question the one that we spoke about earlier, which is what challenges do you encounter when preparing students for the exams, particularly in developing verbal competencies? Now, everybody talked about us having too many students and little time. This has been you know sort of the, the go to I won't say excuse. Excuse is too harsh, but the good to motivation behind the difficulties for you. What is the biggest challenge?

AO: [00:44:30] I don't face challenges in the classroom. I, I I work very much with the monkey see monkey do basis. So I am the example. I use complete sentences. I encourage complete sentences. I use very positive reinforcement. But I'm very firm when things don't work. Well I'm from Africa. There are no challenges in those classes.

There are no problems within a classroom. It's what? It's. It's the approach the teacher has.

Intreviewer: [00:45:00] No, no.

Intreviewer: [00:45:01] I completely understand, I completely agree. If there are no challenges, there are no challenges that.

AO: [00:45:07] They challenge us with the weaker kids. So the weaker kids that are struggling. But in my class, because I encourage the stronger to help the weaker and the weaker to help the stronger. And it is very student based. There's a lot of autonomy. In, in learning I encourage the high achievers, the quick finishers to help the weaker ones. And so there is there is a lot of support within the class. So I, I, I'll be very honest with you. Classes are big. Yes. They're big everywhere. Time is limited. Well, time you can never get back. So if you've got the time, use it. Well, I think when you go off the topic, when you spend too much time talking about things that have got nothing to do with the topic, then you will run out of time. Then you will have difficulties with classroom management. My kids from day one know the posture, know the attitude they need to bring to class and you have to be a very, very positive example for your students.

Intreviewer: [00:46:05] Not completely understandable.

Intreviewer: [00:46:07] And you know, if you don't encounter any I would just ask well how do you because many teachers or language teachers seem to struggle with the concept of time limited resources and large classrooms. How do you in this case, are you able to to deal with this sort of problematic?

AO: [00:46:40] When I started 25 years ago with YLE exams, there were no handbooks. There were no examples of exam practice books. There were no books to buy. Nowadays we have through the Cambridge English org site. Everything is free and downloadable handbooks. If teachers downloaded the handbook onto their desktop and read through it from page one to page 111, they would find all the answers they needed. With regards to to time, Intreviewer as I've said before time is of the essence. So in an hour and a half, you can imagine there are colleges having English every single day. How I envy them. But as I said, my kids are troopers. They they know they're going to

be with me for an hour and a half. They know that we need to work on the purpose together and that we're going to be successful together. So it I honestly, here. It really is. It's I honestly believe it's on the individual teacher and not on the class.

Intreviewer: [00:47:49] No.

AO: [00:47:50] That's what you want to hear. But that's my experience.

Intreviewer: [00:47:52] No no no no, I don't have like, these sort of questions. I don't have any specific how do I say I don't have any specific sort of an answer? You know, it's anyone's personal opinion. Really. So whatever you do say will just be what you believe in, I. I literally do not have anything that I can take away from personal experience besides personal experience, obviously. In your opinion, and this is the last question what are the the long term benefits of incorporating YLE speaking and listening preparation into regular classroom? So when I'm in a regular classroom, I do have to specify, you know, there are some classrooms that are not. Preparing or preparing students for the while for many reasons, mainly because they don't it's a public school system. They don't they don't think they have to do it because there are not many students that will take it anyways. So in the imagine that you find yourself in one of these classrooms. What do you believe would be the benefits of incorporating Wiley type exercises and even exam preparation on the long term?

AO: [00:49:14] Well, they know more so they produce more, builds confidence. And when they eventually do sit for the exams that are credible and needed to study with and without, with, within and with and and out of Portugal the kids the kids don't hesitate and they are the best students. As I've, as I've said before, the the fact that they are stimulating rational thinking. The fact that we are encouraging the kids to use complete sentences, the kids are expected to point and to regurgitate and then point and produce sentences and then answer wh questions and use the backup to guide them to the correct answer. All of this is is beneficial in any type of of classroom, and that the sense that the students are very hands on when they're looking at an exercise. I my biggest the biggest difference here is between kids that have never, ever done exam practice. And those that are doing it on a weekly or monthly or yearly basis. Kids just sort of zoom in and understand exactly what they're looking for. They they they they they they the skill of reading and understanding for just and for specific information is something

phenomenal. A seven year old. Yeah. And of course, you you you read and and Excuse me. You write and you speak the same.

AO: [00:50:48] So if you usually if you speak well, you're going to write well. Right. You might make the odd grammatical error or spelling error. But usually there is the, the skill, the skills are somehow married and the, the, the listening. Well, it speaks for itself because if you have a native or non-native speaker but encouraging the kids to produce English asking other colleagues, can you help? Do you understand? You can encourage the colleagues to translate. But the fact that the kids are so exposed to listening in English listening for spelling, hearing the alphabet, the numbers, I mean, these are basic survival skills that they're going to hear when they're older, right? People forget that if you're an adult and you're learning a language, you're going to learn with the numbers and the alphabets on the phone, right? So a young seven year old's are are, as I've said in my experience, when they're exposed to so many listening exercises where they're also asking them, they're always giving them more information that they need. They're always trying to confuse the kids. And the kids can downsize it and eliminate it and just focus on what's necessary, sort of like, forget the noise. I mean, this is a a win win. This is a this. You can't go wrong with YLE.

Interviewer: [00:52:05] I believe it to be true as well, but obviously I'm perfectly fine.

AO: [00:52:09] I can't hear you very well.

Interviewer: [00:52:11] I'm so. I'm so sorry. Can you hear me better now? Perfectly okay, I said. I agree completely, but I am as well, incredibly biased. Obviously given my masters. But this was the final question. We are all said and done. Oh.

AO: [00:52:27] That was quick.

Interviewer: [00:52:28] Yeah, it was about an hour. So yes, it was a little bit quick was one of.

I. Class 1 Listening Practice Lesson Plan



Mestrado Em Ensino De Inglês No 1º Ciclo Do Ensino Básico

Revision Class

Lesson Plan

3rd Grade Level: A1

Porto, 2024/2025

1. Methodological contextualization

This lesson plan employs a blended approach to reinforce vocabulary and prepare students for their upcoming listening test. The methodology includes a focus on active recall and practical application through worksheet activities and oral exercises. The lesson prioritizes revision of key vocabulary while also introducing strategies for effective listening comprehension.

