

# The Role of English in Communicative Practices of Croatian Adolescents: a Sociolinguistic Analysis

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**THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICES OF  
CROATIAN ADOLESCENTS: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the B.A. in English and Italian  
Language and Literature at the University of Rijeka

Supervisor

Dr. sc. Martina Podboj

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## **Abstract**

The English language is present everywhere today, so it is also part of a daily life of many people living in Croatia. Social media and technological advances have allowed English to become one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. As adolescents are social group that is strongly influenced by contemporary trends, including using English in their everyday life, the aim of this B.A. thesis is to discover in what ways English affects Croatian adolescents and to provide a comprehensive sociolinguistic analysis of the role of English in the communicative practices of Croatian adolescents. To answer these questions, this research uses questionnaire and interview as data collection methods, which provided a nuanced insight into the status of English among adolescents. The research, which included 4 interviews and 46 survey participants, yielded the following results: Firstly, adolescents use English most often on social networks and the use of English increases as more social networks are used in society. Secondly, according to respondents' answers, the use of English is increased among the younger population, compared to the older population, as there are differences in the level of proficiency in English and the purposes for which English is used in social relations. Finally, adolescents seem to adopt the views of the older population (namely, their parents and other family members) and the media surrounding them by emphasizing the need to use the Croatian standard language, which they see as a protection against the perceived harmful influence of English on Croatian.

**Key words:** adolescents, communicative practices, English-Croatian contact, English as a lingua franca, English as a global language

## **1. Introduction**

In today's interconnected and rapidly evolving world, language has become an essential tool for communication and expression, enabling individuals to engage with a globalized society. The role of language, particularly English, in shaping communicative practices has garnered significant attention, especially in diverse sociolinguistic contexts. This thesis delves into a comprehensive exploration of the intricate relationship between the English language and communicative practices among Croatian adolescents. Through a sociolinguistic lens, this study investigates how English influences and interlaces with the daily communication of Croatian youth. The primary aim of this thesis is to analyze the multifaceted role of English in the communicative dynamics of Croatian adolescents. It seeks to unravel the ways in which English is integrated into their social interactions, whether it serves as a marker of identity, facilitates intercultural connections, or functions as a medium for self-expression. By delving into adolescents' beliefs and attitudes about the role of English, the study aims to enrich understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and socialization in the context of Croatian adolescents. To achieve these objectives, a mixed-methods approach was employed, involving both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A questionnaire was administered to a diverse sample of Croatian adolescents, enabling the collection of quantitative data on their usage, attitudes, and perceptions of the English language. Complementing the quantitative insights, interviews were conducted with a subset of participants, allowing for a deeper exploration of their lived experiences and the sociocultural contexts within which English is employed in their everyday lives. By merging quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how language influences social interactions and language beliefs among the youth. This research contributes to the field of sociolinguistics and offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and language practitioners in Croatia seeking to enhance language education and promote effective intercultural communication in a globalized society.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. English-Croatian contact**

English language and its influence on other languages is a well-documented phenomenon in linguistics. This impact can be observed through the introduction of new words, phrases, and concepts into the target language. In Croatian, the influence of English has been a topic of interest among linguists, especially regarding the use of anglicisms, that were carefully researched by Croatian linguist Filipović (1990), whose approach to adaptation of anglicisms lay the groundwork for subsequent research in the field. Considering a large body of research on the topic of Croatian language and anglicization in general, a handful of these studies were published prior the 2010s, after which a growing interest in the topic among researchers and students can be noticed.

The impact of English on Croatian language through anglicisms has been the subject of several studies. Filipović was one of the first Croatian linguist who began studying the language borrowing and anglicisms and helped to pave the way to the future linguists in researching the role of English and its impacts on Croatian language (Filipović 1990).

In 2016, Kišić conducted a study on the use of anglicisms in Croatian media. The study aimed to investigate the frequency and context of anglicisms used in Croatian newspapers and television news programs. The study found that the use of anglicisms in Croatian media was widespread, with a significant number of words and phrases borrowed from English. The study also found that anglicisms were used primarily in contexts related to technology, business, and entertainment. Kišić concluded that while the use of anglicisms in Croatian media can be beneficial in some contexts, it can also lead to the fragmentation of the language and the loss of cultural specificity (Kišić 2016). The study highlights the importance of considering the impact of language borrowing on the target language and the need for language purism to preserve the integrity of the Croatian language.

In 2006, Drljača Margić studied language contacts and paid particular attention to anglicisms in economic terminology and the standard linguistic norm of the Croatian language. It was found that the desire to quickly transmit news through the media contributes to direct contact with the English language, thereby taking over many names and lexical innovations for which there are no words



in Croatian. Drljača Margić noted that there is a need to accept foreign elements if the language needs them, but also that it is necessary to avoid unnecessary description with words in Croatian, which tends to lead to long and incomprehensible expressions, which often happens with anglicisms in the field of economics.

Kolesarić conducted a study that focused on the use of anglicisms in Slovakian and Croatian television programs (Kolesarić 2018). The study found that the use of anglicisms was more prevalent in Croatian television programs than in Slovakian programs. Kolesarić also noted that the context in which anglicisms are used is essential for their successful integration into the target language.

Runjić-Stoilova and Pandža (2010) conducted a study on the adaptation of anglicisms in the speech of Croatian television hosts. The study found that Croatian television hosts used anglicisms to sound modern and professional. However, according to the authors, the overuse of anglicisms can lead to a lack of clarity and understanding among viewers.

Turk and Opašić (2018) conducted a study on linguistic borrowing and purism in the Croatian language. The study focused on the attitudes of Croatian speakers towards the use of anglicisms in their language. The study found that while some Croatian speakers were supportive of using anglicisms, others viewed their use as a threat to the purity of the Croatian language.

In 2022, Božić conducted a study on the use of anglicisms in modern sports terminology in Croatian. The study found that English has significantly influenced modern sports terminology in Croatian, with a large number of anglicisms used. While some anglicisms have been successfully adapted into Croatian, others have led to confusion and misunderstandings. The study concludes that the use of anglicisms in sports terminology can enhance internationalization, but steps must be taken to ensure that the Croatian language remains accessible and diverse.

The overview of the post-Filipović studies of anglicisms in Croatian demonstrates a dominant lexicocentric approach with frequent purist tendencies to interpret their use in Croatian as a threat to effective communication and maintaining the “integrity” and “purity” of the language. These studies often also highlight the challenges of translating anglicisms, the importance of using anglicisms in context, the role of anglicisms in the speech of television hosts, and the attitudes of Croatian speakers towards linguistic borrowing.

## **2.2. English as a Global language**

This thesis explores the impact of English on Croatian language use among adolescents and their views on the use of English in various situations. To understand this phenomenon, it is crucial to go beyond the narrow lexicocentric approach to English-Croatian contact and examine the broader context of globalization and language contact, as well as the development of English as a global language and its use in different parts of the world. In this literature review, key research that offer insights into these topics and their relevance to the thesis will be shortly analysed.

Firstly, Crystal (1997) discusses the rise of English as a global language and its impact on different cultures and societies. Crystal argues that English has become the dominant language in international communication, and its widespread use has resulted in various linguistic changes and challenges. In relation to this thesis, Crystal highlights the significance of English as a global language and its impact on the communicative practices, which can be applied in the interpretation of Croatian adolescents' communicative practices. Crystal's insights on the role of English in international communication can be used to understand the ways in which Croatian adolescents use English in their daily interactions.

Kirkpatrick (2010) discusses the concept of world Englishes and its implications for language teaching, learning, and research. He examines the linguistic diversity of English in different contexts and argues that the standard British and American varieties of English are no longer the only models of the language. This research provides a valuable perspective on investigating the use of English in Croatia, where it is used alongside Croatian in various communicative contexts. Kirkpatrick's insights on the diversity of English can be used to explore the ways in which Croatian adolescents use and adapt English to their local communicative practices.

Ćurković et al. (2017) have conducted a research on how the media affects young people who attend elementary school. They found that the media and social networks are the biggest, most influential, and most common educators for students. Students, who without reservation and without questioning the need to use them, absorb English words and use them, and as a result, they become part of their daily language use to the point where students frequently find it difficult to find a Croatian substitution.

Jenkins (2003) states that English has several reasons why English is the world's primary *lingua franca* and they consist of historical, political, economic practical, intellectual and entertainment reasons. The legacy of British or American imperialism have been the main institutions that have carried out their actions in English. When it comes to practical reasons, English is the language of air traffic control and it is also the chief language of international business and academic conferences, as well as being the leading language of international tourism.

In her study on language and identity, Skelin Horvat (as cited in Ščukanec 2017) places a special emphasis on children and young adults and how they utilize language. She comes to the conclusion that dialectical and non-standard linguistic features, slang, neologisms, and other non-standard linguistic elements are predominantly used in discourse to form identities in group interaction. Slang is a particularly apparent example of how each generation, even the younger ones, modify the language to suit their requirements by indicating group identification and utilizing particular vocabulary, idioms, and phrases.

Drljača Margić (2011) states that speakers are motivated to use loanwords due to various linguistic and socio-psychological needs. Speakers will use loanwords from the need to fill a lexical gap, the desire to express themselves in the most economical way possible, to the need to express their cultural subcultural identity.

Finally, Coupland (2010) explores the relationship between language and globalization. This edited volume features chapters from experts in the field, who examine different aspects of the relationship between language and globalization, such as language policy, language ideologies, and language use in different contexts. In relation to this thesis, this book provides a useful perspective on the global context in which English is used and its implications for language use and policy in Croatia.

Additionally, some other useful sources used in forming the theoretical outline for this research include Jenkins (2003) and Ball (2010). Both authors provide valuable insights on the role of English in different global and local contexts by studying the influence of English in various cultures and its status among speakers or exploring the impact of English on mother tongue and

the changes it causes. This research can help to deepen the understanding of the use of English in the communicative practices of Croatian adolescents.

### **3. The present study- Problem, objective and research questions**

The subject of this research is the role of English in the communication practices of Croatian adolescents. The aim of the research is to investigate the use of English in adolescents' everyday spoken and written communication and to explain its role in adolescent's communication and identity. This is done through an anonymous survey and interview with high school adolescents.

Based on the reading of the literature, this research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the increased use of English in Croatian media affect the communicative practices of Croatian adolescents?
2. How do social factors such as social class, educational background, and the level of proficiency in English influence the extent to which Croatian adolescents use English?
3. What are the views of adolescents regarding the effects of English use on Croatian? What is their attitude regarding the potential negative effects of increased use of English?

### **4. Methodology**

In this research, 2 different data collection methods were used in order to get the best possible insight into the communicative practices and use of the English language among Croatian adolescents: an anonymous questionnaire and interviews. By adopting these two methods of data collection, it was possible to arrive at a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question. The anonymous questionnaire is a widely used method of research that allows researchers to collect large amounts of data in a relatively short period of time. In the context of this thesis, the anonymous questionnaire was chosen as one of the methods to gather data from 46 adolescents aged 16-19, with 37 female and 8 male respondents. The purpose of this questionnaire was to examine the attitudes and usage of the English language among Croatian adolescents in different life and social contexts. The questionnaire involving 46 Croatian adolescents was conducted using

an online Google Form, administered in the English language. The utilization of Google Forms facilitated broader participant outreach and streamlined data collection. The questionnaire's digital format ensured convenience for respondents and enabled efficient data collection and interpretation. By selecting English as the survey language, the research aimed to foster inclusivity and tap into the participants' language proficiency. The utilization of online tools underscores the study's commitment to accessible and contemporary research methodologies.

The questionnaire was structured in a simple and user-friendly way to ensure that participants could complete it easily and quickly. The questionnaire contained six categories of questions, each focused on a specific area of life in which English might be used. The categories included school, society, free time, friends, family, and social networks. By structuring the questionnaire in this way, the researcher was able to gather data on the different contexts in which English is used among adolescents in Croatia.

One of the key benefits of the anonymous questionnaire as a method of research is that it allows participants to answer questions honestly and without fear of judgement or repercussions. This is particularly important when conducting research with adolescents, who may be more hesitant to share their thoughts and feelings in face-to-face interviews. As the questionnaire was anonymous, the participants were able to answer the questions honestly and provide valuable insights into their use and attitudes towards English in their daily lives.

The researcher disseminated the questionnaire among siblings and friends, requesting their assistance in further distribution to acquaintances. A total of 46 individuals willingly participated and satisfactorily completed the questionnaire. Notably, the administration of the questionnaire in English not only underscores their adeptness in the language but also highlights adolescents' capacity to proficiently navigate and respond to the survey.

It is important to note that all responses were submitted anonymously, and if the participants were under 18 years old, they were advised to seek permission from their parents or legal guardians before filling out the questionnaire.

The full questionnaire with results is shown in Appendix at the end of this thesis.

