

STUDY ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This paper aims to present issues related to the situation of the English language level acquired by teachers in the pre-university educational sector in Călărași, the importance of acquiring language skills, general aspects about pre-university education in Călărași. These are some of the main aspects presented in the paper. Knowledge of English is important for a number of reasons. One of these is access to information that can only be found in English, much of the content on the Internet, books, specialized works, documentaries, movies, etc. Another reason to learn English is to get a better job. The requirements of certain positions are knowledge of English, so it gives you a chance to get a good job and the opportunity to progress professionally. The study was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire, which included 14 questions addressed to 174 teachers in pre-university education in Calarasi county.

Key words: education, English language, skills, schools

INTRODUCTION

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment, language competence includes lexical, phonetic, syntactic and other knowledge and skills of the language system [3]. The term language proficiency refers to “the intuitive knowledge of grammatical rules, which underlies the speech that a native sender has already formed and which enables him to produce and recognize correct messages [2]. Communication is a fundamental function in the educational sector, representing a precondition in performing all other functions. Communication is defined as the process of substantial energetic and/or informational exchange between elements of a system or between several systems. In the case of the educational system, it makes intrasystematic exchanges, such as material, affective-motivational, informational, and intersystematic exchanges, between the educational system and other systems [4]. English is an international language used in many sectors and fields of activity, trade, business, communications, aviation.

entertainment, science, diplomacy, etc. Due to the need to know English for several reasons, more than one billion people in the entire world population have knowledge of English, at least at a basic level, being the most studied language as a secondary language. The most important aspect is communication, that is performed mainly by means of a language, and without it, any type of activity, daily, simple or complex, cannot be perceived. Communication became indispensable in all aspects of social life [5]. The present paper aims at presenting aspects regarding the level of English language acquired by the teaching staff in the pre-university institutions in Călărași municipality, the importance of acquiring linguistic competences, general aspects on pre-university education in Călărași.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to carry out the study, we applied a non-standard questionnaire in fifteen state pre-university educational institutions in Călărași county, Călărași locality to gather information and opinions of 174 teachers on the importance of knowing English in

teaching, the preferred ways to learn skills in English, the skills they want to acquire in English. data on the age group in which they fall, gender, level of teaching, level of education, level of knowledge of the English language in which they are located, etc. The questionnaire contains 14 questions as follows:

- Q1- Which is your gender?
- Q2- Which is your education level?
- Q3- How old are you?
- Q4-What specialization did you obtain at the end of the studies?
- Q5-Which is your teaching level?
- Q6- Do you have English skills?
- Q7- Which is your level of English skills?
- Q8- Why did you learn English ?
- Q9- Were there any situations when you felt the need for English?
- Q10- In your teaching activity, do you consider necessary English?
- Q11- Did you participate in English learning programs?
- Q12- What types of materials would you like to study in English?
- Q13- In what context you consider that you would acquire English skills?
- Q14- What skills do you want to develop in English?

The questionnaire was applied in February 2019. The advantage of such research is to obtain accurate, rigorous, representative data, which can be statistically analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The pre-university system is an integral part of the national education constituted as a system, bringing together the state education units, private and confessional, authorized or accredited. It is organized by levels, forms of education and, where appropriate, fields and profiles, ensuring the necessary conditions for the acquisition of key competencies and for progressive professionalization [7]. The population of Călărași County was 295,496 inhabitants on July 2016, according to data provided by the Regional Directorate of Statistics [8]. Out of the total people living in poverty, 56.1% have a low level of education, 37.1% have a high level and 6.9% have a high

level of education. In the 2017-2018 school year, at the level of Călărași county, there were 101 educational units with legal status, of which 97 were state-owned. The promotion rate in 2017-2018 was 95.31% in primary education, 79.20% in secondary education, 72.16% in high school day education. The lowest percentage was 47.86% in post-secondary education [10]. As a result of the mobility actions of the teaching staff, there was a decrease of 97.12 in the number of norms/teaching positions from 2013 to 2019, in proportion to the decrease in the number of students and classes [9]. The questionnaire was applied in 15 educational institutions: "Mircea Vodă" Secondary School, Călărași; "Mihai Viteazul" Secondary School, Călărași; "Nicolae Titulescu" Secondary School, Călărași; "Tudor Vladimirescu" Gymnasium School, Călărași; "Constantin Brâncoveanu" High School, Călărași; Secondary School no. 7 "Gheorghe Florea" Călărași; "Carol I" Gymnasium School, Călărași; Calarasi Economic College, (the former commercial high school, in 1993, it received the name of economic and Services College Călărași)[6]; Barbu Știrbei Călărași National College (starting with the school year 1999-2000, it received the present name) [1]; Mihai Eminescu Theoretical High School Călărași; Danubius High School Calarasi; "Dan Mateescu" Technological High School, Calarasi; Calarasi Car Transport Technological High School; Ștefan Bănulescu Technical College Călărași; Sandu Aldea Agricultural College Călărași.

