The British Council and the Romanian-American Foundation

English for the Community: Baseline study report

February 2018

Report prepared by the *English for the Community* project team

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
AER	Association of Ecotourism in Romania
CCD	*Casa Corpului Didactic* (Teachers House)
CEFR	Common European Framework of reference for languages
CPD	Continuing professional development
EART	Skills for Employability: English for Agritourism and Rural Tourism
EPI	EF English Proficiency Index
ESL	Early school leaving
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICQ	Instruction checking question
ICT	Information and computer technology
IES	Institute of Educational Science
MNE	Ministry of National Education (from 2016)
MNESR	Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (to 2016)
PTR	Pupil-teacher ratio
RAF	Romanian-American Foundation
RATE	Romanian Association of Teachers of English
RODIS	*Regulamentul de organizare şi desfăşurare a inspecţiei şcolare* (Romanian school inspection framework)
SEBD	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
TAG	Teacher Activity Group
TfS	*Teaching for Success*
TTT	Teacher talking time

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1 The *English for the Community* project

The *English for the Community* project aims to enhance the teaching and learning of English in specific locations which have been selected as having substantial potential for the development of ecotourism. The project targets nine counties of Romania (Suceava, Neamţ, Harghita, Hunedoara, Maramureş, Bihor, Mureş, Sibiu and Braşov). These locations are described in detail in Section 6.1.

English is a key skill for ecotourism: it helps communities reach international audiences and share ideas with other agencies abroad. Effective skills in English are a gateway for young people to employment in the ecotourism sector and reduce the need to migrate to find work elsewhere. English school teachers are crucial to developing these skills and the project aims to provide professional development for over 150 teachers registering for the project. The project will be implemented from 1 November 2017 to October 2020 through a partnership between the British Council in Romania and the Romanian-American Foundation (RAF).

The Romanian-American Foundation (RAF) strengthens and promotes conditions for a sustainable market economy and a democratic society in Romania, focusing on areas where well-structured and targeted investments have the potential to create a significant change. Together with national partners and local leaders, the Foundation has created programmes along three strategic priorities: rural economy, technology and innovation, and civic engagement. The Foundation partners non-governmental organisations with a relevant track record, solid operations and policies and a permanent team, and also collaborates with organisations, changemakers and leaders with a shared vision and passion for developing the public good. Most of RAF's investments in rural economy focus on two niches that have been identified as vectors of economic development: support for small farmers and ecotourism. They are complemented with educational programs that contribute to the formation of skilled and well-prepared new generations of students that, in the long term, will support the sustainability of the Foundation's interventions.

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It creates friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the United Kingdom and other countries by making a positive contribution to the United Kingdom and the countries it works with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. The British Council has been operating in Romania since 1938 (2018 is its 80th anniversary), supporting cultural and educational exchange between Romania and Britain, with an emphasis on the teaching, learning and assessment of English, and works closely with partners, including government departments, teachers networks, schools and universities, and arts and civil society organisations.

A preliminary needs analysis was undertaken in late 2016 as an initial step of the project. The decision was taken to undertake a baseline study in the locations where the project operates.

The British Council believes that a baseline study is a crucial part of the project planning process for the following reasons:

- it informs project design and provides data which validates the development of a programme and model that will be relevant to the needs and requirements of the teachers and their teaching contexts
- it identifies appropriate standards and competencies to set as benchmarks and establishes a baseline against which the impact of future project achievements can be measured
- it enables all stakeholders' voices to be considered, therefore increasing initial buy-in for and commitment to any potential project
- it helps to build mutually beneficial relationships at all levels
- it supports the identification of potential talented teachers who may be involved in the project
- it provides direct experience for project personnel of the on-the-ground realities and facilities available for teaching and learning.

The *English for the Community* baseline study therefore aimed to:

- provide data to inform project design and insight on the needs of teachers and learners in addition to that gained through the 2016 needs analysis
- assess the current levels, teaching practices and needs of teachers and learners in grades 5 to 12 in the nine locations selected by the project
- investigate the main areas for development of English language teaching and learning in the locations which future training interventions might usefully address
- identify teachers who could be nominated to go through a further selection process to become project Local Facilitators
- assess the extent to which project design is relevant for the context and make recommendations as to the design of future project components.

This report aims to summarise the main findings of the baseline study and to assess the extent to which baseline findings endorse decisions made regarding project design.

2 Executive summary

This report describes the findings of the *English for the Community* baseline study which was undertaken in January 2018. Data was collected through the baseline study on the current levels, teaching practices and needs of teachers and learners in eight of the nine locations. The study was carried out by the team of *English for the Community* Country Trainers, accompanied in two locations by the *English for the Community* Academic Advisor between 15 January and 26 January 2018. Visits were made to 24 schools and a total of 28 classroom observations were undertaken, using standardised tools. The views of school inspectors, head teachers and learners were also collected using British Council *Teaching for Success* procedures. In addition, data collected from an email survey of 151 teachers and a focus group held in each location in late 2016 was analysed and data from four preliminary visits to one location by the Academic Advisor in November 2017 was also used to support the findings of the baseline study. Findings are presented in this report.

Findings included identification that teachers had a comparatively high level of English and that any professional development initiative should address pedagogic skills development rather than language proficiency. Results also showed that teachers had a significant appetite for support from a continuing professional development (CPD) initiative in specific areas of the teaching and learning of English. Teachers highlighted the need for more support for developing learners' pronunciation, writing, listening and speaking skills in a range of engaging ways and the need to make English language learning more motivating for learners. There was also a considerable measure of consensus of opinion between head teachers, school inspectors and teachers themselves on the need to more effectively support learners' speaking skills, use a wider range of activities, techniques and interaction patterns to make learning English a more motivating and interesting experience for students and to engage with a range of areas including assessment, error-correction, supporting 21st century skills and some aspects of classroom management which teachers may find challenging.

Classroom observations indicated a range of clear patterns which to some extent corroborate needs as perceived by teachers. They also indicated a number of strengths in classroom practice which it is important to bear in mind especially in view of the often very negative opinions of the quality of teaching in rural areas expressed in the larger cities by the public and the press. These included:

- strong and encouraging relationships between teachers and learners and the enthusiasm of teachers to involve learners
- a definite shape to lessons, with sufficient evidence that teachers had formal lesson planning skills
- evidence in a little less than three-quarters of lessons observed of teachers personalising or adapting the course book and using supplementary materials
- use of pair and group work in half the lessons observed.

At the same time, the observations suggested a range of areas that require attention and which could be usefully addressed through a CPD initiative. These included:

- in the majority of lessons observed and lesson plans examined, an undue focus on one specific grammatical structure which was practised throughout the lesson through a series of over-mechanical exercises to the detriment of practice of functional English or speaking skills
- no or very limited student-to-student interaction in over 50 per cent of lessons observed
- a general pattern of whole-class frontal eliciting, although levels of learner involvement were reasonably high partly as a consequence of comparatively small class size, especially in schools outside the urban centres visited
- limited opportunities for learners to speak due to a lack of learner-to-learner interaction and the over-use of closed questions. This impression was reinforced by comments from learners in focus groups held who expressed a desire to be able to speak in English more fluently and who tended to see grammar in terms of rules to be learnt and tests to be passed
- consistent over-use of the learners' first language, in particular to give instructions and to introduce new vocabulary
- particularly direct error-correction and a lack of opportunities for learners to self-correct or peer-correct
- little support for learners' pronunciation skills.

Teachers would also benefit from more support to enable them to reflect on their teaching; although observers' assessment and analysis of teachers' reflective comments showed some developing reflection, many teachers were only able to reflect to a limited extent.

Teachers saw the benefits of a CPD initiative as including practical classroom skills enhancement and the opportunity to interact and share ideas with peers. School inspectors, head teachers and teachers themselves would welcome a CPD initiative in the locations which is localised and contextualised.

Section 7 of this report describes project design, including implementation of direct face-to-face training but also the development of a community of practice for teachers the establishment of Teacher Activity Groups, and the extent to which project design reflects needs as identified through the findings of the baseline study and suggests that there is an effective match between these needs and project plans.

3 Background: the context

This section presents existing data on a range of areas relevant to the project in order to describe the context in which the project will take place. Firstly, it examines urban/rural contrasts in Romania and the context in which many of the teachers who have registered for the project live and work. Secondly, it briefly investigates why ecotourism is seen as one solution to the challenges faced by rural Romania. Lastly, it presents data on why English language skills may be required in the ecotourism (and wider tourism) sector.

3.1 Urban and rural contrasts in Romania

Although rapid growth has slowed since the economic crisis of 2009, Romania remains economically the fastest growing country in Central and Eastern Europe., with a growth rate of 8.8 per cent.[1] Quarter 1, 2017 saw a growth rate of 5.6 per cent[2] and Quarter 2, an expansion in GDP of 2.60 percent in the third quarter of 2017 over the previous quarter.[3] The impact of this growth in the capital, Bucharest, and other larger cities is very evident.

There are however, striking contrasts between urban centres and the countryside where 45.25 per cent of the population live.[4] While the population of Romania as a whole is falling, this decrease is particularly sharp in rural areas, where the population declined by 11 per cent between 1989 and 2010.[5] The principal driver is the need to seek employment elsewhere, with the migration of males of employable age (to urban centres in Romania but, just as importantly, to countries abroad and, in particular, to Italy and Spain). The result is an ageing population and, in the view of a number of observers, impact on family unity[6] and the growth of juvenile crime.[7]

There is also a high imbalance between income in urban and rural areas with the rate of rural poverty in 2011 double that of urban areas[8] and more than 75 per cent of poor children living in rural areas.[9] Percentages of population at risk of poverty in Romanian counties are shown in Appendix1b. In 2014, Romania (along with Bulgaria and Malta) had the highest poverty rates in rural areas compared with urban areas in the European Union.[10] Rural settlements may be less accessible by road or remote from services such as are available in towns. Seven rural counties in Romania, for example, had the highest infant mortality in the European Union in 2015.[11]

3.2 Tourism (and specifically ecotourism) as a source of employment in rural areas

Romania has rich tourism potential. While the tourism sector represented only 1.3 per cent of Romania's GDP in 2016[12], the sector is forecast to reach 5.8 per cent of GDP in 2027.[13] The total indirect contribution of travel and tourism to GDP is estimated to be nearly four times greater than its direct contribution[14], however, and significant underreporting may result in a distorted picture of its importance to the economy.[15] The development of ecotourism is seen as an important factor in the growth of tourism.

Defined initially at the Expert Council for Environment Canada international seminar on ecotourism (1991) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (South Africa, 2002) and elaborated in a Romanian context by the General Assembly of the European Commission for Tourism (Braşov, 2016), ecotourism is seen as contributing positively to natural and historical conservation, generating increased economic benefits for local people and engaging local people in decision making processes.[16] It features a focus on activities related to nature, small, traditional accommodation and local cuisine.[17]

Ecotourism is encouraged in Romania through the work of the National Institute of Research Development in Tourism (INCDT), the National Tourism Authority (ANT), the Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER) and, from July 2017, through the national Master Tourism Investment Plan. Sets of guidelines and a certification process based on seven overarching principles of ecotourism including environmental sustainability and sensitivity towards local culture and traditions have been developed.[18]

Figure 1: Ecotourism centre, Bihor

A further AER principle highlights the constructive contribution made by effective ecotourism to local communities. Bogdan Papuc, Executive Director of the Association of Ecotourism in Romania, states:

Ecotourism means small-scale business, owned mainly by the local people, which offer authentic experiences and bring benefits for the local community. It implies a responsibility toward nature but also toward the social environment in the rural areas of Romania.[19]

Ecotourism is also seen by both state and non-governmental agencies as a way of increasing employability in rural areas. Towards this end, a wide range of ecotourism initiatives have been implemented or are in the process of implemented by the Romanian-American Foundation, partners in the *English for the Community* project. As the Foundation puts it:

Today's rural economy is far from being a prosperity generator for either rural people or their communities. Agriculture is still the basic occupation, but 99 per cent of the farms are very low productivity, semi-subsistence farms.....[However], rural areas have a great ecotourism potential: over 17 per cent of the country is covered by protected natural areas that, if used responsibly, may contribute to local economic development while preserving natural and cultural heritage.[20]

No specific data was available for this report on the measurable impact of ecotourism on local communities but state plans forecast a seven per cent annual increase in revenues generated by local communities in ecotourism. Ecotourism can also be conducted at low seasons for agricultural activities and thus provides additional revenues.[21]

3.3 English as an essential skill for tourism

A number of British Council surveys in Europe and around the world indicate the importance of effective English language skills to the travel and tourism industry. In a study of the sector in Germany, Italy and Russia, responses from hotel management showed an assessment of 80 per cent of revenue for the sector being dependent on effective English language skills and 90 per cent of external communication taking place in English.[22] Responses from Germany, for example, stressed the need for English as a way of maintaining customer satisfaction and communicating with service providers. In a second British Council survey, involving 38 countries, an average of almost 90 per cent of responses stated that effective English (speaking skills in particular) is significant for the industry.[23]

There has been less research on the specific needs of small businesses in the ecotourism sector, although one representative study, *English for Homestays* in Indonesia, identified a vital need for homestay owners to use English with their guests.[24] Activities where English was required included providing welcomes and orientation briefings at the beginning of the guests' stay, detailing schedules of activities, promotion of activities, describing prices, natural features (during bird watching expeditions, for example), food and cooking, phone communication and the management of tourists' feelings and attitudes. Reading skills and technological literacy were important, for example, to enable homestay owners to read online reviews written by guests and make consequent improvements to services offered. A further study in Thailand found that English was most important for giving information, providing services and offering help although more precise details on these functions is not provided in the study.[25]

In Romania, a 2011 to 2013 partnership between the British Council and the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MNESR), the *Skills for Employability: English for Agritourism and Rural Tourism* (EART) project has developed a set of teaching materials to be used at vocational levels.[26] Materials focus on areas including promoting tourist activities and products, communicating information about local culture, food, historical sights, farming techniques and sustainable development and dealing with guests' problems and complaints, all of which were felt to be key needs for staff working in the sector.

Figure 2: Landscape, Hunedoara

Although more research is needed on the specific needs of the ecotourism sector and the value of English to the sector in Romania, the ability to communicate effectively in English is likely to substantially enhance the employability of young people in the locations the project targets.

Summary

While economic growth in Romania is substantial, there are sharp contrasts between the cities and smaller towns and villages.

Ecotourism is widely seen as contributing to increased employment opportunities in rural areas.

Although more research would be useful, it is likely that an ability to communicate effectively in English enhances the potential employability of young people in sectors such as ecotourism.

4 Background: English and education in Romania

This section presents existing data on areas of education in Romania particularly relevant to the project. Educational systems in Romania are briefly described, including the role of the inspectorate. Teacher qualifications and aspects of continuing professional development are examined. The challenge of early school leaving and initiatives to tackle it are described. Lastly, the section presents a synopsis of the teaching and learning of English in Romania, with an overview of the syllabus and a summary of research on attitudes to English in the country.

4.1 Educational systems in Romania

Responsibilities for education in Romania lie with the Ministry of National Education (MNE) which oversees systems from pre-school to vocation and higher education. The Institute of Educational Science (IES), affiliated to MNE, analyses educational performance and undertakes syllabus development while the National Centre for Assessment and Examinations manages learner and teacher assessment. MNE is represented at country level by County School Inspectorates, with one inspectorate for each of Romania's 41 counties and a General Inspectorate for Bucharest.[27] Lower grade 'methodologists' (*profesori metodisti*) also contribute to the work of the inspectorate. Responsibilities of the Inspectorate include the monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance (see 2.2 below) and scheduled whole school inspections through the RODIS (*Regulamentul de organizare şi desfăşurare a inspecţiei şcolare)* framework.[28]

Education in Romania is compulsory for eleven years, from the Preparatory Grade of primary school to Grade 10. Enrolment in pre-primary education meets European Union standards[29], with children beginning primary school at the age of six and then moving on to lower secondary education, with a different teacher for each subject from Grade 5. At the end of Grade 8, students take a national examination (the *Evaluarea Naţională*) in mathematics and Romanian language and literature, with an additional language in language minority schools. Results in this examination combined with year-end average grades (*medii*) determine which of three types of high school children will attend: theoretical, vocational or technological schools, with the first type of institution achieving the highest grades in the baccalaureate examination which acts as a gateway to tertiary education, following two non-compulsory years at Grade 11 and 12.

There are around 7000 educational units in Romania, with a little less than two and a half million children enrolled in state primary, lower secondary and high schools.[30] At primary, lower secondary and high school levels, classes are delivered by slightly more than 173,000 teachers.[31] Figures for individual counties are more complex to obtain as teachers teach over a range of schools (teaching at both primary and lower secondary school, for example). The sample of school inspectors interviewed for the baseline study (see Section 6.3) kindly provided the British Council with figures for five representative counties, presented in Table 1.

Table 1: numbers of English teachers (all schools)

Harghita	Hunedoara	Sibiu	Cluj	Neamț	Average
226	243	278	281	291	263

Pupil-teacher ratios (PTR) for 2012, the most recent figures available for this report, are around 17.6:1 for primary schools and 12.3:1 for high schools; variations between urban and rural areas comprise larger classes than this average (up to 21:1) in urban classes and smaller classes in rural areas.[32] It is estimated that these figures are relatively stable; they are relatively in line with European Union norms although higher than those in a number of member states.[33]

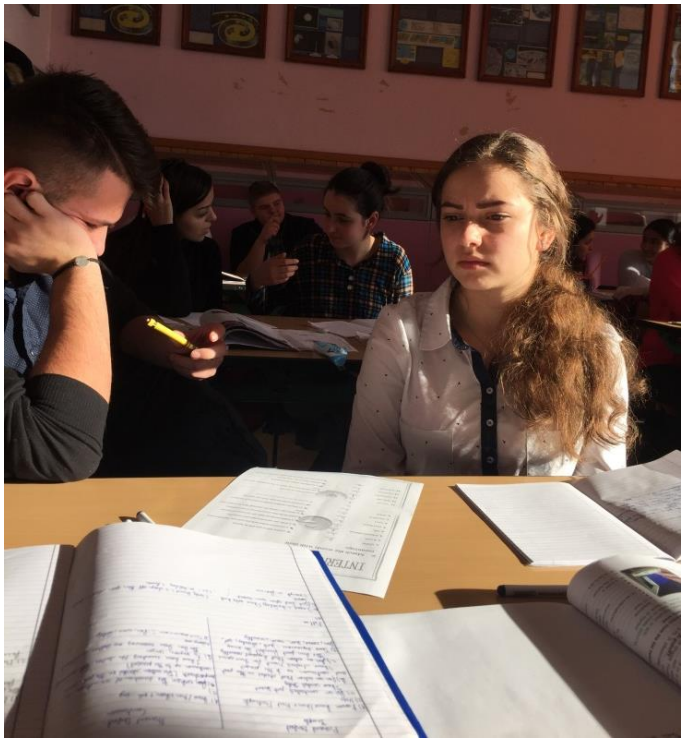


Figure 3: Learners, Brașov

The private education sector is comparatively very small and caters for the wealthiest sections of society: private sector primary and secondary schools represented less than one per cent of the total number of schools in 2014/2015.[34] Out of school private tutoring is widespread, however, with an estimated 17 to 50 per cent of students having recourse to it.[35] Advertisements for freelance tutors are a common feature in cities and towns in the country.

