

The British Council and the Romanian-American Foundation



***English for the Community* Baseline study**

February 2018

***The English for the Community* project**

- Needs analysis, September to December 2016
- Project inception: November 2017
- A partnership between the British Council and the Romanian-American Foundation
- Aims to enhance the teaching and learning of English in nine counties of Romania
- Nine selected locations with substantial potential for the development of ecotourism
- Support for the continuing professional development of over 150 teachers through face-to-face training and the development of Teacher Activity Groups in each location
- Support for libraries in the locations including increased use of digital resources
- Support for the development of civic skills.



What they say.....

'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 will contribute to the creation of a new generation of professionals in rural areas through quality education' (English for the Community mission statement, November 2018).

Locations

- Locations comprise small towns or in villages in the rural hinterland of these

towns

- Towns are often rich in historical interest
- All locations are sited near national parks
- Considerable presence of ecotourism initiatives
- Evidence of no or limited English language skills in the tourism sector

Steep population decreases in all locations since 1992

- Average negative population growth since 2002: -15.3 per cent
- Negative population growth as high as -21.6 per cent in Făgăraş and -22.6 per cent in Haţeg
- Declining industry and limited opportunities for young people
- Migration especially of men of employable age to urban centres in Romania but, just as importantly, to countries abroad and, in particular, to Italy and Spain
- An ageing population and impact on family unity



Ecotourism centre, Bihor

The baseline study: methodology

15 January to 26 January 2018 in eight counties of Romania

Village, Neamţ

Ecotourism: enhancing young people's employability and benefiting local communities

What they say.....

'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' (Romanian-American Foundation website).

The baseline study included:

- Use of standardised British Council *Teaching for Success* baseline tools
- **24** schools visited at lower secondary and high school level
- Visits conducted by **9** *English for the Community* Country Trainers
- **28** classroom observations
- **28** post-observation reflection session with each teacher
- **23** interviews with head teachers
- **23** focus groups with learners
- Discussion with **10** county school in inspectors
- Completion of online questionnaires by **12** head teachers and **7** county school in inspectors
- Results from the 2016 needs analysis included in baseline findings (**151** teachers)

Limitations of the study

- A sample of three observations per location (seven observations in Sighișoara) indicates needs but does not necessarily capture county-wide patterns.
- Teachers volunteered to be observed and were therefore likely to be among the more enthusiastic and/or experienced teachers in that location.
- It was not possible to organise parents' focus groups.
- It was not possible to organise observations in Maramureș but observations took place following training in March 2018.

Project locations

Făgăraș, Brașov
 Hațeg, Hunedoara
 Miercurea Ciuc/Baile Tușnad, Harghita
 Remeți, Bihor
 Sighișoara, Mureș
 Sibiu
 Sighetu Marmăției, Maramureș
 Târgu Neamț, Neamț
 Vatra Dornei, Suceava

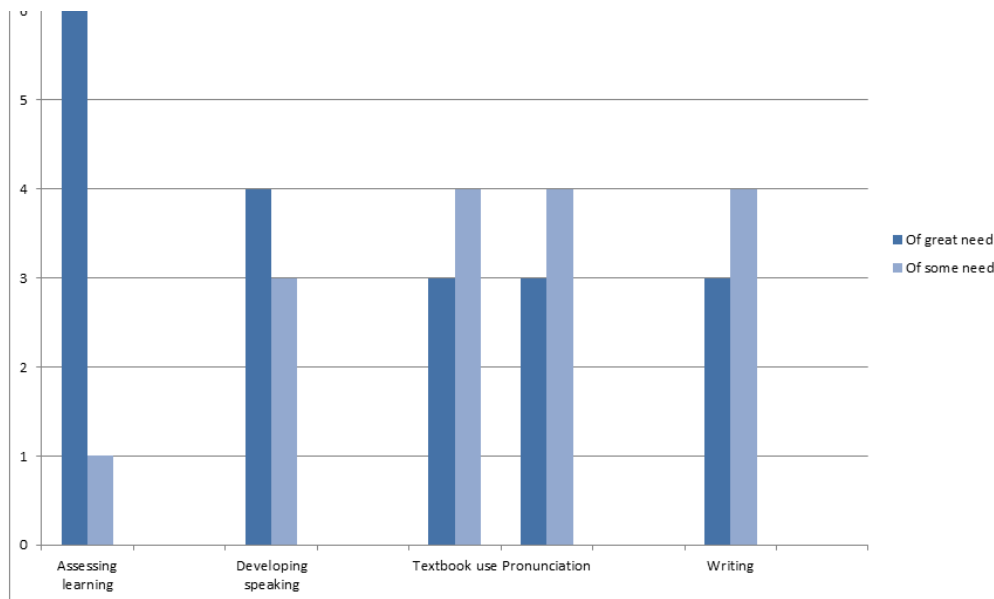


School, Suceava

Views of school inspectors

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

Inspectors saw the greatest needs for support for teachers in these areas:



