

Research report

09/07/2014

EVALUATION OF THE MORTIMER ENGLISH COURSES FOR CHILDREN

Professorship of English Didactics at the Catholic University
Eichstätt-Ingolstadt



SCIENTIFIC MONITORING AND EMPIRICAL EVALUATION

The goal of the scientific evaluation by the Professorship of English Didactics at the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt from April to July 2014 was to offer the management of the Mortimer English Club, in addition to the already sampled status quo, supportive advice for their valuable work regarding the language development of their protégée in the franchise-centers. This included the implementation of diagnostic analysis in action and process fields and making the successes in teaching measurable as well as further optimizing them.

The evaluation was carried out through a number of research methods:

- Visitations of several courses in 10 selected centers as well as deep insights into course structures, lesson plans and materials.
- Qualitative interviews of the teachers and school children on their learning process, learning strategies, courses and learning successes in the form of structured guideline interviews.
- Quantitative questionnaire with the parents, also on learning process, learning strategies, learning success and courses as well as on satisfaction, decisions for choosing the center and on their linguistic, socio-cultural, economic situation at home. Qualitative interviews with the parents were not conducted since the open questions of the questionnaire were detailed enough. Added value was not to be expected.
- Quantitative questionnaire with the children on their own learning strategies, their learning success as well as their joys or fears regarding the use of German and English, and on their language use outside of school.
- Interviews and conversations with the teachers to better classify the results of the survey in the analysis and interpretation.

A relatively exact image of the learning processes and successes resulted from the use of triangulation of the different empirical methods. This is documented and analyzed hereafter. In further steps, additional tests, e.g. linguistic tests, as well as didactical and professional measures can be planned, such as demand-oriented and carefully targeted further training.

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1 Quantitative evaluation

1.1 Evaluation of the parents questionnaires

1.1.1 Family background

On the whole, 104 mothers and fathers participated in the survey. Data was collected by means of a survey, available online from April 1 until mid June 2014. Of the 104 questioned parents 12.6% (13) were male and 87.4% (90) were female. One person did not provide information on this.

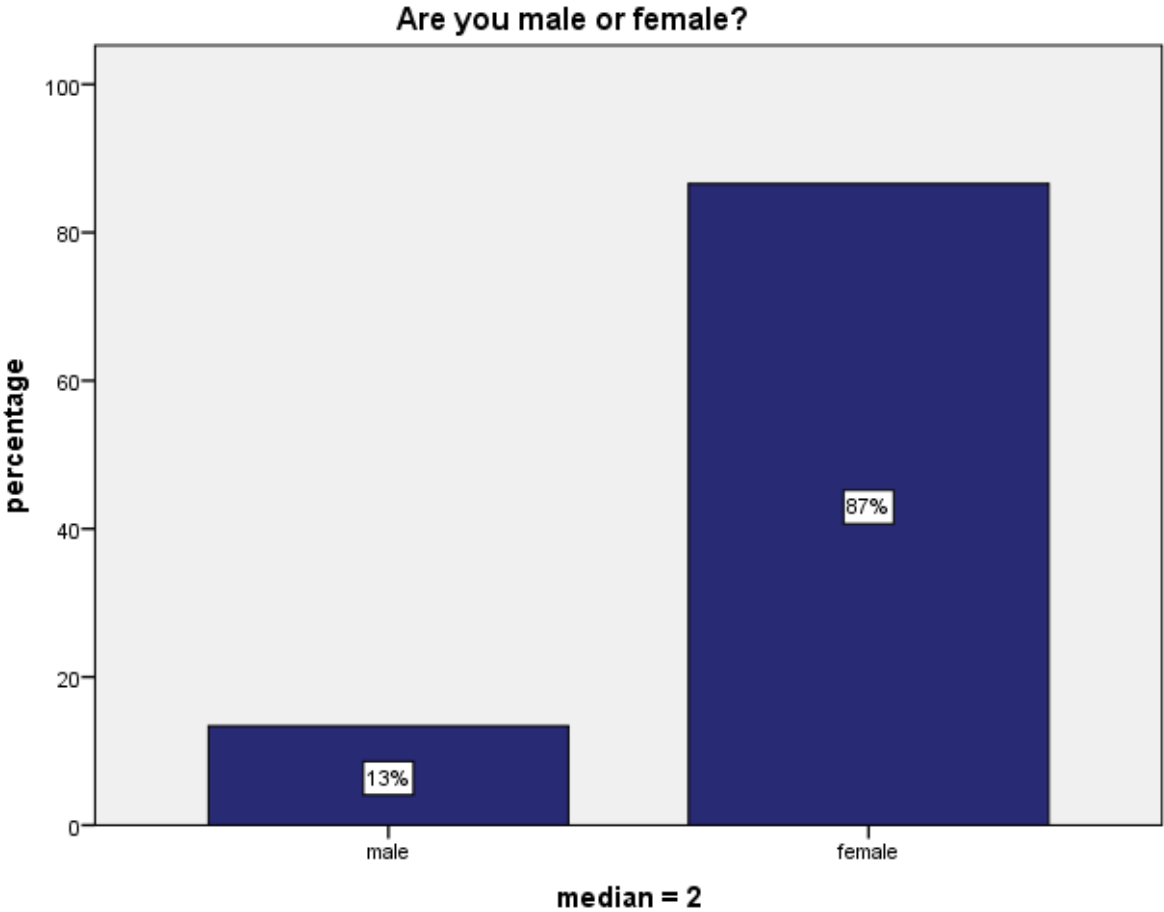


Figure 1 Gender distribution

Most families from the tested sample have between one (34%) to two (49.5%) children. 15.5% of the parents have three children and only 1% has four children. The number of siblings who both take Mortimer courses is at 33.3%.

A review of the age statements of the related children showed that five parents from the sample have children between 14 and 16. Since the survey was designed exclusively for parents and children up to fourth grade, the statements of those parents will be treated as missing hereafter.

16% (26) of the children of the parents questioned are not in school yet, 71% (70) are in Elementary School, none of the children are in a Special Needs School.

Among 94%, German is the main language spoken at home; two people mainly speak Russian in their family and in three other families Serbian, Turkish and Vietnamese are spoken. Second languages were: French, Dutch, Spanish, Polish, Romanian, Russian, English, Portuguese and even Bavarian.

32% (31) claimed to speak English very well themselves. 39% (38) speak English rather well. 22% (21) do not really speak English and only 4% (4) do not speak it well at all. Only 3% (3) said they did not have any knowledge of English.

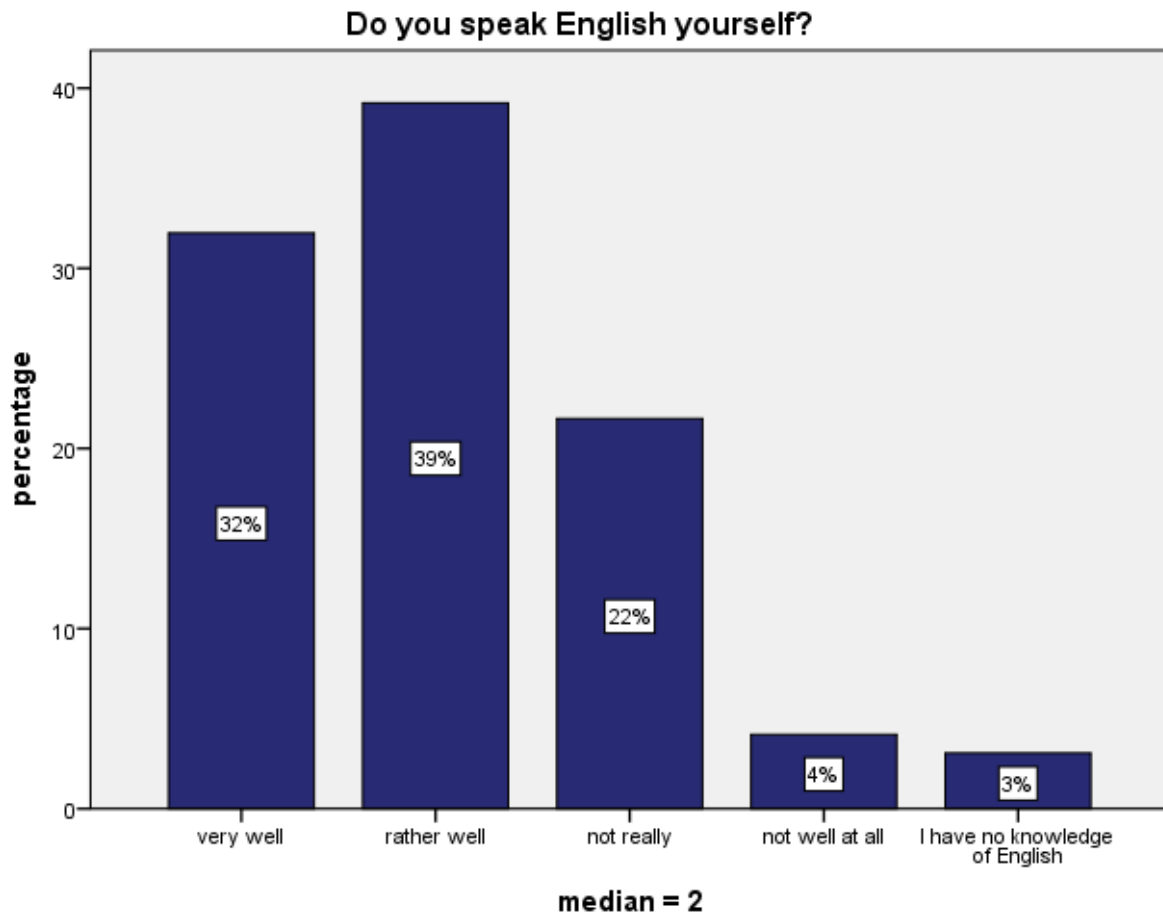


Figure 2 Parents' knowledge of English

In most cases, the parents' knowledge of English was obtained during their own time in school (94.7%). In addition, many parents (28.8%) had been abroad for a longer period of time. Communication with friends was mentioned by 22.3% as improvement of their own English skills.

Furthermore, 10.6% took language courses at university, 8.5% each took a private language course or adult evening classes. 9.6% stated to have learned English auto-didactically. 6.4% had already been on language study travels, which also included language courses.

Where have you obtained your knowledge of English? (multiple choice)

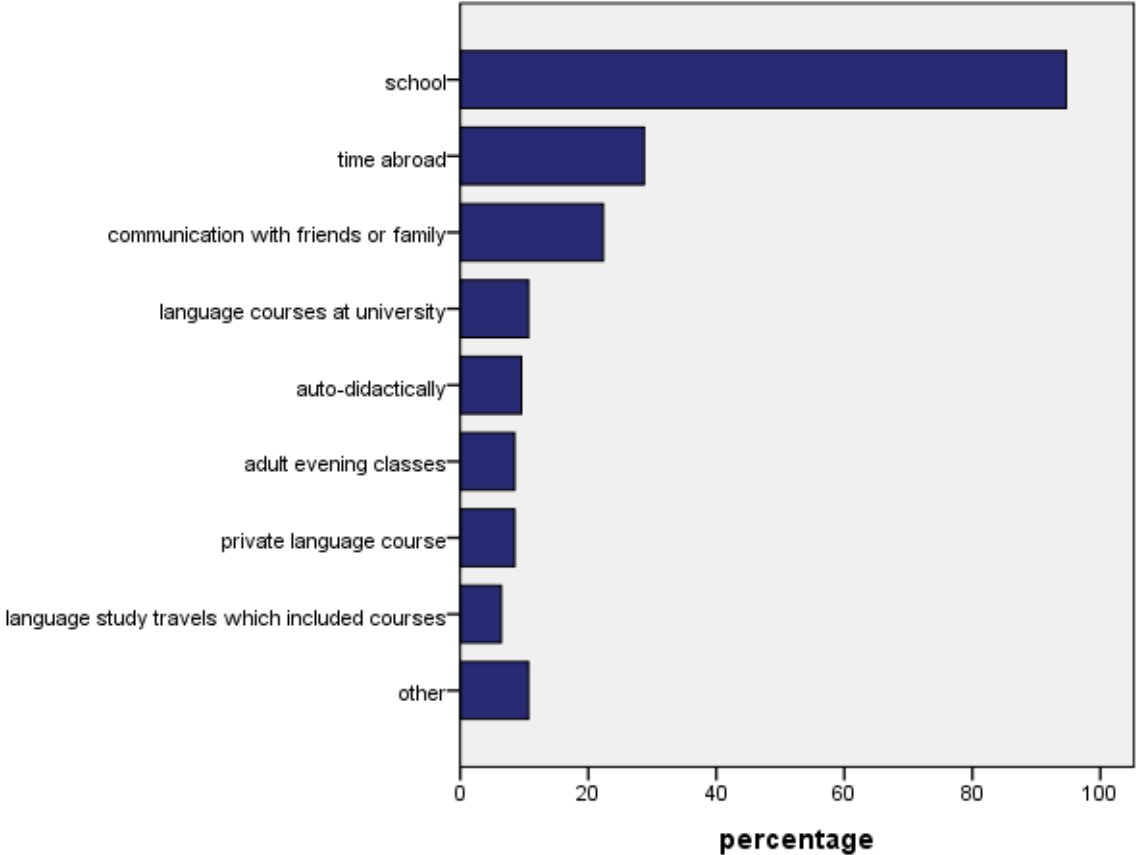


Figure 3 Acquisition of English

In many families, both parents speak very good to good English. In 33%, the partner speaks very good English, in further 36% rather good. 2% have a partner who is an English native speaker.

21% stated that the other parent does not really speak English well, in 3% not well at all. Only 2% of the partners have no knowledge of English.

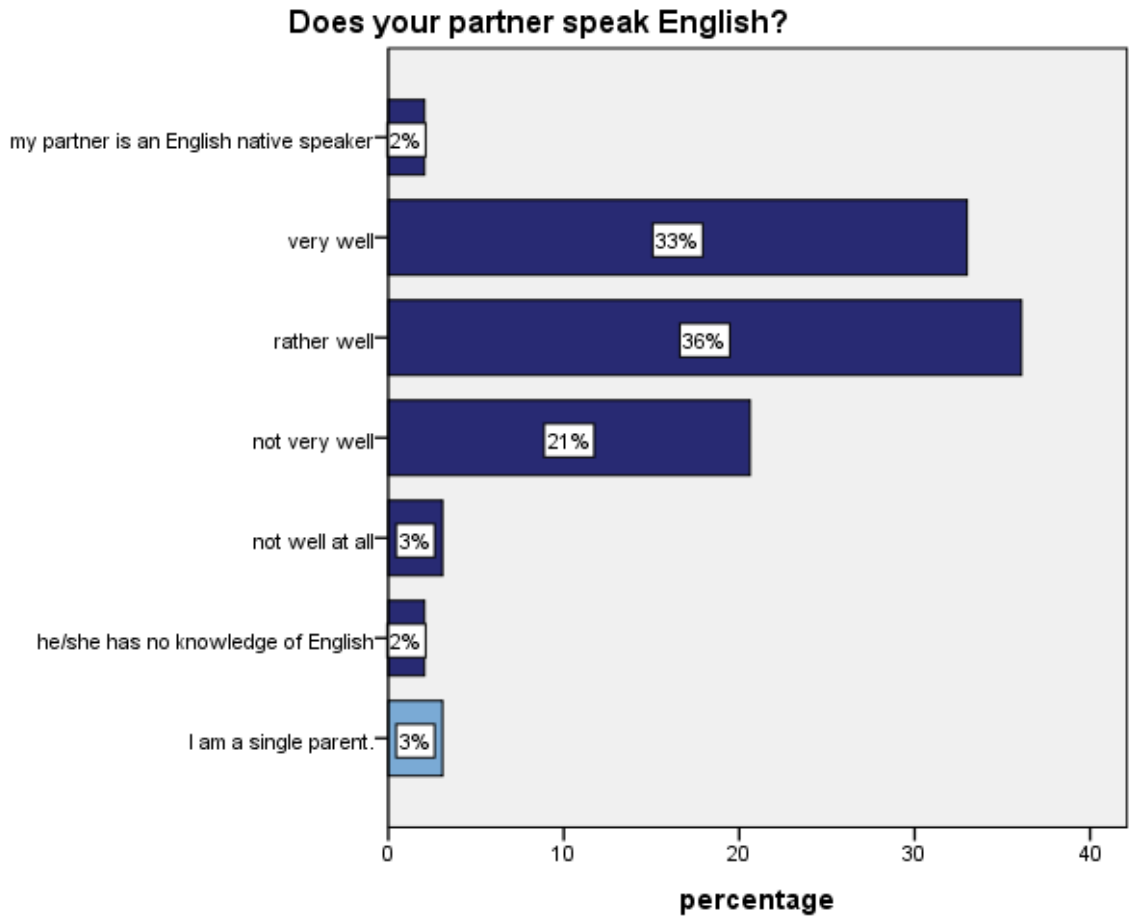


Figure 4 Partner's knowledge of English

There is, however, no estimated correlation between one's own knowledge of English and that of the partner. This suggests that the children are put on relatively equal footing and that there is no measurable percentage of parents in the sample, where both speak English either really well or really bad.

Although in most of the families the parents speak English either well or really well, only few of them speak English with their children at home. A mere 3.1% do so regularly, 19.6% occasionally, 39.2% sporadically, and the other 38.1% never.

What is more, apart from the Mortimer English courses, most children do not have any contact with the English language in their personal environment and 34% only on occasion. 12.4% have a more intensive contact with English and only 1% has a very intensive contact with English.

Of those, whose children come into contact with the English language at least on occasion, 34% stated that they have relatives with whom the children can speak English. 31.8% also mentioned friends of the parents. In 20.5%, the children have their own friends with whom they can communicate in English. Only 2.3% have an English-speaking Au Pair or nanny.

Merely 36% have already been to an English-speaking country with their children, usually for a period of several weeks.

**Did your child/children have the opportunity to communicate in English?
(multiple choice)**

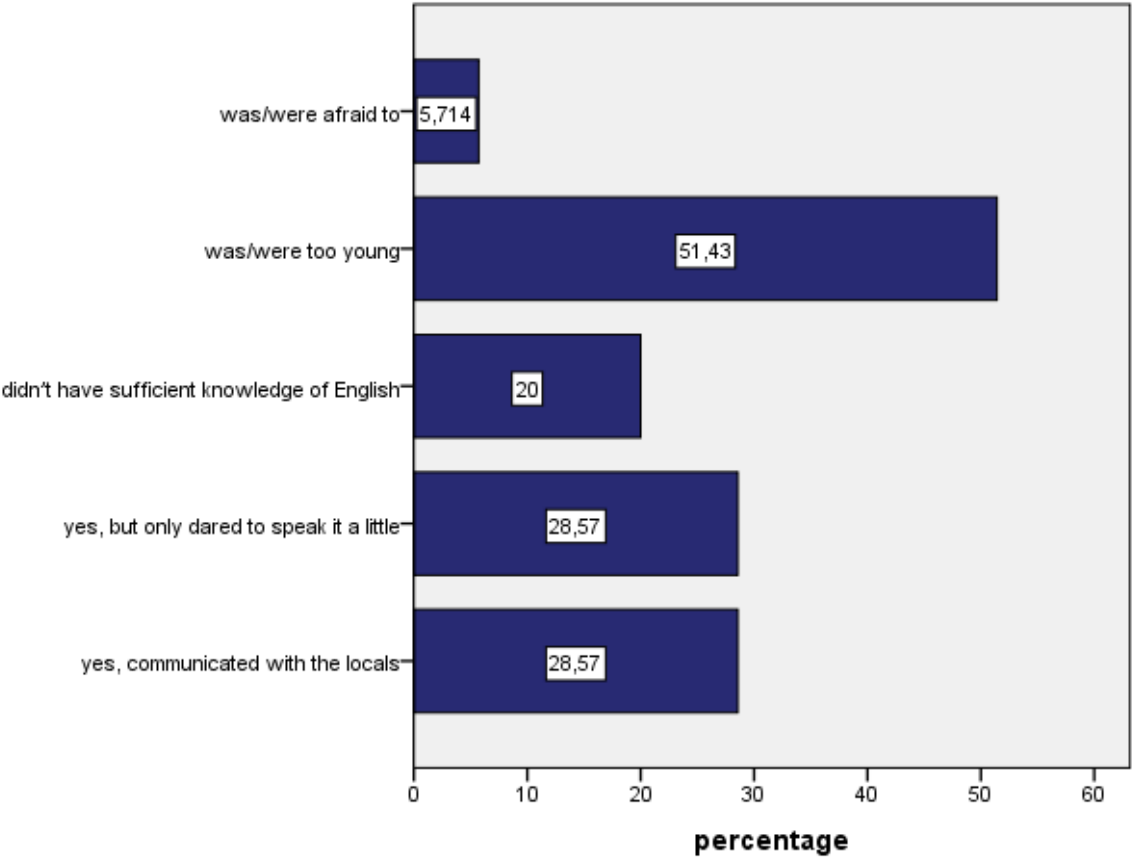


Figure 5 Language use on vacation

On site, most of the children were too young to communicate in English (52%). 29% only dared to speak a little and another 29% were able to communicate with the locals. For 20% of the children, their knowledge of English had not been sufficient enough and only 6% were too afraid to speak English at all.

Which grade in English did your children have in their last report?

