

Target group's profile	2
Attitude towards learning English	3
Learning English at their school.....	3
Why?	4
Describing the teachers.....	5
Why?	5
The Four Skills	6
Most difficult skills	6
Listening	6
Reading.....	7
Speaking.....	7
Writing.....	7
Favorite skills	7
Listening	8
Reading.....	8
Speaking.....	8
Writing.....	8
Summary: What is the best and what would you like to change?	8
What is the best thing about English lessons in your school?	8
What would you like to change?.....	10

Student-focused questions: questionnaire analysis

The survey was done amongst students from three primary schools which cooperate under the "English in Modern Times of Fluid Change" project - Escola Básica Fialho de Almeida (Portugal), Szent Gyorgy Katolikus Altalanos Iskola (Hungary) and Szkoła Podstawowa im. Powstańców Styczniowych, Osjaków (Poland).

Overall, 101 students have submitted their answers.

Target group's profile

The target group are students from Poland, Hungary, and Portugal, who have been learning English at school. They are all between 10 and 17 years of age, the average and the median age being 13.

The students have started learning English at various points of their lives:

- 23 students started learning before they reached the age of 7,
- 28 students - at the age of 7,
- 16 students - when they were between 8 and 9 years of age,
- and 15 students after they reached the age of 10.

The remaining answers were not conclusive and did not provide enough information (e.g. "2013", "I don't know").

Such a diversity not only in the age groups of the students, but also in the moment when they have started learning English (and, inevitably, the length of the period of learning) guarantees a diverse and complex approach to the project. The students do not only come from three different countries, but also have very varied experiences of learning English at school. Some have been experiencing it for many years, some have just started; some have had the experience of learning English in preschool or in other environments earlier, some have only begun learning when they started school (or even in their second, third, and sometimes even fourth or fifth year of school). Their background provides for a wide scope of answers that do not only focus on one or two aspects, but on a whole gamut of what they enjoy, what they don't like, and how in their opinion the system may be improved.

Attitude towards learning English

The attitudes towards learning English among the group were tested via a multiple choice question, for which each student could provide more than one answer. The answers to the question “How do you feel about learning English?” are as follows:

Answers	No. of students
English is important	75
I'm motivated.	54
Sometimes it's hard and difficult.	52
I think it's fun.	48
Working with my friends in a group is great.	35
Nothing special.	7
I don't need English.	2
It's boring.	1

After answering the multiple choice question, the students were asked to further elaborate on any ideas they may have and that are related to the previous question. In this part, almost 50% of students declared that they simply like learning English. Answers such as “English is the best”, “I like English”, “I like learning English” were the most common. In their responses, the students underlined also that they are motivated, because they see a practical component in learning English that can be realized immediately (e.g. understanding the lyrics of English songs, understanding the computer games they play etc.)

At the same time, almost 1/3 of the group has also noticed that English is important for their future – they feel they need to understand and speak English, as it is the lingua franca of our times, and that it will allow for better communication with foreigners while traveling, open more professional opportunities for them, etc. Very common were answers like “English is spoken all over the world” or just “I need English”.

Nearly 20% of the students have also mentioned the level of difficulty in learning English. About a half of that group stated, that English is difficult or very difficult for them; however, a similar percentage stated, that learning English is very easy for them.

Learning English at their school

The next question was put in the questionnaire in order to further deepen the understanding of how the students feel about learning English and what are their attitudes. This time the question was less general – the students were asked how they feel about learning English at their school. They were asked to use three adjectives to describe their feelings.

- The most prevalent answers were “interesting” (over 40% of students used that adjective) and “fun” or “funny” (around 35%), which for the purposes of this survey will be treated



synonymously, since the student's level of fluency did not always suggest that they know the difference between the two words.

- Almost 1/3 of the students also used words such as "necessary" or "useful", thus not really responding specifically to how they see English classes at their school. What is interesting, however, is that a further analysis of their answers shows, that this group has focused on future necessity and usefulness of knowing English because they are usually satisfied with the English lessons conducted at their schools – they belong to the group who answered "I like English" and "English is the best", and in the following sections they will describe their English teachers using adjectives such as "helpful", "patient", "friendly", and/or simply "nice".
- The balance between the percentage of students for whom the lessons are difficult and those for whom the lessons are easy is visible also in the answers to this question. Here, however, it has reached the level of almost 20% for each of the groups.
- Around 15% declare that the English lessons at their school are simply "good", at the same time underlining the aspect of motivation and stating that the lessons make them "happy".
- Only around 5% declare that lessons at their school are boring. No other negative adjectives (except for "hard" and "difficult", which may be interpreted this way) were provided by the students.

Why?

In the next question the students were asked to explain their answers. The explanations can be divided into five groups:

- One of the most popular explanations (almost 30% of the students) focused on the fact that the students simply like the language and enjoy learning it at school.
- Over 15% declared that for them English lessons are a welcome opportunity to learn something new. They enjoy the exercises that provide them not only with a chance to practice their English, but also with extra information about e.g. culture; they appreciate dynamic, interactive, and funny tasks.
- Over 10% underline that learning English is easy for them, which is motivational – they feel that they are good at it and they enjoy learning it because they can see the results quickly.
- In individual cases the students mentioned the negative reasons – difficulties with learning (less than 5%), "bad" English teacher (one case), lack of motivation (one case).

