IS ENGLISH ENOUGH? STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH VERSUS OTHER FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Prizmić, Mario

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SENIOR PROJECT

PROF. R. CHARRY

IS ENGLISH ENOUGH?

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH VERSUS OTHER FOREIGN LANGUAGES

MARIO PRIZMIC

RIT CROATIA

DUBROVNIK CAMPUS

DUBROVNIK, 2018

ABSTRACT

Foreign languages are one of the most powerful tools in the business world today. Sorin (2011) also stated the University of Bologna sees the importance of learning foreign languages and that it is very beneficial for students. English is the most outspread language and it is considered as almost native language for many nations, but is English enough? The purpose of this research was to see what are the student's attitudes towards learning English when comparing to other foreign languages. The results showed that junior students are less exposed to communication in foreign languages other than English, while senior students during their Co-op have experienced communication in many other languages. Also there is a gap in the motivation for learning foreign languages between junior and senior students. Junior students have higher motivation that is more beneficial for them while certain percentage of senior students have motivation only because of easy grades or job requirements.

KEY WORDS: multilingualism, importance, attitudes, students, foreign languages, English, education, tourism

INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization in today's world there is a huge need in being able to know more than just a mother tongue. According to Empirica (2017) languages are perceived as one of the major skills in any kind of business today due to language and culture diversity. Languages play very important role and it is not only about knowing a language but learning about the culture of that country. It is perceived that languages are a key to success in the world today in any kind of business.

WHAT IS MULTILIGUALISM?

Being able to effectively speak and communicate in other foreign language except mother tongue is known as multilingualism. Every language differentiates from each other due to different and unique things that make that language special. With being able to communicate more than two it is much easier to avoid any kind of barriers. Empirica (2017) said that knowing a foreign language is a must due to globalization and continent diversity. Also, it needs to be taken into consideration that most of the world languages are situated in Europe. For most of population around the globe English is almost equal as mother tongue and it obvious that knowing more than English has huge advantage. Hagen (1988) said that Confederation of British Industry saw that some companies are enormous leaders while being able to do their work in foreign languages, meaning those companies have huge FL skills. Being said that, it is more than obvious that significant work needs to be invested into learning foreign languages and to acquire skills and opportunities that it offers.

MULTILINGUALISM IN EDUCATION

Taking under consideration that multilingualism plays significant role in business world, it is obvious that enormous number of colleges, private schools and workshops are opening for those who want to acquire new skills and knowledge. Targeted group is mostly young people, better said students who are enrolling colleges or entering into world of tourism.

Sorin (2011) stated that University of Bologna understands the importance of multilingualism, and after finishing their process of education, alumni's will be able to more easily reach targeted objectives and it will be much easier to compete on the market when applying for job.

It is crucial to take early steps in order to be as much fluent. What is it meant by that? Important role is to start learning languages in early ages because brain at those ages is more competent to absorb significant amount of information. But, still knowing this, institutions don't recognize the importance and are dealing with issues connected to learning FL. In text Cross (2015) is said that Australian schools are not introducing learning of foreign languages because around 80% of students are English native speakers and the rest are students that are speaking language other than English and Australian schools don't see the purpose of introducing FL learning in sooner future (Heugh, 2014).

There is another side where according to Sander (2016) in German International School in Hague is said that children who live with parents of higher educational status are more willing to learn two or more languages by their free choice. One of the choices for learning FL is through going into international schools like previously mentioned in Sander (2016) where parents from Netherlands are sending their children to German International School of Hague.

Another way of acquiring knowledge of language is Erasmus program which was introduced to encourage students to go abroad to get in touch with new culture and language and gaining

new experience. In that way students benefit in two ways, first is they are learning language in more professional and formal way, while being outside there is an opportunity for more casual learning of language.