2. Lesson Plan

| The pupils already know | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colours • Animals vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside vocabulary • Numbers / Hours • Present Continuous • Routine |
| Summary | |
| <p>In this lesson, students will revise vocabulary they have learned throughout the first unit, focusing on new vocabulary that will be important for their listening test. The revision will include a PowerPoint presentation and vocabulary-based questions. Students will also work on a listening worksheet, preparing them for the upcoming test by familiarizing them with the Cambridge A1 Movers format and types of tasks they will encounter. The goal is to ensure students feel confident with both the vocabulary and the structure of listening assessments.</p> | |
| Lesson objectives | Lesson outcomes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise key vocabulary for the listening test. • Improve listening comprehension through targeted exercises. • Enhance confidence in applying vocabulary in context (e.g., during listening tasks). • Familiarization with Cambridge A1 Movers work exercises through worksheets similar to those on the upcoming test. | <p>By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use and identify Routine and Countryside Vocabulary. • Get familiarised with listening exercises similar to A1 Mover of Cambridge. |
| Anticipated obstacles | Solutions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may forget previously learned vocabulary or struggle with recalling it. • Some students may find the listening exercises challenging, particularly with understanding accents or fast speech. • Students may need more practice with specific test formats. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use vocabulary flashcards and visual aids to refresh their memory during the introduction. - PowerPoint • Play listening exercises multiple times and at different speeds to ensure comprehension. |

| Assessment | Lesson duration |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation will be based on the completion of worksheets that focus on vocabulary revision and listening comprehension. The teacher will provide feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the worksheet responses to gauge students' readiness for the listening test. | 60 minutes. We see that on steps 2-4, there is two tentative forecasts of time. This is mainly due to not force an unrealistic view of how much time something can take. |
| | Materials |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet Powerpoint Flash Cards - Digital |

3. Lesson Procedures

| Activities | Time |
|--|--------|
| Step 1 – Opening routine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greetings - The lesson starts at the door where the teacher greets the pupils and asks how they are feeling, to create a welcoming environment. Summary copywriting | 5' |
| Step 2 – Routine Revision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review key vocabulary needed for the listening test. While listening to the sounds on the PowerPoint. Review of vocabulary related to hours. | 5'-10' |

| | |
|--|------------------|
| <p>Step 3 – Review of vocabulary related to countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the usage of digital flashcards, we will revise countryside vocabulary | <p>5-10'</p> |
| <p>Step 4 – Worksheet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute worksheets with vocabulary-focused tasks (e.g., fill-in-the-gap, word matching). Go through examples with the class before allowing them to complete the sheet individually. • Students complete a worksheet based on a listening practice exercise similar to the upcoming test. This will include questions on key vocabulary and comprehension | <p>30' - 40'</p> |
| <p>Step 6 – Closing routine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap the key vocabulary and encourage students to share any words they found challenging. • Tidy up and go routine | <p>5'</p> |

J. Class 1 Listening Practice Worksheet



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H

Exercise 4– Listen and tick (✓) the box. There is one example.

What pet does Sally want to get?



A



B

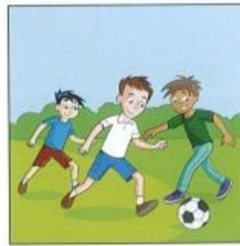


C

1 Where's Alex now?



A



B



C

2 Which is Pat's teacher?



A



B

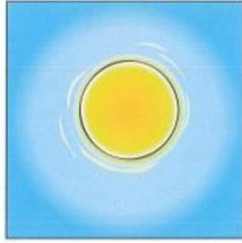


C

3 What's the weather like today?



A



B



C

4 What's the film that Jane is watching about?



A



B



C

5 Where's Jill's homework?



A

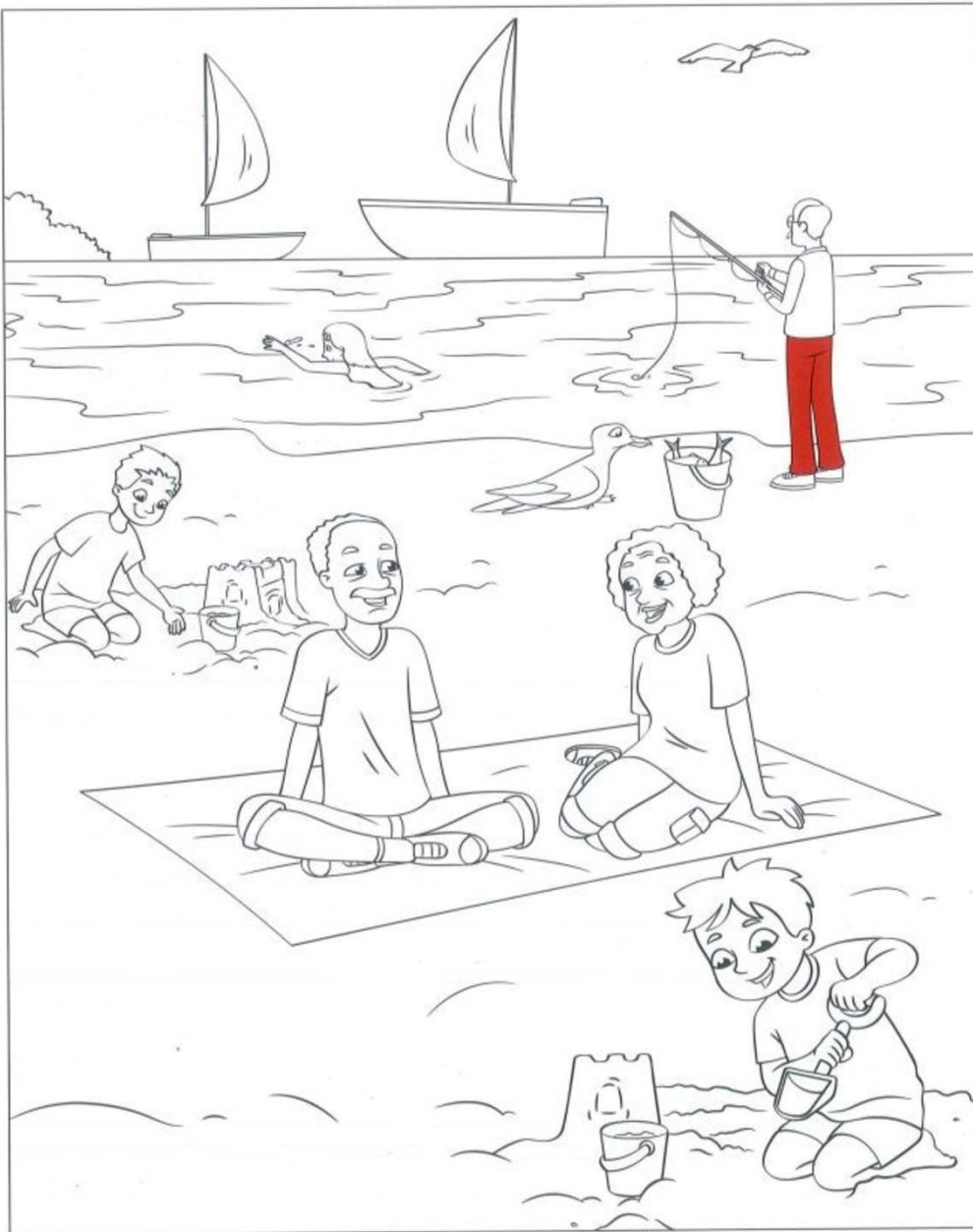


B



C

Exercise 5 – Listen and colour



Good job!

REVISION – LISTENING

Disciplina: Inglês
3rd Grade

Ano Letivo:
2024/2025

Nome: _____ N.º: _____ Ano: _____ Turma: _____

Exercise 1. Listen and Draw the lines. There is one example.

