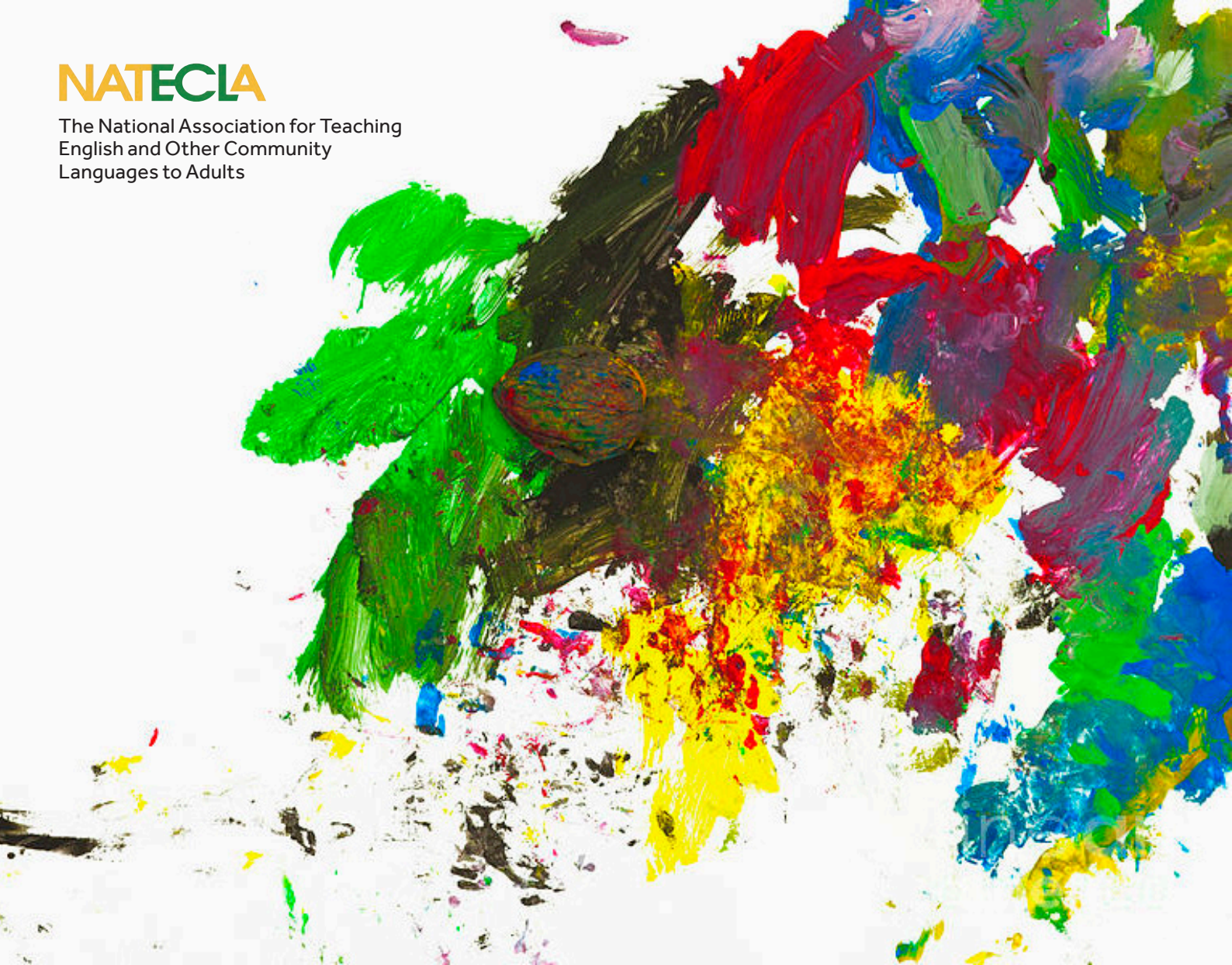


NATECLA

The National Association for Teaching
English and Other Community
Languages to Adults



Learning English in European countries

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A collection of short articles
on learning English in
22 countries

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Cover image: Europe, designed by children in watercolours, Wolfgang Steiner

Learning English in European countries

In 2016 and 2017 *Language Issues* collected a series of short articles on learning English (and other languages) in different European countries. We are pleased to publish them as a single collection, providing you with an introduction to the English language learning situations in more than twenty countries in Europe. The articles describe English language learning over the period between 2015 and 2018. Education policies and practices change, so keep a look out for news and updates for the countries that interest you.

Thanks to all our writers, and to the colleagues who helped us to find you, including the ESOL Research JISC Mail subscribers and the English Language Centre in Brighton.

Language Issues Editorial Board, NATECLA
February 2019

Introduction

First, a few words about the British. While English is the most studied language in the European Union, with 96% of upper secondary students learning English (Eurostat, 2015), the British are famous for not speaking other European languages. The results of a European Commission survey (cited by the British Council, 2015) state that the British are 'officially' the worst language learners in Europe. 62% of people surveyed couldn't speak any other language apart from English.

On the plus side, 38% of Britons spoke at least one foreign language, 18% spoke two and 6% spoke three or more. However, in other European Union countries, 56% of people spoke at least one foreign language, 28% spoke at least two and 11% spoke three or more (2015).

The Commons Briefing on language teaching in schools (2016) formally admitted that 'language learning in England is consistently poor when compared with foreign language learning in other countries', adding that there are 'regular calls from industry and educational bodies for levels of attainment to be raised'.

Learning a foreign language is not a popular option at school in Britain, though many children start learning their first other language while at primary school, from the age of 7, and there are plans to introduce foreign languages from the age of 5. In the 1990s 80% of school students took a GCSE in another language, French, German and Spanish being the top three. This percentage dipped dramatically at the beginning of the 21st century and has only recently started to recover; in 2015 48% of school students took a GCSE in another language, with Spanish replacing German as the second most learned language (Commons Briefing, 2016).

Turning to adults, in a survey conducted by the British Council at the start of 2018, 20% of people surveyed said they would learn a new language in 2018, the main ones chosen being Spanish, French, Italian, German and Japanese.

As we publish this collection in 2019, despite the Brexit storm raging around us, we hope the 20% soon becomes 30% and that learning European languages in the UK becomes as successful and widespread as the learning of English in other European countries.

Sally Bird

Learning English in Albania

Flutura Ferati

English holds an important place in Albania. It is the main and the only foreign language compulsory for learners in public and private education sectors. It is the language of international communication for business and tourism. Every traffic or direction sign, in restaurants, hospitals and at landmarks, has an English explanation next to the Albanian sign.

English in schools

Albanian children start primary school at the age of six or seven and English is taught in the primary curriculum from the age of nine or ten, three times a week. A class lasts forty-five minutes. In the private sector, some schools start teaching English from the kindergarten or from the first year of primary school. English is a core subject in secondary schools, which means it is compulsory up to the final school leaving exams, regardless of the type of school. The number of classes increases from three classes per week in the primary school to four in secondary school and five in high school. There are some professional schools where foreign languages are the key focus. At these, the content of the English curriculum is more academic, and literature and the culture of the target language is taught. Learning English with an equal emphasis on speaking and writing is central to the educational provision across the country. However, I can say that speaking in English is not very successful and there are distinctions between different areas of the country. In rural areas and in the north of Albania there is little or no emphasis on speaking and usually learners there are not successful in learning English. Successful learners are usually from the urban areas and among those who can attend fee paying courses.

There are different vocational courses for young people with fewer academic tendencies, such as plumbing, carpentry, electrical skills, but as far as I know English is just part of some of these vocational courses, for example, Catering and Tourism. Here, I mean courses which deal with the promotion of tourism, hospitality, management and so on.

Higher education

English is taught at university in Albania. There are five universities which offer degrees in English. These include the University of Tirana, the most important one in Albania, at the faculty of foreign languages, and the University of Elbasan. In these faculties, English is the only language used. Courses taught in these universities are focused on grammar and areas such as: Morphology, Syntax, Phonetics, Lexicology, Linguistics, Academic writing, History of the language. There is a focus on

literature as well: British and American Literature is taught for two semesters each, further courses focus on English through poetry and fiction. There is a focus on 'target language culture' through courses such as British and American history and Sociolinguistics. Further non-compulsory subjects are Study Skills (in English) and spoken English.

Other foreign languages taught are French, German, Italian, Spanish, Turkish, Greek and Russian. In the third year of university, there is a division. Students can choose between Interpreting and Translation, British and American Studies or English Language (the latter if you want to be a teacher of English). The modules taught are specific for each field.

In other faculties English is taught just in the first year of university studies. To study for a Masters programme students have to take IELTS or TOEFL in order to graduate. Many students attend private, fee paying courses to help them with general English or with the specialist language used in Business, Law, Medicine and other areas.

Teachers of English

School teachers follow a nationally prescribed pathway into the profession. Having completed a degree in English, they undertake a two-year Master's programme. This is a teacher education programme, where the courses taught are Teaching Methods, Critical Thinking, Development Psychology, Curriculum Development, Class Management, Assessment and Evaluation, Overview of the Theory and Practice of EFL Teaching in Secondary and High Schools and the final element is a dissertation. For three semesters students learn about teaching and in the final one they go to a school to observe classes and then teach English. Usually this two year programme is in the Albanian language. Teachers who graduate from the university of Tirana are more likely to be accepted as teachers, than those from other public universities, followed by those from private universities or people who were part-time students. A teacher of English cannot be employed if s/he has not finished this Masters programme. Having just the Bachelor's degree is not enough.

In the private school system or the higher education system (universities), it is not common for teachers to

have qualified within the school system or to have come through teaching awards routes such as the Cambridge CELTA and DELTA. Teachers are all required to have a Master's degree, and then it is preferable for them to also have a PhD, and some lecturers may even have further post-doctoral qualifications.

Flutera Ferati is from Tirana, Albania. She completed a BA degree in English at the University of Tirana, and then an MA in English Language teaching in the UK.

Learning English in Belgium

Cynthia Grover

Belgium has three national languages: Dutch, French, and German. However, English frequently serves as a fourth, unofficial language, even in communication between native Belgians. In view of the centuries of tension between the Walloon (French-speaking) and Flemish (Dutch-speaking) communities about their languages, the prominence of English is politically sensitive.

As Dutch and German are similar to English, their speakers have less trouble learning English. Subtitling films rather than dubbing them has also made it easier for the Flemish to learn English.

English in Belgian schools

In Belgium, education falls under the jurisdiction of the three language communities, so the state school systems differ across the country. By law, education is compulsory from age 6 until age 18.¹ Between 12 and 15, students choose between academic, arts, technical, and vocational secondary schools.² Private schools exist as well.

Learning English (ESL) is compulsory in the Germanophone and Flemish state schools and can start as early as age three.³ In Francophone schools, starting at four years of age, children can opt to take two hours a week of English. By secondary school, this rises to four hours a week.⁴ Alternatively, immersion programmes offer 7 to 18 hours a week of various subjects in English.^{5,6} English is the language of instruction in about 20% of the immersion programmes in Francophone schools. There is no standard Belgian school-leaving language qualification,⁷ so many immersion students take a local or international English language test to obtain a certificate as proof of their level of English.

There are few reported problems with teaching English in Flemish and Germanophone schools. In contrast, in Francophone schools, language teachers are in short supply,⁸ especially in the immersion schools, which require teachers to be expert in English and another subject.⁹ The dearth in Francophone schools is perhaps not surprising, because obtaining recognition for non-Belgian teaching qualifications¹⁰ can be unpredictable and take years.¹¹ Nonetheless, 30% of language teachers in the francophone schools do not have Belgian qualifications¹². However, pay is then less: the salary grids presume Belgian diplomas.¹³

English education for adults

Belgium recognizes approximately 15 Belgian universities and many other higher learning institutions.^{14,15} Amazingly, these institutions offer over 500 university-level degrees for coursework and a thesis written only in English.^{16,17,18}

In addition, for people over 15, the governments offer many cheap or free language courses for adults that provide a certificate. In Brussels alone, over 100 organisations do so, and English is nearly always on the curriculum.¹⁹ Finding English courses elsewhere in Belgium is easy too; private language schools and English tutors abound.