MULTILINGUALISM IN TOURISM SECTOR

When it comes to importance of multilingualism in tourism sector it is perceived as very important factor. Speaking to a customer in their native language can be of a great importance and making them feel like at home (Suhaimi, Abdullah, 2017). Tourism is a huge growing industry and there are guests from all over the world, with being said that, there are more and more language barriers. Due to that employees are being asked to develop their language skills in order to meet the criteria of the guests (Kostic Bobanovic, Grzinic, 2011). And that is the place where the problem occurs. Most of the employees think that English is just enough but when it comes to intercultural diversity there are guests that speak just their native language. But more important is to make a guest satisfied which was stated by Holmqvist et al (2014) that most of the guests who receive a service in language other than their mother tongue are less willing to give a tip. When speaking to guests in other language the whole perception of service for them is going down because it is expected to be professional at that kind of service. For example according to Milakhina (2015) guests who are bilingual like to be greeted in their native language like for example Belgians who speak Dutch.

Milakhina said that guests who don’t speak any language except their native are not a very frequent travelers and that is the potential issue that tourism and educational sector could be faced with, if not introducing learning of foreign languages.

THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN TOURISM SECTOR

According to Ciobanu (2015) today, anywhere around the globe English language is considered as the biggest influencer in any aspect of living. When it comes to tourism sector English has become the larger part of communication between working staff no matter in which country. From research of Ciobanu (2015) it is visible that Romanian and Spanish tourism has significantly fall under the influence of English language and it is visible from words that are most commonly used like booking, check in, overbooking etc.

Since tourism is fastest growing industry today English has become a necessity and that is the main reason why it is used in significant percentages. At first starts of the tourism English was most important point when trying to attract foreign guests. Same thing was stated by Al-Saadi (2015) that English language is of a significant importance when trying to attract foreign guests also as ability of better understanding on demand.

With growth of tourism the expectations went higher. Guests became more demanding and the need for other foreign languages has enormously gone up. Languages like Spanish, Italian, and German became priority for employees. But, still when speaking other languages than English it might be not fluent because there is no significant experience in speaking those languages. That is the time where English steps in and has a sizable advantage; it is much easier for most of employees to resolve conflict or management issue when speaking English.

This research paper will try to measure the gap between the importance of other foreign languages and English, since other foreign languages are considered as equally important, but the question is to what extend they are really used and practiced.

METHOD

The main purpose of this research was to find out what are the attitudes of students towards learning English language in comparison with other foreign languages. The participants were students of RIT Croatia, to be more precise Dubrovnik campus. The survey was distributed to junior and senior students because they have most of experience when it comes to learning foreign languages. There were 100 participants doing this survey.

There were in total 11 questions. First 4 questions were general ones about the importance of learning foreign languages, job promotion and number of languages spoken. 3 out of these 4 questions were measured on 1-5 point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree).

The following question was about level of education when it comes to foreign languages learning at RIT Dubrovnik campus. This question had 3 types of answers (beginner, intermediate I and intermediate II).

Another set of questions was about motivation for learning foreign languages. The question about culture as motive for learning was measured with 1-5 point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree). The other question was about circling 1 out of 5 options about what motivates a student to learn foreign language.

Last two questions were about usage of foreign languages other than English during a Co-op with possible answers (yes or no) and if answer was “yes”, following question was about the most spoken language.

RESULTS

This survey was done in order to find out what are the attitudes of college student learners towards learning English comparing to other foreign languages at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus. Our total sample was composed out of 100 participants. The response rate was 56 senior students and 44 junior year students.

QUESTION ANALYSIS

Survey consisted of 11 questions in total. 2 out of 11 questions were general ones, 4 questions were measured by Likert scale. Question about level of education was measured just by circling one of three possible answers (Beginner, Intermediate I or Intermediate II). Question about motives for learning foreign languages had 5 possible answers (nothing, ability to learn a new culture, personal satisfaction, easy grade or job requirement).

