

Presentations on the labour market research (June 2004 selections)

1. Introduction to research – defining themselves as researchers

Research is for serious-looking, glasses-wearing researchers. This may seem true at first glance, but we intend to prove that, if they want to achieve something, 10th grade students can sometimes turn into real researchers. You may also wonder how - in a world, where most of the time teenagers do not know exactly what they want - we dare to be presumptuous enough to think that our research will make a difference to English learning.

(Grupul Scolar Industrial Metalurgic – Galati)

We were first introduced to the 'English for the World of Work' project and its purpose at the beginning of the school year and we soon found out that this is a project with a large magnitude and great importance, although it is active in only a few schools in this country.

We started with the key to every research project, the concept of research. Almost everyone knows what research is, in general terms, but along with our teachers we studied the concept more deeply. We read the definition, we discussed every part of it in class and we were introduced to the stages of research. Naturally in the classes that followed, we developed every stage at a time, before applying it to our own materials. To help us understand the stages better we were assigned to do tasks about the stage in question and even mixed stages.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Mircea Cristea' - Brasov)

2. Outlining the objectives of the first year of the project

The Beginning

When we started the project we knew little about where it would take us. Things became clearer when we contacted technology firms to run our surveys. The surveys measured how much English is a would-be employee supposed to know and what kind of English is most useful for a high profile job.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Henri Coanda' – Timisoara)

Having formed the work team, we got down to work. In the first semester we met once a week (one hour for each session) and our first task was to identify the domain of research and the sources of information. We all agreed that the domain of research best suited to the experience, interests and the type of training received by our school's students was the English language needs of people working in the field of electrical engineering. All the students in our team are studying and are being trained to work in this particular sector of activity.

(Grupul Scolar 'Radu Negru' - Galati)**Introduction to research**

- 10th grade students from Grupul Scolar Chimie Industriala - Victoria
- English teacher
- Tourism & practical training teacher
- Established the aim, to find out:
 - Do we need English after graduation?
 - If yes, what aspects of English do we need?

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Dr.Alexandru Barbat' – Victoria)

As we all know, it has become increasingly important for vocational high-school students to find jobs immediately after graduation. As the name of this year's project- Developing research skills for English for specific purposes – clearly states, its aim is to identify important research and English language skills required of a candidate currently working in the field of economics or for a candidate, who wants to work in that field in the future.

This research is part of a two-year project; in the second year we will use the findings (data) of our research to create, together with our teachers and trainers, materials for teaching and learning English.

(Colegiul Economic 'F.S.Nitti' - Timisoara)

We started our project aiming to develop our English language skills and find new methods and materials to help us achieve a higher level in technical English. Additionally, we wanted to develop our research skills and increase awareness of the needs and demands of industry and other economic sectors. Practically, we wanted to know if the English language, we study in school, is enough to help us manage in a specific industrial field, as we do not have specific classes focused on technical vocabulary.

(Grupul Scolar Industrial Metalurgic – Galati)

We are a group of students from the 'Costin Kiritescu' Economics High School in Bucharest, and would like to present to you the results of the research we have done during this school year and the conclusions we have tried to draw at the end of our work.

Our research is concerned with studying the interests of a certain category of population in learning specialised English, and its usefulness for our respondents. The categories we focused on were high-school students, employees and employers.

(Grupul Scolar Economic Administrativ 'C. Kiritescu' – Bucharest)

3. The process in a nutshell

The purpose of this project was to discover the English language needs for the students' future career. We do not claim that we have come up with some sensational discovery, but our work has really been a research-type activity, which was carried out during the two semesters of this school year.

In the first semester we learned what research is, types of research, we identified areas for research, sources and informants. We found out about data collection methods, how to keep a diary and, the most importantly of all, how to design a questionnaire. We also learned what an interview was and what ethical issues meant.

The second semester meant the 'tough' but pleasant work. After designing the three questionnaires (for students, employees and employers), we started collecting the data. The data analysis and interpretation was the longest process, it took us almost five weeks. We came across difficulties (we had some questionnaires which were not properly filled in) and we had some problems when analysing them.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Dr. Alexandru Barbat' – Fagaras)

We are glad to present to you our final results of the project 'English for the world of work' initiated by the British Council in association with some high schools in Romania.

The subject of our analysis is 'The importance of the English language in our activity/ life'. We tried to have an analytical approach using some of the methods and techniques, which are usually involved.

The steps followed were:

- identifying the area of research and the sources for data;
- choosing the appropriate methods and techniques, plus tools;
- designing the tools, in our case questionnaires;
- collecting the data using interviews and surveys, filling in questionnaires;
- data processing through charts and diagrams;
- data analysis using specific criteria, by target groups.

Colegiul Economic 'A.D.Xenopol' – Bucharest)

4. Identifying and sampling the informants

When looking for possible respondents we first took into consideration **probabilistic sampling of informants** (simple random or systematic sampling), but finally we opted for **non-probabilistic sampling methods: convenience sampling** – choosing the nearest individuals who could serve us as respondents, i.e. our parents, teachers, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, present-day or would-be school-mates, business partners, employers, and **purposive sampling** – handpicking certain people to be included in the sample of our research according to our judgement or their typicality in order to serve the purpose of our research, as they had all graduated from schools in which foreign languages were taught, they all knew a lot about the world of work in economic domains and we believed that they could help us to achieve the purpose of this research. We also requested

our respondents to help us identify other relevant persons willing to be included in the study, in a **snowball sampling** activity.

(Colegiul Economic 'F.S.Nitti' - Timisoara)

The companies we worked with would fit in the area of trading with building materials - they sell building materials and other similar products. We decided to cooperate with these firms because they have contracts with both national and international companies in Italy, France, Spain and other European countries, so we assumed that our research would be relevant for the way in which those in direct contact with their foreign partners use the English language in their business.