The strong demand from adults for English is understandable. Belgium is the third most open economy in the world and exports 82% of its production.²⁰ Companies' top management includes many non-Belgians. Moreover, rank-and-file employees need English too: with so much international trade, English serves to communicate with non-English trading partners abroad. Consequently, many Belgian companies offer their employees English courses.

Brussels reinforces this demand. With the accession of the last ten countries to the European Union, interest in learning English has intensified, despite Brexit, English tends to be their second language.

English teachers

Belgian English teachers in the state schools are usually well-qualified in pedagogy and the aim of their Bachelor's degree is fluency in English. However, 'fluency' is often understood to be Common European Framework of reference (CEFR) level C1, and this is not always sufficient. As good immersion students are at level C1, students may therefore end up correcting their teachers.

Qualifications vary among the many teachers of English who are not Belgian. Private language schools tend to hire native or near-native English-speakers who usually have a qualification for teaching English as a foreign language, such as the Cambridge CELTA, or a university degree in languages and several years' experience teaching English.

Kind thanks are due to Simon Edney for his comments on an earlier draft of this article. All errors remain mine.

Endnotes

- ¹ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syst%C3%A8me_%C3%A9ducatif_belge#Budget_de_1.27.C3.A9cole
- ² idem
- ³ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-990_en.htm
- ⁴ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enseignement_des_langues_%C3%A9trang%C3%A8res#En_Belgique_28Enseignement_francophone.29
- ⁵ <http://www.ufapec.be/nos-analyses/1411-immersion.html>
- ⁶ Règlement de Travail (doc 2997_20090630112006.doc) from <http://www.enseignement.be>
- ⁷ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syst%C3%A8me_%C3%A9ducatif_belge#Budget_de_1.27.C3.A9cole
- ⁸ <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php/index.php?page=24944&navi=1022>
- ⁹ <http://www.ufapec.be/nos-analyses/1411-immersion.html>
- ¹⁰ http://www.enseignement.be/index.php/index.php?page=27274&navi=4240#zone_step_0
- ¹¹ Personal communication from a native English teacher in a Belgian school: 11 years to obtain recognition
- ¹² <http://www.ufapec.be/nos-analyses/0313-prof-sans-pedagogique.html>
- ¹³ <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php/index.php?page=24944&navi=1022>
- ¹⁴ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_des_universit%C3%A9s_en_Belgique
- ¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_in_Belgium
- ¹⁶ <http://www.highereducation.be/home>
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vrije_Universiteit_Brussel
- ¹⁸ <http://www.studyinbelgium.be/en/search-formations>
- ¹⁹ <http://www.commissioner.brussels/i-am-an-expat/practical-daily-life/83-practical-daily-life/112-language-courses>
- ²⁰ De Tijd 7 June 2017 p.10 – Pieter De Crem

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Learning English in Bulgaria

Yordanka Nikolova

Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) has always been on the curriculum in educational institutions in Bulgaria. For many years French and German were the two foreign languages taught at schools. After WW II Russian became the main foreign language in the country and remained as such until the democratic changes in 1989. Since then, the standards in FLT in Bulgaria have been in constant transition, but the most characteristic feature has been the ongoing popularity of English as the main foreign language in the country.

English in Primary Education

English is a compulsory subject on the curriculum from the second grade, so children begin studying the language at the age of 8 and are supposed to achieve level A1 on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) by the end of their primary education, at the age of 10–11. There are various universities which train students on pre-service programmes to teach young learners. The Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science is in charge of selecting and approving textbooks and teaching materials for this age range. Besides this, there are a number of foreign publishers that are represented on the Bulgarian market and they further provide a huge variety of teaching and learning resources.

English in Secondary Education

The most characteristic feature is the variety of programmes in secondary and high school education, which aim to provide learning opportunities for students. On intensive immersion programmes students master levels CEFR B2 and C1, whereas with standard programmes they accomplish levels CEFR A2 to B1. At the age of 14 students begin studying a second foreign language, which they master at levels A1 and A2. Textbooks and teaching resources, in general, are in full abundance. However, there has been a shortage of properly trained ELT staff over the years, including at the specialized language schools. For that reason, standards of teaching English differ greatly among schools and the best trained students are expected to have graduated from a school where English is taught intensively. A great number of these students pass international certificate exams in English with honours and continue their education in universities abroad.

English in Tertiary Education

Both state and private universities in Bulgaria are autonomous institutions and there are great variations in the number of teaching hours in English. It is difficult

to draw conclusions about the level of English as there are some 52 universities in Bulgaria, among which the number of state universities is 36, and all of them differ in standards of teaching English.

English in Further Education

After Bulgaria was accepted in the European Union, a number of projects have been implemented in the country, aiming at improving the command of English among employees, both civil servants and people working in private companies. In spite of this, the standards of using English have not improved well enough, and it is still very difficult to employ people with a good level of English. The main reasons for this are the expertise of ELT specialists and the inappropriate format of these projects.

English in Private Education

There are a great number of private educational establishments across the country which offer English language courses to all age groups, primary and secondary school children in particular. They vary in standards of teaching but overall, they support and further help the students to master the language.

It should be pointed out that the biggest problem in English Language Teaching in Bulgaria is the training and qualification of teachers. According to state requirements, teachers of English must have graduated in English Philology or Applied Linguistics. As these are among the most difficult subjects to study at university, there are not enough graduates in them and very few of them will be interested in the teaching profession as teachers in Bulgaria are not well paid. Unfortunately, there is not a government strategy for training English language teachers which will further exacerbate the problems in the area of ELT in the country.

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Learning English in the Czech Republic

Clare Tyrer

As you try to order “smažený sýr” (fried cheese) in your broken Czech, you may be surprised to hear people responding to you in perfect English. This would have been unheard of back in the days before the Velvet Revolution when it was mandatory to learn Russian at school. Nowadays, most people can speak English quite fluently although this will depend on the area: as you move out to the Czech countryside and the smaller villages, you may find that you will have to resort to your Czech phrasebook to make yourself understood.

English in schools

In the Czech Republic, compulsory education begins at six and continues for a minimum of nine years. Learning a foreign language, usually English, is compulsory in grade three when pupils are eight years old although in some schools, pupils start learning English from year one. Initially, the focus is more on fun: playing games and singing English songs rather than adhering to a strict syllabus. From grade seven, a second foreign language is compulsory. Most pupils opt for German, although French and Spanish are becoming more popular.

At fifteen, most pupils apply for their choice of secondary school: the gymnasium (with a more academic curriculum) or a more technical or vocational school. Those who want to access Higher Education need to take the “maturita” which includes taking a compulsory foreign language, Czech and other school subjects such as Maths, History and Geography.

Adult education and training

Adults who wish to improve their standard of English can choose from a number of language schools (jazykové školy) across the country which offer state language exams. There are also many private language schools and international organisations around, such as the British Council, where learners can take a variety of exams such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System), Cambridge English exams and Pearson language tests. In-company language training is also a lucrative business as many companies require English language speaking employees to be able to communicate with speakers of different first languages across the globe.

Teachers of English

Czech teachers of English are usually very well qualified. They have a degree in English and pedagogy or they have passed an Advanced level English exam (equivalent to C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference) plus a course in pedagogy over two or three years.

The Czech Republic, particularly Prague, has long been a desirable destination for tourists and people wishing to teach English from overseas. Although it is not as easy as it once was to find a teaching job, English language teachers are still in demand. Most opportunities come from working in private language schools. Although the salary is not particularly high, you can live quite comfortably as the cost of living is still low compared to most other western countries in Europe. English language teachers are expected to have a minimum of a Cambridge CELTA or Trinity Cert TESOL and some places require a Bachelor's Degree. English 'native' speakers are expected to work alongside Czech teachers, focusing particularly on developing learners' spoken and written skills. Another option is to be a 'conversation teacher' in a state secondary school although this is usually only a short-term opportunity.

Clare Tyrer taught in the Czech Republic for over four years during the period 1993 to 2000. She now works as an ESOL teacher and teacher trainer at Newham College.

Learning English in Denmark

Shelley Taylor

English in schools

Folkeskolen

Denmark has a long tradition of excellence in foreign language (FL) teaching, including English. Before WWII, German was taught as the first foreign language in lower secondary school. With the introduction of the “folkeskole” system in 1958 (primary to lower secondary schooling), English became the second foreign language, initially starting in Grade 6. *Folkeskoler* are municipal schools that provide compulsory education from the primary years up to Grade 9 or 10 (grade 10 is optional). In 1970, German became compulsory starting in Grade 7, and English in Grade 5, thus beginning the trend to introduce English earlier and earlier. In 1975, German became optional from Grade 7 onward, and French was added as an option in Grade 10.

Following the 1994 *folkeskole* reform, English became compulsory in Grade 4. Nowadays (2018), English instruction starts in Grade 1 and, for most students, continues until the end of postsecondary studies. Its use is widespread, and scholars have long suggested that English has taken on the role of a second language as opposed to a foreign language (Færch, Haastrup & Phillipson, 1984). Television stations show movies, the news and cartoons in the original language (e.g., English, German, Swedish) with Danish sub-titles. Cartoons are as popular with young Danish children as they are with children in other countries. While many are dubbed, others are shown in the original English, thereby exposing Danish children to oral English from an early age. An English teacher commented to me in the 1990s that when Danish children start learning English formally in Grade 4, they are ‘false beginners’ due to the language they have already picked up incidentally.

Currently, the focus on English language teaching in the primary years is action-oriented (oral, play-based instruction focussing on pupils’ here-and-now experiences). By the end of *folkeskolen*, the focus shifts to purpose, precision and nuance. The Council of Europe’s (2001) “Can do” statements are evident in the Danish Ministry of Education’s (n. d.) goals for the development of English competences from primary through to the end of lower secondary schooling. Denmark’s introduction of English before age eight is in following with the Barcelona Objective (Council of the European Union, 2002). The goal is to develop CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) A2 levels of oral, written and sociocultural competences by the end of *folkeskolen*, including understanding of various Englishes. By the end of upper secondary schooling (*gymnasium*), the goal is for

most students to graduate with B2 competences in English (CEFR, 2001; European Commission, 2017).

Gymnasium

There are many upper secondary options for students. Depending on which type of *gymnasium* they enrol in, the focus varies; STX is more traditional, HF is shorter than the latter, HHX has a business orientation, HTX has a technical orientation, and EUX is vocational. English is compulsory throughout, but varies in terms of focus and class time requirements depending on the type of *gymnasium* and clusters of courses students select. Traditionally, FL streams existed in STX; however, students now select clusters of A-level courses, with the most popular being the English/social sciences cluster. English instruction in STX courses focusses on developing oral and written competences (e.g., grammar and stylistics), and gaining sociocultural understanding of the UK and North America through studying the classics, modern works, subject-specific readings, different genres of print literacy, and media studies (Danish Ministry of Education, 2018).

Options for content-based instruction in English in a *folkeskole* or *gymnasium*

International primary to lower secondary schools may use English, French or German as the medium of instruction. Danish-medium instruction is the norm in international *gymnasier*, although English, German or French options exist. Sixteen *gymnasier* offer International Baccalaureate courses in English. Some schools offer “Content and Language Integrated Learning” or CLIL, which features some ‘content’ instruction (e.g., Math and Science) through the medium of a FL; however, even in English, CLIL is not as widespread in Denmark as it is elsewhere (e.g., Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Austria, Malta or Liechtenstein where it is offered in all schools, albeit not at all levels; European Commission, 2017).