4.2 Teachers in Romania

An OECD TALIS study has shown that a typical teacher in a lower secondary school in Romania is likely to be female, aged between 35 and 55 with around 16 years of teaching experience.[36] In 2014, almost 90 per cent of teachers were female and only 6.5 per cent of teachers at primary and secondary level were under 30.[37] Teacher salaries tend to be low in comparison with other professions in Romania and European Union norms.[38] Nevertheless, the study shows a committed and enthusiastic workforce, with 90 per cent of lower secondary teachers expressing satisfaction in their work and 80 per cent reporting that observation-based feedback they had received had led to improvements in their teaching practice.[39] In the same study, 83 per cent of teachers responding stated that they have engaged in some type of CPD over the last 12 months and 97 per cent reported having engaged in a teacher education programme since graduation, figures higher than European Union averages.

Formal professional development includes initial training, with all teachers completing a Bachelor's degree with additional semesters of teacher education and teaching practice. While all teachers have undergone initial pre-service training before beginning teaching, more experienced teachers undertook this training before a range of major education reforms were introduced over the last two decades.[40] Concerns have also been expressed as to the theoretical bias of initial teacher training and a lack of standardisation, especially at primary level.[41] Anecdotal reports from staff working at in pre-service training institutions indicate that observation of pre-service teachers undertaken by academic staff at these institutions may be limited to observations of trainees micro-training their peers.

Figure 4: Teachers, Hunedoara

The 2011 Education Law introduced a clear career pathway for new teachers. In-service teacher performance is jointly monitored by the inspectorate and relevant higher education institutions. Processes comprise a probationary appraisal (including observations and a written examination, known as the *definitivat*) which is undertaken by a representative of the inspectorate. Similar processes are used to asses if a teacher is in a position to be promoted through a further two steps in the career ladder (*Gradul 2* and *Gradul 1*). Observations of teacher performance may be at the teacher's request or the decision of the inspector. They include counselling on planning, methodology, use of materials, class management and assessment of learners and are designed to support progress through the career path.[42]

A principal motivation for CPD is therefore advancement; teachers in the 2016 focus groups reported that it is possible that a less ambitious teacher who is not interested in promotion may engage in little or no CPD. Opportunities for participation in training are available, whether through involvement by initiatives organised by the Teachers' House (*Casa Corpului Didactic:* CCD), by non-profit making development organisations or private training providers.

4.3 The challenge of early school leaving (ESL) in Romania

For many school leavers, opportunities for employability may be very limited. One contributory factor is the significantly high rates of early school leaving (ESL) in the last years of lower secondary school and at the end of lower secondary school. An analysis of children starting school in 2006/2007 and graduating in 2013/2014 shows that 15.3 per cent of the sample had dropped out by the end of Grade 8 and only 51.8 per cent passed the national evaluation.[43] Young people who have not completed further education are likely to experience difficulties in finding employment: in 2015, 18.5 per cent of people aged 18 to 24 were not engaged in education or training and had at the most only a lower secondary education, the third highest rate in the European Union.[44] The unemployment rate for people aged 15 to 34 without an upper secondary education was double that of graduates.[45] There would appear to be a number of reasons for considerable numbers of young people not progressing to higher education.

The first may be the fact that less affluent families may simply not be able to afford to have a potential breadwinner at school: ample anecdotal evidence was noted during the baseline study of parental pressure on young people to abandon studies in order to find a job, especially in rural areas where that job might be on the family farm or household. At all school levels, enrolment is higher in urban areas than rural areas, at school entry age by as much as 15 per cent.[46] It is the poorest and often most remote parts of the country that experience the highest levels of ESL, as high as 24.7 per cent in the particularly challenged North-Eastern region.[47] Students may also be deterred from school attendance as a result of long distances to the nearest high school from their village.

The challenge of early school leaving is exacerbated by the fact that a larger share of resources tends to be allocated to upper secondary and tertiary education and, given

enrolment figures, this means a greater expenditure on individual students in higher education than on primary/lower secondary students.[48] In fact, public investment in education in Romania in general has been significantly lower than elsewhere in the European Union, with a level of expenditure up to four per cent below the European Union average.[49] Expenditure on education as a share of GDP also fell sharply following the 2008 financial crisis.

The gatekeeping function of the national examinations described in Section 4.3 has been seen by some commentators as one of the major contributory factors to students leaving education early and not progressing to higher education.[50] Those students who do not perform as well as their peers at entry level to high school and who attend institutions other than theoretical or vocational schools stand substantially less chance of progressing to university. The high stakes of the national examinations may also have the result of narrowing the curriculum, limiting teacher autonomy and precluding effective continuous assessment.

Learners from rural backgrounds may also find it more difficult to make the transition from lower to upper secondary school level. This is reflected in subsequent student performance, with 16 per cent fewer candidates from rural areas performing successfully in the baccalaureate than those from urban areas[51] and many villages in 2012 scoring a zero baccalaureate pass rate.[52] In 2016, 37.5 per cent of grade 8 students in rural schools had poor results compared to 15 per cent in urban schools.[53]

The 2012 World Vision report details the extent to which learners from more rural backgrounds did not feel equitably treated by the teacher, the impact of lengthy travel from remote locations to school, and parents' expectations of children taking up employment in the household/farm following early school leaving.[54]

Teacher recruitment in rural areas is also significantly more challenging than in the cities.[55] One possible consequence is that the quality of teaching in rural Romania is not as high as in urban areas and although there is a lack of conclusive data on this area, this is certainly the view of non-teaching specialists in the cities and, often, the press (see, for example, Besliu, 2014).

4.4 Strategies to meet the challenge of early school leaving

The Romanian government has introduced a series of innovations to meet the range of challenges described above include:

- successful encouragement for enrolment in pre-primary education, which now exceeds European Union averages, and initiatives implemented to support poorer families in enrolling pre-primary age children
- the 'National Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving' which has resulted in improved monitoring and tracking of students likely to drop out. Early school leaving is also addressed through the 'Second Chance' programme, with over 12000 students enrolled in 2014-2015

- strategies aimed at poorer families in rural areas to improve children's well-being in school (typified by the 'Warm Meal' and 'Milk and Croissant' programmes
- the 2016 'An Educated Romania' initiative to develop a consensus of opinion on educational development
- effective encouragement for the improvement in learning outcomes, particularly in science and maths as measured through PISA
- initiatives to improve the quality, effectiveness and attractiveness of the vocational education sector
- grant programmes for low-performing upper secondary schools which aim to improve performance in the baccalaureate
- initiatives to improve transparency at the local level including the 'Anti-corruption Strategy in Education'.

4.5 English in Education in Romania

Learning one foreign language is compulsory from the first grade of primary school (from age 6), with the choice of language studied being often but not always English. At secondary level, children continue with the foreign language they began at primary school and begin the study of a further foreign language. A significant number of high schools employ a foreign language (including English, German and French) as a medium of instruction for all subjects.[56]

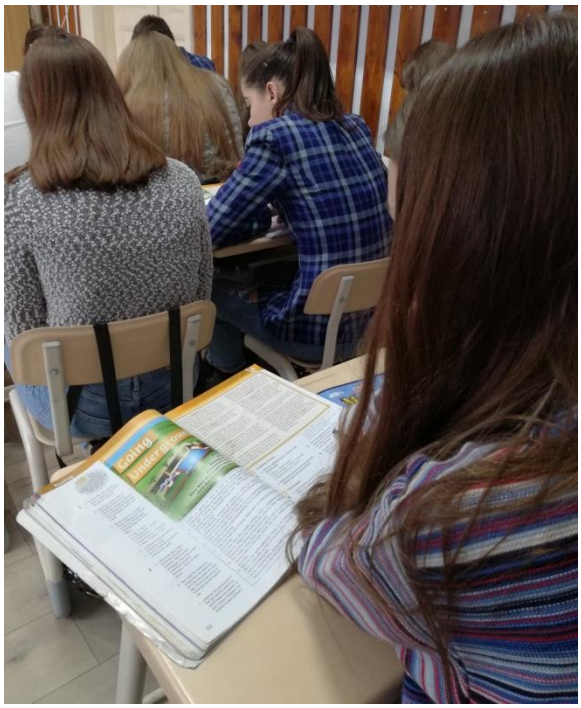


Figure 5: Use of commercial textbook, Mureș

A new school curriculum including relatively detailed specifications of language items to be learnt has been in the process of introduction through the work of the IES since 2012, replacing the previous curriculum which had remained unchanged since 1998. Coverage exists for Grade 8 with ongoing development for Grades 9 to 12. The

curriculum takes a competency-based approach to learning, in line with the key competencies for lifelong learning set out in the European Union Reference Framework.[57] This approach includes the ability to communicate in a foreign language, digital competence and learning to learn, with a description of what learners should be able to do by the end of each cycle of Grade 4, Grade 10 and Grade 12. Encouragement for the development of higher order thinking skills is proposed.

The curriculum for English, available online, presents a series of '*communication and interaction competences, based on understanding and correctly applying language structures and functions*'.[58] It is relatively flexible and provides a series of Can-do statements (*competente*) for each grade for each of the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. It also includes an inventory of language functions to be introduced at each grade and grammatical items to support those items. It also includes support for the development of awareness of the culture of English first language speaking countries. The curriculum does not specify the use of any one textbook and in fact, as discussed in Section 6.6.6, a variety of textbooks are used in schools to teach English.

One aim of this baseline data is to gather data on how learners of English in school in Romania perceive English, a relatively under-researched area. A subjective impression would be that English is widely used in larger urban centres, including regular transmission of films and other programmes in English on mainstream television, subtitled in Romanian and that Romanians are well-disposed towards the teaching and learning of English. As one commentator puts it: '*most Romanian students choose to study it as their first foreign language, confirming not only the general European trend), but also global statistics*'.[59] A 2015 study of teachers' and learners' perceptions of English in Germany, Romania and Turkey suggests that English is seen in the country as a lingua franca, essential for communication and employability and important in particular for online communication.[60] The study also concludes that more formal instruction of standard English may be valuable to learners accustomed to less standard forms through interaction with, for example, online forums. A British Council report due for publication in 2018 which interviewed key Romanian academics on the status of English confirms opinions on the importance of the language.[61] Comments included:

*Before 1989, there was more of a balance between French, German and English but today English is by far the first and the most favourite language …. Students in secondary school tend to choose English (*Professor Octavian Roske, University of Bucharest*).*

*The level of proficiency in English has indeed gone up in the last ten years……..this is primarily driven by the recognition that English is a necessity in an increasingly globalised world. This need is what has generated the surge of interest in individual improvement and study (*Diana Deleanu, University Lecturer and Law Partner*).*

The result would appear to be a growing number of Romanians who are able to converse in English. A 2005 Eurobarometer survey gives a national figure of 29 per cent of Romanians who speak English well enough in order to be able to have a conversation

(five and six per cent respectively more than in Hungary and the Czech Republic).[62] The British Council in Romania estimates that between 2007 and 2017 the number of candidates taking IELTS or Cambridge English examinations at CEFR band B2 and above has increased by 82 per cent. The mean overall and individual band scores achieved by 2016 IELTS Academic and General Training test takers in Romania are, however, lower than a range of EU countries including the Czech Republic, France, Hungary and Spain.[63] A further indication of the importance of English is the fact that the number of Romanian students studying at undergraduate level in the United Kingdom increased from 385 students in 2006/2007 to 6965 in 2016/2017.[64]

Summary

Romania has a well-developed system for support for individual teachers through a systematised career path.

Interest in CPD opportunities for teachers in Romania is likely to be high.

One very significant challenge facing education in Romania is the early school leaving rate in the last years and at the end of lower secondary school. Initiatives to address this are in place but it remains an area of concern.

Syllabus development has been significant since 2012 and is ongoing.

English is seen as the preferred foreign language to learn by many Romanians.

5 Methodology

This section presents the methodology of the baseline study and the British Council *Teaching for Success* principles which inform it. Further information on *Teaching for Success* and the British Council's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework can be found in Appendix 2a and 2b

5.1 Methodology and tools

The baseline study was conducted during a two-week period from 15 January to 26 January 2018 in eight counties of Romania. Locations were as follows:

Table 2: project locations

Location	County
Făgăraş	Braşov
Haţeg	Hunedoara
Miercurea Ciuc/Baile Tuşnad	Harghita
Remeţi	Bihor
Sighişoara	Mureş
Sibiu	Sibiu
Târgu Neamţ	Neamţ
Vatra Dornei	Suceava

Locations and numbers of teachers registering for the project are shown in Appendix 1a. Locations are referred to by county in this report. One Country Trainer was allocated to each location (referred to by county in this report). In addition, results from four preliminary visits made by the Academic Advisor to schools in Sighişoara have been included in this baseline study. The team visited a total of 24 schools.

Prior to the baseline Country Trainers were invited to a two-day workshop held in Bucharest from 13 to 14 January 2018 during which the team were fully familiarised with the principles of a baseline study and tools to be used. They were joined at this workshop by nine MNE county inspectors and one MNE deputy-general inspector who also contributed views and opinions which are presented in Section 6.3.

The team used the standardised procedures outlined in Table 3 below to collect data. In each school visited, one or more observations took place, usually of around forty minutes. Whenever possible, this observation was followed by a short learner focus group, usually with the whole class. Each observation was followed by a post-observation interview with the teacher which included the completion by the teacher of a short report form in which he/she identified strengths and possible ways to improve the lesson. Visits also included, wherever possible, an interview with the head teacher.

Following completion of the baseline study, data was collated and analysed by the British Council *English for the Community* project team and findings are summarised in Section 6.6 of this report.

Table 3: Baseline study methodology

Preliminary needs analysis: September to December 2016			
Stakeholder group	**Data collection method**	**Tool**	**Sample size**
Teachers	Teacher self-assessment	British Council *Teaching for Success* (TfS) teacher questionnaire and teacher self-evaluation	151 respondents
Teachers	Focus groups	Focus groups led by the *English for the Community* Project Manager	9 focus groups, 1 group per location
Teachers	Teacher interviews	Post-observation reflection	28 teachers
Teachers and learners	Classroom observations	British Council TfS observation form	28 classroom observations
Learners	Focus groups	British Council TfS learner focus group guidelines	23 focus groups (sample size dependent on class size)
Head teachers	Head teacher interview in schools visited Questionnaire	*English for the Community* head teacher interview form British Council TfS head teacher questionnaire	23 head teachers interviewed Completion of questionnaire by 12 head teachers
School inspectors	Views collected during January 2018 workshop Questionnaire	 British Council TfS officials' interview questionnaire (amended)	Participation by 10 county inspectors Completion of questionnaire by 7 county inspectors

5.2 The British Council's Continuing Professional Development Framework

All tools used in the baseline study are based on the British Council's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework which describes the teaching skills and knowledge that contribute to quality in the classroom. This includes a focus on three areas: language proficiency, professional qualifications and twelve professional practices.

These twelve professional practices provide a comprehensive, practice-based, and detailed view of the skills and knowledge which a teacher should demonstrate. The professional practices are:

1 Planning lessons and courses
2 Understanding learners
3 Managing the lesson
4 Knowing the subject
5 Managing resources
6 Assessing learning
7 Integrating ICT
8 Taking responsibility for professional development
9 Using inclusive practices
10 Using multilingual approaches
11 Developing 21st century skills
12 Understanding national policies and practice

Using the CPD framework allows the British Council, its partners and the teachers it works with to identify and track teachers' competence in the different skills and knowledge areas, throughout a project and beyond. All British Council resources and training content are mapped against the framework to clearly show how their use will help teachers to develop.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The baseline study was limited to observations of three teachers per location (seven observations in Sighişoara) and visits to two to three schools per location. Given that there is an average of 263 English language teachers across the five representative counties for which figures were made available for this report, samples are relatively small and data presented in this report should not be used to make comparisons between counties or to propose a fully representative picture of the county as a whole. Nevertheless, data presented in the report is internally consistent in suggesting the strengths, areas for development and especially the needs of teachers involved. It was not feasible to include one aspect of the context which frequently provides useful baseline data: it did not prove possible to access parents' views during the baseline study as teachers emphasised the difficulty of organising the focus groups at the time the study took place. However, teachers were very helpful in indicating future dates at which parent-teacher events take place and which will be used to organise parents' focus groups. It was also not possible to organise observations in Maramureş as teachers were initially very reluctant to invite an observer into their schools. However, following a five-day training course held in Maramureş in February 2018, teachers were far more receptive to being observed and observations will take place in March 2018. While the results of these observations will not be included in the baseline study, they will prove to be invaluable to inform project implementation.

6 Findings

6.1 Locations

The majority of schools visited were in comparatively small towns or in villages in the rural hinterland of these towns, between one to thirty kilometres from the town centre. All locations have considerable potential for ecotourism and are sited near national parks comprising ranges of mountains forming part of the Western Carpathian, Apuseni or Transylvanian Alps chains. Generally, locations comprise a relatively small urban centre situated in a broad valley below these mountains with dispersed villages in the countryside around it. Remeţi is an exception in that it is wholly rural. These urban centres themselves may be rich in historical interest, especially Sighişoara, Sibiu (both with fine medieval remains) and Vatra Dornei (originally a nineteenth century spa-town; Baile Tuşnad near Miercurea Ciuc has a similar history).

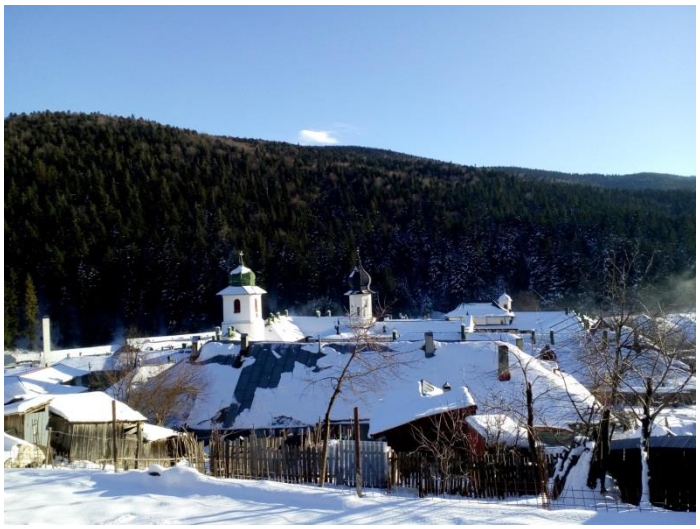


Figure 6: Village, Neamţ

In most locations, teachers may live in the town itself or in the surrounding rural area and there were examples of teachers commuting from villages in the country to the town where they work or commuting from the town to villages in the country. Observers gathered anecdotal data on the distances some teachers travel to school (up to 40 kilometres in the case of Neamţ) and teachers also described students travelling long distances by foot each day to school. In Bihor, one teacher lived in the city of Oradea, worked in Remeţi (where she had been allocated a post as a novice teacher) and commuted by car (a one hour journey) each day.