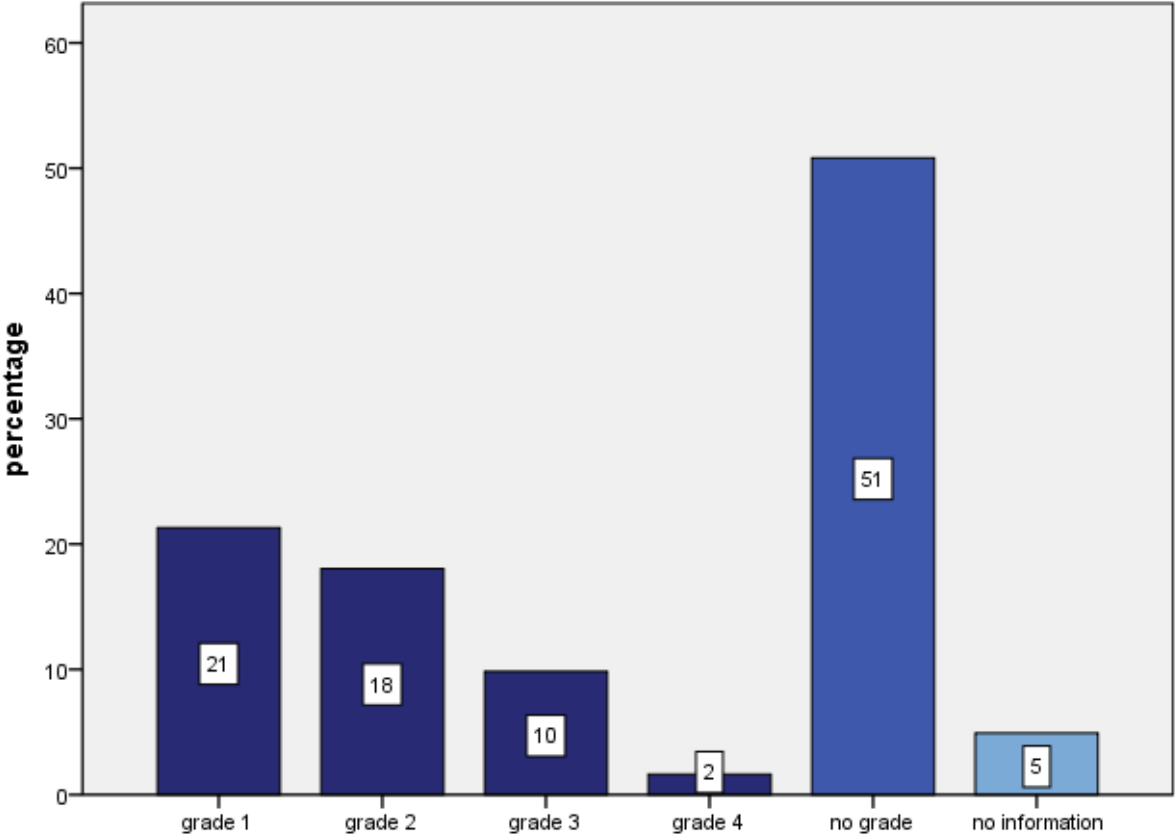


Figure 6 Children’s school grades

The majority of children had had no school grades in English up to that point (51%). A large proportion of those children who had already received grades performed very well (21%) to well (18%). 10% of all children received a grade 3, only 2% a grade 4.

1.1.2 Mortimer English courses

89% of the children from the sample are taking the course *English For Children*; 11% a *Fit For English* remedial course.

34% of the children have been taking a Mortimer English course for one or two years, another 28% for as much as three to four years, a little less than one fourth (24%) for not even one year, and 15% for five to six already.

For how long have your children been taking English courses at Mortimer?

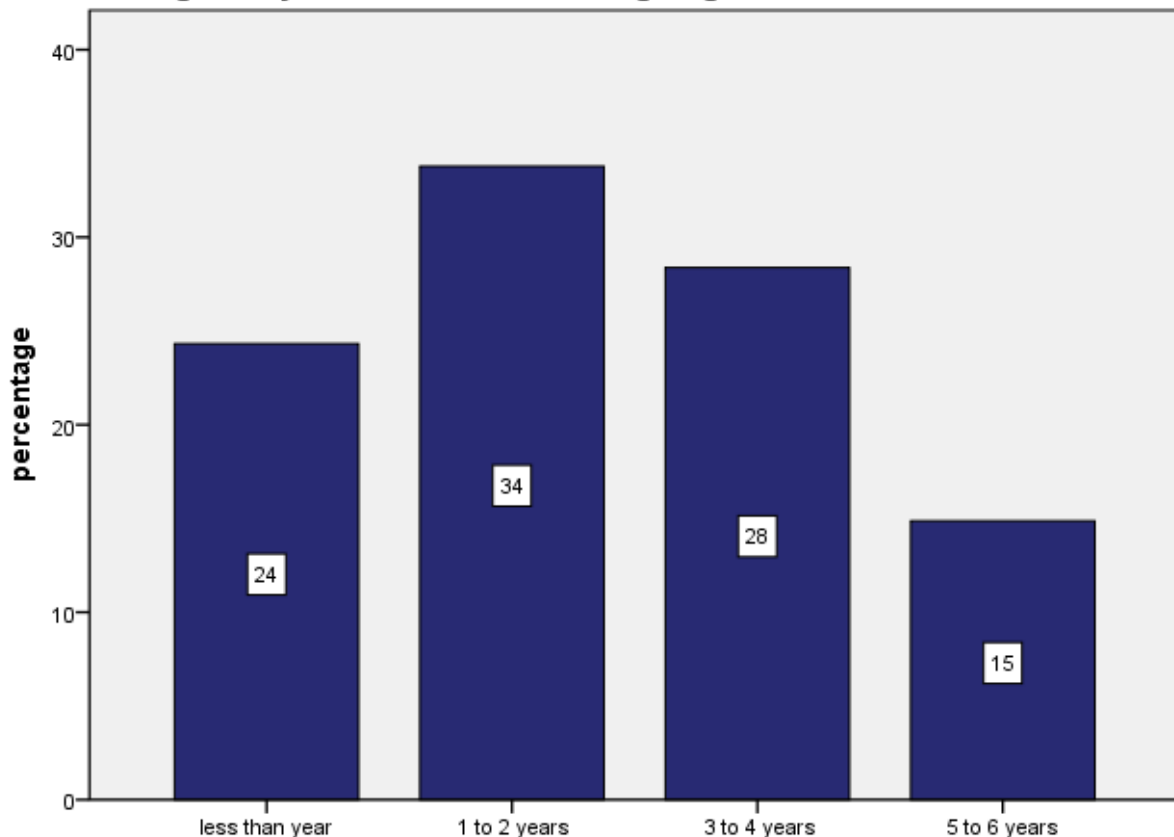


Figure 7 Length of time at Mortimer

Motivations for registering for a Mortimer course vary. Well over half of the parents (66%) consider English to be significant for the future chances of their children. 53% are convinced that it is best to start learning English as early as possible. 45% would like to encourage their child as much as they can and another 40% would like to prevent future problems at school. Only 10% registered based on recommendations; 3% wanted to try something new.

Which motivation did you have to register?

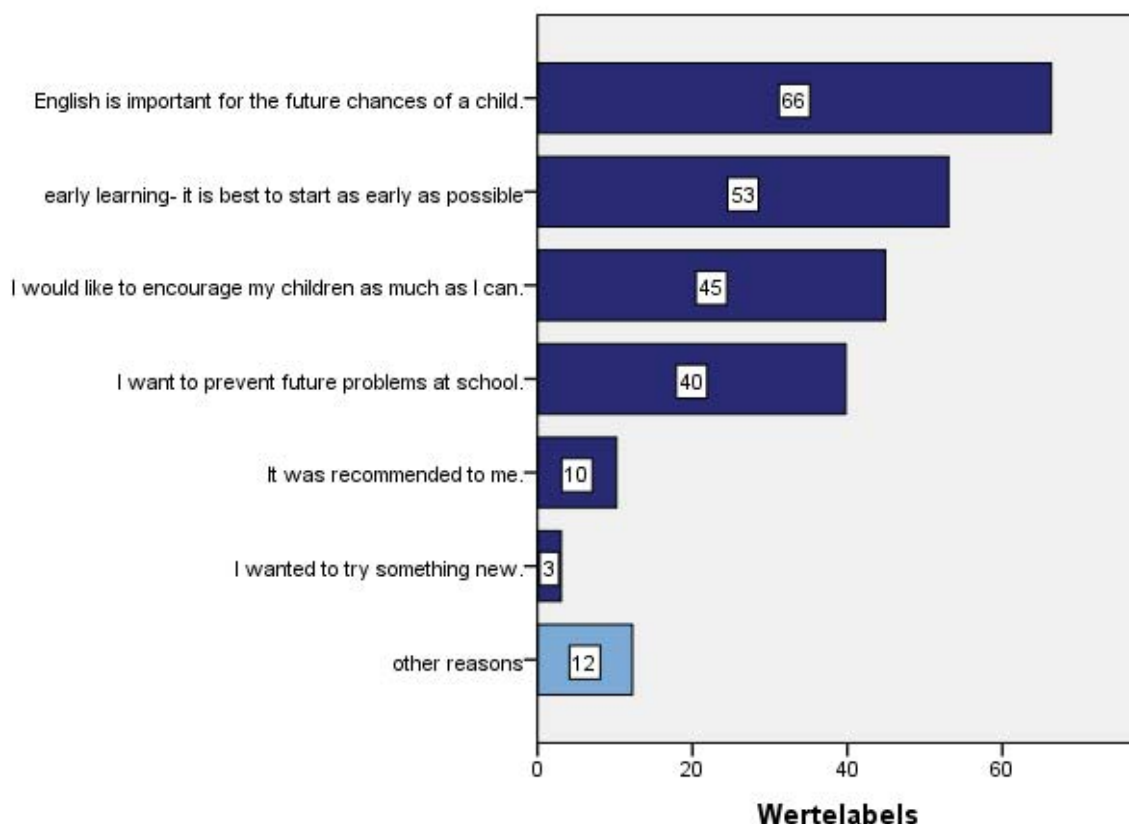


Figure 8 Motivation to register

42% learned of Mortimer through friends or acquaintances, another 15% went to an information event. 11% learned of Mortimer through their children's school and 10% informed themselves online. Only 8% had first learned of Mortimer through radio, TV or newspapers.

The majority of the parents, surprisingly, did not really busy themselves intensively with Mortimer prior to registering (44%). A fourth (24%) had informed themselves somewhat intensively and only 20% very intensively. 10% did not beforehand inform themselves about Mortimer at all.

33.77% think they are well-informed about the exact contents of the courses, almost half (49%) believe that they are somewhat well-informed. 14.3% are less well-informed and 3% are not at all well-informed about the exact contents of the courses.

A very similar impression is given in regard to information about the working methods and techniques of the Mortimer courses. Here, 33% consider themselves very well-informed, 49% well-informed, 16% less well-informed and 2% do not feel informed at all.

1.1.2.1 Instructional elements

Without exceptions, the individual instructional elements are evaluated positively by the parents.

Evaluation of various instructional elements (cumulative sum)

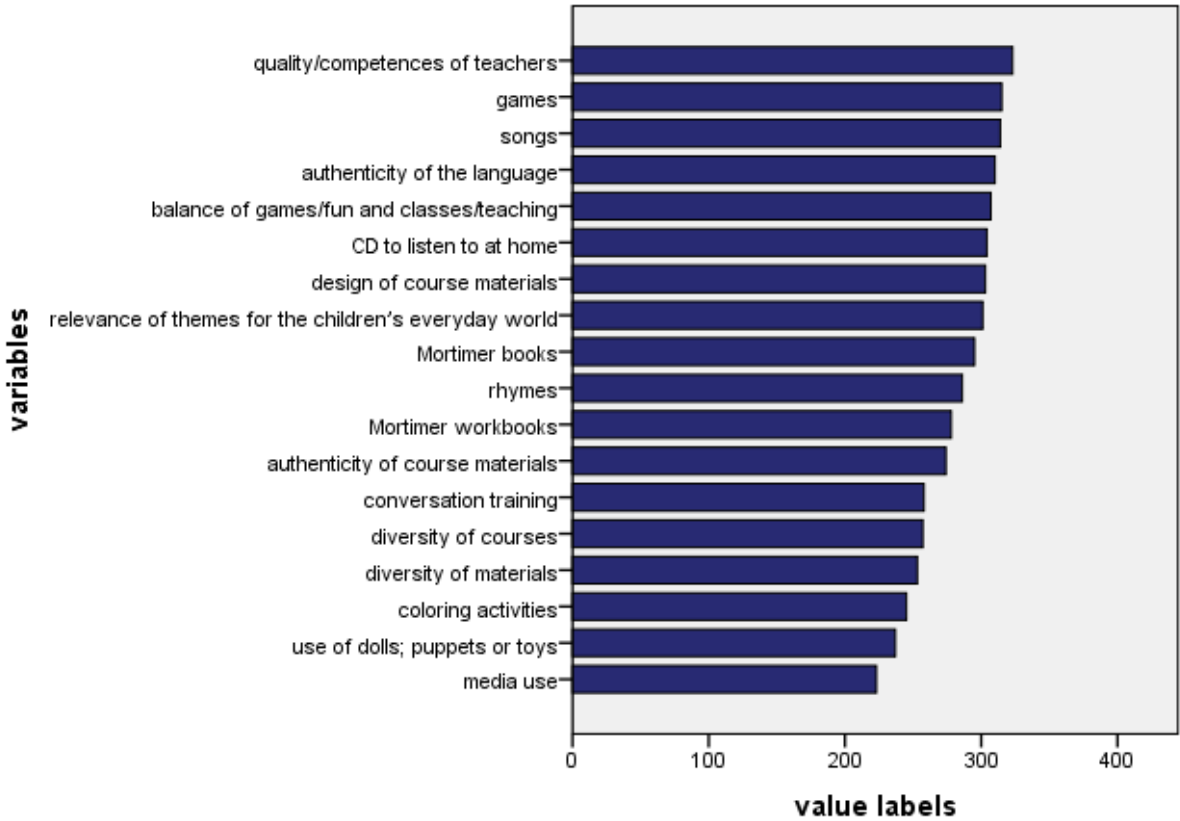


Figure 9 Evaluation of instructional elements

On the whole, quality and competences of the teachers were rated the most positive. 66.7% judge them to be very good, 26.7% rather good. Solely 1% is not satisfied.

One aspect to be seen as the least positive was media use. Here, 26.4% are very satisfied, 47.2% find the current media use ok, 19.4% not good and 2.8% are not at all satisfied with it. Another 4% stated that there was never any media use.

A median of 1 (on average very good) is calculated in the following instructional elements:

- songs
- games
- balance of games/fun and classes/teaching
- quality/competences of the teachers

A median of 2 (on average rather good) can be seen in the following elements:

- design of course materials
- authenticity of the language
- relevance of the themes for the children's everyday world
- authenticity of course materials
- media use
- rhymes
- use of dolls, puppets and toys
- coloring activities
- CD to listen to at home
- conversation training
- diversity of courses
- diversity of course materials
- Mortimer books
- Mortimer workbooks

A median of 3 (on average good) was thus not calculated in any of the variables queried.

Only 5% listen to the CD at home on a daily basis. 20% listen to the CD several times a week and 15% once a week. 19% work with the CD a few times per month, another 14% approximately once a month. More than one fourth (26%) listen to the CD even less or never when at home.

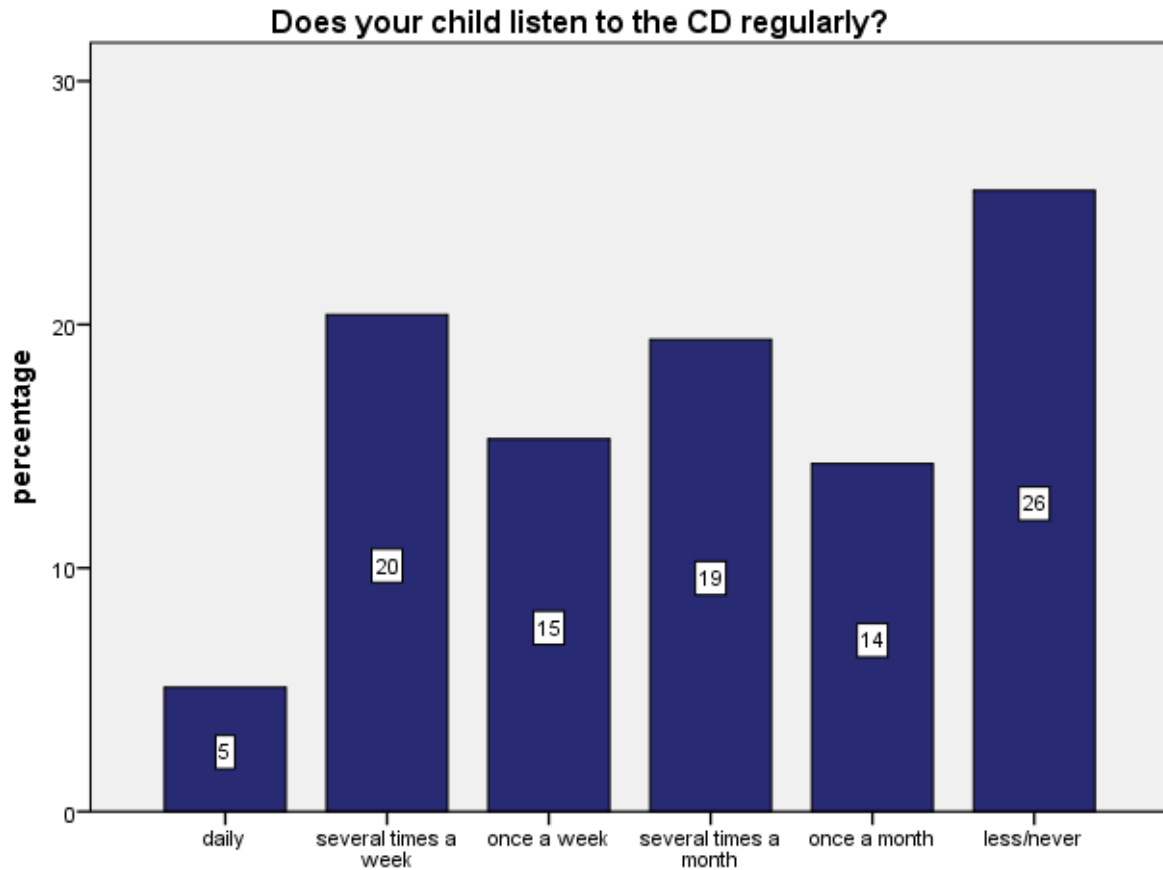


Figure 10 Listening to the CD regularly

The median lies in the category “several times a month.”

1.1.2.2 Learning success

45% are very satisfied with the learning success the children have had with the Mortimer courses and 46% rather satisfied. Only 6% are less satisfied and 2% not at all.

Excerpt from the parents’ statements:

Positive statements:

"Has already learned more vocabulary than at school"

"Participates at school, is enthusiastic about English and not afraid of speaking it"

"A quick ear for the English language is already established and my child understands a lot; speaking, though, is another story – of course, it is still lacking grammar, vocabulary and the necessary self-confidence. But this is absolutely normal for a third grader."

"The child already has an extensive vocabulary and has the courage to articulate sentences on its own and it likes going there even though the courses take place very late Friday afternoons."

"The subject matter is discussed again. They show a great interest in the school topics. There only does my daughter get to speak English as well. She really enjoys it; I find the conversations very important."

"The children enjoy taking the courses and use their acquired knowledge at home."

"Enormous amount of vocabulary in the shortest of time, interest is awoken and every possible thing is asked about (English song lyrics, how do you say this and that in English?)"

"My child has a lot of fun in learning and for his age, his vocabulary is good."

"My child learned a lot: language skills, no linguistic inhibitions, vocabulary."

"My daughter is now more excited about her English classes at school. She has also already received a positive feedback from her teacher. Her pronunciation has improved."

"Our oldest son, who's now in seventh grade, had a great advantage until the end of sixth grade. At the beginning of fifth grade, we took him out of the Mortimer courses and registered him for bilingual classes. Thanks to Mortimer, he didn't have any reserve."

Negative feedback:

"My child experienced some de-motivation; there are many older children and they are superior when it comes to games or motor functions etc. For a six-year-old, it is very demotivating to always come in last during games and such."

"It seems as if my child just isn't all that interested. In addition, it's often afraid to participate in the various activities."

"To me, there isn't enough actual speaking done. The sandwich-methods still allows too much German. The Mortimer CD isn't fun enough – there are better ones available to keep the children's attention (Huckla Hexe, Ritter Rost etc.)."

"The desire to communicate has not been aroused sufficiently. "

"I would have liked for them to actually speak more, but I'm also aware that this is probably more wishful thinking than reality, and only can be that."

"I would like to be more informed about my child's level. It's hard for me to tell how successful they are in learning and using the language."

"Barely 40 minutes per week – MINUS SCHOOL AND BANK HOLIDAYS – is not nearly enough for the price we pay! If there were any alternatives here in the countryside, I would consider them."

„Unfortunately, they do speak a lot of German in the courses."

"Coloring has nothing to do with language acquisition but rather with killing time. If a child is supposed to learn the word 'DOG', then there is no need to waste 30 minutes on drawing a dog while constantly using the German word during that time."

"My child still hardly speaks any English after 2-3 years and tells me that they always do the same things in the courses."

So far, 42.7% were able to note positive effects on the performance of their children at school, especially in English; a further 11% mainly in English but also in other subjects, e.g. other languages, German and in their ability to concentrate.”

46.3% did not note any effects on the performance in school.

Have you been able to note positive effects on the performance of your child at school?

