

INTEGRATING ENGLISH IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: In today's globalized world, English proficiency is a critical factor for success in various fields, including sports. This study investigates the specific needs and interests of first-year Physical Education and Sport (PES) students at South-West University in Bulgaria regarding English language learning. Limited Research, High Demand Existing research on the needs of PES students for English is scarce, making it difficult to address their unique challenges. This study aims to bridge this gap by understanding their current English language proficiency, their goals for improvement, and their preferred teaching methods. Survey Insights: Demographics and Language Learning A survey of 100 PES students revealed a majority of males aged 19-24. Students expressed diverse perspectives on English learning. Some desired interactive methods and a variety of materials like sports texts and videos. Others emphasized improving pronunciation of sports terminology and gaining confidence to communicate in various sporting situations. The survey highlighted the need for practical exercises focusing on sports scenarios and communication skill development. English in the Life of a PES Student. The study underscores the importance of English in a PES student's career. Students identified English as a key tool for communication with coaches, teammates, international organizations, and sponsors. Furthermore, proficiency in English allows them to stay updated on the latest trends and innovations in the world of sports. Integrating English for Success To better prepare PES students for the global sporting community, the study emphasizes the need to integrate English effectively into their physical education curriculum. Students suggested incorporating English into teaching materials and lectures, organizing discussions and projects on sports topics, and creating multilingual resources. Conclusion and Future Directions The survey results show a significant interest among PES students in learning English and a strong recognition of its value for their future careers. This study emphasizes the need to integrate English strategically into the curriculum to enhance their communication skills and ability to adapt within the international sporting community. Future research can delve deeper into specific methods and approaches for integrating English into the PES curriculum. Additionally, research can explore the effectiveness of various educational strategies and programs in improving students' language skills and their impact on their future career success in the global sports arena.

Keywords: English language learning, integrating English language, physical education and sport

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of globalization, the prominence of the English Language (EL) transcends mere linguistic proficiency, emerging as an indispensable cornerstone for success across multifarious domains of societal engagement, including the realm of sports. Particularly for students ensconced within the domain of Physical Education and Sport (PES), mastery of the English language assumes a paramount significance, functioning not only as a conduit for effective communication but also as a linchpin for navigating the intricate pathways of their sporting careers (Uktamovna et al., 2021). Within this dynamic context, the acquisition and adept utilization of English transcend conventional linguistic paradigms, metamorphosing into a potent catalyst for fostering successful participation within the international sporting arena.

PES students confront an array of challenges in their athletic endeavors, extending beyond the realms of physical training and competition to encompass the imperative need for seamless interaction with a panoply of global stakeholders, ranging from sporting organizations and coaches to sponsors and media entities. In this milieu, proficiency in the English language emerges as an inexorable prerequisite, facilitating efficacious communication and affording seamless ingress into the echelons of the global sporting community (Liu et al., 2017). Despite the ostensibly universal nature of sport, the linguistic medium through which communication transpires assumes a pivotal role in engendering bonds and fostering mutual comprehension among participants within the expansive tapestry of the sports community.

Moreover, a substantial cohort of PES students harbors aspirations of transitioning into the realm of physical education pedagogy, wherein fluency in English assumes an even greater salience, serving as a conduit for accessing the latest pedagogical methodologies and resources. Proficiency in English empowers aspiring educators to seamlessly engage with peers and scholars across international borders, facilitating their participation in exchange programs and collaborative initiatives aimed at fostering cross-cultural dialogue and knowledge dissemination (Pranawengtias, 2022). Additionally, mastery of English augments their capacity to impart linguistic prowess to

their students, thereby fostering a generation of linguistically adept athletes poised to navigate the intricacies of the global sporting landscape with confidence.

For this reason, learning and improving English occupies a central place in the educational process and development of PES students. This paper examines the needs and interests of these students in terms of English language acquisition by analysing the role of English in their sport careers, the preferred teaching methods and the materials used. In this context, understanding the specific needs of PES students in terms of English language learning is essential in order to achieve a more effective and tailored learning experience that meets their professional and personal goals (Padial Ruz et.al. 2022).

This paper focuses on exploring the needs and interests of first year students of Physical Education and Sport in relation to English language learning. For this purpose, a survey was conducted among 100 students of Physical Education and Sport at the Faculty of Education, South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria. Our aim was to collect data on their level of English language proficiency, preferred teaching methods, materials used, expectations and perceived role of English in their sport careers (Farrell et.al., 2020).

The aim was to provide a detailed analysis of these aspects, paying particular attention to the students' individual needs and requirements in terms of language acquisition. By exploring these factors, the aim is to understand how the English language learning process for student athletes can be improved by tailoring it to their specific needs and career ambitions (Al Arif, 2019). The analysis of the survey data will provide valuable information for the development of appropriate educational strategies and programmes aimed at improving students' language skills and their successful integration into the global sport community.

2. RELEVANCE

Delving into the needs and interests of Physical Education and Sport (PES) students holds profound significance for a multitude of compelling reasons, chief among them being:

The paramount importance of the English language for PES students.

The conspicuous lack of attention devoted to addressing the unique needs of PES students.

It is discernible that extant research concerning the needs and interests of PES students in the realm of English language acquisition is conspicuously scarce, thus impeding a comprehensive understanding and efficacious redressal of their specific needs and challenges (Krüger, 2018). This paucity underscores the pressing need for further scholarly inquiry and exploration in this domain, with a view towards fortifying the educational landscape and furnishing robust support systems tailored to the exigencies of PES students traversing their academic and vocational odysseys (Bell et al., 2004).

