

## ***English Language – an Essential Tool for Easily Accessing Knowledge and Better Integrating Within a Rapid Changing Labour Market in the Present Day Romanian Socio –Economic and Cultural Context***

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**Abstract:** *The English language has become nowadays the dominant language at the international level in all the fields of activity: communications, sciences, business, aviation, tourism, media and diplomatic life. Possessing the necessary skills enabling individuals to build up linguistic competence at the level of all the employees may create a significant impact upon business operations. In this world facing permanent and rapid changes, promoting partnerships, building up associations, making mergers and acquisitions within a territory and beyond its borders, all these are imposing the use of English language as an essential conditions for the good run of any kind of social, economic and cultural activity.*

*Researches from all over the world shows that cross-border business communication is most often conducted in English. Its importance in the global market therefore cannot be understated, learning English really can change an individual's life. Speaking a foreign language will also help people expand their cultural horizons and consequently the knowledge horizon.*

*Taking into consideration the above mentioned global directions we intended to present, by analyzing several studies and surveys, the interest of the Romanian people to acquire English language skills in order to be able to easily integrate in a more and more challenging socio-economic and cultural context imposed by a global market.*

**Keywords:** *English language, linguistic competence, English language skills, global market.*

### **Introduction**

Learning a foreign language is an advantage for any individual personal development and for a successful career. Purely circumstantial reasons that occurred during the evolution of economic, social and technical society have determined to accept English language as the language of globalization. The reasons that have led to the imposition of English are numerous. Among them are: the rapid development of information technology and banking domain that has been achieved especially in the US space that speaks English. This has meant that those who wanted to have access to information and scientific research have to study English language. At the same time, business partners had to accept negotiations in English.

It has become increasingly important the use of English languages in international linguistic context and in an increasingly competitive business environment as source of information and communication in order to tailor accessibility to a broad categories of staff. English may not be the most spoken language in the world, but it is the official language in a large number of countries. It is estimated that the number of people in the world that use in English to communicate on a regular basis is 2 billion. According to a survey, conducted by Eurostat in 2014, "English is the native language for most residents of Australia, Canada, the Commonwealth Caribbean, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom and United States of America (also known as "Anglo-sphere"). It is a language used extensively as a second language or as an official language throughout the world, especially in Commonwealth countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and South Africa, and many international organizations" [1]. According to the same source, over 380 million people speak English as their mother tongue. English today is probably the third largest language by number of native speakers, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. In addition English is the secondary official language in 54 other countries, including the Bahamas, Barbados, Fiji, Kenya, Namibia and Sierra Leone.

Researches show that in Europe, most students are studying English language since primary school. On the occasion of the European Day of Languages, celebrated each year on September 26, Eurostat

published a report showing that 20% of people in Europe speak fluent English, 35% possess a solid knowledge of English language and 45% of the population uses it at a satisfactory level. Eurostat report shows that 83% of children in primary and secondary education learn English as a second language, and the percentage increases to 94% for pupils and students.

### **1. The Importance of Studying English Language in Romania**

The same Eurostat survey shows that the main foreign language spoken in our country is English. But statistics show that only 17% of Romanians say that they speak English very well, 32% good and 52% satisfactory. This statistics demonstrates that the fewer adults who know a foreign language among European Union countries are found in Romania, where only 4.9% of people aged between 25 and 64 years possess a "solid" mastery of English, compared to the EU average of 15.9%.

Nowadays English is included as a second language in the Romanian school syllabus and children start learning English at a young age. At the same time, in the last years though, according to the same statistics published by Eurostat, the percentage of Romanian students who are studying English in higher education cycles increased from 92.9% in 2004 to 99.2% by the end of 2013.

In Romania, as anywhere else in the world, the English language was and is employed as a tool in order to accelerate the synchronization with the global economy. The widespread use of the English language in our country was determined, therefore, by a number of economic issues resulting from the liberalization of the economy. In Romania, in the last ten years in the production and trade sectors there has appeared the implantation of "multinationals" or foreign firms. So many recruitment offers are developed in English and in very many cases, the interviews for hiring certain categories of staff are sustained in English. Here comes the necessity to study English and get the competences enabling the individuals to communicate at different levels of discussions.