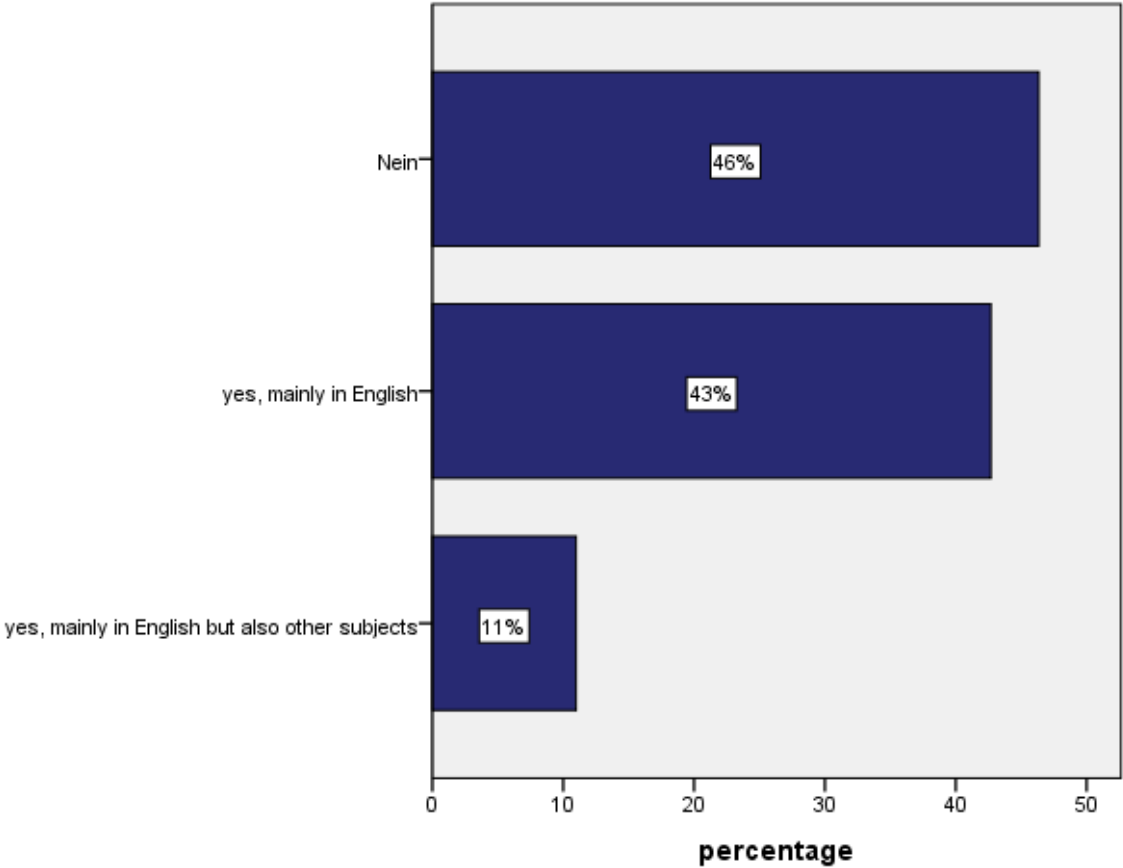


Figure 11 Positive effects on school performance

The following sampled items furthermore show clear positive effects of the Mortimer courses on the children:

The following statements received full approval (median = 1) on average:

- is not afraid to actively participate during English classes at school and to speak loudly (57.9% fully agree to this, 33.3% agree, 7% do not really agree, and only 1% disagrees)
- does easier in English classes than other children (61.4% fully agree, 26.3% agree, 10.5% do not really agree and 1.8% disagree)

- has a better knowledge of English than other children that age (57.3% fully agree, 30.7% agree, 9.4% do not really agree and 2.7% disagree)

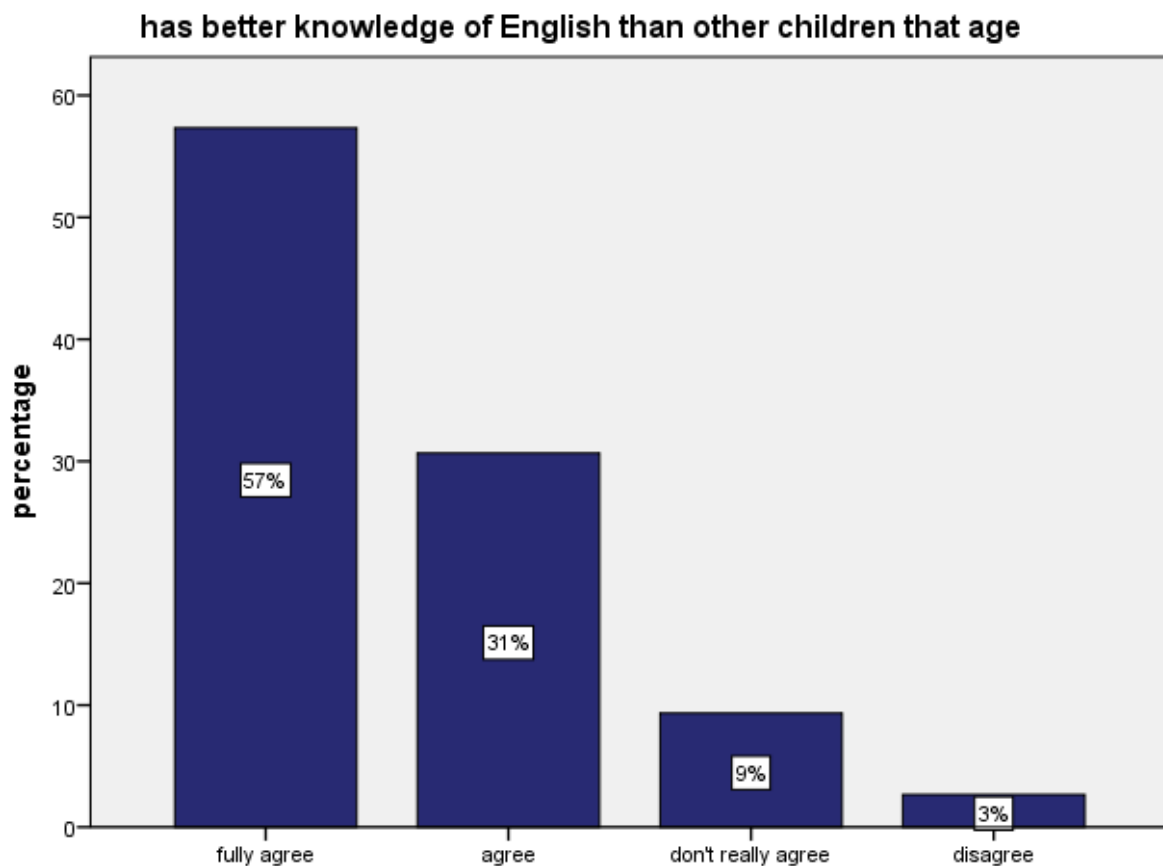


Figure 12 Age group comparison

- shows great social skills (61.1% fully agree, 33.3% agree, 5.6% do not really agree)
- has fun taking Mortimer courses (68.2% fully agree on this, 29.5% do not really agree and 1.1% each do not agree or disagree completely)

On average, the parents rather agreed (median = 2) to the following statements:

- is braver at school because of Mortimer (39.6% fully agree, 43.4% agree, 15.1% do not agree and 1.9% disagree)
- has made a positive development through Mortimer (36.1% fully agree, 39.3% agree, 19.7% do not agree and 4.9% disagree)
- has gained more self-confidence through Mortimer (here, 19.7% fully agree, 41% agree, 29.5% do not agree and 9.8% disagree.)

Since the survey only included parents with children at Preschool and Elementary School level, most parents have not really noted any problems with the learning success of English at school. 60% cannot perceive any kind of problem areas; the other problem areas only reach percentages between 3 and 13%.

Where do your children have problems in their English classes at school?

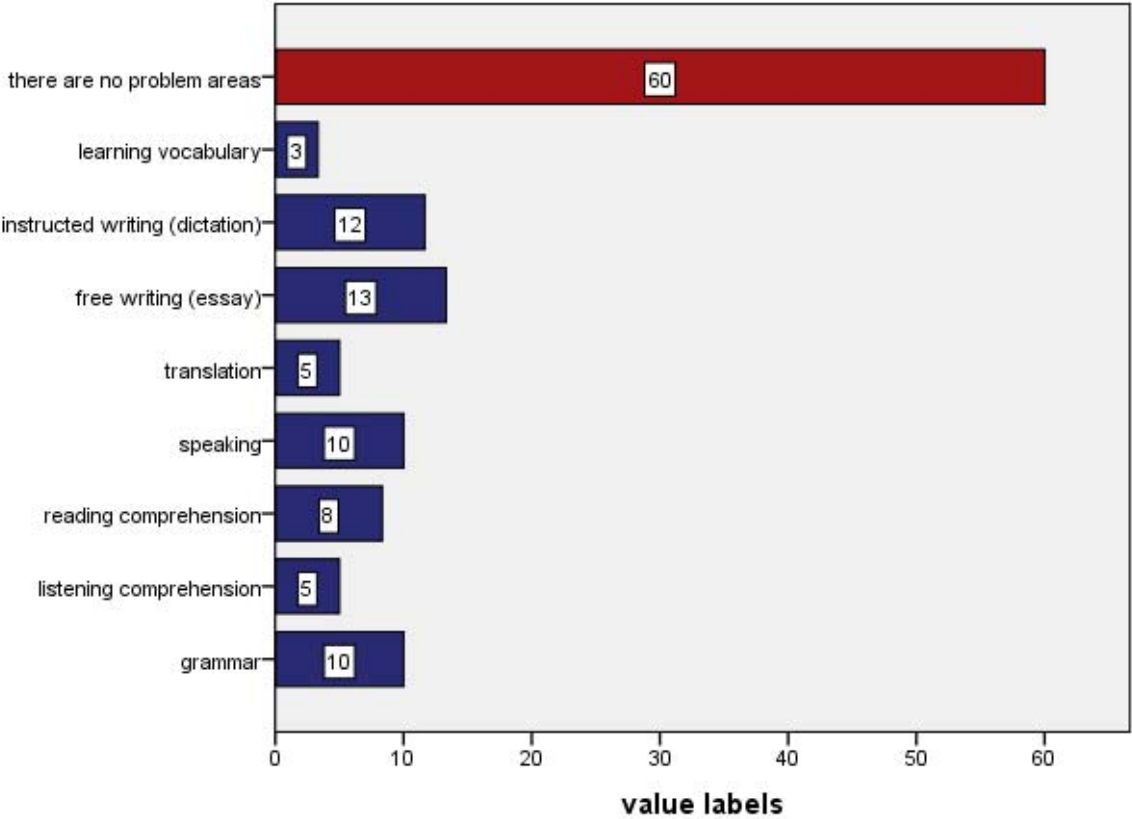


Figure 13 Problems with English classes at school

Still, the majority of parents, however, did see improvements. These mainly showed in the areas speaking (67%) and listening comprehension (63%).

In which areas do the Mortimer courses show improvements?

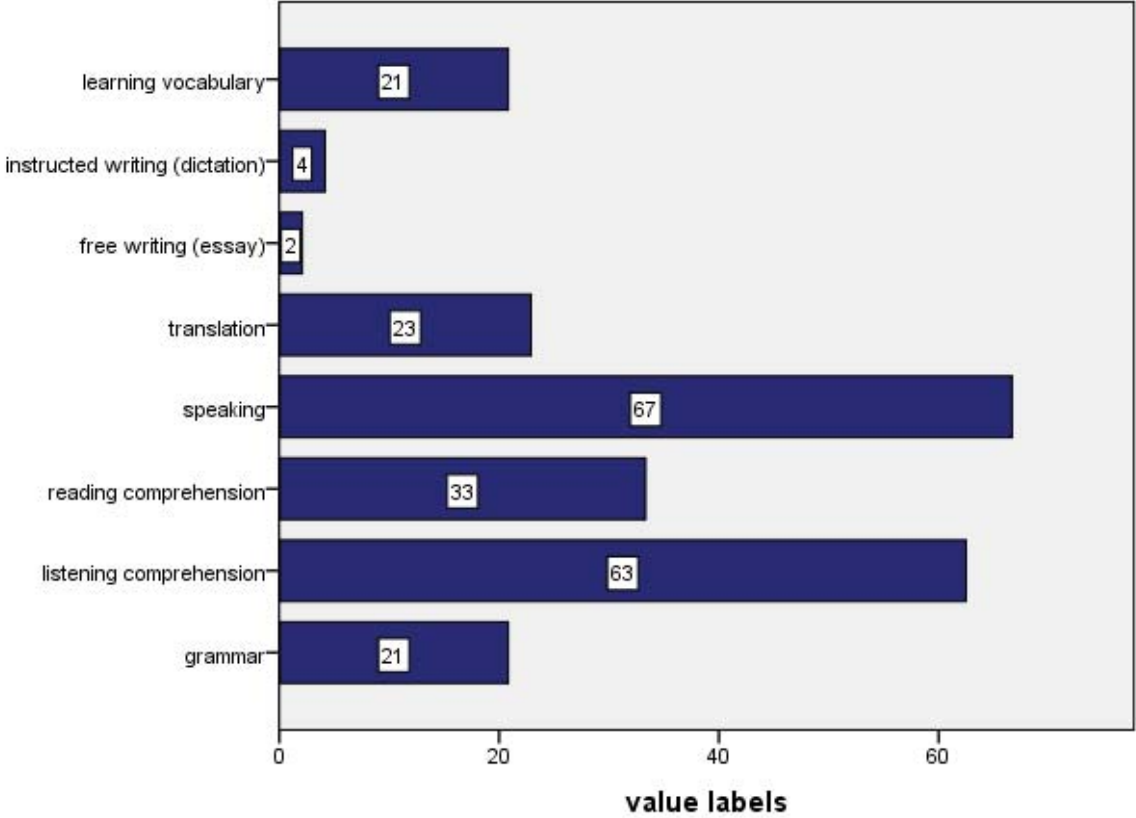


Figure 14 Improvements through Mortimer

43.5% of the parents say that a mental underload in English classes at school due to the Mortimer courses could not really be detected, 18.3% cannot detect this at all. 20.3%, however, do detect a mental underload because of the advanced knowledge through Mortimer courses. 17.4% are absolutely sure that the children are not challenged enough in their English classes at school.

The parents are absolutely divided on the question of whether children have more time to prepare for other school subjects due to the Mortimer courses. On this, a fourth (25%) each fully agrees, agrees, does not agree, and disagrees.

Quite obvious, though, is the question on the sufficient preparation for the transfer to Secondary School in English.

60.3% of the parents fully agree to the question, “do you think the Mortimer courses help make the transfer to Secondary Education in English easier for the children?“, another 34.2% agree. Only 2.7% each do not really agree or disagree. The median is 1.

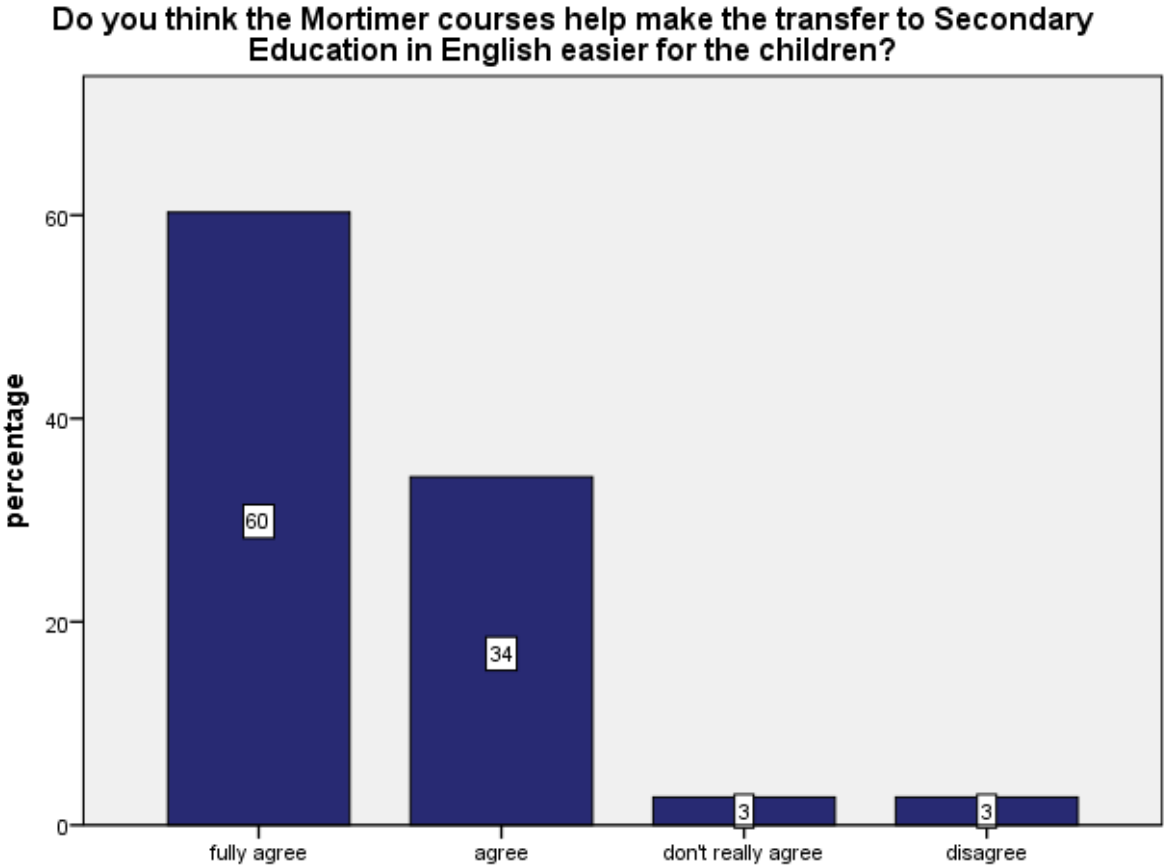


Figure 15 Effects on transfer to Secondary Education

Reasons of the parents:

"Their basic knowledge is quite stable at that point so further education can build upon it."

"The children have very good basic knowledge."

"The preparation of the children for Secondary Education is ideal because the knowledge they gain forms the basis for the transfer and the knowledge from Elementary School is more to be considered as secondary."

"English in Elementary School is not sufficient since the class is often cancelled due to illness or other issues! The gap between Elementary School and Secondary Education is huge!"

"He has more confidence when it comes to speaking. Grammatical constructions are easier for him."

"In Secondary Schools there is a fast pace in all of the subjects. The advanced knowledge provides a sense of security."

"Since English is not our mother tongue, I can only offer limited help with her homework. Through Mortimer, she became more happy and solves problems on her own."

1.1.2.3 Satisfaction

All in all, the majority of the parents is very satisfied (60%) or satisfied (36%). A mere 3% are not really satisfied and only 1% is not at all satisfied.

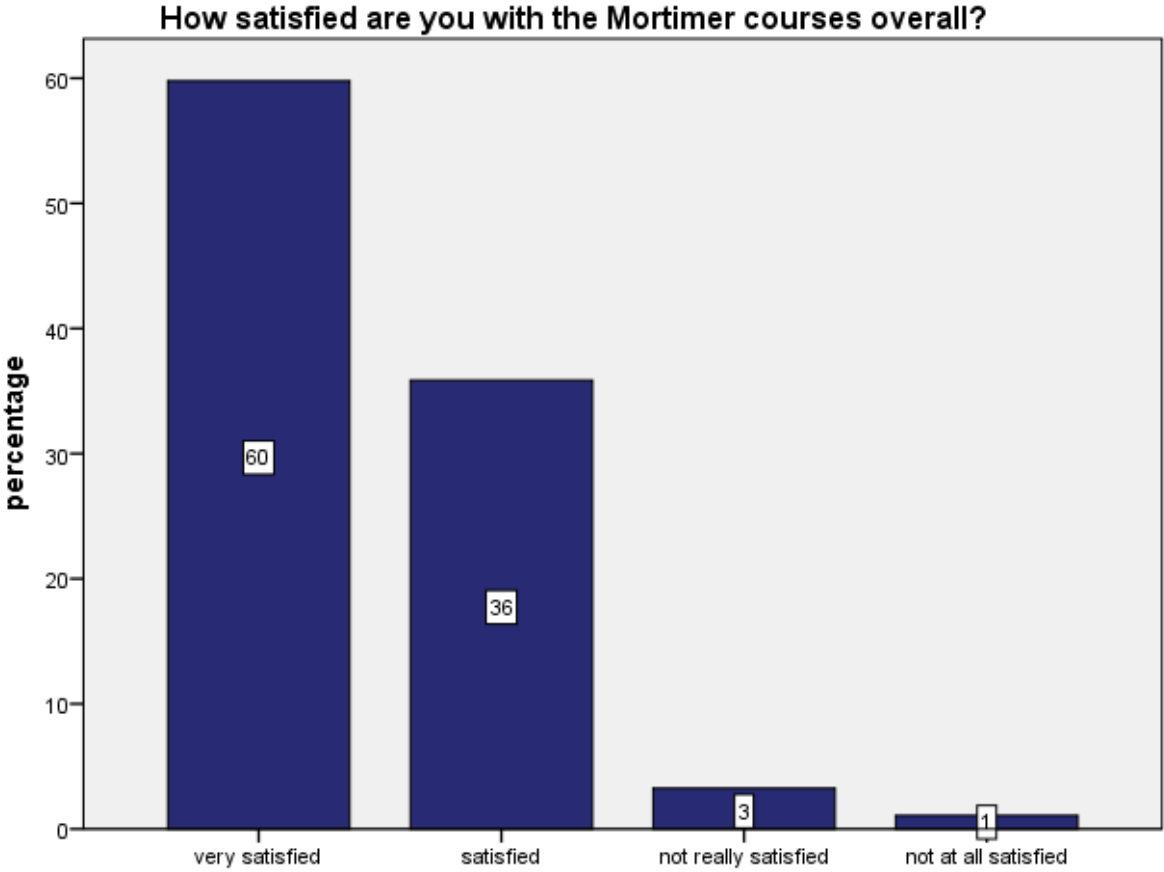


Figure 16 Overall satisfaction

Parents who claimed not to be satisfied gave the following reasons:

"I'm quite satisfied with the courses per se. However, there are not enough courses for the high costs. A few things do get stuck in the children's memory, but the price-performance ratio is not ok. As parents, you never really know which contents the children are supposed to learn at the moment, so it's hard to provide any help at home. A little bit of age-appropriate homework would make sense."

"The CDs could alternate between songs and stories."

"It would be nice to have parents' evenings where the children can perform something in English. That way, we as parents could see what the child has learned, whether or not it manages, and if it actively participates. "

"No native speakers – that's why they speak too much German during the classes."

"My child loves taking the courses; with all the revisions and repetitions, however, it doesn't seem to be challenged enough. I don't have any feedback on this from the teachers, though."

Almost one fourth (24%) is very satisfied with the price-performance ratio; the majority is satisfied (61.5%). 12.5% are not really satisfied and 2.1% are not at all satisfied.

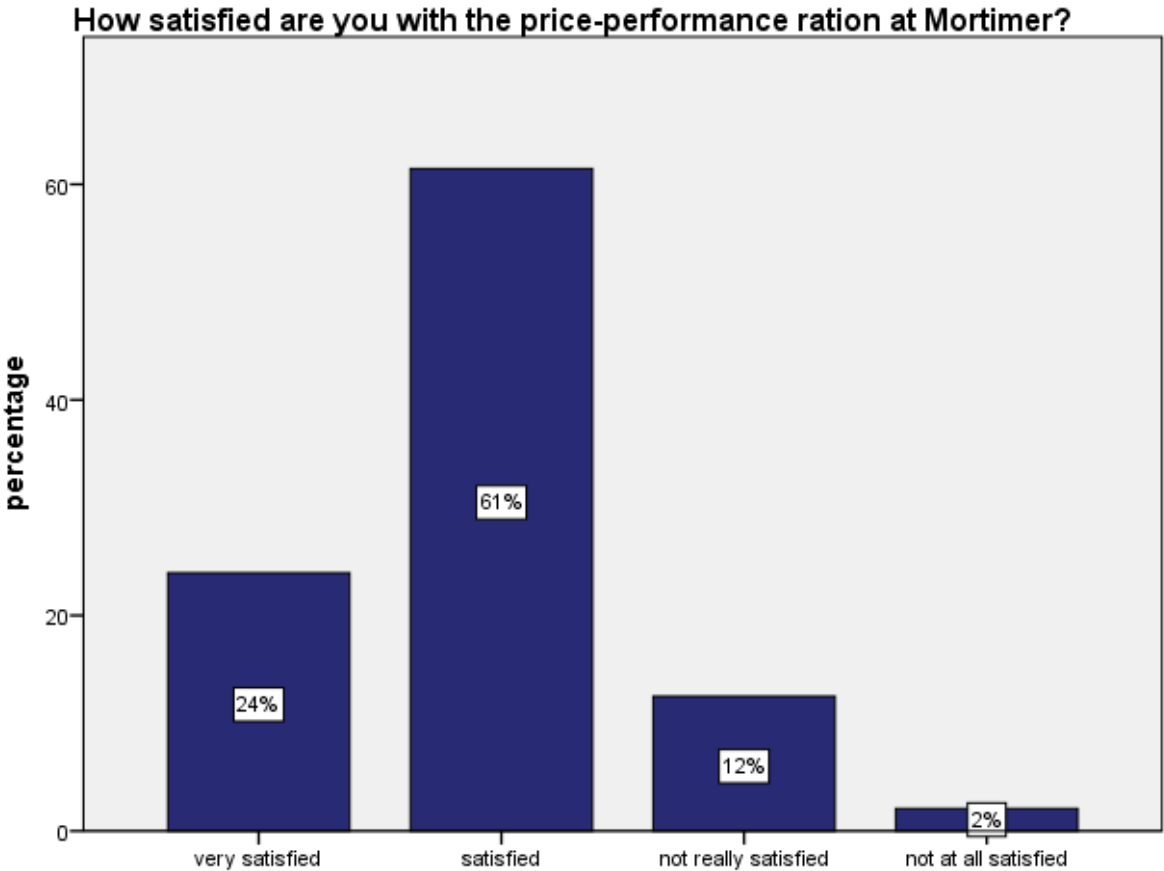


Figure 17 Price-performance satisfaction

Based on the high degree of overall satisfaction, 67% of the parents interviewed would most certainly recommend Mortimer and another 22% would probably recommend it. 6% might or might not recommend Mortimer and a mere 4% would not really recommend it. None of the parents would definitely not recommend it.