In the second subchapter we structured the sample by age categories, level of education, level of teaching, gender. The questionnaire was applied to 174 teachers from the 15 educational units.

Structure of respondents by gender

The structure of respondents by gender reflects that 79% of the sample members was represented by women, and the rest by men (Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of respondents on gender

No. crt.	Gender	No of answers	Percent
1.	Feminine	137	79
2.	Masculine	37	21

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

Structure of respondents by education level

At the question "Which is your education level?" 77% of respondents had high education, 14% graduated a Master study, 6% had post-university studies and only 3% had a medium training level (Table 2).

Table 2. Structure of respondents on study level

No. crt.	Study level	No of answers	Percent
1.	Medium	5	3
2.	High education	135	77
3.	Post university	10	6
4.	Master	24	14

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

Structure of respondents by age category

Among the respondents, the ones of 36-50 years have the highest share, followed by the ones of 51-65, while just 1% represents the young category of 20-25 years (Table 3).

Table 3. Structure of respondents by age category

No. crt.	Categories of age	No of answers	Percent
1.	20-25	2	1
2.	26-35	22	13
3.	36-50	84	48
4.	51-65	66	38

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

Structure of respondents by job specialization obtained at the end of the studies reflects a large variety of professions as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Specialization obtained by respondents

No crt.	Answer	No of answers	%
1.	Mathematics	25	15
2.	Biology	7	4
3.	French language	12	7
4.	Sports	4	2
5.	Primary education teacher	28	16
6.	Informatics	6	3
7.	Engineer	11	6
8.	Romanian language and literature	14	9
9.	Physics	5	3
10.	Psychologist	8	5
11.	Music education	4	2
12.	Chemistry	6	3
13.	History	11	6
14.	Geography	8	5
15.	Philology	4	2
16.	Theology	4	2
17.	Others	17	10

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

Structure of respondents by teaching level

Most of the questioned teachers have teaching charge for subjects at the high school level, accounting for 46%, while the lowest share of 16% belongs to the ones teaching pupils in primary schools (Table 5).

Table 5. Structure of respondents of teaching level

No. crt.	Teaching level	No of answers	Percent
1.	Primary	28	16
2.	Secondary	66	38
3.	High school	80	46

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

The structure of respondents related to English skills

At the question "Do you have English skills?", the answers proved that 77% have English skills (Table 6).

Table 6. English skills

Nr crt	Answer	No of answers	Percent
1	Yes	134	77
2	No	40	23

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

The structure of respondents by level of English learning

Regarding the level of English language learning, most of the respondents are at a beginner level, in proportion of 50%, followed by respondents who are at an intermediate level, in proportion of 41%, and the remaining 9%, is at an advanced level (Table 7).

Table 7. Level of English language

No. crt.	Level	No of answers	Percent
1.	Beginner	87	50
2.	Intermediate	71	41
3.	Advanced	16	9

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

At the question: "**Why did you learn English ?**", of the 174 respondents, 63% said that their reason for learning English was for personal development, 52% for communication, 18% for other situations, 6% for the current job and only 1% answered that they had learned English for a job abroad (Table 8).

Table 8. Reasons for English learning

No. crt.	Answer	No of answers	Percent
1.	For personal development	109	63
2.	For the present job	11	6
3.	For a job abroad	1	1
4.	For communication	90	52
5.	Other situations	32	18

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

At the question **"Were there any situations when you felt the need for English?"**, 98% of the interviewed persons answered yes, they needed English in various situations (Table 9).

Table 9. Situations when needing English

No. crt.	Answer	No of answers	Percent
1.	Yes	171	2
2.	No	3	98

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

Table 10. English need for teaching activity

No. crt.	Answer	No of answers
1.	Yes, for European projects developing	27
2.	Yes, for communication, information, documentation	51
3.	Yes, as it is an international language	28
4.	Yes, for personal and professional development	10
5.	Yes, for educational software using	15
6.	Yes, because there are terms, notions, neologisms, names in English	10
7.	Yes, to cope with the technology	8
8.	Yes, because it is useful in all activities	12
9.	No, because it is not useful for the study discipline I teach	7
10.	No, because children do not know well Romanian language	6

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

At the question **"In your teaching activity, do you consider necessary English?"**, the majority of respondents consider that it is important to know English in the teaching activity. 29% argued that English is necessary for communication, information, documentation, at an equal rate of 16%, respondents consider English important for European projects and because it is a language

of international circulation, 9% consider it is important for the use of educational software, 7% answered that English is useful in all activities, 6%, respondents believe that English is important for personal and professional development, and due to the fact that there are terms, notions, names, neologisms, taken from the English language. On the last two positions, at a level of 3%, the respondents do not consider English important because it is not useful for the study discipline they teach and the pupils do not yet know Romanian well (Table 10).

