



Soft Skills in World of Work: Applied Linguistics' Approach

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Introduction: aims

1. to define soft or transversal skills in dentistry,
2. to report on the survey administered as part of the Erasmus+ Strategic partnership project “Transversal Skills in Dentistry: Content and Language Integrated Approach”. Agreement No -2015-1-LV01-KA203-013401-P3



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Partners:

- Department of English Studies , Centre for Applied Linguistics and Faculty of Medicine, University of Latvia, Latvia (beneficiary)
- Department of Preventive Dentistry, Academic Centre for Dentistry Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Center for Intercultural Studies, School of Accounting and Administration of Porto, Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal

1. Theoretical background

Transversal skills

- “[...] are relevant to a broad range of occupations and sectors.” (ESCO, Online 1)
- building blocks for the enhancement of the hard skills

Soft skills

- interpersonal, human, people or behavioural skills, which are needed in order to apply the hard skills in the workplace (Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell & Lay, 2002).

Soft or transversal skills in dentistry

- patient management skills, interpersonal communication skills, digital skills and language skills

2. Materials and methods

Aims of the survey:

- to recognize the skills and competences required by the labour market and crucial for employability of graduates,
- to determine innovative approaches to addressing the target groups in developing efficient and attractive education teaching /learning materials, using a virtual learning environment (VLE)

Questionnaire

Part 1: demographic data.

Part 2: information on the acquisition of dentistry related skills and competences in English.

Part 3: information on the level of competences required for a dental practitioner.

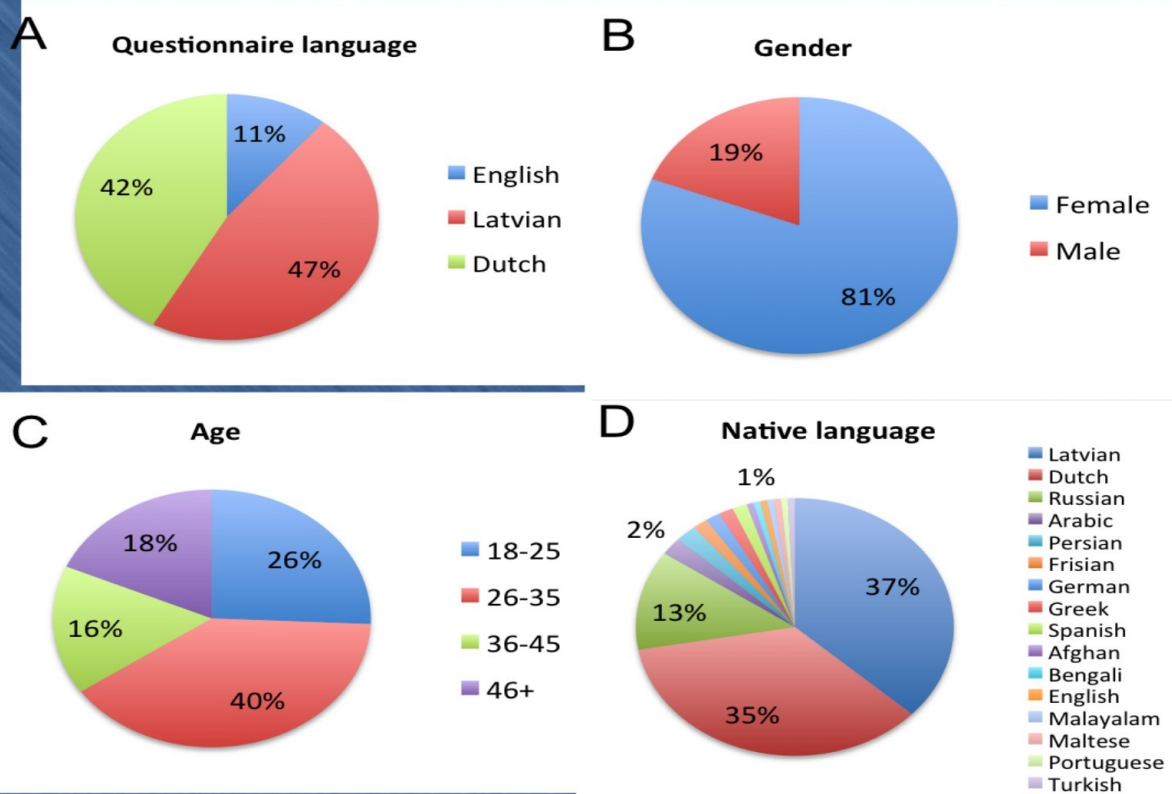
Pilot surveys

- with professional dentists doing the ESP course at the Faculty of Medicine, the University of Latvia (UL) at the beginning of January 2016.
- in English, Dutch and Latvian on a convenience panel (i.e. dentistry students at the UL and qualified dentists at Academic Centre for Dentistry Amsterdam (ACTA), the Netherlands)

