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A．D．Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Centre


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Among Schoolchildren of Gavar Region

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STUDY OF FOREIGN
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG SCHOOLCHILDREN OF GAVAR REGION


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## A WORD OF GRATITUDE

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With gratitude and expectation of new and quality research works

## in Gegharkunik Region,

"Bayazet" Center team
July, 2022

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Study of Foreign Language Proficiency Among
Schoolchildren of Gavar Region
INTRODUCTION

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[^0]In the modern world, foreign language as a subject holds an important place in the field of general education. The knowledge of a foreign language enriches and broadens people's outlook. In the 21st century, for up-to-date education, knowledge of the world and choice of future profession, as well as for the contribution to the development of the environment and surroundings, a young person should have the abilities and skills to find useful information and to socialize and communicate. One of the factors behind the list is sufficient knowledge of various foreign languages.

English, German, Russian and French languages are taught in schools within the framework of the reform of subject standards and programs of general education in RA. According to the same state standard of general education, the teaching of at least two of the listed languages is a mandatory requirement in schools. The standards defined at the state level and applied by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports aim to emphasize the student's active social role in multilingual communication, where communication in foreign languages should help the studentto get to know the world and other cultures, provide an opportunity to present their culture in other languages, act as a creative and investigative person. a thoughtful individual, as well as contribute to collaborations in order to solve personal, group, community and public issues. ${ }^{3}$

In Armenia, foreign languages are taught in grades 2-12, covering all three levels of general education: elementary, middle, and high school.

Russian, English, German and French languages are introduced as compulsory subjects in the schools of Gavar community, which were studied within the framework of this research. ${ }^{4}$

In order to find out the current situation of foreign language teaching in the schools of Gavar, to bring out the extralinguistic factors that have the most impact on learning and to describe them in a credible way, we tried to collect the opinions of all the parties concerned, listen to their problems and suggestions. In order to find out the answers to the research questions, 15 qualitative interviews with foreign language teachers, 114 quantitative surveys

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among students and 20 document studies were conducted among students and 20 document studies were conducted in the schools of Gavar community.

Combining all project components and a comprehensive approach made it possible to present practical information in this report. While developing the methodology, an attempt was made to avoid abstract theorizing as much as possible, to focus on the existing difficulties in the field of foreign language teaching in schools, to bring out contradictions and complications.

The generalization of the results of the conducted research and the conclusions and recommendations formed on its basis are presented below.



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Study of Foreign Language Proficiency Among Schoolchildren of Gavar Region
THEORETICAL AND
METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE RESEARCH











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Modern societies are characterized by the expansion of interstate relations, deepening of commercial and economic ties, advances in science and technology, as well as the periodic exchange of scientific and technical information. From this point of view, the knowledge of foreign languages is becoming more important day by day as an effective means of scientific and technical progress, socio-economic developments and intercultural relations and communication in the world. Mastery of foreign languages is also important for future specialists to follow international developments in their profession, communicate with foreign language colleagues, present their own experience and achievements on international platforms, learn about the experience of others, and other considerations.

Since independence and educational reforms in RA, many shifts and changes have been made in the field of teaching foreign languages in the general education system, which are still not enough. In different regions of Armenia, in particular in Gavar community of Gegharkunik region, it is difficult to consider the level of knowledge of foreign languages of schoolchildren as sufficient, as schoolchildren often have to attend additional foreign language classes, as well as many university faculties remove foreign languages from the list of entrance exams in order to attract a sufficient number of applicants.

## Aim of the project

To reveal the degree of knowledge of foreign languages among students of 9-12th grade of Gavar community and extralinguistic factors affecting learning.

## The object of research

9-12th grade students of Gavar community

## Selection of information collection methods

Quantitative and qualitative methods of information collection were used to reach the aim of this research and solve the set problems. The results obtained by each method and the main data were compared, combined and reflected in the analysis of the research results. This kind of approach allowed to obtain as objective and comparable empirical quantitative data as possible, while describing and supplementing them with qualitative information.