However, the most prevalent answer was again not directly connected to the question. Around 40% of students declared that their opinion is based on the fact that they will need English in their lives, therefore not referring to the reasons why they feel a certain way towards learning English *at their school*. Their justifications were rather focused on the certainty that knowledge of English language will open new work possibilities for them, enable them to communicate with foreigners e.g. while traveling, and give them access to English-language video games, movies, and TV series. The students pointed out that English is

the lingua franca of our world and they will simply need it to be actively included in the international society. It may however be understood either as motivation, which is a very important factor when it comes to attitude to learning a foreign language, or – again – as a signal, that the English classes at the school of each of the students who decided to focus on that issue simply meet their needs and expectations, therefore allowing the student to take one step ahead towards the bigger picture.

Describing the teachers

In the next section the students were asked to describe their English teachers. The table below shows the frequency of the most popular adjectives:

Adjective	No. of students
nice	39
helpful	31
fun, funny, has a sense of humor	30
clever, intelligent, smart	18
good	15
explains the material well	15
cool	14
patient, calm	11
kind	11
friendly	11

All of the above are unquestionably positive. The only negative adjectives that have appeared among the answers to this questions were: “boring” (4 students), “bad” (2 students), and “unfair” (1 student).

Why?

When asked for the reasons behind choosing the three adjectives, the biggest group (26 students) answered that their teacher is good at explaining the material. Almost as many (24 students) stated that their teacher is helpful. Interestingly, these reasons do not seem to correlate with the answers to the previous questions. The students who chose reasons such as “helpful” or “good at explaining” usually described their teachers as “nice”, “cool”, or “fun”. The ones who already described their teacher as “helpful” in the first section of the question explained their opinions by stating that they simply like the teachers, they like the way they teach, or that the lessons are interesting.

The third most popular answer was the often provided in all open questions expression of “liking” the teacher (14 students). 8 students underlined that their teachers are “nice”, “kind”, or “understanding”, and 7 more students expressed that their opinion results from the fact that the lessons or the forms of teaching are “fun” or “funny”. 4 students stated that their teachers are patient and explain things until

everyone understands them, without yelling at the class. In individual cases students have also pointed out that

- their teachers are very knowledgeable (“they know everything about English”, “they know a lot of things”),
- they care about their students,
- they are nice, but also demanding,
- they are always prepared for the lesson,
- and they provide the students with extra work to develop their skills.

The only explanation provided by a student who used adjectives such as “boring”, “bad”, and “unfair”, was “because they’re very boring and they are always upset”. The explanation does not however provide enough information to analyze how to change the teachers manner of teaching in order to meet the student’s needs for interesting lessons.

The Four Skills

The next section focus on the four basic skills in language learning, namely: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The questionnaire addresses the problems that student encounter while learning them by asking which skill is the most difficult for each student and why. At the same time, the question about choosing one’s favorite skill and explaining the choice allows to see not only the motivation for learning a particular skill, but also to see whether the favorite skills and the most difficult skills belong to two different groups, therefore allowing to define ‘favorite’ as ‘easy’. They also provide information on what is the most problematic skill for the students to develop and how to facilitate the process of its development.

Most difficult skills

In the question “When you're learning English - which skill is difficult for you?” the students were able to choose one or more answers. Their answers are as follows:

Skill	No. of students
listening	37
reading	12
speaking	45
writing	36

Listening

The students who chose listening as the most difficult skill for them to master focused mainly on three reasons that are somewhat interconnected. The one mentioned most often (by 12 students) was simply troubles with understanding spoken English. These students also mention that it is hard to understand when someone does not speak clearly or when someone is speaking too fast. Furthermore, as 4 students state, they are not always sure how certain words are pronounced, and therefore cannot understand them

when they hear them. In individual cases students also mention low quality of audio materials and issues related to troubles with concentration.

Reading

When it comes to writing, the biggest group (7 students) mention a general sense of difficulty or sense of lack of ability to read in English. 5 students address the fact that reading out loud is hard for them due to general pronunciation issues, and 3 students underline that reading is difficult for them because they have troubles with understanding both entire texts and/or new words that appear in them.

Speaking

The group that chose speaking as the most troublesome skill focuses mostly on the general sense of difficulty (8 students answered simply “it’s difficult”). An important issue is also, not surprisingly, pronunciation (7 students) and the fact that spelling does not always reflect nor suggest proper pronunciation (1 student). In individual cases the students mentioned stress resulting from public speaking in a foreign language (2 students), trouble with avoiding mistakes (1 student) and inability to express their thoughts (1 student).

Writing

The students who chose writing as the most difficult skill for them underlined first and foremost troubles with mastering proper spelling (12 students). They also mentioned lack of sufficient vocabulary to express oneself (4 students), general difficulty in writing (4 students), and troubles with applying proper grammar structure in written texts (3 students).