(Grupul Scolar Industrial 'Simion Mehedinti' - Codlea)

Identifying the sources of information was a more complicated job and took us a lot longer. Finally, we opted for three local companies: S.C. EEKELS ROMANIA S.R.L., S.C. MENAROM S.A. and S.C.RETEC S.A. These were very successful companies with mixed capital, Dutch and Romanian, who had been implementing new technologies over the previous few years, where English was likely to be the language of communication between the various departments. We must also mention here the other two reasons why we selected these three particular companies from a long list of potential sources of information:

- a) The nature of their activity. The above-mentioned companies produce electric panels, installations, devices and equipment for the ships built at the Damen Shipyard in Galati and are a potential work place for the students on the team upon graduation.
- b) They were very kind in granting us permission to visit their companies during work hours and allowed us to talk to their employees to collect the data we needed for the present report.

(Grupul Scolar 'Radu Negru' - Galati)

5. Designing and administering the instruments; collecting the data

First we studied the questionnaires. We learned the purpose of questionnaires and how to create one of our own, but the trickiest part was to shape the questions, because you have to be direct, short and, last but not least, your questions have to be very clear. We also learned how to sort the questions by the type of the answer.

After the questionnaires we studied interviews. Here we discussed the rules of thumb, some ethical issues and general rules for data collection, for data processing and confidentiality and acceptance. Exactly like the questionnaires, interviews have certain types of questions, which we studied carefully. Also we took a very close look at the advantages and disadvantages of an interview and we came to the conclusion that, compared to the questionnaires, interviews have more advantages like: personal contact with the interviewee, the chance to clarify some misunderstood questions, 100% rate of response, shorter time of response, the chance of getting more information, etc.

We also learned how to behave, talk and interact with different people. For example when you deal with a visitor you try to make him as comfortable as possible, talk to him using a neutral and polite tone and of course the most important is always to talk face-to-face. On the other hand, when you interact with your colleague you talk in an informal tone, along with an informal behavior, but it is best to talk to him/her face-to-face.

Then we proceeded to the next level: live interviewing and spreading questionnaires. Three of our classmates were assigned to take an interview to the director of the Art Telecom and the sales manager of the RDS. Although at first we were refused, we managed to take the interviews, because we have the commitment of gathering information for our successors. In the meantime, we spread the questionnaires at both firms.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Mircea Cristea' - Brasov)

We chose as our target audience, people who work in SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), especially those who work in travel agencies – according to our specialization, which is tourism – and we designed structured interviews for the employers and the employees. Then we decided to create a questionnaire for the 12th grade students, to show their knowledge of English and their opinions about the utility of English for their future/ further activities. So we used two methods of data collection: interviews and questionnaires.

Collecting the data was the hardest part of our project, because some of our colleagues did not want to answer our questions and we had to work very hard to obtain some data to analyze. We also had some problems with the employers, because they usually have a very busy schedule, we did not have many connections and there was not much time.

However we managed to interview two employers:

- a manager of a tourism agency called VACANTA;
- an administrator from an advertising agency called EXPLOSIVE DIVISION MARKETING.

(Colegiul Economic 'A. D. Xenopol' – Bucharest)

The instruments we chose for our research were **the interview** and **the questionnaire**. We designed **semi-structured interviews** to give our respondents enough freedom to express their ideas in their answers. We used 6 types of questions in order to get a detailed picture of the information they were willing to share with us: 1. *Basic descriptive*; 2. *Follow-up*; 3. *Experience-example*; 4. *Clarifying*; 5. *Structural-paradigmatic*; 6. *Comparison-contrast* questions. We carried out 8 interviews with a school inspector, a human resources director, a school principal, 2 teachers of economic subjects, a British consultant at the Timisoara Chamber of Commerce, a business manager, the programme co-ordinator of the Romanian Centre of Training Firms, Timisoara.

We administered 72 questionnaires to 15 people involved in education (teachers, a school inspector, a CCD director), from our own school and other schools in Timisoara, but also from Iasi, Buzau, Tg. Mures and from Timisoara University. We also gave the questionnaires to 58 people working in economic domains (18 employers and 40 employees) and to 7 undergraduates studying economics in Romania, Germany, Sweden, the Czech Republic. The format of the questionnaires included 8 types of questions: 1. *Closed*; 2. *open*; 3. *Lists*; 4. *Category*; 5. *Ranking*; 6. *Scale*; 7. *Quantity*; *grid-type* questions. The respondents were requested

to tick, cross, encircle or underline their chosen answer out of several options given, or to write in full in the space provided, if they had any additional items or comments.

We also collected useful data by means of **Documentary Analysis**. We looked at *a. job advertisements in English / requiring knowledge of English* and *b. business documents we used in our activity in the TRAINING FIRMS* (our school is involved in a major international programme, **Learning in Training Firms**, initiated by Austrian KULTURKONTAKT Organisation, and we took part in the First International Trade Fair of Virtual Firms – ROTIFE – Timisoara 2004, for which we had to prepare and work with all kinds of business documents in English, because the language of the Fair was English, even if the participants came from Russia, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Croatia, Austria, Romania, etc.)

(Colegiul Economic 'F.S.Nitti' - Timisoara)

The data for our research at the "Romanian Data System" company were collected by means of questionnaires, because this form of collecting data – with fewer communication skills involved – minimized the probability of errors occurring. A number of 25 employees answered the questions.

We have also administered a set of questionnaires to the employees of Romtelecom to find out how and when they use English, i.e. what their language needs are in their professional field. We have applied 60 questionnaires including 15 questions regarding the use and level of English language skills in the line of work and beyond.

(Grupul Scolar de Marina'Al. I. Cuza' – Constanta)

The aims of the questionnaires:

- 1) Collecting data revealing the importance of using English in postal services
- 2) Questioning on how the employees perceive their use of English in postal services
- 3) Questioning on whether it influences their activities

Conceiving the questionnaires

- The questionnaire is formed of 10-15 items addressed to the following categories of personnel:
 - Postal office clerks
 - Company representatives

Collecting data

- The present data have been gathered from employees of CNPR
- The respondents had been informed about the aim of the questionnaire and the reason why they were asked to fill them in
- Some of the employees doubted whether to fill in the questionnaire, the majority declining on the ground of not being the suitable persons

Grupul Scolar de Posta si Telecomunicatii – Timisoara)

The two instruments that we used during our research were the interview and the questionnaire. We took four interviews with people involved in the management of the companies that agreed to offer their support. These people are either employees or employers, together with their assistants, and are involved in decision-making concerning the present and future employees.