First question was “How many foreign languages do you speak?”. Out of 100 participants 45% answered that they speak 2 foreign languages, 43% answered 3 languages, 9% answered 4 languages and surprisingly only 3% of participants answered that they speak 5 languages. From this question it can be seen that there is not large popularity when it comes to learning languages. In the second question came total turnover when it comes learning foreign languages, “rate the importance of learning foreign languages” 4% of participants said that they disagree, 14% said that they are neutral and there was slight difference between agree (39%) and strongly agree (43%). When it comes to question “English can be advantage when applying for job” students showed little bit of pessimism, 13% of them said that they disagree , 24% remained neutral, and then slight difference between agree (30%) and strongly agree

(33%). In the fourth question “English can result in a job promotion”, 12% said they disagree, 34% was neutral, 30% agreed and a slightly smaller percentage, strongly agree 24%. In the fifth question participants showed optimism and interest, “what is your level of foreign language learning at RIT Croatia”, only 5% of them said that they finished only beginner level, 33% Intermediate I and the largest percentage for highest level of learning Intermediate II 62%. Sixth question was surprising one it can be said. Question was “learning foreign language because culture of that language interested me”. In this question diversity can be seen, 6% of students strongly disagreed with this statement, 19% disagreed, 30% stayed neutral, 27% agreed and only 18% strongly agreed, this interprets that culture is not an important factor when it comes to foreign language learning. Seventh question showed as interesting one, “during your co-op have you used any other foreign language except English?”, 28% said that they didn’t have any contact with other foreign languages other than English and out of 28%, 24% of them were junior students which is very interesting and important fact. 72% of students said “yes” and 53% of them were senior and only 19% of them junior students. Eight question is very interesting one because students were asked what was the most spoken language during their Co-op. The significant difference is visible between Spanish and other languages, Spanish is the most spoken language with 34,7%, then comes Italian 20,8% same as German 20,8%, Russian was mentioned 9,7%, French 8,3%, Turkish 4,16% and last one was Korean with 1,38%. Ninth question was about the motivation for learning a foreign language. 9% of students said that nothing motivates them to learn languages, 14% said that it is a job requirement, 18% easy grade, 24% ability to learn new culture and 35% for personal satisfaction. This survey was completed by 53 female students and 47 male students. 46 of them were juniors and 54 of them were seniors.

DISCUSSION

The research showed that there is a significant gap between junior and senior students when it comes to foreign language learning. The research was done at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus. There were 100 participants in total. The survey proved first thing that what was expected, 99,99% of participants showed interest in learning a foreign language and all of them speak two or more foreign languages. All of the participants said that usage of foreign languages has significant value and importance when it comes to job promotion or application. In order to gain better knowledge of languages most of the students completed Intermediate II level which shows lots of interest and awareness of the importance of learning foreign languages. Learning foreign languages opens variety of opportunities for students which gives them higher motivation when it comes to learning foreign languages. Interesting fact from the research is that junior students slightly more take into consideration learning of foreign languages than senior students, but are less involved into communication on other foreign languages during their Co-op. While senior students in 98% have experienced communication on foreign languages during their Co-op. Speaking about languages, predominant language is Spanish with 34,7% of usage, which is a significant difference in comparison with Italian and German which are sharing second place with 20,8%. Surprising thing is that Russian is at third place with 9,7% compared to other languages that are more "popular". The reason for Spanish language predominance lies in the culture and mentality of people living there.

It is important to mention that junior students learn foreign languages because of personal satisfaction or because of interest into the culture but they don't have any opportunities for using those as it can be seen from the research. Senior participants didn't show significant

interest into learning languages, even though they said it had a significant role in todays' world of business. They learn languages because of easy grades, job requirements or they have no motives at all, but it is visible also that some part of them are strongly interested into learning because of satisfaction or culture.

When all aspects of the research are taken into consideration it could be seen that junior students have slightly higher interest into foreign language learning than the senior ones.

In comparison with article of Cross (2015) about Australian schools not introducing foreign language learning, RIT Croatia can be proud and recognized as an institution whose students are eager and optimistic to learn foreign languages because it provides varieties of languages with highest level of knowledge.