The second method used in this research were interviews. Interviews were conducted with four female high school students, aged 16 to 19, who have been studying English since their first grade

of elementary school. One of the respondents of the interview was the researchers' sibling. Two of the subjects attend vocational high schools while the other two attend gymnasium high schools. All four respondents live in a small town with less than 10 000 citizens. The aim of these interviews was to gain insight into how these adolescents use English in their everyday lives and how they see this might impact their future.

The interview questions were carefully designed to cover a range of themes, from the use of English in social media to its impact on future education and career opportunities. To ensure the authenticity of the responses, the questions were not given to the subjects in advance. Interviews were conducted in Croatian, the mother tongue of the subjects, and lasted for approximately 30 minutes for each participant. The transcription of the interviews was used for the purpose of this research, and the subjects gave their informed consent for the interview to be recorded and for the sections of the transcript to be included in the written version of the study.

## **5. Analysis**

This chapter is dedicated to presenting the outcomes derived from the analysis of both the conducted interviews and administered questionnaire.

### **5.1. Questionnaire**

Overall, the anonymous questionnaire was an effective method of data collection for the thesis. By gathering data from 46 adolescents, the researcher was able to gain a deeper understanding of the role of English in the communicative practices of Croatian adolescents across a range of different contexts. The questionnaire was structured in a way that allowed for quick and easy completion, while also providing valuable data for the analysis.

The purpose of this questionnaire was to research the role of English in the communicative practices of Croatian adolescents. All participants reported studying or having studied English in school, with most having studied the language for over 10 years.

The majority of the participants, accounting for 54.5%, live in small towns with populations under 5000, while the remaining participants, 45.5%, live in either bigger cities or villages. 2.3% of the participants live in large cities, 9.1% in cities, 18.2% in large towns and 15.9% of the participants live in villages. In terms of their educational background, 60% of the participants attended comprehensive high schools (gymnasium), while the remaining 40% attended vocational schools.

The questionnaire for this study has been divided into six sections: school, society, free time, friends, family, and social media. Each category addresses a specific aspect of the subjects' lives and their relationship with the English language. The questions are a mix of open-ended and multiple-choice, with some 5-point Likert scale questions, while others required a simple yes, no, or maybe response. The aim of this structure was to gather a wide range of information about the subjects' communicative practices, focusing on how they use English in different settings and situations. By categorizing the questions in this way, different patterns and trends in the subjects' responses can be analysed.

### 5.1.1. School

In the school category of the questionnaire, the first question asked about how often the subjects spoke English at school, and the majority of the students (37 out of 46) reported speaking English often or sometimes. Only one subject answered always, while 15 subjects answered often, 22 subjects answered sometimes, and 15 subjects answered *rarely*. None of the subjects answered *never*, indicating that English is commonly used as a medium of communication in Croatian schools.

The second question in this category asked whether the English classes at school adequately prepared the subjects for communicating in English. The results showed that 28 subjects answered *Yes*, while 17 subjects answered *No*. This suggests that although English classes are taught in schools, they may not be meeting the needs of all the students in terms of preparing them for effective communication in English.

The third question asked the subjects how comfortable they felt speaking English in front of their classmates. The majority of the students (18 out of 46) answered 5, which meant that they felt very comfortable speaking English. Eleven subjects answered 4, indicating that they were quite comfortable, while three subjects answered 2 and four subjects answered 1, meaning they were not comfortable at all. These results reveal that participants are comfortable using English in front of their peers, which could be a positive factor in promoting English communication in school settings. This can also be interpreted as a contradiction to the previous observation about English in schools, or an indication that respondents turn to other sources to learn English, such as TV shows and popular music.

Overall, the findings from the school category indicate that English is an important language in the communicative practices of participants and that it is frequently used in school settings. However, the results also highlight that the effectiveness of English classes in preparing students for communication in English may need to be further examined. The positive attitudes of the students towards speaking English in front of their classmates could be a promising area for further exploration, as it may suggest opportunities for promoting English communication in school settings.



### 5.1.2. Society

The results of the questionnaire in the category of society reveal that English plays a significant role in the daily lives of Croatian adolescents. The majority of the participants reported using English regularly outside of school, with 17 out of 46 respondents indicating that they use it always. This suggests that English is an important part of their communicative practice beyond the school setting. Moreover, the fact that 38 participants reported using English to communicate with strangers in public underscores the significance of English as a global language for these respondents.

The findings related to the perception of English in the context of employment opportunities in Croatia also indicate that English is viewed as an important asset. Although 26 respondents stated that they believe knowing English is important for getting a job in Croatia, a notable number of respondents (18) answered *maybe*, suggesting that there are other factors that could also be relevant in the job market. Nonetheless, the overall positive perception of the importance of English in relation to job prospects is noteworthy and highlights the societal expectations related to language proficiency.

It is interesting to note the diverse attitudes towards hearing English in public, as expressed in the answers to the open (fourth) question. Some respondents viewed English as a sign of education and global awareness, while others expressed the importance of preserving the Croatian language and culture, as illustrated by Example 01<sup>1</sup> below.

#### Example 01

Question: *How do you feel when you hear people speaking English in public in Croatia? (Možeš odgovoriti na hrvatskom)*

Respondent 31: *Ako su Hrvati, tj. materinji jezik im je hrvatski, to mi nije drago čuti jer smatram da bi trebali pričati i njegovati svoj jezik. Razumijem kada se koriste par engleskih "slangova" i*

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<sup>1</sup> Illustrative examples from the collected data are enumerated and presented in the original, followed by the English translation in footnotes. Respondents are marked with numbers to ensure anonymity.

*engleskih riječi jer sve više ulaze u hrvatski jezik, no ne sviđa mi se kada ljudi (tinejdžeri) cijelo vrijeme pričaju engleski jer tako smatraju da su superiorniji.*<sup>2</sup>

Respondent 1: *I feel proud that we are educated enough to be able to participate and understand another language.*

This suggests that while English is viewed as valuable, there is also recognition of the significance of the native language and the need to maintain its vitality. Overall, the results suggest that English is becoming increasingly important in the Croatian context, with the majority of respondents perceiving it as an asset in various domains of their lives.

### **5.1.3. Free time**

The category of free time explores the extent to which English language is present in the leisure activities of Croatian young adults. In response to the first question, *How often do you watch TV shows or movies in English?* a significant number of subjects, 22 out of 46, indicated that they always watch TV shows or movies in English, while 21 subjects said they often do. This shows that a large portion of Croatian young adults are exposed to English language content through entertainment, which may positively influence their English language skills, especially in terms of listening and comprehension. It is also interesting to note that none of the subjects answered *never* to this question, indicating that watching TV shows or movies in English is a fairly common leisure activity for the respondents.

The second question, *Do you listen to English-language music or podcasts in your free time?* received a resounding *yes* response from 43 out of the 46 subjects. This suggests that listening to English-language music and podcasts is a popular leisure activity among Croatian young adults, which may further enhance their language skills, especially in terms of listening and pronunciation.

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<sup>2</sup> *If they are Croats, i.e. their mother tongue is Croatian, I am not happy to hear that because I think they should speak and nurture their language. I understand when a couple of English “slang” and English words are used because they are increasingly entering the Croatian language, but I don't like it when people (teenagers) speak English all the time because they think they are superior.*

The fact that only 3 subjects answered *no* to this question indicates that exposure to English language content through music and podcasts is a common occurrence for young adults in Croatia.

Regarding the third question, *Have you ever travelled to an English-speaking country? How did you communicate there?* 36 out of the 44 subjects who answered this question indicated that they have not travelled to an English-speaking country. This suggests that exposure communication with native speakers of English through travel is not as common among Croatian young adults. It should be noted that this question lacks consideration of the imbalance in access to countries where English is the first or national language for Croatians, compared to other, more accessible European destinations. A more apt formulation could be *Have you used English when travelling abroad?* given the relatively restricted accessibility of English-speaking countries to Croatians in contrast to other European countries. This is particularly relevant given the likelihood of Croatian natives travelling abroad and interacting in English, thereby highlighting the broader role of English as a global lingua franca, beyond conventional native-to-non-native speaker exchanges. However, out of the 8 subjects who have travelled to English-speaking countries, 7 have communicated in English, indicating that they are able to use English to communicate to native speakers. Moreover, two of the subjects reported that they spoke English well and communicated easily with locals, indicating a level of proficiency in the language.

The fourth question, *Have you ever played video games in English?* received a positive response from the majority of the subjects, with 42 out of 46 answering *yes*. This suggests that playing video games in English is a popular leisure activity among young adults in Croatia. This could potentially have a positive impact on their English language skills, particularly in terms of reading, listening and comprehension.

Finally, the fifth question, *Do you think English is becoming more or less important in Croatian society?*, received a positive response from 44 subjects choosing that English is becoming more important, while only 2 subjects answered that it is becoming less important. This suggests that while English is becoming increasingly important in Croatian society, especially among the younger generation.

Overall, the responses to the questions in this category indicate that English language is a common presence in the leisure activities among the respondents, with a majority of the subjects engaging in activities that expose them to the language. However, exposure through travel to English-

speaking countries is not as common, which may hinder exposure to native speakers, but not the development of real-life communication skills in the context of English as lingua franca. It is important for educators to recognize the influence of leisure activities on language development and incorporate such activities into language learning programs. Additionally, there is a need to support those who may not feel comfortable or confident with the language and provide them with resources and opportunities to improve their skills.

#### **5.1.4. Friends**

This section of the questionnaire investigated the role of English communication in maintaining friendships among Croatian adolescents. The first question, *How often do you communicate with your friends in English?* asked subjects about the frequency of English communication with friends. The majority (65.2%) of the subjects reported communicating with their friends in English either sometimes (34.8%) or occasionally (30,4%). This suggests that English is not the primary language of communication for most of the participants, but it is still used in this context.

The second question asked the subjects *Have you ever made friends with someone primarily through English communication?.* A significant number (71.7%) of participants answered in the affirmative, indicating that English can be an important tool for building and maintaining friendships across language barriers, most likely in online contexts.

The third question, *Do you feel that speaking English has helped you make friends outside of Croatia?.*, explored whether speaking English has helped the subjects make friends outside of Croatia. A majority (76.1%) of the participants answered in the affirmative, suggesting that English proficiency can be an asset in social interactions beyond the borders of one's own country.

The fourth question, *Do you feel like you use different language styles or vocabulary when speaking with friends in English versus Croatian?.*, asked whether the subjects used different language styles or vocabulary when communicating in English versus Croatian with their friends. The responses were varied, but a significant proportion (43.5%) of the participants reported using

different language styles and vocabulary in English, which suggests that code switching<sup>3</sup> can be an important part of social communication in a multilingual context.

The fifth and final question asked about the importance of English in maintaining friendships with individuals outside of Croatia. The majority (60%) of the respondents considered English to be important or very important, which reinforces the idea that English communication can facilitate social connections across language barriers.

In conclusion, the results from this category suggest that English proficiency can be a valuable asset for the respondents in maintaining friendships across borders. Even if English is not the primary language of communication for them, it can still play an important role in facilitating social interactions. The results also highlight the importance of code switching and adapting to different language styles and vocabulary in multilingual social contexts.

### **5.1.5 Family**

In this category, the participants gave their answers to the questions related to their family and English language proficiency. The first question asked whether any members of their family spoke English fluently. Out of the 46 participants, 32 answered *yes*, while 14 answered *no*. This finding suggests that a significant proportion of the participants have family members who are fluent in English, which may have an impact on their English language learning and communication, but also demonstrates the presence of English as a foreign language across different generations within respondents' families.

When asked how often they communicate with family members in English, only 9 of the participants answered *sometimes*, 14 answered *occasionally*, and 23 answered *never*. This indicates that English is not commonly used in communication within the participants' families.

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<sup>3</sup> *Instances where a clause or sentence-size chunks are being borrowed from a foreign language usually have a dramatic impact on the character of language. The form of code-switching is a process in which people rely simultaneously on two or more languages to communicate with each other and the increase in code-switching is evidently one of the most noticeable features of the situations in which New Englishes are emerging (Crystal 1997).*

The scope and context of English usage inside the family should be further researched, for instance, to see the patterns of code switching and whether or not English lexical elements or other phrases are employed in conversation rather than communicating exclusively in English.

Regarding the impact of English on communication with family members outside of Croatia, 27 out of 46 participants reported that they did not have family members outside of Croatia, while 13 answered *yes* and 6 answered *no*. This suggests that for those who do have family members outside of Croatia, English can be a valuable tool for communication and connection, confirming again the importance of English as a global language.

When asked how important English was to their family in general, the responses varied, with 10 participants selecting *1*, indicating that English was not important at all, while 19 selected *2*, 12 selected *3*, and five participants selected *4*. None of the participants selected *5*, indicating that English was not considered extremely important to any of the families in the study. This finding suggests that while some families may value English proficiency to a certain extent, it is not a top priority for most and that English has more relevance in some other domains (for example, entertainment, school and travel, as demonstrated in previous sections).