Bill May Tom Lucy

Jim Fred Jane

The illustration shows a farm scene. At the top, names are listed: Bill, May, Tom, and Lucy. At the bottom, names are listed: Jim, Fred, and Jane. A line connects May to a tree. In the scene, a boy is climbing a tree, a girl is petting a dog, a girl is holding a dog, a girl is feeding chickens, and a boy is pointing at chickens. There are also sheep in a field and a barn in the background.

Exercise 2. Listen and write. There is one example.



Mrs Jack's weekend

- Mrs Jack went to: the mountains
- 1 She went with: her Peter
- 2 Her friend's house is: next to Lake
- 3 She was there for: nights
- 4 They went for: long
- 5 She went by:

Exercise 3. Julia is telling her teacher about her family's weekend. What did each person do?

Listen and write a letter in each box. There is one example.



Mum

E



Dad



Aunt Zoe



Uncle Fred



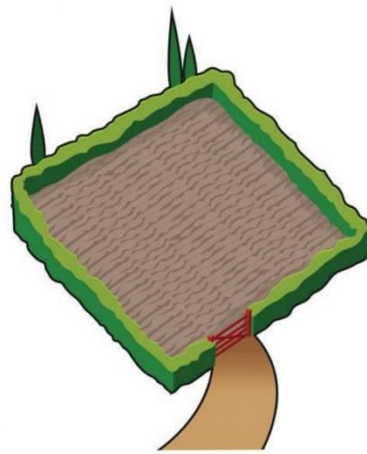
Grandpa



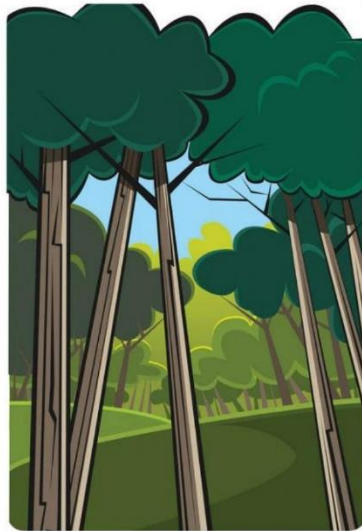
Clare



Countryside



Field



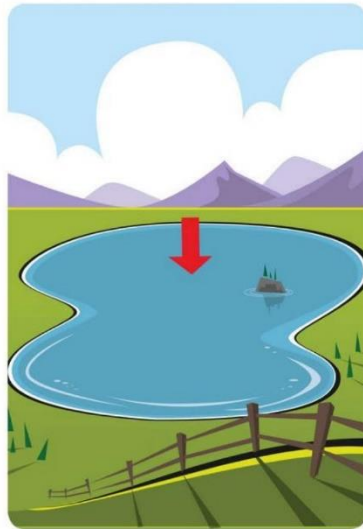
Forest



Grass



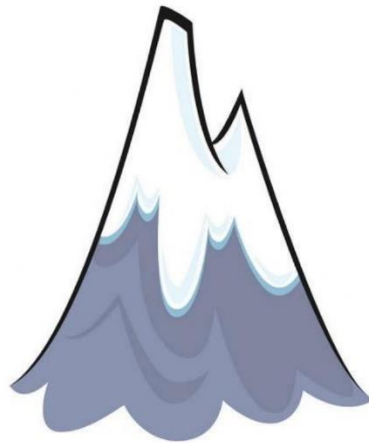
Ground



Lake

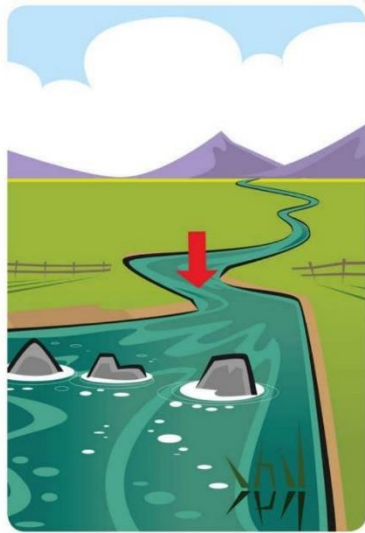


Leaf, Leaves

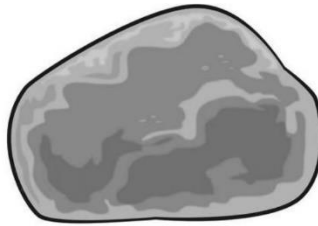


Mountain





River



Rock





Tractor



Waterfall



Sea



Road



Village



House



Farm

L. Class 2 Speaking Practice Lesson Plan



ESCOLA
SUPERIOR
DE EDUCAÇÃO
POLITÉCNICO
DO PORTO

Mestrado Em Ensino De Inglês No 1º Ciclo Do Ensino
Básico

Speaking Practice Class

Lesson Plan

3rd Grade Level: A1

Porto, 2024/2025

1. Methodological contextualization

This lesson will focus on enhancing students' speaking abilities through structured activities that encourage the use of countryside vocabulary. The multimodal approach will include visual aids and guided exercises to support their speaking practice. By incorporating a warm-up, a vocabulary-focused task, and a worksheet-based exercise, the lesson will cater to students' verbal interaction and sentence-building skills. The constructivist approach will be applied, encouraging students to actively use prior knowledge while practicing language production..

2. Lesson Plan

| The pupils already know | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colours • Animals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside vocabulary • There is/There are. |
| Summary | |
| <p>In this lesson, students will practice speaking using countryside-related vocabulary. The lesson starts with a warm-up exercise to engage students in making sentences using "There is/There are." They will then analyse pictures in their pupil's book, identifying similarities and differences in visual elements. The final activity will involve a speaking simulation using a worksheet, where students will work individually or in pairs to practice sentence-building and conversational skills.</p> | |
| Lesson objectives | Lesson outcomes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice speaking using "There is/There are" constructions. • Enhance vocabulary related to the countryside. • Improve the ability to identify and describe differences in images. • Simulate a speaking activity either individually or with peers. • Familiarization with Cambridge A1 Movers speaking exercises through worksheets similar to those on the actual exam. | <p>By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form basic sentences using "There is/ There are" correctly. • Identify and describe objects and scenes in pictures. • Engage in a speaking activity where they express themselves using countryside-related vocabulary. • Get familiarised with speaking exercises similar to A1 Mover of Cambridge. |
| Anticipated obstacles | Solutions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students might struggle with sentence formation. • Limited participation during the speaking activity. • Keep everyone motivated and in place during individual or paired up evaluations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sentence starters and vocabulary prompts to assist students in forming complete sentences. • Encourage peer support during paired speaking tasks and model answers to build confidence. |
| Assessment | Lesson duration |

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will be evaluated based on their participation in speaking activities and the completion of the worksheet. The teacher will monitor sentence structure accuracy and vocabulary use during the lesson. There is also teacher feedback section. | 60 minutes. |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet Activity book Pupil's book Board |