The questions we decided to ask the representatives of the firms that consented to take part in the project focused on the English language and on the degree in which it represents a selection criterion when employing new personnel (Questions 1, 2, and 3). We also wanted to determine the languages they use in communication with the foreign partners (Question 4), what topics those confronted with communication in English have to face (Questions 5 and 6), the persons they communicate with (Question 7) and whether they use General English or English for Special Purposes in the process (Question 9).

Besides all these, our research was meant to determine if future employees' knowledge of English is tested (Question 8) and if these people are sent to English classes in order to improve their communication skills in English (Question 10). Other questions we asked aimed at the skills and the possible recommendations people are willing to make for better teaching and learning of English (Questions 15 and 16).

The possible problems employees have with the language were also tackled (Question 12) and also the situations the language is used in (Question 11). Two of the questions were meant to determine whether the managers considered it necessary for their personnel to take up private classes and courses (Question 13) and whether they were willing to finance such classes (Question 14).

(Grupul Scolar Industrial 'Simion Mehedinti' – Codlea)

To collect the data, we used questionnaires, because in this way we could obtain information from a large number of persons in a relatively short time and with relatively low costs. We used a large variety of questions and the anonymity of the respondents ensured a higher degree of sincerity.

The questionnaires that were used in order to collect the data were filled in by 63 12th-grade students from our high-school, by 13 employees and 3 employers.

(Colegiul Economic 'Virgil Madgearu' – Bucharest)

During this year, we focused on identifying the English language learning needs for our specific training domain. Thus, we have created our own questionnaires and designed interviews in order to find out relevant opinions about the English language needs in some of the biggest companies in town, our potential employers.

We used questionnaires to gather the data, which we further processed for this presentation. What struck us were some of the difficulties we encountered in administering the questionnaires. Some of the employers refused to answer, saying that they did not have the time to do it, others said that they could not tell us secrets of their work process.

Nevertheless, we had the privilege to find good hosts in ISPAT SIDEX GALATI – from where we have gathered 54% of our results, ROMTELECOM – with 29% of the respondents, MEHID – 10% and UZINSIDER – 5%. It is worth mentioning that we administered 100 questionnaires and took 10 interviews, gathering data both from employers and from employees: of the total numbers of respondents, 5% were employers and 95% were employees.

(Grupul Scolar Industrial Metalurgic – Galati)

I would like to mention from the beginning that the survey for employers represented a real problem in our research.

Firstly, our school provides vocational education in the fields of electronics, electrical engineering, automation as well as power generation. It is obvious that we tried to aim these fields when choosing our respondents. Brasov can be considered a developed industrial area thus we expected that it would be extremely easy to gather data.

However, we experienced exactly the opposite phenomenon.

We started our research with a big power generation company, which provides electrical power for the whole area. This institution has always had a very good relationship with our school and many of its employees were former students of our school. It is obvious that they supported us with enthusiasm.

As we needed more companies and more employers for further information, we tried to fix a few appointments with high rank executives or company owners. Many of them declined our request or offered the personal secretary's help.

One of our main objectives was to gather reliable data and that is why we did not accept their offer. When we decided upon the numbers of respondents we proposed inquiring four employers but we succeeded to speak only with three of them.

The general atmosphere, in all cases, was a friendly, encouraging one and the employers listened to us with patience and interest asking for extra information about our project and school activity.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Remus Radulet' – Brasov)

Every session had time allotted for learning how to research, and then for developing and improving those research skills. The next important step was to choose the instruments of work. The research diary was an obvious option as it offered the perfect tool for keeping a record of all of our activities in class, the progress we were making, the research stages, the tasks and their results. As for which instrument we were to use to obtain the data from our informants, we had to choose between the interview and the questionnaire.

We decided to use a questionnaire since we lacked experience in using interviews as an instrument for collecting data. Also, interviewing had major disadvantages – it is time-consuming, rather subjective and the responses can be difficult to analyse. After long discussions, analysis and debate, we designed a questionnaire which we considered appropriate and serving our purpose.

We then allowed some time so that all of us could get familiar with the questionnaire in its final form. In the meantime, we discussed the ethical issues involved and prepared visits to the

selected companies. At the beginning of the second semester we administered the questionnaires and checked those returned for completeness, accuracy and unity, eliminating those, which contained errors. Finally, at the beginning of April, we were ready to start processing the data.

(Grupul Scolar 'Radu Negru' - Galati)

Research tools

Questionnaires:

- 71** – total number
- 22** – teachers / coaches who take part in international competitions
- 21** – sports people / students who participate in international competitions
- 28** – students in the 10th grade – potential beneficiaries of the “English for the World of Work” optional course

Interviews:

- 7** – total number
- 3** – managers
- 4** – employees

(Liceul cu Program Sportiv – Braila)

6. Processing the data

Though we had our questionnaires filled in, soon another problem emerged. What should we do with the gathered information? How can we process the data in order to obtain reliable and correct conclusions?

This was the point when we reached the conclusion that we should have used interviews and not questionnaires. However, it was too late. We spent too much time fixing appointments, making phone calls and we had already asked the employers to answer the questionnaires. We could not go back and ask for another appointment.

We did not have any alternative but to analyze the data we had in our hands. Yet, the questionnaires provided some useful information, although we must point out that the graphical representation is not completely reliable. It rather provides a sort of orientation.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Remus Radulet' – Brasov)

All the data that we collected through the questionnaires were processed and analysed during a period of two weeks. We went through all the stages of the analysis and came up with the results presented in this report.