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A face-to-face survey with a quantitative standardized questionnaire was chosen as the first method of information collection. A representative-quantitative survey was conducted according to the schools. A sample was made from 25 existing schools in 12 settlements covering the enlarged community of Gavar, ensuring that at least one school from each settlement was studied. It was taken into account which foreign languages and how many of them are taught, and then the number of students in grades 9-12 was taken into account. As a result, 114 surveys were conducted among 9-12 grade students in 12 selected schools. The final research subject participating in the survey, the student, was selected with the help of electronic journals randomly.

The second method of information collection was the qualitative semi-structured interview. Based on a guide of basic open-ended questions prepared in advance, 15 interviews were conducted among foreign language teachers, lasting from 30 to 60 minutes. The recordings were then transcribed and analyzed.

Secondary analysis of documents was chosen as the third method of information collection. 20 documents were collected within the framework of the office research, the sample was made on a typical basis, the date of publication, language and content were taken as criteria.

## Socio-demographic characteristics of the surveyed students

According to the information provided by the RA Gegharkunik Regional Administration, as of 2022, the total number of students studying in the enlarged community of Gavar (in 12 settlements) is 6099 . Figure 1 shows that the city of Gavar is the first in the total number of students. The leader in the number of students studying in grades $9-12$ is Gavar. The number of high school students in Karmirgyugh, Noratus, Sarukhan and Gandzak settlements is 2-3 times higher than the number of high school students in Tsovazard, Lanjaghbyur, Gegharkunik, Hayravank, Lchap and Tsaghkashen settlements.

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Figure 1: The number of students of public schools in Gavar region by settlements as of 2022
















Figure 2 shows the number of respondents by settlements. The most polls were conducted in the city of Gavar - 20 polls, and the least in Karmirgyuh - 5 polls. In Sarukhan, Gegharkunik, Lchap, Tsovazard, Gandzak and Hayravank settlements, 10 surveys were conducted each, in Tsaghkashen and Noratus settlements- less than 10 surveys, and in Landzaghbyur - more than 10 surveys.


Figure 3 shows that the surveys were conducted among students aged 14-18. 34 surveys were conducted with 16 -year-old students, a smaller number of surveys (19 surveys) among 14-year-olds. Relatively equal number of surveys were done with the students of other ages.

Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by age



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Figure 4 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. Equal numbers of female and male respondents were ensured so that the research data would be representative.




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Study of Foreign Language Proficiency Among Schoolchildren of Gavar Region

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE SCHOOLS OF GAVAR REGION

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## FOREIGN LANGUAGES TAUGHT AND SCHOOL HOURS

As we have already mentioned, Russian, English, German and French languages are included in Gavar's school programs as compulsory subjects.

The teaching of these languages has the following goals, according to the state subject standards of general education of foreign languages presented below.

- In elementary school: To develop A1 level abilities of Common European Framework of Reference (hereinafter: CEFR)
- In middle school: To develop B1 level abilities of CEFR ${ }^{6}$.
- In high school: To develop B2 level abilities of CEFR.

Figure 6. Which of the following foreign languages do you study at school?


Figure 6 shows that English and Russian languages are taught the most in the studied schools. As foreign languages, German and French are less common. Let's pay attention to the fact that the number of respondents who are currently learning three foreign languages at school is also small.

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Figure 7 shows that the majority of the respondents, (50 and more respondents), believe that knowledge of 3 or more foreign languages is a mandatory condition for a person. Approximately 50 respondents believe that knowledge of at least 2 foreign languages is currently necessary, and 10 respondents stated that a person should know at least 1 foreign language.































Let's also look at the number of weekly lessons allocated to foreign languages taught.