3. Lesson Procedures

| Activities | Time |
|---|------|
| <p>Step 1 – Opening routine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greetings - The lesson starts at the door where the teacher greets the pupils and asks how they are feeling, to create a welcoming environment. Summary copywriting | 5' |
| <p>Step 2 – Warm-up Exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher shows/draws an image on the board of a countryside scene with mountains, a lake, a forest, a river, flowers, rocks, and grass. The teacher asks, "What can you see?" Students respond using "There is/There are". | 5' |

| | |
|--|--------|
| <p>Step 3 – Pupil's Book and Activity book exercises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students open their pupil's book to page 16 and look at Picture A. They describe what they see using countryside vocabulary. • They move to Picture B and discuss differences (water, orange, boots, no leaves, more cows), using the speech bubbles in the book as prompts. This will going to be the foundation for later exercises. • To finalise and to attest the skills of the student's we will do one more speaking exercise of "Find difference", this one will be located on the activity book page 16 | 10'-15 |
| <p>Step 4 – Speaking whole-class speaking activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The worksheet will be projected and the students will be asked to come to the board, one by one, or in pairs (maybe chosen through a fun gimmick like throwing a ball). • The worksheet focuses on uses some countryside vocabulary on one exercise and a "find the difference" structures from the previous exercises we covered in class. Main objective here is to explore the absolute maximum of those pictures making sure every student participates | 20-25 |
| <p>Step 6 – Closing routine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher recaps the key points of speaking assessment and sentence structures. Students can share what they found easy or difficult. • Tidy up and go routine | 5' |

External resources.

1. Warm up Image



2. Teacher book speaking exercise suggestion – Page 16

Learning outcomes By the end of the lesson, learners will have practised answering basic personal questions and talking about the differences between two pictures (A1 Movers Speaking Part 1).

Test skills Describing two pictures by using short responses

New language *farmer, have a picnic, sandwich(es)*

Recycled language *animals, countryside, food and drink, tap, tree, wash (her) hands/boots, have got, Here ...*, prepositions of place, present continuous, *There is/are*

Materials paper, coloured pens or pencils (optional), practice paper for Movers Speaking Part 1 (optional), Countryside and Daily routines flashcards

Warm-up

- Draw a landscape on the board with mountains, a lake, a forest and a river. Draw flowers, rocks and grass. Draw animals, e.g. a dog swimming in the river, a cat on a rock.
- Ask *What can you see?* Learners make as many sentences as they can with *There is/are*.
- Ask about positions: *Where's the (bird)? (In the tree)*

Extension Learners draw their own picture with different details/animals. They swap pictures and talk about their partner's picture in the same way.

Extra support Practise prepositions by asking about objects in the classroom or giving instructions (e.g. *Put your book under your chair. Put one pen on your desk.*).

Presentation

- Say *Let's practise for a speaking exam. Write Speaking exam on the board. Say your name in a quiet/unclear voice. Ask Is that good for a speaking exam? (No) Say your name clearly and ask Is this good? (Yes) Say Speak clearly in the exam. At the beginning of the exam, the examiner asks questions about you. What are the questions? Write learners' suggestions on the board (e.g. What's your name? Where are you from?).*

Pupil's Book, page 16

1 Practise with a friend.

- Say *Open your Pupil's Books at page 16. Look at the questions from the exam. Choose two or three learners to answer. Learners practise in pairs. Tell learners the examiner only asks these two questions. Learners can also role play the exam – with someone taking them to meet the examiner and exchanging greetings before the questions.*

2 Look at this picture. What can you see?

- Show an example of the Movers Speaking paper (Part 1), if possible. Say *Part 1 of the exam has two pictures. You need to look for four differences between the pictures. Focus on picture A. Point and ask Who's this? Teach farmer.*

- Learners work in pairs to say as much as they can about the picture / name as many items as they can. Teach/Revise *have a picnic* and *sandwiches*.
- Learners share ideas with the class. Encourage them to use different structures (*I can see ... There is/are ... have got ...* present continuous and prepositions of place) and expand on their first sentence, e.g. say *Yes, there's a farmer. What's she doing? / Yes, there's an orange fish. Where is it?*

Key: (possible answers) There's a farmer. She's washing her hands under a tap. She's got two children, a boy and a girl. They're having a picnic. There are sandwiches, orange juice and apples. There's an orange fish in the river. There's a lizard on a rock. There are three cows.

3 Look at this picture. How is it different from picture A? Read and correct.

- Read the instructions and the sentences. Learners look carefully at picture B and correct the sentences individually or in pairs. Check answers. Note that in the exam, the pictures are not labelled A and B.


Key: 1 In picture B, there are four cows in the field.
2 In picture B, there are no leaves on the grass / there aren't (any) leaves on the grass.

4 Look and say.

- Say *Now look at the pictures again. Focus on the first speech bubble and ask a learner to complete it.*
- Learners talk about how to complete the other sentences in pairs. Check answers.

Extra support Do all three sentences as a class.

Key: 1 water 2 her boots 3 a duck


-  Point to the monkey at the bottom of the page and read the sentence. Ask learners to look at another picture with lots of details, e.g. Pupil's Book page 4 or 9. In pairs, they make as many sentences as they can.

Activity Book, page 16
See pages TB120–132

Ending the lesson

- Show some Countryside and Daily routines flashcards. Ask learners *What is it? What colour is it? What's he/she doing? Tell me about it.* Put learners into groups of four. Each learner chooses and describes one of the flashcards. Other learners try to guess which it is.


3. Pupil's Book page 16, Preparation for speaking part 1. Two exercises.

A1 Movers 


1 Practise with a friend.

What's your name? How old are you?

2 Look at this picture. What can you see?

A 

3 Look at this picture. How is it different from picture A? Read and correct.

B 

1 In picture B, there are four sheep in the field.
2 In picture B, there are some leaves on the grass.

In picture B, there are ...


4 Look and say.

1 I can see orange juice in picture A. Here, it's ...

2 In picture A, she's washing her hands. In this picture, she's washing ...


3 There's a lizard on the rock. In picture B, there's ...


You can say *Here, there's / there are ...*
and *There isn't/aren't.*




Preparation for Speaking Part 1

4. Activity Book page 16, Speaking part 1 “Find differences” type exercise.

A1 Movers 

1  4.12 Find four differences.



Speaking Part 1

M. Class 2 Speaking Practice Worksheet

Speaking Praticce - 1.ºCEB

Disciplina: Inglês |
28 de outubro de 2024

Ano Letivo: 2024/2025

Nome:

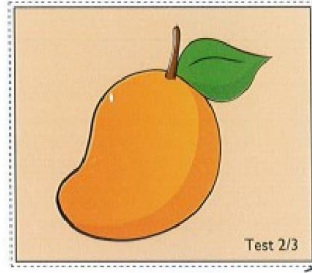
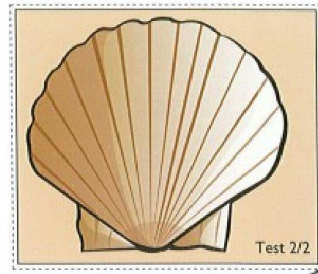
N.º:

Ano: 2º

Turma:



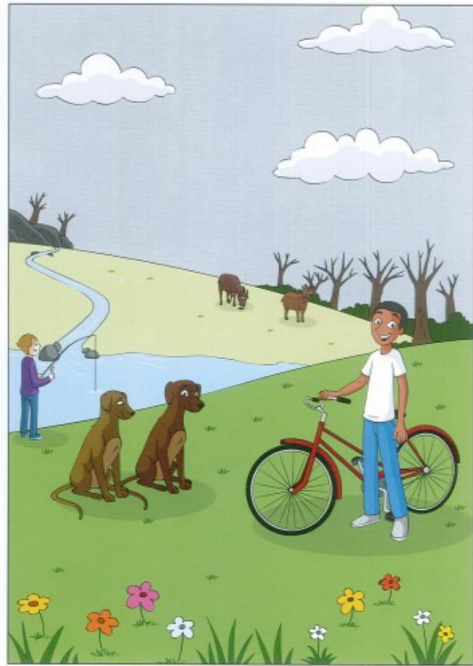
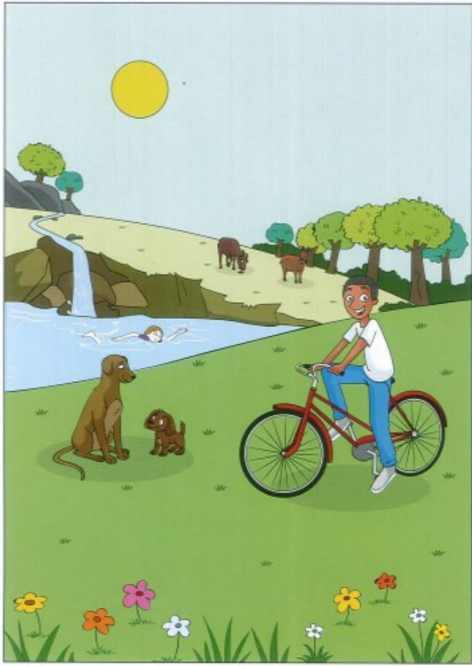
SPEAKING SCENE PICTURE



SPEAKING SCENE OBJECT CARDS

Summary of procedure's for speaking scene picture – Teacher Material

1. The examiner asks the child to point to objects on the scene picture, e.g. 'Where's the Bird?'
The examiner asks the candidate to point to two object cards and gives instructions to place them in different locations on the scene picture, e.g. 'Put the apple in front of the birds.'
2. The examiner asks the candidate some questions about the scene picture, e.g. 'What's this?' (Answer: a book) 'What colour is it?' (Answer: green). The examiner also asks the child to describe an object from the scene, e.g. 'Tell me about this man.'
3. The examiner asks the candidate questions about four of the object cards, e.g. 'What's this?' (Answer: a dog) and 'What's your favorite animal?'
4. The examiner asks the candidate some personal questions on topics such as age, family, school and friends, e.g. 'What's in your classroom?'



FIND THE DIFFERENCES

Summary of procedure's Find the Differences – Teacher Material

| Part | To do | To say | Student's response (variations possible) | Back-up questions |
|------|--|--|---|---|
| 1 | [The usher brings the student in.] | [The usher to the examiner: <i>Hello, this is (student's name).</i>] <i>Hello (student's name), my name's (examiner's name).</i> <i>How old are you?</i> | <i>Hello.</i> <i>Nine. etc.</i> | <i>Are you nine?</i> |
| | Show the student both find the differences pictures. | <i>Look at these pictures. They look the same, but some things are different. It's sunny here, but it's cloudy there.</i> <i>What other different things can you see?</i> | <i>There's a waterfall here, but there's a river there.</i> <i>There are lots of leaves on the trees here, but there are no leaves on the trees there.</i> <i>This man is sitting on his bike, but this man is standing next to his bike.</i> <i>There's a woman swimming here, but there's a boy fishing there.</i> | <i>Point to differences the student doesn't mention. Give first half of response: There's a waterfall here ...</i> <i>There are lots of leaves on the trees here ...</i> <i>This man is sitting on his bike ...</i> <i>There's a woman swimming here ...</i> |

N. Class 4 Listening Practice Lesson Plan



ESCOLA
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POLITÉCNICO
DO PORTO

Mestrado Em Ensino De Inglês No 1º Ciclo Do Ensino Básico

Listening Practice Class 2

Lesson Plan

3rd Grade Level: A1

Porto, 2024/2025

1. Methodological contextualization

This listening-focused lesson is designed to enhance students' comprehension skills and prepare them for the YLE Movers Exam. By engaging with a worksheet that mirrors the structure and expectations of the exam, students are encouraged to process auditory input, connect it with corresponding visual stimuli, and respond accurately. These objectives align with the communicative and task-oriented focus of language teaching, supported by a range of established theoretical frameworks. The activities in this lesson target A1 level proficiency, as outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), emphasizing the ability to understand familiar phrases, follow straightforward instructions, and extract specific information in predictable contexts.

The lesson is structured around Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles, which emphasize the importance of meaningful tasks in promoting language acquisition (Ellis, 2003). By framing the listening activity as an authentic and purposeful task, students are placed in a scenario that replicates real-world communication and exam conditions. This approach enables learners to engage with the target language in a way that is both practical and relevant, fostering confidence and fluency.

Central to the design of the lesson is Swain and Canale's Communicative Competence Theory (1980), which identifies four essential competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. Linguistic competence is addressed as students decode vocabulary and grammatical structures embedded in the listening task. Sociolinguistic competence is integrated through the culturally grounded context of the activity, simulating real-life interactions. Discourse competence is promoted as students connect auditory input with visual and written components, emphasizing cohesion and coherence. Strategic competence, meanwhile, is developed during the collaborative review phase, as students employ problem-solving strategies and engage in peer-assisted learning.

The lesson further draws on Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), which posits that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current level of proficiency ($i+1$). The listening activity is carefully designed to align with A1-level expectations, presenting language that is accessible yet sufficiently challenging to promote growth. This ensures that students can engage with the material confidently while still encountering new structures and vocabulary that expand their linguistic repertoire.

Building on Krashen's theory, the lesson incorporates Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996), which emphasizes the role of meaningful interaction in language learning. During the collaborative phase of the lesson, students work together to compare answers, clarify misunderstandings, and negotiate meaning. This peer interaction not only reinforces comprehension but also encourages learners to articulate their thoughts and refine their understanding through dialogue.

The CEFR A1 level descriptors serve as a guiding framework for this lesson, focusing on the ability to comprehend simple spoken language in familiar contexts. The tasks within the lesson are aligned with these descriptors, ensuring that students are practicing skills directly relevant to their proficiency level. By targeting key listening objectives, such as recognizing familiar words and extracting specific details, the lesson supports students' progression within the A1 band.

Lastly, the lesson incorporates Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which underscores the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development. Through teacher support and peer collaboration, students operate within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), enabling them to achieve tasks that may initially be beyond their independent capabilities. This scaffolding is gradually withdrawn as students gain confidence and proficiency, fostering both linguistic and cognitive growth.

By synthesizing these theoretical foundations, the lesson provides a robust framework for developing listening comprehension at the A1 level. The integration of TBLT, Communicative Competence Theory, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, CEFR guidelines, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory ensures that students are not only equipped for exam success but also for real-world communication. Through meaningful tasks, collaborative learning, and guided input, this lesson creates an environment that supports both language acquisition and broader cognitive development.