(Grupul Scolar de Marina 'Al. I. Cuza' – Constanta)

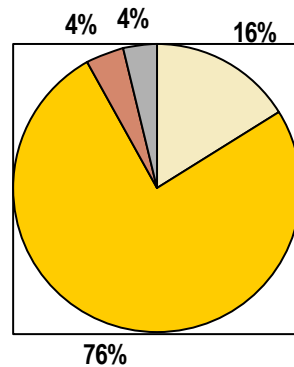
After all the questionnaires were filled in, we analysed the data that we obtained. For this, we went through the following stages:

- 1) *Editing*: the questionnaires were checked for completeness and accuracy.
- 2) *Coding*: because we had some open-ended questions, we chose to give each category a code number.
- 3) *Processing the data*: we used a question-by-question recording in percentages. For the open-ended questions we wrote all the responses on separate sheets, and then we identified the categories by common criteria.

(Colegiul Economic 'Virgil Madgearu' – Bucharest)

7. Graphic representation of the data

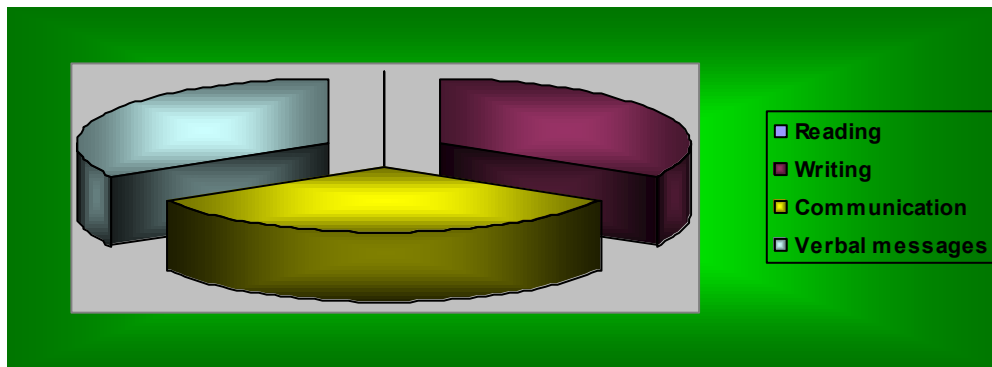
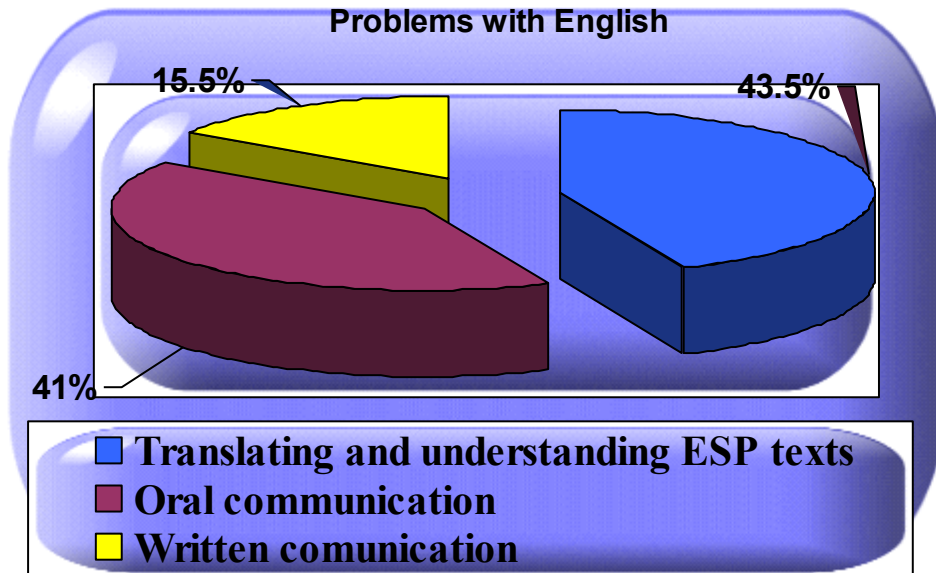
Frequency in Using English at work
(Grupul Scolar de Electrotehnica si Telecomunicatii – Constanta)



Question 11:

Where do your present employees come across difficulties while using English?

- Reading----0
- Writing---2
- Interpersonal communication ----2
- Understanding of the verbal messages----2

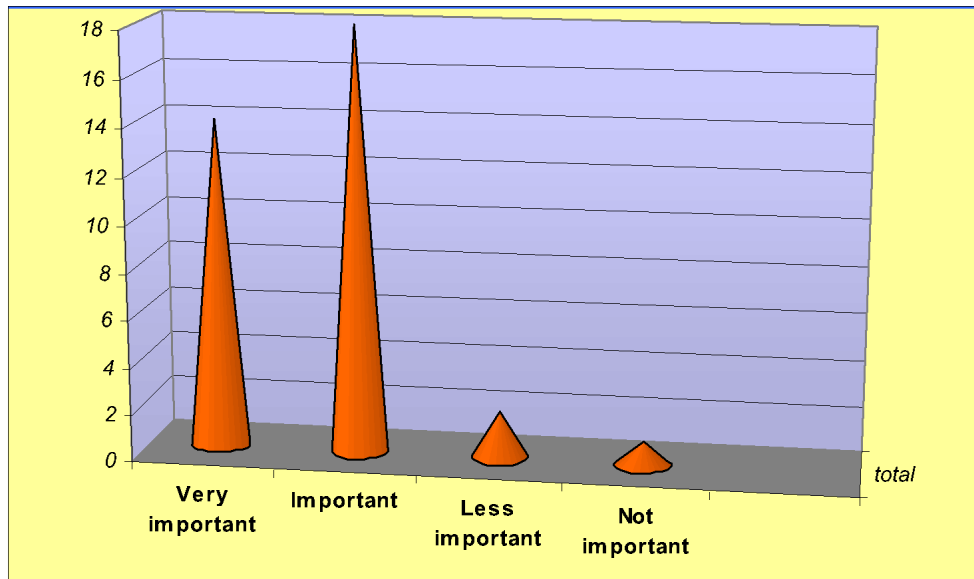


**(Colegiul Tehnic 'Aurel Vijoli' – Fagaras)
The importance of specialized English**

91,42%

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Dr. Alexandru Barbat' – Victoria)

Report on the data collected from employees



(Colegiul Tehnic de Constructii, Ape si Protectia Mediului – Arad)

8. Analysing and interpreting the results

All the presentations/reports provide the results of the research carried out by the different school teams, analysing the data usually question by question, but also in a more synthetic manner – often with some form of visual support – and offering an interpretation of the results.