Growth of English-medium instruction at the university level, particularly in graduate studies

To be competitive and attract ‘the best and the brightest,’ Denmark and other countries where the national language is not one of the major languages of Europe offer graduate programs taught through the medium of English (Cots, Llorca & Garrett, 2014; Danish Ministry of Higher

Education and Science, n. d.). Up to 700 degree programs and 1300 courses are now offered in English, including 43% of all Master's programs, with the amount differing from university to university (Danmarks Statistisk, 2018; The Danish Agency for Higher Education, 2015). For instance, the Danish Technical University and the Copenhagen Business School offer the highest percentages of Master's courses in English (71% and 68% respectively) and, at 15%, Roskilde University offers the least (Danmarks Statistisk, 2018). These programs and courses do not just serve international students, though their numbers are growing. Overall, more Danes tend to enrol in the Social Sciences, and more international students tend to enrol in STEM fields. As PhD students in areas other than FLs are widely expected to write their dissertations in English,¹ one could say that students' English proficiency continues to develop from Gr. 1 to the end of postgraduate studies in Denmark.

Teachers of English

Folkeskole teachers take a Professional BA in a University College. Throughout their studies, they take courses on theoretical and practical aspects of teaching. Some, but not all, *folkeskole* English teachers take an English teaching stream. They may also take continuing education (in-service) in University Colleges after completing their degree and teacher qualifications. There are also ongoing projects such as one entitled "Tidligere sprogstart" [Earlier start-date for teaching languages], which is currently being coordinated by FL consultants from the University of Copenhagen, and Copenhagen's University of Education [Københavns Professionshøjskole]. The project was developed in response to the needs of teachers now called upon to teach FLs in younger grades (e.g., English starting in Gr. 1, and German or French starting in Gr. 5 instead of Grades 3 and 7 respectively). Phase I of the project involves 20 teachers in 5 Copenhagen schools, and Phase II will involve 40 teachers. The focus of the project is on developing teacher competences through instruction on and mentoring in action-oriented, plurilingual pedagogy by means of exemplary teaching units and plurilingual story books for children in the younger grades (Council of Europe, 2018). See: <https://tidligeresprogstart.ku.dk/>.

To gain a permanent contract in teaching English at the *Gymnasium* level, teachers must have completed: (a) a five-year, university-based MA with a major and a minor (e.g., with a major in English), and (b) been offered a "pædagogikum [practicum]" through their employer (the director of the *gymnasium* at which they work). During their year-long *pædagogikum*, they teach their regular workload while also watching others teach, having their own teaching monitored, being mentored and, finally, being evaluated. It is decentralized except for the seminars they attend, which are organized nationally. These seminars cover both general and subject-specific pedagogy

ranging from Vygotsky and Piaget to FL teaching (e.g., English as a foreign language/EFL). As a final requirement, teachers must submit a compulsory writing piece — a long essay drawing on their general and subject-specific pedagogical readings, integrated with an empirical study — that is graded at the national level.

Not all *gymnasium* (English) teachers are granted the opportunity to complete a *pædagogikum*, without which they cannot gain permanent employment. *Folkeskole* teachers have their own challenges (e.g., some do not have a dedicated classroom for teaching English; others may not have taken an English-teaching stream at a University College or the earlier "seminarier," and may thus be teaching English on a letter of permission). Yet, not one of the 55 EFL *folkeskole* and *gymnasium* teachers whom I surveyed for a comparative/international investigation into conditions for teaching EFL in Denmark, and French as a 2nd language (FSL) in Canada, reported ever considering leaving the profession in the preceding 12 months (Taylor, in preparation). In comparison, Canadian FSL teacher attrition during the induction phase has been compared to a 'revolving door,' with 50% of all new FSL teachers resigning within their first two years on the job, despite French holding official 2nd language status (Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchel & Roy, 2008). Therefore, even though teaching conditions may not be perfect for all EFL teachers in Denmark, tentative evidence suggests that they perceive them as better than do their Canadian FSL teacher counterparts (see Lapkin, MacFarlane & Vandergrift (2006)). These results can only benefit English learners in Denmark.

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¹ For example, a PhD candidate writing a thesis on the works of Marcel Proust or Antonine Maillet in French. Studies would not be expected to write her thesis in English; she would write it in French.

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Learning English (and French) in France

Sally Bird, Rob Simmons, Gabriel Ellenburg

'France badly in need of boosting its English skills' ran the headline in a report from Education First (a private language training organisation) in November 2014. The report went on to say that France ranked fairly low among European countries for English language skills and suggested that France was more interested in protecting its own language and culture than learning English.

Despite this, English is the language of choice for most schoolchildren selecting their first new language to learn at school. English features prominently on the curriculum throughout the compulsory school system, in college and higher education and in the adult education sector, both state-run and private. In Paris alone there are over 500 private language schools teaching English to young people and adults. And, according to Eurostat (2015) France rated second highest (along with Czech Republic, Finland, Romania and Slovakia) for the proportion of secondary school students (99%) learning at least two foreign languages.

The French school system

French schooling is free and compulsory from age six to 16, although the majority of children start earlier, entering pre-school at age three. Another two years of study is required if a student is to sit the *baccalauréat* exam (le bac), needed to enter university.

After nursery school or kindergarten (*école maternelle*), which is optional, the French compulsory education system is divided into three stages or 'cycles':

- primary school (*école*)
- middle school (*collège*)
- high school (*lycée*)

While the majority of schools are state-run (*écoles publiques*), there are also private schools under contract (*sous contrat*) to the French government, whereby the government pays the teachers' salaries, the school follows the national curriculum, and fees are reasonably low. There are also private schools (*écoles privés*) that are fully independent (*hors contrat*), some of which are international schools. Schools affiliated to a particular religion are also usually private and thus fee paying. There are state schools with bilingual programmes but in most cases bilingual education is only available in private schools.

Most French schools follow a national curriculum set by the Ministry of Education, but in the reforms of May 2015 the government began to allow schools to set 20 percent of the curriculum themselves. The reforms also introduced a strong focus on language learning.

Language learning in schools

Children start learning their first foreign language at around the age of 8 in primary school, with the majority choosing English over the alternative, German. At age 12, they choose their second foreign language and at this point it is usually Spanish. In the 1970s German was the second most studied language, but this was overtaken by Spanish more recently. Lycée students have a third language option at age 15, and here Portuguese and Italian start to feature as choices.

Generally, at least one foreign language is required up to the *baccalauréat* at age 18, usually two. Exceptions exist for professional studies students (similar to National Vocational Qualifications in the UK).

English language curriculum and methods

There is a national foreign language syllabus that each school, and by extension, each teacher, adapts to suit their own teaching style and their students. There are two aspects to it – Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels as targets for each stage, and content, which is very broadly defined. As an example, the content for 16–18 year olds is articulated around four main notions: places and forms of power, ideas of progress, myths and heroes, and spaces and exchanges. This breadth allows teachers considerable latitude in choosing topics that students will enjoy or appreciate. The syllabus divides into listening comprehension, written comprehension, interactive speaking, presentations and reading.

Language teaching methodologies tend to change as the politicians at the top change, but recently the preferred method is project-based learning (*la démarche actionnelle*). There has been a big push to move away from 'chalk-and-talk', supported by the ministry and academies. This is creating a conflict between new teaching graduates who want to apply what they have learnt, and academic management who have been 'teaching from a textbook' for a long time.

Assessment

The national tests fall into two parts. The speaking part is assessed by teachers in the students' schools, although a different teacher to their usual teacher. The students choose one of the four above-mentioned topics, and make a presentation, after which there is a short discussion with the teacher. This is graded according to criteria decided at the regional or national level.

The written test is set at the national level, and all students take it simultaneously. The test is different according to whether students have specialised or not in English. There may be a literature section, for students choosing this pathway, or a focus on technology or economic topics, giving students the opportunity to begin specialising in English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Aside from the national tests in schools, TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication from Education Testing Service, ETS) seems to be the most popular international exam.

Higher education

A *baccalauréat* guarantees access to a publicly funded university, although some students take another one or two years of private studies, preparatory classes, or *prépas*, so they can sit for an entrance exam (concours) into the handful of prestigious schools known collectively as *les grandes écoles* for engineering, business, and politics or administrative studies.

To enter higher education in France, students need to prove their French is at a level that will enable them to undertake the course of their choice; this might be done via a written and oral test. Unless students want to specialise in English, there is no specific standard level or proof of level required for English; it varies across institutions and courses.

University students almost always need to take English courses, usually around two hours a week. Almost every academic faculty has integrated a foreign language requirement (usually English, although German, Spanish and Italian are found in regions adjacent to Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Spain).

National target levels for university students were set some years ago, but these are seen as very optimistic for ordinary universities. Some universities follow the 'National Pedagogical Syllabus' for some of their courses. In reality, programmes vary, usually with some content related to the degree concerned, sometimes more specialised, with English language teachers working with colleagues from other departments.

France has a very significant international higher education system. France is the third most attractive study destination for overseas students after the US and the UK (British Council, 2015). The traditional international audience for French universities is in the French-speaking

world, and largely concentrated in Africa. In order to engage with China, India and other parts of Asia, France has adapted its approach to include an increase in English language teaching. Masters students coming to France without proof of their English language level need to get a certain mark in English to have their degrees validated.

Adult Education

The French adult education organisation, Greta (www.education.gouv.fr/fp/greta), has centres nationwide and runs education and training programmes. Classes are also run by Uni Inter-Age (like U3A in the UK) and local associations as well as local authorities. FE is referred to as '*Formation Continue*' and may take place in a variety of institutions including universities.

English classes for jobseekers are government funded and found in both state-run and private language schools. Programmes range from General English to English for Business, ESP for medicine and technology, as well as TOEIC preparation.

Becoming a qualified teacher

To become a permanent teacher in the French education system, you need to have a relevant Master's degree, plus the French secondary teaching certificate, CAPES. If you don't have a Masters, there are Master's in Educational Sciences programmes available that also prepare people for the CAPES.

The CAPES is a competitive exam with a specific number of open places each year, according to ministerial needs in each subject. For English teachers there are two written papers in early spring – one a dissertation in English on either civilisation (history, sociology) or literature, the other translation from French to English (or vice versa, or both) followed by linguistic questions on each text. If successful, you are invited to take the oral exams in early summer which consist of a prepared presentation on a dossier of sources in English, followed by an interview in French on the pedagogical applications of that dossier. Then there is a second exam where you have to discuss an audio source that you have only just heard, followed by a second part where you have to discuss the errors made by a student in a dossier of work, and propose ways to work on those areas with the students. If you pass, you become a civil servant, do an NQT (newly qualified teacher) year locally and then you are assigned to a school (possibly far from where you live, if you're not married). But it's a job for life!

There are two routes to university teaching work. If you are a secondary teacher, you can request transfer from the secondary education to the higher education sector. You have to pass an interview panel, but if approved, you are assigned to a post and receive the same pay as if you were teaching in school. If you are a researcher, there

are competitive exams to become a 'researcher-teacher'. Part-time hours in higher education are mostly covered by hourly-paid '*vacataires*' who must produce evidence that they have a full-time job elsewhere or that they have been self-employed for a period of time. Qualifications required for these posts are more flexible.

In the private sector, qualifications demanded vary from nothing at all, usually for schools with 'method learning' who follow a strict programme, upwards but most insist on English teachers being 'native' speakers. Cambridge CELTA and DELTA are gaining in recognition. The CAPES would be useful but it's a moot point – if you have the CAPES, you are probably already working full time for the state.