2. Lesson Plan

| The pupils already know | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic listening comprehension strategies, including identifying specific details in spoken texts. • Familiar vocabulary related to topics commonly found in YLE Movers Exam contexts (e.g., people, places, daily activities). • Simple sentence structures that are used in questions and answers during listening tasks. | |
| Summary | |
| <p>This lesson focuses on preparing students for the YLE Movers Exam listening section by engaging them in a structured listening activity. Using the provided worksheet, students will practice listening for specific information and matching what they hear to written and visual cues. The lesson incorporates strategies to enhance their listening accuracy, such as focusing on key words, interpreting context, and checking comprehension collaboratively.</p> | |
| Lesson objectives | Lesson outcomes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve students' ability to understand and extract specific details from spoken English at the A1 level. • To familiarize students with the format and expectations of the YLE Movers Exam listening section. • To enhance confidence and accuracy in listening comprehension through collaborative practice and teacher feedback. | <p>By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will complete the listening worksheet with a high degree of accuracy, demonstrating improved comprehension of spoken English. • Students will articulate strategies for understanding listening tasks, such as identifying key words and interpreting context. • Students will actively participate in the review phase, discussing answers and clarifying misunderstandings. |

| Anticipated obstacles | Solutions | |
|--|--|-----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may struggle to recognize key words or phrases during the listening task, leading to misunderstandings. • Some students may lose focus during the listening task, particularly if they find it challenging. • Learners with limited exposure to authentic listening tasks might find it difficult to process spoken language at a natural pace. • Uneven participation during the review phase could limit peer learning opportunities. • Time constraints may limit the opportunity for thorough review and clarification. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a pre-listening activity where students predict key words they might hear based on the worksheet's visuals and context. • Keep the audio segments short and play them multiple times as needed. Pause between segments to allow students to reflect and write down answers. • Before playing the audio, model an example sentence and emphasize listening for the most relevant details rather than every word. • Use pair or small group discussions before reviewing as a class, ensuring all students have a chance to share and compare answers. • Prioritize key questions during the review and provide follow-up explanations for commonly misunderstood items. | |
| Assessment | Lesson duration | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess students' ability to complete the listening worksheet accurately, focusing on their understanding of specific details in the audio. • Monitor for improvement in identifying key words and interpreting context during the task. • Observe students' engagement during the pre-listening activity and their willingness to predict key words or discuss answers in pairs or groups. • Note contributions during the class review phase and evaluate their ability to explain and justify their answers. • Evaluate students' application of strategies, such as identifying key details, listening for contextual clues, and using visuals to support comprehension. • Assess how effectively students work with peers during pair or group discussions, providing and receiving constructive feedback to improve understanding. | <p>60 minutes.</p> <hr/> <th style="text-align: center;">Materials</th> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheet • Board | Materials |

3. Lesson Procedures

| Activities | Time |
|---|------|
| <p>Step 1 – Opening routine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greetings - The lesson starts at the door where the teacher greets the pupils and asks how they are feeling, to create a welcoming environment.• Summary copywriting | 5' |
| <p>Step 2 – Part 1 Exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play the audio for Part 1: Listen and draw lines. Ensure students understand the task and follow the example provided. Allow them time to process the information and complete the activity as they listen. The audio will auto-replay twice.• Review the answers for Part 1 as a class. Call on students to share their responses and explain what they heard. Replay sections of the audio if necessary to clarify any errors or misunderstandings. | 10' |


| | |
|---|-----|
| <p>Step 3 – Part 2 Exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play the audio for Part 2: Listen and write. Direct students to focus on writing the correct information based on what they hear. Allow sufficient pauses between sections of the audio if needed. Audio will auto-replay. • Review answers for Part 2 as a class. Ask volunteers to read their responses aloud and explain how they arrived at their answers. Write any difficult or commonly misunderstood phrases on the board for clarification. | 10' |
| <p>Step 4 – Part 3 Exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to Part 3: Listen and tick the box. Explain the task and ensure students understand how to choose the correct option. Play the audio, pausing as necessary to allow students to think and tick their answers. The audio will auto reply twice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the answers for Part 3 as a group. Encourage students to justify their choices, referring to what they heard. Replay specific segments of the audio for reinforcement if students struggle with certain questions. | 10' |
| <p>Step 5 – Part 4 Exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to Part 4: Listen and draw lines. Play the audio and instruct students to draw the correct lines based on the relationships or positions described. Allow time for students to complete this carefully. • Review the completed answers as a class. Provide a correct version on the board or explain each line while playing back key parts of the audio for verification. | 10' |

| | |
|---|-----|
| <p>Step 5- Part 5 Exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play the audio for Part 5: Listen, color, and write. Guide students to follow the example and carefully complete the coloring and writing tasks based on what they hear. Ensure they have time to process both instructions. • Review the coloring and writing activity with the class. Highlight correct answers and explain any unclear instructions. Use this opportunity to reinforce listening strategies and provide final feedback. | 10' |
| <p>Step 12 – Wrap-Up</p> <p>Conclude the lesson by summarizing the key strategies for effective listening. Praise students for their effort and progress, tidy-up and go routine.</p> | 5' |

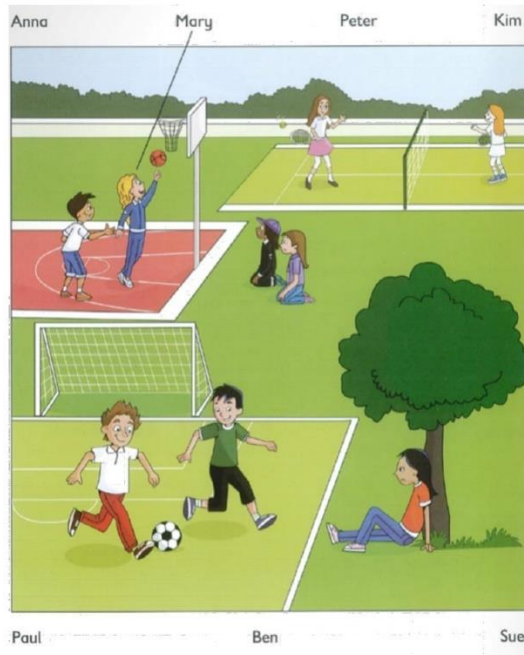
O. Class 4 Listening Worksheet

External resources.

1. Listening Worksheet

| | | |
|---|--|---------------|
|  | Listening Practice Name: _____ | January, 2025 |
|---|--|---------------|

Part 1
Listen and draw lines. There is one example.



Part 2

Listen and write. There is one example.



Mr Beard's new pet

Mr Beard's pet is a: kitten

Colour:

Age: weeks

Likes to: run and

Eats: kitten

Name:

Part 3

Listen and tick the box (✓). There is one example.

What's the matter with Paul?