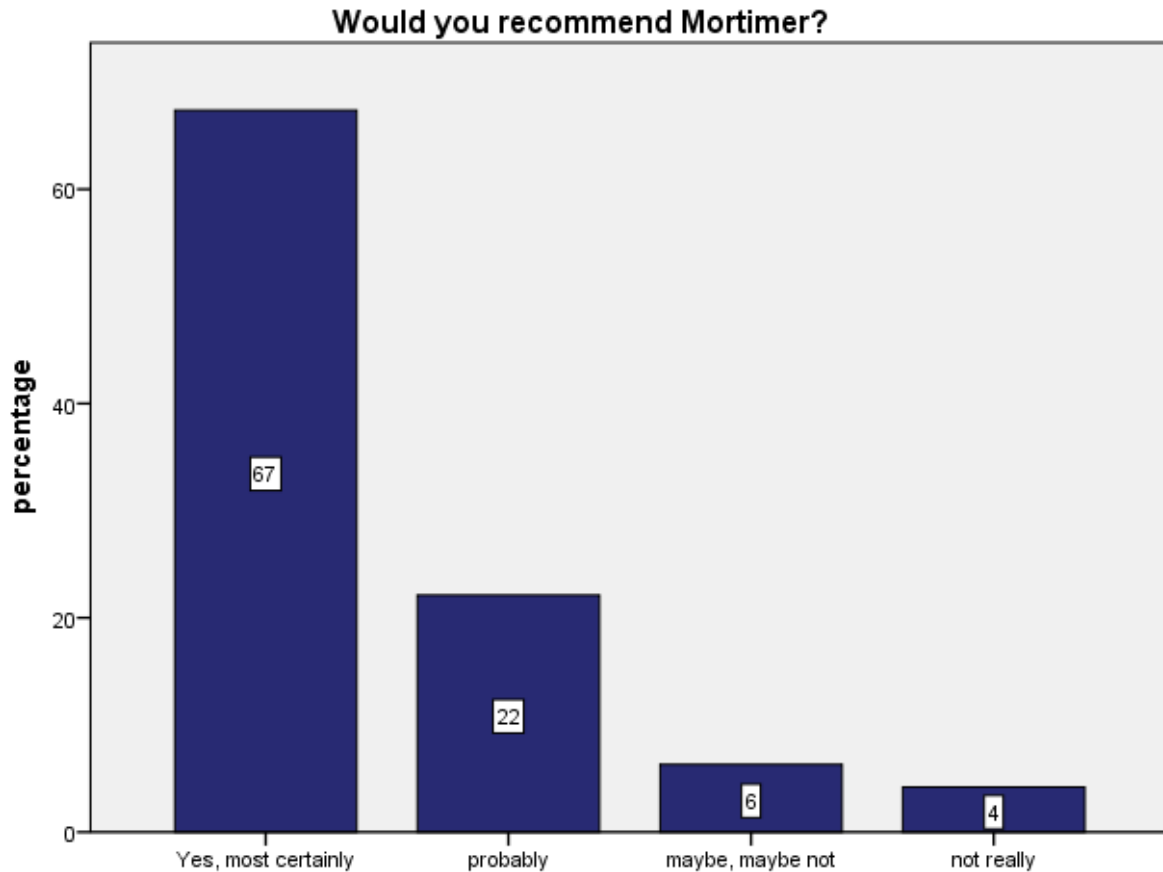


Figure 18 Recommendation

1.1.3 Socio-economic factors

The parents questioned were born between 1963 and 1982 and on average between 30 and 40 years old.

88.7% of them are married, 7.2% are single but have a partner, 2.1% are single, and 1% each is divorced or lives in separation.

The majority of the parents questioned were born in Germany (85.7%). Other countries of birth mentioned are England, Italy, Austria, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Spain and Vietnam.

For the most part, the respondents live in four-person households (48%) and three-person households (32%). 14.3% live in a five-person household, a mere 2% in a two-person household and only 1% lives with six people.

More than half of the participants (50.1%) completed their professional studies/university education, another 20.6% received their higher Secondary Education certificate. 23.7% completed their secondary compulsory education, 3.1% have a qualifying degree. 1% has no degree. The degrees of their respective partner are more or less equivalent.

Most of the parents are employed (50.5%); 12.6% each are freelancer or self-employed. 4.2% belong to the professional group of civil servants. The percentage of workers is 3.1%. 9.5% of the respondents are stay-at-home parents, 2.1% are unemployed or looking for a job and 1.1% is currently on leave.

36% did not want to give information on their net household income, the median in this area lies between an income of 3000 and 4000 Euros.

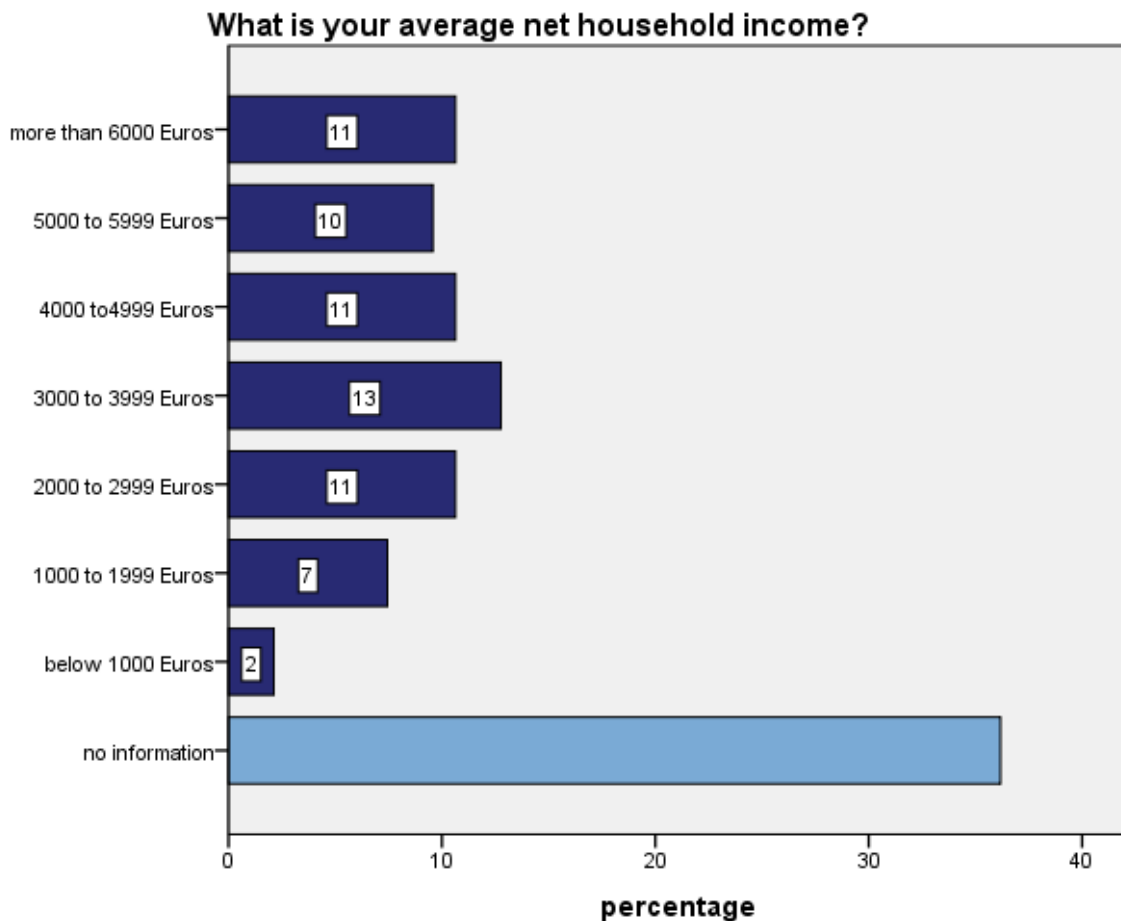


Figure 19 Income

For the most part, the respondents live in rural communities (49.5%) and small towns (37.1%). Solely 7.2% live in a big city or in a city of over a million (6.2%).

Various statements by the parents:

"Please organize the Mortimer community in [REDACTED] There is a lot of potential for Mortimer here but the implementation is deficient."

"It would be nice if there were parents' evenings, where the children give performances. That way, us parents could see what the child has learned and if it manages and participates in English. Only then would we really have an idea of what is done in these courses."

"It would be nice to have more special activities (hikes, small excursions such as grocery shopping...) at which English is spoken."

"Mrs. [REDACTED] should keep doing what she's doing! My child really loves being in her group!"

"Maybe lower the prices for children who have been there for a while – (e.g. after one year 5 Euros less/month or something like that), especially for only children."

"I think it all comes down to the teacher and if the child enjoys learning something. My daughter started in preschool when she was four and she is now in second grade. She likes her teacher very much and the teacher is doing a great job. If my daughter stopped enjoying it, she wouldn't have to continue. For us, it's not about her being better at English than the other children, but that she develops a feel for the other language."

"I think the courses are good but I would like them to have homework and courses during school holidays as well, or, if the course falls on a bank holiday, to find an alternative for that week! The CD is quite nice for little girls who like to dance and sing. My boys can't stand it. As I said, maybe more actual tasks!"

"I want my children to continue with English...it would be nice if it were cheaper...thank you for your effort..."

"I would like to participate in the courses, to know where my child is at, and to be able to support it."

"Principally, there needs to be improvement in the area of English regarding the transfer from Elementary School to Secondary School. There is a lack of uniformity and thus equality of opportunity in education."

"Children should first learn their mother tongue properly before starting with a new language."

"My child won't start first grade until September 2014, so I couldn't answer all the questions."

"My children always enjoy going to Mortimer and my daughter is quite sad that that she has no suitable group at the moment and thus can't take any Mortimer courses. We are very interested in finding another course for her."

"For me, the questionnaire should include questions on "former" Mortimer children – my second daughter is in seventh grade and she profits from this early encouragement even today still."

"Only my son is taking Mortimer courses. My daughter (10 years old) profited from both years of taking English. She loves the language and already understands a lot when she hears someone speak English on vacation. Correct spelling is also easier for her."

1.2 Evaluation of the children questionnaire

1.2.1 Family background

A total of 40 children took part in the evaluation, of which 39% are girls and 61% are boys. The children range in age from four to eleven years and mostly (93%) grew up with German, some children with Russian or Dutch.

More than 82% is already in Elementary School; 18% are not in school yet.

Therefore, 53% of the children have had no school grade in English yet, 24% had received a grade of 1 in their last report, 12% a grade 2, 9% a grade 3, and 3% a grade 4.

As has already been established in the parents questionnaire, most of the children come from educated families, which is why 60% of them state that both of their parents speak English. In 12.5% only the mother speaks English; in 15% only the father. In a mere 10%, according to the children, not one parent speaks English.

Even though most parents do speak English, the children questionnaire also confirms results, according to which English is rarely spoken at home. 53% state that they speak English at home occasionally, 47% however, never speak English at home.

What's more, only in exceptions do the children have someone in their private life, with whom they can speak English.

Are there other people in your private life who sometimes speak English with you?

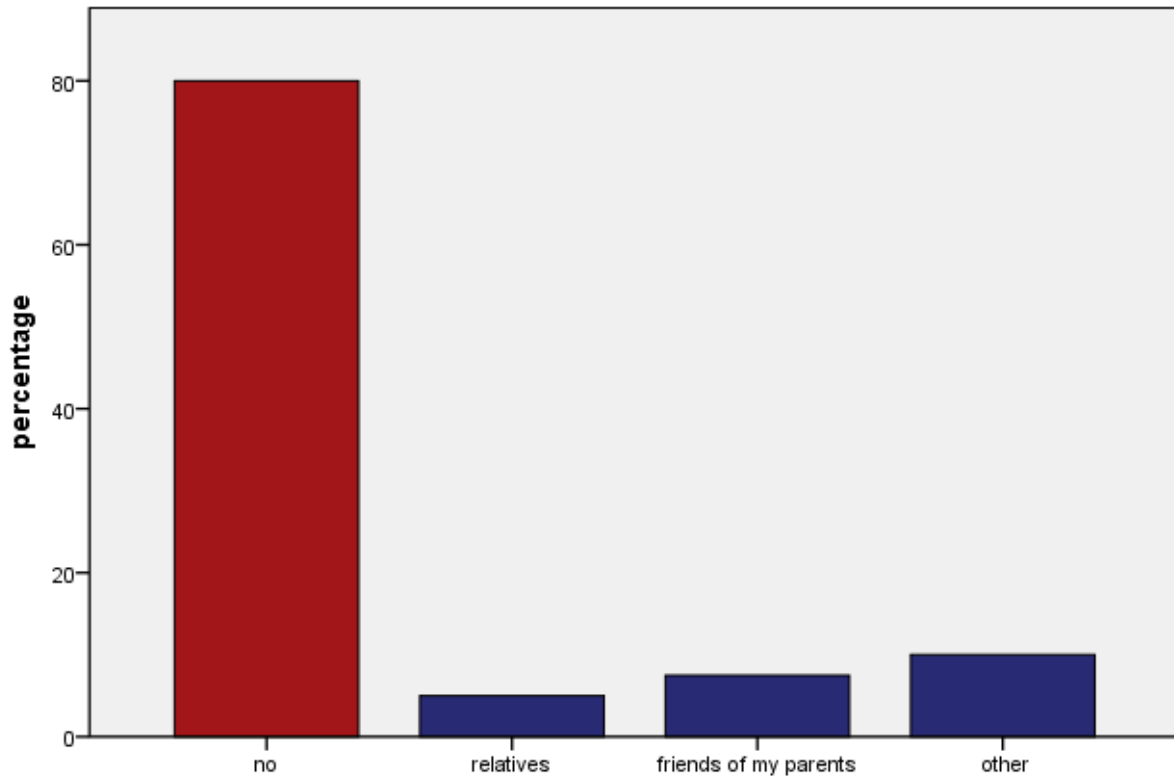


Figure 20 Language use in their private life

35% of the children indicate they speak further languages apart from English and German. These include: Italian, French, Korean, Dutch, Low German, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish.

58% of those who speak another language speak it well, 29% a little and 12% hardly. The languages hardly ever spoken are mainly Italian and French.

Only one fourth of the children have been to an English speaking country with their parents. Of those, 54% say that they dared to speak English with the locals. Of the children who were afraid to speak English abroad, 50% say their English was not good enough, 25% were simply afraid to and 25% do not know.

1.2.2 Mortimer courses

1.2.2.1 Framework conditions

When asked why they registered at Mortimer (multiple answers possible), 72.5% state it was their parents' idea. 30% name joy in the English language as reason and 17.5% say it was their own idea. 15% already had friends there and 7.5% wanted to improve their grade.

90% of the children who participate take an *English For Children* course, 10% a *Fit For English* remedial course.

In each course, there are between two and eight children; on average between five and six. For 93% this is the perfect number of children, only 7% find it to be too many in the course. Those statements were made by children in courses with an average of six children.

The children stay with Mortimer between several months and six years. The average age at entry is five.

90% had never taken private English courses before. The knowledge of English they gained can therefore be related exclusively to the Mortimer courses and possibly to English classes at school.

On a positive note, it can be said that the majority of the children (56%) really enjoy taking Mortimer English courses. Another 39% enjoy them rather well and only 5% (two children) do not really like going to Mortimer.

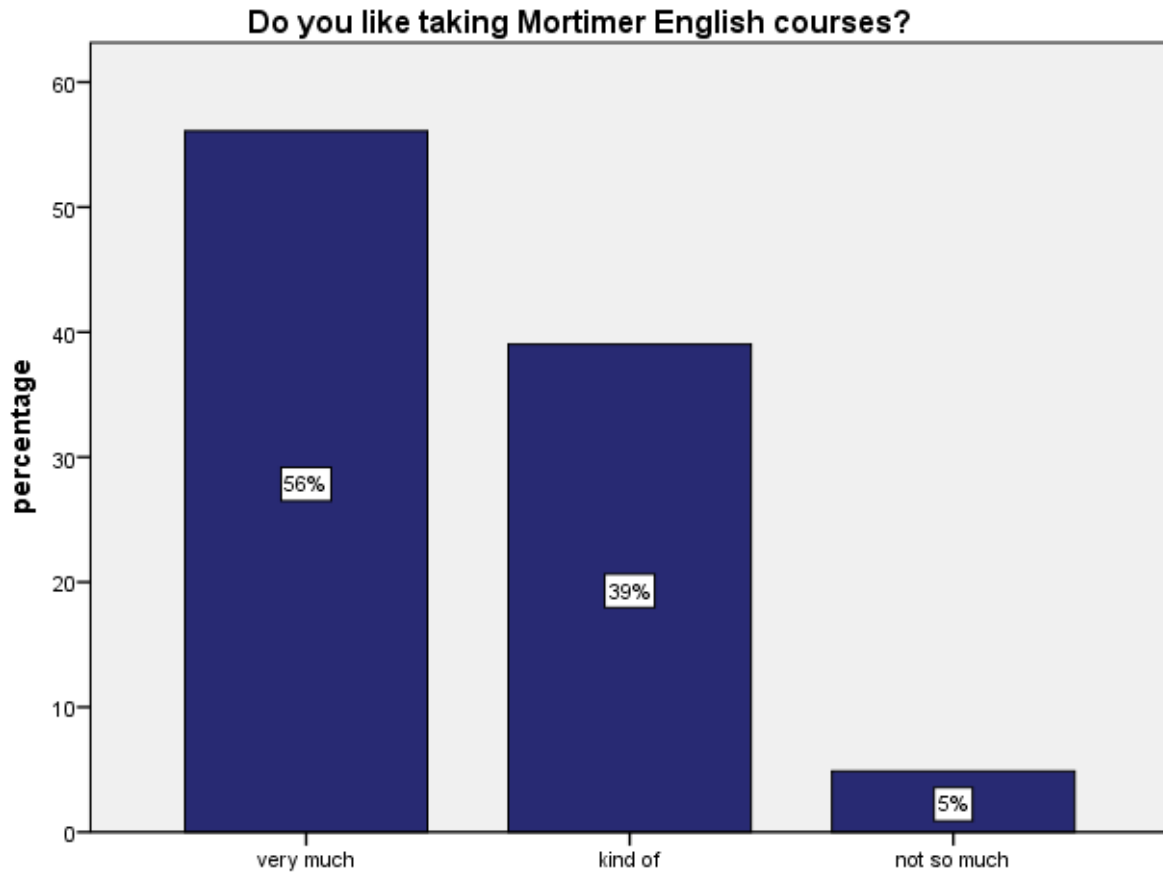


Figure 21 Joy in taking the courses

The children's expectations on the Mortimer courses are distributed clearly. Most important to the children is learning English (88%) and to have fun while doing it (73%). Less important are the following:

- I want to improve my English (22%)
- I want to improve my grade (17%)
- I expect better chances in my (professional) life (12%)
- I want to make new friends (10%)

What do you expect from the Mortimer English courses? (multiple choice)

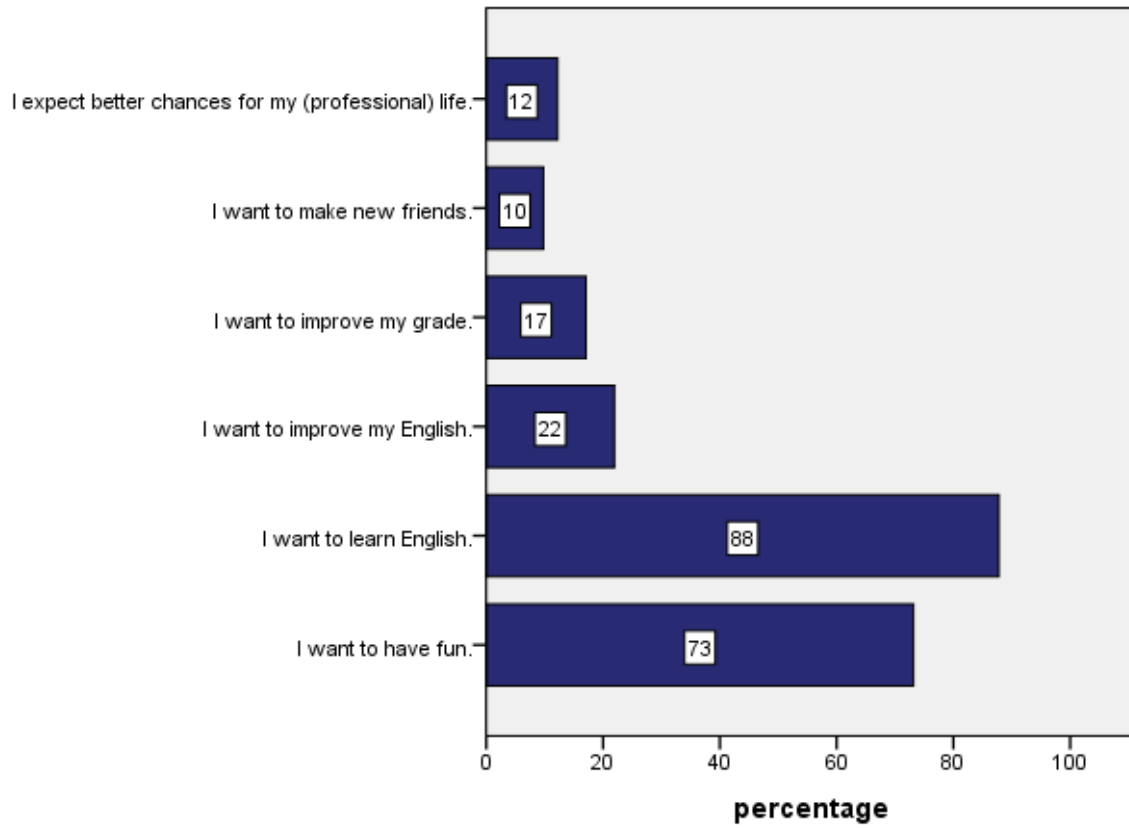


Figure 22 Expectations on the courses

1.2.2.2 Elements of the Mortimer class structures

How do you like the individual Mortimer elements? (comparison of means)