Migration from all the locations is indicated by the steep population decreases all these urban centres have experienced since 1992, with a similar decrease in the surrounding countryside. Up to 1992, these centres had seen a steady growth (except immediately after the Second World War) but all have seen negative population growth since the 2002 Romania census of an average of -15.3 per cent and as high as -21.6 per cent in Făgăraş and -22.6 per cent in Haţeg.[65] One cause of this decrease is a lack of local

employment opportunities; economic strategy under the Communist regime (1947 to 1989) included the development of heavy industry in less urban locations. In many cases, such as the chemical industry in Făgăraş or wood-processing in Maramureş, these industries are in terminal decline although there have been visible initiatives to encourage light industry (such as brewing and food-processing) in a number of the project locations.

A variety of minority languages are spoken in the nine locations. The number of German speakers in Transylvania has greatly declined since 1989 although there is still a significant presence in the region; no first language German speakers were encountered during the baseline. Teachers described the small Slovak community in Remeţi, Bihor which has Slovak medium language schools although again the baseline study did not collect any evidence of this.

Where the study did encounter widespread use of a minority language, however, was in Harghita county, which forms part of the region often referred to as Szekeley Land, with a long and often complex history. The 2011 Romania census gives the percentage of first language Hungarian speakers in Miercurea Ciuc at 81.39 per cent and in Harghita county as a whole at 84.8 per cent. The observer in Harghita noted regular use of Hungarian and estimated that almost all students were likely to be first language speakers. Romania has a well-developed system as regards the place of minority languages in school with use of Hungarian in schools (and local administration and the justice system) where Hungarians represent more than 20 per cent of the local population.[66]

Figure 7: Learners from the Roma community, Sibiu

The second language other than Romanian encountered during the baseline study was Roma. The percentage of Roma in each location is shown below, based on figures from the 2011 census:

Table 4: Percentage Roma population, selected locations

Vatra Dornei	Neamţ (county)	Sighet	Hunedoara (county)	Harghita (county)	Făgăraş	Sibiu (county)	Sighişoara
0.64	1.48	1.5	1.74	1.76	3.8	4.76	5.3

Nationally, 77 per cent of Roma students are early school leavers and 64 per cent of Roma aged 16 to 24 are out of employment, education or training.[67] Section 6.6.1 presents data relating to the Roma community as collected through the baseline study.

Tourism is evident in each of the locations visited during the baseline, with small family-run *pensiuni* scattered throughout the countryside. Villages around Târgu Neamţ are typical: small hotels are located in close proximity to a number of historically important monasteries and other sites. The observer in Neamţ reported that a high school, located a stone's throw from one of the most significant monasteries in the area, offers courses in English for Religious Tourism. However, services in locations except Sighişoara and Sibiu (which have gained an international reputation) would appear to target the domestic tourist market and it is not at all uncommon to find establishments in the locations where no staff speak English and menus are not available in English. Anecdotally, two expatriate British Council staff report experiencing challenges in different rural locations during stays in ecotourism/small *pensiune* accommodation due to the lack of English skills of homestay owners, with some consequent confusion.

Figure 8: Signage (in Romanian) for *pensiuni* and small restaurants: above left, Remeţi above right, Haţeg

Wherever possible, informal conversations were held with hotel staff during the baseline study, which produced some useful insights into the use of English and job opportunities locally. Comments included:

I come from this town and I enjoyed English at school. I'm lucky I got this job in the hotel as it's one of the best hotels in town. I'm not sure if I'll be here in the future, though (hotel receptionist, Sighişoara: C1 level of English).

My English is OK – I learnt it in Communist times but I never used it. I use it a lot now. I send my kids to German school because I want them to have a good education. I can't see them living here in the future (small *pensiune* owner, Sibiu: B1 level of English).

I work nights here on and off but my main job is painting yachts in Italy – I can make ten times as much money there as here. I want to stop though because I have young kids and I never see them but the only job I can do here is to work as a mechanic. My English is OK – I learnt most of it working with the English in Italy (night receptionist, Târgu Neamţ: A2 level of English).

Just prior to the baseline study, the British Council Academic Advisor was invited to participate in an ecotourism conference organised by the Association of Ecotourism in Romania in Poiana Negrii (Suceava). Participation included a visit to a national park where the Association have assisted with constructing a guided walk across a peat-bog, providing signage in Romanian/English and developing an information centre. Conversation with the AER representative from Neamţ showed that there are increasing numbers of tourists coming to the location, mainly Romanian although there is a growing German, French and Israeli market; however, despite their attraction, counties such as Suceava and Neamţ (and unlike Braşov and Sibiu, for example, which are seen as having particularly dynamic tourist boards) are relatively unknown in the United Kingdom. One topic discussed at the conference was the use of social media and the internet to collect feedback from guests, a process for which an ability to communicate in English would be a valuable asset.

Summary

Each location visited is experiencing negative population growth.

Each location visited in the baseline study showed evidence of tourism/ecotourism.

Minority languages are especially significant in Harghita where Hungarian is spoken as a first language by the majority of the population. All locations have significant Roma communities.

6.2 Schools

Figure 9: School, Suceava

Class size as recorded through baseline observations is presented in Table 5. The largest classes observed were in the urban centre of Sighişoara (Mureş) where some classes observed contained more than 25 students; classes in the rural hinterland of Sighişoara were significantly smaller. The smallest classes observed were in Neamţ and Braşov.

Table 5: Class size in classes observed

	10-15 students	16-20 students	21-25 students	26-30 students	30-35 students	Average: class size
Number of classes	7	7	8	5	1	20.28

Schools visited by observers were generally assessed as being in good condition. Where observers made reference to classroom conditions (Mureş, Neamţ, Sibiu, Bihor and Hunedoara), their comments were all positive, with classrooms described as spacious, well-lit and clean. Schools are generally well-equipped. Observers noted the presence of video projectors, tablets and PowerPoint facilities in Mureş, Suceava, Neamţ and Hunedoara. Smartboards/interactive white boards were noted in Braşov and Harghita. Comments from observers included:

The foreign languages department has three laptops, speakers and video projectors – they have all the materials they need. They have an information and documentation centre, a school library which teachers use (observer, Hunedoara).

I was impressed by how well-equipped the school in the village was……..both schools I visited had language laboratories which the head teacher told me the English teachers actually use (observer, Harghita).

However, observers noted variations in the level of school equipment within one location, with for example, one rural school in Mureş being far better equipped than a second school visited in urban Sighişoara. There are also variations between locations, with schools in Sibiu assessed as the least well-equipped, as the following comments shows:

The schools I visited looked clean and taken care of but technology appeared to be non-existent in the classrooms I visited. Teachers said they had little use for technology in their lessons (observer, Sibiu).

Variations on how well-resourced may depend, amongst other factors, on the number of students in the school (and comparative funding), the extent to which the head teacher has successfully bid for grants and the extent of support provided by the local municipality. However, the majority of teachers would appear to have access to computers (including access for many at home) and there were numerous examples of teachers using materials downloaded either at home or in school from websites including the British Council LearnEnglish site.

Figure 10: Use of technology in the classroom, Braşov

There are also variations in the extent to which technology is actually used in class. The use of information technology was noted in only a minority of lessons (an effective use of PowerPoint in Suceava to demonstrate and practise a tongue twister, for example) but there were many other cases where equipment was available but was not used. In one school in Braşov, the teacher used a laptop and a data projector but the lesson itself took place in the computer room, with fifteen computers, more than sufficient for each learner to use, of which no use was made during the lesson. The observer reported that

the teacher was keen to demonstrate that he makes the most effective use of equipment available but expressed a lack of confidence in using it; one suggestion by the head teacher was for training for teachers in using the video-projector. Developing teachers' computer literacy and confidence is one area that a future CPD initiative for teachers could address.

A number of schools visited were decorated with educational displays, especially in corridors. One example was noted in Mureş where the observer noted:

The classroom has a beautiful display of pictures and quotes in English, set up by the form teacher, who is a geography teacher and a tour guide – she took the photos (observer, Mureş).

Other examples of effective visual display were noted in Neamţ and Suceava. However, this was lacking in a significant number of schools and a number of classrooms had no decoration except in observers' comments '*a chart of Romanian noun cases'* or '*a dusty looking map*'. In a technological school visited in Suceava, for example, there was no evidence of the arts and crafts products, learners' work and models one might expect in such an institution. It was comparatively unusual to see any learners' work displayed in any subject area including English and observations in only 10.7 per cent of classrooms visited during the baseline study showed learners' work being optimally displayed. Providing support for teachers to value and display learners' work is another area which a CPD initiative could include.

Summary

Classes are comparatively small and lend themselves to the use of interactive techniques.

Many schools are well-resourced but levels of use of resource vary.

Teachers would benefit from more CPD on exploiting ICT technology.

Many classrooms would benefit from more display of learners' work.

6.3 Views of school inspectors

Figure 11: School inspector and Country Trainer at the *Developing monitoring and evaluation skills* workshop, January 2018

Views of school inspectors were collected a) through completion of a *Teaching for Success* questionnaire revised for inspectors completed by seven school inspectors with responsibilities for the counties of Braşov, Cluj, Harghita, Hunedoara, Maramureş, Neamţ and Sibiu b) dialogue at the January 2018 two-day *Developing monitoring and evaluation skills* workshop attended by ten school inspectors (those above and those inspectors with responsibilities for the counties of Bihor, Mureş and Suceava). Views expressed through the questionnaire and also at the workshop are presented in this section.

School inspectors were asked to summarise their main roles and responsibilities. As described in Section 4.1, these roles include the observation of teachers, supporting teachers in their continuing professional development and in the majority of cases the direct training of teachers. One respondent stressed the importance of observations in their role:

In my capacity as a school inspector for English, I had the opportunity to attend many English classes, to see different styles of teaching, to witness extremely different approaches as my colleagues did their best to impress me with a well-designed and conducted lesson. What is more, the discussions at the end of the teaching activities helped me grasp the rationale of their teaching endeavour.

In both responses to questionnaires and during the workshop, inspectors stressed the developmental aspect of their role:

I monitor, coordinate, evaluate and assess the teaching activity of English teachers within the county to support their professional development in order to help them pass professional qualifications according to the teachers' scale of development (in accordance with the Romanian educational legislation).

Inspectors regularly report back to higher officials in order to:

support the evaluation of the quality of the educational offer and the school performances of the students – at local and county level – by providing accurate information to the decision makers through the inspections reports.

They also monitor students' progress, collecting data from progress, grades and comparison to examination results at national level, in including the Baccalaureate.

Inspectors have participated in a wide range of continuous professional development themselves, including courses focusing on methodology and materials development, assessment and evaluation, classroom management, classroom use of ICT and communication. They report these training experiences very positively and have been able to implement them in their own work. Inspectors felt they had benefited from the *Developing monitoring and evaluation skills* workshop and would be interested in being involved in further training initiatives to address a wide range of areas including methodology to support 21st century skills, technology and effective delivery of training.

Both groups were asked to comment on current training provision. They suggested that the training of teachers at primary and secondary level is adequate (with one exception: one inspector who felt that training at primary level required improvement). Some feel however that pre-service training would benefit from a longer period of teaching practice in the final years of university and that most university graduates require more practical training. Another inspector commented:

I do feel initial training has shortened too much and become insufficient; graduates who wish to start teaching take a national exam ('titularizare') and if they get at least 5,00, theoretically, they may get a teaching position for a year, without having completed an induction year with a qualified mentor.

All inspectors agreed or strongly agreed that English language teaching in government schools needs improvement and that teachers and teacher educators should receive training in new techniques and methodologies periodically through some type of intensive course. Inspectors also saw benefits in online networking and use of the internet for inter-school communication.

Inspectors were asked to prioritise what they felt to be the needs of teachers. Responses are presented in Appendix 3a. The greatest need perceived was support for teachers to more effectively assess their learners. They also foregrounded the need for teachers to develop learners' speaking, pronunciation and writing skills and would like to see teachers taking a more creative approach to the textbook. Inspectors suggested:

Teachers must widen their curricular perspectives and bring into line their teaching with real life. Task based learning can provide great opportunities to improve language learning.

[Teachers need support to help them] use strategies to increase opportunities in which students can interact, use proper materials to make students speak more English in the classroom in order to improve their speaking skills and use strategies and methods to make students listen actively.

The learning of English can be improved if teachers help students and make them understand how important it is not to be afraid to make mistakes, but to be confident and to surround themselves in English. They have to use English in the classroom.

While they saw all items in the questionnaire as of some need, lesson planning, classroom management, teaching vocabulary and developing listening skills were felt to be the least important priorities. School inspectors as a group also feel that they themselves would benefit from further support in helping teachers in assessing learners and, to some extent, developing learners' speaking skills.

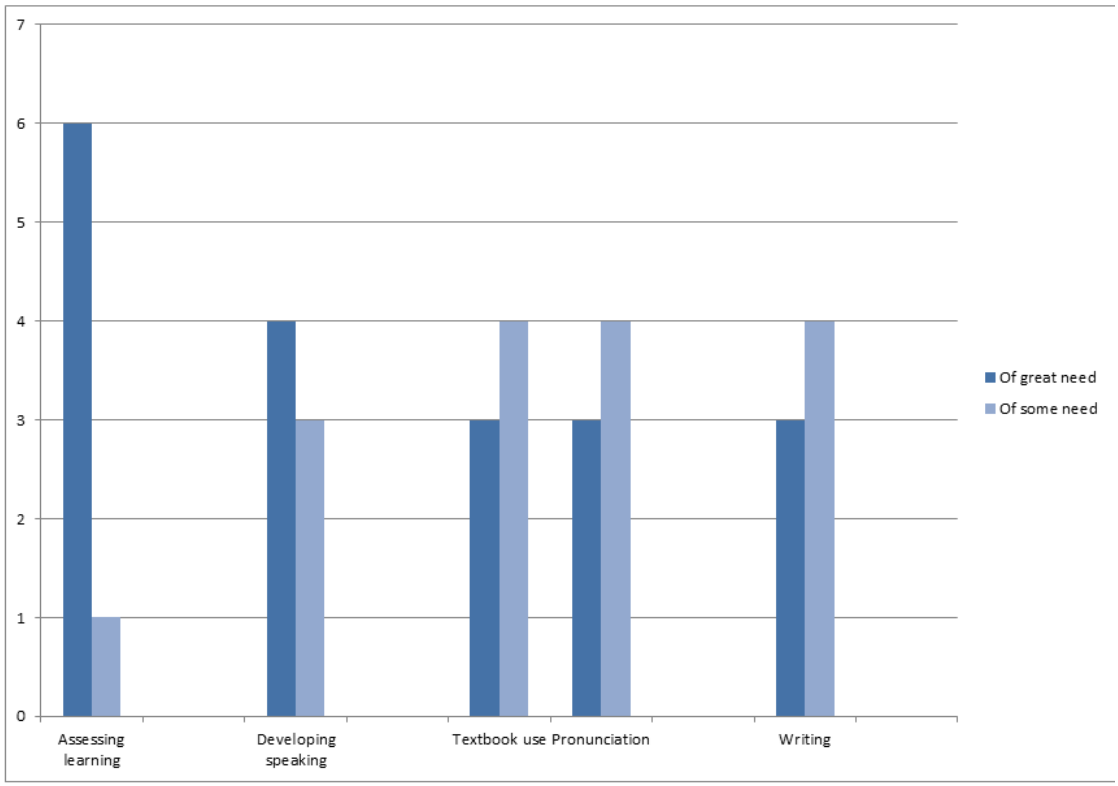


Figure 12: Views of school inspectors: areas of need

Suggestions for improving in-service support for CPD included the expansion of existing mentoring programmes for young teachers, '*more opportunities to participate at exchanges, job shadowing activities, projects and teacher refresher courses*' and encouraging teachers '*to attend training courses where workshops based on modern and*

interactive techniques can be organised'. Inspectors were also keen to see ways in which new ideas and good practice can be disseminated. They felt students would benefit from increased opportunities to speak with learners from other countries.

Inspectors emphasised challenges teachers face in Romania including discipline problems and lack of cooperation from parents and reference was made to the lack of attraction of teachers' current salaries. The specific challenges of teaching in rural areas was also stressed in the workshop including lack of student motivation in small towns and villages and the challenge of ESL, with many learners encouraged by their parents or the community to leave school early.

Some inspectors were sceptical about the level of awareness of head teachers as regards the teaching and learning of English and the level of support the project might receive from head teachers. They identified a need for further resources especially in more remote locations including enhancing resources in school libraries, ensuring that all learners had access to the internet and all teachers had access to '*the latest materials and research into EFL teaching – instructional materials and technical equipment*'.

Inspectors recognise the importance of training courses but also the need for teachers to take more responsibility for their own professional development:

> [There is a need to] *raise awareness for young graduates of the importance of self-study and independent learning for continuous professional development: there are a lot of online training courses and workshops available (I often send them such useful links on the English teachers' network communication).*

All inspectors welcomed the *English for the Community* project, however, approved of its objectives and would be happy to provide further support as the project continues, one inspector proposing that '*County School Inspectorates could create a link between the course provided and teachers'*. Another inspector stressed the need for the initiative to take place '*systematically, in teaching centres close to the areas where teachers are'*, exactly the type of localisation the project aims to achieve, while another emphasised the importance of teachers sharing good practice, '*assisting each other and thus learning new things and getting new ideas from each other'*, corresponding to another project aim. As the school inspector from Harghita put it:

> *Teachers need a little 'encouragement': we all need to learn throughout all our lives but sometimes we are not always aware that we also have to put into practice what we have learnt.*

Summary

Inspectors play a key role in the continuing professional development of teachers.

Inspectors support project aims and would value more British Council awareness-raising workshops.

Assessment, the development of learners speaking skills and the creative use of textbooks are seen as priorities.

Inspectors see a significant need for systematic in-service continuing professional development focusing on the teaching and learning of English.

6.4 Views of head teachers

Figure 13: Head teacher interview, Suceava

Views of head teachers were collected a) through face-to-face interviews at 23 schools in the eight locations surveyed and b) through completion of the *Teaching for Success* head teacher questionnaire by 12 respondents and these views are presented in this section. Baseline study interviewers stated they were invariably welcomed into schools and that head teachers enjoyed the opportunity to express their opinions.

Head teachers tended to be over forty, qualified to Masters degree level (90 per cent of the questionnaire sample) and had considerable teaching experience, often over twenty years, at primary, lower-secondary and high school level. Experience of headship varied from six months to over twenty years. The vast majority had experience in subject areas other than English, including Science (around one third of head teachers interviewed), History, Geography and Romanian. One respondent interviewed had a background in French but only one interviewee, a deputy head in Neamț, had taught English. Few of the head teachers interviewed had extensive active English, although they spoke a number of other languages. Head teachers did not tend to have experience of directly training teachers: 63 per cent of respondents completing questionnaires and almost all head teachers interviewed had no training experience (although a minority held training qualifications).

