

How Do We Use Language Exams as a Comparison Tool?

1 In the following, we show how the Bilingual.hu Program uses the language exam system to assess students' abilities and progress.

To promote a better understanding, we will first look at the language exam system in general.

Whatever language exam we are talking about, it is concerned with the determination of exam levels as compared to the **Közös Európai referenciakeretéhez** (CEF/**CEFR** = Common European Framework of Reference).

1/1 Comparison of Exam Systems

The following table shows some exam system categorisations of level testing and the corresponding names:

CEFR	Cambridge British Council	City&Guild		Origo ELTE Idegennyelvű Továbbképző Központ (Foreign Language Training Centre)	Euroexam
		YESOL	ESOL		
	YLE Starters				
A1 Breakthrough	YLE Movers	Basic	Preliminary		
A2 Waystage	YLE Flyers/ KET/KET for Schools	Elementary	Access	Junior	
B1 Threshold	PET/PET for Schools	Achiever		Alapfok (Elementary)	Euro B1 alapfok (elementary)
B2 Vantage	FCE/FCE for schools	Communicator		Középfok (Intermediate)	Euro B2 Középfok (Intermediate)
C1 Effective Operational Proficiency	CAE	Expert		Felsőfok (Undergraduate)	Euro C1 Felsőfok (Undergraduate)
C2 Mastery	CPE	Mastery			

1/2 Informative Links with Respect to Language Exams

A compilation of information on accredited language exam levels of accredited language exam centres, the exam process, prices, and marking used at undergraduate level can be found here: http://www.nyak.hu/doc/akk_nyelvek.asp. Information regarding exams can also be found on the websites of the individual exam centres.

An explanation of basic concepts (such as state-recognized, accredited) can be found at: <http://www.nyelvvizsgacentrum.hu/cikkek/alapfogalmak.php>.

The listed YLE exams are not accredited in Hungary, but the British Council organises exams on these levels. Further information about the exams, prices, dates, and registration deadlines can be found at: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/hungary-education-take-a-uk-exam-young-learners.htm> (the language can be changed to Hungarian).

Exam material is available at the exam centres and foreign language book shops. Moreover, material can be downloaded from the website: <https://www.teachers.cambridgeesol.org/ts/exams/examsforschools>; we can also obtain them.

1/3 Parts of the Flyers Exam

LISTENING	READING AND WRITING	SPEAKING
25 mins Maximum five shields	40 mins Maximum five shields	7-9 mins Maximum five shield

(The oral part of Starters and Movers is shorter.)

1/4 Evaluation of the Language Exam

Information regarding the evaluation of the language exam can be found at: (official information: <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-qualifications/young-learners/flyers/results>).

Officially there is no *satisfactory* or *unsuccessful* evaluation (there is no pass or fail). All children receive an award of shields. 5 shields represent the maximum result. Fewer shields show that the student still needs to develop.

As a general rule it can be said of every language exam evaluation that 40% achievement of the modules and 60% overall achievement are considered the acceptable minimum; 85-90% or higher result is regarded as particularly good.

1/5 The Structure of the FCE for Schools Exam

Each module requires a 40% result and a 60% total result corresponds to a successful exam.

FCE / FCEFS	READING AND USE OF ENGLISH	WRITING	LISTENING	SPEAKING
Time allowed	1hr 15 minutes	1 hr 20 mins	40 mins	14 mins
(% of total)	40%	20%	20%	20%

1/6 Description of the Language Exam Levels

The Common European Framework of Reference (Közös Európai Referenciakeret (CEF/**CEFR**)) determines that at each level of the target language as a second language students must have reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

1/6/A. Basic User

A1 – Minimum

At this level, the language user is able to understand and use basic everyday phrases that occur in a specific situation. The user is capable of introducing him/herself and others, is able to say where he/she lives, who he/she knows. The user is able to communicate in the given foreign language if the communication partner speaks slowly and clearly and is willing to help.

A2 - Elementary

At this level, the language user is able to use language in simple sentences and use frequently used expressions that occur in everyday, simple, routine situations (shopping, place of abode, work, family). The language user is able to talk about him/herself and their family, direct surroundings, and things directly associated with them.

B1 – Threshold Level

At this level, the language user is able to use simple related text and understand general topics (work, school, leisure, travel). The user is able to talk about past events and experiences, about dreams and ambitions and is capable of briefly explaining reasons and opinions.