3. Results of the survey: target population

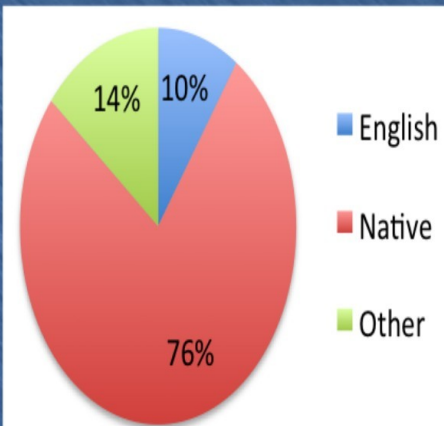
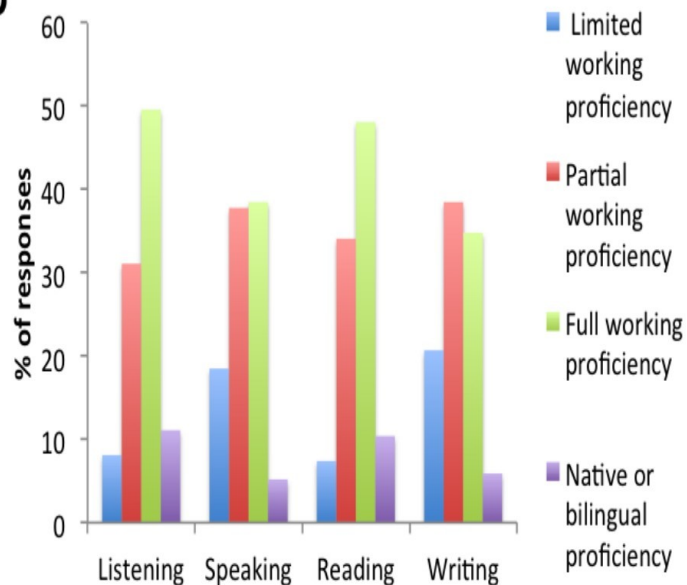
- 136 individuals from Latvia and the Netherlands,
- 65% - clinical dentists,
- 25% - academic dentists, last year study,
- 10% - postgraduate dentists proceeding with specialization programme.

Results: part 1



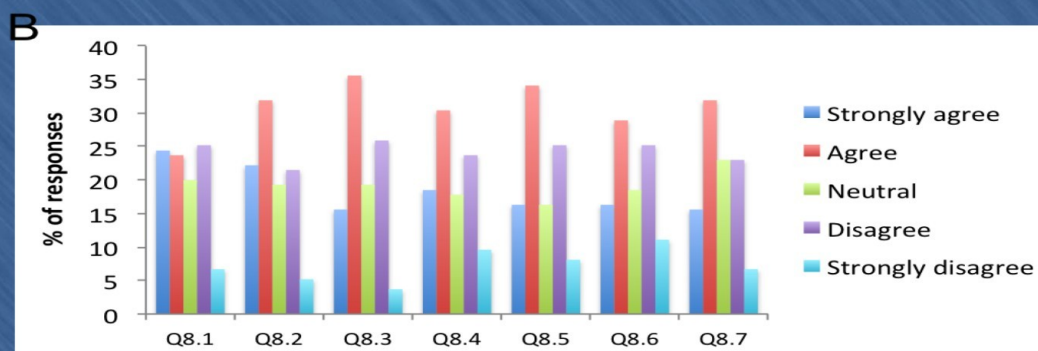
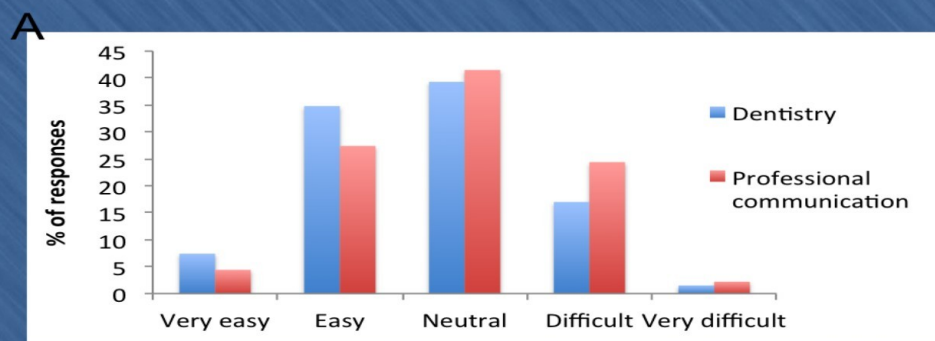
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Results: part 2

A**The language of instruction****B**

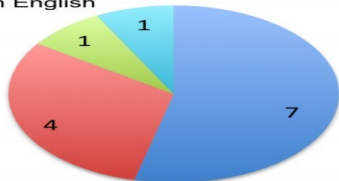
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Expected or experienced (A) difficulties and (B) problems if studying dentistry in English per item.