According to the results of the interviews conducted with the teachers, the lessons allocated to a foreign language on a weekly basis, particularly in the lower grades, cannot be enough to transfer full knowledge and skills to the learner. Teachers mention 3-4 lessons per week as a desirable minimum threshold. Below are the characteristic opinions of several teachers.
"...Now we have 2 lessons. If 3 hours were planned for teaching a foreign language, then I would allocate 2 hours to explaining grammar and vocabulary, and the other hour to children's communication skills, oral speech. Now are they learning a language so that it remains in the textbook? Aren't they learning to improve their communication skills? And we don't have enough time to do that."
"...Approximately 3-4 hours a week, at least at least 3 hours, and not only in the 9th grade. It is more preferable that the desired 3 hours be planned for the third grade, as the students are just starting to get acquainted with the subject and face many difficulties. So, for example, the time period for children to learn letters is short, and the 3rd grade program is also complex. The fact that our students still manage to learn just what they learn, is an achievement. "
"...Each class is given 2 lessons, which is not enough for a foreign language. There should be at least 3 lessons. There were cases when I asked the director to allocate 1 more lesson for a foreign language, in which case the efficiency was great. I used to spend 2 class hours reading and translating the material, and the 3 rd one for retelling. I devoted that extra class time to the development of oral speech.But we hardly manage to finish the program with 2 lessons."







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"...Working with children of lower grades, I face many difficulties. English grammar is very difficult to explain.If the students haven't learnt the grammar of the Armenian language yet, how do I explain the relevant material in Armenian in 40-45 minutes during one lesson and then manage to explain the English version? But there is another difficulty;The generation is indifferent. Children are mostly interested in the Internet and cellphones, they spend most of their time like that."

Teachers also note that the lack of class time sometimes forces them to deviate from the curriculum and provide students with such learning materials that are prioritized and necessary at the moment.

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## TEACHING ONE AND MORE FOREIGN LANGUAGES

According to Figure 8, most students do not know German and French, 107 and 110 students respectively, and 12 and 6 students do not know English and Russian respectively.

4 and 2 students learning German and French respectively only can write and read (level 1), and 24 and 19 students can read and write in English and Russian (level 1), respectively.

At the pre-intermediate level (level 2), German and French languages are mastered by 2 and 1 students respectively, and English and Russian languages by 47 and 45 students.

At an intermediate level (level 3), German and French are mastered by 1 student each, and in the case of English and Russian, 29 and 39 students respectively.












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At an upper-intermediate level (level 4), German and French languages are mastered by 1 students each, and English and Russian languages by 29 and 39 students, respectively.

According to their self-assessment, students at an advanced level (level 5) only speak English and Russian, only 2 students, 1 student per language.

According to Figure 9, 97\% of the respondents self-assessed that their level of knowledge of a foreign language had improved over the past 2 years, $16 \%$ said it had not changed, and $1 \%$ said it had worsened.

Figure 9. How has the level of your knowledge of a foreign language changed over the last two years?


As can be seen in Figure 10, the majority of the respondents attribute the positive change in the level of knowledge of a foreign language to school classes. 12 and 14 students, respectively, improved the level of foreign language knowledge with additional classes and self-education, and 26 students improved the level of foreign language knowledge with both school classes and lessons with a tutor.

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According to Figure 11, most of the respondents had the opportunity to communicate with a foreigner several times. About 10 respondents indicated that they had contact once, 10 had contact with foreigners for a long time, and approximately 30 respondents did not have the opportunity to communicate with a foreigner at all.


Respondents were asked to rate the extralinguistic factors that contribute to learning a foreign language(s) on a scale of 1 to 10.



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With the responses reflected in Figure 12, the majority of students give primary importance to the learner's diligence, motivation, concentration, memory, and the environment in which the appropriate education is received. According to the respondents, these 5 factors are the main condition for learning a foreign language. And the rest of the factors - the teacher's role, the learning program, cultural awareness, the learner's age and additional time - are considered less important by the respondents in the process of learning a foreign language.


According to teachers, communication and the development of listening skills through movies and many other types of media products play an important role in learning a language quickly and effectively. In relation to the formation of an effective educational environment, it is necessary to emphasize the positive assessment of the teachers about the foreign volunteers, which was due to the way of working they used, which is drastically different from the traditional teaching.