Endnote – learning French in France

The level of French needed for migrants aged under 60 is CEFR B1. Classes in French are available in major state-run education providers, some adapted to people who use other scripts or who have low levels of previous education. The focus is mainly on lower level classes from CEFR levels A1 to B1.

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Learning English (and Finnish) in Finland

Gemma Dunn

Brought under the pedagogical spotlight recently, thanks to its impressive PISA test results, Finland aims to provide a broad-based education for all and learning English is an accepted part of this. Most Finns have a good understanding of the language and their own continued need to develop their skills to meet the demands of the modern workplace.

English in schools

Children begin school in the year they turn 7, following a pre-school year which is now compulsory. Schools follow a national curriculum which has just undergone revisions in 2016 and students are in mixed ability classes. English is introduced as a core subject in grade 3 (at age 9) but, increasingly, primary school students may encounter it as early as grade 2. Another optional language is offered by the time pupils are at secondary level and Swedish, which is an official language in Finland, is compulsory from grade 6.

In contrast to a generation ago, speaking practice is very much to the fore of English lessons and the internet-savvy students of today are motivated to hone their skills in this global language. There are a number of international schools dotted around the country in which English is the language of study, though the teaching combines the national curriculum with, for example, the International Baccalaureate programme. Tuition is free, in nearly all cases.

Further education

With 99.7% of youngsters completing the syllabus of basic education in comprehensive school, the majority of those who go on to upper secondary school will continue with their English studies, and language courses are routinely offered alongside professional training and academic courses. Beyond these vocational colleges and universities, English is widely available to adults looking to improve their general skills. A local community college in the northern city of Oulu offered 16 courses this spring (2017), charging 60 euros for 12 x 90-minute lessons and 20 euros for a similar course for "seniors", underlining the commitment to lifelong learning which Finland champions. Aside from these subsidised programmes and the accreditation students gain in their specialised education, there is also the opportunity to take the IELTS test in Helsinki (250 euros).

English is a key part of business studies but, once in the world of work, language training may be offered to employees if a need is identified within a company or organisation. It is a win-win situation: done during

work time, free to the participant, but of benefit to the organisation. Courses are tailor-made to the student/business, usually by a private language teacher, and are held at the place of work.

Finnish as a foreign language/ Suomi toisena kielenä

Immigrants to Finland are strongly encouraged to learn the language and, consequently, there are numerous courses on offer. The Employment and Economic Development Office has a free, full-time programme which also incorporates work experience for those following an integration plan. The YKI test (national certificate of language proficiency) is central to the application for Finnish citizenship, costing 123 euros to take the required intermediate level. There are many practice tests online and preparation courses for which Brits have shown an increased interest since the EU referendum in June 2016. Language provision for asylum seekers and refugees is viewed as essential and gaining the high school certificate fundamental to their future employment prospects.

Teachers of English

Teacher training courses are popular and difficult to qualify for. Teachers working with grades 1–6 must be qualified to a level of at least Master of Education. Those working with grades 7–9 must have a Master's degree in their subject, as well as high-level qualifications in education. As professionals, teachers enjoy a great deal of autonomy and this training prepares them for it. A non-native would need the equivalent in recognised qualifications to secure a permanent job, and a willingness to learn Finnish to boot.

Gemma Dunn has taught English as a foreign language for over twenty years, initially in the UK (London and Cambridge) before moving to Finland in the year 2000. She and her husband run their own language training company in the hi-tech city of Oulu where they teach in local colleges, businesses and organisations.

Learning English (and German) in Germany

Christoph Link

As with many other European countries, the impression gained from encountering Germans personally or through the media is that the majority have a good level of spoken English. The importance of English for international communication is appreciated by Germany, especially for business purposes.

English in schools

German children start primary school at the age of 7 and English is taught in the primary curriculum. English is a core subject in secondary schools, which means it is compulsory up to the final exams regardless of the type of school you attend. The structure of the school system varies between states and education is federally governed. Thus some states have a three tiered system with a vocational strand (Hauptschule) a more academic strand (Realschule) and a completely academic oriented strand (Gymnasium). In other states the three are integrated into a comprehensive system, but one which is streamed (Gesamtshcule). Obviously the content of the English curriculum will vary in each school type, with a more functional approach being taken in the vocational schools. Nevertheless, learning English with an equal emphasis on spoken and written form, is central to the educational provision across the country.

Further education

The main vehicle for further education is the Volkshochschule (VHS), a state funded provider, again organised separately by each state. English is a popular subject in all VHS providers and courses are attended mainly by adults who are no longer in compulsory education. The offer will normally depend on demand and the larger cities will have a more extensive provision of a range of levels and times. The levels are always linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and many VHS courses lead to accreditation, usually the Cambridge ESOL examinations. Courses are self funded, but subsidised. An example from the Munich VHS shows that an 18 hour beginner course costs 100 euros. Participants are encouraged to take a final exam, but this is not linked to funding.

VHS providers offer specific courses for business English. Many companies, however, employ private language schools to offer bespoke programmes for their employees, usually on the company's premises. These would be free for employees to attend and there is often the incentive that attendance time counts as working hours.

German as a foreign language/ Deutsch als Fremdsprache (DaF)

In parallel to ESOL provision in the UK, the VHS offers a range of courses in German for those who have German as a second language. Language courses can be taken as stand-alone proficiency courses or as part of an "Integration course", which includes both language and information about German culture, politics and society. The aim of the course is to allow participants to pass a language test and a "living in Germany" test, which they will need to apply for citizenship. The courses are free for EU citizens and those who gained residency prior to 1 January 2005. Asylum seekers and those who gained residency after 2005 may apply for funding, but it is not guaranteed.

There are other sources of funding to provide DaF instruction such as ESF funding programmes or specific state projects. An example would be provision at the Berlin VHS funded by the Berlin Senate Department for Labour which currently offers up to 400 hours of German lessons free to refugees and asylum seekers.

Teachers of English

School teachers follow a nationally prescribed pathway into the profession. Having completed a degree in English, they undertake a two year teacher education programme with a school placement. A non-German English speaker would have to undertake the same training programme to be employed in the state secondary system, though they could apply to the small number of private schools.

In private language schools and VHS providers, it is common for teachers to have qualified within the school system or to have come through the Cambridge ESOL teaching awards route (CELTA and DELTA). Germany has four centres offering the CELTA qualification and two offering DELTA. The qualifications are well regarded by employers. Companies and private language schools often have a policy of only employing teachers with what they perceive to be 'native' or 'near-native' proficiency.

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Learning English in Greece: All the way to the Paper

Anna Vasilokonstantakis

According to the Eurobarometer, Greek students possess the highest percentage among the European students who learn at least one foreign language at school (92%). Although the Greek educational system is ranked last across Europe and the Greek students are not included among the most proficient learners, the results of SurveyLang tests show that the majority of them are at the Independent User level. However, these results are not attributed to English learning within normal schooling alone; 9 out of 10 students attend supplementary language classes proving that private tuition classes and schools loom large in Greece.

Greek diglossia

Throughout the years, Greece and its educational system have been subject to dramatic changes and debates. The trademark of Language Planning and Policy was some years before the Greek Revolution in 1821 when the Greek nation had to deal with the issue of diglossia. The need for a national language promoting the national consciousness, pride and liberation created a debate between traditionalists supporting the uncontaminated classical Greek as the national language and the liberals supporting the spoken, popular language variety. The conservatives advocated the spoken language but 'cleansed' from any admixtures or word loans, creating 'Katharevousa' (deriving from the word 'katharos' meaning 'clean'). Katharevousa was considered the continuum of Ancient Greek and the new European identity of Greeks. Still, although it was the official language used for all documents, it was considered as 'elitist' and unfamiliar to people. Opposing to that, the demoticist movement suggested 'Demotiki' as the national language, i.e. the popular, simplified and spoken variety. This long-lasting debate ended in 1976 when simplified Greek was voted as the official language.

English in state schools

As linguistic debates were a common issue in the Greek educational system, English Language Learning could not escape from this plague. When should be the first year of English instruction in public schools has always been a debate, depending usually on the political party in power. For some years, English was taught from the very first year of Primary school (Dimotiko) while right now English is considered a subject of general education from the third grade of Primary school, taught for 3 hours per week, till the third year of Junior High school (Gymnasium), taught for 2 hours per week. In the first and second year of Junior High school, students are divided into 'beginners' and 'advanced' learners. In High school (Lykeio), students are

given the opportunity to choose between English, German or French as their single foreign language. The Ministry of Education, Research & Religious Affairs that also provides the textbooks, oversees all levels. Still, the hours English is offered in public schools are too few to bring all students to the Intermediate User level based on the CEFR and the 4.000–5.000 guided teaching hours for this achievement. Following this, parents having in mind the necessity of the acquisition of 'The Paper' and that English is urgently needed for international communication and prestige issues, enrol their children in supplementary evening language classes, i.e. Frontistiria.

Private language schools/ Frontistiria

Private Language Institutes are a prosperous business in Greece, being almost exclusively oriented towards preparing students for language certification exams. This financially expensive practice reflects parents' perennial lack of trust towards the quality of foreign language provision in Greek state schools and is a result of their deep-seated belief that foreign language instruction equals foreign language certification. The 'mania' for foreign language certification by Greek parents explains why there are two to three private language schools in every block. Students who can not afford those schools are considered 'foreign-language-illiterate', as the ones who have not any chance of learning English at school and definitely the ones who will never get "The Paper".

Private schools

Greece has one of the highest private school attendance figures in Europe; 6% of students attend private schools mostly due to the perception that the quality of private schools in Greece is superior to state education. Because of the country's economic problems, however, many parents have struggled to keep up with private tuition

fees and have had to consider public schooling for their children. While private schools certainly have more autonomy than their public counterparts, they are still typically supervised by the Ministry and the medium of instruction in most of them is Greek. Still, during the last decade, private schools have begun to offer International Baccalaureate programmes, in which all lessons are taught in English preparing students for international universities, feeding parents' vanity and pride.

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Learning English in Hungary

Gabriella Megyesi and Adel Török

What strikes many who travel to Hungary, an ex-communist country still struggling to catch up with its European neighbours after the 'changes' in 1989, is the number of people *still* not capable of communicating in English on the streets of Budapest. When the traveller goes deeper into the Hungarian countryside, this lack of knowledge of any foreign languages is even more obvious.

Yet, Hungarian children have mandatory English lessons on a weekly, in some cases, on a daily basis, from 4th grade (age 8–9) until the completion of their secondary education (age 16–18). Job advertisements require competency in English in most cases and Hungary has its fair share of international investors and tourists whose language of communication is predominantly English.

Statistical data also shows that the popularity of learning English is increasing and the dominance of the language among language learners cannot be denied. In the 2001–2002 school year 644 thousand Hungarian students of all ages studied English; in the 2009–2010 school year this number increased to 729 thousand (index.hu). This is a significant increase in a country where the population is only about 10 million. The second and third most popular languages are German and French, but neither of these can successfully compete with English.

If there is a demand for English, if it is in the school curriculum, and if it does appear to be popular among students, then what is happening to the teaching, practicing, and mastering of English in Hungary that makes the foreign traveler reach for their Hungarian phrase book each time they want to order a beer?