Although learning English can be challenging and time consuming, we can see that it is also very valuable to learn and can create many opportunities. Learning English can change your life because:

- English is the dominant business language and it has become almost a necessity for people to speak English if they are to enter a global workforce.
- Many of the world's top films, books and music are published and produced in English, therefore by learning English you will have access to a great wealth of entertainment and will be able to have a greater cultural understanding.
- Most of the content produced on the Internet (50%) is in English. So knowing English will allow you access to an incredible amount of information which may not be otherwise available.
- Half of the world's scientific journals are written in English, three quarters of the world's mail is written in English and three fifth of the radio stations of the world beam their messages in the English language.
- English is rapidly becoming a global language in academia. At least 1,700 universities in countries with another host language offer bachelor and master's degree programs in English.

### **2. English language and the Business Culture**

As already mentioned before, English language is the most important factor in getting a business perspective and a business culture. In a competitive business environment one needs to be sure that his/her business is reaching its full potential. While there is no magic fix for unlocking business potential, did you know that building the language, literacy and numeric skills of employees can have a significant impact on business operations? English language and especially business English helps the learner to better integrate into a business environment [2]. Many disciplines must be studied together in order to understand how the mechanisms of the business environment can be mastered.

In this changing world individual people carry on getting up and going to work and doing the best they can for themselves and for their families. For working people the challenge remains to manage diversity and change simultaneously. The European Union will continue to foster partnerships and joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, within the territory and across borders.

In order to create a business culture at a global level implies several stages and several intervals. At the executive stage, there may be the need to create a strategy to develop a business culture

appropriate to the overall objectives. English language is therefore an acceptable background for international business transactions being often called the business community language, and it is not surprising when one considers that half of the world's scientific journals are written in English, three quarters of the world's e-mails are written in English and most of the radio stations in the world send messages in English.

### **3. Performance Objectives for English Language Learners**

One of the main goals of English language learners is the emphasis on performance. The priority is to be able to understand and get the message across, and for the majority of English language learners many of the refinements of language are quite simply not relevant. What the majority of English learners need to acquire could be broadly summarized as follows:

- Confidence and fluency in speaking
- Skills for organizing and structuring information
- Sufficient language accuracy to be able to communicate ideas without ambiguity and without stress for the listener
- Strategies for following the main points of fast, complex, and imperfect speech
- Strategies for clarifying and checking unclear information
- Speed of reaction to the utterances of others
- Clear pronunciation and delivery
- An awareness of appropriate language and behaviour for the cultures and situations in which they operate.

Some learners may also need to develop practical reading and writing skills.

In Business English, these performance criteria need to be seen in the context of specific business situations which the learner will be involved in. If the requirements of a typical job are analyzed, it can be seen, for example, that the learner has to attend meetings which are carried out in English and that he or she has to follow what is going on and be able to make a contribution [3], [4].

### **4. The Importance of English Language Competences at the Level of Bacau Town Community**

We wanted to know the degree of interest of the population in this geographical area about possessing English language skills. The method used by us in gathering information was a questionnaire based survey applied upon a sample of one hundred twenty people, aged between 20 and 45 years, having different levels of education, all living and working in Bacau town, a town located in the north –east region of Romania. We have intended it in order to find out how important is for the Romanian population the practice of the English language within the present day international context.

*The overall aim* of the present research was to identify how important English language can be for the personal development of individuals in Bacau town, Romania, a country definitely integrated within the European level and developing economic and political international policies.

*The specific objectives* of the research are:

1. Determining the level of awareness of individuals for the study of English language;
2. Identifying the skills and abilities of practising English language;
3. Determining of the main reasons for further studying English language;
4. Identifying resources to develop English language communication skills and abilities;
5. Presenting an overall vision on possessing a good command of English language.

We asked all the interviewees the same questions. First we asked what are the most important resources for studying English; then if they are trying to improve their English language competences. Next, we asked if English knowledge can have an impact on people's lives in the sense of a job or a career. After that we wanted to know if a good command of English in a second language situation is the passport to social and economic advancement, and if the successful user of the appropriate variety of English identifies himself/herself as a successful, integrated member of that language community. Finally we asked them to consider their level of English language practice taking into consideration the scale of the Association of Language Testers of Europe (ALTE).