A



B



C

1 Which man is Mary's father?



A

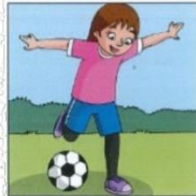


B



C

2 What's Jane doing now?



A

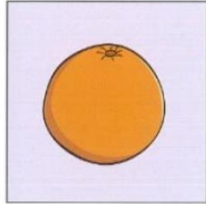


B

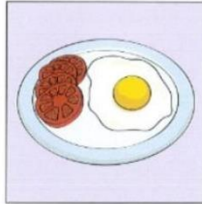


C

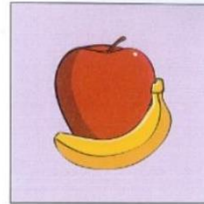
3 What did Fred have for breakfast today?



A



B



C

4 What work does Sue's mum do?



A

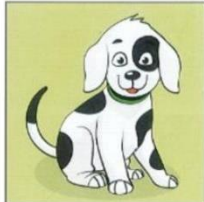


B



C

5 What present did Kim get yesterday?



A









B



C

Part 4

Listen and draw lines. There is one example.



Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

A line is drawn from the elderly woman to the word 'Monday'.

Part 5

Listen, colour and write. There is one example.



P. Class 3 Speaking Practice “Whole Class” Lesson Plan



ESCOLA
SUPERIOR
DE EDUCAÇÃO
POLITÉCNICO
DO PORTO

Mestrado Em Ensino De Inglês No 1º Ciclo Do Ensino Básico

Speaking Whole Class

Lesson Plan

3rd Grade Level: A1

Porto, 2024/2025

1. Methodological contextualization

This speaking-focused lesson builds on previously introduced descriptive vocabulary and family-related terms from the "Family at Home" unit, with a focus on enhancing students' spoken fluency and accuracy. The lesson incorporates comparative adjectives and physical descriptors in interactive, whole-class activities designed to foster essential communication skills, collaboration, and critical thinking—key competencies for thriving in a modern, interconnected society.

The lesson is divided into three progressive activities, each designed to scaffold speaking skills and encourage active participation. The first activity, "Guess Who Am I?", invites students to describe a character using physical traits while their classmates attempt to identify the character. Each student at a time has a physical card depicting the character for them to describe, and a projection of all possible characters is displayed on the board for the rest of the class to view. This activity promotes articulation, group interaction, and active listening, as students engage with the speaker's clues and guess the character.

The second activity is a "Find the Difference" exercise, which presents two sets of images - a group of four people on a train and a boy in his room. These images are projected for the class to view. Students work together to identify the differences between the two pictures, but instead of simply stating the differences, they must try to use full sentences. For example, "In picture A, the shoes are red. In picture B, the shoes are yellow."

The third activity is a "One Odd Out" game that focuses on family members. The class views four sets of images, each depicting four people. In each set, one family member stands out because they differ in an attribute such as age, size, or hair type. For example, in one row, the odd one might be the older family member, while in another it could be the thinner family member. Students must identify which family member is the "odd one out" and explain why, using comparative language. For example, "The father is thinner than the mother and the sons." Following the identification, students can be prompted by the teacher to describe one of the other family members, encouraging them to apply comparative language to describe physical traits. For instance, "The mother is shorter than the father and has wavy hair." This activity strengthens students' abilities to compare and describe family members in context while reinforcing their vocabulary and grammar skills.

Throughout the lesson, constructivist principles are at the core of the methodology, allowing students to build on prior knowledge and apply new grammar structures in meaningful, dynamic settings. Behaviourist techniques, including clear modeling, structured practice, and immediate feedback, are used to help students internalize the target language. Visual aids, such as character cards and projected images, support multisensory learning, catering to diverse learning preferences. By promoting group interaction, this lesson fosters collaboration and teamwork, which are essential skills in the 21st-century classroom and beyond. This lesson also places a strong emphasis on critical thinking and creativity. Students are encouraged to observe, analyze, and describe characters and family members in detail, integrating new grammar structures with descriptive language. By incorporating humor and playful elements, such as exaggerated physical traits, the activities keep students engaged and motivated to participate.

Ultimately, this lesson not only equips students with the linguistic tools they need but also prepares them for the demands of modern society, where effective communication, collaboration, and critical thinking are vital. By practicing descriptive and comparative language in meaningful contexts, students are empowered to use English confidently in real-world situations and future academic challenges.

2. Lesson Plan

| The pupils already know | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic vocabulary for describing physical characteristics (e.g., tall, short, black hair, glasses) from previous units. • How to use family-related vocabulary (e.g., father, mother, son, daughter, grandparents) introduced in the "Family at Home" unit. • The structure of a descriptive sentence and simple comparative adjectives. • Cambridge speaking exercise structure. | |
| Summary | |
| <p>This lesson focuses on speaking practice for the whole class, using descriptive and comparative language in engaging and interactive tasks. The lesson is structured into three activities: a guessing game where students describe characters using physical traits, a "Find the Difference" activity, and a "One Odd Out" game involving family members where students compare and contrast physical attributes. These activities are designed to promote speaking fluency, reinforce grammatical structures, foster collaboration, and develop critical thinking skills in a dynamic, supportive environment.</p> | |
| Lesson objectives | Lesson outcomes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To describe people using physical descriptors accurately and fluently. • To construct sentences using comparative adjectives (e.g., "Jack is taller than Jill") with attention to correct grammar rules. • To identify family roles and compare family members using descriptive and comparative language. | <p>By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will describe and identify characters accurately based on physical descriptors. • Students will construct comparative sentences using correct grammar and syntax. • Students will engage in a whole-class discussion, confidently using family-related vocabulary and descriptive adjectives. • Get familiarised with speaking exercises similar to A1 Mover of Cambridge. |
| Anticipated obstacles | Solutions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students might struggle to remember descriptive and family-related vocabulary. • Students may find it challenging to form sentences using comparative adjectives correctly, especially with irregular forms or spelling changes. • Some students might hesitate to speak in front of the whole class. • Students may not understand how to describe a character without naming them directly. • Some activities might take longer than expected. • Initial reaction to the guessing game – Activity 1, may be positive but will take a considerable amount of time in the first try. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support students in recalling descriptive and family-related vocabulary throughout the lesson by providing reminders and encouraging peer assistance. • Provide a clear explanation and examples of comparative forms on the board. Use sentence starters and scaffolding to guide students during activities. • Encourage peer support during the speaking tasks and model answers to build confidence. • Model the activity beforehand by describing a character yourself and asking the class to guess. Clarify the rules and provide a checklist of possible descriptive phrases to help students. |

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activities may take more time than expected given the necessity to explain them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate specific time limits for each activity and provide reminders to ensure the lesson stays on track. Focus on completing the main objectives first, with extra time for additional questions if possible. |
| Assessment | Lesson duration |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor students' engagement during the activities. • Assess their ability to describe characters using adjectives accurately and fluently. • Observe students during the activity where they use comparative adjectives. Evaluate their use of grammar rules, such as applying irregular forms (better, worse). | 60 minutes. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the family-focused task, assess how well students identify family members and use descriptive vocabulary. • Check their ability to answer questions and compare family members using the correct structures. • Note overall participation, effort, and collaboration during group and whole-class activities. • Provide immediate feedback to support their confidence and correct any errors in real-time. | Materials |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projector to display the characters for Activity 1 and the family picture for Activity 3. • Printed character cards for Activity 1 (11 characters with distinctive physical traits). • Whiteboard and markers for modeling comparative structures and vocabulary. • Visual aids (c.g., images or flashcards) for family vocabulary in Activity 3. • Timer or stopwatch to manage activity transitions and maintain time limits. |