Favorite skills

In the question “When you're learning English - which skill is your favourite?” the students were allowed to choose only one option. The results show some correspondence to the results of previous question. The most often chosen answer – reading – was also the least often chosen in the question about the most difficult skill. However, that correspondence is not maintained in the case of other three skills, which may result from the fact that in the question about most difficult skills students were allowed to choose more than one answer.

The answers for this question are as follows:

Skill	No. of students
listening	26
reading	35
speaking	21
writing	19

Listening

The students who chose listening as their favorite skill to develop during English classes focused mainly on the fact that it is easy for them (9 students). They like listening, because the exercises do not pose too much difficulty and they can easily understand what is being said. 3 more students had a very similar approach – they enjoy listening because they can understand the text that is being read out. 6 students added that listening improves their knowledge of the language and that it is easier for them to learn via listening than via other types of activities. Some students (3 persons) mentioned also that listening is fun for them because they enjoy listening to the lyrics of the songs, and 3 persons simply chose listening because they “like” it.

Reading

The answers of the group who chose reading as their favorite skill were not too diverse. 17 students simply stated that reading is their favorite activity because they “like” it. Another 12 students focused on the fact that it is easy. For them activities connected with reading are something they “can”, and therefore enjoy to do. There is also one interesting answer that does not fit into any of the aforementioned categories, namely: “because the teacher can explain to me things I don’t understand.” This answer underlines the fact that during activities connected with reading there is space for immediate explanations or support from teacher.

Speaking

The students who chose speaking as their favorite skill provided simple reasons for their choice: that they simply “like” speaking (6 students) and that it is easy for them (4 students). However, 4 students pointed out that speaking is the best way for them to practice their English and develop their knowledge of the language. Another 2 students justified their choice by stating that speaking is fun, and one student stated a very important point – that during speaking one can hear and learn how to pronounce certain words properly.

Writing

Students who chose writing were not too original – they too focused on the fact that writing is easy for them and that it is something they can do (7 students). They also stated that they simply like writing (6 students). 2 students pointed out that they can remember words better when they write them down.

Summary: What is the best and what would you like to change?

The questionnaire concludes with two summarizing questions. Their purpose is to ask for general opinions on what the students like the best in English lessons and what they would like to change. The answers are a basis upon which further changes and development may be built.

What is the best thing about English lessons in your school?

The biggest group (14 students) chose working in groups as their favorite part of English lessons at their school, which is a clear suggestion that this form of activities is a welcome manner of making classes

interesting and enjoyable. The second most popular answer was learning vocabulary (10) – this part allows to see quick results, which is an important part of keeping the students motivated and encourage them to learn.

Among the most interesting answers was also doing exercises – unspecified form of exercises was chosen as the favorite activity by 7 students, 7 more students chose reading exercises as the best thing about English lessons, for 6 students speaking exercises are the most interesting part of the lessons. and listening and grammar exercises were mentioned by 4 and 3 students, respectively.

The aspect of learning more than just English was mentioned by 9 students, 5 of whom describe learning new things and/or gaining new information as their favorite part of English lessons. For 4 of them the most interesting part of the lessons are the visits from volunteers from other countries – they describe it as a way to learn about different cultures, other countries, and other people’s lifestyles.

3 students have also mentioned playing educational/language games and for 2 students the most fun part of the English lessons is translating texts.

What is the best thing about English lessons in your school?	No. of students
working in groups	14
learning vocabulary	10
the teacher and/or the manner of teaching	7
reading exercises	7
doing exercises	7
speaking exercises	6
learning new things, gaining new information	5
visits from volunteers	4
listening exercises	4
grammar exercises	3
playing language and/or educational games	3
translating texts	2

This part of the questionnaire has provided crucial information as to what activities should be included in learning English at school so that the needs of all or almost all students would be met. A variety of exercises that allow to practice the four skills (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) are of course the basis for all language-learning programs. Combining them with group work, vocabulary lessons that allow the students to see quick results of their efforts, and fun ways to learn more than just English via English-language materials, games, or meetings with people from other countries seems to be the perfect recipe for lessons that would engage all students in the classroom into active participation and learning.

What would you like to change?

The goal of the final question – “Would you like to change anything about English lessons in your school - what? Please explain why” – was to invite the students to actively participate and suggest changes that according to their opinions and experience are necessary and would be welcome. However, as could be predicted from the numerous positive answers to all the questions of the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority (almost 75%) declared that they would not change anything. Aside from that:

- 4 students declared that they would add more group work to the English lessons in their schools,
- 3 students would change their teacher or “the teacher's way of teaching”, because they don't understand everything,
- 2 students would prefer using less Polish and talking more in English during classes;
- and 2 declared that they would like to change something, but did not elaborate on what would that be or why would they change anything.

Other answers provided by individual students included:

- less grammar, because it's difficult;
- less and easier vocabulary;
- less writing
- no tests;
- pronunciation classes;
- learning to read in English;
- more games, more interactive classes;
- listening to pop songs during lessons;
- inviting more English volunteers to the classes;
- “the teacher should be more helpful for the students who are not doing too well”.