1/6.B Independent User

B2 - Intermediate

At this level, the language user is able to understand the main point of a more complex text. This applies to both concrete and abstract topics, including the user's field of specialization. The user is able to communicate relatively fluently and spontaneously, which in turn means that he/she can have conversations with native speakers on a level that can be enjoyed by both parties. The user is capable of producing detailed and clear text on a diversity of topics and is able to express various opinions explaining their advantages and disadvantages.

1/6.C Proficient User

C1 – Advanced

The advanced user can express him/herself and rarely has to search for words and expressions. He/she uses the language flexibly and effectively for a variety of social and professional purposes. He/she can express his/her thoughts precisely and address his/her comments to his/her speaking partner. He/she can describe complex things clearly and in detail, also involving other topics,

1/6.d Native-Speaker Level

C2 – Graduate Level

The language user can easily take part in any conversation or discussion. He/she is able to use their specific phrases and colloquialisms. He/she is able to speak smoothly and accurately taking into consideration fine nuances. If he/she gets stuck, he/she is able to start again and express what he/she has to say in such a way that it is not even noticeable. The language user writes or expresses anything clearly and fluently, adapting their style to the situation. He/she presents the structure logically, which helps the listener to understand and remember the material.

2 Internal Assessment in the Bilingual.hu Program

In the beginning we used our own assessment. Parents' questions, however, always referred to whether there was any standard assessment system against which they could compare the progress of our students.

The **Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages Exam System** is known and used worldwide. It is the most professionally developed system and consists of carefully structured examination and preparation material, for students from quite a young age up to adulthood. From the above table it can be seen that the measurement system has been developed for learners of English as a second language in the earliest stages of the Cambridge school, this is the YLE (=young learners) Starters, Movers, and Flyers series.

This is why we chose this system, as well as the fact that it is used in many other English bilingual programmes in Hungary

2/1 Our Internal Assessment System

Thus we use an external international assessment system as our internal assessment system.

The **preparation** and „**mock exams**“ are carried out throughout the **entire school year**, without the parents being informed especially about this, as follows:

- Our teaching spreads language development in every bilingual lesson.
- In addition to the bilingual lessons, the language development opportunity is expanded in the English language lessons and the afternoon tutorials.
- 1 lesson out of the weekly 5 English language lessons is devoted the preparation of the Cambridge exam material.

Based on the age modules recommended by the **Cambridge system**, we start our internal assessment in the spring of the second year (Grade 2). The oral exams are conducted in April and May in the English language lessons and the tutorials.

2/1.a) Mock Exams

The **mock exams** are held in **spring** and they prepare the children for real exams with respect to the exercise types and the exam situation. The mock exams are taken under exam conditions. This is to ensure, on the one hand, that the results mirror the real abilities of the students and, on the other hand, to determine the number of points that the student would achieve if the exam were to be taken at an official exam institute. For official exams the exam centres can be contacted directly.

2/1.b Exam Results

The **exam results** are shown as a **percentage value** in the report (we will come back to the official evaluation of the exam later). Moreover, together with the end-of-year report we send home a video taken of the child talking to the native-English-speaking teacher. This conversation is an expansion of the oral exam and shows a more extensive discussion.

The results of the internal assessment **are not given in the form of marks**. The test results are considered as a part of the end-of-year results. However, the assessment shown in the report is a result of the child's work during the entire school year. The assessment result does not equal the assessment of a child's achievement during a whole year.

2./1.c Assessment in the Upper School

It is our experience that, although initially too easy, there does not exist any standardized system to which our results can be measured. Later there are challenges to meet the exam levels, which become more and more challenging.

Year 5 KET A2 – internal assessment

Year 6 PET B1 – internal assessment

Year 8 FCE for Schools B2, exam organised by Bilingual.hu through the examination members of the British Council.

In light of the results, whether a child takes the exam is based on the decision of the parents. The **official exam is not obligatory**. We help with the registration for an exam, but the entire exam itself is done at the exam centre. The costs of the exam are carried by the parents. Current prices and exam dates can be found at the website we mentioned above: www.britishcouncil.org. It is possible to take exams at other exam centres; it is not obligatory to go through the British Council.

2/2 National Survey

Nationally, there is no organized assessment in English. In schools with bilingual teaching programmes it is obligatory to have students assessed at the end of year 6, level A2 and year 8, level B1.