The Hungarian education system

The Hungarian school system requires children to start school at the age of 6, having attended a three-year-long 'kindergarten.' When entering their first school, pupils have two options: they can join a school that has eight years of primary education, directly followed by four years of secondary education (a 12-grade school), or participate in primary education in one school for eight years, before changing schools and going to a different, secondary-level school for four years. This latter choice is more popular because this way young people can select different types of secondary schools: grammar schools (gimnázium), secondary vocational schools (szakkepzőiskola), and vocational schools (szakmunkásképző). Both grammar schools and secondary vocational schools are four years long, and provide students with the opportunity to complete their studies with a baccalaureate exam at the age of 18. The certificate from this exam is required if a

student wants to carry on with their studies in tertiary education. On the other hand, vocational schools are often shorter, mostly focusing on vocational education with very little emphasis on general subjects. The certificate students receive at the end of their studies does not allow them to proceed to university.

Those students who successfully obtained their baccalaureate certificate have the option to apply for a place in tertiary education. Due to the fairly recent changes in the financing and organization of higher education, the number of students participating in university education is decreasing. At universities, students complete their studies to gain a BA in three years, or continue for an additional two years to receive their Masters.

A recent reform of the education system allows students to stop going to school at the age of 16. This means that many of them, especially students from the minority Romani (cigány) population, do not complete their secondary education and often only acquire the basic literacy skills. However, despite these challenges, the Hungarian education authority recognizes the necessity of teaching a foreign language as a core curriculum subject. So let's have a look at how English is taught at the various levels of the school system.

Teaching English in Hungary

Compulsory language education in Hungary starts in the 4th grade of primary school (age 8–9), although a few children go to kindergartens where there is an opportunity for them to start learning a language, mostly through games and songs. In 4th grade, 'foreign languages' (idegen nyelv) becomes a mandatory subject in school. This foreign language is mainly English, but German, Spanish, and French are becoming increasingly popular as well.

Compulsory language education continues through primary school as well as through secondary school (in all three types of secondary schools) until the students are 18. In those types of secondary schools where students have to take a baccalaureate exam, they also have the option to sit this exam in English 1–2 years earlier, if they have made good progress.

It is mandatory to take a baccalaureate exam in a foreign language and the grades that students receive in English throughout their secondary school years also contribute to the points they are required to collect before they can apply for university. As a result, those students who plan to continue with their studies in tertiary education are generally a lot more motivated to study English than those who do not. Many students plan to continue their university studies abroad, especially the children of wealthy parents, so having solid English skills is essential for them.

In grammar schools and in vocational secondary schools, students have four foreign language lessons a week, while in vocational schools they only have two. Because students know that their future employment prospects grow significantly if they speak English, they often attend classes in secondary schools with an increased number of English lessons.

After the regime change in 1989, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become increasingly popular in grammar and vocational secondary schools. Students study only English during their first year at secondary school, then, from their second year on, they learn certain subjects in English. The most common subjects taught in English are Geography, Biology, History, Physics, and English Civilization (learning about the geography, history, art, and customs of English-speaking countries).

Most English classes in Hungary are taught by Hungarian teachers. While Hungarian teacher training has great traditions (Peter Medgyes, Judit Kormos and several high profile English language educators are from Hungary), recent changes to teacher education along with financial constraints have impacted on the quality of training. Since teaching English comes hand in hand with low salaries, high number of contact hours, and a lot of preparation, the profession does not attract enough talented young people. This, in turn, often makes the everyday experience of learners rather demotivating.

In the 1990s there was a growing number of native English teachers who chose Hungary as their destination, but this trend, unfortunately, did not continue. This is mostly due to the poor pay teachers receive, the increasing living expenses, and the new requirements that were introduced by the Hungarian government regarding teachers' qualifications. Although native speaker teachers receive a tax break for two years, after spending this amount of time in Hungary, they usually move on to other countries.

Another difficulty that makes English teaching in primary and secondary schools challenging is the restrictions on the selection of books that can be used. While in the past schools were able to decide what coursebooks to teach from, after recent changes introduced by the Hungarian Ministry of Education, both primary and secondary schools only have a choice of 5 or 6 coursebooks. Some of these coursebooks do not always reflect the most recent developments in English language teaching methodology,

and are at times written and published by authors and organizations who are not always aware of the current best practices.

In universities students used to be able to study foreign languages regardless of their majors. However, after the educational reforms, language departments of universities were reduced in numbers and sizes, so now only those students who are majoring in a foreign language can use their services.

A requirement that was introduced in Hungarian higher education after 1989 is that students have to pass an intermediate level language exam (in their chosen language) before they could receive their BA. On the one hand, it has encouraged university students to study a foreign language more seriously, but it has also created a large backlog of students who have been unable to master a language to such level. As a result, they end up without a degree. Some universities run courses to help these students 'rescue' their degrees, but it is a real challenge for them to achieve their goals when they often lack even basic knowledge.

Because of the numerous problems that serious learners of English encounter when learning English in primary, or secondary schools, students often have to resort to learning English privately. Lack of regulation allowed a large number of private language schools to operate in the late 80s, 90s and early 2000s. Many of these schools had very low standards and low success rates, coupled with dubious methodologies. The Association of Language Schools was established in 1991 and got a more central role in maintaining the quality control of language teaching more recently.

Current situation

Despite the general theoretical consensus in Hungary that English is necessary for success, many young people do not see the immediate need for its use. They are now in the same situation as their parents were years ago when, instead of English, Russian was a compulsory subject in schools. Although they had lessons almost every day, very few could actually communicate in the language even at a basic level. Those who master English to an advanced level often leave the country and search for jobs elsewhere, mostly in the UK, or in Ireland, where their knowledge can be put to the test right away and can truly help them progress in their careers.

In the meantime, foreign travellers continue to look on puzzled and bewildered as their waitress, their host, the bus or taxi driver, or the person they ask directions from on the streets keeps talking to them in Hungarian, the only language they can use to communicate.

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Learning English in Italy

Sharon Hartle

English is used widely in Italy, as in many other countries worldwide, as a lingua franca. Because of this it is prominent both in the mainline state organised education system as in private schools both of which are regulated by the Ministry for Education as well as private language schools that work as independent businesses. External certification such as the Cambridge ESOL exams, TOEFL and IELTS are well known and recognised both in the education systems and in the workplace, and these exams can be prepared for often both at state schools and at private language schools that deal only with language teaching. The CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) levels are often used as well, to classify levels of competence within educational institutions.

English in schools

Italian children generally first encounter English at the first compulsory stage of their education: primary school which they start at the age of 7. Some primary schools may even prepare children to take young learner exams such as Starters, and then the Middle schools Movers and Flyers (Cambridge ESOL). English is also a core subject in secondary schools (12 – 19 years old), which means it is compulsory up to the final exams regardless of the type of school you attend. The structure of the schools themselves varies from school to school, and following recent reforms individual headteachers have a great deal of autonomy when it comes to selecting extra courses. Many families, however, choose to send their offspring to the private language schools for extra English tuition, and once again the aim is often to obtain certification of the level of competence.

Further education

English is used in some degree courses now as a medium of instruction although this tends to be limited to the more advanced options such as postgraduate courses. Many university courses have a minimum entrance requirement in at least one other European language and a popular choice is English. Universities can accept external certification when it comes to languages, if the examining body is recognised by the Ministry. In addition to this the Italian university language centres were set up in the eighties and nineties to meet general language requirements supplementary to specialized existing faculty courses. The majority of students attending these courses are undergraduates, many studying languages, but also increasingly from other departments as well. At the moment of writing (2017) the most popular levels are CEFR B2/ C1. Despite an increasing percentage of overseas students, students tend to be Italian with an

Italian cultural and linguistic background. It is in the language centre that work on developing linguistic and communicative competence is done and these courses have the opportunity to act as a starting point for learners to explore L2 language and how to use it in today's world.

Teachers of English

School teachers follow a nationally prescribed pathway into the profession. Having completed a degree in English, they may undertake teacher education programmes which at the moment are available according to need, and according to experience. These courses do not, however, lead automatically to work placement.

In private language schools, it is common for teachers to have come through the Cambridge ESOL teaching awards route (CELTA and DELTA).

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Learning English in Latvia

Inta Augustane and Julija Oceretnaja

The role of foreign languages in Latvia

According to the survey carried out by Central Bureau for Statistics in 2013, 85% of the total number of pupils in general schools were learning foreign languages. In primary education (grades 1–6) 73% of pupils were learning foreign languages, in basic education (grades 7–9) – 98%, but in secondary education (grades 10–12) all pupils were learning foreign languages. 51% of the pupils were learning two and more foreign languages. The majority of pupils (97.9%) were learning English.

In 2013, 95% of inhabitants of Latvia aged 25 to 64 knew at least one foreign language. Almost half of adult population, 46%, knew two foreign languages, 36% knew one foreign language, but three and more foreign languages were known by 13% of adults. The majority of adults, 57%, knew Russian, 49% knew English, and 18% of the population knew German.

English in the education system

Considerable investment in the teaching of English is seen as crucial in the education systems of many European and non-European countries. Since English is believed to be the most widely used language of international communication, it is one of the core school subjects within the national curriculum and is taught as the first foreign language in the majority of educational institutions including state and private schools and as a second foreign language in the institutions where French or German is the first language. Moreover, proficiency in the English language is required for continuing into further education and for many types of employment. Apart from studying the language at school, there is also considerable exposure to it in the media, pop culture, public and private life.

English in schools

In Latvia the acquisition of the English language starts in grade one (at the age of 7), however, some pupils get an insight into the language at nursery school. As there is no standardized curriculum regarding the acquisition of the English language at pre-school level, students' knowledge of English differs when they start school. That causes certain difficulties for the teacher when choosing a textbook and setting the requirements.

At the beginning of each academic year teachers prepare a plan which corresponds to learners' levels of knowledge, age group, and their interests. Another crucial aspect of

planning is the number of lessons within a particular institution (the number of English lessons differs in general primary education and secondary education; it varies from 3 to 4 in primary school and 3–5 in secondary school; each lesson is 40 minutes long) and its compliance with the requirements stated in the State Standard for basic and secondary education. The latter emphasizes the acquisition of a foreign language as a means of communication and as part of a foreign culture. Therefore, one of the aims of teaching and learning the English language is to develop learners' communicative, linguistic and socio-cultural competences since communication and cooperation take place in a constantly changing multicultural environment.

It is important to state that schools are free to choose textbooks for teaching English. However, the chosen books (whether published in Latvia or in the UK) must be approved by the Ministry of Education. Teachers are responsible for comparing the content of the chosen textbook with the standards and using appropriate additional materials to cover the missing topics.

Taking a standardized examination in a foreign language is mandatory at the end of grade 9 (standardized test) and 12 (standardized exam). All five skills are tested, which include reading, listening, use of English, writing and speaking. Students are allowed to choose whether they would like to take an exam in English, German, French or Russian (students start learning a second foreign language in grade 6). The majority of students opt for English since they have been studying it the longest.

A growing number of high school graduates choose to continue their studies abroad, which means they need to take an international exam in English. 2016 was the first time the formal English language test (IELTS, TOEFL and others) results were recognised as a replacement for the state exam. However, students usually opt for taking both IELTS and the centralized examination as IELTS results are valid for two years only whereas the state issued certificate does not have an expiry date. The tests at the end of year 9 are evaluated by the examination commission of the educational establishment (a board of teachers working for a particular school) whereas the exam in English at the end of year 12 is assessed by reviewers (teachers and lecturers of higher educational establishments) prepared by National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia (NCE). In addition, the State Examination is organized on a national level, so students cannot decide when they want to take the exam. Every year State Examination Schedule is approved by Cabinet of Ministers.