This research can be helpful for college professors to see how they can attract and motivate those students who don't have some motivation or ambition about learning foreign languages. Other thing that can be looked upon is difference between junior and senior students interest of learning foreign languages. RIT Croatia should also think about introducing new languages that are becoming more popular in today's market like Chinese, Korean, and Turkish. Wide selection of foreign languages may attract more students and motivate them in another way.

Also it can be very beneficial for Career Service department to see why junior students when comparing to senior ones in huge percentage haven't had any contact with usage of foreign languages during their Co-op and how that can be fixed.

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APPENDIX

Dear participant,

My name is Mario Prizmic and I am graduate student of RIT Croatia. For my final project I am researching about Attitudes towards learning English VS other foreign languages. I am inviting you to participate in my survey because you meet all the criteria. Survey would not take more 2-3 minutes and it is completely anonymous. Your answers would be only used for my research and will remain confidential. Thank you for taking few minutes of your free time in helping with my data collection.

1. How many foreign languages do you speak?

   _____

2. From scale 1 (strongly disagree)-5(strongly agree) please rate the importance of learning foreign languages.

   1 2 3 4 5

3. Do you think learning foreign languages other than English can be advantage when applying for job? 1(strongly disagree)-5(strongly agree).

   1 2 3 4 5

4. Knowing more languages other than English can result in job promotion. 1(strongly disagree)-5(strongly agree).

1 2 3 4 5

5. What is your level of foreign language learning at RIT Croatia?

   Beginner Intermediate I Intermediate II

6. I have started learning foreign language because culture of that language interested me. 1(strongly disagree)-5(strongly agree).