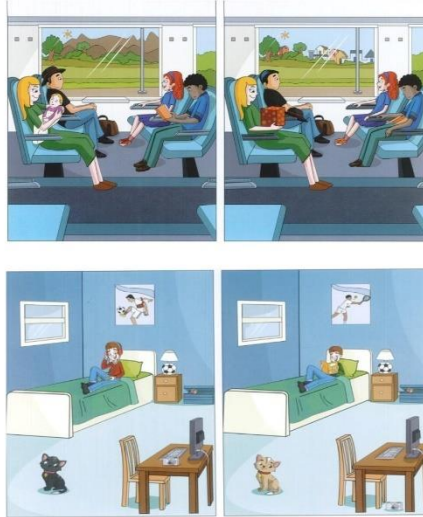
3. Lesson Procedures

| Activities | Time |
|--|------|
| <p>Step 1 – Opening routine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greetings - The lesson starts at the door where the teacher greets the pupils and asks how they are feeling to create a welcoming environment. • Summary copywriting | 5' |
| <p>Step 2 – Activity 1: Guess Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project an image with 11 characters on the board. These characters should have distinctive and easily describable physical traits (e.g., height, hair color, age). Ensure all students can see the projected images clearly. Distribute printed character cards to individual students randomly, ensuring each student knows their assigned character. The cards can be either distributed all at once or one at a time. <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the rules to the class. The pupils will be given cards, and they must be kept hidden from the other classmates. Each student who receives a card will describe their assigned character without saying their number. The goal is for the pupils to use descriptive adjectives to give clues about their character (e.g., “This person is tall and has curly hair”). • The teacher calls on a student to begin. Encourage them to speak in full sentences and avoid vague descriptions. Prompt them to use vocabulary like tall, short, black hair, curly hair, young. The rest of the class listens to the description and guesses who the character is. Students raise their hands to guess and must answer in complete sentences (e.g., “Is it number three?”). The pupils can also, if possible, use the family member vocabulary to guess the character described (e.g., “Is it number 5? Is it the grandfather?”). • Provide scaffolding if a student struggles, such as sentence starters (e.g., “This person is...”; “They have got...”). Offer praise and corrective feedback to encourage participation. • Continue until all characters have been described. Summarize some of the descriptive language used and highlight effective sentences. Transition to the next activity after completing this step. | 15' |

Step 3 – Activity 2: Find the Differences


15'-20'

- Project two sets of images, one at the time: one set shows four people on a train, and the other shows a boy in his room. The images should be clearly visible to all students. Ensure the characters in each image have differences that are easily noticeable (e.g., different clothing, accessories).



- Ask the students to work together to find the differences between the two pictures. They should take turns describing what they see, using full sentences. For example:
 - “In picture A, the shoes are red, but in picture B, they are yellow.”
 - “In picture A, the woman is taller than in picture B.”
 - “The boy in picture A is wearing glasses, but the boy in picture B is not.”
- After each difference is pointed out, ask students if they agree with the comparison. Example follow-up questions:
 - “Do we agree with that?”
 - “Do you think that’s the difference?”
- Once the differences are fully identified, the teacher can ask the students to describe the characters in the image (this step is optional, depending on time or if it is deemed necessary). For example:
 - “Can you describe the woman in picture A? What does her hair look like? What colour is it?”
 - “What about the boy in picture B? Is he younger or older than the man on picture A?”

Note: This follow-up activity is optional, depending on how much time is available and other external factors.

| | |
|--|--------|
| <p>Step 4 – Speaking whole-class speaking activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display four sets of images of people/family members on the board. Each set should have three people who share similar traits (e.g., age, height, body type), and one person who stands out because of a difference (e.g., one family member is older, thinner, shorter, or has different hair). Each set should include a mix of characters (father, mother, child, etc.), with one clearly differing from the others in a specific attribute.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the students to look at the four sets of family images and identify the family member who is different from the others in each one of them. They should justify their choice using comparative language. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The father (is the odd one out) because he is older than the mother.” - “The daughter (is the different one) because she is shorter than the brother.” <p>Note: Encourage students to use comparative language as much as possible when describing the characters.</p> • After identifying the "odd one out", the teacher can ask a follow-up question to encourage further description. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Can you describe the mother? How does she compare to the father and son?” - “Can someone tell me more about the boy in the second picture? Is he shorter or taller than his sister?” <p>Note: This follow-up activity is optional, depending on how much time is available and other external factors.</p> • Rotate turns among students to ensure everyone participates and has a chance to describe a family member or find the “odd one out”. Offer sentence starters, such as “This person is...” or “The father is taller than the son.” If needed. | 15-20’ |
| <p>Step 6 – Closing routine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher recaps the key points of speaking assessment and sentence structures. Students can share what they found easy or difficult. • Tidy up and go routine | 5’ |

Q. Class 3 Speaking Practice Worksheet

Speaking Whole class

January 2025

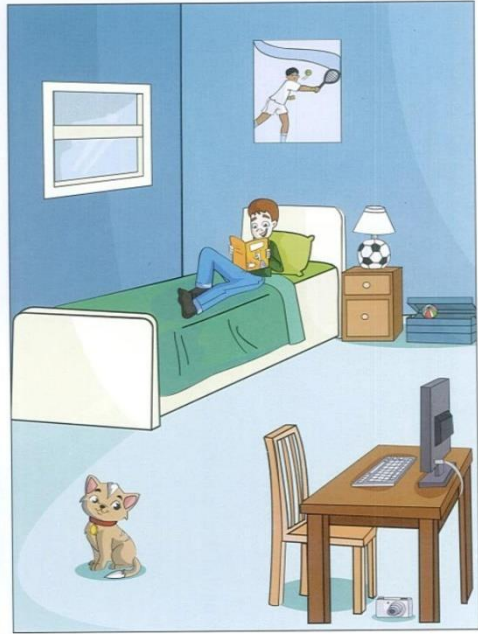
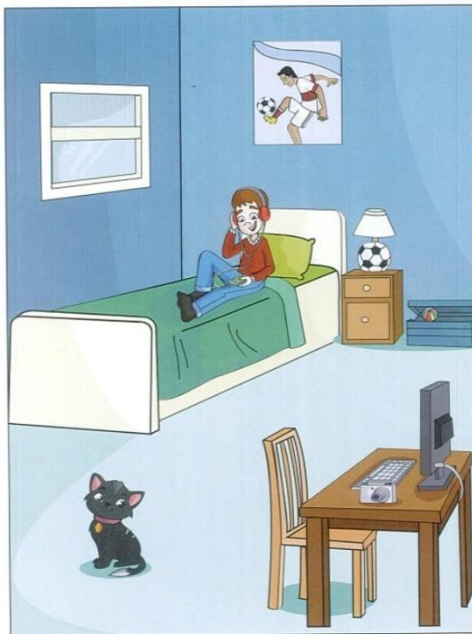
Activity 1 – Guess who



3. Activity 3 images



Activity 2 – Find the differences



Activity 3 – Odd one out