According to the amendments introduced in 2012 to Regulations Regarding the National General Secondary Education Standard and General Secondary Education

Subject Standards, centrally marked examination results are expressed in percentage, which shows a proportion of correct answers scored in points against the maximum points possible in the whole exam or its part. Centralised examination results in foreign languages in addition to percentage scores also contain information on the proficiency levels B1, B2 or C1 which correspond to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). In 2010 NCE initiated a study, which was carried out by the leading educational institution, the University of Latvia (LU), in order to determine whether foreign language exams in Latvia comply with the requirements of the CEFR and can be used to assess school-leavers' language proficiency according to the proficiency levels described in the CEFR. After having conducted a comprehensive study and analysed foreign language tasks and results experts from LU came to the conclusion that the Latvian foreign language exams are capable of providing tasks for the C1, B2 and B1 levels.

The percentage scored in the foreign language exam is expressed in CEFR levels as follows:

Total percentage scored	CEFR level
95–100%	C1
70–94%	B2
40–69%	B1

Foreign language exam scores below 40% are reported as percentage only.

Teachers of English

The main two institutions which prepare teachers of English are the University of Latvia (LU) Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art and Daugavpils University (DU). It takes students four years to get a Bachelor's Degree from LU and two years and a half to get one from DU. Students study core subjects such as general psychology, pedagogical psychology, social psychology, history of education, etc. Special attention is paid to the quality acquisition of the English language and methodology of teaching a foreign language (including lesson modelling and internship). LU also provides its students with such courses as English literature, English speaking countries (geography, history, history of culture), IT in TEFL, an insight into translation.

At the moment there is a change of paradigm in education in Latvia. It is believed that the current traditional approach, which involves separation in teaching subjects with an emphasis on theoretical knowledge, should be replaced with more pragmatic approach focusing on the context of the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, not only should a teacher provide knowledge of his or her study subject, but also facilitate, inspire, link different fields, co-operate with teachers of different subjects, give advice, and so on. Education, especially in elementary

school and primary school, should be directed towards the development of communication skills, student's individuality and intrinsic motivation. This major shift in the policy of education in Latvia will undoubtedly lead to a number of important changes in the preparation of teachers. One of the solutions to ensure quality education for students taking into account the new requirements is preparing teachers who specialise in various subjects. Both major institutions which specialise in teacher training already offer their students the opportunity to get a degree in two subjects. For example, at the beginning of the 3rd semester of studies students of LU need to choose the second specialization from the following: the Teaching of German, Home Economics, IT and Computer Programming, History of Culture, Social Sciences, Primary School, Pre-School. As for DU, students' choice is not so diverse, it is limited to the second foreign language.

Sharing experience and promoting lifelong learning are crucial elements of studies at LU. Therefore, at the end of year 3 LU students have an opportunity to organise and take part in the International Students' Conference, whereas teachers from all over the world can take part in the Professors' Week, which is an annual event organised by LU and which is held at the same time as the Students' Conference.

Sharing experience at an international level leads to learning about other cultures and enables students and teachers to explore new ideas and prospects. Options that might not have occurred to them before stand out as obvious if they realise how other people experience the world. That is why, it is so important to facilitate a deeper global awareness and understanding of other cultures which will help teachers become more competent and confident in teaching their subjects.

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Learning English in the Republic of Macedonia: a 21st century linguistic melting pot

Almina Shashko and Gordana Koteska

A Macedonian saying claims that “without your language you are a nobody and nothing”. People in Macedonia keep this sentiment close to their hearts and souls, and cherish and protect their language as an important part of their identity. There are several national holidays that celebrate those responsible for one of the oldest languages in the world; on these days people around the country celebrate loudly and proudly, sing songs and recite famous words from the brothers, Saints Cyril and Methodius, the teachers and missionaries who gave the Slav people their own alphabet and opened their eyes in the dark world in which they lived.

Not only are Macedonians very proud of their language but they are also very proud to be called a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Living in a society that is rich with different cultures is a huge advantage for the people of Macedonia because that is what helps them acquire different languages so easily. Perhaps that is why foreign languages are very popular in Macedonia. Indeed, there are many of them spoken here. If you walk around any part of the country, you will immediately feel our multi-culturalism and plurilingualism when you hear the various indigenous and other languages. In addition to Macedonian, you will also come across Albanian, Turkish, Vlah, Serbian, Roma and Bosnian being spoken around you. But don't worry if you do not speak those languages! There is no way of getting lost in Macedonia because, as well as these languages, you will also hear English, German, Italian, Spanish et al. Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma and Vlah people have been living together in this part of the world for centuries and, on the whole, they continue to do so fairly peacefully.

Growing up with neighbours from different cultures makes it easy for us to see how different, but at the same time, how basically equal we are as human beings, and how important it is to cherish and to respect both our differences as well as our similarities.

Languages can, and should, help us to communicate with each other in peaceful ways, and people in Macedonia have no problem using different languages, not only because they hear them all around but, in addition, because they can study them at school and university.

Let's consider English as an example. All students start studying English here in nursery school by, for example, using songs and games. Later the English language is a mandatory subject from the first grade of primary school to the 4th year of high school when they graduate. In this way students in Macedonia study English from the age of 5 to the age of 18. Apart from studying it at school, most of the students take private English (as well as French or Italian) classes when they start first grade.

Students also have the option to study in their own language if they are from one of the minority (Albanian and Turkish) linguistic groups in Macedonia. They study in Albanian and Turkish medium state schools and they follow the same curriculum. However, English and Macedonian are mandatory for students in such schools. English is mandatory from the first grade of elementary school (age 5) and Macedonian is mandatory from the fourth grade of elementary school (age 10).

English is so popular in elementary and high schools that many students decide to study it at university as well. They have three options when studying English: studying to become an English teacher, studying to become a translator from their L1 to English and vice versa, and studying Business English. Albanian and Turkish students also have the options to study these courses in their own languages. The university courses last four years. Students can study in state universities or in private universities. English is sometimes a mandatory subject as part of some other university courses as well, such as medical and law studies.

Given the difficult economic situation that our country, along with some other Balkan states, has been going through, migration to different countries has been a huge issue here lately. This has, in fact, increased the interest of people studying languages even more than usual. Many adults have been taking private language classes in order to prepare for their new lives in their chosen country, with the most popular language being German.

Our history, traditions, ethnicities and diversity have made us what we are, and hopefully will continue to be for a long, long, time in the future: a real linguistic melting pot!

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Learning English in Malta

Daniel Xerri

The Maltese archipelago is located in the central part of the Mediterranean Sea. The country is situated around 58 miles south of Sicily and 180 miles north of Libya. Having gained its independence from the British Empire in 1964, the country considers English to be one of the most fundamental aspects of its colonial heritage. English is one of Malta's two official languages, the other being Maltese. Most Maltese people are bilingual from the early stages of their lives. The complexity of the country's linguistic landscape means that individuals make different choices as to which language to speak in which social domain. English is considered to be the second language for the majority of the population (Sciriha & Vassallo, 2006); however, a substantial number of families and individuals describe themselves as first language speakers of English. Besides being vital for the country's citizens, learning English is also valued by migrants and visitors.

Currently, Malta's population amounts to around 434,000 (National Statistics Office, 2017) and it is one of the most densely populated European Union members. Since joining the EU in 2004, Malta has seen a steady increase in the number of migrants choosing to work and live in the country. A number of industries capitalize on the country's English speaking workforce and various international companies have established offices and factories in Malta partly because of this. However, for some migrants both English and Maltese are new foreign languages. While adults may seek to improve their proficiency on the job or else through specialized courses, migrant children benefit from the fact that the learning of the two languages is catered for throughout compulsory education.

Education in Malta is compulsory up to the age of 16 and English is taught on a daily basis from the early years of primary schooling. While certain subjects are taught in English, others are taught in Maltese. In addition, code switching between the two languages is a widespread phenomenon in education in Malta and is used both as a communicative resource and as part of one's identity (Camilleri, 1996). Since a high level of proficiency in English is deemed essential in order for one to operate effectively in different domains, a lot of emphasis is placed on students' mastery of the language. In addition to its importance as the global language, English is considered pivotal because it is used on a daily basis in different sectors of Maltese society.

The prevalence of English in Malta has fostered the growth of the English Language Teaching sector, which is an important source of revenue for the country (Xerri, 2017). This started with the opening of the first language school for foreign students in the 1960s and has now become a significant contributor to the country's tourism industry. For example, in 2017 more than 87,000 students from a wide range of countries visited Malta

to learn English (National Statistics Office, 2018). These amounted to almost 4% of all inbound tourists. The biggest proportion of students who choose to study the language in Malta are aged 15 years or less. They largely opt for General English courses that on average last two to three weeks. The country's 38 licensed language schools employ around 1,200 teachers, more than a third of them aged between 18 and 24. Given that Malta was one of the first countries to regulate its ELT sector, all teachers are obliged to have a teaching permit that is awarded on the basis of a set of minimum requirements. These include holding qualifications in language teaching methodology, language awareness, and English language proficiency. With respect to the latter, applicants for a teaching permit need to attain an operational band in the Spoken English Proficiency Test for Teachers. This test provides evidence that a candidate possesses a satisfactory level of English-for-Teaching.

In Malta, people from diverse backgrounds learn English for a host of different reasons. The country's citizens learn the language because it constitutes part of their national identity, as well as it being an important tool to navigate their social landscape and interact with rest of the world. Migrants in Malta learn English because it provides them with better job opportunities and the possibility to integrate in Maltese society. Short-term visitors attending English courses at one of the country's specialised schools are seeking to enhance their prospects by learning the global language. The learning of English is most likely to continue growing in significance in Malta as its residents and visitors place more value on the individual and social possibilities that a good level of proficiency in the language can provide.

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Learning English in the Netherlands

Jasmijn Bloemert and Tatia Gruenbaum

Primary Education

Like other European countries, the Netherlands is experiencing the global rise in teaching English in primary education. English has been compulsory in the final two years (student age 10–12) of primary school since 1986. However, a rising number of Dutch primary schools are currently opting to introduce English in grade 5 and 6 (student age 8 to 10) or even as early as in grade 1 (student age 4). The introduction of English into the very early stages of the primary curriculum will become mandatory in 2032. Currently 16% of the primary schools in the Netherlands are already offering early English as a Foreign Language learning.

In addition to early English, there is the introduction of bilingual primary education in the Netherlands. Launched as a 5-year pilot project in 2014, 24 Dutch primary schools are at present offering an English/ Dutch bilingual education from grade 1–8. Whereas normally schools may allocate between 30–120 minutes a week to learning English, bilingual primary education supports language learning through immersion and as such 30–50% of class time is dedicated to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and teaching in English.

Secondary education

As of 2014, EFL has become a core subject and is therefore compulsory for all secondary school students (vocational-, general-, and pre-university level). Even though it is not mandatory, most schools use the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) as their guideline. The expected CEFR level for reading skills ranges between A2 (lower vocational) and C1 (pre-university) and is tested in a national end of year exam. For the other skills, students are expected to reach between A1 (lower vocational) and B2 (pre-university) level. For the testing of these skills, the individual schools are responsible.

Similar to the rise of teaching English at primary level, one in five secondary schools in the Netherlands now offers a bilingual education, which usually means that half of the subjects are taught in English. Since students in bilingual education must sit the Dutch final exams, many bilingual schools complement the national Dutch exams with a Cambridge English language exam (e.g. CAE) or the English Language and Literature Certificate from the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme to confirm their students' English proficiency.

Tertiary education

In line with the growing number of bilingual secondary schools, higher education in the Netherlands also finds itself in a period of transition with the current shift towards the greater use of English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI). At universities of applied sciences and research universities alike, individual courses, faculties, and sometimes entire institutions have adopted English as their working language. Over half of the subjects taught at Dutch universities are now offered in English which has had a positive effect on the number of international students studying in the Netherlands.