Finally, when asked whether they felt their family supported their English language learning, 37 subjects answered *yes*, seven answered *maybe*, and two answered *no*. This suggests that a large majority of the participants felt supported by their families in their efforts to improve their English skills, which could be a motivating factor in their language learning journey.

Overall, the findings of this category suggest that English proficiency within participants' families may have an impact on their language learning and communication. While some participants have family members who are fluent in English, the language is not commonly used in communication within the families. For those who do have family members outside of Croatia, English can be an important tool for communication and connection. While English proficiency may not be a top priority for most families, the majority of participants felt supported by their families in their language learning efforts, which indicates a positive attitude towards learning English. These findings highlight the complex relationship between family dynamics and language learning, and suggest that further research is needed to fully understand this relationship.

### **5.1.6. Social networks**

The results of the questionnaire in the social media category indicate that a significant number of the participants frequently use English on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. The majority of the participants (18 out of 46) answered that they always use English on social media, while 13 participants use English often. This suggests that social media is an important context in which participants use English and therefore may have an opportunity to practice and improve their skills. The frequent use of English on social media may help individuals to become more comfortable communicating in the language, as well as provide them with opportunities to engage in conversations with other English speakers. English has a high social value for the participants because choosing to use it there (instead of, say, Croatian) can be seen as an act of expressing their identities.

The fact that 38 out of 46 participants have communicated with someone on social media primarily using English highlights the global nature of social media and the vast number of English speakers who use these platforms. This finding also suggests that social media is an effective tool for language exchange and practice. Social media provides opportunities for individuals to communicate with others from different countries and cultural backgrounds, which can help them to learn more about the language and improve their language skills.

The majority of the participants (41 out of 46) believe that social media has helped them to improve their English skills. This supports the previous finding that social media is an effective tool for language exchange and practice. The participants may have been exposed to a wide range of English language content on social media, such as videos, articles, and posts, which may have helped them to improve their language skills.

The fact that 39 out of 46 participants have used social media to practice their English language skills suggests that they are taking an active approach to language learning. They are using social media as a tool to supplement their language learning, which may include attending language courses, watching English-language movies, or reading books in English. This finding suggests that social media can be an effective tool for language learning, especially when combined with other forms of language learning.

The results also show that social media has changed the way some individuals communicate in English compared to face-to-face communication. Almost 30 out of 46 participants answered yes to the question *Do you think social media has changed the way you communicate in English compared to face-to-face communication?* indicating that social media has a significant impact on their language communication style. The informality of social media communication, such as the use of emojis, abbreviations, and memes may have influenced the participants' communication style in English. This finding highlights the importance of understanding the differences in communication style between social media and face-to-face communication.

Overall, the results of the questionnaire suggest that social media is an important tool for practicing and improving English language skills. The frequent use of English on social media, the communication with other English speakers, and the use of social media for language learning all demonstrate the potential of social media for language exchange and practice. The finding that social media has changed the way some individuals communicate in English compared to face-to-face communication highlights the importance of understanding the differences in communication styles between social media and face-to-face communication.

To summarize this section, the study found that the proficiency level of English among the participants varied. While some reported being highly proficient in the language, others reported being less proficient. Additionally, the study found that the proficiency level of English did not necessarily correspond with the length of time the participants had studied the language.

The results of the questionnaire revealed that English plays a significant role in the communicative practices of respondents, which may potentially be generalized to the Croatian context as well. The majority of the participants reported using English on a daily basis, both in and outside of the classroom. The most common forms of communication in English were texting, social media, and listening to music.

However, it is worth noting that the sample size of the study is relatively small, and the participants are not representative of the wider population. Additionally, the study did not explore the potential negative effects of social media on language learning or communication in English. Further research is needed to explore the impact of social media on language learning and communication in more detail.



## **5.2. Interview**

The purpose of conducting interviews was to investigate adolescents' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of English in their communicative practices. The participants taking part in the interview were four female adolescents aging from 16 to 19 years old. The interview served as a method of qualitative data collection that could provide insights into the role of English as a global language and its impact on the use of Croatian. The aim was to explore the reasons behind the use of English, the contexts in which it was used, and the adolescents' opinions on the use of English versus Croatian in various situations.

The interview consisted of open-ended questions related to the use of English in school, with friends, with family, on social media, and in expressing their emotions. The questions aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the adolescents' perspectives on the use of English and its influence on their communicative practices. The interview structure was flexible, allowing the participants to express their thoughts freely and spontaneously. The questions were designed to elicit detailed responses and to encourage the participants to reflect on their experiences and perceptions.

The interview was conducted in a comfortable and informal setting, allowing the participants to feel relaxed and at ease. The researcher adopted an approachable and non-judgmental attitude, which helped to create a safe and open environment for the participants to express their views. The interview lasted approximately half an hour per respondent, and the researcher took detailed notes to capture the participants' responses accurately. The interview was recorded, for which the respondents gave their informed consent. The data collected from the interview was then analysed thematically, with the aim of identifying recurring themes and patterns in the adolescents' attitudes towards the use of English.

The role of English language in communication practice of Croatian teenagers is a topic of great interest for researchers in the field of sociolinguistics. In the following subsections, respondents' answers will be presented and analysed in thematic sections that were covered in the interview. The examples provided are presented in Croatian, as they were produced, with translations in English provided in footnotes. The outline of the interview questions is shown in the Appendix below.

### 5.2.1. English language daily use and learning

All respondents use English daily, through social networks, TV shows, school materials, or various hobbies. One of the respondents attends a vocational high school for computer technicians and states that her English is in constant use precisely because of the programming languages that are in English, as illustrated by example 02 below.

Example 02

R1: *S engleskim se najviše susrećem na društvenim mrežama, ali se isto dosta susrećem u školi zbog programiranja jer većina programskih jezika je na engleskom.*<sup>4</sup>

Respondents most often use TV-shows and films in English as the sources of learning and improvement of knowledge of the English language and state that this is the best way of learning the English language, as illustrated by example 03:

Example 03

R2: *Pa zapravo najviše razvijam svoj engleski gledajući serije, videa, na društvenim mrežama, nekada čitam i knjige na engleskom, slušam audio knjige, podcaste i zapravo je to najbolji način na koji ja razvijam engleski.*<sup>5</sup>

Respondents usually follow content on social networks, mostly Instagram and YouTube, as platforms where they spend most of their free time watching videos and sharing content on different topics, so it is easy to follow topics of interest. Each respondent stated that she uses certain English expressions and phrases, which have become very established in their everyday

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<sup>4</sup> *I mostly use English on social networks, but I also use it a lot in school because of programming because most programming languages are in English.*

<sup>5</sup> *Well, I develop my English mostly by watching series, videos, social media, sometimes reading books in English, listening to audiobooks, podcasts, and it's actually the best way for me to develop my English.*

communication in Croatian. As demonstrated by examples 04 and 05, the respondents themselves notice that they use certain English words in the middle of a sentence in Croatian. Respondents also state the frequent use of English abbreviations in Croatian, such as OK and BTW, which respondents often use in writing or correspondence on social networks.

#### Example 04

R2: *Pa evo sad sam navela podcast, ali koristim još i naprimjer sheranje, lajkanje, ma različite riječi koristim.*<sup>6</sup>

#### Example 05

R1: *Vjerojatno bi jedan od primjera bio OK, ali mislim da je to već urođeno, ali najviše možda u svojoj struci, najviše tehnički vokabular.*<sup>7</sup>

Learning English in Croatia generally begins in school, but as these respondents claim, more can be learned independently by watching films or videos and by using English on social networks. Learning English is favoured due to its wide distribution and adolescents understand well that they will find more of what they are interested in English than in Croatian, which is not such a global and widespread language. The functionality of English also plays a major role in its learning, especially among young people, because they are aware that with this knowledge, they will be able to reach more content they are interested in or need for some purpose, which confirms findings by Ćurković et al. (2017, as cited by Ščukanec 2018).

### **5.2.2. English language as a *lingua franca***

English is now considered to be a commonplace and necessity for people who want “to get on in the world” using a means of communication that takes them beyond the traditional community boundaries, meaning that wider networking needs a *lingua franca* (Jenkins 2003). In other words, in communicative situations when Croatian is not available, adolescents have to find a different language that will fulfil their expectations and needs.

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<sup>6</sup> *Well, now I've mentioned podcasts, but I also use, for example, sharing, liking, I use various words.*

<sup>7</sup> *One of the examples would probably be OK, but I think that's already innate, but probably most often in my profession, mostly technical vocabulary.*

Adolescents participating in this study are applying their knowledge of English to their hobbies and professions, as mentioned earlier. As shown in example (04), one of the respondents stated that she is learning French through the Duolingo application, which is unavailable in Croatian, and for this reason, she learns French through English, that is, she uses not only her native Croatian language but through the first foreign language, in this case, English, learns her second foreign language, that is, French. This example demonstrates a great use and application of English as a foreign language that serves as an intermediary for learning another foreign language, which illustrates the role of English as a lingua franca (ELF). In this way, English is a tool that opens up new possibilities and helps speakers discover new languages and ways of communication by enabling everyone a possibility they might not have with their mother language.

#### Example 04

*R4: Pa na primjer, ja učim francuski preko Duolinga, ali nije dostupan na hrvatskom pa ajmo reći preko engleskoga učim francuski. Nekad kad gledam neka videa što me zanima uvijek sve bude na engleskom, također su i većinom knjige koje čitam na engleskom.*<sup>8</sup>

In Croatian, it is sometimes difficult to obtain literary works translated from English, and a greater choice is provided in English, which creates an even greater need for both adolescents, and native speakers of Croatian in general, to turn to English as a primary source of information for functional reasons.

From the respondents' answers, it is evident that adolescents in Croatia are highly aware that not speaking English is a disadvantage, not only because the knowledge of English is necessary for educational and cultural reasons, but because it has a useful functional role. Adolescents believe that in case they do not know English, they are limited, as seen from the example below.

#### Example 05

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<sup>8</sup> *Well, for example, I learn French on Duolingo, but it's not available in Croatian, so let's say I learn French through English. Sometimes when I watch some videos that I'm interested in, it's always in English, and most of the books that I read are also in English.*

R3: *Htjeli mi ili ne svuda je oko nas, od običnih čestitki za rođendan do filmova i dokumentaraca pa do knjiga.*<sup>9</sup>

Other respondents use English in various ways, such as reading books in English because certain titles are not translated into Croatian and are easier to access in English. As shown in example 05, one respondent is engaged in horseback riding and, to improve her skills in this sport, she follows the internationally famous instructors in this field online, who share their knowledge in English, and she can therefore apply that knowledge in practice. This respondent also searches for most of the riding equipment online in English, since it is not available in Croatia.

#### Example 06

R3: *Kad sam se bavila jahanjem, jako puno baš poznatih jahača objavljuje svoje upute i neke treninge na engleskom tako da mi je to jako pomoglo. Ako bih tražila za kupiti neku opremu, puno nje nije bilo dostupno u Hrvatskoj pa bih je morala tražiti na engleskom.*<sup>10</sup>

When it comes to the use of English among peers, adolescents agree that they use English in everyday communication and even state that they use it when it seems that the Croatian language simply does not allow them to express themselves well enough, so they use the English language that describes their moods, attitudes or situations much better, as shown below.

#### Example 07

R2: *Mislim da ga koriste kao i ja, kada se neka riječ u hrvatskom jednostavno ne čini dostatnom da opiše ono što želimo reći. Koristimo se engleskim kako bi bolje opisali.*<sup>11</sup>

One of the respondents states that she uses English to communicate with a friend from abroad who speaks German, but when they talk to each other, they use English as the primary means of

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<sup>9</sup> *Whether we like it or not, it's all around us, from simple birthday cards to movies and documentaries to books.*

<sup>10</sup> *When I was riding, a lot of very famous riders published their instructions and some trainings in English, so it helped me a lot. If I was looking to buy some equipment, a lot of it was not available in Croatia, so I would have to search for it in English.*

<sup>11</sup> *I think they use it like I do when a word in Croatian just doesn't seem enough to describe what we want to say. We use English to describe things better.*

communication, which is yet another example how EFL works in the context of adolescents' communicative practices. This demonstrates that English is used as a universal means of communication and is a very important factor in maintaining interpersonal relations.

#### Example 08

R3: *Znam iz svoga iskustva, imam stranih prijatelja, koji npr. govore njemački, a ja ne znam njemački pa pričamo na engleskom.*<sup>12</sup>

Respondents believe that the knowledge of English will help them in their further career. Due to their proficiency in English, they can go to school or work abroad to countries where they speak a language they do not know, but due to their knowledge of English they will easily communicate with others and English will serve as a common means of communication. The interview participants consider English to be an almost universal means of communication that can serve them in any part of the world because everyone is speaking English, as illustrated by answers in example 09 and 10.