Nevertheless, all head teachers were able to provide opinions on the teaching and learning of English, in many cases in quite subject-specific ways. Respondents were asked to identify the strengths of their English language teachers. A range of positive views were received, with, in many cases, responses focusing on personal qualities including teachers' passion, dedication, commitment and dependability. Respondents in four counties commented on the strong relationships between teachers and their learners and the degree of empathy teachers showed towards learners. A range of

comments from head teachers referred to an appropriate level of teacher language proficiency and ability to use English in the classroom. Teachers were described as having the ability to cooperate well with colleagues, make effective use of ICT and build links with parents and the wider community. Head teachers in Bihor and Neamţ also attributed results in examinations including the Cambridge Main Suite to the effective performance of their teachers. In general, interviewers were impressed by warm and supportive relationships between head teachers and staff.

Only a minority (36 per cent) of head teachers felt that the pre-service teaching of their teachers was inadequate but both samples stressed a need for further in-service training of teachers. Comments included:

We finance teachers' training: we believe in CPD and send teachers everywhere. Lifelong learning is a must in teaching (head teacher, Sibiu).

Our teachers really need to know the latest trends, the latest methods and how to involve and motivate students (head teacher, Hunedoara).

All head teachers but one (in Sibiu) felt teachers were in need of further professional development and those respondents were asked to identify areas of development for their teachers. Those head teachers completing the questionnaire were asked to grade a range of subject-related items in terms of English language teachers' needs. Results are presented in Appendix 3a. Over 80 per cent of respondents saw a great need for support for teachers to use a wider range of techniques and in particular for teachers to develop the speaking skills of their learners. Support for teachers to manage the class more effectively, use the textbook/course book more creatively, teach vocabulary and develop learners' writing and listening skills were also prioritised. In fact, head teachers assessed some need for all skills they were asked to comment on including developing learners' reading and pronunciation skills and assessing learners and tended to emphasise a greater need to address many of these skills than was indicated by county inspectors completing a similar questionnaire. Only lesson planning was downgraded as a priority, one head teacher from Făgăraş adding that while novice teachers would benefit from further training in lesson-planning, it was not a significant requirement for more experienced teachers.

The need for teachers to use a wider range of methods and to provide more support for learners' speaking skills was also stressed by head teachers taking part in face-to-face interviews. Respondents in five locations in the survey felt there was insufficient interaction taking place in the English language classroom and that there was an excessively high level of teacher talking time. Comments included:

It's not that the teacher herself needs training in any particular area but maybe students could have more opportunities to speak in English (head teacher, Suceava).

One area that needs to be improved is related to teachers' use of interactive teaching methods (head teacher, Hunedoara).

Teachers need to be able to make the students speak/communicate: English is a loved language and we need to look at things from the students' perspective (head teacher Neamţ).

Learning should be enjoyable and relaxed. Teachers should adapt their attitudes so that they respond to the interests and skills of each child (head teacher, email questionnaire).

Eight responses from interviewees also suggest a need to support teachers in the use of ICT and to enable them to make more use of existing ICT resources.

Individual heads commented on a wide range of other areas that could be addressed through a CPD initiative including time-management (two responses), developing pronunciation skills (two responses) and selecting materials or course books (three responses). Head teachers would welcome initiatives that would enable teachers to work more closely in teams, and collaborate or undertake peer observations. A small minority of teachers commented that teachers need to take a more proactive approach to discipline, make grammar exercises more difficult and assess more rigorously.

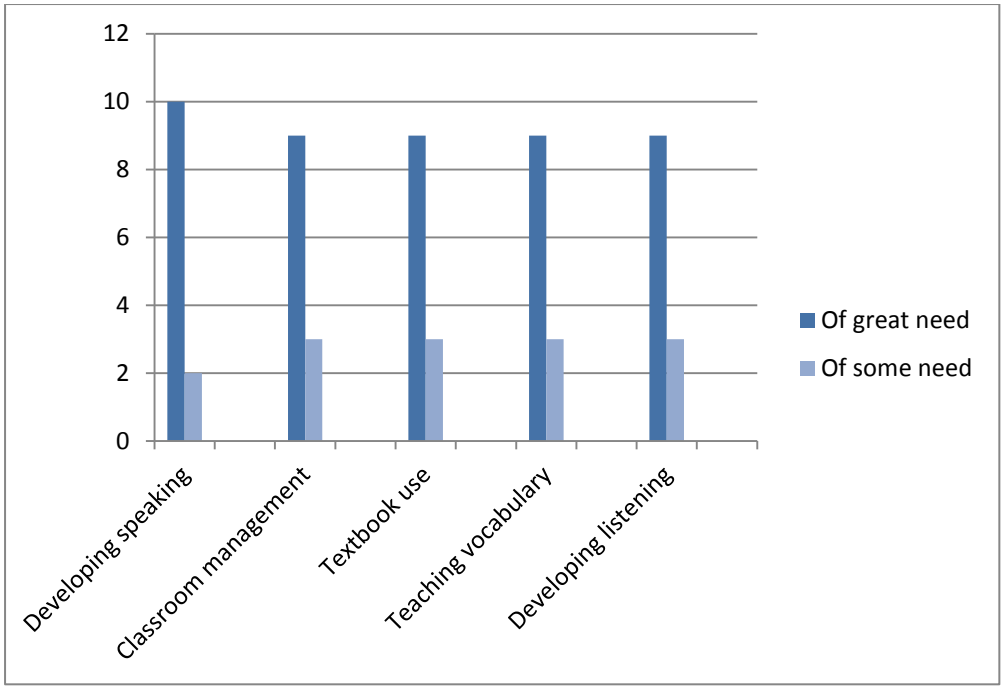


Figure 14: Views of head teachers: areas of need

Responses suggest that the majority of (but not all) teachers in schools surveyed have undertaken some type of training since becoming a teacher, often through the CCD, but there was no evidence given by head teachers of teachers participating in courses specifically targeting the teaching and learning of English language. Examples of training topics included counselling, personal development, teaching styles and life-long learning

skills. Feelings on the impact of previous training are mixed, as shown by the comments below:

The head teacher thinks that her teacher 'had something to learn from the courses she had attended [teaching styles and counselling] but sometimes the courses were disappointing (observer, Hunedoara).

The head teacher stated that the English teacher had had some training, about immigrant students in Malta, although it was not very relevant and there was nothing she could actually use in the school (observer, Suceava).

During the baseline study, interviewers outlined the *English for the Community* project and all interviewers noted that head teachers were well disposed to the project. Respondents would welcome an initiative which would introduce teachers to new ideas and new techniques (with one exception: a head teacher in Sibiu who felt that her existing teachers were already adequately trained) and saw these as having an eventual impact on the employability of young people and possibly leading to a reduction in the dropout rate. A number of head teachers also stressed the importance of a project which would be local and contextualised as seen in the comments below

If the training takes place in Vatra Dornei, many teachers would be able to attend……online meetings are not enough, there need to be face-to-face meetings too (head teacher Suceava).

The best part of this project is that it is designed for rural schools……..the training should not be very far away and should involve no significant costs (head teacher, Suceava).

It is important for the trainers to get to know the teachers and their needs so that the training addresses their needs (head teacher, Sibiu).

Ninety per cent of respondents completing the questionnaire suggested training should take place at weekends or in the holidays, and while around half the group saw face-to-face training as the most effective way of providing further CPD, online learning was mentioned in five of the locations surveyed. Respondents were also very open to the concept of regular discussion groups for teachers as it was felt this would lead to increased teacher collaboration and exchange of ideas which a number of head teachers felt to be currently lacking. Participation by teachers would, they felt, reflect well on the school and on examination results.

Heads of rural schools may often experience more problems than their urban counterparts in applying for and securing funding through European Union or World Bank projects[68] and grants from international donors and are less likely to receive national grants funds.[69] A minority of respondents (three schools), took a more traditional view of the project as a donor agency and requested materials, books or IT equipment. A residual trace of the view of the pre-eminence of the native speaker was

shown in only one comment, from Hunedoara, where the head teacher felt teachers would be better trained by native speakers.

However, ample evidence was provided of successful fund-raising and liaison with projects by, for example, a head teacher in Neamţ who had founded an ecology group through a World Bank grant and liaised with Comenius and Erasmus projects. Some head teachers are also interested in the possibilities of teacher exchanges (either face-to-face or online) which is beyond the remit of the *English for the Community* project. It would also be useful to connect schools visited to the British Council Examinations network where links do not currently exist.

Summary

Observers noted warm and supportive relationships between head teachers and staff.

Head teachers generally assessed support for a range of teaching skills as greater priorities than school inspectors had done, but there was a general consensus of opinion on which skills were priorities

Head teachers felt teachers require further support for developing learners' speaking skills including the use of a wider range of interactive patterns and also for more effective classroom management and creative use of the course book.

All but one of the head teachers surveyed would welcome a CPD initiative that focused on specific skills for the English language classroom and emphasise that initiatives should be localised and contextualised.

6.5 Views of teachers

At project inception (September to December 2016), teachers in the nine locations were asked to complete the British Council *Teaching for Success* self-evaluation questionnaire which was sent to respondents by email. The questionnaire was completed by 151 of the 155 teachers who had registered for the programme. In a second initiative, focus groups were held in urban centres in each of the nine counties selected which were facilitated by the British Council Project Manager. Views of teachers were also collected during the post-observation discussions during the baseline itself. Views of teachers are presented in this section.

In addition, between September and December 2016, a British Council language assessment was undertaken by 143 teachers and results matched to the Common European Framework of reference for languages (CEFR: see Appendix 2c). Results are discussed below.

Figure 15: Teacher focus group, Harghita

Teacher demographics reflect the national characteristics discussed in Section 4.2 above. Teachers were almost all women (93 per cent of the total), with 44 per cent of teachers having more than ten years' experience. Teachers with less than two years' experience represented only 14 per cent of the total. Table 6 below show that teachers teach a range of grades, with many teachers working at both primary and lower secondary levels, with a significant number of teachers working at high school level. Project initiatives therefore need to address a wide range of needs, from a minority of teachers working at pre-primary level to a significant number working at high school level.

Table 6: Learner levels taught by respondents (n=151)

Learner levels taught by respondents	Per cent of respondents
Pre-primary	13
Primary	72
Upper primary	74
Secondary	41

It is generally suggested that a language level of B2 and above is required for effective delivery of language classes to all but the most specialised and advanced grades. As shown in Table 7, in the majority of cases, the language level of teachers is at the least adequate for their classroom teaching.

Table 7: Learner levels taught by respondents (n=151)

Teacher language level	Per cent of respondents
C2	17
C1	62
B2	17
B1	4
Below B1	0

This would suggest that any teacher education initiative should focus primarily on pedagogical approaches rather than teacher language proficiency.

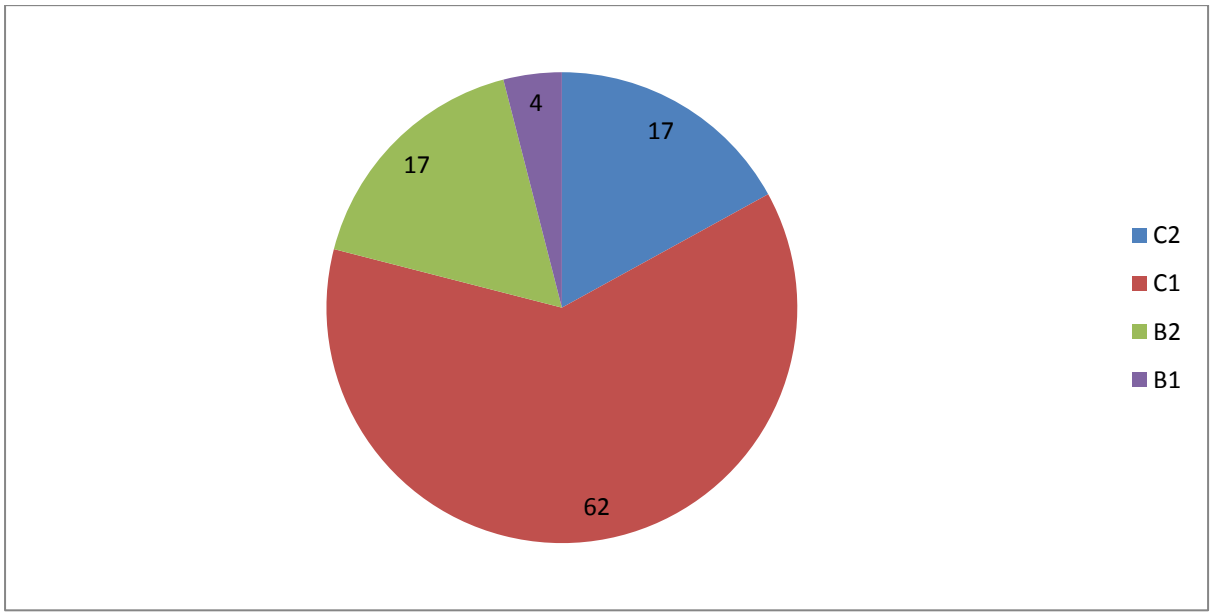


Figure 16: Teacher language levels: per cent: 2016 assessment

In the self-evaluation, teachers were asked to express their degree of confidence as regards specific elements of English language teaching and learning. Findings are presented in Table 8 below and further detail is presented in Appendix 3b.

Table 8: Teacher degrees of confidence: professional practises (n=151)

Skill	Relative degree of confidence
I can use a range of engaging techniques to teach pronunciation.	low
I can use a range of engaging techniques to teach writing skills.	low
I can use a range of engaging techniques to teach listening skills	low
I can use a range of techniques to teach my learners to speak English.	low
I can use a range of engaging techniques to introduce new grammar.	low
I can anticipate problems that may arise and decide how to respond.	low
I can assess learners in a range of ways.	low
I can motivate my students and meet their interests.	low
I can use a range of techniques to teach reading skills.	mid
I can use a range of techniques to teach vocabulary.	mid
I can give learners feedback on errors that helps them improve.	mid
I can develop materials to supplement the course book I use.	mid
I involve parents, learners and any other relevant persons in an inclusive learning.	mid
I can check learners' understanding during the lesson.	mid
I can write lesson aims which describe the intended learning outcomes for a class.	high
I can select activities which help meet the aims of the lesson.	high
I can create a positive learning environment.	high
I can evaluate the effectiveness of the materials and resources I use during lessons.	high
I can monitor learner engagement.	high
I can give instructions effectively.	high
I can give explanations that the learners are able to understand.	high
I can reflect on my lessons effectively.	high
I treat all my learners equally and with respect.	high

Results suggest that teachers need help in using engaging techniques to introduce and teach language/language skills, speaking in particular but also grammar, pronunciation, listening skills and, to a lesser extent, introducing vocabulary. Respondents were generally confident in their ability to plan lessons and courses, but less so in their ability to anticipate and deal with problems that might arise during lessons. Teachers are confident about their lesson management skills (giving instructions in particular) though less so in their ability to monitor students effectively and deal with learner errors. They were also confident about their ability to check learners' understanding, although much less so about assessing learning.

Through the 21st Century skills framework, the British Council has identified six key skills required by any subject teacher. Teacher degrees of confidence as regards these skills are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Teacher degrees of confidence: 21st century skills (n=151)

21st century skill	Degree of confidence
Digital literacy	Low
Student leadership and personal development	Low
Critical thinking and problem solving	Low
Citizenship	Low
Creativity and imagination	Low to mid
Collaboration and communication	Mid

In general, teachers appeared less confident about developing learners' 21st century skills than some other areas of classroom delivery. The concept of 21st century skills is relatively new; it formed the major theme to the most recent the Romanian Association of Teachers of English (RATE) conference in Cluj, November 2017. A significant number of teachers did not feel confident about their digital literacy and around a quarter of teachers in each location expressed little confidence in locating appropriate digital content, evaluating its quality, using technology to design and create teaching materials.

Sixteen per cent of teachers completing the questionnaire and around 25 per cent of teachers also had little experience in/confidence about working effectively with colleagues to design teaching materials collaboratively. A range of levels of confidence was expressed by teachers about their ability to identify and accommodate learners' special educational needs (SEN(D)) but a quarter of respondents stated they knew little about any special education needs their students may have.

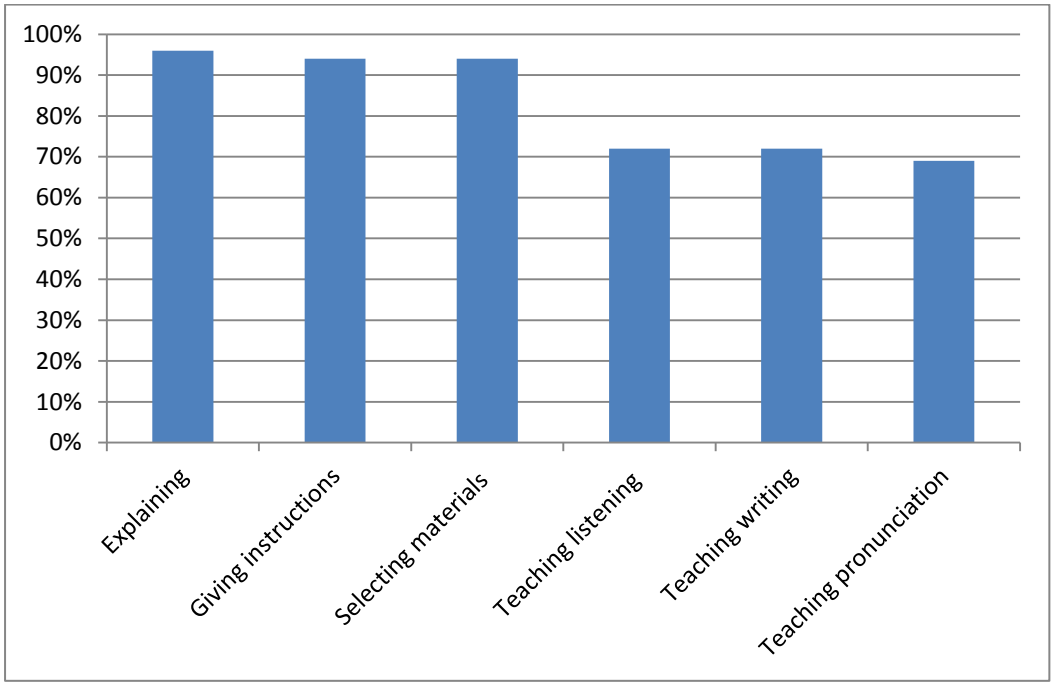


Figure 17: Percentage of teachers assessing personal performance as 'quite good' or 'very good'

Teachers are also keen to find ways to motivate their learners. When asked to produce questions which they would like answered by a CPD initiative, teachers in Bihor posed the following, all of which centre on motivation:

How can I motivate my students to prepare for important examinations?
How can I make my students take part in pair or group work?
How can I make my learners realise I cannot learn for them, I can only teach them?
How can I motivate a learner who has no skills?
How can I motivate an eight to ten year old to learn for himself not just because his mom tells him to? (teachers, Bihor).