Views of head teachers



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

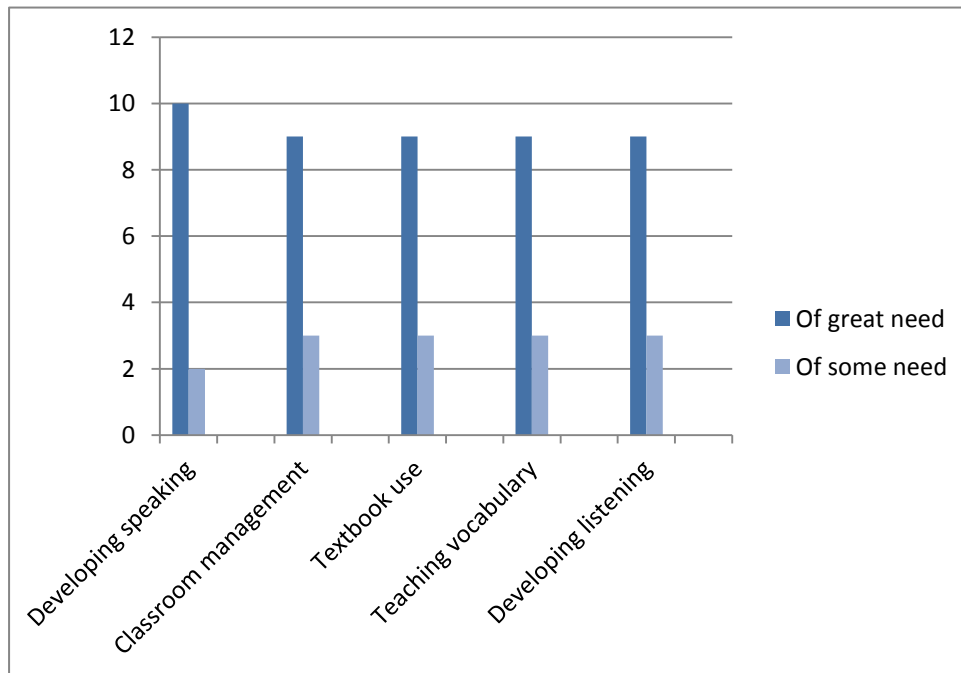
What they say.....

'[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 is not to be afraid to make mistakes, but to be confident and to surround themselves in English'.

- Observers noted warm and supportive relationships between head teachers and staff.
- All but one of the head teachers surveyed felt that a CPD initiative which focused on specific English language skills was a priority.
- Head teachers emphasised that initiatives should be localised and contextualised.

Head teachers saw the greatest needs for support for teachers in these areas:



Views of teachers



Head teacher interview, Suceava

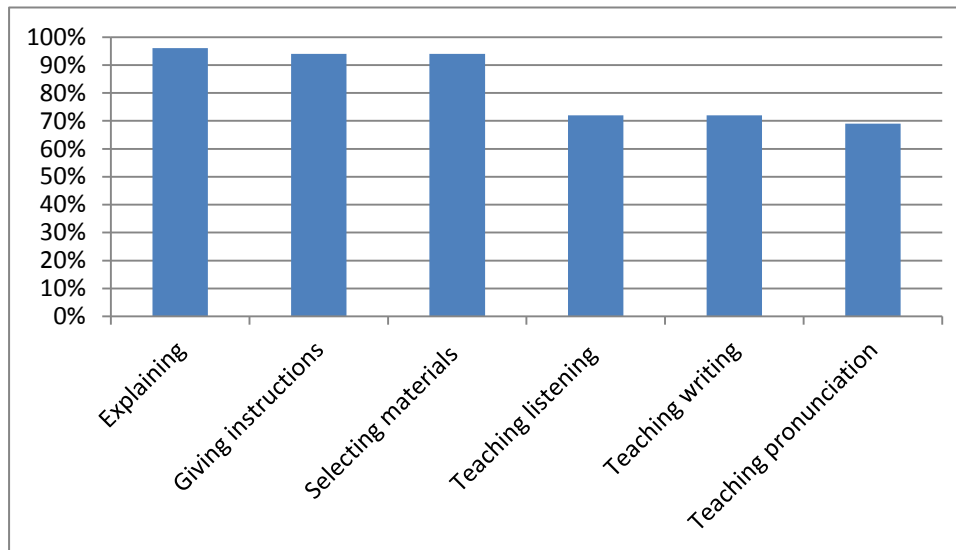
What they say.....

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

'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).

'Lifelong learning is a must in teaching' (head teacher, Sibiu).

- Teachers had a wide range of backgrounds and previous training experience and may teach across a range of levels.
- Teachers felt least confident about using a range of engaging techniques to develop learners' pronunciation, writing, listening and speaking skills and to introduce new grammar.
- Teachers identified a need for support for dealing with mixed ability classes and learners with special needs and motivating learners.
- Teachers' appetite for CPD was noticeable throughout the baseline study and they would welcome more collaboration and communication with colleagues.