#### Example 09

R4: *Ako znam engleski, mislim da se mogu zaposliti bilo gdje u svijetu ili čak živjeti bilo gdje u svijetu jer puno je lakše onda i preko toga naučiti neki novi jezik ili samo živjeti s engleskim jer ga skoro svi koriste.*<sup>13</sup>

#### Example 10

R4: *To je veliki plus jer nismo ograničeni ni na mjesto ni na ništa drugo jer svi govore engleski.*<sup>14</sup>

The interview showed that the respondents consider that the knowledge of the English language ensures potentially better working conditions in the future better options in education. They believe that the knowledge of English can help them to participate in Erasmus exchange programs and that it provides them with better opportunities to work abroad. A shared assumption among these

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<sup>12</sup> *I know from my experience, I also have foreign friends who speak German, but I do not know German, so we speak English.*

<sup>13</sup> *If I know English, I think I can get a job anywhere in the world or even live anywhere in the world because it's so much easier to learn a new language through it or just live with English because almost everyone uses it.*

<sup>14</sup> *That's a big plus because we're not limited to the place or anything else because everyone speaks English.*

adolescents is that “everyone speaks English” and that this opens up a whole world of new possibilities that they might not be able to experience if they did not speak English.

#### Example 11

R4: *Mislim da je to dodatan plus jer to je uvijek poželjno pogotovo sada kad bi mogli ići raditi van, morali bi samo položiti test i to je to. to je veliki plus jer nismo ograničeni ni na mjesto ni na ništa drugo jer svi govore engleski.*<sup>15</sup>

For these reasons, it is not surprising that adolescents in Croatia are surrounded by English every day and learn it more and more and generally see proficiency in English as an asset.

Situations in which adolescents use the English language are most often based on watching TV shows and films in English, but one of the adolescents gave an interesting answer that English is used, among other things, when communicating with her friends, switching codes in a way that is more complex than the usage of loanword from English in an exchange that is dominantly in Croatian.

#### Example 28

R2: *Koristim ga za gledanje serija i filmova, uvijek ih gledam na engleskom, nekada za čitanje, nekada u komunikaciji s prijateljicama kada razgovaramo pa onda se prebacujemo s engleskog na hrvatski jer jednostavno tako nam je prirodnije zbog načina na koji komuniciramo, zbog društvenih mreža provodimo vrijeme, zbog jednostavno tolikog pristupa engleskog na svim tim platformama.*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *I think that's an added plus because it's always desirable, especially now that we could go work abroad, we'd just have to pass the test and that's it. It's a big plus because we're not limited to a place or anything else because everyone speaks English.*

<sup>16</sup> *I use it to watch series and movies, I always watch them in English, sometimes for reading, sometimes in communication with my friends when we talk and then we switch from English to Croatian because it's simply more natural for us because of the way we communicate, because of the way we spend our time on social networks, because of simply so much access to English on all these platforms.*

As the above example demonstrates, respondents spontaneously i.e. switching from speaking their mother tongue Croatian to English within the same interaction, which becomes natural and instinctive for adolescents because they consider expressing themselves easier in this way. Adolescents are, in this way, opting to use English as they say that it seems more natural expressing themselves that way, which are communicative practices more complex than the use of loanwords or switching from one code to another when the situation requires.

### **5.2.3. Cultural identity and limits of English language**

When it comes to their cultural identity, respondents agree that English opens new doors for them and provides new opportunities in life, but they also believe that there are limits to which English should be used in the Croatian language.

#### **Example 12**

R1: *Možda bih čak ja nekada malo smanjila te engleske riječi i fraze, čisto ono, stvarno nekad dođem i kažem ajde dosta.*<sup>17</sup>

Among the respondents, the need to preserve the Croatian language in its standard form is emphasized, and some respondents believe that the frequent use of English negatively influences the identity and uniqueness of the language, as well as that their Croatian vocabulary is also reduced because they are less able to express themselves in Croatian only. It could be stated that these respondents care about the Croatian language and that they strive to preserve it in its standard form even though they see that the language progresses in step with time and that changes are necessary for the language to progress. This can also be found in Ball's research where he mentions that there is a strong will to keep the Croatian language as standard as it is, but also that for the progress and survival of the language it is necessary to open the door to other languages that will enrich it.

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<sup>17</sup> *Maybe I'd even cut those English words and phrases down a little, just like, sometimes I really think and say that's enough.*



### Example 13

R3: *Smatram da je to možda malo i gubljenje identiteta i nekako se gubi ta nekakva posebnost, individualnost jezika.*<sup>18</sup>

### Example 14

R4: *Mislim da mi je vokabular iz hrvatskog sve slabiji, sve mi je teže pronaći nekakve sinonime, druge riječi na hrvatskom i rijetko uspijem ajmo reći objasniti kao što sam prije mogla jer kao da mi se smanjio vokabular iz hrvatskog, takav imam osjećaj, nemam dovoljno riječi za opise.*<sup>19</sup>

As can be seen from the responses of adolescents in this research, they use slang and develop a rich vocabulary from popular culture that is prevalent in the dominant media for their culture, confirming Skelin Horvat's (2017, as cited in Ščukanec 2018) findings.

English is also used in the context of overcoming cultural and linguistic divisions by becoming a universal means of communication, as is evident in the example of the answer of one of the respondents.

### Example 15

R1: *Ne mogu se sjetiti kako se nešto kaže na hrvatskom i onda kažem riječ na engleskom i onda me svi oko mene razumiju, a ja se ne mogu sjetiti kako se to kaže na hrvatskom u tom trenutku.*<sup>20</sup>

More and more words and expressions of English origin enter the mother tongue of the speakers, so they often use English words to express what they fail to express in their native language, that sometimes simply cannot convey the message that a thought or expression has in English. The Internet also plays a major role and adolescents' responses demonstrate the opinion that the Internet and the community in general are becoming more and more aware of new language forms

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<sup>18</sup> *I think it may be a bit of a loss of identity, and somehow this uniqueness, the individuality of language, is lost.*

<sup>19</sup> *I think my Croatian vocabulary is getting weaker, it's getting harder for me to find some synonyms, and other words in Croatian and I rarely manage to, so to say, explain things as I used to because it's as if my Croatian vocabulary has shrunk, that's how I feel, I don't have enough words to describe things.*

<sup>20</sup> *I can't remember how to say something in Croatian and then I say a word in English and then everyone around me understands me, and I can't remember how to say it in Croatian at that moment.*

and styles. By communicating in English, individuals and communities connect and thus embrace other cultures and educate each other about things they didn't know before.

#### Example 16

R2: *Mislim da je Internet postao dosta kulturno svjestan, potiču se različite kulture stoga smatram da su društvene mreže postale platforma na kojoj se posebno na engleskom potiče prihvaćanje razlika kultura i jednostavno dodatno informira o njima.*<sup>21</sup>

When it comes to the increased use of English versus Croatian, these adolescents provide similar answers. They agree that they notice English being used increasingly, and they use it in speech. They share the opinion that they would like Croatian to be used more than some English terms in speech.

#### Example 17

R1: *Ja bih nekada da više koristim hrvatske riječi nego engleske, ali mislim da bi se više trebale koristiti hrvatske riječi nego engleske kako bi se to moglo reći.*<sup>22</sup>

It is clear from the explanation that adolescents would prefer to use Croatian expressions if they existed and were accepted in practice in Croatian. It concludes that Croatian adolescents are mostly aware of the influence of English on the Croatian language and believe that it has both a positive and a negative side. An awareness of the perceived negative effect can be noted in example 18 below.

#### Example 18

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<sup>21</sup> *I think that the Internet has become quite culturally aware, different cultures are encouraged, so I think that social networks have become a platform where, especially in English, the acceptance of cultural differences is encouraged and simply provides additional information about them.*

<sup>22</sup> *Sometimes I would like to use Croatian words more than English ones, but I think that Croatian words should be used more than English words in order to say that.*

R4: *Mene nekako osobno to žvrcira kad netko koristi englesku riječ, a mi imamo hrvatsku pa onda samo ubaci engleski u hrvatski. Nekako mi se bolje slaže kad već imamo na hrvatskom pa da onda koristimo hrvatsku verziju.*<sup>23</sup>

Most of the answers given by the adolescents in this interview have illustrated the attitudes of Croatian adolescents on how language ideologies are formed at an early age. The young person, an adolescent, is surrounded by values and practices within their society, family, and media, who have a somewhat negative attitude when it comes to entry of English words in Croatian vocabulary. Namely, these adolescents explain that they find it strange when English terms are used on national television and that it is more reasonable for them to use the Croatian standard language.

Even when it comes to foreign tourists visiting Croatia, respondents have the attitude that Croatian should be preserved and given priority in its use, although English is one of the usual means of communication between foreign tourists and Croatian locals.

#### Example 19

R1: *Npr. preko sezone dođemo u neku turističku atrakciju i sjećam se da se prvo priča na engleskom, a onda na hrvatskom i ostalim jezicima. Mislim u redu, vjerojatno većina ljudi, odnosno turista će prvo razumjeti engleski, ali mislim da kako smo u Hrvatskoj, trebali bismo prvo na hrvatskome to reći, to bi nam trebalo biti neki prioritet.*<sup>24</sup>

The negative effects of using English are, in the opinion of the respondents, the loss of vocabulary from the Croatian mother tongue due to the frequent use of the English language and the isolation of people who do not know English. Adolescents, drawing on their experiences, believe that when English is used in the presence of individuals who do not speak it, this can make them feel depreciated. It is mentioned again that in professional settings or conversations with older

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<sup>23</sup> *It kind of annoys me personally when someone uses an English word, and we have a Croatian one, and then they just insert English into Croatian. Somehow, it sounds better when we already have it in Croatian, so let's use the Croatian version.*

<sup>24</sup> *For example, during the summer holidays and during the tourist season on the coast, we go to some tourist attraction and I remember that the conversation is first in English, and then in Croatian and other languages. I mean, it's fine, probably most people, that is, tourists, will understand English first, but I think that since we are in Croatia, we should say it in Croatian first, that should be our priority.*

individuals, it is necessary to use the Croatian standard language. Although it is considered that the use of standard language, in this case, Croatian standard language, is desirable, in reality, standard language is more used for writing and implies strictly following grammar and orthography rules that are very difficult to adhere to in spoken communication.

#### **5.2.4. Practical use of English**

Respondents agree that their lives are easier because they know English and it offers them different possibilities, from smaller ones such as watching series in English without subtitles or dubbing, to those more serious, such as business and academic opportunities that are offered to them in the future. They believe that the knowledge of English creates more opportunities for them because what they need can be found more often in English than in Croatian, and the use of English allows them to function much easier and to find the content they need or are interested in.

##### **Example 20**

*R4: Mislim da razumijem jako puno toga i puno mi je lakše funkcionirati u svakodnevnom životu jer jako malo toga je dostupno na hrvatskom i kad razumijem sve to na engleskom, osjećam se uključenom, kao da imam puno više mogućnosti nego kad znam samo hrvatski.<sup>25</sup>*

According to Jenkins (2003), the majority of scientific, technological, and academic knowledge in the world exists in English, and English accounts for more than 80% of all information saved in electronic retrieval systems. Therefore, it is not surprising that this is often mentioned by the adolescents in their answers as they are still high-school students and their main source of information in the educational purposes is the Internet where most of the useful information can be found in English, as demonstrated by example 21 below.

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<sup>25</sup> *I think I understand a lot, and it is much easier for me to function in everyday life because very few things are available in Croatian and when I understand all of that in English, I feel included, as if I have a lot more opportunities than if I only knew Croatian.*

## Example 21

R2: *Pa zapravo mi to dosta olakšava i zahvalna sam na tome što mi je zapravo omogućeno da pratim i razne sadržaje na engleskom.*<sup>26</sup>

Adolescents believe that social networks have encouraged the development and learning of English among young people. Recording TikTok videos and listening people speaking English has made learning the language more available and easier to younger generations who are willing to do something new and interesting. To understand those videos, a person must have a certain proficiency in English and thus learn some terms or phrases used for these purposes. According to the interviews, the social aspect of English certainly plays a big role for young adolescents in Croatia because they are aware that if they do not follow the content in English that is appreciated by their peers, they do not fit into their social circle. Being involved in the content and events in English that are created, followed, and shared by their peers online provide these adolescents with a sense of belonging and allows them to function in society.

Global trends affect all participants in society, including adolescents, who are affected by these changes perhaps more than anyone else. Respondents clearly express their opinion that trends come into the Croatian language and culture and carry with them a noticeable influence of English.