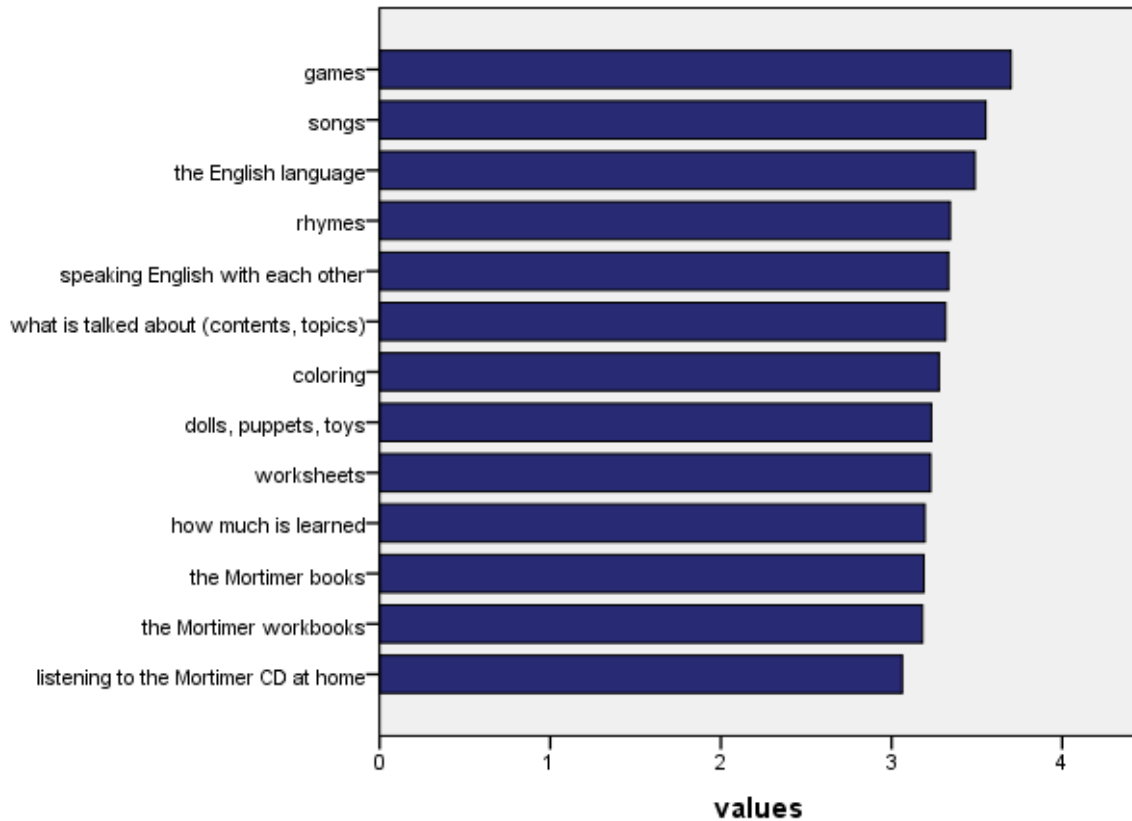


Figure 23 Evaluation of individual course elements

- What the children like best are the games played at Mortimer. 70% like them very much and another 30% like them (median = 4/very good).
- What the children like second best are the songs: very much (63.2%) or like them (28.9%). 7.9% do not really like them. (median = 4)
- Also rated highly is the English language: 51.2% enjoy it very much, 46.3% like it and only 2.4% do not really like it. (median = 4)
- 43.8% like the rhymes very much and 46.9% just like them. 9.4% do not really like them. (median = 3)
- The children also like speaking English with each other (55.6%). 38.9% even like it very much; 5.6% like it less. (median = 3)

- Mortimer's contents and themes are also popular with the children. 36.6% rate them as very good and 58.8% as good. 4.9% do not like the contents and themes very much. (median = 3)
- 41.7% of the children find coloring very good and 47.2% find it good. 8.3% find it less good and 2.8% do not like it at all. (median = 3)
- 43.3% enjoy the use of dolls and puppets very much, 36.7% like it but almost one fourth (20%) do not really like them. (median = 3)
- 34.3% like working with worksheets very much and the majority of children (54.3%) like it; 11.4% like them less. (median = 3)
- Only 29.3% like how much they are learning very much and the majority (61%) just likes it. Another 9.8% do not really like how much they are learning. Whether or not the children should learn more, however, was not evident from these questions. (median = 3)
- 24.3% find the Mortimer books very good and 70.3% find them good. 5.4% find the books not so good. (median = 3)
- The Mortimer workbooks are liked very much by 24.2% and liked by 69.7%. They are less popular with 6.1%. (median = 3)
- Least popular is listening to the Mortimer CD. 28.1% find listening to it very good and about half (53.1%) find it good. 15.6% do not really like listening to the CD and 3.1% do not like this at all. (median = 3)

In summary, it can be noted that the children all like the Mortimer elements either very much (Median = 4) to a lot (median = 3) and none of the sampled items was rated as bad. The evaluation of the elements depends on the children's age; there were no correlations found in this regard.

Concerning gender, there were also hardly any differences in the evaluation. Only in regard to the variable „speaking English with each other“, does a highly significant difference exist. Girls rated this variable a lot more positively, so they enjoy speaking English during the classes significantly more than the boys.

1.2.2.3 Evaluation of the Mortimer courses

- Best rated was the accent-free English of the Mortimer teachers. The statement: „The English teacher speaks very good, accent-free English” was fully agreed to by almost all of the children (92.7%) and the remaining 7.3% rather agreed.

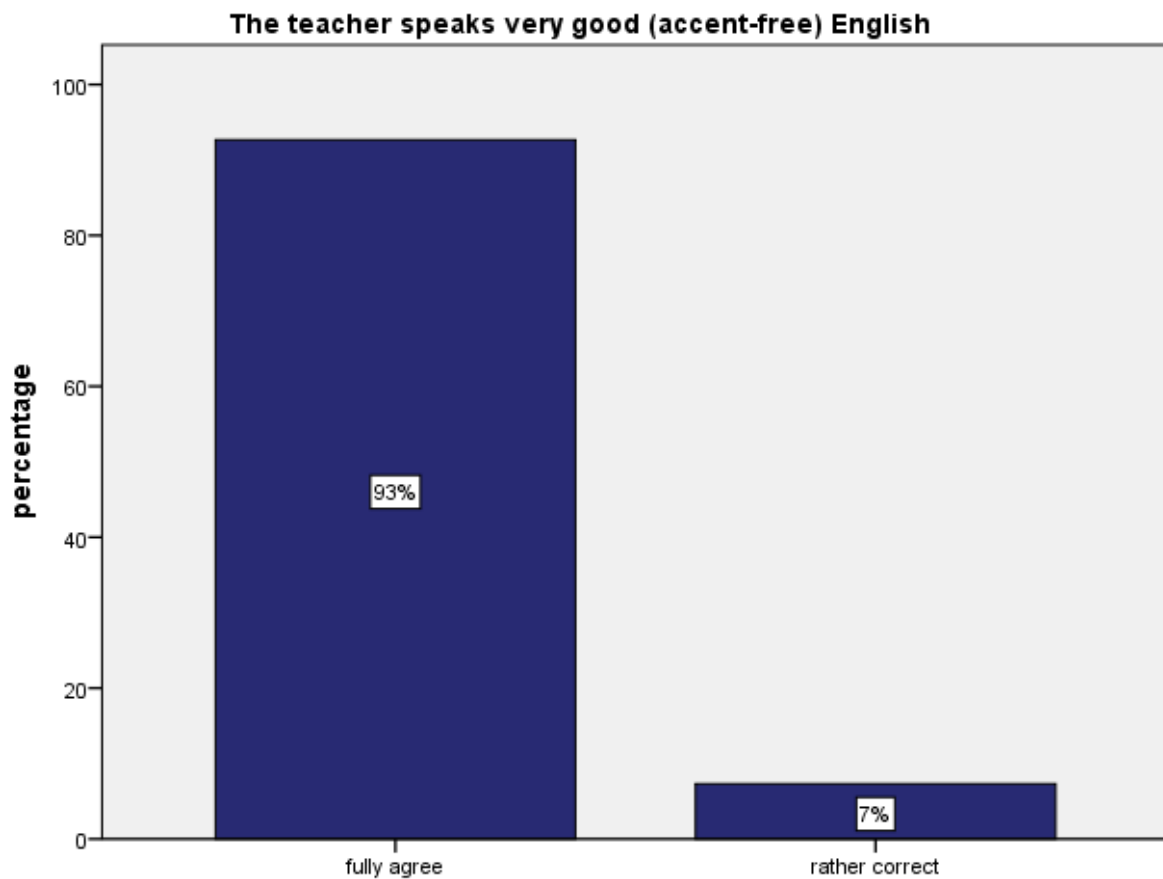


Figure 24 Accent-free English of the teachers

- According to the children, they often do new things at Mortimer to prevent boredom. Here, 68.3% fully agree, for 29.3% this statement is somewhat true and only 2.4% disagree with it.
- „I really learn a lot and have fun,“ fully applies to 63.4% and a little to 36.6%.

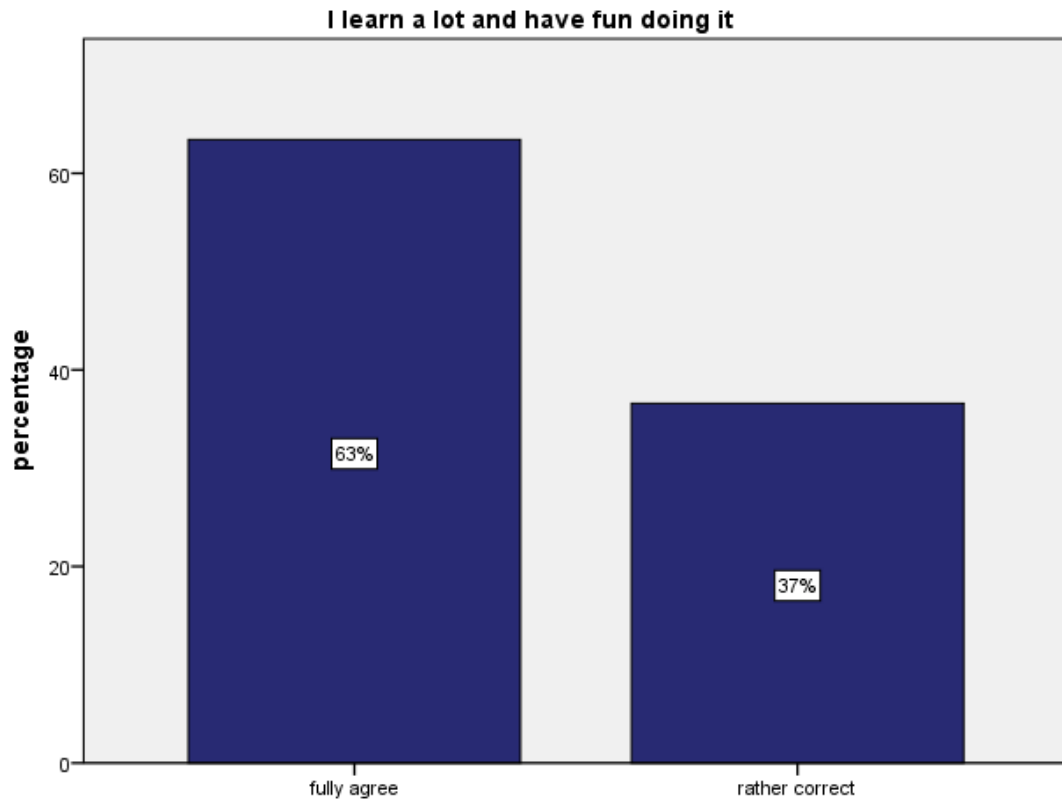


Figure 25 Having fun learning at Mortimer

- More than half of the children state that their English has improved; 57.9% fully agree to this. For 36.8%, there is some truth to it, and 5.3% disagree.
- A lot of the children claim that in their courses, dolls or puppets are hardly or never used, even though it was established that the children like it very much, no matter their age (within the questioned age group). Only 37.1% fully agree to the statement: “We use things such as dolls in our courses. “ 34.1% each agree a little or disagree.
- Unfortunately, it must be noted that there hardly any items used which come from England, America or any other English-speaking country. Only 22.5% fully agree with the statement that such elements were indeed used, 45% agree a little and 32.5% disagree.

- Furthermore, the amount of cultural aspects taught in the courses seems to be relatively small. Only 15% fully agree on: “we also speak about exciting things from other countries (cultural topics).” For 42.5% this was somewhat true and for another 42.5% not at all.

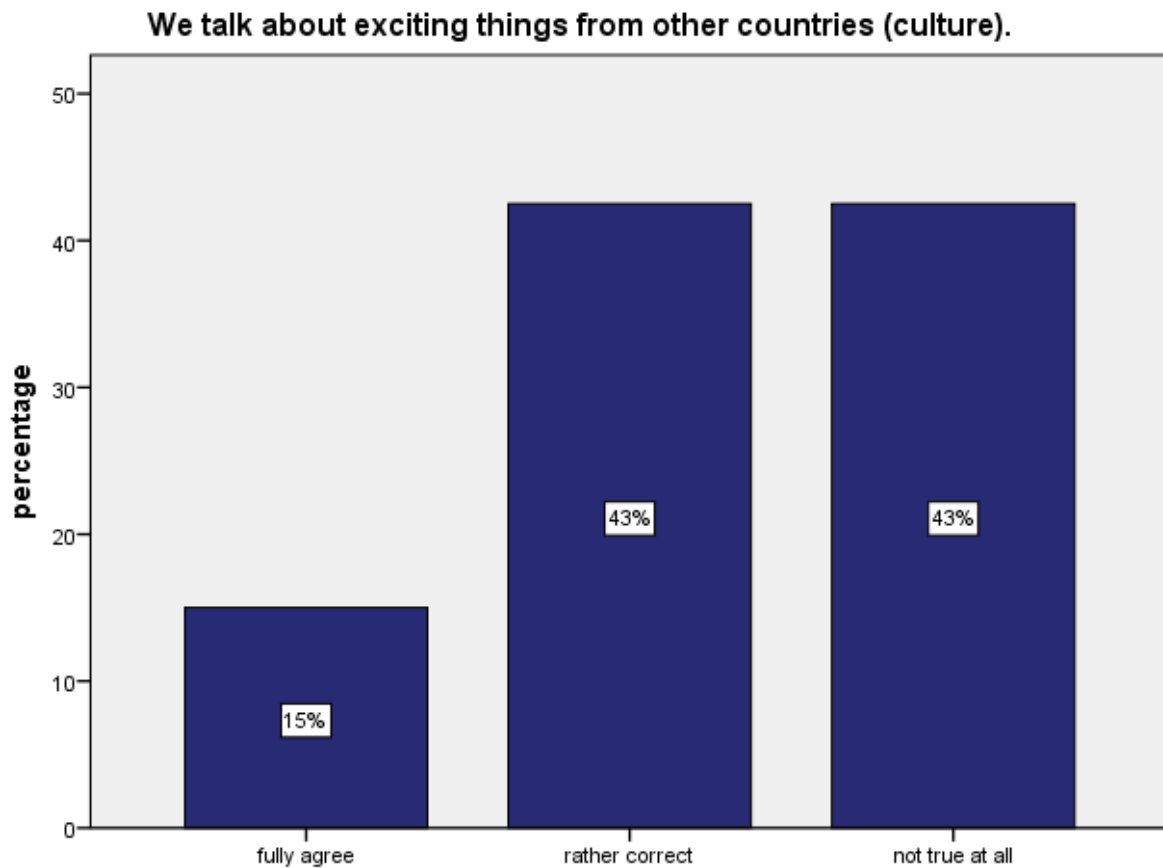


Figure 26 Teaching of culture

- In 33.3% of the cases, the English teacher actually was from an English-speaking country (native speaker). 7.7% of the children were not sure about it. More than half (59%) have a Mortimer teacher who is not from an English-speaking country.
- It was pleasantly noted that only 2.4% find the courses to be too strenuous. For 14.6% this is somewhat true and 82.9% say that Mortimer courses are not hard at all.
- The statement: “Mortimer courses are no fun at all,” is fully affirmed by a mere 2.4%, 4.9% agree with it and 92.7% disagree.

Only the fewest children (7%) see the Mortimer courses as real classes. For the majority of the children (56%), they are equally part class and part fun. Another 37% consider them to be mostly fun.

How do you feel during the English courses at Mortimer? Do you find them...

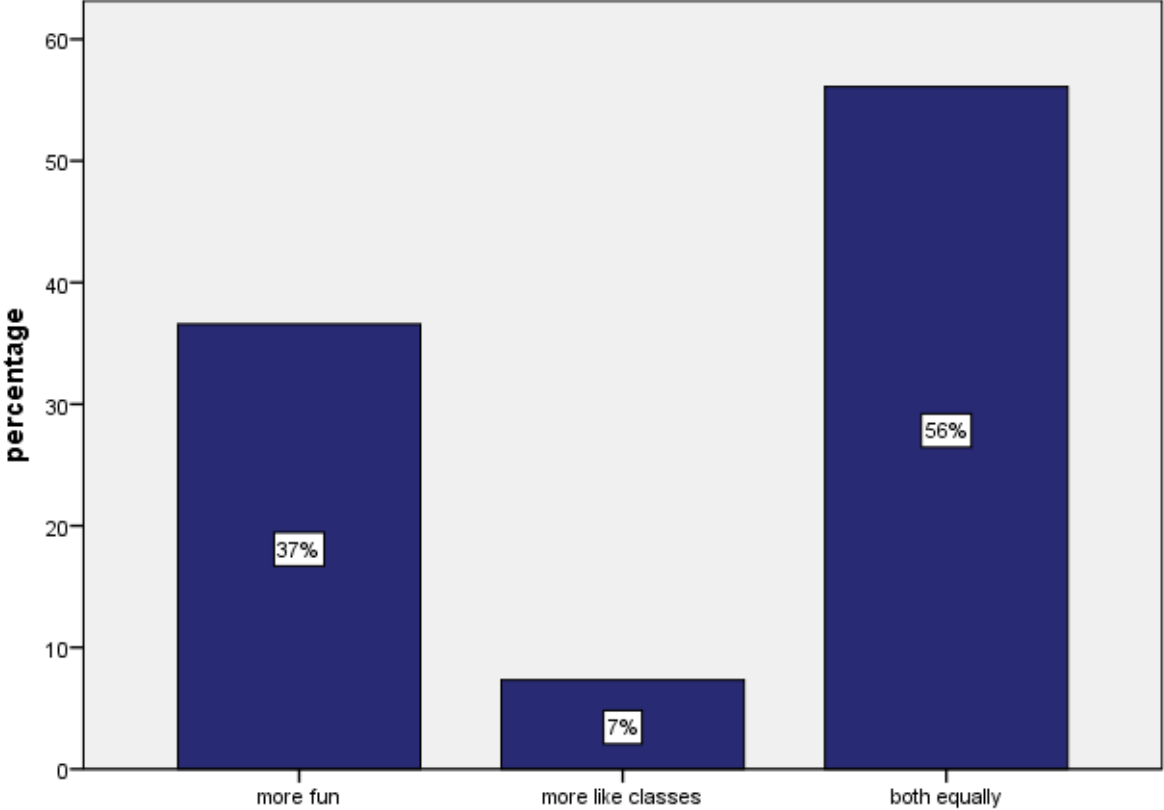


Figure 27 Feeling when at Mortimer

1.2.2.4 Effects of taking Mortimer courses

38.4% are of the opinion that they have definitely improved at school, thanks to Mortimer. Another 29.4% think they have made some progress.

Only 5.9% do not share this view.

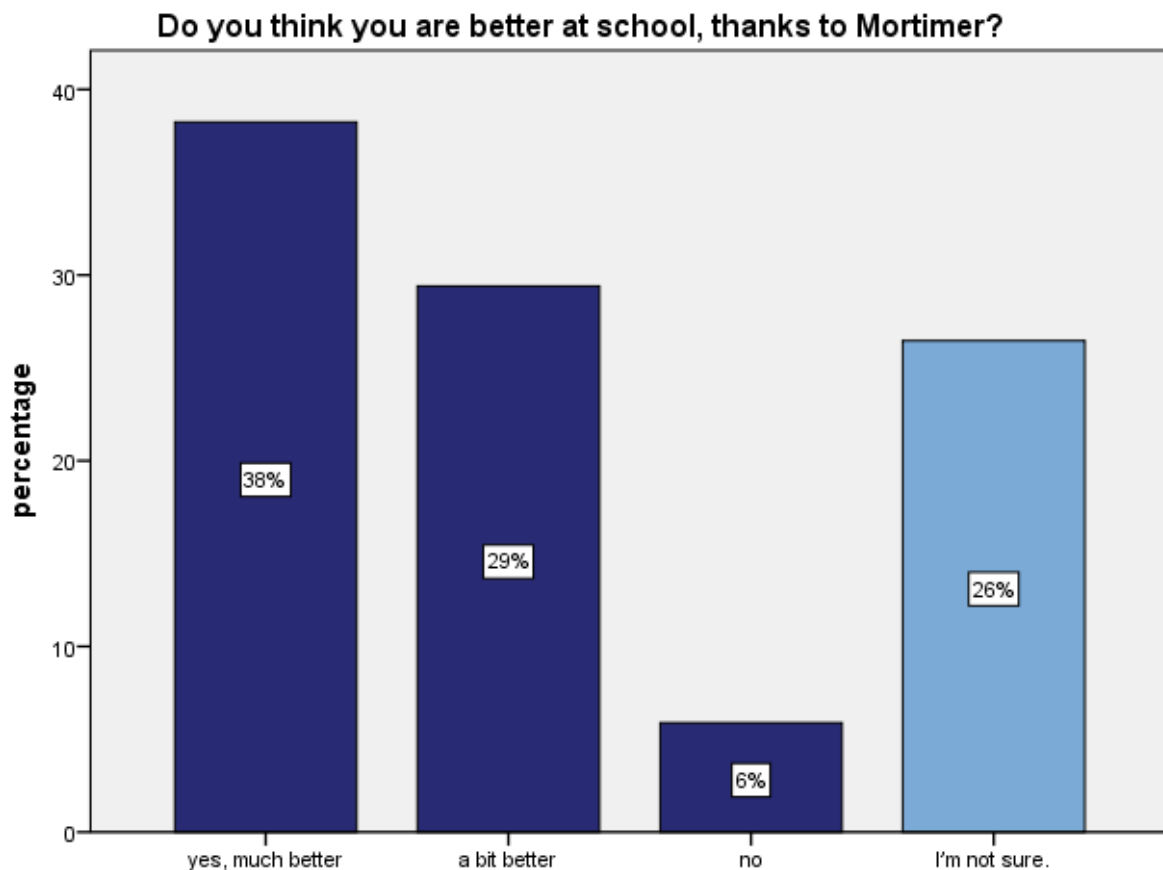


Figure 28 Improvements at school

Consequently, the children largely (51.4%) think that they have it much easier in English at school than other children, who did not or are not taking Mortimer courses. 24.2% feel they have it a little easier and only 3% do not think so.