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

Classroom observations: strengths

Findings:



Teachers, Harghita

What they say.....teachers' questions on motivation (Bihor)

- *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?*

Teacher language level

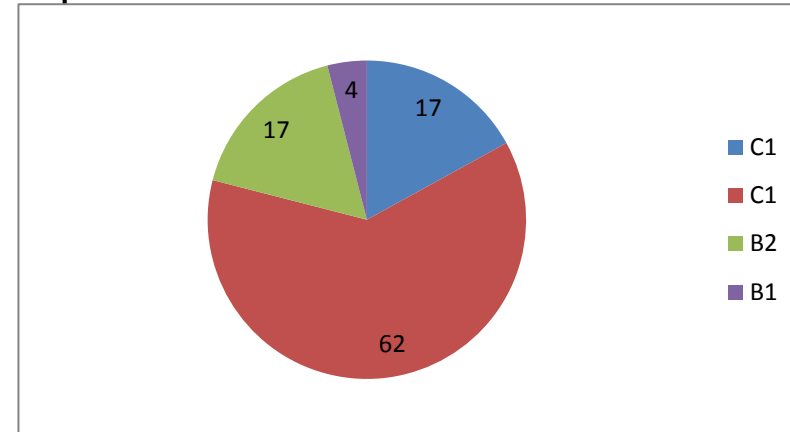
Teacher language level is at the least adequate for effective

- Views in Romania expressed by the public and the press on the quality of teaching outside the larger cities are often negative.
- However, the baseline study identified a range of positive features of English language teaching and learning.

Strengths

- Observers noted strong relationships between teachers and learners and encouragement of learners by teachers: **92.8** per cent of teachers treat their learners without bias.
- Effective praise and encouragement was given to learners in **85.7** per cent of lessons observed.
- **78.8** per cent of lessons generally had clear stages.
- **78.5** per cent of teachers observed supplemented course book content, often with materials found online.
- **71.4** per cent of teachers observed adapted or personalised the course book.
- **75** per cent of teachers have some awareness of CPD and opportunities available and some CPD ambitions.

classroom delivery. In many cases, it exceeded minimum requirements.



Teacher language levels: per cent: British Council assessment (143 teachers)

What they say.....

'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).

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

Classroom observations: areas for improvement: lesson content

The need to practise functional language

Teachers generally saw language teaching as involving a list of grammatical items to be taught and tested.

Teachers were unfamiliar with the competency approach emphasised in the national school syllabus.

Lessons often involved mechanical exercises to practise a single grammatical structure.

Little support was offered to develop learners' pronunciation skills

Only 28.5 per cent of lessons observed involved tasks which encouraged critical thinking, creativity or imagination.



Learners, Sibiu



Learners, Mureş

What they say:

'All the teachers felt they had to use Romanian in their lessons to make themselves understood, becoming quite defensive when asked if they had considered alternative approaches. They stated: 'I don't know else they can understand what I say' (observer, baseline study).

Teacher questions

- Although the vast majority of teachers elicited throughout lessons, questions often only required yes/no, simple word or translated responses.
- There is a need to ask more questions that provide opportunities for learners to use English to express ideas or opinions.

Overuse of English

- Although many teachers are able to give instructions fairly effectively in English, instructions were often given in the learners' first language.
- Vocabulary was often introduced using the learners' first language in cases where use of realia, visuals or gesture would have been more appropriate.

Dealing with errors and pronunciation

- Error-correction tended to be immediate and direct.

Classroom observations: areas for improvement: interaction

Pair work and group work were seen in only 46.4 per cent of lessons although some effective interaction was seen in lessons where pair

and group work was used.

A need for development

Learners were engaged in the lesson (at least occasionally) in all lessons.

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

Lesson stages in which learners could have collaborated in completing exercises or comparing answers during a listening activity often involved learners working individually.



Views of learners

What they say:

'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).

'Although a pair work activity was included in the coursebook and the teacher actually gave instructions to the learners to work in pairs, she immediately began eliciting and did not follow through on the interactive activity' (observer, Mureş).

Good practice



What they say:

'The teacher organised students in groups of four and assigned roles to them: one student wrote and the others helped. Students were given a handout with riddles and worked in groups to solve the riddles. The students completed the task while the teacher checks they are working in groups, checking and praising' (observer, Hunedoara).

Learners and teachers

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

Learners and English

Learners enjoy:

- reading, often because it was 'interesting' or 'helps you learn new things'
- speaking/working in pairs or groups
- learning new words.

Learners dislike:

- grammar rules, exercises and tests which are seen as 'difficult', 'complicated' and 'hard to understand'
- 'learning things by heart' and 'learning lists'
- writing
- speaking – 'when we don't have enough words to express our ideas'.

Learners frequently come into contact with English outside the classroom (through television, online games, video and music) but seldom in face-to-face encounters.



Learners, Sibiu

English for the future

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.

Learners have a wide range of ambitions with the police, law and accountancy amongst the most popular but also including acting, architecture, design and health care.

What they say:

'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).

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

Acknowledgements and credits

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