## Example 22

Question: *Smatraš li da na korištenje engleskog jezika kod hrvatskih adolescenata utječu globalni trendovi i popularna kultura? Ako je tako, na koji način (kako)?*<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Well, it actually makes it a lot easier for me, and I'm grateful that I've been able to follow a variety of content in English as well.*

<sup>27</sup> *Do you think that global trends and popular culture influence the use of English among Croatian teenagers? If so, in what way (how)?*

*I think so, because we are quite a consumer – here it is again, in English – type of population. We accept a lot of media, a lot of influencers and whether we like it or not, we are influenced especially by the new growing media such as TikTok, which I know a lot of people around me are using.*

R3: *Smatram da da, jer mi smo dosta consumer, opet na engleskom, populacija. Prihvaćamo puno medija, puno influencera i htjeli mi to ili ne, pod utjecajem smo još pogotovo s novim rastućim medijima kao što je TikTok, za koji znam da jako puno ljudi u mojoj okolini koristi.*

The role of English in Croatian communicative practices seems inevitable to adolescents and is a very important factor in their everyday communication. Its role in business purposes and as a database of information is very important to adolescents in Croatia, and these respondents believe that the use of English among young people will spread. These adolescents are aware of the opinion that there is a very negative attitude in Croatia towards the entry of the English language into Croatian, which encourages the design of Croatian neologisms to replace English words. This is most likely the influence of attempts of language purism-oriented authors to stop language contact between Croatian and English (for example, Opačić 2006, Frančić 2006). However, adolescents participating in this interview believe that people will use these neologisms less and that English words will remain in use by speakers of Croatian, as shown in example 22.

### **5.2.5. English language and self-confidence**

When asked if English makes them feel more confident, most respondents explained that they do not think that knowledge of English makes them cooler than other peers, but they do share the opinion that they can express themselves better in English, and better understand others around them. One of the respondents believes that her knowledge of English helps her feel more self-confident, but sometimes she feels ashamed of speaking English, fearing that she will say something wrong and that she will seem less cool. What can be understood from this answer is that not knowing some expressions or words in English as a foreign language can cause a feeling of inferiority in speakers. It may result in questioning one's language proficiency and fear of public speaking and interactions in English, simply because a person is afraid of the reaction of others if they make a mistake.

Example 23

Question: *Misliš li da se govoreći engleski osjećaš samopouzdanije ili cool među svojim vršnjacima?*<sup>28</sup>

R4: *Mislim da da, to daje taj nekakav cool osjećaj, ali mene je baš zbog toga nekad onako i sram govoriti engleski da ne bih nešto krivo izgovorila pa da onda ne bi ispalo kao manje cool.*

As Jenkins (2003) notes, personal advantage or prestige of being able to speak English is in many cultures as providing higher status on the speaker. As examples so far show, adolescents in Croatia seem to have a certain affinity towards English as it may result in a higher social status in their personal social spheres where they will be more praised for their knowledge of English, confirming Jenkins' findings.

### **5.2.6. Difficulties facing English language use**

Respondents agree regarding problems or challenges in communicating in English and claim that they had difficulties through experience, but that using and actively practising English helped them to overcome these language barriers. One of the adolescents mentions the use of Google Translator, which she uses if she does not understand an expression. The role of machine translation and the development of translation tools has greatly contributed to a better knowledge of foreign languages, and it can be seen that these tools also contribute to learning a foreign language, in this case English.

When the respondents were explaining difficulties in communicating in English, they most often gave examples of situations in the environment with their peers such as school or socializing at home. The most common problems in communication occur among schoolmates who do not have an equal level of proficiency in English and therefore have difficulties with vocabulary or grammar, which makes it difficult to communicate with each other. One of the respondents gives an example of a conversation between her and a friend from Germany, communicating with each

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<sup>28</sup> *Do you think that speaking English makes you feel more confident or cool among your peers?*

*I think yes, it makes me feel kind of cool, but that's why I'm sometimes embarrassed to speak English so that I don't say something wrong, and then it doesn't seem less cool.*

other in English, sometimes having difficulty communicating, but with mutual help in explaining, they manage to help each other and understand each other. It is an example that illustrates how speakers of English as a second foreign language can be understood in such a way that if they do not have an excellent proficiency in the vocabulary required for communication, they manage to find a way to help each other by explaining the language parts they do not understand.

#### Example 24

R3: *Ne sjećam se točno o čemu smo pričali, ali ja i prijatelj koji je iz Njemačke smo razgovarali na engleskom i oboje smo imali malo poteškoća, ali nekako malo po malo, jedno drugom smo pomogli. Ono što ja nisam znala, on bi mi objasnio i suprotno.*<sup>29</sup>

According to the interviews, these adolescents do not feel discriminated against or that society has prejudices against them when they use English in their speech, although they note that among the elderly population, they sometimes feel misunderstood in certain situations when they use English in their company.

While the respondents did not experience discrimination over the use and proficiency in English, they stated that they sometimes they felt shame because they did not know something, either vocabulary or grammar, although no one around them intentionally offended them about it, as illustrated in example 25.

#### Example 25

R4: *Mislim da se nikad nisam osjećala tako među drugima, ali sam se ja osjećala osobno npr. osuđivala sam samu sebe što znam manje nego drugi, što imam manji vokabular ili tako nešto.*<sup>30</sup>

When it comes to English being a link between people of different cultural and national backgrounds, adolescents believe that English represents a universal language code that connects people, as shown in Example 26 below.

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<sup>29</sup> *I don't remember exactly what we talked about, but me and a friend who is from Germany were talking in English and we both had a little difficulty but somehow, little by little, we helped each other. What I did not know, he would explain to me and vice versa.*

<sup>30</sup> *I don't think I have ever felt it among the others, but I felt personally like I was judging myself for knowing less than others, for having a smaller vocabulary or something.*



## Example 26

R2: *Mislim da engleski je postao nekakva univerzalna platforma stoga smo svi koji znamo engleski, imam osjećaj da smo dosta povezani no naravno da dodatni jezici omogućuju još više ljudi da bude povezano.*<sup>31</sup>

Adolescents in Croatia use English in everyday communication and respondents believe that there are certain differences when it comes to the manner and purpose for which it is used. One of the adolescents believes that there is a difference in the use of English between urban and rural population in Croatia.

## Example 27

R1: *Mislim da postoji razlika među ruralnim i urbaniziranim mjestima, tamo gdje je veći broj mlađih osoba, mislim da je tamo engleski zastupljeniji.*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *I think that English has become a kind of universal platform, so all of us who know English, I have the feeling that we are quite connected, but of course additional languages allow even more people to be connected.*

<sup>32</sup> *I think there is a difference between rural and urbanized places, where there are more young people, I think English is more prevalent there.*

## 6. Conclusion

This research has certainly proven that the role of English for Croatian speakers in this age group is much more complex than just reducing it to a lexical model and identifying borrowed anglicisms. English is clearly a prestigious language for this generation, which they see as an advantage in their professional career in the future, but also on a personal and social level, through the possibility of communicating with the entire spectrum of interlocutors, from peers on social networks to friends and relatives abroad who do not speak Croatian. But at the same time, they are aware that it is a code that is used in specific situations and they do not want to replace Croatian with it, they understand that it spreads under the influence of popular trends and they fully understand where its use is appropriate and where it is not, compared to Croatian. This shows that English is not just a language that is taught in schools and used only in classes but is used to make new acquaintances and gain new experiences. English serves teenagers as a bridge between new cultures and their understanding of the world around them, broadening their horizons and providing more opportunities. The analysis of the collected data allows to answer the three starting research questions within the context of Croatian adolescents' communicative practices.

The first research question (*How does the increased use of English in Croatian media affect the communicative practices of Croatian adolescents?*) can be answered the following way. The use of English in the media that surround adolescents in Croatia certainly encourages them to increase the use of English for various purposes and circumstances. This research has shown that adolescents use the media and English to get more content and find what content they are interested in, which is otherwise not available to them in Croatian. Adolescents are aware that they sometimes use English more than they would like, but they do not think that this necessarily means that using it will destroy the Croatian language. The Croatian media, or the media used by Croatian adolescents, certainly have a role in the spread of the English language among young people, but the younger generations do not see this as a very negative thing but rather as an advantage for the Croatian language to develop and open up by following contemporary trends and by enriching its vocabulary.

When it comes to the second research question (*How do social factors such as, social class, educational background, and the level of proficiency in English influence the extent to which*

*Croatian adolescents use English?*), results of interviews and questionnaire provided significant insight into the answer to this research question. First, in the questionnaire, respondents make it clear that their level of proficiency in English is very high and that they are able to use the language for different purposes. The enviable level of knowledge of English can be attributed to the Croatian educational system, that makes English a compulsory subject from the elementary level, although this research shows that adolescents certainly further improve English by using various methods outside of school, such as using social media, listening to music and even reading novels in English. According to the answers from the interview and questionnaire, it can be concluded that the knowledge of English indisputably plays a major role in the lives of adolescents because they are aware that if they do not know English, they will not be able to follow the content in English either on social networks or any other form and will therefore be left out of the desired social circle. By being involved in content and events in English that are followed, created and shared online by their peers, adolescents find a sense of belonging and English helps them function in society.

Finally, the third research question (*What are the views of adolescents regarding the effects of English use on Croatian? What is their attitude regarding the potential negative effects of the increased use of English?*) can be answered as follows. Although some authors in Croatia fear that the media and new technologies pose a danger to the Croatian language through the overuse and spread of English, especially among the younger generations, this research refutes this dramatic claim. As can be seen from the responses of young respondents in this research, adolescents are fully aware of the impact of the English language and they are trying to use it less in situations where they see that there is no need to use English, but rather use adequate words in Croatian. These adolescents seem to be willing to use Croatian instead of English version of some words, although they don't believe that the newly created Croatian neologisms make sense to use and that they will not catch on in actual language use. Adolescents believe that language must progress and that Croatian must keep up with the times, which implies the use of English in the media around them and that it is simply not possible to eradicate English vocabulary from Croatian, but it is necessary to see English-Croatian contact without negative attitudes towards English. The role of the English language is to provide Croatian adolescents with new opportunities and enable what they could not achieve with Croatian alone, so they see English as a key factor to their successful future.

While this study provided valuable insights into the role of English in the communicative practices of Croatian adolescents, it is important to acknowledge its limitations in terms of sample size. The relatively small number of respondents, while providing significant qualitative and quantitative data, may not fully capture the diverse spectrum of perspectives and experiences within this demographic. Therefore, in order to give a more comprehensive and clearer picture of the role of English among Croatian adolescents, future research attempts would greatly benefit from expanding the participant pool to encompass an even larger and more diverse range of respondents. By doing so, a broader sample of the population can be represented, enabling a deeper understanding of the intricate ways in which English influences communication, identity, and social dynamics among Croatian youth. This study aimed to shed light on the role of English in the communication practices of Croatian teenagers, as well as its influence on their identity formation and future prospects. The findings of this study could be used to inform language policy and education practices in Croatia, as well as contribute to the broader field of sociolinguistics.

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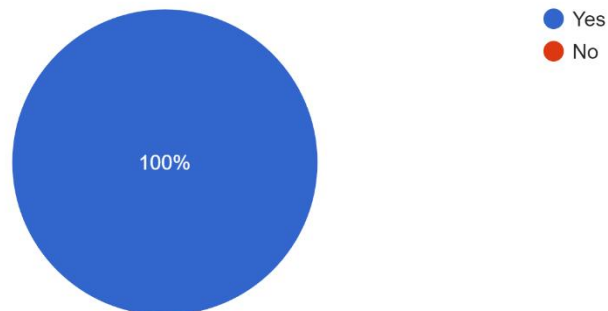
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## 8. Appendix

### 8.1. Questionnaire

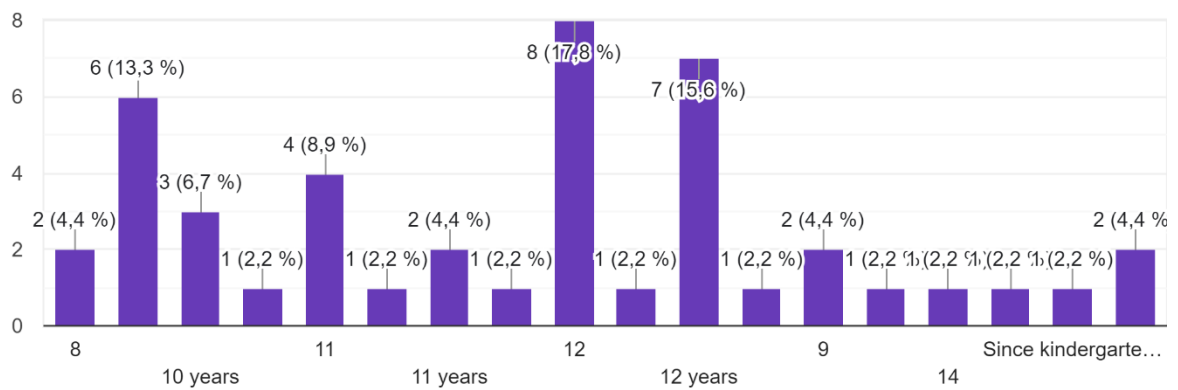
Do you study English at school?