During focus groups, teachers were asked to identify difficulties they faced in their work. Some teacher challenges are systemic and beyond the scope of this project, including low salaries (see Section 4.2), a lack of resources and 'too much bureaucracy'. Issues related to direct delivery of classroom teaching included the challenge of teaching mixed ability classes (either because of the range of language levels within one grade or because grades are combined; teachers described teaching 'simultaneous' classes, in which one class might comprise children from grades 1 to 4). Teachers were also interested in obtaining access to more diverse teaching resources, increased opportunities for continuous professional development and ways to learn effectively from colleagues.

Teachers had widely varying levels of experience of in-service education. In Neamț, for example, one teacher (also as deputy head and state methodologist) had been sponsored for participation in teacher-training courses at the University of Exeter while a teacher in a neighbouring school had had no involvement with any CPD since graduating. Observers assessed 75 per cent of teachers as having some awareness of CPD and opportunities available and some CPD ambitions, and almost 18 per cent as being able to do this readily and thoroughly. The majority of teachers were enthusiastic about the possibilities of any initiative to support them in their work and would welcome the training in specific English language teaching areas and regular teacher discussion groups. The group in Bihor listed benefits of such an initiative as including skills development, support in making lessons more engaging and increasing student involvement, '*learning something I can adapt to my class every day*' and, especially, as providing opportunities to interact with colleagues and share ideas.

A principal purpose of the baseline study is to compare strengths and areas for development as expressed by teachers with data collected from classroom observations which is then used to confirm or disconfirm teachers' beliefs about their own classroom practice. This data is presented in Section 6.6.

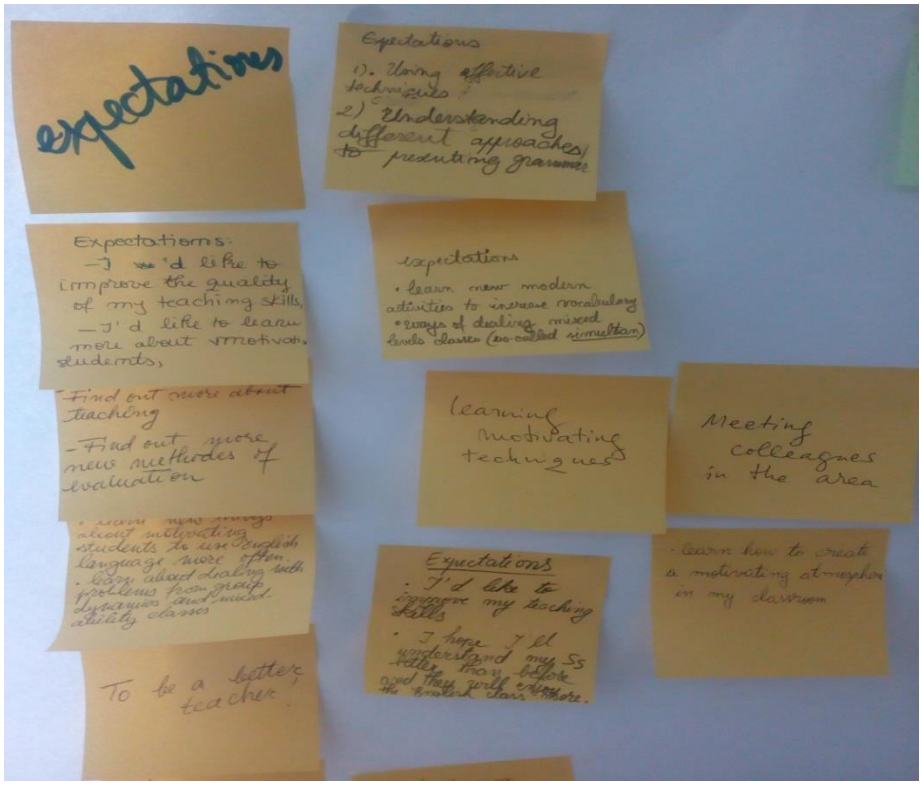


Figure 18: Teacher expectations of a CPD initiative, Neamț

Summary

Teachers had a wide range of backgrounds and may teach across a range of levels.

Teachers had a generally high level of English; any professional development initiative should address pedagogic skills development rather than language proficiency.

Teachers highlighted the need for more support for developing learners' pronunciation, writing, listening and speaking skills in a range of engaging ways and the need to make English language learning more motivating for learners.

Teachers did not feel confident about their digital literacy, teaching 21st century skills or addressing the special needs of their learners.

The majority of teachers had some awareness of CPD and opportunities available and some specific CPD ambitions.

They saw benefits of a CPD initiative as including practical classroom skills enhancement and the opportunity to interact and share ideas with peers.

6.6 Observation results: classroom practice

Observation tools used assessed the extent to which teachers provide evidence of key professional practices for the effective delivery of English which are detailed in the British Council Continuing Professional Development Framework (see Appendix 2a and 2b). Teachers were assessed as to the extent to which they exceed, met, partly met or did not meet a set of 23 indicators in the observation tool. Sections 6.6.1 to 6.6.6 will examine the extent to which individual indicators were met in the context of the professional practices and examples of good practice and areas for improvement will be detailed.

All teachers had volunteered to be observed. However, in all cases, observers felt that lessons were representative of reality although there may have been limited special preparation for the lesson. Many of the indicators used by observers also measure an aspect of teacher performance which is likely to be regularly exhibited in other lessons: it is unlikely, for example, that a teacher would give effective instructions in an observed lesson but provide ineffective instructions in their regular performance.

Observers found some significant variation from one teacher to the next in the same location in the degree to which lessons were effective and the use of specific teaching techniques. In total, nine of the teachers observed on average met or exceeded expected standards and 19 teachers partly met standards on average.

The number of teachers meeting or exceeding standards also varied from one location to the next, with Suceava, Neamţ and Sibiu having the fewest teachers doing so. However, due to the small size of the sample, it is not suggested that these variations provide in any way a comprehensive picture of differences in effectiveness of teaching across the nine districts and a much larger observation survey would be required in order to determine this.

6.6.1 Professional practice: using inclusive approaches

Teachers generally adopted an inclusive approach to their learners. Almost all teachers (92.8 per cent) fully met or exceeded indicators for fair treatment of learners, with almost half the sample exceeding standards for this indicator. Praise and encouragement for learning was provided by 85.7 per cent of the sample. A similar number use learners' names, with over half the group always using names appropriately and consistently. These figures substantiate observers' views of the generally warm and caring relationships between teachers and learners which would appear to be a real strength of teaching across the nine locations. In post-observation reflection sessions, teachers regularly showed detailed understanding of their learners' backgrounds and social and economic challenges. Comments from observers included:

I noticed a very good rapport between the teachers and their students and there was a non-threatening atmosphere in classes observed (observer, Neamţ).

All teachers observed had excellent relationships with learners, encouraging them constantly, maintaining a low affective filter and thus providing opportunities for learners to try and express themselves (observer, Bihor).

I *was impressed by the obviously warm relationship between the teacher and learners in the grade 6 class I observed: the teacher began by inviting everybody to sing 'happy birthday' to one of the students; her enthusiasm was clear in the games which followed and encouragement to learners to applaud each other* (observer, Mureş).

All teachers used positive feedback to praise students (observer, Harghita).

In general, teachers aim to distribute questions fairly across the class, with examples of teachers encouraging less confident learners to speak ('*somebody else, please' 'great, Ştefan, but can anybody else give me an idea?*'). In a number of classes, more able learners may dominate a little and there were some examples of gender bias, with boys tending to be chosen to answer questions more than girls in some classes. In a few exceptions, the teacher appeared to take a different approach to different students (using first names for preferred learners and surnames for other students) but these were comparatively rare.

Teachers were able to provide a great deal of information about their learners. They were very much aware of reasons for absences from school due to a need for children to work in the household/on the family farm and described how these absences peaked at certain times of the year. They described families where the father was working elsewhere or abroad and grandparents for example were acting as guardians. They were generally aware of their students' aspirations and preferences. In general, relationships between teachers and learners are strong and would provide a firm foundation for any professional development initiative to build on.

Attitudes to children from specific communities, in particular the Roma community, would appear to vary. Observers noted Roma learners in four of the locations where visits took place (Bihor, Sibiu, Mureş and Braşov). In one class in Bihor, a Roma student was described by the observer in the following way:

One of the learners in the class is Roma. He has not got a textbook (apparently, he keeps losing it), and sits alone doing nothing. When I asked him if he liked his teacher, he replied: 'Yes, she hasn't failed me yet' (observer, Bihor).

In a teacher focus group held a week after the baseline study was complete in Harghita, strong and very negative opinions about Roma parents were expressed by some participants and it was clear a number of participants in the group saw the term 'mixed-ability' as referring to children from different communities rather than children having different levels of proficiency.

In contrast, in a class where 11 of the 12 students observed come from the Roma community (and a further 12 students from the same community were absent), the observer noted:

The learning environment in the class was very friendly and the students seemed to love their teacher very much. The teacher was always supportive and praised them for every achievement (observer, Braşov).

There was evidence (in observations in Sibiu) of more able students being encouraged to support two Roma students who were struggling with the task. More research is required on the relationships between teachers and children from other communities, but it is clear that it would be useful for any professional development initiative to address the issue of inclusion.

In the majority of classes, observers were not able to identify children who might have special needs and teachers were only infrequently able to identify if children had any special needs in their classes. It is likely that many learners do, however, and that these needs may not be immediately visible or may not have been identified by the teacher. In Mureş, an observer who has received training in this field and is herself a trainer on special needs courses, estimated that there were five students in the class possibly having ADHD[1] and SEBD[2] and in addition a student who required a wheelchair. The observer in Neamţ also felt there were two to three students in the class she observed who might have cognitive challenges.

Teachers themselves have emphasised their own lack of detailed understanding of special needs, the fact they do not always feel supported by the system in dealing with them and the need for further awareness raising for teachers. One result of this limited awareness is that the teacher may be reluctant to engage with such learners as shown in the following comment from Sibiu:

According to the teacher, there are some learners in the class who can barely read. The teacher did not deal with them during the observation (observer, Sibiu).

As with inclusion, it is recommended that the project continue to collect information on this area and use this information to inform professional development sessions.

6.6.2 Professional practice: using multilingual approaches: selection of language used

In seven locations the majority of learners were estimated to speak Romanian as a first language; in Harghita, almost all students observed were estimated to be Hungarian speakers. A class in which many learners spoke Hungarian as a first language was also

[1] Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
[2] Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

encountered in Mureş. Three-quarters of teachers conducted the majority of the lesson in English and teachers were consistently able to provide good models of English. However, in only 28.6 per cent of lessons was English used throughout the lesson with thoroughly appropriate use of the learners' first language. In one example, in Bihor, the teacher translated each sentence of the reading text into English although this practice was comparatively unusual. However, while there is certainly a place for learner languages in the English lesson, teachers appeared to find it difficult to make considered choices of when to use English and when to use the learners' first language and all observers reported that the latter was usually over-used.

There appear to be two reasons for the over-use of Romanian/Hungarian. The first is teachers' apparent reluctance to accept that their learners may be able to understand their instructions in English, partly because of an under-estimation of learners' capacity and partly because of a lack of a systematic approach to introducing English for classroom management. In many lessons, relatively clear instructions were given in English (but see comments on areas for improvement in Section 6.6.5 below) but the teacher switched immediately to the learners' first language to reformulate these instructions. As the observer in Sibiu reported:

All the teachers felt they had to use Romanian in their lessons to make themselves understood and were not prepared to give it some thought, becoming quite defensive when asked if they had considered alternative approaches.....they stated: 'I don't how else they can understand what I say' and 'I must absolutely give instructions in Romanian. There is no other way'. (observer, Sibiu).

Other observers came to the same conclusions:

All teachers were fairly good at giving instructions but sometimes felt they had to translate them because they were not aware of other ways of checking instructions (observer, Mureş).

Teachers provided some clear instructions but would then sometimes translate them into Hungarian (observer, Harghita).

A teacher in Neamţ emphasised that she used (and over-used) Romanian throughout to ensure that '*all my students understand and are part of the lesson, to help them find similarities with Romanian and to prepare the students for the Grade 8 examination*': all commendable reasons but with the impact of limiting learners' exposure to the language being taught.

The second area in which the learners' first language was consistently over-used was in the area of introducing and checking learners' understanding of vocabulary as a consequence of teachers not being aware of or reluctant to use techniques to undertake this without recourse to direct translation. In one lesson observed, for example (Suceava), learners were asked to identify any words they did not understand

and ask the teacher for the meaning who then provided a translation. In a second example, at a high school in Mureş, with higher level learners, learners were repeatedly asked '*What does ___ mean?*' and replied with a Romanian equivalent. Examples collected by observers across locations of vocabulary items the teacher or learners translated included '*windowsill*', '*blink*', '*meat*' '*rice*' (which could all have been dealt with through the use of realia, a simple gesture or visual/blackboard drawing), higher level vocabulary such as '*gratitude*', '*complain*' '*relief*' (which could have been dealt with through simple paraphrase/synonyms) and idioms such as '*let off steam*' '*fits like a glove*' (which also would be more effectively dealt with through paraphrase and may be confusing to deal with in translation).

6.6.3 Professional practice: planning lessons

Fifty per cent of the sample provided the observer with a lesson plan for the lesson. However, including cases in which a lesson plan was not provided, 78.8 per cent of lessons showed evidence of staging, with clear, defined stages and outcomes apparent to the observer. Observers commented:

All three teachers I observed prepared their lessons thoroughly, had lesson plans, the text book and additional materials (observer, Bihor).

Teachers had lesson plans with the stages of the lesson written clearly as well as the objectives of the lesson (observer, Hunedoara).

Teachers were generally well-prepared.....one teacher I observed asked learners at the end of the lesson 'So if you go to a restaurant, can you order in English?' directing their attention to the objective (observer, Harghita).

At times, these lesson plans were rather over-ambitious: teachers sometimes planned more than they could teach in the period and rushed stages at the end and in one otherwise quite focused lesson in Suceava, the addition of a whole new language area in the last ten minutes of the lesson disrupted what had been up to then a fairly solidly structured lesson. In another example, the teacher failed to take into sufficient account the range of levels in her class, as shown by the observer's notes:

Although it was a well-prepared lesson, with lots of materials, learners completed tasks slowly and were not able to complete the jigsaw reading task in the time allocated. Some tasks were too difficult for less able learners although the teacher attempted to help them by providing clues and explanations (observer, Bihor).

Problems with pacing sometimes meant that the production phase of the lesson and/or stages in which pair work or group work appeared in the lesson plan were postponed for a future occasion. Nevertheless, this staging was felt by observers to be a real strength of many lessons observed and teachers were familiar and/or had been trained to construct a relatively detailed plan with appropriate aims and objectives.

What needs to be addressed through a professional development initiative, however, is the focus of the vast majority of teachers on grammar rules and exercises. Teachers generally saw language teaching as involving a list of grammatical items to be taught and tested rather than the competency approach emphasised in the syllabus. This was often a result of a laudable but misplaced desire to ensure that all students learn: a teacher in Neamț, for example, described her own very negative experiences of studying French at higher levels without sufficient grammatical awareness and expressed her intent that her learners did not experience the same.

Teacher knowledge of grammar was often very solid and in some classes, effective concept checks were seen. One general consequence though of this focus on grammar and in particular on form was that a specific construction (conditionals or the past tense, for example) predominated at the expense of functional language and learners were asked to practise the same construction, sometimes through a series of roughly similar handouts drawn from different sources. Grammatical constructions were often given priority over other language areas such as vocabulary. Choice of activities also needs to be addressed: while there was some variety of activities or tasks, in almost 40 per cent of lessons observed, not all tasks were assessed as being meaningful or appropriate. Tasks were often not creative: the indicator that the least number of teachers (less than one third: 28.5 per cent) were able to meet or exceed comprised the involvement of learners in tasks which demanded critical thinking, creativity or imagination.

A sample of 13 lesson plans collected during the baseline study was subsequently examined by the Academic Advisor. Of these, nine dealt directly with a grammatical structure (comparatives, conditionals, countability, past verb forms, possessives and quantifiers *too* and *enough,* word order of adjectives). One plan aimed to introduce a range of idioms and a further plan introduced vocabulary for clothes. Two plans supported the development of reading/listening skills. All plans showed an understanding of how to write a formal lesson and all presented the stages of the lesson, often in considerable detail, with timings and sometimes with sub-aims. All had aims although many of these aims lacked precision and there was sometimes confusion between aims, objectives and lesson procedures. A common tendency was to present a 'methods' section although this ranged from statements that the communicative method will be used to for example '*conversation, explanation and debate'* to details of interaction patterns. A number of plans referred to student communication under 'methods' but did not include any pair or group work in the stages, and some lessons observed did not include the student interaction included in the plan.

Three of the plans discussed problems that might arise during the lesson but it is clear some teachers do require more support in this area: problems included for example '*the impossibility of doing all the activities*' to '*some unknown phrases'*. Four of the plans included an evaluation stage, although these tended to focus on '*giving grades to some students, accounting for them'*, '*making sure the students understand the rule'* and '*offering constructive feedback*" and it would appear that the frontal distribution of grades in the closing stages of the lesson to learners who have performed particularly

well (or badly) was how teachers perceived the assessment of learners' progress. The lesson plans all represent a creditable effort to prepare and map out the lesson, but they also indicate a need for more awareness for teachers of how objectives can be reached, how a variety of activities can be used and linked together and how learner progress can be measured.

6.6.4 Professional practice: understanding learners: proficiency in English and demonstrating models for learners

Teacher language proficiency as identified through the language assessment of all teachers registering for the project is described in Section 6.5. Observations supported the conclusions of this assessment as shown in Table 10:

Table 10: Teacher language level as assessed through classroom observation (n=28)

Teacher language level	Below B1	B1	B2	C1 and above
Per cent per level	0	10.7	25	64.3

Apart from a very small number of minor slips by teachers, teacher use of English was accurate and clear. One observer recorded a teacher who was initially reluctant to undertake the post-observation interview in English but who encountered no problems with use of English once the interview had begun.

6.6.5 Professional practice: managing the lesson

Establishing and maintaining a positive learning environment and maintaining discipline

There were very few incidences of any classroom discipline problems. Classrooms observed were orderly and organised and while the presence of observers may have had an effect on the classroom atmosphere, teacher descriptions in interviews would indicate that what was observed is the norm. There were isolated examples of learners not paying attention or of minor behaviour problems. Only in one school, in Mureş, with a class all teachers in the school described as challenging, did the teacher appear to have any problems with maintaining class control.

6.6.6 Classroom management: setting up and using classroom activities with a range of interaction patterns

Learner involvement

Learners were engaged in the lesson (at least occasionally) in all lessons and in 68.7 per cent of lessons observed, levels of engagement fully met or exceeded the indicator. In some cases, this level of involvement was very high, as in the following examples:

Each and every student was involved in each activity and the teacher made sure that learners overcame their shyness, constantly encouraging the learners to speak (observer, Braşov).

This was a particularly involving lesson, in which learners participated very actively in a short grammar concept check and then in a game. Any areas for improvement in classroom management were more than made up for by the teacher's enthusiasm and the involvement of her students (observer, Mureş).