Since the surveys were restricted to the specific situation of each school and the particular companies approached in their town/region, the results given in the extracts below do not apply to the English language needs of vocational students throughout Romania. They are simply shown as examples of the ways in which the students presented the processed data.

The questionnaires for the 12th grade students:

1. The data from the students' questionnaire show that a very large majority of students consider the study of English more important than that of other foreign languages.
2. We asked the students why they think the interest in the study of English is increasing. Nearly half of the respondents said that it is an accessible language, about a quarter that it is the language of business and a quarter that English is important for using the Internet.
3. We also wanted to know how the 12th graders appreciate their level of English and what helps them learn the language. 70% of the students considered their level satisfactory but only few students think that they have very good level of English, which shows that they want to improve their English.

4. We asked the students what kinds of activities have helped them in learning English. The results are very varied, the most important seemed to be translation, grammar and vocabulary, music (lyrics of songs), debates and discussions, essays.

(Colegiul Economic 'A.D.Xenopol' – Bucharest)

The Interview

The respondent, a systems analyst estimates that 60% of his English comes from high school. He is an electronics graduate and says that technical English is never a problem for an engineer.

When he applied for the current job at Alcatel he was tested in technical English and was interviewed in English. Had it not been for his upper-intermediate speaking skills he would have been denied the job:

"No one works at Alcatel unless he speaks good English"-he says.

Our respondent uses English on a daily basis (90% of his communication on the job is in English). He has regular contacts with suppliers and clients all over the world. His job involves direct and written contacts in functional English.

Functional English involves writing and reading reports, writing and reading e-mails and analysing information.

We were curious to see what a technical text in English looked like but we could not obtain any because technical English is confidential –it is about the system they make.

The interviewee also underlines that an engineer is almost always professionally trained on the job but, as far as English is concerned, he is expected to have a good control of it before he is assigned the job. Only exceptionally is an engineer hired with little knowledge of English, if he is an outstanding professional.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Henri Coanda' – Timisoara)

Considering the fact that the persons we interviewed are involved in the management of different companies, their answers varied. They all have different requirements for their present employees and for the future ones. Two employers said that they demanded at least one foreign language from their employees, while the other two said that this matter depended on the position they fulfill at work, and that knowledge of English was not compulsory but appreciated. As for the reason why they require knowledge of English, the ones who require this do it because they have in mind the future development of their business, meaning more contracts with foreign partners.

This knowledge of English is tested in only one of the four situations, by means of translations dealing with language for special purposes, discussions, and interviews. The other three interviewees admitted that they did not test the future employees' knowledge of English and they do not intend to do it in the future either. They also did not seem very interested in financing English language classes for their employees at the moment, because they consider it is enough for the managers and their assistants to be the only fluent speakers of English, considering the fact that they communicate in English and also their present level of development in business. But they did not exclude the possibility of future financing, if required.

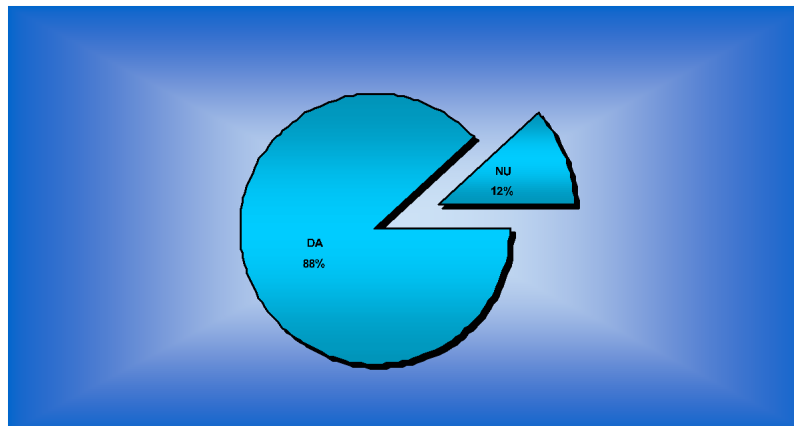
(Grupul Scolar Industrial 'Simion Mehedinti' – Codlea)

Now, as we proceed, we are going to present to the audience the results we obtained by questioning a number of employees, results that made it clear for us that English is very important if you want to be hired.

The first chart displayed shows that the majority of those we questioned are employed in the public services area. As shown in the next chart, the school has a very important role in the learning of English: 79 percent of the respondents said that they had learned to speak English in school.

... As the results to our fifth question show, 88 percent of the employees questioned consider that knowledge of English is very important to get a job nowadays. The percentage of those who want to improve their English is as high as 99 percent, so we can see that English is not only important, but also useful to them.

Question 5. CONSIDERATI INDISPENSABILE CUNOSTINTELE DE LIMBA ENGLEZA LA ANGAJARE? /


(Colegiul Economic – Arad)

The questionnaires discriminated the following kinds of English:

1. *English in the prospect of getting a job.* It is compulsory in high profile multinational companies (category A), an advantage in national companies (category B) and independent of the job in low-profile local firms (category C).
2. *English in the line of work*
 - a) English for technical information – categories A and B (90%)
 - b) English with co-workers – 100% in category A companies
 - 60% in category B companies
 - 0% in category C companies
 - c) English with customers, clients, suppliers – 100% in category A
 - 80% in category B
 - 5% in category C
3. *Competencies and levels of English:*
 - speaking/reading – over 90% in categories A and B

- writing/listening – between 40 – 80% in categories A and B
- upper-intermediate speaking skills are a condition in job promotion (Category A)
- intermediate speaking skills are an advantage in job promotion (Category B).