At the question **"Did you participate in English learning programs?"**, 73% answered "Yes" (Table 11).

Table 11. Participation in English learning programs ?

Nr. crt.	Answer	No of answers	%
1.	Yes	127	73
2.	No	47	27

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

At the question **"What types of materials would you like to study in English?"**, the results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Types of materials to study in English

No. crt.	Answer	No of answers	%
1.	Audio Material	101	58
2.	Video Material	78	45
3.	Interactive exercises	94	54
4.	Written materials	53	31

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

There were received the following answers: 31% respondents prefer the audio materials, 29% prefer the interactive exercises, 24% like the video materials and the rest of the respondents, in a percentage of 16 %, answered "I prefer written materials" (Table 12)

Regarding the context in which the interviewed teachers would learn English language skills, most of the respondents, 73%, consider language skills training under the guidance of a teacher as a good way to learn English, 33% chose online courses as a good way to learn English, 16% of them preferred school and the fewest of them, 8%,

considered college to be a good way to learn English language skills (Table 13).

Table 13. Context to acquire English skills

No. crt.	Answer	No of answers	%
1.	Online courses	56	33
2.	Linguistic skills courses with a teacher	127	73
3.	At school	27	16
4.	At faculty	13	8

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

The respondents' answers at the question "**What skills do you want to develop in English?**" are shown in Table 14.

Table 14. English skills developing

No. crt.	Answer	No of answers	%
1.	Oral expression	153	88
2.	Grammar	64	37
3.	Written expression	58	33
4.	General vocabulary	70	40
5.	Oral messages understanding	70	40
6.	Written messages understanding	59	34

Source: Results carried out by the author based on questionnaire.

The last question in the questionnaire refers to the skills that the subjects want to develop in English. Many of them chose several skills from the 6 they want to develop. Most respondents, 88%, chose oral expression as the ability they want to acquire, equally, in proportion of 40%, they chose as skills that they are interested in assimilating, the general vocabulary and comprehension of oral messages, 37% want to deepen their English grammar, 34% of them are interested in acquiring knowledge of written messages and 33% chose written expression.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper is to study the knowledge of English from the perspective of teachers. Nowadays, the knowledge of English has become a necessity, globally, more than a billion people with knowledge of English, at least basic, this being the most studied language as a secondary language. The most important aspect for which we need to know English is communication, which is

done mainly through a language, and without which no activity, everyday, simple or complex, can be conceived. Communication has become indispensable in all areas of social life [3].

Following the study, we found that the acquisition of skills in English is a plus for those who acquire communication skills in this language, English being a language of international circulation.

Some of the advantages of knowing English are: access to information that is only available in English; obtaining a good job, whose requirements include knowledge of English at a certain level; professional progress; communication with different people from different countries, assimilating knowledge about different cultures; facilitating travel to foreign countries, making it easier for us to manage; personal development, etc.

In order to carry out the case study, we applied a non-standard questionnaire among 174 subjects, represented by teachers from 15 pre-university institutions. Then we interpreted the questionnaire. In the surveyed sample, the largest share is held by women, who fall into the age category 36-50 years, have higher education, and teach in high school. Most of the interviewees are specialized as teachers in primary education. Regarding the English language skills, most respondents stated that they have language skills at a beginner level. The main reason they learned English is personal development. Most respondents consider it is important to know English in teaching activities. They freely and openly expressed their views on the need to know English, arguing in large part that it is necessary for communication, information, documentation; for the fact that English is a language of international circulation and for the development of European projects.

To a smaller extent, respondents do not consider it is important to know English, arguing that pupils do not yet know Romanian well and that English is not useful to them in the study discipline they teach.

Most respondents agree to participate in English language learning programs. The

context in which they prefer to study English is through language skills training courses under the guidance of a teacher, many of whom want to learn to express themselves orally. Throughout our lives we never stop learning, no matter how old we are and no matter how much knowledge we have acquired, there will always be opportunities to learn if we want to. Therefore, we believe that it is never too late for someone to learn English, given that it is an easy language to learn. Being spread everywhere, we inevitably intersect with it.

We consider that of all the many accessible methods of acquiring English language skills, attending a language skills training course under the guidance of a teacher is the most effective method in terms of the fact that the teacher sends the necessary information, organizes interactive activities according to the level of knowledge and the pupils shortcomings, it solves the problems encountered by them, facilitating the assimilation of knowledge, so that pupils are motivated to study and progress. In order to learn and improve a foreign language, it is important to practice the acquired knowledge as often as possible. Dialogue, reading and writing, constantly trained, are effective ways to increase the level of knowledge of the language, thus reducing the possibility of forgetting the knowledge acquired.

This paper presents the level and need for knowledge of English in the pre-university educational environment. Continuing education of teachers is indispensable in improving the development of teaching.

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