Not all learners were engaged; in a number of classes, back rows were relatively ignored and there were cases (in Bihor and Hunedoara, for example) of learners who were left relatively to their own devices as long as they did not cause any discipline problems – the 'unspoken compact' between the teacher and the back row(s).

In many classes, however, this level of engagement was achieved through interaction between the teacher and the class through quite a traditional, teacher-centred approach. In many classes, learners were involved as a result of the teacher asking questions and distributing these around the class rather than the learners interacting with each other, as shown in the following observer comment:

There was a need to vary the interaction patterns in order to provide more opportunities for learners to speak in English. In two of the classes observed, learners were engaged only in frontal elicitation, without any pair or group work (observer, Mureş).

In many cases, learners were actively engaged in these elicitation phases and the comparative small class sizes meant that turns for responding could be distributed around the class. There was a need, however, for development in terms of eliciting, with almost one third of teachers eliciting infrequently or inappropriately. In particular, questions were often (but certainly not always) limited in scope, requiring only yes/no, simple word or translated responses. Learners would also benefit from increased waiting time. Questions only occasionally encouraged critical thinking and teachers require more support in this area.

Figure 19: Frontal eliciting, above left: Sibiu, above right: Suceava

In the 2016 focus groups and interviews, teachers regularly prioritised a desire for further training to help their learners to develop their speaking skills, a skill often supported in effective classrooms through the use of pair and group work. In some lessons observed, these interaction patterns were used quite extensively – in all of the three classes observed in Bihor, for example. The observer in Sibiu described a class in which:

Students seemed to be very involved. They enjoyed moving and being grouped and they happily built up the sentences, collaborating on deciding what to include in the sentences and debating which examples should be included (observer, Sibiu).

A teacher in Mureş described her classroom practice in this way (and demonstrated her use of these interaction patterns during the class):

I usually pair up students. I ask them to sit together and complete the pair work activity in the book and to speak English with their partner. I find it useful to encourage them to compare their answers sometimes, I sometimes organise them in groups (teacher, Mureş).

Effective group work was seen, for example, in observer's notes on the following lessons:

The teacher organises students in groups of four and assigns roles to them: one student writes and the others help. Students are given a handout with riddles and work in groups to solve the riddles. The students complete the task while the teacher checks they are working in groups, checks and praises. She then asks students to read out the riddles and supports learners with their pronunciation (observer, Hunedoara).

The teacher gives each group strips of paper and asks each group to write three sentences with the verb 'to be', an affirmative sentence, a negative and an interrogative one. The children move into groups of their own choice. The teacher then has a student switch places with someone in a group where there are two boys who cannot read in order to help them with their work. Students start talking and writing sentences on their strips while the teacher moves around the groups. When the sentences are written on the strips, the teacher tells them to tear them up so that each piece of paper contains one of the words in the sentence. They are then folded, placed in piles and exchanged with other groups. The groups then recreate the sentences they received from their peers (observer, Sibiu).

Figure 20: Effective group work, Bihor

However, fewer than half the lessons observed (46.4 per cent) showed any evidence of pair or group work. Although classes were generally comparatively small and there was space for learners to move around, opportunities were missed to exploit this space in almost 40 per cent of cases. Lesson stages in which learners could have collaborated in completing exercises or comparing answers during a listening activity often involved learners working individually. There were a number of incidences of role play activities but these were usually organised as one or more open pairs performing in front of the class. There were also examples of teachers giving instructions for pair work but then eliciting and not following through on the interactive activity.

Figure 21: Effective group work, Hunedoara

The result of the lack of interactive activities was a comparatively high level of teacher talking time (TTT) in almost half the classes observed, assessed as excessive in 42.8 per

cent of lessons observed with a consequent lack of opportunities for learners to use English.

Giving instructions and monitoring

As stated above, teachers often resorted to giving instructions in Romanian/Hungarian, often because they were not confident about learners' ability to follow their instructions but also because many teachers require support in giving effective instructions. Instructions were assessed as not always effective, in a little less than one third (32.1 per cent) of lessons resulting in some learner miscomprehension of tasks. Instructions would benefit from more Instruction Checking Questions (ICQs), the provision of an example or 'test-run' before the activity began, 'chunking' of instructions and (where interactive activities were used) the provision of signals to begin and end the activity. As observers in Harghita and Hunedoara put it:

Teachers used a lot of 'Do you understand?' type questions (rather than checking or chunking instructions) and if students replied 'No', they would switch to Hungarian as an easy way out (observer, Harghita).

There were problems with delivering instructions: teachers gave the instructions for a task on handouts which had been distributed in one phase and learners paid more attention to what was written on the handout than to what the teacher was saying (observer, Hunedoara).

Teachers also find monitoring challenging with this classroom practice not assessed as effective in almost half (53.6 per cent) of lessons observed, as shown, for example, by observer's notes from Harghita:

The teacher asks the learners to continue but they don't seem to clearly understand the instructions. She prepares the DVD rather than monitoring the class. Learners do not appear to be watching the DVD but focus on the projector……when the teacher realises learners do not understand, she translates and asks if students have understood (observer, Harghita).

6.6.7 Professional practice: managing resources

As described in Section 4.5, the Romanian syllabus for English aims to be competency based and to be flexible. Within this syllabus, schools in Romania have more freedom than in many other countries to choose their own course books. Rather than being obliged to use one prescribed course book, schools choose from an approved list which includes books produced by international commercial publishing houses and Romanian publications. This choice then conditions course book use for a number of years. Publications seen in observed lessons included *Reward* (Macmillan, 1994), *High Flyer* (Longman, 1999), *Snapshot* (Longman, 2000) and *Upstream* (Express Publishing, 2002). The use of the Romanian publication *Front Runner* (Corint, 2005) was also noted.

Teachers in Romanian classrooms also have more freedom to choose their own resources to supplement the course book.

A substantial number of teachers (78.5 per cent) were observed using materials apart from the core textbook. In many of these cases, teachers had downloaded materials from a range of sites including the British Council LearnEnglish Teens site with which teachers seemed relatively familiar. However, encouraging though this is, these downloads were most frequently handouts of grammatical exercises and as described above, one result was of learners completing a series of different grammatical exercises downloaded from a range sites but often simply practising the same structure, to the detriment of more creative production stages.

Teachers have mixed feelings about the course book itself (and indeed about course books in general, as emerged from a short focus group in Bihor shortly after the baseline study). During the post-observation reflection sessions, some teachers emphasised a need to supplement the course book which was felt to be inadequate. Other lessons observed were particularly course book driven, with some teachers in Sibiu described in the following way:

Teachers seemed apprehensive about using other materials and give their motivation for their fondness for the course book as 'I have to follow the national curriculum and go through all the course book'.....one teacher felt there was no need for technology to support lessons as students were not particularly interested in language-learning (observer, Sibiu).

Similar opinions were voiced in Suceava. Such opinions would appear to stem from a miscomprehension of the syllabus and more awareness-raising by state educational authorities would be useful.

Many teachers are however aware of the need to be flexible in the use of the course book. A relatively high proportion of teachers observed (70 per cent) adapted and/or personalised the course book and in 21.4 per cent of lessons, this approach was taken consistently and appropriately. This was again a strength of current practice and one which could support the introduction of a range of other techniques and approaches.

The extent to which technology was used is described in Section 6.2. All classrooms were equipped with a black/whiteboard which was used effectively in three-quarters of the lessons observed. In a number of lessons, the teacher involved learners by asking them to write on the board, often in the form of a game or to write suggestions from the class.

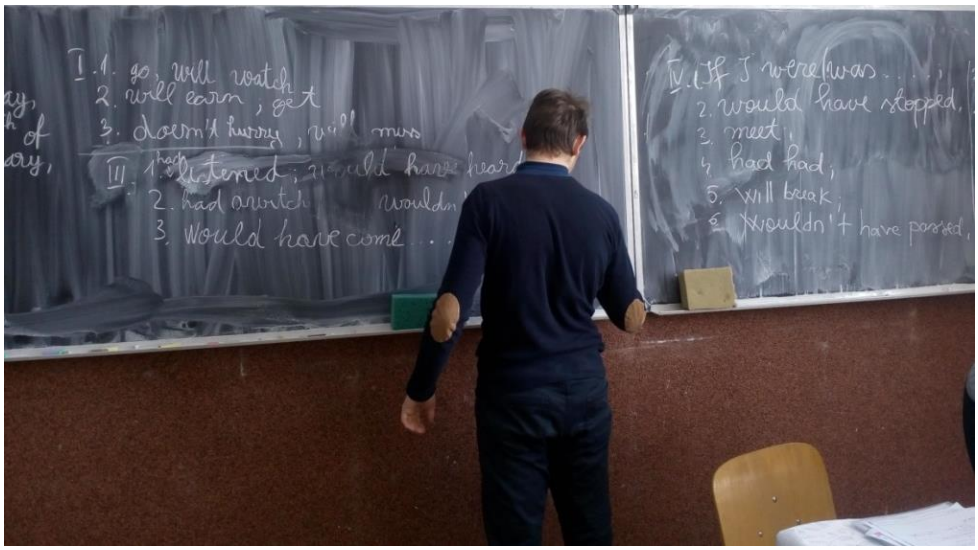


Figure 22: Learner board work (conditionals) Neamţ

6.6.8 Professional practice: assessing learners: error correction

Error correction observed presented particular challenges for teachers of English in the locations, with teachers finding it challenging to correct errors effectively in over half (53.3 per cent) of the lessons observed, and seven per cent of teachers providing only negative feedback. While correction was generally accurate and errors meriting treatment were not dealt with infrequently, correction was almost invariably direct. An exception was in Hunedoara:

In one lesson I observed, the teacher encouraged the students to correct their peers' mistakes, while in a later activity, the teacher decided not to interrupt the learners by correcting mistakes all the time.....the teacher was keen to help learners express their ideas and opinions without being criticised (observer, Hunedoara).

In general, though, teachers would benefit from support in using less direct methods of correction, encouraging peer and self-correction and using delayed (indirect) correction.

Little direct support for the development of learners' pronunciation was observed beyond the direct correction of occasional words ('*suit'/'there'/'jungle'/'microphone'*) although in one isolated case, the teacher drilled the initial sound of '*cucumber'* which was proving to be difficult for learners. There was little or no evidence for support for learners' stress and intonation which many advanced Romanian speakers of English often identify as the most problematical aspect of English pronunciation.

Summary

A strength of teaching English in the locations was the warm and caring relationship between teachers and learners identified by observers.

A second strength was the fact the lessons had a definite shape and were staged; there was sufficient evidence of teachers' ability to construct a formal lesson plan.

Teachers were able to use English effectively in class. However, the learners' first language was regularly over-used in the classroom, particularly for classroom management including giving instructions and for teaching vocabulary.

Learners are generally involved in lessons but this is often through activities in which the teacher elicits and learners respond. There is a need for further support for teachers to encourage more interaction between learners in the classroom.

Teachers adapted or personalised the course book or used supplementary materials. However, these supplementary materials were generally very grammar-based and there was a need to identify materials and activities to support learner interaction in order to develop learners' speaking skills.

Error correction tended to be very direct and little support was provided for learners to develop their pronunciation skills.

Some aspects of the extent of inclusion in schools including relationships with learners from specific communities and addressing special needs would benefit from further research.

6.7 Teacher reflection

Figure 23: Post-observation interview, Suceava

Following each lesson observation, teachers were asked to reflect on their lessons and to complete a short reflection form detailing what they felt had gone well in their lessons and what could be improved for a future occasion. Observers assessed their ability to reflect on their own performance, on possible improvements for their teaching performance for the future and on the progress their learners had made during the lesson. Results are presented in this section.

The process of reflection (as opposed to receiving feedback) seemed new to many teachers. Only one teacher was not able to reflect on her performance at all, but a quarter of teachers observed were only able to do this to a limited extent. A similar number of teachers (28.6 per cent) were able to identify ways learners had made progress during the lesson to a limited extent. Around half the group struggled to identify a range of ways to improve for the future. On average, no teacher exceeded all three indicators. Conclusions are therefore that teachers are at a developing stage of reflection.

A second process confirmed these conclusions. Just prior to the post-observation meeting, 24 teachers observed were asked to note down aspects of the lesson they felt had gone well and areas to improve. These comments were then collected, subsequently analysed and are presented in Appendix 5.

A little less than half the total comments on what had been successful showed only very limited reflection in that they referred only to recall of the lesson itself or what tools were used. These included, for example:

- *I wrote notes on the board*
- *I helped the students to understand conditional sentences*
- *I used hand-outs with lots of exercises*
- *I used a PowerPoint presentation*

A more developing ability to reflect was shown in the 26 per cent of comments that refer directly to learners and the 11.5 per cent of comments which described an appropriate classroom atmosphere. These included, for example:

- *I encouraged students to express personal views*
- *I tried to enable students to practise speaking spontaneously and fluently*
- *The students were interested in the riddles and managed to find the answers/find the fruit and vegetables*
- *I managed to create a proper atmosphere for learning*
- *The atmosphere was pleasant/students were relaxed*

In a rather limited way, 18 per cent of comments referred to lesson planning, for example:

- *I organised the lesson/managed the students well*
- *The lesson had a logical structure*
- *I reached my objectives (unspecified)*

or to personal performance:

- *I explained the vocab in English resorting to Romanian only when strictly necessary*
- *My language was accurate*

Only three comments referred to specific features of teaching:

- *I checked and improved pronunciation*
- *I allowed the students to express their own ideas without interrupting them to correct each minor error*
- *I gave feedback (more positive than negative)*

Suggestions for improvements in the lesson similarly showed a developing level of reflection. Only one comment referred directly to a desire for more resources (a figure often far higher in less experienced groups of teachers and sometimes referred to as a 'wishlist'[70]) although there were significantly more comments made orally. Over 30 per cent per cent of comments showed an appreciation that the level, of teacher talking time was too high and of the need to involve students more although there are few direct suggestions on how to reduce this:

- *I could talk less and let the students do more work*

- *I would like the children to talk more than me during the class*
- *I could create more opportunities for students to speak English*
- *I could make the class more engaging*
- *I should work with the grouping method more*
- *I should encourage all the students to participate*

There are again a limited number of comments on specific features of the lesson or appropriate techniques that could be used:

- *Not correcting errors on the spot*
- *Giving feedback needs to be improved*
- *Time management: the activity was too long*
- *Timing: more time should have been allowed for the last activity*

While there were few examples of fully developed reflection, this is not to say that teachers in the locations do not consider their lessons deeply and seek ways to improve their teaching. However, one benefit to teachers of an effective professional development initiative would be to broaden the scope of their reflection while also helping it to become more specific.

Summary

Assessment by observers and analysis of teacher comments both suggest that teachers were able to reflect, but in a limited way although there were some examples of developing reflection.

All teachers would benefit from further support to enable them more reflectively on their teaching and their students' learning.

6.8 Views of learners

Learner focus groups were held in 23 schools during the baseline study. Following the observed lesson, teachers kindly permitted baseline observers to talk to the class for periods of 20 to 30 minutes. The fact that most classes were comparatively small meant that it was relatively easy to access learners' views. Seven of the focus groups were held entirely in English, seven mainly in the learners' first language (with translation by the teacher into Hungarian in one case in Harghita) and nine in a mixture of English and Romanian or (in two cases in Harghita) Hungarian. In around half the focus groups, the teacher voluntarily left the room to encourage the discussion to be more open.

Focus groups were held over a range of grades 5 to 12. Learners appeared to enjoy the focus groups and were keen to volunteer opinions. In many classes, learners were confident about using their English, however limited, often using their first language in order to express opinions in more detail. In cases where the focus group included the Academic Advisor, learners were happy to interact effectively with a foreigner. Observers noted that learners in lower grades were often less reticent than those in higher grades especially in areas such as describing ambitions.

Learner language level varied from class to class and there was often a wide range of language level within the class; teachers' concerns about the range of levels of their learners and the consequent mixed ability quality of classes were often well-founded. Table 11 shows estimated average range of language level for classes observed at different grades:

Table 11: Estimated average range of learner level in observed classes

Grade	Estimated average language level	County where classes observed
5	Below A1 to A2	Mureş, Sibiu, Harghita
6	A2 to B1	Mureş, Bihor, Harghita
7	A1 to B1	Suceava, Neamţ, Sibiu, Bihor, Braşov, Hunedoara
8	Below A1 to B1	Mureş, Suceava, Neamţ, Braşov, Sibiu
9	A2 to B2	Mureş, Suceava, Hunedoara
10	A1 to C1	Mureş, Neamţ, Braşov, Hunedoara, Harghita
12	B1 to C1	Bihor, Harghita

Where appropriate, learners were asked to describe their teacher. Although their responses were relatively generic (for example: *nice*: 8 incidences, *helpful/encouraging:* 8 incidences, *understanding*: 5 incidences, *caring/patient:* 5 incidences), adjectives used by learners confirmed views of teachers, head teachers and observers that relationships between teachers and learners were strong. When asked what he most liked about learning English, one student in Neamţ replied: '*my teacher*'; other comments included:

She is not as mean as other teachers (learner: Suceava).

She explains very clearly, she understands us, she doesn't yell at us and she works a lot.....she encourages us to speak (learner: Sibiu).

She knows our names even though we have only known her since September.....she is awesome (learner: Hunedoara).

Figure 24: Learner focus group, Neamț

Learners in around half the focus groups stated that English was used all the time or a lot by the teacher during classes, with perceptions from other focus groups that a mixture of Romanian/Hungarian was used. Learner perceptions of language use may not match reality, however: the observer in Mureş reported that, although the lesson she had just observed had been characterised by a significant level of Romanian, learners stated that the teacher used English all the time. Learners described English use by the teacher as including greetings, giving explanations and instructions, asking questions, reading texts and grading and giving homework. Learners described their own language use in class as mainly a mixture of English and their first language:

We use English a lot but we also use Romanian/Roma (learner: Mureş).

We use Romanian because it's easier but it's definitely not helpful (learner: Mureş).

We often speak Romanian in groups and ask the best student to translate (learner: Braşov).

If I don't know a word in English, I say it in Romanian and the teacher translates (learner: Braşov).

Learners were asked what they liked and disliked about learning English. Learners prioritised reading, often because it was '*interesting*' or '*helps you learn new things*', with

speaking/working in pairs or groups in a close second place. They also enjoyed learning new words and, in a number of cases, translating. There were relatively fewer references to taking part in games (identified by learner focus groups in Neamţ, Braşov, Hunedoara and Harghita) although in some classes, this may be simply be a result of learners not seeing games as a usual classroom activity. Learners dislikes centred squarely on grammar (73 per cent of all dislikes expressed) which was seen in terms of rules, exercises and tests and often described as '*difficult*', '*complicated*' and '*hard to understand*'. Learners also disliked '*learning things by heart*' and '*learning lists*' (of irregular verbs in particular). Writing was also seen as difficult and '*hard work*'. In a little less than half the focus groups, learners described speaking/oral expression as demanding, but clarified that what made it so was a lack of vocabulary to be able to express opinions or ideas.