Academies which offer English-taught degree programmes will require students to have advanced (C1) English skills and might test upon enrolment. However, many academies who run Dutch-taught degree courses now also include English placement tests. Due to the rise of EMI, English might feature within these Dutch degree programmes and so academies hope to support students to reach at least B2 level upon graduation.

Conclusion

The red thread between each of these three levels of Dutch education is the ever increasing exposure to the English language and the teaching of EFL. Despite this increased exposure, there are currently some issues related to the transition from primary to secondary education and from secondary to tertiary education. This is due to the absence of a clear minimum English (CEFR) requirement when moving from one educational level to the next but also due to the varying interpretations of the CEFR values.

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Learning English in Norway

Kim-Daniel Vattøy

Ranked in the World Happiness Report 2017 as the happiest country in the world, Norway has high ambitions for providing an open and inclusive education for all. With the emergence of English as a lingua franca (ELF), English language skills have become increasingly important to enable active participation in society – both in the physical and digital arena. The widespread use of English around the globe has national implications for the learning of English in Norway. English has a high status in Norway, and students are engaged in English language learning both in schools and in their spare-time.

Learning English in schools

In Norway, students attend formal instruction in English from their first year of primary education when children are six years old and throughout the course of 10-year compulsory education. Norwegian compulsory education is divided into two stages: primary school (1–7) and lower secondary school (8–10). Throughout this education, students receive 588 teaching hours of English (teaching hours are here given in 60 minutes).

The English subject has undergone vast changes from its introduction as a voluntary subject in the 1930s to its present-day status as an obligatory subject with many teaching hours. The present English subject curriculum states that English is a world language, which implies that skills in English are vital in the quest of educating active citizens who use English as a tool for communication. The Norwegian national curriculum is inspired by European trends and the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR), particularly with its can-do statements.

Exposure to English in spare-time activities

Norwegian students are highly exposed to English through different media, e.g. film, TV, music, gaming, and social media. Norwegian national TV channels do not dub any of the English media, and new media habits lead Norwegian students to increasingly access English media via for instance YouTube, where the learners need to rely on context to understand the language. Norway does not have any official pronunciation norm, but studies (e.g., Rindal, 2010) have shown that British English is considered more prestigious and is the preferred model, although American English is the dominant pronunciation among Norwegian learners.

English Language Teaching and new requirements

In terms of English language skills, Norwegian students have, in general, higher degrees of receptive skills than productive skills. This has consequences for the teaching of English. Teachers focus on facilitating learning environments where students are active and engaged in their own learning processes. Several national initiatives, e.g. Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Classroom Interaction for Enhanced Student Learning (CIESL) (both funded by the Norwegian Research Council), target classroom interactions and help teachers develop their feedback practices with the aim to raise the quality of instruction.

Recently, Norwegian teacher education has undergone a transformation, and teacher students commencing teacher education in 2017 are admitted into Master's education programmes. The core school subjects in Norwegian education, i.e., Norwegian, English, and Mathematics, have all been imposed new requirements on. Therefore, lower secondary teachers (teaching 13–16-year olds) need a year course of English to remain teaching English (Norwegian Ministry of Education, 2015). Similarly, primary school teachers need a half year of English to teach English to students. These new requirements are a response to a need for raising the quality of instruction in Norwegian, English, and Mathematics.

Changing status of English in Norway

In such a new and changing linguistic setting as is the case of English in Norway, some Norwegian scholars who research English education break the traditional conventions and use the term “English as a Second Language”, whereas other retain the more standard “English as a Foreign Language”. Different usage can be explained in terms of what constitutes a second language or a foreign language. Although Norway is a multilingual

society with bilingual and trilingual speakers, a great proportion of Norwegian students acquire English as their second language. Consequently, in terms of order of acquisition, English will for many Norwegian students be a second language. However, English does not have similar status as in post-colonial countries, such as India, Kenya, or Singapore, neither does English have an official status in Norway. Nevertheless, English as a school subject has received increased attention, and learning English is considered as a vital and life-long skill in Norway.

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Learning English in Poland

Magdalena Jurowicz

Obligatory foreign language education in Poland starts in primary school (at the age of six/seven). The foreign language taught in primary schools doesn't have to be English; it can be any modern language. Most schools opt for English language though. However, there are still schools that teach other languages instead, like German or French. In gymnasium students start to learn two foreign languages, one of them has to be English. Therefore, compulsory English language education doesn't start until the age of 12/13.

The educational system in Poland is divided into the following stages:

Kindergarten

(for children aged 3 – 5/6 years of age)

Although not compulsory, most kindergartens provide English lessons for their pupils. Three and four year olds benefit from two 15 minute lessons of English language a week while five and six year olds benefit from one 60 minute lesson a week. The lessons in kindergarten are based mainly on the total physical response (TPR) approach.

Primary School

(for children aged 6/7 – 11/12 years of age)

At this stage children learn two hours of English language a week, providing that the foreign language taught at school is English. Learning is based on books and by the end of this stage students are expected to achieve level CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) A1.

Gymnasium

(for children aged 12/13 – 15–16 years of age)

At this stage learners are required to learn two foreign languages. The first foreign language is taught for three hours a week, while the second foreign language is taught for two hours a week. One of these two languages must be English. By the end of this stage learners are expected to achieve CEFR A2 level. At the end of gymnasium students take obligatory examinations which include foreign language tests. Students can choose whether they want to take basic or advanced test in chosen foreign language.

Secondary School

(different types, education lasts three or four years depending on the type of school)

At this stage students continue to learn two foreign languages, one of which is English. Depending on the school, students benefit from 2–5 hours of English language lessons a week. By the end of secondary school students also take exams in foreign language (basic or advanced level) and are expected to achieve proficiency that relates to CEFR B1/B2.

Teachers' views

- Although children are divided into smaller groups to make their foreign language learning more beneficial, the groups are not based on learners' language level, but in most cases on the order of the class register
- There is an emphasis on vocabulary and grammar teaching, and a neglect of other skills. Writing is hardly ever taught
- There are few English-speaking native' speakers involved in English teaching.
- Vocabulary is mainly taught by rote
- Teachers use mainly L1 in the classroom
- Teacher talking time greatly outweighs student talking time (STT) at a ratio of approximately 60% to 40%, sometimes even 70% to 30%
- 60–80% of children attends additional English language lessons (in private fee-paying paid language schools or tutorials).

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Learning English (and other languages) in Portugal

Mónica Lourenço and Sandie Mourão

Foreign language education has had a long life in Portuguese schools. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, Latin, French, English, German and Greek were already part of the curriculum. More recently, the range of foreign languages was broadened to include Spanish, and since 2015 Mandarin Chinese has become an option in selected secondary schools. At present, all students learn at least two foreign languages, in alignment with the current European language policy recommendations. English is mandatory for seven years (grades 3 to 9), occupying a prominent role in the curriculum.

Foreign languages in the curriculum

Pre-primary education, although attended by an increasing number of children aged 3 to 5, is still not mandatory. As in most European countries, early English initiatives are common, mainly in the private sector and conducted by peripatetic English staff who often lack training in child development and appropriate methodologies.

Formal compulsory education comprises three sequential cycles of basic education – 1st cycle (grades 1 to 4, ages 6 to 9), 2nd cycle (grades 5 to 6, ages 10 to 11), and 3rd cycle (grades 7 to 9, ages 12 to 14) – and secondary education (grades 10 to 12, ages 15 to 17). Foreign language education (English or French) became compulsory in the 2nd cycle in the education reforms of the late 1980s, and it was also possible, dependent upon school resources, in the 1st cycle. However, in 2012 English became the only foreign language choice in the 2nd cycle, with French, German and Spanish becoming options only upon entry into the 3rd cycle.

Following trends to lower the start of English in schools throughout Europe, in 2005 English became a free extra-curricular subject in the 1st cycle from grade 3 (age 8). A year later, this option was lowered to grade 1 (age 6). English teachers were recruited from a variety of backgrounds, sometimes with little or no training. This, combined with the lack of funding, regulations and an unchanged syllabus upon transition into grade 5 (age 10), lead to learner demotivation and attainment levels dropping at the end of the 2nd cycle. In 2015 English was finally introduced into the 1st cycle as a curriculum subject in grade 3. Curriculum changes were then made to accommodate a smooth transition between cycles and ensure progression.

Currently, English is the main language choice in the 2nd and 3rd cycles with a provision time ranging between 90 minutes and 2 hours per week. At secondary school level a foreign language is mandatory for grades 10 and 11, irrespective of the chosen subject area. Students may take a third new foreign language (Latin, German and, when

available, Greek or Mandarin), or continue studying one of the languages they took before.

In higher education, following the Bologna Process (a series of ministerial agreements between European countries to ensure compatibility in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications), language provision was substantially reduced in undergraduate degrees. However, the internationalisation agenda brought English-medium instruction to the table as a way to attract international students. English taught programmes at Master's and PhD level are therefore becoming more common, despite controversy generated by the (surprising) lack of English proficiency of both Portuguese students and academics.

English teacher education

Until the recent changes in the English curriculum, there were two routes to becoming an English teacher: to obtain a degree in English for education at a university and teach English in 3rd cycle or secondary education, or to obtain a degree in basic education at a polytechnic institute with a specialisation in English for 2nd cycle. With the inclusion of English as a curricular subject in the 1st cycle, a three-semester Master's degree, which includes a teaching practicum, can be taken by graduates with CEFR C1 English (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Innovative approaches

In addition to the formal teaching of English, other language learning approaches are being used in some Portuguese schools. In 2011, together with the British Council, the Portuguese Ministry of Education piloted a Bilingual Schools Programme aimed at teaching part of the curriculum of the 1st cycle in English, with the support of assistant English teachers. In 2015 and 2016 new bilingual programmes were set forth, this time involving schools from pre-primary and the 2nd cycle.

Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) projects using English as a learning vehicle have also been developed in the last decade through partnerships between schools and higher education institutions. One of these projects, English Plus, started as a school-led initiative in 2010 and has since then involved English, History and Science teachers from two state-run schools in Northern Portugal and nearly 300 students from the 3rd cycle.

Other innovations include Awakening to Languages (AtL), a plurilingual approach which promotes contact with a variety of languages and cultures that may or may not be part of the school curriculum. Since 2000 AtL projects have been developed in pre-primary and 1st cycle schools by student teachers and postgraduate students from the University of Aveiro. Still, despite the positive effects of these three innovative approaches, they remain locally and narrowly circumscribed, lacking adequate government support and teacher preparation.

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Learning English in Serbia

Milana Papić

Being the lingua franca of today, English is the most used and learnt foreign language in Serbia. It permeates all aspects of life, social, cultural and business, and it is becoming more and more challenging to imagine successful individuals without confident knowledge of English.

The Serbian school system

The Serbian school system has three levels, primary school, secondary school and higher education. Children start primary school at the age of 7, or possibly 6 if the conditions have been met. Prior to starting primary school, it is obligatory for children to attend preschool education for four hours for at least nine months in a preschool institution. Primary school lasts for eight years, and it is divided into lower grades (first to fourth grade) and higher grades (fifth to eighth grade). At the end of primary school, students are obliged to take a test called Matura (a test in Serbian, maths and a combined test in biology, chemistry, geography, physics and history). Even though it is not compulsory, nearly all students enroll in a secondary school. There are three types of secondary schools: gymnasiums (gimnazije) which offer the most academic education and last for four years, vocational schools (stručne škole) that last for four years and offer specialized education in a certain field and vocational/crafts schools that last for three years. If a student has completed their four-year secondary education they are eligible to take an entrance test to enroll in a university or a college.