   1 2 3 4 5

7. During your Co-op have you used any other foreign language except English?

   Yes No

8. If yes, what was the most spoken language?

   _____

9. What motivates you to learn foreign languages?

   a) Nothing

   b) Ability to learn about new culture

   c) Personal satisfaction

   d) Parents

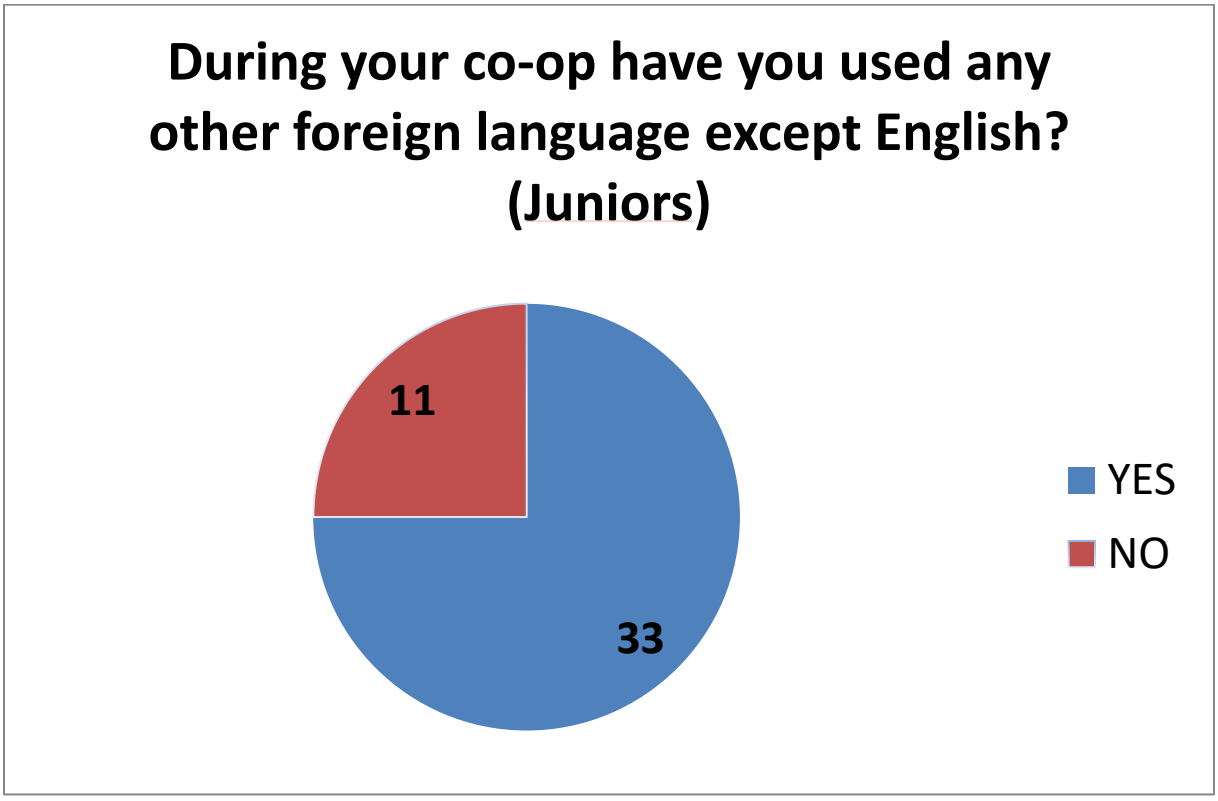
   e) Job requirement

10. What is your gender?
a) Male
b) Female
c) Other

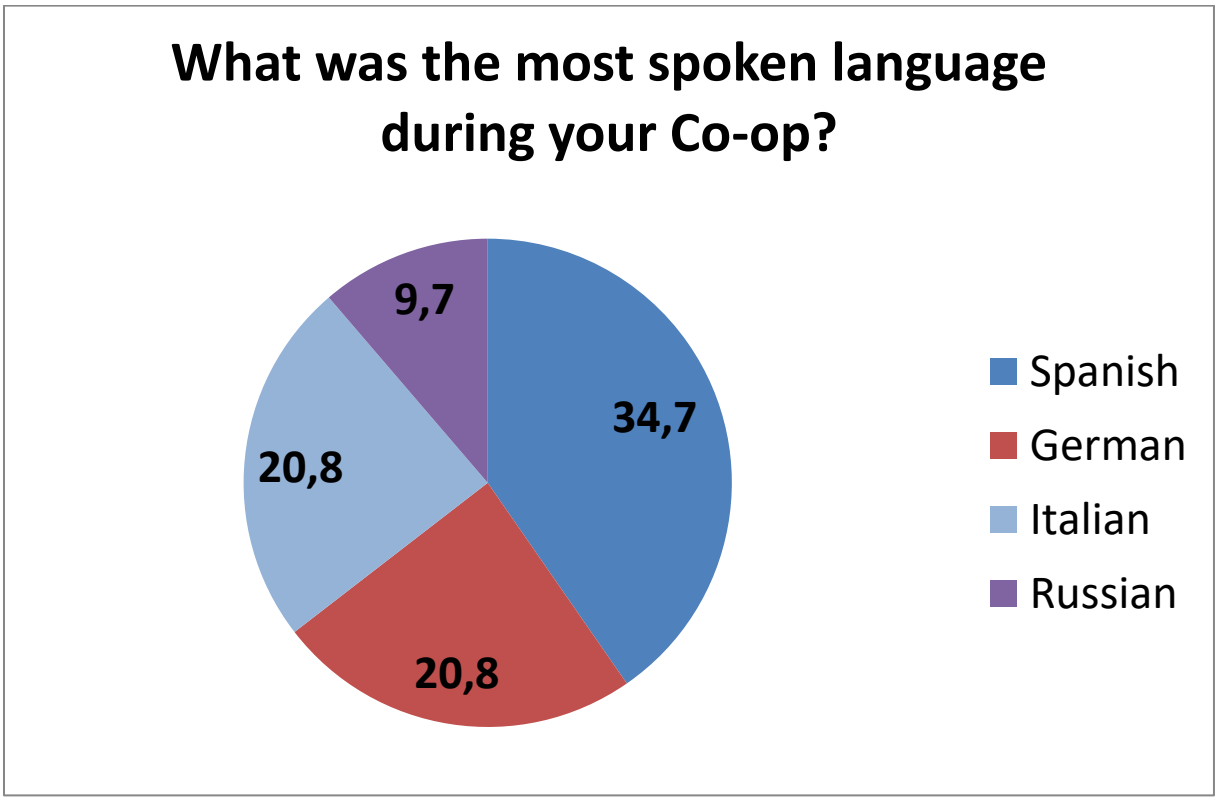
11. Your level of education:

Junior Senior

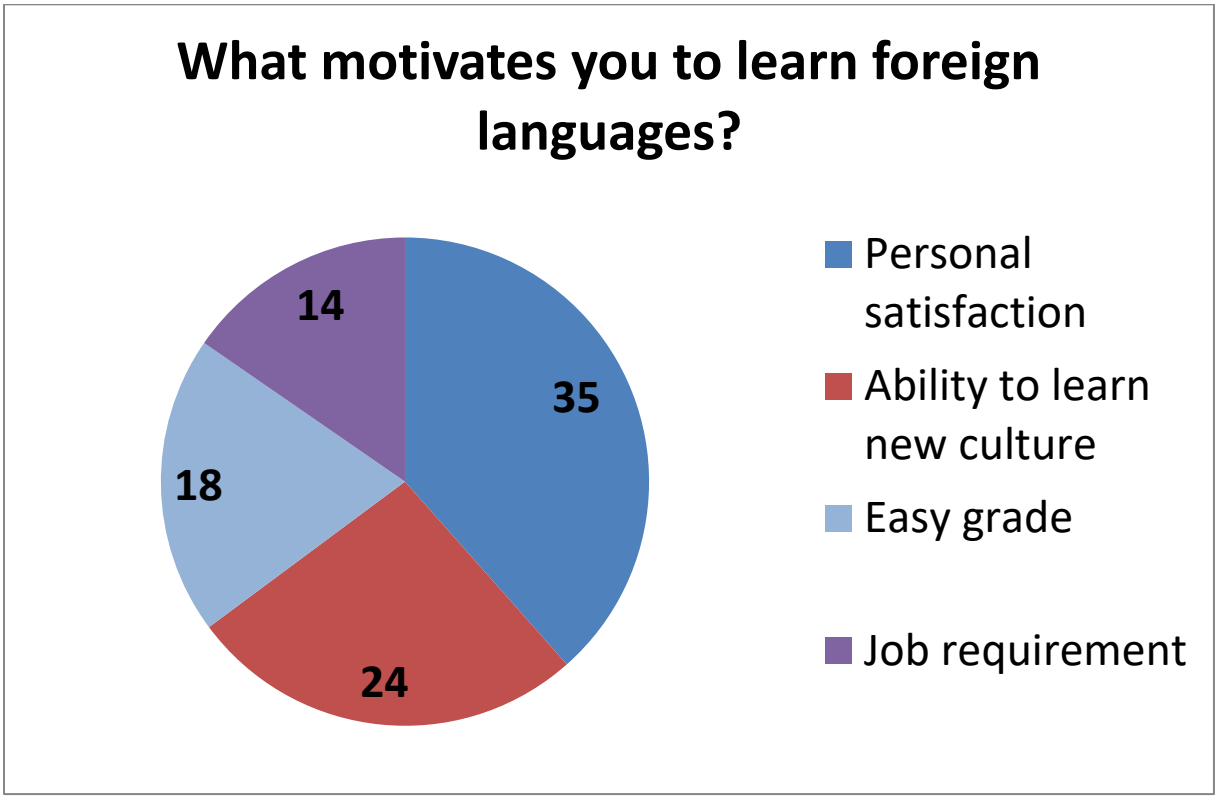
Question 7



Question 8


What was the most spoken language during your Co-op?
9,7
34,7
20,8
20,8
Spanish
German
Italian
Russian

Question 9


What motivates you to learn foreign languages?
35
24
18
14
Personal satisfaction
Ability to learn new culture
Easy grade
Job requirement