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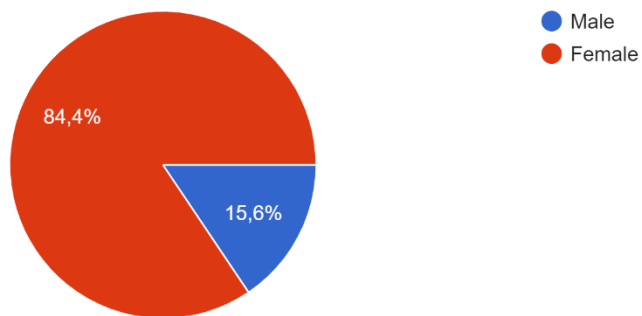
How long have you been studying English? (In years)

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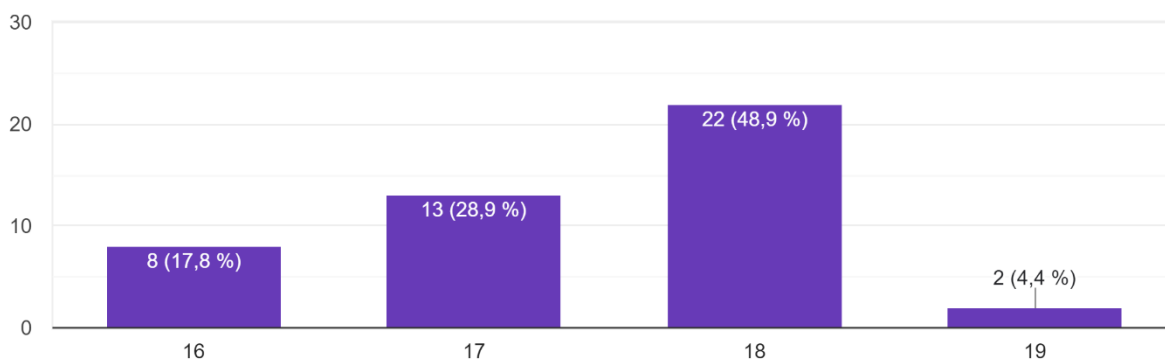
### Gender

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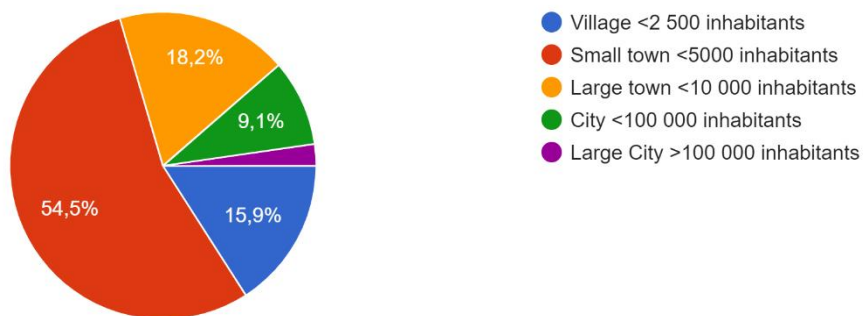
### Age

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### Where do you live?

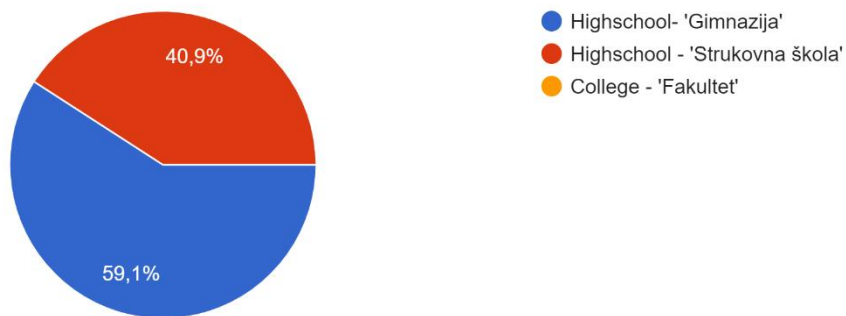
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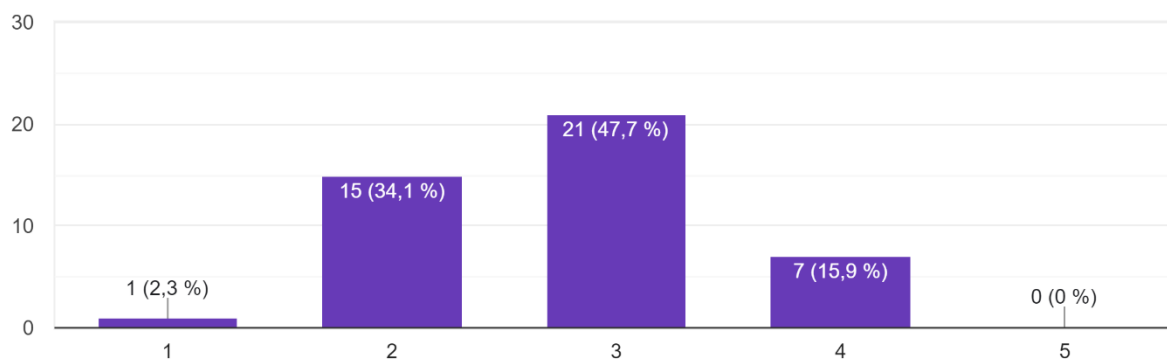
### School

44 odgovora



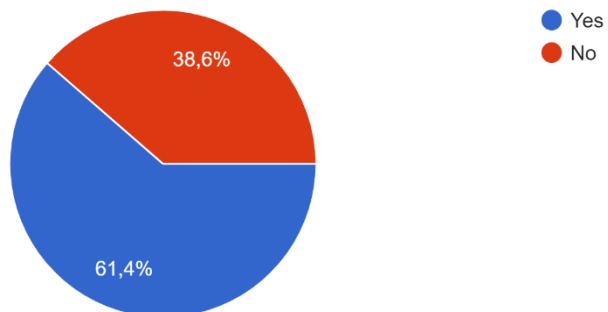
### How often do you speak English at school?

44 odgovora



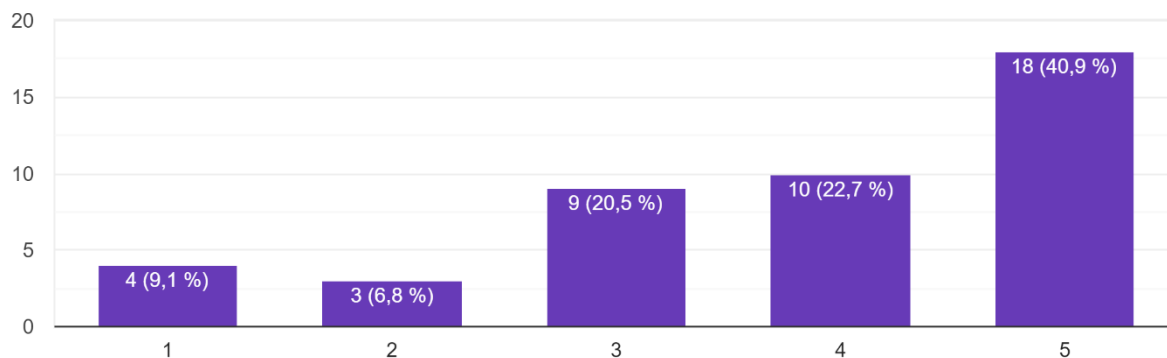
### Do you feel that English classes at school adequately prepare you for communicating in English?

44 odgovora



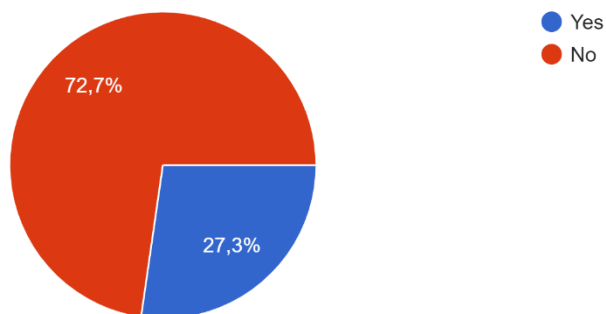
How comfortable do you feel speaking English in front of your classmates?

44 odgovora



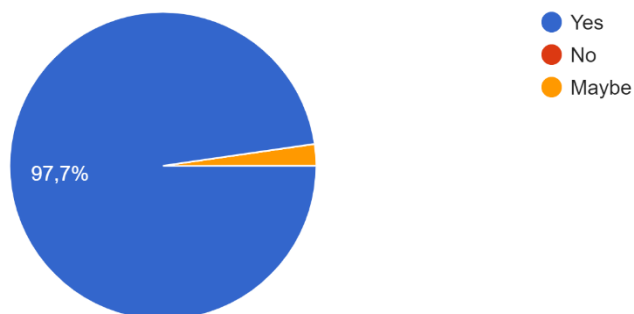
Have you ever used English to communicate with teachers outside of class?

44 odgovora



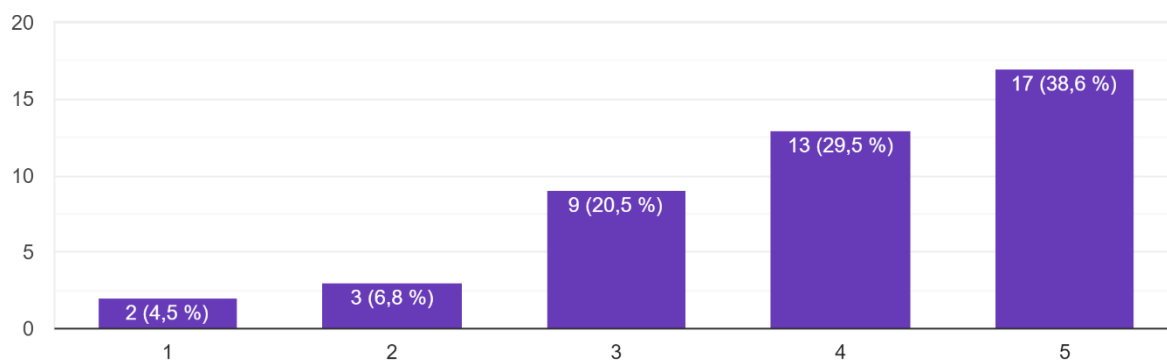
Do you think it is important to learn English in school?

44 odgovora



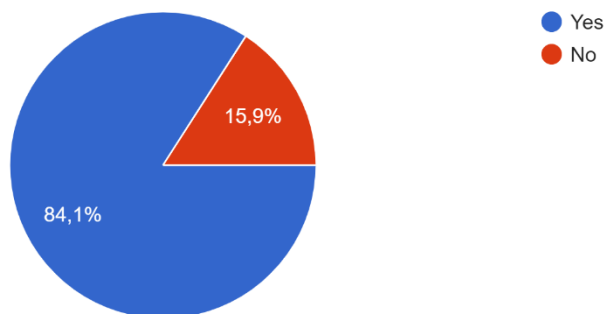
How often do you use English in your daily life outside of school?

44 odgovora



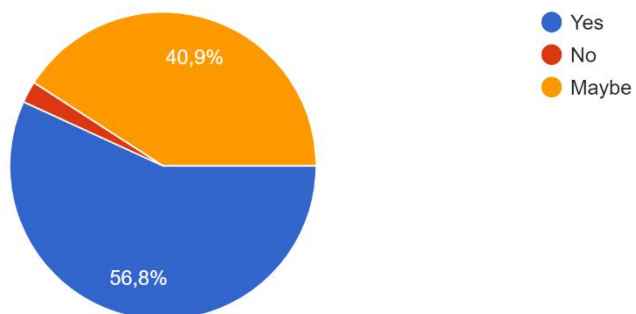
Have you ever used English to communicate with strangers in public?

44 odgovora



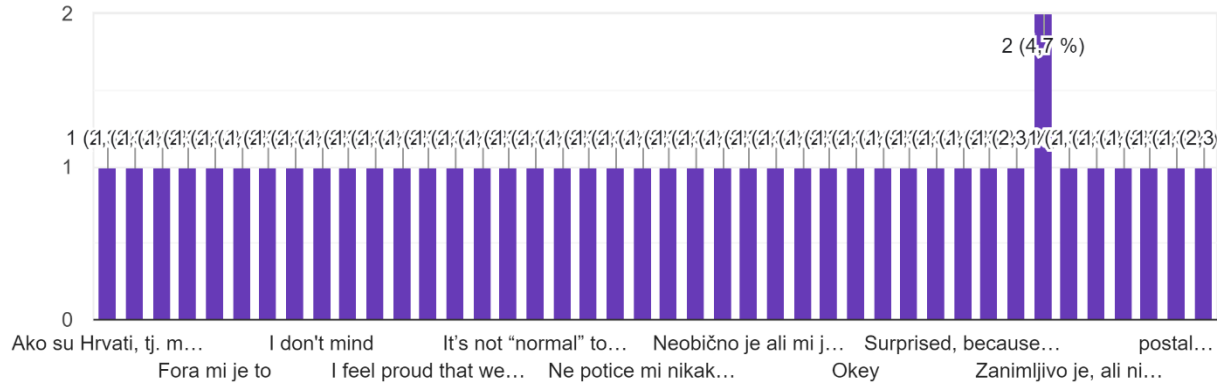
Do you think knowing English is important for getting a job in Croatia?