Learners frequently come into contact with English outside the classroom, but seldom in face-to-face encounters. All focus groups but one (in Braşov) described regular watching of television programmes in English which are regularly broadcast in Romania with Romanian subtitles ('*National Geographic*'. '*Animal Planet*', films and cartoons) and learners at higher levels described attempts to watch these without using the subtitles for support. The majority of learners made use of online games, video and music. Smartphone ownership stated was high (in some cases, such as a class in Haţeg, Hunedoara, all the class) although this varied from location to location and from grade to grade. There were numerous examples of learners using social media in English and communicating in English with Romanian diaspora (and much less so non-Romanian speakers) abroad. There were scattered incidences of learners using English to talk to friends '*for the fun of it, as a game*' or '*because it's good practice*' (in Suceava and Mureş) to converse with foreigners in their towns (especially in Mureş, Suceava and Neamţ) or to help siblings or parents (Neamţ, Sibiu and Bihor) but in general, face-to-face use of English outside the classroom appears quite limited.

Learners have a wide range of ambitions (27 different occupations were named by learners), especially at lower grades, with the police, law and accountancy amongst the most popular but also including acting, architecture, design and health care. The range declined with higher grades as a sense of slightly pessimistic realism sets in: the observer in Albeşti, Mureş reported that while the girls in the class had aspirations for higher education, the boys all wanted to leave school and start working as soon as possible; as many students had ambitions to be a mechanic/driver as they had to be lawyers.

With all locations characterised by negative population growth, very few learners saw their futures as taking place in their hometowns or villages. There were widespread expectations of the need to find work elsewhere whether or not this involves study at university first. Learners imagined themselves as living in large cities in Romania including Bucharest, Iaşi and Braşov and in particular Cluj-Napoca which exerts an almost magnetic effect over much of Transylvania and the north-east. Learners predicted study abroad (in the United Kingdom, the United States or Denmark) and/or

migration for work '*to have a better life*' (learners: Braşov) – but '*not Romania, definitely*!' (learners: Hunedoara).

Learners from Grade 5 up are aware of the importance and usefulness of English, whatever their own language level may be. English was identified as an international language, essential for travel or (as identified in almost 70 per cent of focus groups) for job opportunities or for working abroad. English was also recognised as valuable for work in the tourist sector although there was only one incidence of a study with ambitions to work in the sector. Representative learner comments included:

English is spoken everywhere: if you visit a country and don't speak the native language, you need English (learner: Sibiu).

I'd like to play football professionally and I'll need English (learner: Sibiu).

English will help me have a good job and make money (learner: Bihor).

I want to be a cook on a cruise ship and I'll need English (learner: Braşov).

Summary

Teachers' concerns about the range of levels in their classes are justified and they would benefit from further support for teaching mixed ability classes.

Learners' opinions confirmed observers' assessments of the strong relationships between teachers and learners.

Learners were keen to develop their speaking skills, stating that they enjoyed working together but disliked rote learning and a focus on grammar rules and patterns.

Learners come into regular contact with English outside the classroom, but seldom in face-to-face encounters.

Learners were aware of the importance English language skills might play in their future lives; many learners saw their futures as involving migration from the towns or villages where they had grown up.

7 Summary and project design

This section will present a brief summary of findings and discuss how these are reflected in the *English for the Community* project design.

7.1 Summary

In considering the findings of the baseline study described in this report, the limitations of the study described in Section 5.3 should be borne in mind. It should also be remembered that the sample of teachers observed were self-selecting and had already expressed interest in the project and a wider study would be required to identify county-wide patterns. Nevertheless, these are likely to reflect some if not all of the features observed in the schools visited.

A summary of which indicators were met and exceeded by the highest and lowest numbers of teachers are presented in Figures 25a and 25b below.

Views in Romania expressed by the public and the press (see, for example, Besliu, 2014) on the quality of teaching outside the larger cities are often negative. It is hoped that this baseline study has shown that there were, in fact, a range of positive features to the delivery of English language teaching in the locations where observations took place. Relationships between teachers and learners were assessed as being strong and teachers as being encouraging towards their learners. Lessons generally had clear stages and were organised, whether or not a lesson plan was produced for the observer. Many teachers supplemented course book content or adapted or personalised the course book.

There is also a need to address a number of key areas of teaching. There is a general level of consensus amongst teachers, head teachers and school inspectors on what these areas might be. These include a need to support teachers in developing learners' speaking skills the use of interaction patterns that support this development, developing writing and listening skills, using the textbook more creatively and a range of issues related to classroom management. Teachers are also keen to make their teaching more motivating and engaging and to increase learner involvement. These are all skills that teachers can be supported in developing through continuing professional development. It was felt there was less need for support for areas such as lesson planning, confirming observers' impressions.

These stakeholder responses were confirmed through observation which, in addition to the positive features of lessons noted above, emphasised a need for a wider variety of interaction patterns and increased opportunities for learners to use English to express their own ideas orally rather than simply responding to the teacher's questions, with a consequent reduction in TTT. Needs as assessed by Country Trainers are presented in Appendix 3a. There is a need to provide opportunities for learners to engage with other areas of language than specific grammatical structures, with a focus on more meaningful

and functional language use and less reliance on grammar exercises. Many teachers would also benefit from support for the use of technology.

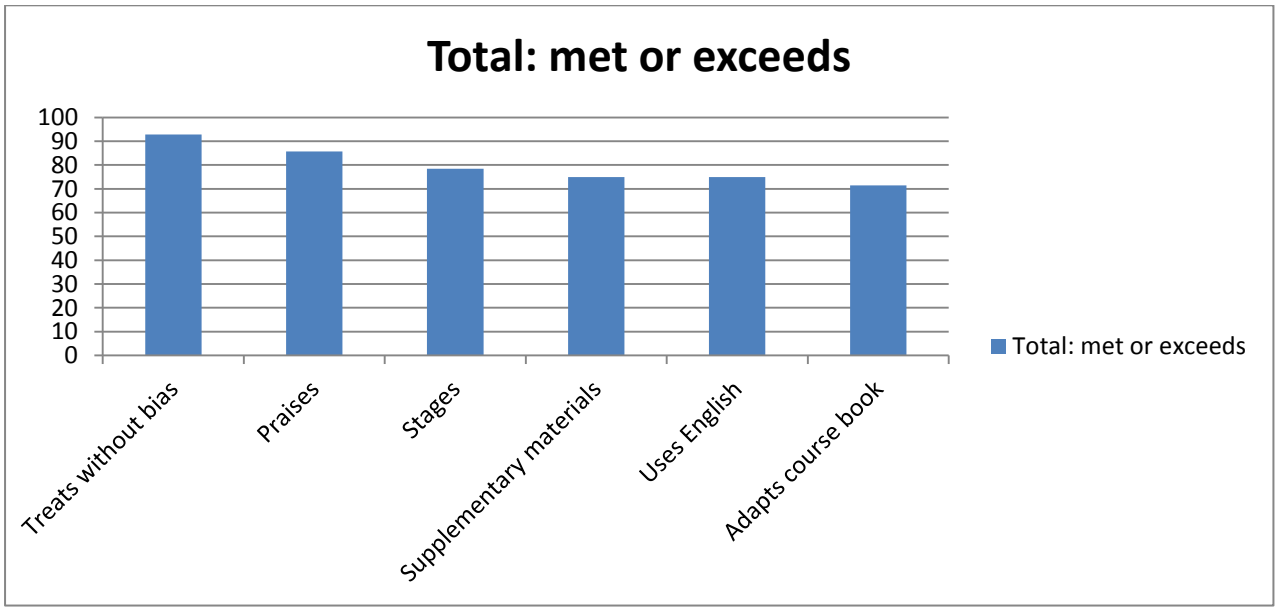


Figure 25a: Percentage of teachers meeting or exceeding indicators: high performance

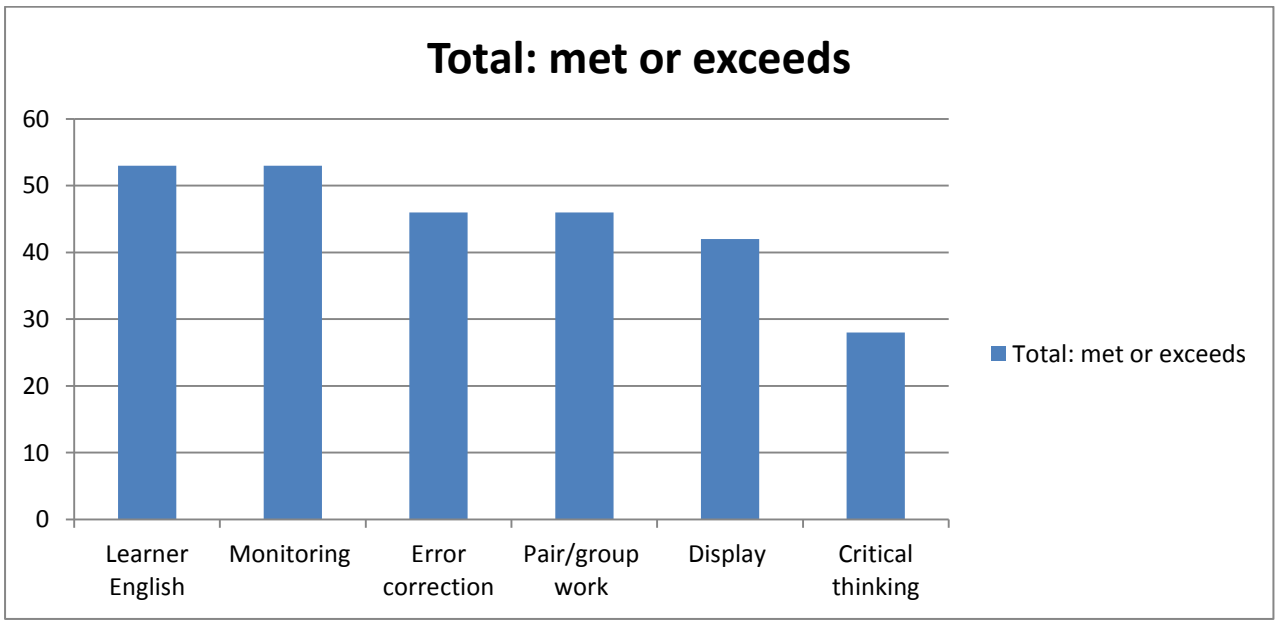


Figure 25b: Percentage of teachers meeting or exceeding indicators: low performance

7.2 Project design

Whereas it would be more usual for the findings of the baseline study to inform project design directly, in the case of *English for the Community*, time constraints meant that a considerable element of project design had to be completed before baseline study findings could be analysed. Project design was informed by the 2016 needs analysis. However, the findings substantially confirm that appropriate choices had been made of modes of delivery and CPD content.

Although there were variations in the views of head teachers and school inspectors on the adequacy of pre-service, there was a consensus of opinion that a CPD initiative would be of benefit. Teachers also would welcome subject-specific support. There are a number of forms this CPD programme might take, including face-to-face training, which was the most common stakeholder recommendation.

Project design therefore includes a five-day face-to-face training course (*Teaching for Success*) delivered by Country Trainers in the locations where teachers live and work. A key feature of project design is that teachers' own expressed needs and preferences are taken into account in order to inform content design, including a focus on developing learners' speaking skills, motivating learners, developing pronunciation skills, dealing with mixed ability classes and dealing with unanticipated problems. The relevance of content design of the course was also endorsed by the baseline study findings which suggest the inclusion of support for teachers to use alternatives to whole-class eliciting including the use of pair and group work and a wider variety of learner-centred activities which enhance learners' speaking skills and make lesson content more interesting to learners and to provide constructive error correction and feedback for learners.

The *Teaching for Success* course therefore comprises the following units:

Table 12: *Teaching for Success* schedule

	Morning sessions	Afternoon sessions
Day 1	Understanding motivation in the classroom	Understanding resources
Day 2	Engaging with grammar	Engaging with vocabulary teaching
Day 3	Understanding speaking: maximising interaction	Understanding speaking: key terms and issues
Day 4	Engaging with pronunciation	Engaging with error correction
Day 5	Understanding and anticipating classroom management problems	Understanding professional development

Teacher language level is at the least adequate for effective classroom delivery and in many cases exceeds minimum requirements. Project initiatives therefore need to recognise the relatively high level of language proficiency of teachers and focus primarily on pedagogical approaches rather than teacher language proficiency. However, there is also a need to support teachers in making more informed and

appropriate use of languages in English language classes, and provide increased encouragement to learners to use English in more meaningful ways.

Head teachers stressed the challenges of releasing teachers from school during term-time and confirmed the project plan to hold the course during holidays or at weekends in a location easily accessible to local teachers.

Face-to-face training is not the only way to support the continuing professional development of teachers, however, and its limitations are being increasingly recognised What was abundantly clear during the baseline study was that teachers were relatively inexperienced in learning from peers but keen to expand their experiences. Teachers expressed interest in collaborating with peers on, for example, material development and would welcome ongoing continuing professional opportunities. All these responses confirmed plans for a teacher education initiative capable of moving beyond simple delivery of face-to-face training to support communities of practice.

The concept of a Teacher Activity Group provides a form of CPD which is less transitory than participation in a short course. A TAG involves a group of teachers meeting regularly, usually monthly, for between two and three hours to provide mutual support and share learning. All the teachers come from the same location: the town or village where the TAG takes place so they are familiar with the same context, the same challenges and the same sources of satisfaction of teaching learners in that location. TAGs therefore correspond to the suggestions from head teachers for localised and contextualised CPD.

Teachers can participate in a range of activities in these TAGs. They can:

- discuss teaching issues and challenges
- find solutions to these challenges
- identify strategies that work well in the classroom
- engage with different sources of new ideas, through reading, through watching videos and through using other online resources
- share ideas and keep each other up to date on new developments both locally and in the international world of English language teaching
- find answers to questions about teaching or learning they may have
- discuss difficult areas of language and support each other in relevant types of language development
- make plans to use new activities and techniques in their own classrooms, try them out and report their successes and challenges to the group at the next session
- reflect effectively and help each other to reflect on teaching and learning.

Following the *Teaching for Success* course, it is planned to select Local Facilitators who will then establish Teacher Activity Groups in each location**.** This will enable teachers to take more responsibility for their own professional development through a range of means, including but not exclusive to, online learning, co-planning lessons and

undertaking peer observations and can support developing reflection. Support, including materials and training for key personnel, will be provided to teachers to enable them to establish Teacher Activity Groups in each location.

Baseline data also confirmed the relevance of choices made regarding the content of the first year of TAG operation which includes support for teachers to develop learners' reading, listening, writing and pronunciation skills, developing learners' critical thinking (through more effective eliciting) and classroom management. TAGs are also an effective way to support teacher reflection which was assessed in Section 6.7 as limited and requiring further support. Year 1 TAG content comprises the following topics:

Table 13: Teacher Activity Groups: sessions: Year 1

Session	Topic
1	You and your Teacher Activity Group
2	Lesson planning: engaging learners
3	Helping learners with vocabulary
4	Developing learners' reading skills
5	Developing learners' listening skills
6	Developing learners' pronunciation skills
7	Managing the class
8	Peer observation
9	Developing learners' writing skills
10	Developing learners' 21st century skills
11	Understanding learners
12	Assessing learners

Accessing the views of school inspectors, head teachers and teachers and relating these views to the data obtained through the baseline study has produced a wide range of areas which teachers would like to address or which it is felt they could usefully address. It has not been possible to include all these areas in the *Teaching for Success* course or content for Year 1 of TAG operation. However, development of TAGs means that these areas can be engaged with over time, and, for example, that any further findings on areas such as special needs or dealing inclusively with specific communities such as the Roma can inform design of future TAG content. It is also planned that selected TAG members or Local Facilitators could be sponsored to undertake specialised training in areas such as special needs, an area of focus that was referred to throughout the baseline study.

Once TAGs are operating, material development workshops are planned for Local Facilitators to enable them to develop further TAG sessions with the support of British Council Country Trainers and contribute to the sustainability of the project.

The project is grateful for the support of the ten school inspectors who participated in the pre-baseline study workshop, provided invaluable insights into educational systems in Romania and supported the baseline study itself. Feedback on participation in the workshop was very positive. Similarly, head teachers were very interested in the project

and keen for their teachers to benefit from any CPD initiative. Despite some misgivings expressed by inspectors in the workshop, head teachers proved to be very aware of the strengths and challenges of English language teaching and learning in their schools. The continued support of stakeholders, in particular school inspectors and head teachers, will contribute to project effectiveness. This will include liaison with head teachers and awareness-raising workshops/project updates for school inspectors.

Summary

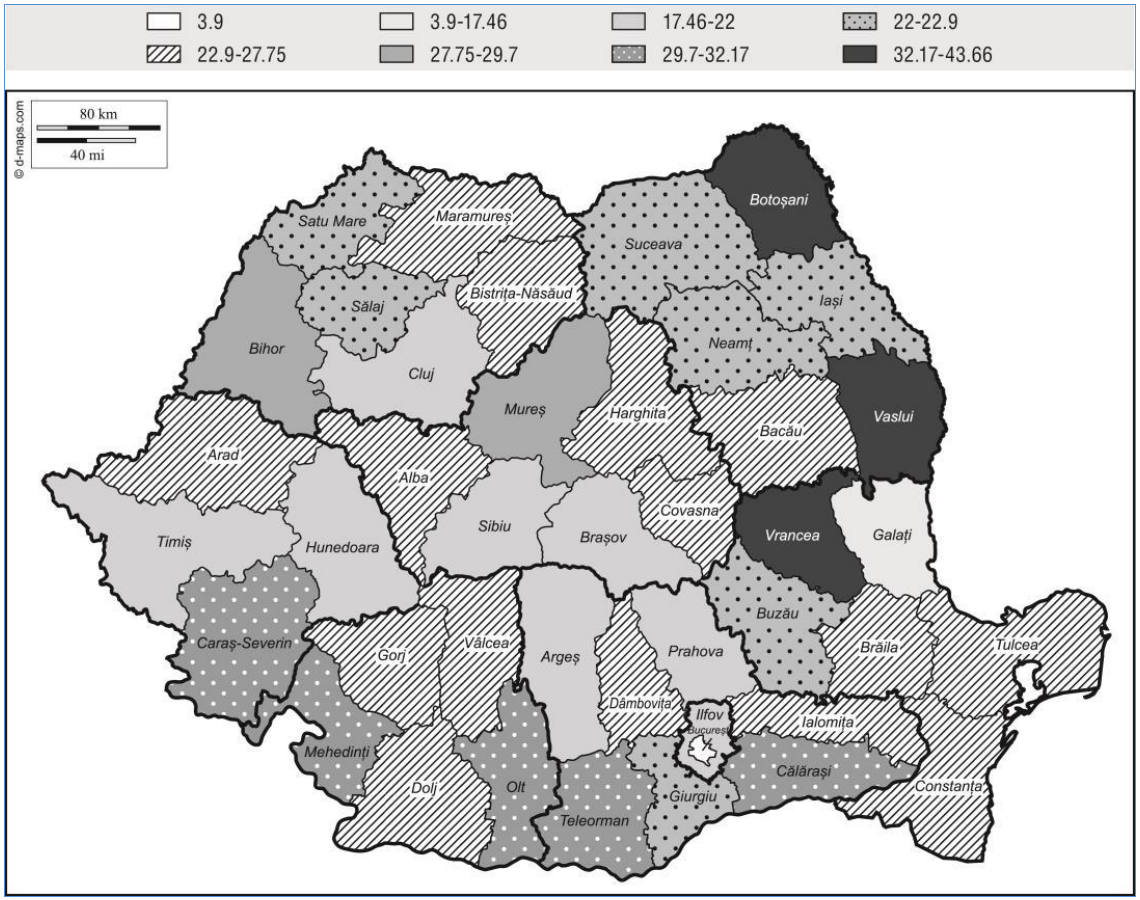
Teachers' appetite for CPD was noticeable throughout the baseline study and their expressed needs often (but not always) correspond to those identified by baseline observers. This provides a strong foundation for initiatives planned to enhance the quality of teaching in the classroom, which will, ultimately, impact on the employability of learners in the future in the locations targeted by the project.