Is English at school easier for you than for children who did not take Mortimer courses?

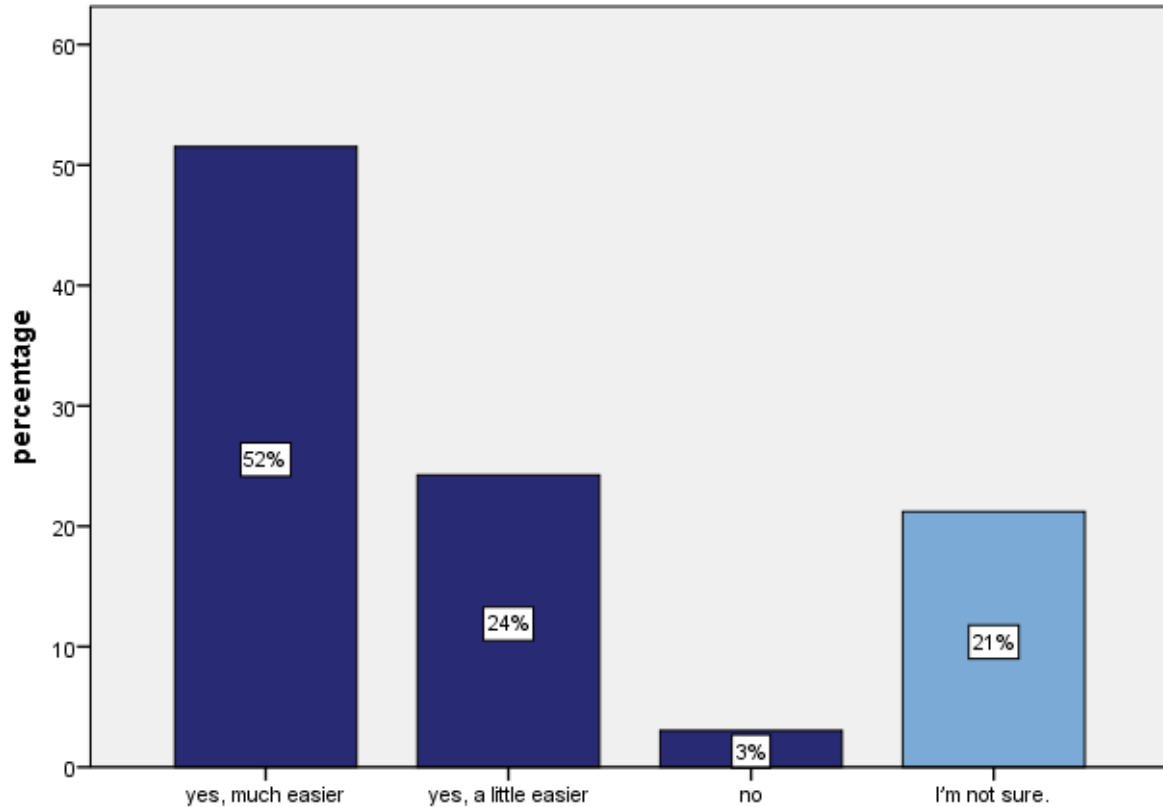


Figure 29 Advantages at school

Further statements:

- 80% enjoy participating during their English class at school; 6.7% not at all.
- 70% are not afraid of speaking English loudly in front of the class; only 7.3% are too afraid.
- 46.9% of the children are convinced, to have gained more self-confidence thanks to Mortimer while 15.6% disagree with this.
- 50% fully agree with the statement: "I think I'm much better in English than the other children in my class." 40.6% say it is somewhat true, 9.4% disagree.
- If a classmate was bad in English, 74.2% would recommend taking Mortimer courses. 25.8% agree to this; no child disagreed.

If a classmate was bad in English, I would recommend taking Mortimer courses.

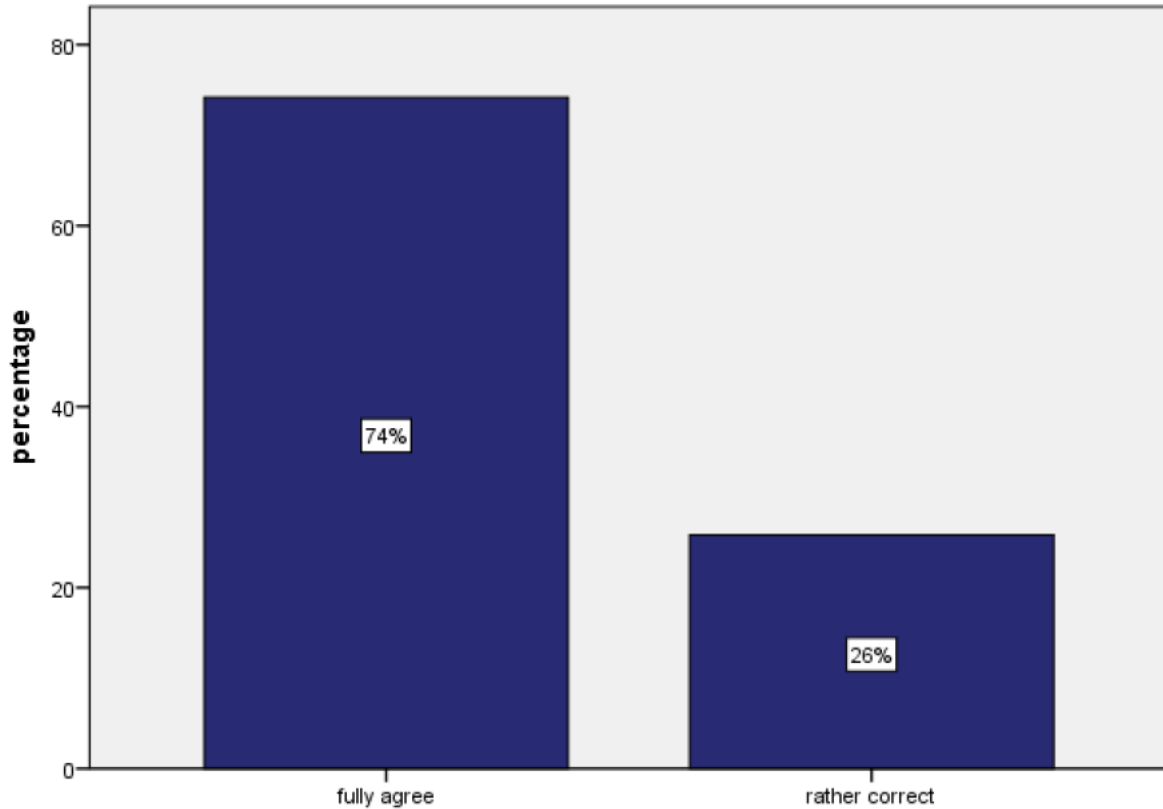


Figure 30 Recommendation

- 81.8% think English is a great language and that learning it is fun. 15.2% agree a little, only 3% disagree.
- 34.5% fully agree to the statement: “Thanks to Mortimer, I now know how to best study and prepare for exams.” 37.9% agree a little, but there are also 27.6% who disagree.

Due to the very young age of the children in the sample, most of them have had fewer problems with English at school. The main difficulties occur when it comes to writing, which was to be expected, considering their age and the school curriculum for English. Here, 12% have great difficulty and 36% have some difficulty. 52% have no difficulty. At translations, 11.5% have great difficulty, 30.8% some and 57.7% no difficulty.

Grammar is easy for 57.9% and only a little problematic for 42.1%.

64.3% easily understand what they hear or see in English; 28.6% have some, 7.1% many problems.

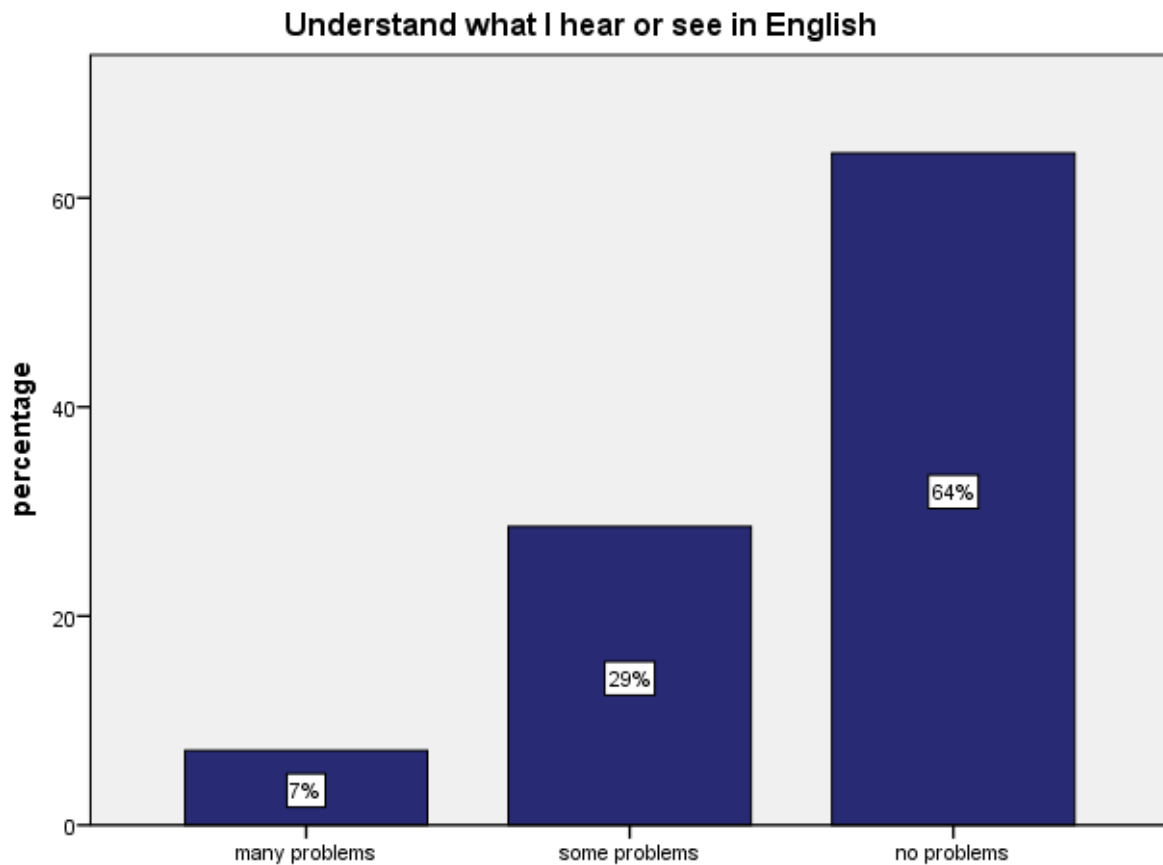


Figure 31 Understand what I hear or see in English

65.5% have no problems at all, when it comes to speaking English. 24.1% have a few problems and 7.1% have many problems.

Reading causes no problem for 61.5%, some problems for 21.7% and in turn, a big problem for 7.7%.

Memorizing words caused many problems for 8.7%, some problems for 21.7% and none for 69.6%.

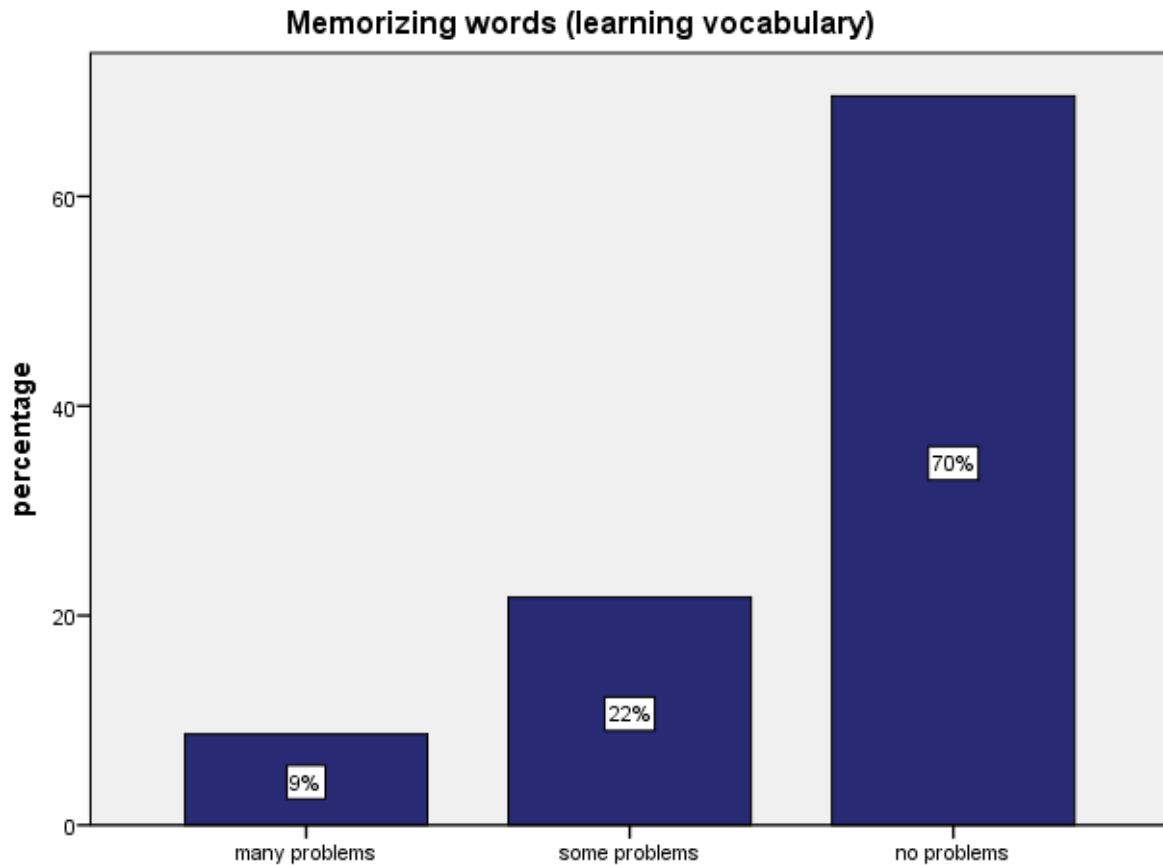


Figure 32 Memorizing words

The longer the children have been with Mortimer, the fewer difficulties arise for them, especially in the areas of understanding what they hear or see in English (correlation is highly significant, Spearman Rho = 0.514** is quite strong) and memorizing words (also highly significant, Spearman Rho = 0.460** is relatively strong).

Usually, children who have problems in one area, also have problems in the other categories.

The Mortimer courses are especially helpful regarding the areas speaking and listening comprehensions, according to the children.

Where did the Mortimer courses help you? (multiple choice)

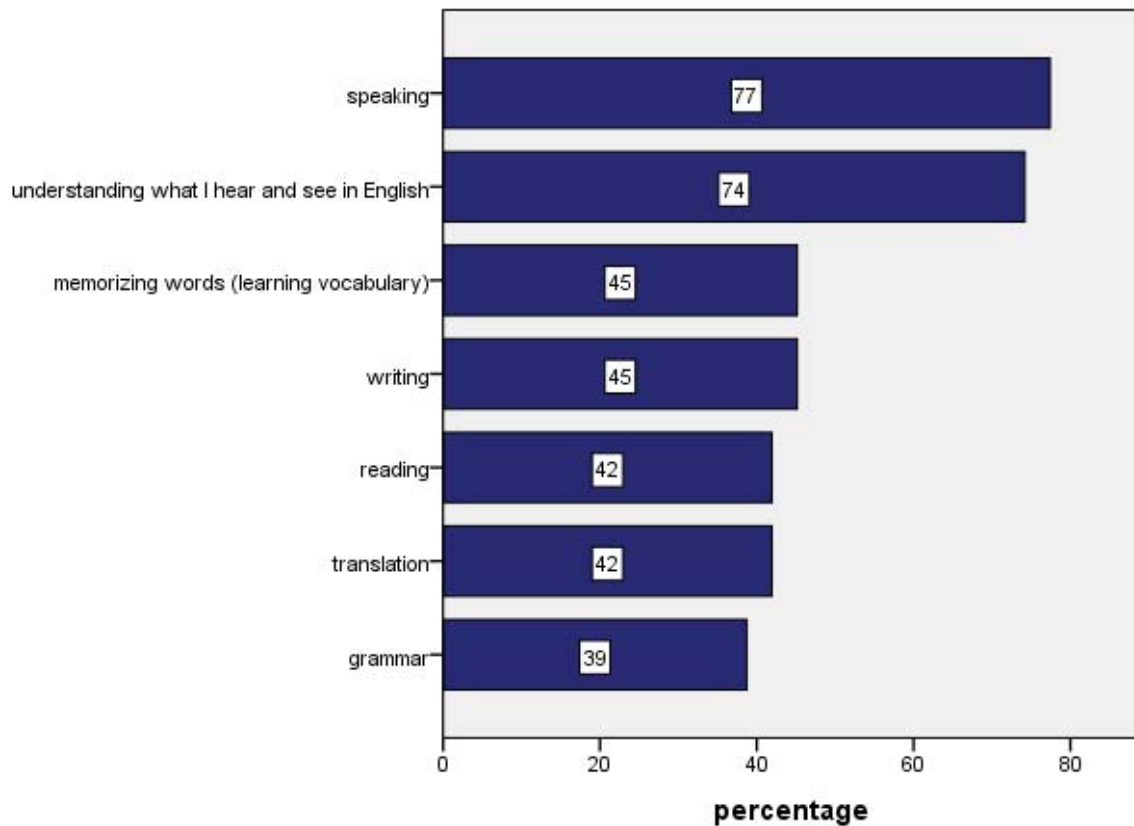


Figure 33 Improvements through Mortimer

77% feel that Mortimer was able to help them in the area of speaking, 74% think this is also true for understanding things in English.

45% agree that Mortimer helped them with learning vocabulary and with writing; 42% each also feel this about the areas of reading and translating.

When learning grammar, 39% perceived Mortimer as being helpful.

1.2.2.5 What the children have learned so far (successes)

- Look up an unknown word in the dictionary: 28.6% can do this well, 57.1% a little, 14.3% not yet.
- Memorize English words: 9.7% cannot do this, 29.3% can do this a little, but 61.3% can do this well.
- Ask for directions in English: 34.5% can do this well, 31% “manage”, but there are also 34.5% who cannot do it.
- Understanding English instructions: causes no problems for 40%; 36.7% can understand a little, 23.3% not really.
- Welcome someone in English and ask how they are: almost three fourth (73%) can do this well, 16.2% a little and 10.8% not well.

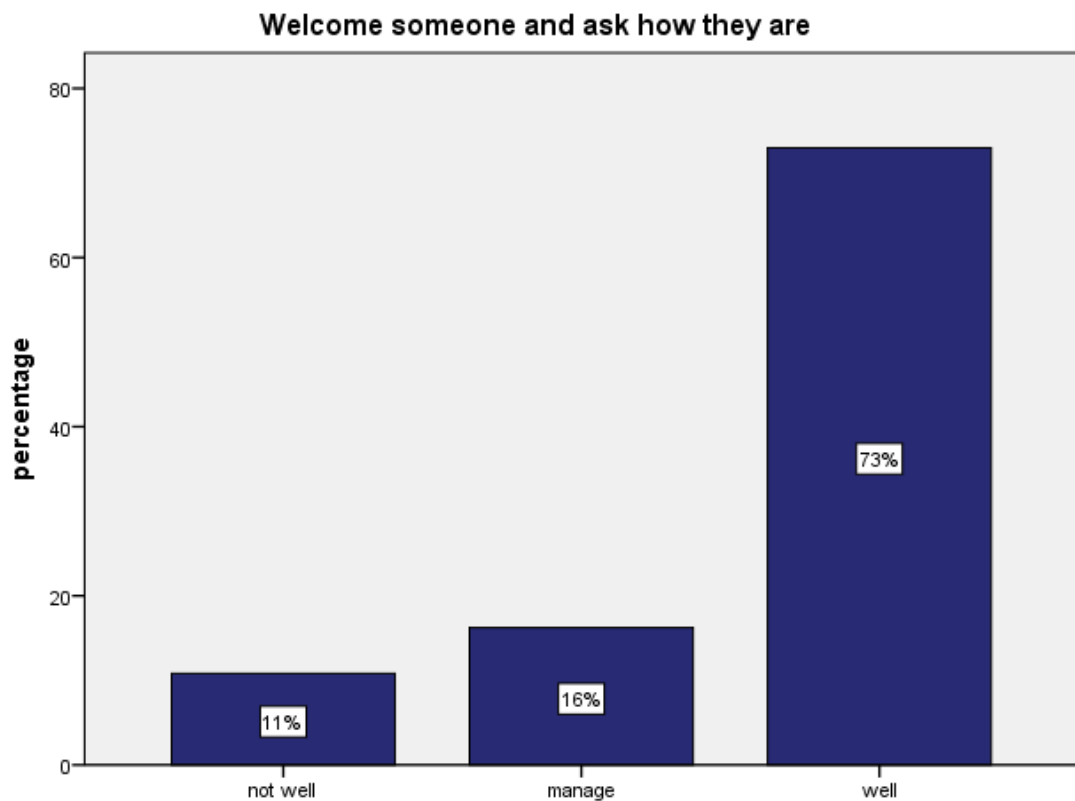


Figure 34 Welcome someone and ask how they are

- Name special holidays, food or drinks from English-speaking countries: 39.3% can do this well and 35.7% a little, but even so, one fourth (25%) cannot do this.
- Answering simple English questions is no problem for three fourth (76.5%) of the children; 17.6% manage and 5.9% cannot do it at all.

- Introducing yourself: most children (82.9%) can do this well, 14.3% manage and only 2.9% have difficulties.