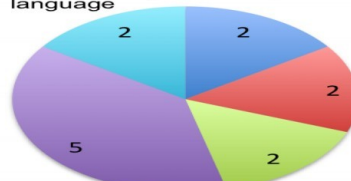


Studying dentistry in English

Q9.1: My language skills have improved since I have started studying in English



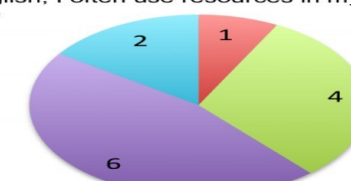
Q9.2: My progress in dentistry would be faster if studying it in my native language



Q9.3: It is very time consuming



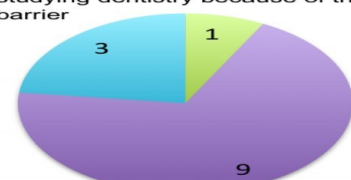
Q9.4: To understand dentistry studied in English, I often use resources in my native one



Q9.5: The resources I use develop my knowledge of dentistry but do not help me with English



Q9.6: It is difficult for me to effectively communicate and express my opinions when studying dentistry because of the language barrier

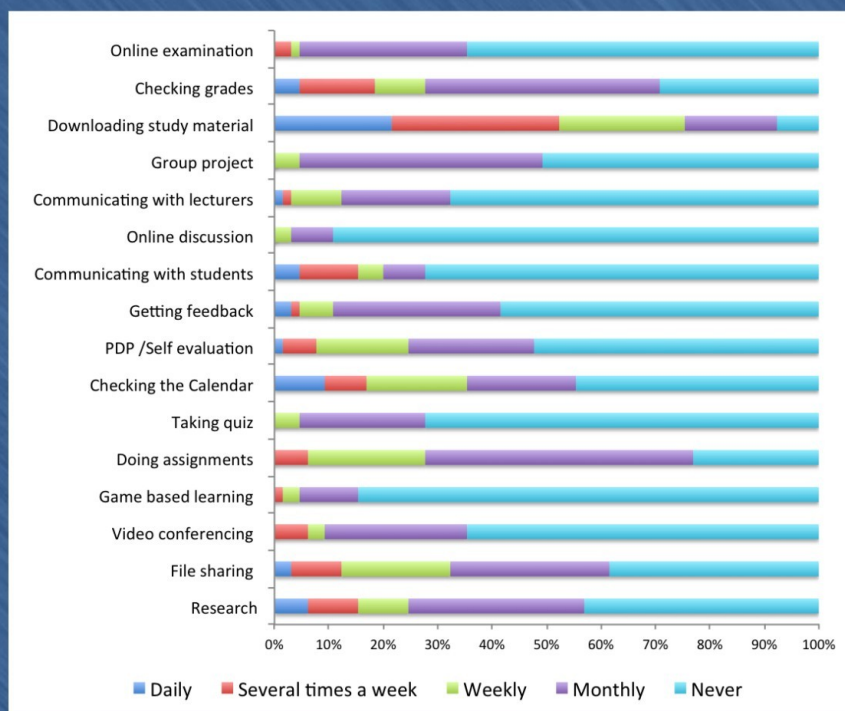


Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



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Purpose and frequency of VLE use



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4. Discussion

- general English language proficiency level: intermediate to high-intermediate;
- satisfactory ability in dentistry area-related language competences in order to:
 - a) obtain and record a comprehensive medical and dental state history;
 - b) gather information from various profession- related sources;
 - c) understand and critically evaluate scientific information;
 - d) distribute the obtained data to other dentists.

4. Discussion:

Limited language competence within the area of dentistry in:

- understanding (visual reception /reading) and applying (oral production/speaking) professional values and standards described in the administrative processes and requirements for clinical audits in practice, and explaining clinical findings and treatment options to different patient groups.

Studying dentistry in English: linguistic level limitations:

insufficiently developed skills to

- use of profession-related terminology in context and professional written discourse production,
- understand interaction with a patient/s having international background,
- understand written professional discourse if it contained unfamiliar general vocabulary or terminology,
- obtain and record comprehensive medical history of patients' oral and dental state.

5. Conclusions

- respondents' skills need further advancement,
- understanding clinical audits and other administrative processes both in general and in English requires additional knowledge,

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

1) Dentistry and English language integrated learning **materials**, incl. VLE, should be developed in order to enhance students' confident communication in dentistry.

- They should envisage the development and promotion of students' higher level language competence via, e.g.:
 - simulation of clinical procedures and clinical scenarios,

- decision-making, clinical reasoning and judgement skills in order to assist the patient to establish and maintain oral health and general health prevention and promotion.

2. Students' soft skills can be enhanced using materials that focus on, e.g.:

- establishing efficient interaction with a good control of language use,
- participating in interactions on topics related either to meet the interactants' personal needs or to address the areas of their professional and/or scholarly interests.

References

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