The overarching objective of the present study is multifaceted and profound in its scope: it endeavors to meticulously gauge the proficiency levels of English among PES students by undertaking a granular dissection of their competencies, lacunae, aspirations, and proclivities. Additionally, the study seeks to delve into a myriad of pathways for seamlessly integrating English within the pedagogical fabric of PES courses, through a scrupulous examination of diverse pedagogical methodologies and approaches. Furthermore, the study aspires to chart a course for English language instructors, delineating recommendations aimed at refining instructional techniques and materials to resonate more harmoniously with the imperatives of PES students (Kherroubi, 2016). These recommendations, imbued with a discerning sensitivity to the idiosyncratic needs and preferences of PES students, are poised to engender more efficacious learning experiences, thereby nurturing the cultivation of linguistic competencies requisite for their holistic development (Vorobel et al., 2023).

3. SURVEY RESULTS ANALYSIS

Demographics:

In terms of age distribution, the predominant cohort of students falls within the 19-24 age bracket, constituting a significant majority comprising 57 individuals. Subsequently, students aged between 25 and 30 represent the next sizable demographic segment, totaling 28 students, followed by those aged 31 and above, comprising 15 students.

Turning to gender demographics, it's evident that males dominate the student population, comprising a substantial 83% of the total respondents, while females constitute a modest 17%.

In summation, these demographic insights offer a foundational understanding of the respondent profile, furnishing valuable context for the interpretation and analysis of the survey findings.

English language:

When delving into the realm of English language acquisition, students exhibit a spectrum of perspectives and objectives. A nuanced exploration reveals a divergence in experiences, with some noting varying durations of English learning endeavors, while expressing a proclivity towards interactive pedagogical approaches and a rich array of materials, encompassing authentic sports texts and videos. Furthermore, there emerges a palpable aspiration

among students to refine their pronunciation of sport-specific jargon and fortify their confidence in navigating diverse sporting contexts. Their constructive feedback underscores a call for enhancements within the curriculum, advocating for the infusion of more hands-on exercises centered on real-life sports scenarios and the cultivation of adept communication proficiencies.

At its core, this study endeavors to furnish invaluable insights geared towards refining the educational milieu and tailoring it to better resonate with the aspirations and requisites of sports students. By meticulously considering their distinct needs and preferences within the dynamic sphere of sports, the aim is to sculpt an educational paradigm that not only imparts linguistic proficiency but also bolsters their efficacy within the sporting domain.

Physical education and sport:

The responses garnered from students offer a multifaceted glimpse into their diverse sporting proclivities, underscored by active engagement in outdoor pursuits, encompassing both competitive endeavors and routine training regimens. Moreover, their articulations illuminate a resounding acknowledgment of the pivotal role English plays within their sporting trajectories, with a keen focus on its indispensability in fostering effective communication with an array of stakeholders, including coaches, teammates, international organizations, and sponsors. Additionally, the aptitude to stay abreast of emerging trends and groundbreaking innovations within the sporting sphere emerges as a cornerstone of their rationale for prioritizing English proficiency.

In contemplating the integration of English within the realm of physical education, students proffer a repertoire of proactive strategies, advocating for its infusion within teaching materials and lectures, fostering enriching discussions and collaborative projects, and the development of versatile, multilingual instructional resources. Implicit within these recommendations is a collective aspiration to not only bolster linguistic aptitude but also to fortify their readiness for seamless integration into the global sports community, thus affirming their commitment to holistic preparation for the multifaceted demands of the sporting arena.

4. CONCLUSION

An overview of the survey results paints a vivid picture of the fervent desire of PES students to master the English language and to recognise its transformative potential in shaping their sporting destinies. These findings not only underscore a palpable enthusiasm, but also reveal an urgent need to seamlessly weave the teaching of English into the fabric of their educational odyssey. It's akin to equipping them with a linguistic compass that will enable them to navigate the labyrinthine paths of the global sporting landscape with finesse and dexterity.

Recognising English as the crucial key to effective communication with a range of stakeholders - be they coaches, teammates, international organisations or sponsors - students are conscientiously embracing its indispensable role in orchestrating the symphony of sporting interactions. It's not just about stringing words together; it's about weaving a tapestry of connection, bridging cultural and linguistic divides to foster camaraderie and collaboration on a global scale.

But the importance of English goes beyond mere communication; it serves as a portal to the beating heart of sporting innovation and evolution. Mastery of this lingua franca isn't just about articulating thoughts; it's about tapping into the zeitgeist of the sporting realm, staying attuned to the ebb and flow of trends and breakthroughs that define its ever-evolving landscape.

As we look to the horizon of future research endeavours, the landscape seems ripe with promise and possibility. Delving deeper into specific methodologies and approaches for seamlessly embedding English into the curriculum has the potential to open up new vistas of educational effectiveness. Equally, looking through the lens of different educational strategies and programmes reveals a tapestry of insights waiting to be woven into tailored interventions that can shape the trajectory of PES students towards unparalleled success in the global sporting arena.

In essence, the journey to language proficiency is not just a quest for fluency; it's an odyssey of empowerment, encouraging PES students to stake their claim in the annals of sporting history with words as their steadfast companions.

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