

Foreword

In today's interconnected world, English is a key that unlocks global conversations. It opens doors to cross-border collaboration and countless cultural, educational and professional opportunities. It is no wonder then that many young people and their parents see mastering English as an essential step towards a successful future, nor that education systems across the world are investing heavily in teaching English.

But gone are the days when learners of English only encountered the language via teachers and textbooks for a couple of hours a week in a classroom. Today's teens are surrounded by English while navigating a digital landscape that reaches far into their lives both in and outside school. For many, English also has a greater presence offline as the preferred language of communication in increasingly diverse communities. Yet despite such important developments, relatively little is known internationally about the nuances of how young people today learn English.

This report explores the ways in which 15-year-olds learn English, building on case studies that examine their experiences in Finland, Greece, Israel, the Netherlands and Portugal. It was co-financed by the European Commission and has been prepared as part of ongoing collaboration between the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the European Commission in the development of a PISA Foreign Language Assessment. In its first cycle (2025), this assessment will provide international data on 15-year-olds' English language skills in more than 20 countries and economies as well as insights into the factors related to proficiency.

The development of this report was led by Tue Halgreen and Catalina Covacevich and coordinated by Christa Rawkins. Christa Rawkins wrote Chapters 1-4 and Chapter 8, Tue Halgreen wrote Chapter 5 and Inés Sanguino Martínez wrote Chapters 6 and 7. Kelly Makowiecki contributed to the drafting of Chapters 3-7 and Catalina Covacevich contributed to Chapter 8.

The authors express their gratitude to colleagues from the OECD's Directorate for Education and Skills for their valuable input and advice. Juliana González Rodríguez provided support throughout the preparation of the report. Ricardo Sanchez Torres and Dongwook Choi provided administrative support during the data collection; Ricardo Sanchez Torres also supported the production of the report. Francois Staring prepared the initial research design. Solène Burtz, Young Chang, Jonathan James, Jason McGrath and Christopher Olivares supported the development of the data collection tools. Duncan Crawford, Sophie Vayssettes and Michael Ward, provided feedback on the draft report. Charlotte Baer and Della Shin, under the guidance of Sasha Ramirez Hughes, provided support for production and communication. The team would also like to thank Andreas Schleicher (Director of Education and Skills) and Yuri Belfali (Head of Division, Early Childhood and Schools) for their overall guidance and feedback on the report. Yuri Belfali also supported the data collection and analysis for Chapter 6.

The authors are also grateful to several external collaborators. Talia Isaacs (University College London) provided early guidance on the research design and data collection tools; Lisa Maria Müller (Chartered College of Teaching) offered expert guidance throughout the project and prepared a background paper, with Cat Schutt (Chartered College of Teaching), to inform the preparation of Chapter 2. Rima Belfali, Maxime Charbonnier and Iris Jamet supported the development of the data collection tools by participating

in pilot interviews. Officials from the Schools and Multilingualism Unit within the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, including Anna Sole Mena, Miguel Álvarez Espinosa, Oana Felecan and Eldrid Gaukstad, provided feedback on the draft report. Kristina Cunningham supported the initial concept development for the case studies. Jennifer Allain copy edited the report.

The country case studies benefit from extensive collaboration with national experts and PISA national teams as follows: in Finland, Petteri Laihonen, Karoliina Inha, Ari Huhta and Tarja Nikula-Jäntti from the University of Jyväskylä and Tommi Karjalainen from the Ministry of Education and Culture; in Greece, Ioannis Ventouris and Pinelopi Papastratou from the Institute of Education Policy and Chryssa Sofianopoulou from the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports; in Israel, Tziona Levi and Gal Alon from the Ministry of Education and Micaela Ziv, an independent consultant; in the Netherlands, Marjolijn Verspoor, Marije Michel and colleagues from the University of Groningen and Wendoline Timmerman and Marjan Zandbergen from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; and in Portugal, Anabela Serrao from the Institute for Evaluation of Education.

Finally, the team is extremely grateful to the students, English teachers and school leaders that made the school visits possible, and to other interviewees that contributed to each case study.



From:

How 15-Year-Olds Learn English

Case Studies from Finland, Greece, Israel, the Netherlands and Portugal

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/a3fcacd5-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2024), "Foreword", in *How 15-Year-Olds Learn English: Case Studies from Finland, Greece, Israel, the Netherlands and Portugal*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/51b2c89f-en>

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.