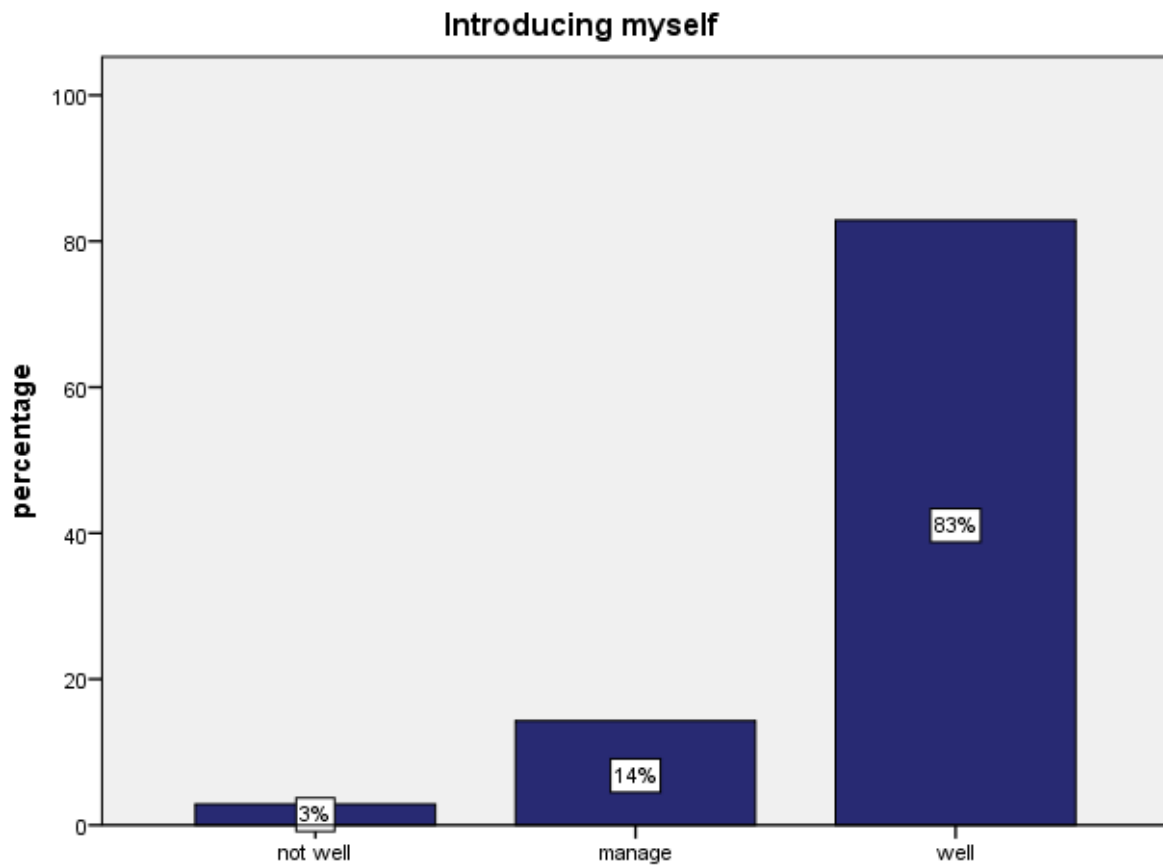


Figure 35 Introducing myself

Based on the above mentioned items, the index “ability” was formed, which is used for further calculations. This led to the result that the longer the children have been with Mortimer, the better their overall English. The correlation is highly significant and with a value of Spearman Rho of 0.369 quite strong.

Another equally significant correlation was determined between age and skills. This correlation, however, is relatively small and indicates that age is not an important factor; participation in Mortimer courses, however, is.

1.2.2.6 Evaluation of Mortimer by children

What do the children like best at Mortimer? (excerpt from individual statements):

"I can learn English."

"Speaking English."

"The „Flyswat-game."

"Learning and playing. Everything actually."

"The fact that we're learning English and that the teacher is nice."

"We have fun learning English!"

"I'm meeting my friends and we laugh and learn English together."

"I like the games as well as reading and translating best."

"I like everything."

"Our teacher is very creative and always comes up with something new."

What do the children not like, or rather, where is room for improvement? (open answers, excerpt):

"Working on one worksheet for the entire class."

"I like everything, except for one child who disrupts the class."

"More longer sentences"

"When the boys goof around."

"We should also work with current song lyrics."

The question: "Do you think all children should take Mortimer English courses?" was answered by 46.3% with „yes, most definitely.“ 48.4% answered „maybe, maybe not“ and 4.9% answered „no, absolutely not.“

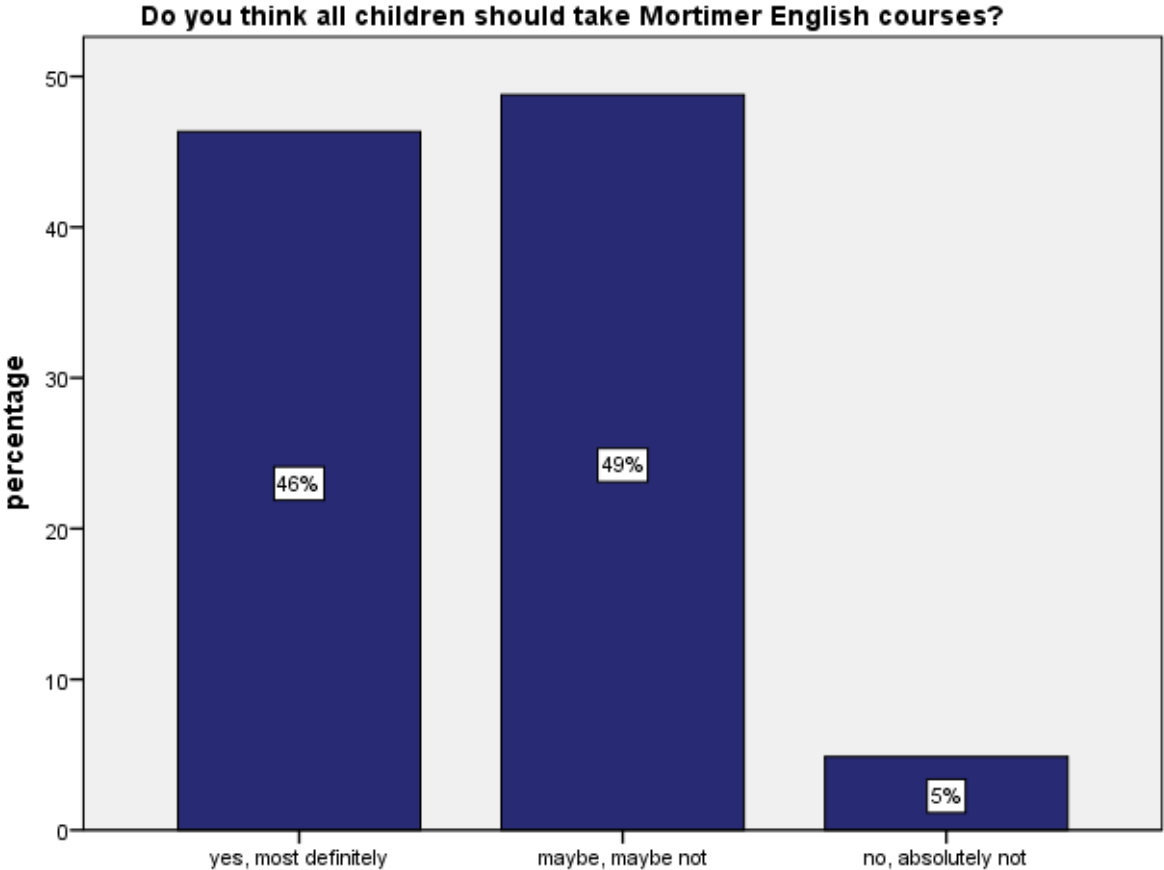


Figure 36 Mortimer for everyone

2 Qualitative Evaluation: Interviews and Visitation

The Mortimer Evaluation Project consists of a quantitative online survey of parents and children at Preschool and Elementary School level. The survey took place in eight of the German federate states, in which English in the form of the *Mortimer English Clubs* is offered. In order to validate the quantitative survey, the participants were also questioned in additional interviews. Furthermore, a course observation including notes, sketches and (memory) minutes of the class proceedings took place, due to the fact that video and audio recordings were not possible.

2.1 Selected Mortimer Centers

2.1.1 Selection

Initially, it was planned to do visitations in ten cities. However, it proved difficult to find locations of centers that met the necessary criteria, which is why only the following nine regions were included in the research study:

Grasbrunn (Bavaria), Markt Schwaben (Bavaria), Hersbruck (Bavaria), Bayreuth (Bavaria), Katzenelnbogen (Rhineland-Palatinate), Wissen (Rhineland-Palatinate), Rheinberg (North Rhine-Westphalia), Hattingen (North Rhine-Westphalia) und Verden (Lower Saxony).



Figure 37 map: distribution

2.1.2 Criteria

It can be justified insofar as that on the one hand, a distribution throughout Germany, as even as possible, was to be guaranteed. A few schools that would have been interested in taking part in the study were therefore rejected.

On the other hand, it was important to see at least two courses of varying age groups in one location, in order to gain a differentiated insight into the course routine.

This could not be taken into consideration in the city of Bayreuth as there is only one class per week.

A further criterion was good accessibility of the centers for the learners using public transportation, which turned out to be somewhat difficult in rural areas. As a result, visits to two of the beforehand suggested schools were cancelled since their teachers advised against it.

Based on these criteria, a further 14 Mortimer English Clubs were contacted in addition to the already suggested 13.

This merely resulted in visits to Bayreuth and Hersbruck because other franchisees did not want to take part in the study for various reasons. Two reasons that were often given were the additional time effort and expense as well as the claim that visits would create a form of unrest in the courses. In approaching other Mortimer English Clubs, the attempt was made to expand the distribution of the locations from North-East and South-West Germany. There are, however, proportionately fewer Mortimer English Clubs in these areas and thus schools that would have been open towards a visit.

On the whole, the selected clubs, by a large percentage, met all criteria which allow a comparison within the framework of this partial research.

2.2 Teachers

The courses visited were taught by twelve different teachers who were to be interviewed.

Here, only ten of the teachers could be interviewed, however, because due to subsequent adult courses, there was not enough time to conduct a thorough interview.

Of the teachers in the courses there was only one native speaker and one other teacher at the level of a native speaker as she had spent many years abroad.

Another five teachers had dealt with the English language more intensively during their education, for example during their training as foreign language correspondent, interpreter, or via language studies.

In addition, two of the teachers had worked abroad as part of their previous job assignment or worked in an American company based in Germany. This led to an intensive use of the language over several years.

The remaining three teachers had no intensive or direct relation to the language prior to working at the Mortimer Clubs.

Except for one case, this fact did not attract great attention, however. This particular case involved a former employee who claimed to have used English occasionally at her prior job. Her pronunciation, however, had a strong German accent and during the course, it was evident that she made clear and obvious mistakes in her sentence structure. Since she is apparently aware of her level of knowledge, she stated in the interview that she “would only [teach] the little ones until about first grade, since [her] English was not good enough to teach higher age groups.”

Didactical analysis and recommendations

Overall, the English-speaking competence for the intensive courses can be considered as ranging from good to sufficient. Nevertheless, it must be noted that there are hardly any or only limited prior methodical-didactical experiences as would be gained during a genuine

education. In this context it is therefore recommended to adhere to strict guidelines and materials of English didactics for Elementary Schools.

Central, mandatory and exact guidelines seem as important as an assurance of quality for languages through proof of corresponding (external) certificates or internal language competences (e.g. aptitude tests etc.) by franchisees, in order to project homogeneity instead of possible heterogeneity.

2.3 Framework conditions

In the following, the setting is understood to be a fixed variable. Further conditions influencing language learning are the learning atmosphere on the one side, and the children's motivation on the other side.

2.3.1 Classrooms

Regarding the premises, all courses, with the exception of four, took place in rooms rented especially for the Mortimer English Club.

In Grasbrunn, courses were held in a room of the local Preschool and in Verden, one of the courses was held in the room of a bank building which was provided to early childhood language education free of charge.

Only in one town was the course held in the private living room of the teacher. Here, it was only one course altogether, whereas at peak times there were up to four courses per week. The teacher explained that she was only able to afford such a small number of courses because there were no additional rental fees.

In Markt Schwaben and its branch in Poing, all courses took place in extra premises. Solely on one afternoon per week were additional courses offered in Anzing, in the basement of an apartment building.

This location dates back to the beginnings of the Center in 2009, when there were no special classrooms available yet. Therefore, and also due to the lack of alternatives, courses are still held there. Although there would be alternatives in Markt Schwaben and Poing, the teacher would like to make it easier for the parents in the area, so that they do not have to drive too far. The room is set up especially for the purpose of courses, decorated with a big rug and equipped with appropriate course materials.

Since the courses mainly take place on the floor, the rooms generally have carpeted floors.

But here too, there were exceptions. Two courses were held exclusively at the table because they practiced methods to prepare for the Cambridge Certificate as well as the transfer to fifth grade and thus the spatial arrangement fit the working method.

In another four courses, the teacher alternated between table and open space, depending on the momentary activity. In these examples there was one instance where there was hardly any room for the children to move around since the table took up a lot of the space.

In the other three cases, there was plenty of room and the spatial arrangement was adapted to the age group of the children. There, courses with smaller children were often entirely held on the carpeted floor. Courses with older children alternated between the table and the floor. One of the teachers also explained that she would always sit on the floor with smaller children but that the older ones did not really like sitting on the floor anymore and so she moves to the table with them. The rooms which are rented specifically for the Mortimer English Club are also specially decorated, matching an English learning theme, e.g. English flags, posters with English vocabulary and pictures, pin boards, and descriptions of current projects.

Regardless of whether the course takes place on the floor or at the table, each child has a spot to which it can return after activities involving movement. On the floor, this is usually made clear with pillows or similar seating. In doing so, the teachers leave a lot of freedom to the children so they can decide for themselves if they would like to sit, kneel, lie or if they would like to rest on the table. Only in the two courses which were held solely at the table, were the children seated around it just like in regular tutoring sessions.

The duration of the courses visited was 45 minutes each and included children ranging from Preschool level up to and including fourth grade. Since the level of courses is not linked to the children's age, however, most courses included children with an age difference of one or two years. Furthermore, the books used in the various course levels were chosen independent of the different age groups but reliant on the children's level of knowledge and on how long they have been taking Mortimer courses.

Premises and class-size are mutually dependant.

The number of children per group is set to range from four to eight. On the one hand, this is done to ensure that the courses are profitable for the provider; on the other hand, however, Mortimer wants to ensure individuality and differentiation within the courses. Put into practice, the number of children was mostly conforming to this. As a result, on the days of the actual visits there were:

- in Markt Schwaben four children in each of the three courses visited,
- in Bayreuth three children,
- in Grasbrunn five children in two courses and six in the other course,
- in Hersbruck four children in the first course, only two in the second course and again four children in the third course,
- in Katzenelnbogen four children in the first course and five in the second course,
- in Rheinberg two children in the first course, though usually there appear to be five children, and only one child in the second course,
- in Hattingen five children in the first course and in each of the two following course seven children,
- in Wissen five children in the first course and four in the second course,
- and in Verden four children in the first course and six in the second course.

Regardless of the registrations per course, there were cases where children were ill or could not attend the course on the days of the visits, which is why the actual number on the days of the school visits was below four in five cases and in one case there was only one child

present. This made it difficult to plan playful sessions in compliance with the Mortimer concept, but the teacher used the opportunity to encourage the child in its active language use.

Deviating from the guidelines, the teacher of the town where courses are held in the living room of a private home stated that to some extent she also had courses with three children. This was especially the case, when children de-registered and the entire course would have had to be cancelled. For her, this was justified by the fact that she did not have any additional rental fees and thus could financially afford to give courses with a smaller number of children. As a counter example, the teacher named another location. Regarding this, the teacher stated in the interview that in certain cases she would also accept nine children per group, since there was “always someone ill or absent anyway.”

Didactical analysis and recommendations

Minimum requirements regarding, for example, the size of the room, equipment as well as general conditions concerning the psychology of learning (colors, materials etc.) are to be recommended and further developed in order to create not only corporate identity aspects and comparable learning standards, but also space in which the children can move and act, exhibition and presentation space, and also access to materials which enable children to learn independently and individually.

2.3.2 Learning atmosphere

A crucial component is the learning environment or rather the learning atmosphere.

Everywhere, people were open towards and friendly with each other. In most cases, the courses appeared more like play groups, which led to the fact that the children did not feel as if they were in classes in which they had to learn something.

Only the above mentioned courses that took entirely place at the table did seem like tutoring sessions and not like courses in which English was learned playfully. In those cases, the teachers seemed to be more like actual school teachers, compared to the other courses

in which the teachers were more like a part of the group. Here, there was a general balance between playful situations and those in which clear instructions or similar had to be given by the teacher.

Dealing with disruptions is an essential aspect in creating a pleasant learning atmosphere. Here, teachers usually chose a middle course in which the children had enough freedom to also get up and move around, for example. In doing so, they created a learning environment without any pressure. On the other hand, disruptions which affected to entire group were mostly solved quickly and in a friendly manner. The children who were briefly cautioned, for example, had to be re-seated elsewhere or were promised a reward.

On the whole, it was ensured that there was no pressure on the children. They all participated in the courses voluntarily, with few exceptions. During the visits, only three children appeared to be indifferent. It was furthermore important to give the children the choice of whether or not they want to join in the course activities. There were actually a few situations where the children were either tired or they simply did not like a particular game or song. All teachers reacted in the same way, though. They offered the children to sit on the edge of the room and take a break from the activity. They were, however, asked to at least listen. After a short while, the children re-joined the game independently, which shows that they participate on their own initiative and not due to any pressure from outside.

Another aspect, which is part of an open and friendly learning environment, was feedback. The children were praised very often, even if they made mistakes. This way, the children were encouraged to feel comfortable in their environment and to not be afraid of speaking. Any mistakes made were usually corrected through immediate feedback after the praise.

Didactical analysis and recommendations

The overall positive encouragement as well as the voluntary participation that could be observed is exemplary. Restrictive measures would clearly be counterproductive in the process of foreign language learning. Should the observed positive cases mirror general, self-developed attitudes then that would be gratifying. This should, however, (if not the case) be constantly encouraged and strengthened through further educational training regarding

pedagogical aspects of foreign language learning (also online or virtually with video examples). The positive learning environment of the MECs is a significant plus and can strongly be used as part of their profile.

2.3.3 Motivation

The children's motivation plays an essential part in a concept which puts great emphasis on fun and joy in learning.

Indicators of the children's intrinsic motivation prove their active participation and the circumstance of whether they take part in the activities with fun and joy. Of course, with an independent observer, this criterion is based on a very subjective assessment.

With only a few exceptions, which will be further explained later on in the text, the children took actively part in the activities and always seemed to enjoy the English courses and to attend them willingly.

In order to maintain the children's motivation, the teachers used different methods. They have to respond to the children's mood that day, for example. They also have to assess if the children are more tired or hyper. As a consequence, they have to choose appropriate activities so that the children want to participate.

On this, one teacher gave an example: in situations where a child does not want to participate, she would choose a very exciting game since this always works, and the children would then re-join the class with new motivation. In her opinion, however, it cannot really be controlled whether or not children want to participate since their motivation was also strongly dependent on their daily mood. Another teacher contradicted this, saying that the children's motivation can easily be controlled if you consider their wishes and needs. On the whole, a diverse course structure in which new things were done regularly was considered important. "This is especially true for the smaller children as they are not able to concentrate on one task for long periods of time and otherwise get bored quickly."

In addition to the different approaches within one session, several rewarding systems were introduced in a few courses in order to keep the children's interest up. For example, one teacher would "[take notes] in each session, so 12 times, for *use of English* and *behavior*.

And at the end of each session there is a reward. By now, I reward not only the best anymore, but all children; just as further incentive. But I only do this in some groups if absolutely necessary.” Another teacher said that she had introduced a similar system in a difficult group, using stamps and rewards. In addition to such long-term rewarding systems for difficult groups, there were also occasional smaller rewards, such as gummy bears for the winner of a game or something similar. This did not seem to be standard procedure but to be spontaneous and to depend on the momentary situation.

Didactical analysis and recommendation

Motivation in early English courses feeds primarily and sustainably on relevant contents, not superficially and for a short time on methods. If the “subject matter“ bears a certain meaning for the learner, e.g. as a communicative aid, as part of a presentation, for a product etc., then intrinsic motivation is created. In my opinion, it is necessary to develop and provide standardized learning and task formats in this context. Differentiated praise is also essential. However, the well-developed feedback-culture within the courses is already highly pleasing.

2.4 Course progression

The Course progression can be divided into two main aspects. Firstly, the general structure of courses with the objective for that particular session and secondly, concrete action patterns and materials used within the course progression. To serve as basis, the teachers’ statements from the interviews regarding a deviation from the guidelines were clarified in order to afterwards compare them to observations made during classes.

2.4.1 Deviations from the guidelines

The general structures for a particular session or rather the objectives of that session were reached by using various methods and action patterns. These were stipulated in a *teacher’s guide*.

Without exception, the teachers stated that they initially worked strictly according to this guide, but that with time they would deviate from the guidelines in certain situations, based on prior experiences.

Thus, the children's wishes and their current mood played an important role. If the children had a bad day or were tired, the course progression was adapted individually to the group.

What's more, the general group constellation, gender specific aspects, and the growth in knowledge also played an essential part, "i.e., whether the group consists of boys or girls and for how long they have been taking courses."

"Boys, for example, don't really like to sing songs, so there's no use in being hell-bent on singing a song if the children simply don't want to. I always look at the basic concept of a session and then add other things as well; mainly, though, games or sometimes revision. You just have to be considerate of the children's pace too. You cannot constantly start something new if they keep forgetting the old stuff."

The extent of the deviation depends strongly on the teacher's personality and prior experience. One teacher stated that over time, she had split most "lessons" into two sessions and filled them with her own materials and ideas. In turn, she would sometimes leave out things or go through them quicker.

"I wouldn't leave out complete topics, but there are some stories or themes which the children don't particularly like. [...] The second book somehow starts with "family". And there, objects are nicely assigned based on gender-specific aspects. *It's my mother's saucepan and my father's briefcase*. The children then have to connect them accordingly. And [...] I don't like that at all. I sometimes just use the cards that come with the story and ask the children how things are in their family or if things could be different from what is shown in the book."

Didactical analysis and recommendations

The provided *teacher's guide* is clearly meant as an orientation guide. The question is, whether a standardized training guide equipped with a more or less universal course book

and multiple, additional materials should be developed. Comparability, assurance of quality, and didactical assistance for teachers who are linguistically competent, but lack didactical training are key point arguments in favor of this.

Indeed, as part of gender studies, differentiations should also be recommended in this matter, e.g. different contents and task formats.

A standardized, online-based teacher-training course provided by MEC could clearly be effective.

2.4.2 Objective and course structure

The underlying criterion for structuring a course is time factor.

In theory, each of the courses visited was 45 minutes long. Mostly, they even started on time, though often, one or two children arrived a little bit late. This did not disrupt the course progression since these children were immediately integrated in the activities. The teachers did not always end the courses exactly on time, if, for example, games had to be finished.

Within this time frame, the overall structure or objective of the course could be identified to varying degrees.

Due to this, there was one location where there seemed to be no clear structure in the session, but rather as if the teacher spontaneously chose the activity that best fitted the situation in that moment. The teacher often strayed from the plan or stopped in the middle of a game in order to briefly start a new activity: counting to twenty, for example, although the game was about counting things off.