44 odgovora



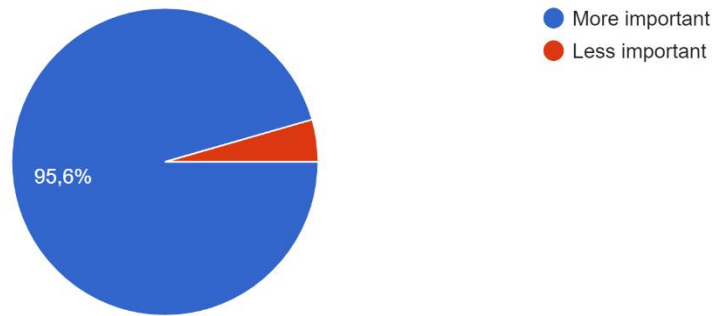
How do you feel when you hear people speaking English in public in Croatia? (Možeš odgovoriti na hrvatskom)

43 odgovora



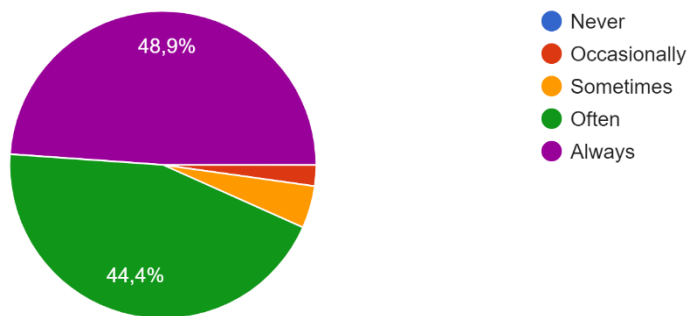
Do you think English is becoming more or less important in Croatian society?

45 odgovora



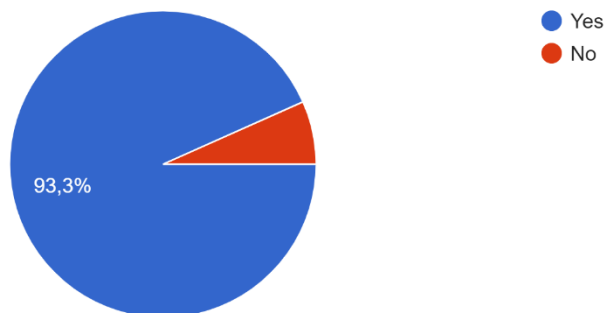
### How often do you watch TV shows or movies in English?

45 odgovora



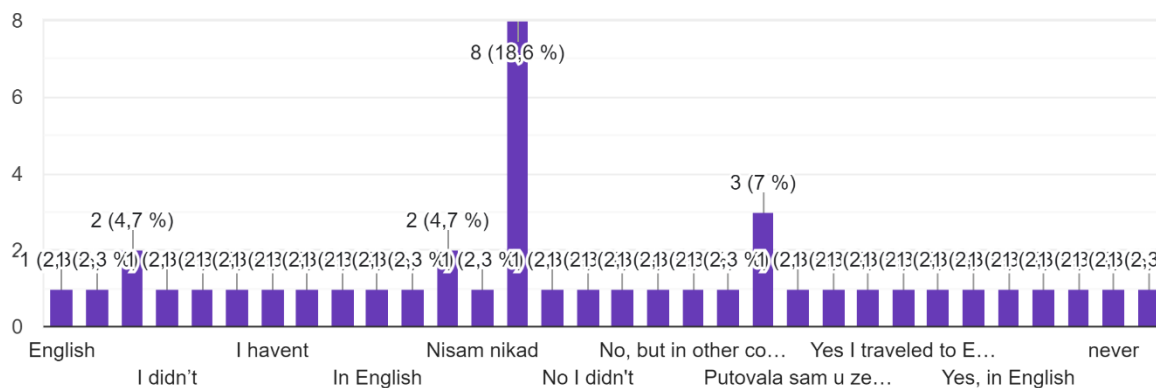
### Do you listen to English-language music or podcasts in your free time?

45 odgovora



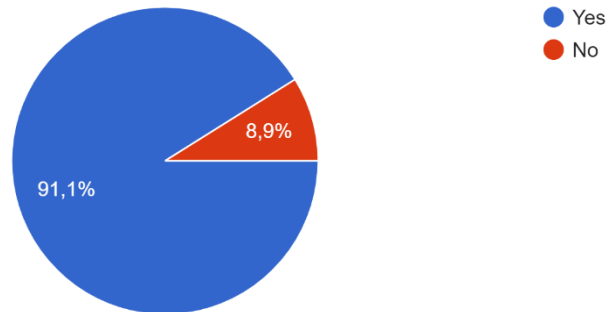
### Have you ever traveled to an English-speaking country? How did you communicate there?

43 odgovora



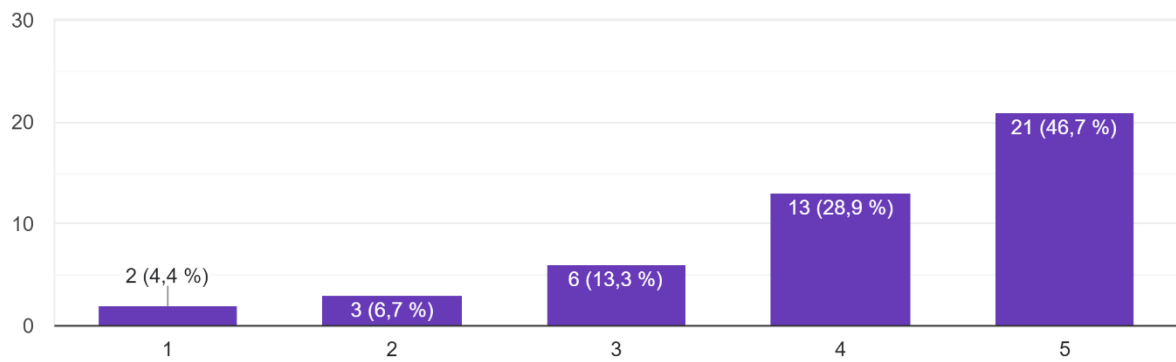
Have you ever played video games in English?

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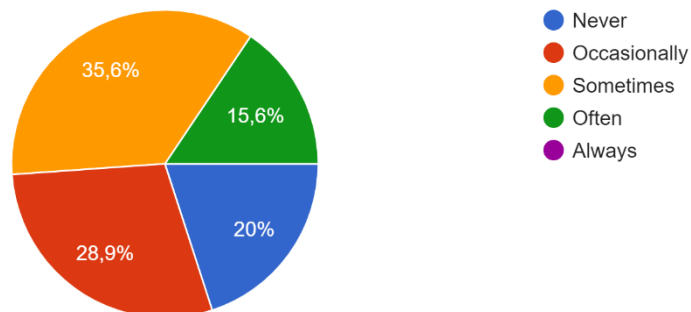
How comfortable do you feel reading books or articles in English in your free time?

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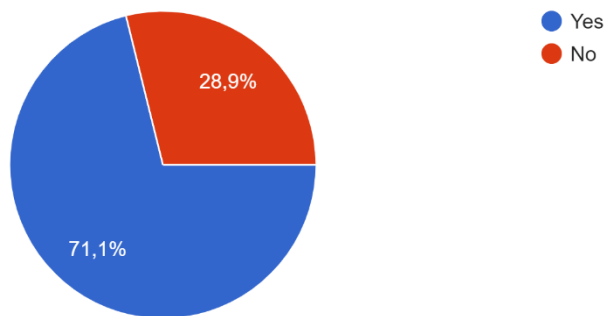
How often do you communicate with your friends in English?

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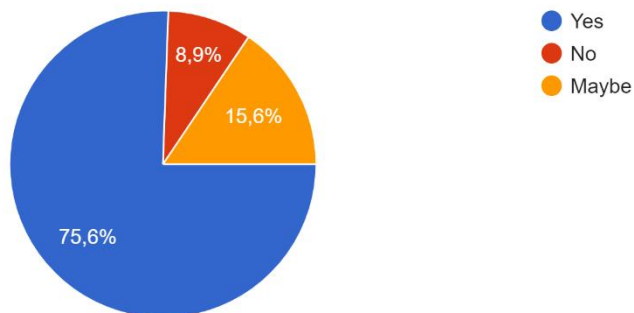
Have you ever made friends with someone primarily through English communication?

45 odgovora



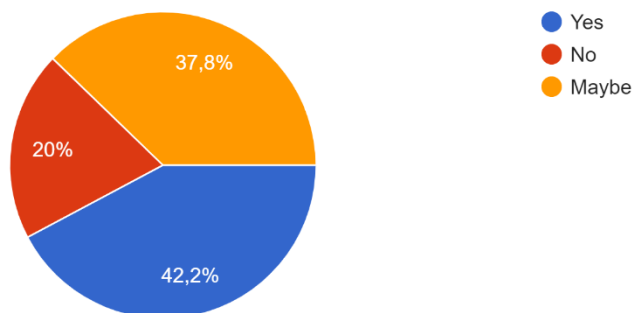
Do you feel that speaking English has helped you make friends outside of Croatia?

45 odgovora



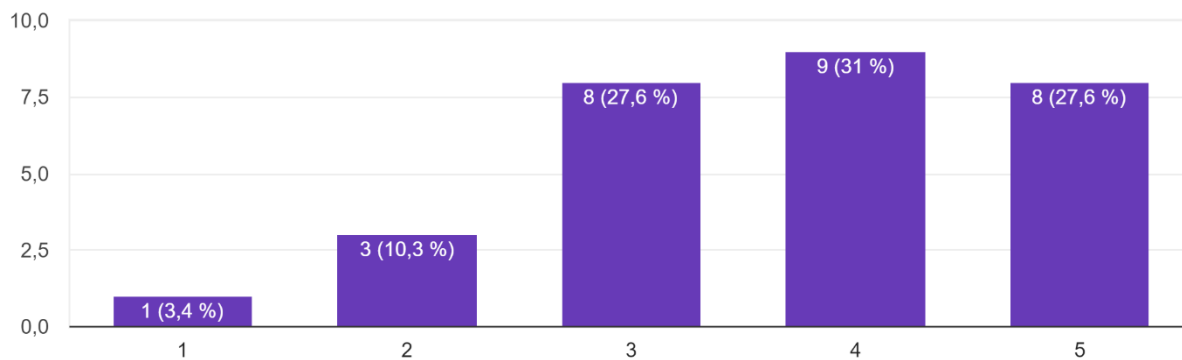
Do you feel like you use different language styles or vocabulary when speaking with friends in English versus Croatian?

45 odgovora



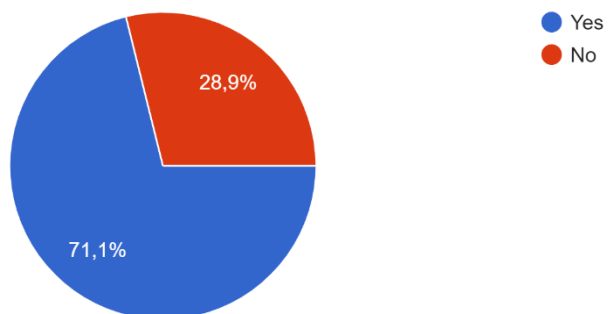
How important is English to you for maintaining relationships with friends outside of Croatia? (If you don't have friends outside Croatia, skip this question.)

29 odgovora



Do any members of your family speak English fluently?

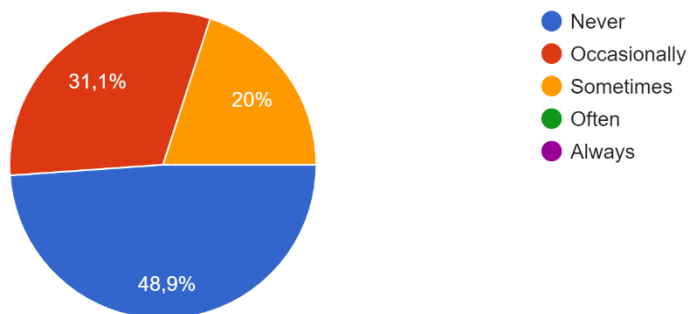
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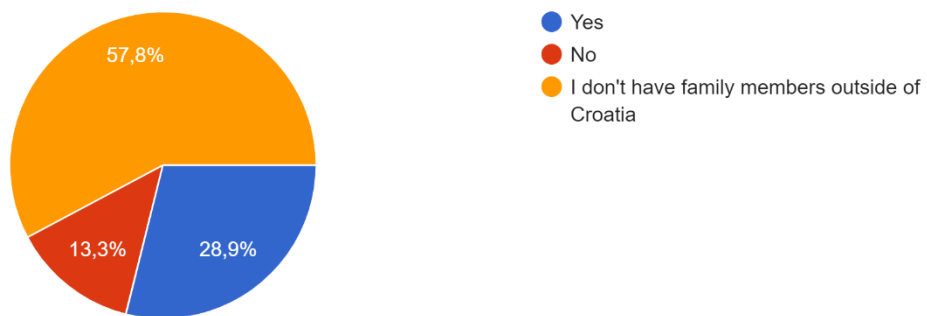
How often do you communicate with family members in English?