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Some considerations about extralinguistic factors made by teachers are also presented.
"...We had a foreign volunteer in the school, whose professional skills were not bad. He was an economist by profession, and he taught the language through games. He volunteered for two years, which was effective. The students had to speak in a foreign language as the volunteer did not understand Armenian. We planned the lesson and divided it into parts. Then we decided who should present which part to the class, so that we don't fall behind the program."
"...Language is learned by practicing it. A person can know very good grammar, master vocabulary, but if he does not apply it, he cannot communicate. That's why I emphasize the development of oral language in high school. Although now there is a trend. young people have started watching small videos or movies in English on the Internet, but the problem remains that children lack communication and practice."
'...In my opinion, students should have a very good command of their mother tongue, which is currently a very big problem for us. I would like to emphasize the teaching of the Russian language, because the knowledge of the Russian language has decreased compared to 10 years ago. Students must know at least 2-3 foreign languages. The more languages they know, the greater the opportunities will be."

Basically, the knowledge of the mother tongue is also problematic, because the problem faced by teachers teaching foreign languages can be doubly complicated if the student has not yet had time to get acquainted with the same topic from the subject of Armenian language or the knowledge gained is not valid. In that case, the teacher has to first explain the relevant Armenian material to the students, referring to, for example, the grammar of the Armenian language

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## RELEVANCE OF SYLLABUS

As we know, the goal of teaching foreign languages is to form a person who knows different languages, who is able to communicate and act in the modern multilingual and multicultural world. According to the state subject standards and exemplary programs of foreign language general education, the following four concepts are the basis for the foreign language teaching program in general education schools: communication, intercultural awareness, investigative and creative thinking and identity, which are then divided into sub-concepts. The content of the courses in schools should be built by the teachers, taking into account the selection of topics necessary for the achievement of the abovementioned abilities and learning outcomes.

With certain reservations, teachers emphasize the need to ensure the relevance of taught programs. The latter requires up-to-date teaching methods and sufficient technical equipment. Unfortunately, very few schools have technical resources that meet at least the minimum requirements, which poses additional problems for teachers to bring their own laptop to the classroom, ensure Internet access, etc.

Below are the teachers' considerations.
"...This year, we received a television set from the World Vision organization, we have Internet connection and we use video lessons during many classes. If we study fairy tales in elementary school, we watch the corresponding cartoons. Sometimes I replace textbooks with TV, showing something on the screen. I also organize games, but I try not to do it during classes. We have chats on messengers, through which I send assignments for the students to complete and send the answers, otherwise we do not manage such things in 45 minutes, and the class hours are too short."
"We don't have language rooms, it would change a lot if we had one, because listening is very important. They say that in general you learn faster in a language environment, in that sense a language room could provide a language environment, because no matter how much you speak in class, it is still not enough.




























Besides, it will be interesting for students. And now, in order to ensure interest and efficiency, I bring my computer to school. But aside that, sometimes there is a problem with internet access. Especially in the lower grades, there are classes where there are poems with QR codes, I turn them on for the children to listen to, and then we read, but it would be more effective if the children also listened to a native speaker."

For the materials provided by the curriculum, teachers try to independently choose the teaching methods that are appropriate to use for each studied material. In this regard, the teachers' comments are interesting.
"The choice of the form and course of study is related to the assigned topic and the age of the students. For example, we read, translate, discuss textual works, most importantly teach vocabulary. I make the thematic plan based on the textbook, that is, I do not allocate a separate hour for additional materials. "
'...I would like the students to have their personal computers in the classrooms, through which we could develop the oral skills with listening exercises, because the students do the written assignments well, but when I ask them a question, they start to have difficulties."
"...We conduct the course with a textbook, sometimes we also use a laptop. We listen to recordings related to the topic, hold open classes, use online literature. We also carry out language level checks for children. The level of knowledge is checked with online tests."
"...I am trying to use game methods in the lower grade, the topic of my master's thesis was "The introduction of games in foreign language learning". It helps me a lot, I am very interested and I use different games during class. I also use my phone, we listen to dialogues in English and try to understand. I see that the children understand by listening, they try to translate. This method contributes to the development of children's listening skills. "
















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Despite the importance of modern methods, according to teachers, there are topics where traditional methods should be used if they want to ensure longterm results and impart lasting knowledge. Here is an opinion confirming what was said.
"Mostly, when teaching grammar, I prefer traditional methods so that everything is understandable to the students. Modern methods, in my opinion, do not take root. Therefore, we write everything in the notebooks and explain them in parallel."