Clearly, one advantage of this could be that the course seemed more like a play group, in which English is learned very subconsciously. The entire structure for the session, however, did not appear to be all that target-oriented. It must be noted in this context, though, that with the increasing age of the children, course structures became more clear and understandable.

In contrast to this, there was one Mortimer English Club where various course exercises were completed one after the other in a clear and understandable way, and where the objective of the session was always transparent. Here, the teacher did not deviate from the original plan. In this case, the courses were quite similar to regular school classes or rather typical tutoring sessions. In other locations, teachers chose to find a middle course, tending either towards one or the other. Here, the clear objective of a session was discernible. Teachers still acted flexible and, if necessary, deviated from the initial plan which was usually done on the children's request.

Didactical analysis and recommendations

On this point too, we need to strengthen quality assurance regarding the courses through standardization as well as encourage comparability (references to English teaching at school) through obvious target competences, which can be conveyed easily to children and their parents.

The development of a special curriculum, based on already existing consensual standards and descriptions of competences within the federate states of Germany and Europe, is at least worth a thought in the medium term. For promoting the courses, it is quite significant!

2.4.3 Methodical patterns

In six locations, the teachers used different rituals to get started at the beginning of a session. They either started by singing a "hello"-song or with a short round of conversations where the children would introduce themselves either shortly or in a more verbose manner, depending on their age and level of English, and would talk about their hobbies or past week.

This was also done in two other locations, but only with the smaller children at Preschool level and with first or sometimes second graders as well. In all other locations, sessions started with course-specific activities. An underlying criterion for each course was to say goodbye to each other at the end of the session. These goodbyes turned out to be of varying

durations. In parts, the children either recited a “goodbye”-poem combined with specific movements, or the teacher said goodbye to each child individually.

The actual course with its diverse action patterns and methods took place within this structure. As an outsider, it was difficult to judge whether or not these patterns and methods were complying with the *teacher’s guide*. Individual methods and action patterns were often alternated within the course progression.

Only one group of fourth graders who prepared for the Cambridge Certificate almost exclusively practiced listening comprehensions. Yet, even here, the teacher combined the listening comprehensions with varying, different tasks, such as coloring, writing, assigning correctly, or speaking. By tendency, a certain method in groups with younger children was used for a shorter period of time and teachers also switched methods more often than in groups with older children as they were often able to concentrate on one task for a longer period of time.

This cannot be generalized, however, since such an approach not only depends on the age but also on the activity itself. Even younger children played games lasting ten to 15 minutes, whereas they quickly lost the ability to concentrate when they were working with flashcards and corresponding vocabulary. This can be ascribed to the fact that the method of using flashcards is neither as varied nor as exciting as a game and that it demands a higher level of concentration. Subsequent action patterns mostly went well together thematically but also content-wise. Before starting a game, for example, such as Bingo or the „Flyswat-game“, the necessary vocabulary was re-activated or newly introduced with flashcards, then used concretely during the game, and afterwards usually transferred to other exercises in connection with a subsequent game or song. In most cases, there was one coherent theme in each course, which was extended by other, not topic-related activities. These were usually carried out at the end of a session. Here, the children were sometimes allowed to choose a game themselves, or existing knowledge was revised. In this case too, however, the groups practiced the necessary vocabulary for each activity in advance. Concerning the content-related compatibility of the order of methods, one exception was found at the location, where it had already proved difficult to find a common theme during the course progression. At this location, though, the teacher would frequently go back to the initial theme in the course of the session. All additional methods not relating to the theme or the ones used for

revision were added to the structure plan spontaneously. In making sure that action patterns were thematically compatible, certain themes were practiced and there was a clear transfer of knowledge.

It is also important for successful and individual learning of the English language that the various methods appeal to the individual learners. This aspect is always considered through the concept of playful learning.

It was implemented in the courses insofar as that many things were illustrated, which is helpful for the so-called visual learner. All terms of the vocabulary specifically used in a session were combined with flashcards or objects. Games such as Bingo, Memory, or similar also help visual learners. In order to not only play a game but to also encourage the English language, the children mostly had to use the corresponding words during a game as well. This was not consistently done in each location, but at least the teacher would then say the specific word herself. This constant repetition of a word, in addition to descriptive explanations of terms, helped the auditory learner.

In the courses, the teachers also read stories from the special Mortimer book and sang songs from it. Then at home, the children can and should then listen to these stories and songs on a CD. Through playful learning, the so-called haptic learner is also taken into account automatically.

If children learn the names of spatial arrangement, for example, they are supposed to go to the particular objects. For the theme "animals", there was one teacher who even brought in Playmobil animal figures which the children could collect after correctly naming them. Albeit in weakened form, this method was also used with flashcards. Even though the children would not hold a concrete object in their hands, they could still collect the cards after correctly naming the terms and pictures or specifically match each term with its corresponding picture, as in the "Flyswat-game" or in Memory. This encourages the spatial link of both aspects.

According to one of the teachers, grammar at higher levels is not only learned by using worksheets, which encourages the visual learner, but also during the actual language use in class, which encourages the auditory learner. Regarding syntax and structure of declarative and interrogative sentences, the individual segments of a sentence were additionally placed

on the table in form of cards and shifted around by the children. This integrated the haptic component into the learning process and thus visually illustrated the structure of a sentence.

Depending on the children's age, the teachers also made sure to alternate between activities in a seated position and active movement. Most songs were therefore combined with certain movements, such as "Head, shoulders, knees and toes", where the children would point to the appropriate body parts. In addition, there were not only games while seated, but also in the room itself, such as the "Flyswat-game" or "Hide and Seek" with flashcards. Especially in courses with fourth graders and sometimes third graders as well, there were proportionately less games involving movement, compared to classes with younger children.

One of the teachers explained that those children who were about to transfer to fifth grade of Secondary Education often did not really like to sing or do such "kids' stuff" anymore. And since the teacher tries to cater to the children's individual wishes, she usually refrains from doing activities which they do not really enjoy. In turn, especially the children at Preschool level still need many opportunities to move around frequently in order to "stay happy."

Didactical analysis and recommendations

All of the centers visited are characterized by diverse methods, child orientation and a great effort regarding positive and affective learning experiences. In useful learning steps, the teachers always try to get the learners enthusiastic about linguistic aspects and they are doing so with great commitment, which also affects the children's attitude. This can only be explicitly praised and encouraged.

Using differentiation as a didactical means seems to be less of a "method", but more of a general, positive attitude of the teachers, which even shows in the small, very individualized groups.

2.5 Media and use of material

Concerning the material provided: at the beginning of the course, the teachers had already prepared everything they would need for that session. If the children made requests or if

there were other reasons to deviate from the initial plan, however, the teachers were able to quickly use other teaching materials.

In most cases, the shelves containing materials were in the same room or in an adjacent room, usually stored in labeled folders or boxes. This allowed for a quick and purposeful access for all involved.

2.5.1 General material

In general, the teachers use a lot of different and diverse material during a session. In parts, they use the same material for several age groups in which a certain theme is worked on more or less comprehensively depending on the children's level of knowledge.

Materials provided and used by Mortimer were mainly flashcards, Memory games and Bingo cards, which still had to be printed out and laminated by the franchisees, and which were used for visualization purposes.

One teacher also explained that at "Mortimer, individual teachers would also [send] their own material and ideas for sessions to the headquarters, which were then made available to everyone via a mailing list."

On the whole, the teachers would often mix their own material with that provided by Mortimer. The same teacher went on to explain that "the materials need to be complemented. And each teacher [...] also [uses] their own games."

In this particular course, for example, the group also played Twister in addition to using the regular material. These complements happen automatically, considering the fact that the teachers are mostly adhering to the *teacher's guide* but also vary and extend it with their own ideas.

Regardless of whether or not the material is provided by Mortimer or was chosen by the teachers themselves, it is very child-appropriate in general. It includes games the children also play at home in German, for example Twister, as well as colored and child-appropriate images on the picture cards. What's more, the children seem to really enjoy the use of these materials, which emphasizes their age appropriateness. Here, a distinction between

individual age groups needs to be made since fourth graders already do reading and writing exercises and thus use other learning materials than children at Preschool level.

Didactical analysis and recommendations

The Materials and media used comply with all common findings of early foreign language learning and are to be acknowledged quite positively. Creating a pool of materials and ideas is a welcome development which can be encouraged online, but which must be classified within a general concept. Standardization was already referred to. Classifying learning materials and media is conveniently helpful for those who had no didactical training (e.g. through comments and assigning them upon redistribution).

2.5.2 CD and workbook

In addition to the material used during courses, there are several work books which build on each other and a CD containing one course level each.

Sometimes, the books are also used in courses in order to read stories to the children, to color in, or to do smaller exercises. In addition, the books are to be used at home also. In relation to this, one teacher stated that this “would strongly depend on the child and its parents and their support.” During a session, the teachers only gave the children little tasks for homework, such as to finish drawing a picture. This was not really contributing to practicing English, but it left room for other activities during the session.

The only exception to this was the group preparing for the Cambridge Certificate. Here, the children seemed to be given more homework since once, on the day they only had to color in pictures of an exercise done in class, they happily said that “this is very easy homework.”

As mentioned before, there is also a CD for each course level, always comprising a set of work books. The first level of *English for Children* comprises four work books and is meant to be used for one and a half years. Following the concept, this CD should be listened to daily at the very beginning and three to four times a week later on.

According to one teacher, the children only listen to the CD sporadically at one point because “by that time they really have been working with it for quite a while already.” She also stated that she “didn’t like the new CD. You can’t sing along with it properly. It’s nice to listen to, but I still use the old one for sing-along.”

Each Mortimer English Club suggests the CD to parents and gives tips such as “to always keep it in the car and play it while driving, even if it’s only short distances. The children aren’t doing much anyway and should always try to sing along. One lesson per week is simply not enough and so they should listen to the CD as often as possible.”

In reality, the actual use of the CD varies greatly.

One of the teachers said that the children would listen to it most of the time. “I always get a lot of feedback on this. Yes, well, some children listen to it to no end and I almost feel sorry for their parents.” Two other teachers also stated that you can indeed trust the parents to play the CD frequently because they are told at the beginning of classes how important the CD is and that it is a significant component of successful language learning.

Another teacher whose own children also take classes at Mortimer talked about her own personal experience, saying how she “was super strict about it at the beginning but that it started to really annoy her at one point because you just couldn’t listen to the songs any longer.”

Other teachers also confirmed that the CD was usually played regularly in the beginning, but that this would strongly wear off later, which is why teachers then suggest other materials.

There is also the fact that the children often have a full schedule during the week or that there are sometimes periods in which they simply do not like listening to the CD. One teacher describes this situation during the interview in a more differentiated way. According to her, “the children at Preschool level [...] are still very enthusiastic about it which is not really the problem anyway because at that age [...] they really like doing that. As soon as they start school, however, they stop using the CD. At that point, the CD just doesn’t do it for them any longer. Maybe for another six months, then they become cool and its sound doesn’t fit them anymore and repetitions are also uncool and so you have to find new ways.”

In most cases, the teachers did not check or ask if the children listened to the CD.

Only three teachers said that they would ask the children at the beginning of each course, if they had listened to the CD or not. The children are very honest about it and always “feel quite guilty if they hadn’t listened to the CD.”

In two of the classes, those children who listened to the CD were allowed to choose a sticker. All teachers stated, however, that they would still know if the children had listened to the CD or not, even without asking them because the children would know the songs by heart, remember the words better and generally understand more.

Regardless of how often the children would listen to the CD and in order to work against increasing boredom due to excessive listening, the teachers advised the parents to buy additional material so that the children could use English in another context.

One teacher described how she gave the children further ideas when they said they did not want to listen to the CD anymore. “It’s also a little bit about simply keeping the English language present. Whether you watch a movie or take out a CD from the library...and the children do this. They go to the library and take out English language material. They showed it to me.”

The other teacher also finds it important to offer the children further material. “They have to realize this – and it’s also extremely important later on. Not just what they learn at school but they really have to do more. That this is realistic.”

Didactical analysis and recommendations

The critical opinions about the CD are to be taken seriously. Especially the development of listening comprehensions through audio materials is proportionately advancing much faster – compared to the other linguistic partial competences speaking, writing, and reading. In doing so, the child-appropriate material is quickly permeated completely and becomes routine. This could be countered by specifically offering story CDs with longer, exciting stories.

Regarding the workbooks, a clear distinction between Fundamentum (mandatory) and Additum (optional) is to be recommended. This might also promote the above-mentioned standardization.

2.6 English as language of instruction

In the courses, English as language of instruction was used to varying degrees.

At the beginning of individual sessions, there was usually a specific moment when the teachers switched to English since they would often still speak German with the parents before class. This switch to English was usually indicated by closing the door, or through a shared ritual. The teachers, however, handled the use of German during a session differently.

Two teachers said they only speak English during their courses since they feel that this immersive instruction is the only proper way to go. Only when new courses start, they would speak some German at first so that the children can come to trust them and clear rules can be set up.

Both teachers disapproved of the sandwich method and do not use it in their courses.

At other locations, courses were not entirely held in English. Though English was used predominantly, new words were usually first explained or described for clarification purposes, and in part still translated. This happened mainly when children asked for the

German meaning of a word, which was usually done by the older children. In some instances, instructions were first given in English and if the children did not react, they were repeated in German as well. In addition to the teacher's English, whose level of linguistic knowledge was already described, each course also had authentic audio material of other people, which is provided on the Mortimer CD.

Didactical analysis and recommendations

By now, code-switching has become a consensual approach for early foreign language learning and is equivalent to growing up bilingually.

On the whole, however, the value of constant English input in the courses needs to be emphasized, with the use of the German language in didactically important moments which are characterized cognitively (e.g. grammar), which make comprehensive understanding necessary (socio-cultural information etc.), and which also have the character of practice (e.g. mediation, translation etc.).

2.6.1 Children's language level

Of course, you cannot clearly determine the actual effect of learning English in these courses through mere observation. You can, however, gain a good insight based on certain observation criteria.

Firstly, by noting whether or not the children understood the instructions, which varied more or less strongly. In most cases there was at least one child who understood the teacher's instructions and the others would simply follow that child's example; or the children would help each other with brief explanations. In those courses in which only English was spoken, the instructions were paraphrased if unclear until the children understood them. In other cases, this was also attempted on occasion.

Many teachers, however, switched to German after only one or two attempts and sometimes even as soon as instructions were not understood. In such situations it was

difficult to judge whether the children might have understood them by paraphrasing or describing them.

During the interview, one teacher explained that the children would often simply not understand certain parts of the instruction. As a teacher, you could tell how much the children really understood if they would generally react appropriately to instructions, but mistranslate one aspect of them. This would indicate that the child merely did not know a certain word.

“Some children don’t speak for weeks, not even a word, but I can see that they are following me. Some start speaking immediately. Each child is different in this respect. But you usually figure out quite quickly how much a child understands, for example, if you give English instructions, or if only part of the instructions are misunderstood. If necessary, you can then resort to the sandwich method. This makes the course very individual because you always notice what the children know and what’s still missing, or if some things have to be repeated and practiced. You practically test the children’s knowledge without them being aware of it. Sometimes the children even say “ah, we’ve had this before,” then you know it’s not completely forgotten. It is always best, though, if they don’t remember the story, but still know the words.”

Secondly, this provided an impression of how detailed and in which language the children would answer the teacher’s question. Of course, this strongly depended on the teacher and whether or not she would demand that the children answer in full sentences, for example. In such cases, the children would answer questions in full sentences too. These sentences often had mistakes, but were always praised by the teacher and revised through corrective feedback. In those courses, it also happened sometimes that children would form English sentences all on their own; for instance, if they wanted to have something or if they wanted to play a certain game.

In courses in which the teacher did not particularly pay attention to the use of full sentences, the children would automatically only answer in one word. This also proved to be the case for the preparation course of the Cambridge Certificate. Here, the children seemed to be really competent when it came to listening comprehensions which were practiced

intensively during the course, but they hardly said anything spontaneous in English or only with as few words as possible.

Regarding corrections: as already mentioned, mistakes were mostly addressed via corrective feedback. The children's statements were therefore either praised or confirmed with a "yes" and the sentence or statement was then repeated correctly. Only in few exceptions would teachers specifically point out mistakes and explain how to say it properly. One example of this would be a location where the teacher explained the position of the word "please" within a sentence.

Didactical analysis and recommendations

If the observed situations in each of the individual sessions are a representative portrayal of all courses in every MEC, it must be mentioned that the partial competence (first) speaking still needs to be further encouraged by means of appropriate task formats. Compared to listening comprehensions (e.g. when extending vocabulary) and also the use of writing, it showed considerable potential for development.

2.6.2 Assessment of parents

Another aspect which mirrors the influence of the courses on the children's English is the feedback parents give regarding school grades or the children's experiences on vacation.

During the interviews, the teachers referred to the fact that the children of the various course levels visited do not actually have grades yet when it comes to school performance. Children who were already taking Mortimer courses at Elementary School level usually had "no problems with English at school" and "usually had good grades" after transferring to Secondary School levels.

Three teachers named concrete examples of different children in sixth grade who received top grades at school and "where the parents said: this head start is all your doing."

One of the teachers, however, narrowed this feedback down. In her opinion, the “question [is] whether they were children who were good at school anyway.” Plus, there are also children who did “not take Mortimer courses and are still somehow talented when it comes to languages.”

On the other hand, if children have bad grades, “there are always still other reasons” to be taken into consideration, “for example exam nerves and such”. Concerning private tutoring in Secondary Schools, though, successes are recorded.

One teacher, for example, said that she would “usually manage to get students with a grade average of 6 (fail) up to at least a 4 (sufficient).”

In the context of performance at school, several teachers stated that children were a lot less inhibited towards the English language because of the Mortimer courses. The children have an “enormous openness” towards the language and are not afraid to speak it.

“From the very first session, they just actively participate. [...] They already know what English is and they know that you pronounce it differently; and they just dare to join in. And that makes the big difference because that’s what sticks. [...] Speaking a language properly is not something you learn at school. I’m not sure if you really learn it perfectly at the MECs, but at least here, English is spoken a lot more. Of course, this also changes with the increase in the children’s age in the groups and it’s something you can then already observe in Elementary Schools.”

This openness towards the language also shows in the children’s experiences on vacation.

This was confirmed by all teachers who received corresponding feedback from the parents. One example was given in which a five-year-old boy already managed to say two small sentences during his trip to England; or that of another child, a second grader who had only been taking Mortimer classes for one year, playing with American children during the vacation on Majorca. Naturally, the communication did not yet work quite as well, but there were no inhibitions towards speaking another language, which made some form of interaction possible.

In general, it is to be considered that parents only give positive feedback to the teachers at the Mortimer Centers. Only one teacher also gave a negative example when asked about

feedback. In this case, the girl went to a camp of another English provider and afterwards, the mother said that “the past week there [...] [had] proved more effective for me than the past six months with you.” The teacher, however, knew how to classify that kind of feedback since “of course, 5 times 8 hours with 100% native speakers are a lot more effective than 45 minutes in the group once a week.”

Didactical analysis and recommendations

The positive effects of the MEC courses on learning English in schools are clearly appreciated by the parents. Especially when it comes to overcoming linguistic inhibitions or the advantage over contemporaries (which cannot be measured without tests), something that transfers well into fifth or even sixth grade, these effects are prominent. A linguistic test, such as the standardized EVENING-Studie in North Rhine-Westphalia or that of the BIG-Kreis 2014, can be recommended on demand in order to verify these impressions.

3 Summary: analysis and recommendation

1. To begin with, it is recommended to strengthen the informal aspect of learning English through additional offers, e.g. with precise task-/homework formats and through additional media, apart from the CD, that still needs to be developed (e.g. their own videos, online offers etc.). The lack of contact with the English language outside the MEC courses, put in relation to the high motivation for course participation, makes this worthwhile. In addition, the issue of domestically encouraging English as a non-everyday language is relevant for themed parents' evenings.

2. It should be possible to further encourage the positive survey findings concerning the parents' satisfaction with the various instructional elements and competences of the course teachers if given standards and stipulated course structures are made binding. Since at least one fifth of the parents were rather unsatisfied regarding media use, it is advised to carry out a deeper analysis in cooperation with the course teachers. Experience has shown that reasonable explanations via a letter to the parents are effective

3. More than 90% of the parents are satisfied with the achieved learning success in the MEC courses; a very gratifying value which, altogether, is a sign of great competence and acceptance of the concept.

Critical statements regarding the instructional language (sandwich method) and in parts also the parents' wish for more verbal performance are to be considered and taken seriously – in this context, appropriate and successful task formats are already available for English didactics. According to the children's statements, 33% of the teachers are native speakers and 59% are not. The consequence of this circumstance is a constant need for further educational training.

4. Clear findings on the positive transfer of learning successes on English classes at school are available. Within them, the aspect of speaking is also mentioned; the distinction between pronunciation and speaking freely, however, was not examined. One assumption is that the satisfaction refers mainly to repeating vocabulary and not necessarily to spontaneous statements. The qualitative inquiries point towards that direction.

5. Quite striking again was the 94% affirmation of the positive influence of the MEC learning successes on the transfer to Secondary School as well as the overall evaluation of MEC (96% positive); adding to this, the positive statements of 95% of the children regarding their course participation.

6. The deliberate reflection on the questions on course structure by the children proves their equally sensible, professional, and progressional structure. The gender-specific distinction regarding the partial competence speaking is interesting and neuro-didactical, and clearly favored by girls. Of course, the reflection on the course structure by the children is very subjective overall and often quite affectively driven. This is considered in the analysis and also in terms of the experiences made during the visitation.

7. Within early foreign language learning, authenticity of the learning material is a widespread desideratum. Children have a feel for what is authentic or what is didactically arranged. Audio and audio-visual media formats are great means and anchor points for this.

8. The same applies to intercultural subject matters: comparing yourself beyond national borders and discovering similarities or also disparities makes for exciting topics and offers suitable cause for conversations.

9. Points 4 and 5 are reinforced by the children: in their positive statements regarding the effects of the MEC courses on their English performance at school, they hint at a considerably increased self-confidence. Their individual assessments concerning their own performance in the partial competences are indicators. They must, however, be thoroughly examined in order to be verified.

10. The significant correlations to length of course participation and receptive or also learning-strategic language development are surely remarkable. The following formula can be phrased as the index "ability": the longer the period of time in which individual learners take courses, the better their English language competence.

11. Recommendations for a more emphasized and intensified use of writing is not only due to the children's wishes, but also to the development of the subjective feeling of being able to achieve (still) more. This feeling needs to be further encouraged through a purposeful expansion of cognitive task formats.

12. Collaborative forms, e.g. group work, are as much emotionally yet not only interactively more exciting, but are also proven to be more efficient; especially for the development of linguistic competences. In essence, it comes down to appropriate task formats which could be the subject matter of an educational training via webinar.