Appendices

Appendix 1a: Project locations: numbers of teachers registering for the *English for the Community* project

Source: http://travelsfinders.com/romania-map-counties.html

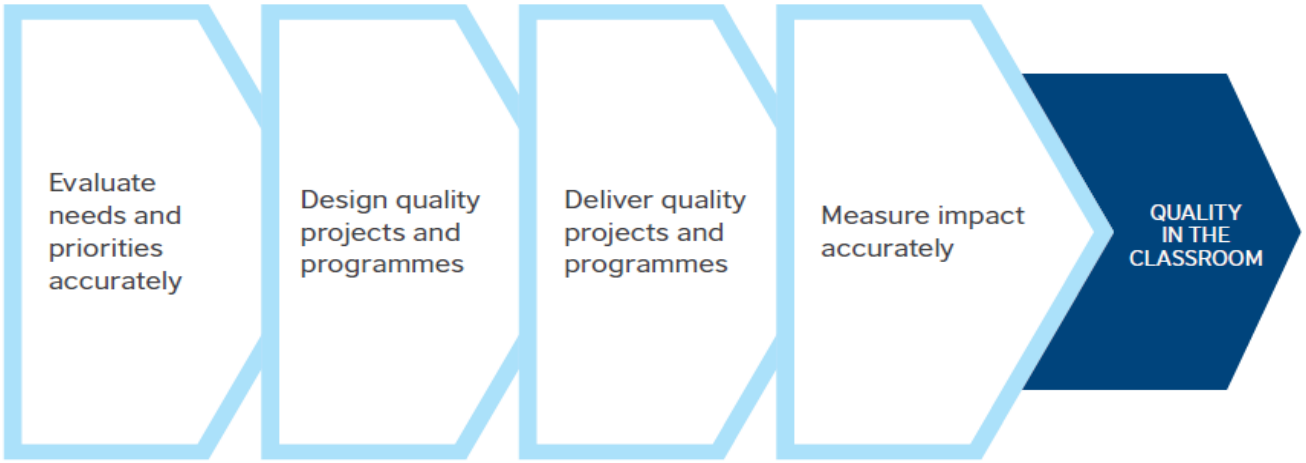
Appendix 1b: Percentage of population at risk of poverty (2011)[71]



Source: World Bank (2016), *Pinpointing Poverty in Romania*

Appendix 2a: *Teaching for Success* – the British Council approach

Teaching for Success uses the following approach to building effective continuing professional development systems to improve the quality of teaching:



This approach is based on the following beliefs:

1 English is best acquired through **communication** and learners should be given as much opportunity to use it in the classroom as possible.

2 **Collaboration** through task-based group and pair work has a positive effect on learning.

3 Teachers and learners become motivated and develop a positive attitude to learning when it is **engaging and fun** and relates directly to their needs and **context**.

4 Change can only be achieved if teachers are encouraged to **reflect** on current teaching practice and their personal beliefs about teaching and learning.

5 Learning is a lifelong process and teachers need to be encouraged and supported to **take responsibility** for their continuing professional development

6 Through **experiential activities** such as peer teaching and lesson planning, teachers can practise and develop their teaching skills and knowledge more effectively.

7 Teacher education and development programmes should provide a **mix of teaching and training skills, English language proficiency and subject matter knowledge**.

8 The relationship between the teacher and learner or the teacher and trainer is fundamentally important and should be based on **mutual respect and understanding**.

Appendix 2b: The British Council CPD framework

Continuing Professional Development Framework

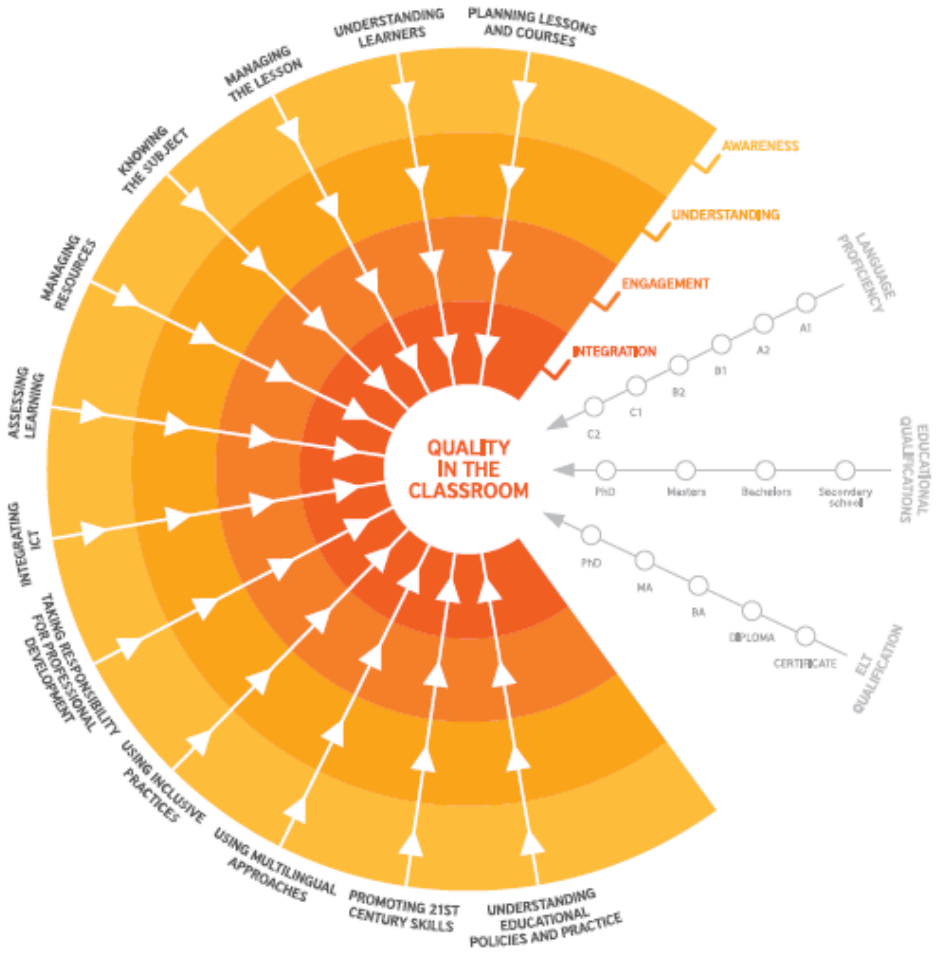
Choosing professional development pathways for English language teachers

Awareness: you have heard of the professional practice.

Understanding: you know what the professional practice means and why it's important.

Engagement: you demonstrate competency in this professional practice at work.

Integration: you demonstrate a high level of competency in this professional practice and it consistently informs what you do at work.



Appendix 2c: Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) descriptors

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 Class 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.

Appendix 3a: Teacher needs as assessed by school inspectors (n=7), head teachers (n=12) and Country Trainers (n=9): percentage of responses

	School inspectors			Head teachers			Country Trainers		
	Of great need	Of some need	Of no need	Of great need	Of some need	Of no need	Of great need	Of some need	Of no need
Developing learners' skills in speaking	57.2	42.8	0	83.2	16.8	0	100	0	0
Classroom management	14.4	85.6	0	75	25	0	77.8	22.2	0
Creative use of textbooks	42.8	57.2	0	75	25	0	77.8	22.2	0
Teaching vocabulary	14.4	85.6	0	75	25	0	55.6	44.4	0
Developing learners' skills in listening	14.4	85.6	0	75	25	0	44.4	55.6	0
Developing learners' skills in writing	42.8	57.2	0	75	25	0	55.6	44.4	0
Developing learners' skills in reading	28.6	71.4	0	66.7	33.3	0	55.6	44.4	0
Assessing learning	85.6	14.4	0	66.7	33.3	0	77.8	22.2	0
Developing learners' skills in pronunciation	42.8	57.2	0	58.3	41.7	0	55.6	44.4	0
Teaching grammar	0	100	0	58.3	41.7	0	44.4	44.4	11.1
Lesson planning	14.4	85.6	0	25	58.2	16.8	55.6	33.3	11.1

The first three priorities selected by each group are highlighted in yellow.

Appendix 3b: Teacher needs as assessed through self-assessment

(Numbers of teachers stating they can perform practice quite or very well)

Practice	Quite or very well	Sample size
I can give explanations that the learners are able to understand.	**144**	149
I can give instructions effectively.	**141**	149
I can select materials from a range of different sources.	**141**	150
I can select materials and resources based on learner needs.	**141**	151
I can evaluate the effectiveness of the materials and resources I use during lessons.	**139**	150
I can select activities which help meet the aims of the lesson.	**138**	150
I can monitor learner engagement.	**133**	150
I can create a positive learning environment.	**135**	148
I can write lesson aims which describe the intended learning outcomes for a class.	**133**	149
I can check learners' understanding during the lesson.	**132**	149
I can develop materials to supplement the course book I use.	**132**	151
I can give learners feedback on errors that helps them improve.	**131**	150
I can use engaging techniques to teach vocabulary to my learners.	**129**	150
I can encourage collaboration and communication.	**127**	151
I can encourage creativity and imagination.	**127**	151
I can describe how learner understanding will be assessed.	**123**	149
I can use engaging techniques to teach reading skills.	**121**	149
I can use technology confidently for the purposes of teaching English.	**120**	151
I can anticipate problems that may arise during the lessons and decide how to respond.	**119**	150
I can assess learners in a range of ways.	**118**	147
I can measure learners' progress effectively.	**119**	149
I can describe how feedback on learner performance will be provided.	**118**	150
I can use a range of engaging techniques to introduce new grammar to my learners.	**116**	150
I can work with colleagues to design materials collaboratively.	**113**	150
I can use technology to design and create teaching and learning materials.	**113**	150
I am aware of any special educational needs my students have.	**113**	149
I can use digital tools effectively to help my students learn English.	**111**	149
I can use engaging techniques to teach my learners to speak English.	**110**	150
I can locate appropriate digital content and evaluate digital content effectively.	**110**	150
I can use a range of engaging techniques to teach listening skills.	**109**	150
I can use a range of engaging techniques to teach writing skills.	**108**	149
I can use assessment results to inform subsequent teaching.	**105**	137
I can use a range of engaging techniques to teach pronunciation to my learners.	**101**	151
I can encourage critical thinking and problem solving.	**103**	149
I can encourage student leadership and personal development.	**94**	151
I can encourage citizenship.	**81**	150
I can encourage digital literacy.	**74**	150

Appendix 4: Teacher needs as assessed through observation

(Percentage of teachers meeting or exceeding standards)

	Met	Exceeded	Total: met or exceeds
The learners are treated without gender / religious / class / minority status or socio-economic bias.	46.4	46.4	**92.8**
The teacher mostly uses learners' names appropriately.	32.1	53.8	**85.9**
The teacher mostly supports learners with praise and encouragement and mostly appropriately.	57.1	28.6	**85.7**
There are clear, defined stages in the lesson with intended outcomes mostly apparent to the observer.	53.8	25	**78.8**
The teacher uses some non-textbook and context- appropriate teaching- learning materials and resources (but occasionally inappropriately).	46.4	32.1	**78.5**
The teacher conducts the majority of the lesson in English (but uses some L1 inappropriately and/or sometimes uses English at an inappropriate level for the learners).	46.4	28.6	**75**
The board is mostly used appropriately and provides support for learning, (but with some missed opportunities).	50	25	**75**
The teacher caters to some aspects of learners' individual needs, with some success.	60.7	10.7	**71.4**
There is some adaptation of the textbook and/or personalisation of content to learners' contexts and needs (but some opportunities are missed).	50	21.4	**71.4**
The teacher elicits most of the time (but occasionally misses opportunities *or* elicits inappropriately).	53.8	14.3	**68.1**
Instructions for tasks/activities are mostly effective, but students occasionally need clarification.	60.7	7.1	**67.8**
Learners are mostly actively engaged in the lesson.	57.1	10.7	**67.8**
The teacher uses a variety of activities/tasks, most of which are meaningful and appropriate.	46.4	14.3	**60.7**
The teacher exploits some opportunities to encourage the use of English (but misses some key opportunities).	35.7	25	**60.7**
Outdoor or classroom space and furniture are mostly used effectively; most opportunities to use it effectively are exploited.	42.9	17.9	**60.7**
TTT is mostly appropriate for the classroom, but some of the TTT is not beneficial for the students.	53.8	3.4	**57.3**
Learners use some English, including occasional creative utterances.	32.1	21.4	**53.5**
The teacher has a written lesson plan in a clearly structured format and demonstrates evidence of lesson planning skills but has not clearly articulated learning outcomes.	28.6	21.4	**50**
Monitoring during activities/ tasks is mostly effective in supporting some learners.	28.6	25	**53.6**
The teacher provides some positive and constructive feedback with some good examples of error correction.	35.7	10.7	**46.4**
The teacher uses pair/group work appropriately and meaningfully with some exceptions.	42.9	3.5	**46.4**
Walls and display space are used to improve the learning environment by displaying charts and/or learners' work, but there are some missed opportunities.	32.1	10.7	**42.8**
The learners engage and participate in tasks that demand critical thinking, creativity or imagination.	25	3.5	**28.5**

Appendix 5: Reflection: teacher comments

5a: What went well: total number of comments (provided by 24 teachers): 63

Limited reflection: Focus on what the teacher did in the lesson: recall	
I used a lead-in *I used an introduction/follow-up/exercises* *I explained certain expressions* *I wrote notes on the board* *I put the vocab on the board* *I wrote words related to clothes on the board* *I tried to explain grammar rules/vocabulary as well as possible* *I helped the students to understand conditional sentences* *I did listening* *I practised reading* *I clarified the word 'famous'* *I spoke with my students a lot* *I asked the students to write on the board* *I asked the students to talk/converse*	Total comments: 14
Limited reflection: Focus on what materials/tools: recall	
I prepared the lesson with lots of materials *I used auxiliary materials* *I have chosen the right materials and topics* *I used hand-outs with lots of exercises* *I used PowerPoint presentation* *I did a PowerPoint presentation* *I used visuals and auditive prompts (songs)* *I used realia* *We watched the DVD twice*	Total comments: 9
Limited reflection: reference to methodology (unspecific)	
I used new methods of teaching	Total comments: 1
Developing reflection: reference to methodology (more specific)	
I used the deductive method of teaching *I encouraged both receptive and productive skills* *The four skills were all involved*	Total comments: 3
Developing reflection: focus on students	
I helped students understand reported speech *I have a good teacher-student relationship* *I could catch the attention of the students* *I tried to get all the students interested/involved* *I encouraged students to express personal views* *I allowed the students to express their own ideas without interrupting them* *I tried to enable students to practise speaking spontaneously and fluently* *I could involve each student in all the activities* *I involved students in speaking activities* *I used students' previous knowledge to introduce new grammar rules* *All the students were involved in the activity/ interacted/ felt confident* *The students were interested in the riddles and managed to find the answers/find the fruit and vegetables*	Total comments: 14

Students worked in pairs/groups and they liked that *Students talked more than the teacher*	
Developing reflection: focus on language use, lesson planning and classroom management	
I explained the vocab in English resorting to Romanian only when strictly necessary *My language was accurate* *I reached my objectives (unspecified)* *I reached most of my objectives* *My lesson was organised* *The activities were prepared well* *I organised the lesson well* *I managed the students well* *The lesson had a logical structure* *I explained clearly what students had to do (instructions?)* *I followed the stages of the lesson*	Total comments: 11
Developing reflection: focus on language use, lesson planning and classroom management	
I managed to create a proper atmosphere for learning *I made the students feel comfortable* *I wish to create a warm atmosphere* *The atmosphere was pleasant/students were relaxed* *I created a good atmosphere* *I created a positive atmosphere* *I built the right atmosphere*	Total comments: 7
Developing reflection: focus on error correction and feedback	
I checked and improved pronunciation *I allowed the students to express their own ideas without interrupting them to correct each minor error* *I gave feedback (more positive than negative)* *I helped students who had problems/difficulties*	Total comments: 4

5b: Areas for improvement: (provided by 24 teachers): total comments: 44

Limited reflection: wishlist	
I would like more materials to work with: a computer, CD player, books and charts	Total comments: 1
Limited reflection: focus on methodology (unspecified)	
Use more active learning *By using a variety of teaching methods* *Focus on TTT*	Total comments: 3
Limited reflection: focus on teacher persona	
Make myself more commanding and respected *I could be more creative* *I should be more severe when assessing* *I could be more severe*	Total comments: 4

Developing reflection: focus on language	
Use English more during the class *I could talk only in English* *I should use more English rather than Romanian* *I should speak more English* *More student/less teacher talking time* *I could talk less and let the students do more work* *I would like the children to talk more than me during the class* *I should give the students more time to speak* *I could create more opportunities for students to speak English* *I need to allow students more time for the discussion part of the lesson*	Total comments: 10
Interaction and involvement	
I should work with the grouping method more *I should encourage all the students to participate* *Making students interested in reading and learning the language* *I could encourage the students to read more at home* *Not all the students were involved/students could talk more* *I could involve more students in classroom activities* *I could make the class more engaging* *Students could have been more active* *I could ask the shy students to answer the questions* *I need to focus more on student needs*	Total comments: 10
Resources	
I could use a tape for listening but I didn't *I could write the two lists on the blackboard* *Use more grammar-related exercises based on the book* *I could improve the lesson by using a computer and some pictures*	Total comments: 4
Feedback	
I need to make more time at the end of the lesson to give students feedback and grade them *Not correcting errors on the spot* *Giving feedback needs to be improved* *I could motivate students by giving marks*	Total comments: 4
Time management	
Time management: the activity was too long *Timing: more time should, have been allowed for the last activity*	Total comments: 2
Other	
I should make the students work faster *Teaching grammar* *I could ask the students to repeat more* *We could watch the DVD without subtitles* *The general atmosphere of the room wasn't as it used to be (unspecified)* *I could prepare myself better at home*	Total comments: 6

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