English in the Serbian school system

Throughout primary, secondary and tertiary education it is compulsory for students to learn at least one foreign language. English is predominantly taught at all levels. As of 2005, students in Serbia start learning their first foreign language, namely English, in the first grade while they start learning the second foreign language in the fifth grade of primary school. Since curriculum is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the objective is for students to reach level A2 in English by the end of eighth grade. Depending on the type of secondary school, students are expected to reach different levels of competence in English. For example, students are expected to reach levels B1+ to B2+ by the end of gymnasium education. During tertiary education, students usually take either general English courses or more commonly, courses of English for specific purposes.

As the Serbian school system has been facing numerous problems, many students fail to reach the expected level of knowledge in English. Reasons for this vary from objective ones, such as large numbers of students in

classes, insufficient numbers of hours, poorly equipped classrooms, to subjective ones, like lack of motivation. Even though the communicative approach has been the prescribed norm of teaching foreign languages in Serbia, due to the aforementioned reasons, teachers are not always able to comply with its standards and norms. That is why, in numerous cases, the stress has been placed on learning grammatical rules, rather than its usage in real-life communication.

Private language schools

Due either to failed expectations, or gloomy predictions about their children's mastery of the English language, parents have been increasingly opting for enrolling their children into private language schools. Following Serbia's commencement of the process of EU integration in 2000, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of private language schools as well as private language tutors. Unfortunately, there are no legal regulations that prescribe the criteria for this activity. Thus, many clients of various private language schools get disappointed when they realize that the goals they set out to achieve are not or cannot be reached. This unfair competition causes a decrease in the number of clients in private language schools that are compliant with European standards of language teaching where the course prices are higher and results are not unrealistically promised.

Reasons for learning English

Reasons for learning English and acquiring one of the internationally accepted certificates, such as Cambridge FCE, CAE, CPE, TOEFL or IELTS, vary from social to academic and business. Ever since Serbia's borders were opened and many foreign companies entered, the demand for English knowledge has skyrocketed. English represents a prerequisite for any higher position in a company that is either owned by or does business with foreign entities. In addition, many students decide either to start or complete their studies on one of foreign universities or, less frequently, secondary schools abroad. A major problem that Serbia has been facing is the emigration of its citizens. Many people take up learning English for the purposes of finding a job abroad. For the same reason, the demand

for German, especially amongst medical workers, has increased in the previous few years.

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Learning English in Spain

Cristi Gonzalez

The level of spoken English in Spain varies considerably according to age groups and profession types. Most young adults and middle aged professionals, especially in the Tourism and Business industries, have a good level of spoken English and are able to communicate effectively. This is down to the fact that English has become an important school subject studied by all in the last 15 to 20 years.

English in schools

Schooling in Spain is state funded and is compulsory between the ages of six years and sixteen. Once the required schooling is finished, a student can then opt to continue on to high school (bachillerato) or move on to a vocational school (formacion profesional). Only those who finish high school can be admitted to a university.

There are three categories of Spanish schools in the Spanish education system: public schools (colegios públicos), state-funded private schools (colegios concertados) and private schools (colegios privados). Since some private schools are publicly funded the line between public and private is blurred.

The structure of the Spanish Education System follows the Fundamental Law of Education, known as LOE in Spain. English is taught in the primary curriculum from the start. English is also a core subject in secondary schools. It is compulsory to study a foreign language although a specific one is not identified as this will depend on the availability of the school. Approximately 91% of students choose to learn English.

The content of the English curriculum is identical throughout the school system where all four skills are developed. It is worth noting though, that in most schools there is a stronger focus on reading and writing within a functional/grammatical approach. This is one of the reasons why the majority of parents pay for their children to have private tuition in English alongside the school curriculum. A more academic approach, however, will be taken at high school and university for degrees in humanities and one more focussed on communication for science degrees.

English for adults

Adults who are no longer in compulsory education can continue to learn English. Firstly as part of their studies, while attending Formacion Profesional where English is a popular subject and is an integral part of most vocational qualifications.

Secondly, and very popular, is to attend the government funded language schools, Escuela Oficial de Idiomas. At these schools levels of English studied are always linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and many courses lead to accreditation, usually the Cambridge ESOL examinations. Courses are self-funded, but subsidised. Participants are encouraged to take a final exam, but this is not linked to funding.

Thirdly, many companies employ private language schools to offer bespoke programmes for their employees, usually on the company's premises. These would be free for employees to attend and there is often the incentive that attendance time counts as working hours.

Another option is to attend private language schools where courses are self-funded and participants are encouraged to take a final exam.

Teachers of English

Primary school teachers follow a nationally prescribed pathway into the profession. Having completed a degree in teaching (Magisterio), they will specialise in English and will undertake a programme of practical pedagogy within a school placement.

Secondary school and high school teachers also follow a nationally prescribed pathway into the profession. However they complete a degree in English (Filologia Inglesa) and will also undertake a programme of practical pedagogy (CAP) within a school placement and/or an MA in Teaching (Master de Profesorado de Ingles).

In private language schools it is common for teachers to have qualified within the school system or to have come through the Cambridge ESOL teaching awards route (CELTA and DELTA). The qualifications are well regarded by employers. Companies and private language schools often have a policy of only employing teachers with 'native' or 'near-native' proficiency.

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Learning English in Sweden

Malena Sager

The Swedish school system

The Swedish school system is comprised of nine mandatory years of schooling. It is divided into three stages; lower school (years 1–3), middle school (years 4–6) and high school (years 7–9). In year 9, in order to study further students take their national exams and are required to pass the core subjects, namely: Swedish, English, and Maths. If students are predicted not to pass in these subjects, they are entitled by law to extra help so as to ensure a pass.

After year 9 students have the option to go to college (gymnasie). Here, they can choose different courses depending on their interests and future plans for university. The core subjects remain as aforementioned. The level and difficulty of the course depends on whether the course is either academic or vocational. National exams are held at gymnasie level and students are again required to pass the three core subjects. Should students fail any of these subject, they are required to retake the course to be able to graduate.

The public school system

Due to the strong emphasis on English in the public schools, English centres and private courses such as the IELTS and TOEFL are quite uncommon. Unlike the U.K, the private school system has not been encouraged by the government and at the moment, homeschooling is not allowed. This, along with a long history of socialist governments have contributed to a strong public school system and private schools have increased in number within the last ten years. Among them are International English Schools and the International Baccalaureate programme.

Current challenges

The PISA results of Swedish students have steadily been dropping for the past 20 years. In the 90's the government implemented a number of school reforms, giving increased powers to local councils to carry out educational policies and divide and allocate resources. This is thought to be one of the pivotal, major reasons why the results have been declining. Teachers have lost control and authority in the classroom as class sizes grow. The more affluent areas have better results as parents are often better educated and more resources are spent on the schools.

According to the school law across Sweden, all students have the right to an equal education no matter what your socioeconomic status is. This is not always the case; schools are very different depending on parents' background and economic status. PISA results indicate that schools in 'richer' neighbourhoods are doing better than those in less affluent locations. The government schools commission recently recommended that students will enter a lottery system for the opportunity to study at the best schools, to ensure a more equal balance of student placement distribution to schools and to safeguard that schools reflect a developing multicultural society.

It is estimated that 60,000 qualified teacher posts will be unfilled by 2019. Many universities are now implementing programmes to help unqualified teachers complete their education and to assist new citizens who have been educated abroad to expedite their Swedish equivalency teacher qualifications.

In 2015, the educational system – and by extension teachers, was faced with the challenge of absorbing a sudden influx of thousands of people fleeing war and poverty. Many arriving were and are young people without their families. This in itself causes a big strain on the social services which have to make sure that the young asylum seekers are living in safe social housing or foster families. Many of these vulnerable young people are not only missing their families, they have to now adapt to this new and strange society with its alien language. Working in the background are the cogs of the uncertain asylum-seeking process. As has been documented, a number of "refugee homes" have been set alight by right wing extremists along with a simmering resentment in some quarters of society stoked by the usual culprits.

Thankfully this has little traction in broader society, however, in all of this we find the teacher. It is the teacher who has to both mediate and deal with a growing number of challenges in the classroom. The newly arrived students, some of whom have very little schooling or big gaps of knowledge in their learning experience add, at times, a complex dynamic to the classrooms. One cannot fail to factor in the social and emotional difficulties these students are also coping with. Teachers find it challenging not having the time or resources to help students who need it the most.

Recent upswing in Pisa results (2016)

After many years, Swedish students' results have actually risen. At the moment school authorities are analyzing why this might be and what the schools and teachers are doing to get this result. The best recovery has been in

reading comprehension, low achieving students had the best results. In mathematics both low and high achieving students have improved. The newly arrived students have contributed some to the negative results, but the data shows that their results have also improved more and at a faster rate than natural born citizens. The minister of education said that this is “a victory for principals, teachers, and students”.

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Learning English in Turkey

Banu Inan-Karagul and Dogan Yuksel

In Turkey, the necessity of learning a language has always been acknowledged since the time of the Ottoman Empire, even though different foreign languages were popular at different periods of time. There is even a Turkish proverb which says 'One who speaks one language is one person, but one who speaks two languages is two people'. Since learning English is valued by Turkish people in general, English courses are included in all the stages of the Turkish education system.

English in schools in Turkey

According to the constitution of the Republic of Turkey, everyone has the equal right to benefit from the education supplied by the government and supervised and controlled by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (TMNE). Twelve years of education is compulsory for both boys and girls and they start school at the age of five and a half. In every stage of education, English courses hold a special place as people are aware of the importance of learning a language other than their mother tongue. As stated in the new English curriculum, which has just been updated, English language education program focuses on developing the language skills and proficiency in general. The new program strictly follows the principles and descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEFR).

Children start learning English when they are grade 2 students in state primary schools (around the age of 7 or 8). In the first stage of their education, when students are 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders, English is taught for two hours a week, when they are 5th and 6th graders, it is three hours a week. Between 7th grade and 12th grade, English is taught for four hours a week. In some schools, a preparatory year including 24 English course hours is offered to students when they start their fifth year in the primary school and in the following four years, English is taught for four hours a week. In the first four grades of primary school (grade 2, 3, and 4), English courses are skills-based, focusing mainly on listening and speaking skills. As the curriculum emphasizes language use in an authentic communicative environment, the aim of the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum is to allow learners to experience English as a means of communication rather than focusing on the language as a topic of study (ELT Program of TMNE, 2017).

In addition to English, some other foreign languages, too, are offered to students as electives such as German, French, Russian, Japanese, Arabic, between the 5th grade and the 12th grade.

English in Tertiary Education

In Turkey, in many of the prestigious universities, the medium of instruction is English. In these schools, most of the lecturers are the ones who obtained their MA and PhD degrees abroad; therefore, these schools are able to offer a lot of courses to their international students. In these schools, a preparatory program, which consists of 20–24 English course hours, enables students to gain the necessary skills to help them continue their studies in their departments with ease. This preparatory program is provided to the students of these universities by the Turkish government free of charge. In the other universities and vocational schools where the medium of instruction is Turkish, there are also compulsory English courses as well as the academic courses and courses providing professional training.

Teachers of English

ELT departments at universities are responsible for the training of teachers of English in Turkey. When students are admitted to their programs of study after passing the university entrance exam, they take a placement test which will determine their level of different skills (e.g., reading, writing, listening and speaking) in English. If they are successful in this placement test, they automatically start their university education from the first year as a freshman. If they cannot pass the test, they attend a one-year intensive English preparatory program which will prepare them for their departmental courses. When students graduate from the ELT departments of universities, they have to take another exam which will test their level of English level and their academic knowledge. A University diploma is enough to be able to teach English at primary and secondary school level. In order to become lecturers in the English departments of universities, people have to have a PhD in TESOL or other related fields such as English Literature or Linguistics.

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