We found that 81.8% of respondents selected school as a primary resource in training for the English language knowledge, 6% of respondents said that library is the main resource in English training, 5.7% uses the Internet as a resource of studying English, 2.7% of respondents participated in conferences on career development opportunities, 1.8% at networking events.

It is true that many studies argue that education facilitates success by offering knowledge. Although most responses indicated the school as the main resource in their training however, it is known that the education offered by the education system in Romania follows a still conservative way of teaching knowledge in the field of foreign languages.

Even if you study English at a language school it does not mean you can not learn outside of class, and most people agreed with the idea. Using as many different sources, methods and tools as possible, will allow you to learn faster. There are many different ways you can improve your English, so one should not limit to only one or two. The internet is a fantastic resource for virtually anything, but for the language learner it is perfect is a statement which a great segment of the participants at the interview offered.

We also find out that 80 % of the respondents are aware of the fact that English is the dominant business language and it has become almost a necessity for people to speak English if they are to enter a global workforce, and this can change one's life. 10 % of the questioned people think it is necessary to possess English language competence only if you work for a multinational company and 10% did not answer.

75.5% of the interviewed people said that Knowing English increases your chances of getting a good job in a multinational company within your home country or of finding work abroad. 5.5% of the respondents consider themselves too old to be able to improve their knowledge in the field of foreign languages. But as English is also the language of the Internet and many websites are written in English 19 % of questioned people are ready to continue studying English in order to be able to get the necessary information in order to solve day to day activities.

In a second language situation, English is the language of the mass media: newspapers, radio and television are largely media. English is also the language of official institutions—of law courts, local and central government—and of education. It is also the language of large commercial and industrial organizations and 87% people agreed with the fact that English language competences can be the passport to social and economic advancement. 11% of the respondents do not want to change anything in their lives because they are satisfied with their current situation and 2% of the people do not know the answer.

Most of the subjects of the research were very modest when assessing their level of English according to ALTE. Thus, 55.5% mentioned B2 level; 12% C2 level, 11% C1 level; 11.5% A2 level and 10% A1. As we can notice a great number of the people in the studied sample possess English language competences in order to give them the opportunity to be competitive into a continuous changing labour force market. Level B2 give one the chance to make notes in English while someone is talking or it gives the chance to write a letter or a report including non-standard questions. At level C2 one can write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression or accuracy.

### **Conclusions**

Concluding we can state that the statistical figures show a Bacau town population that is aware of the fact that there is a strong relation between language skills, cultural competence and exporting performance. Their interest in acquiring English language competences is increasingly high. Most of them consider that in contemporary business environment foreign language skills are prerequisite for success of young business people and their companies. They are also aware of the fact that every professional, from scientists to engineers, to nurses, to businessmen etc, function in a global market. Much information is needed and gathering it relies on primary sources published in other languages, attending international conferences, and often finding they are interacting across national, cultural, and linguistic borders.

Both young professionals and the adults know that government and industry often give preference to job applicants who are proficient in one or even more foreign languages. Most of the respondents stated that more and more companies are competing in the global market place, which means there is a growing demand for managers with an international outlook. A larger part of the interviewees consider that graduates with knowledge of foreign countries and their business cultures, that are proficient in foreign languages have a real support for successfully developing their future.

Because learning English is important and people all over the world decide to study it as a second language most of the interviewed people decided to continue learning or improving English language competences.

Further on we do not forget that English is the language of the media industry so if you speak English, you won't need to rely on translations and subtitles anymore to enjoy your favourite books, songs, films and TV shows.

Most people know that English is the language of science, of aviation, computers, diplomacy, and tourism. Knowing English increases an individual's chances of getting a good job in a multinational company within your home country or of finding work abroad.

The better trained the population is the greater the chances are for that region to build up a flourishing future, to rapidly adapt to changes and to face the global market competition. The more people possess English language competences the more competitive they will become.

Knowing English language has become a real necessity within the present day basic competences area. Under these circumstances it is the role of schools and other organizations in the territory to cater for the needs of the community and develop new and performing programs for teaching English language.

#### **References**

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