(Colegiul Tehnic ‘Henri Coanda’ – Timisoara)

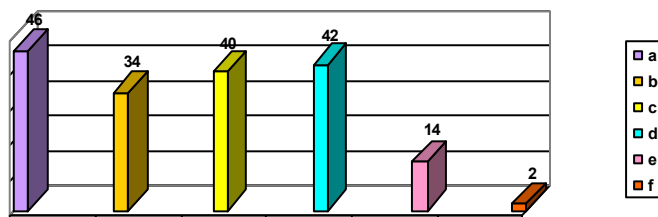
The strength of our research, if we can say so, is that we have approached three different types of companies: small (with 7 employees), medium-sized (with 75 employees) and big (with 500 employees). All employers expected from their future employees to know one or more foreign languages. All agreed that their employees’ English proficiency is important. Moreover, advanced or at least intermediate levels should be reached.

Both General English and English for Special Purposes are needed, the former being a little bit more important than the latter. We had different answers regarding the difficulties faced by their employees. Writing, interpersonal communication and technical vocabulary were the sources of the main problems.

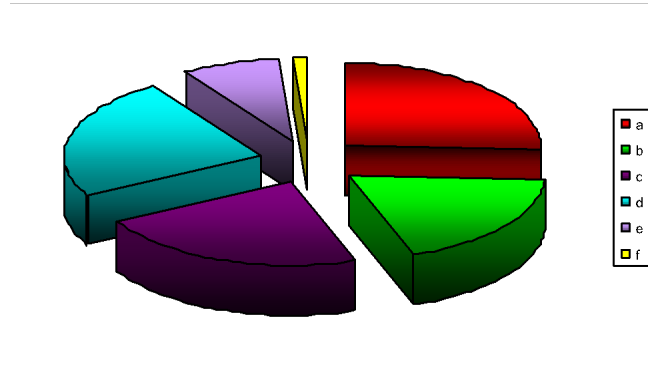
Employers need employees who can read technical documents and special literature; can write letter, send a fax and fill in forms; can carry on discussions and conversations as well as speak on the phone. At small and medium-size companies the English proficiency of the future employee is checked by interviews and presentations, business mail and reading or listening comprehension.

(Colegiul Tehnic ‘Remus Radulet’ – Brasov)

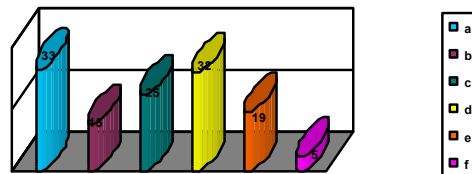
Question no. 9 aims to find out what the respondents need English for, asking them to specify in which of the following categories they use English: a) documentation; b) writing reports; c) in collaborating with others; d) technical terms; e) in their free time; f) not at all. As the chart below shows, 46 out of 52 respondents (88.4%) claim that they use English for reading specific documents. 42 respondents need English for understanding technical terms (80.7%). 40 respondents collaborate with other people in English (76.9%), while 34 of them use English for writing reports (65.3%). Only 14 respondents indicate they use English in their free time (26.9%). Less than 4% (2 respondents) claim they don’t use English at all.



Over 80% of the polled respondents use English in 50% of the categories provided. While 10 respondents (19%) claim they use English in all the contexts given, 32 respondents (61%) use English quite often – having marked either 3 or 4 different categories on the survey. Predictably only 2 respondents claim they don’t use English at all.



Question 10 intends to show whom the respondents communicate with. Respondents were asked to specify in which of the 6 categories they used English: a) boss or supervisor; b) co-workers; c) communication with other departments; d) clients; e) other people; f) no one. Out of 52 people more than 60% (33 people) use English to communicate with their boss or supervisor. 32 respondents (61.5%) communicate with their clients in English. 25 respondents (48%) interact with other departments in English. 19 respondents (36.5%) state they use English with other people. 15 respondents (28.8%) communicate with their co-workers in English, while less than 10% (5 respondents) claim they don't use English at all.



(Grupul Scolar 'Radu Negru' - Galati)

As employers are those who impose the level of English needed for being hired, we also collected data from the managers of three companies: Mobifon, Fastcom Trading and Robema Brewery. As the answers to the questionnaires show, 2 of the employers would not hire a high school graduate because of the lack of experience and studies. The third one would offer them jobs only as secretary or promoter. In any case, all the employers consider English a necessary criterion for hiring employees. General English is the most required (70%), followed by specialised English (25%) or even both (5%).

Interpersonal communication is necessary in an enterprise and the graduate should have mainly this type of skill (85%), followed, from the employers' point of view, by translation (15%), writing technical reports and business letters.

The graduates' level of English should be pre-advanced (50%) or advanced (50%). The employers also consider an interview in English the best way to check the candidates' knowledge and mention that the main difficulty in understanding English they came across when interviewing the candidates was in the area of specialised English. However, two of them have never organised an English course to improve their employees' level and they are not eager to organise one very soon either.

In conclusion, employers consider that high school graduates should have more knowledge of specialised English and the candidates' main abilities should be interpersonal communication, drawing up technical reports and writing business correspondence. Therefore, these aspects should be a major part of the English course in the high school.

(Colegiul Economic 'Virgil Madgearu' – Bucharest)

This report is intended to present the views expressed by the graduates of our school on the usefulness of general as well as specialised English for their future careers. We asked 60 graduating students to fill in the questionnaire that had been conceived by 9th and 10th graders of our school. The results are presented below.

◆ **English as a school subject**

The majority of our graduates studied English for over 7 years. Half of the graduates that were questioned study English out of pleasure. It appears that 90% of the respondents believe that speaking is more important than reading and writing. It is interesting that 45% consider they write well in English; the same holds for their reading skills – 43%. A lower percentage – 40% – are able to speak well in English.

As might have been expected, the most important source for learning English is school. In general, the graduates enjoyed the use of modern activities: watching video tapes and role playing. However, they came across the following difficulties in acquiring English: a reduced number of classes of English per week, grammar, the teacher and the lack of teaching aids. Organizing meetings with native speakers is considered advantageous by 53% of the respondents. Similarly, 55% of them think they would need additional specialised teaching aids.