45 odgovora



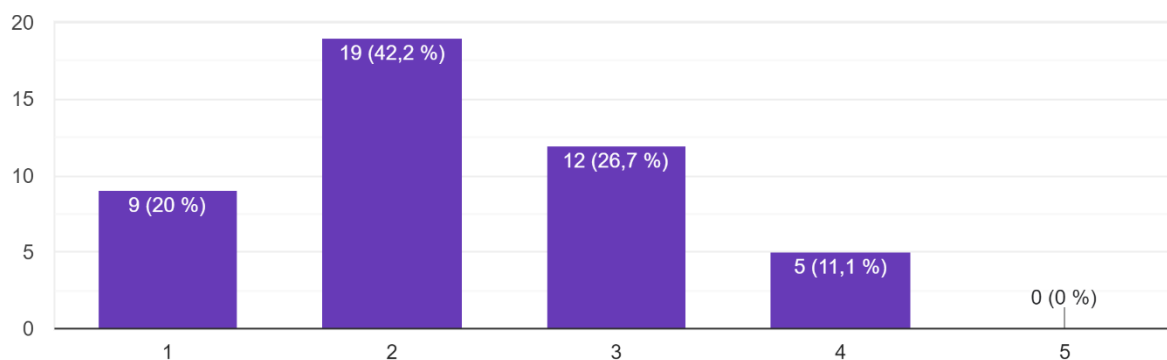
Do you feel that speaking English has helped you communicate better with family members outside of Croatia?

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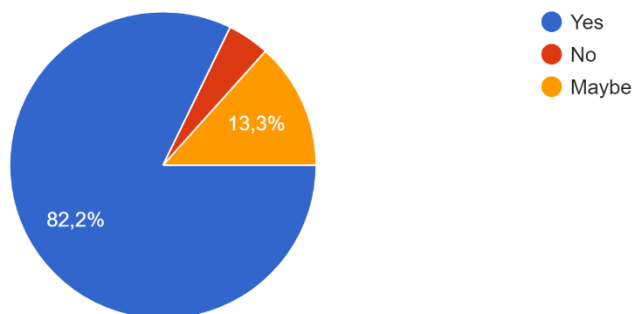
### How important is English to your family in general?

45 odgovora



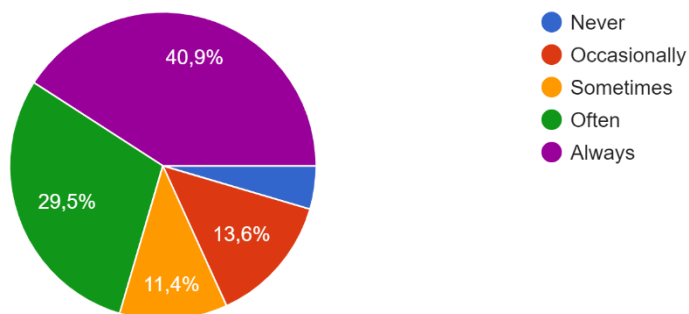
### Do you feel that your family supports your English language learning?

45 odgovora



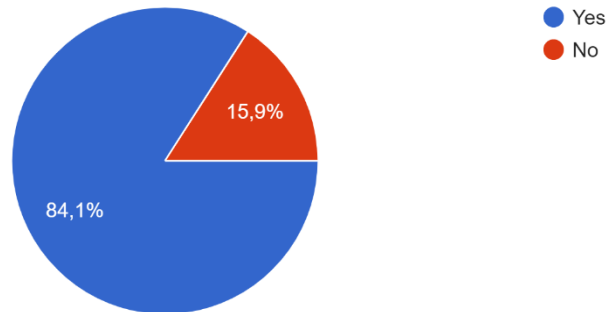
### How often do you use English on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter?

44 odgovora



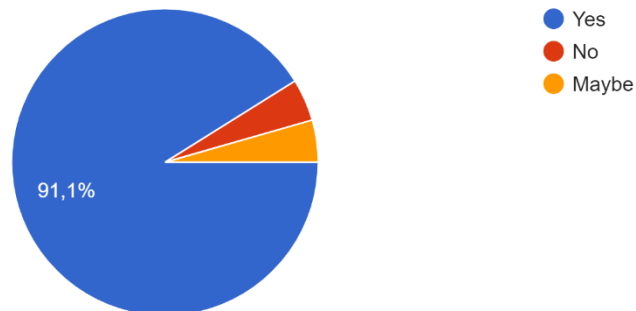
Have you ever communicated with someone on social media primarily using English?

44 odgovora



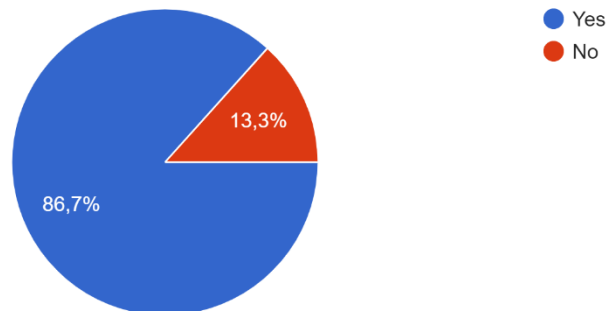
Do you think social media has helped you improve your English skills?

45 odgovora



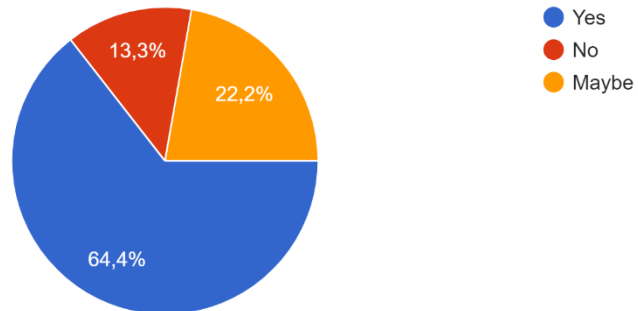
Have you ever used social media to practice your English skills?

45 odgovora



Do you think social media has changed the way you communicate in English compared to face-to-face communication?

45 odgovora



## 8.2. Interview questions and answers outline (in Croatian)

1. Možeš li mi reći nešto o svojim iskustvima s korištenjem engleskog jezika u svakodnevnom životu?
2. Koje resurse (Internet, serije, igrice...) koristiš za poboljšanje znanja engleskog jezika?
3. Koje vrste medija ili sadržaja redovito koristiš i zašto (koristiš li se društvenim mrežama, čitaš li novine, pratiš li dnevne novosti)?
4. Koje engleske fraze ili riječi koristiš u komunikaciji s prijateljima (možeš navesti nekoliko primjera)?
5. Jesi li ikada učio engleski kroz video igrice ili online *gaming* zajednicu?
6. Kako se služiš engleskim jezikom u svojim omiljenim hobijima i zanimanjima?
7. Što misliš kako tvoji vršnjaci koriste engleski u međusobnoj komunikaciji?
8. Što misliš kako upotreba engleskog jezika u svakodnevnom životu utječe na tvoj kulturni identitet?
9. Jesi li neke engleske riječi ili fraze naučila iz svojih omiljenih TV emisija ili filmova?
10. Kako se osjećaš zbog toga što možeš razumjeti engleske filmove, TV emisije i glazbu bez titlova?
11. Misliš li da se govoreći engleski osjećaš samopouzdanije ili cool među svojim vršnjacima?
12. Smatraš li da je korištenje engleskog jezika važno za tvoju buduću karijeru ili mogućnosti obrazovanja?
13. Kako misliš da ti znanje engleskog jezika može koristiti u budućnosti?
14. Jesi li ikada iskusio poteškoće ili izazove u komunikaciji na engleskom? Kako si ih prevladao?
15. Možeš li opisati situaciju kada si imala poteškoća u komunikaciji na engleskom s nekim?
16. Jesi li se ikada osjećao osuđivano ili diskriminirano zbog svoga znanja engleskog jezika?

17. Smatraš li da je učenje više jezika, uključujući engleski, važno za izgradnju razumijevanja i povezanosti između različitih kultura?
18. Misliš li da postoje razlike u tome kako se engleskim jezikom služe različite skupine adolescenata u Hrvatskoj? Ako je tako, možeš li opisati te razlike?
19. U kojim se kontekstima (situacijama) obično koristi engleski jezik?
20. Što misliš kako mladi u Hrvatskoj uče engleski?
21. Što misliš kako su društvene mreže utjecale na korištenje engleskog jezika u hrvatskoj mladenačkoj kulturi (kulturi mladih)?
22. Smatraš li da na korištenje engleskog jezika kod hrvatskih adolescenata utječu globalni trendovi i popularna kultura? Ako je tako, na koji način (kako)?
23. Što misliš o korištenju engleskog jezika u odnosu na hrvatski?
24. Jesi li ikada doživio predrasude ili diskriminaciju zbog upotrebe engleskog jezika (u nekoj situaciji)?
25. Što misliš kako poslodavci i sveučilišta u Hrvatskoj gledaju na znanje engleskog jezika?
26. Možeš li opisati bilo kakve slučajeve u kojima si primijetio da se engleski koristi za svladavanje kulturnih ili jezičnih podjela?
27. Koliko je po tvom mišljenju važno da hrvatska mladež zna engleski jezik?
28. Možeš li opisati neki slučaj u kojima si primijetio da se engleski koristi na neočekivani ili neobičan način u Hrvatskoj?
29. Misliš li da se upotreba engleskog jezika u hrvatskom društvu povećava ili smanjuje? Zašto misliš da je to tako, što je uzrok tome?
30. Smatraš li da među hrvatskom mladeži ima i nekih nedostataka u širokoj upotrebi engleskog jezika?
31. Kako se osjećaš o korištenju engleskog jezika u školskom okruženju (akademske okruženjima) ili prilikom pisanja formalnih dokumenata?

32. Kako zamišljaš ulogu engleskog jezika u hrvatskoj komunikacijskoj praksi (govor, pisanje, čitanje...) u budućnosti, odnosno na koji način misliš da će se engleski jezik koristiti u budućnosti?

### **8.3. Interview questions and answers outline (in English)**

1. Can you tell me about your experiences with the use of English in everyday life?
2. What resources (Internet, series, games...) do you use to improve your English skills?
3. What types of media or content do you regularly use and why (if you use social networks, if you read newspapers, if you follow the daily news)?
4. What English phrases or words do you use when communicating with friends (you can give a few examples)?
5. Have you ever studied English through video games or online gaming community?
6. How do you use English in your favourite hobbies and professions?
7. How do you think your peers use English to communicate with each other?
8. How do you think the use of English in everyday life affects your cultural identity?
9. Did you learn any English words or phrases from your favourite TV shows or movies?
10. How do you feel about being able to understand English movies, TV shows and music without subtitles?
11. Do you think speaking English makes you feel more confident or cool among your peers?
12. Do you think that the use of English is important for your future career or educational opportunities?
13. How do you think your English skills will benefit you in the future?
14. Have you ever experienced difficulties or challenges in communicating in English? How did you overcome them?

15. Can you describe a situation where you had difficulty communicating in English with someone?
16. Have you ever felt judged or discriminated against because of your knowledge of the English language?
17. Do you think learning multiple languages, including English, is important for building understanding and connection between different cultures?
18. Do you think there are differences in how English is used by different groups of adolescents in Croatia? If so, can you describe the differences?
19. In what contexts (situations) is English commonly used in your environment?
20. How do you think young people in Croatia learn English?
21. How do you think social media influenced the use of English in Croatian youth culture?
22. Do you think that the use of English in Croatian adolescents is influenced by global trends and popular culture? If so, in what way?
23. What do you think about the use of English in relation to Croatian?
24. Have you ever experienced prejudice or discrimination due to the use of English (in a situation)?
25. How do you think employers and universities in Croatia view the knowledge of English?
26. Can you describe any cases where you have noticed that English is used to overcome cultural or linguistic divisions?
27. In your opinion, how important is it for Croatian youth to know the English language?
28. Can you describe a case in which you noticed that English is used in an unexpected or unusual way in Croatia?
29. Do you think that the use of English in Croatian society is increasing or decreasing? Why do you think that is, what is the cause of it?



30. Do you think that there are some shortcomings in the widespread use of the English language among Croatian youth?
31. How do you feel about using English in school (academic) settings or when writing formal documents?
32. How do you imagine the role of English in Croatian communication practices (speaking, writing, reading...) in the future, or how do you think English will be used in the future?