◆ **English as an advantage in obtaining a good job**

90% of the respondents claim that English is an advantage in getting a job. More than 50% feel confident about being interviewed in English by an employer. The majority of the graduates think that knowledge of general English will be more useful than specialised English.

(Grupul Scolar Industrial 'Iuliu Maniu' – Arad)

9. Recommendations made by the respondents

Two of our respondents also filled in the space left for recommendations. I would like to end my presentation by quoting them:

"You should acquire as much as possible during your school years."

"It is important for the students who are future employees to speak English very well because it is an advantage when you get employed and you may need it in your further activities. In addition, I would like to mention that a rich technical vocabulary will be really useful."

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Remus Radulet' – Brasov)

Another question in the employers' interview focused on the possible recommendations the interviewees wanted to make for a better training of the students in the English classes. Here the answers also varied. Still, the suggestions had all some common points: more communication, more conversation, more translations in English and more classes a week. One of the managers suggested better trained teachers, who are able to make their students more interested in the language, more interesting lessons and even the presence of poetry and music in the language classes. One of the managers suggested that teachers should teach not only general English, but also English for Special Purposes, according to the specialization of the class.

As recommendations for a better training of high school students as far as the English language is concerned, the employees suggested the following:

- ◆ More conversation in the language classroom
- ◆ Not to miss classes, because they are very expensive when taken in private
- ◆ A greater number of English classes a week
- ◆ As much grammar and conversation as possible
- ◆ A severe teacher
- ◆ Good materials provided by the teacher in the language classroom
- ◆ Exchange of experience with foreign students
- ◆ Varied texts used for reading

(Grupul Scolar Industrial 'Simion Mehedinti' – Codlea)

When asked for recommendations to the students regarding their training as far as English is concerned, the employers interviewed mentioned the following:

- ◆ To put their English knowledge into practice.
- ◆ To do their best to study English, because it's the most widely spoken foreign language in the world.
- ◆ To learn English because it will help them in their future career.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Aurel Vijoli' – Fagaras)

The two employers that we interviewed recommend that English should be used as much as possible in real life and that schools and other education institutions (such as language schools, the British Council, etc.) should organise training courses in English for Specific Purposes.

(Colegiul Economic 'A. D. Xenopol' – Bucharest)

In overcoming obstacles, many respondents agreed that in improving their English, more individual study is essential. They also emphasized the need to take part in organized courses and advised us to study hard while we are in high school. In this respect, teaching materials should be adapted to the present needs of the potential employee and teachers should tailor their methods to support a student-centered learning process. Another solution for improving English was increasing the number of English classes in high school and vocational schools

and providing school libraries with modern technology and dictionaries, which should effectively be used in class.

Some of the respondents suggested that by asking the colleagues who know more, they could learn better. Another way of improving English would be by communicating as much as possible with native speakers or with other colleagues who speak the language well. This is easier nowadays, as the companies we have visited are international ones. Other respondents suggested that asking their children for help would be a good idea, as it is well known that many of the students in school speak English very well.

(Grupul Scolar Industrial Metalurgic – Galati)

10. Drawing conclusions

As a final conclusion to our study, we want to tell you that all the students who answered our questionnaire said that they believed English would help them in future to find a job. This is why we think that English and in particular specialized English should have a very important place in our high school curriculum.

(Colegiul Economic ‘A. D. Xenopol’ – Bucharest)

Here are the general conclusions we have drawn from our research:

- 1) School is the main source of learning and is responsible for preparing students for life and work.
- 2) Knowledge of English is both necessary and advantageous.
- 3) Employees are expected to know both general and specialized English, therefore students need to learn both General English and English for Specific Purposes.
- 4) Candidates should be able to give an interview in English.
- 5) In the field of sports, English is mainly used in international competitions.
- 6) The students in our school consider that knowledge of specialized English will make them more competitive on the labour market. Consequently, many of them are willing to do an optional ESP course.
- 7) While the emphasis is to be placed on oral communication, other language skills should be developed, too.
- 8) As concerns the content of the future course, this should focus on the following areas:
 - game / sports descriptions, instructions, and regulations;
 - competition rules;
 - competition ground / field;
 - competition reports;
 - equipment / outfit.

(Liceul cu Profil Sportiv – Braila)

In today's global market, as more and more companies become multinational, it is clear that English has become the business language of the world. This project has enabled us to clearly visualize the impact this has had upon our current workforce: more than 90% of our

respondents use at least some English. An amazing fact, since half of them were not even taught English in school and considering the average of our respondents (around 40).

We, the teachers and students involved in this project, are now more acutely aware of the significance English plays in the work world. We learned that, from a purely technical perspective, English is an absolute requirement in order to read technical documentation. Since, in some cases, it is not available in any other format.

In a broader sense, this project has enabled us to see how small our world has become – it is truly a global work community – where the English language has been chosen to bridge the communication barriers. And the higher one's position is within a company, the more likely they are to be competent in English. It is generally felt that being able to communicate in English opens more doors and offers one better opportunities. And as our students prepare to enter the global labour market this becomes more and more obvious.

(Grupul Scolar 'Radu Negru' - Galati)

Conclusion

In short, although English is viewed as a compulsory subject in most schools, the students consider it pleasant and useful. In spite of the fact that there are other sources of information (such as the Internet, the media, social interaction, native speakers), school remains the main environment for acquiring English. The graduates predict that English is becoming an important selection criterion for obtaining a good job. It would be advisable for teachers of English that they organise meetings with native speakers or, even better, trips to English speaking countries.

(Grupul Scolar Industrial 'Iuliu Maniu' – Arad)

Our research has led us to a very important conclusion, namely that, as the Romanian society has changed a lot recently and our world of work has, by all means, to satisfy the demands of the European Union and of the world market, the study of specialised English in high-school should be given more importance than it is now and the high-school curriculum should take into consideration the introduction of specialised English as a permanent discipline.

The result of our research shows that there is a vital need of making people become aware of the opportunities specialised English knowledge provides, especially in the economic field, and we would recommend that it should be introduced for study in high-schools in the form of optional courses or some other kind of training.

The result we predict is that, by doing this, Romanian schools would offer great help to the Romanian world of work and would provide it a significant qualitative improvement.

(Grupul Scolar Economic Administrativ 'C. Kiritescu' – Bucharest)

11. Reflecting on the challenges and benefits of the project

To make a project work you need dedication and you have to use your mind, because you don't have a living example to study and see for yourself how the people in question react. The project was challenging and we were confronted with a lot of disbelief, but in the end, with lots of work and dedication, we managed to break through.

(Colegiul Tehnic 'Mircea Cristea' - Brasov)

Let's analyze now the strengths and weaknesses of this project:

Strengths:

- it represents a start in a real analysis about the use of English;
- it reveals the interest in English of Romanian people;
- it helps us to have a synthetic view of projects.

Weaknesses:

- the analysis was made with rather empirical methods;
- not all the respondents were completely sincere in their answers;
- not all the respondents were cooperative and they did not answer all our questions.

(Colegiul Economic 'A. D. Xenopol' - Bucharest)

- ❖ We **liked our work**, it was interesting to study different **theoretical things** about research in the English class. At the beginning it was difficult, because it was an optional class and English is our second foreign language, so not everybody can speak (good) English. However, everything was all right in the end – we used **work-sheets**, which proved very useful for **application**. What was more difficult in the first term were the **diaries**, because the teacher asked us to write them in English, even if we could not write very much.
- ❖ It was interesting to **devise the questionnaires**. Everybody contributed with questions, even the university students who were doing their training practice with our English teacher and with us.
- ❖ **The questionnaires were not difficult to administer** because we made 2 versions – Romanian and English – and most respondents preferred to answer the Romanian version. We kept the English version for ourselves in the personal file and it helped us to write the final report. A success was the fact that **no questionnaire was lost**, all were returned, with very few omissions. ... In general, the quantitative questions were carefully answered, but it was more difficult with the qualitative ones: only about half of the respondents took the trouble to read / indicate the relevant business tasks / activities / documents among those suggested for identifying communication and language needs in business settings, they contented themselves to underline the large domain, not specific elements. Very few respondents made suggestions for the content of the would-be course of Vocational English mentioned in the final question.
- ❖ The interviews were based on the questionnaire, but they were more flexible, the interviewers were freer to choose what to ask. However, they were more time-consuming, more difficult to schedule, or more emotionally charged (the interview with the school

- ❖ principal). **Work with the respondents was smooth, pleasant and easy enough. They helped us willingly, they did not refuse to answer any questions and they talked openly to us.**
- ❖ THE ENGLISH FOR THE WORLD OF WORK (EWOw!) PROJECT and its first part, achieved in the academic year 2003-2004, DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS for ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES, **have been fruitful activities.** The **participants** have **gained**:
 - General research skills
 - Computer skills
 - Team work skills
 - Communication skills
 - Presentation skills
 - Report writing skills
 - Improved oral and written English
 - Better knowledge of themselves and others
 - Better knowledge of the world of work and of job opportunities
 - Confidence
 - Resources (“goodies”): equipment for the school (a dictaphone) and stationery materials

(Colegiul Economic ‘F.S.Nitti’ - Timisoara)

When, in September 2003, we decided to embark upon this enterprise we were not fully aware of what such an experience was going to be like. “Just another one of those school projects, the kind of which we dealt with many times in the past!” we said to ourselves. All we knew at the time was that the project, “English for the World of Work”, was started by the British Council – Romania in 2001 with a pilot phase and that it was now carried out in 19 vocational high schools in different regions of the country. That it was to enable students to come into direct contact with various potential working places, to get in touch with people who work in their particular vocational sector, and to help them develop useful skills and collect information for their professional future. That piece of information alone was enough to motivate us – students and teachers at Grupul Scolar “Radu Negru” – Galati – and we accepted the challenge to become part of it.

After the first training session, we realised that it was going to be different, something we had never done before. Over this school year that awareness has grown into a more accurate and comprehensive image of the whole project and its implications. We now know how much we have gained working on it and working together. It is not only the new things we have learned, the information we have received, the knowledge and abilities we have acquired in the process, but also the new kind of relationships we have developed between one another, students and teachers, on the one hand, teachers from different departments of the school, on the other. The teachers on the team have learned to rely more on the students’ contributions, to pay more attention to their opinions, to seek for the students’ feedback more often than before, and to regard them as partners in a dialogue. We – the teachers – have also become more aware of new teaching techniques and of some of the new trends in methodology.

The students on the team have become more communicative and active. We – the students – have developed a new sense of responsibility, improved some of our old skills and acquired new ones. We have also learned to cooperate with our colleagues and our teachers on a new

basis, as we now have a more prominent role in this relationship. In short, we have all learned to work together as a team.

We have come to understand that, as the world begins to work more and more together, each of us needs to improve our communication and teamwork skills. This project has demonstrated to us in a very “hands-on” way the value of improving these skills. We had no choice but to work together to accomplish our goals. And the constant monitoring of our activities forced us to look at ways to improve our efficiency. We found the use of the research diary an extremely useful tool.

And there’s something else worth mentioning here: having to work on this project in the context of the rapid changes that are taking place all around us today, as Romania intensifies her efforts to join the European Union, made us even more aware of the importance of the project. We are witnesses to, and part of, the many programmes aimed at reforming the National Public Education System. Curricular reform (with a basic stress on the reform of curricula, syllabuses of different disciplines, and the design of new textbooks), the reform of the methodology of assessment and evaluation, the training of teachers and trainers, the expansion of the vocational schools and the establishment of a new relationship between vocational schools and their economic and administrative environments – all of these are meant to improve the access of graduates to available jobs on the labour market. And due to this project we are now more able to understand and more willing to accept these changes.

We, the team of students and teachers from Grupul Scolar “Radu Negru” – Galati – regard our work on the project “English for the World of Work” as part of this complex national effort. And we are very proud of it!

(Grupul Scolar ‘Radu Negru’ - Galati)