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Study of Foreign Language Proficiency Among
Schoolchildren of Gavar Region
EXTRALINGUISTIC
FACTORS IN THE CONTEXT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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## THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEACHER

The role of the teacher is the most important not only in terms of imparting the required knowledge to the students, but also in terms of motivating the learner, serving as an example, and setting priorities, because currently teachers have enough freedom to manage class time.

In their turn, teachers mention some problems related to their role.
"...There are topics in the content of the final exams that are not in the current textbooks we teach. Being familiar with the order of the entrance exams and the topics missing from the textbook, I introduce students to them myself, so that in the future they will be able to use this knowledge when passing the exam."
"...There are language learning websites, one of which is offered by the British Council, but very few follow them."
"...In my presence, the children carry out listening exercises, discussions, and we also compose dialogues, but most of the students do not work without me, and the reasons are unknown to me."

Teachers also often address class sizes, as efficiency decreases when working with large classes.
"... 32 students in one class is too much, even for an experienced specialist. But in any case, if the number of students exceeds 32, then the school must divide the class during foreign language classes, which is not always implemented."
"In my opinion, a foreign language teacher should first master his native language, and then only the foreign language they teach."

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## AGE-RELATED FEATURES

It should be noted that the age of the learner plays an important role in the study of a foreign language. As foreign language teachers state, starting the study of a language at an earlier age gives the learner a great opportunity to achieve a high level of language mastery.

Let us present some relevant considerations.
"The second foreign language is taught in public schools from the 3rd grade. If the groundwork is laid from the letters, from the 3 rd grade, then until the 12th grade, the students will definitely be able to achieve some result, if, of course, they strive to learn and have an inclination towards the foreign language. And if there are breaks, it's already interfering with learning."

One of the obstacles to classes is conducting classes online.
"...I would like for us to learn a foreign language orally from the 2nd grade, get to know the letters orally, and develop our conversational skills. It is necessary to learn writing from the 3rd grade, and the knowledge will be strengthened faster that way. Well, now we have a preschool, children come to school knowing letters, they know numbers, addition, subtraction..., I would like it to be the same in the case of English."
"From the 3rd to the 9th grade is the main period when students should be able to thoroughly master the language, because then they grow up, choose professions, and it is possible that the interest in learning a foreign language will decrease and fade away. But in the lower classes, they are not yet faced with a choice, so they learn with love."

And even though older language learners have a clearer idea of why they need to learn a foreign language and are usually more assertive about it, many adults face difficulties while learning a foreign language ,overcoming which may require greater effort.

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## MEMORY-RELATED FEATURES

Both teachers and students emphasize the key role of memory in the process of learning a foreign language and effective communication. Both visual and auditory memory are very important, otherwise it is impossible to expect longterm results.

In this regard, some considerations expressed by the participants of our interviews are presented.

The factor of memory is very important for learning a foreign language, students are able to write and present words correctly by memory. By the way, the way girls are able to enter a higher educational institution without additional training almost every year is due to their hard work and memory .
"Natural abilities, memory! these are important conditions for mastering a foreign language, because the foreign language must also be remembered with the correct pronunciation and translation of words. We have students who present the lesson very well, but ask them after one class- they don't remember anymore."
"In my opinion, memory training methods should be used. In that sense, we can use memory training exercises, maybe also vitamins."

Considering the fact that foreign languages are studied in schools in grades 212 , we can say that the activation of the memory factor is subordinated to the method of obtaining knowledge through regular repetition, as a result of which a large number of students are forced to acquire the necessary knowledge at different stages of learning by seeking the help of tutors.

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## MOTIVATION OR ITS ABSENCE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

One of the most important prerequisites for ensuring the effectiveness of foreign language learning is the learner's goal orientation or, in other words, motivation. Among some students, the motivation to study a foreign language is absent, which is largely due to the out-of-date content in the textbooks. This is confirmed by the presented considerations.
"Starting from the 7th grade, there are very few exercises. The texts are followed by several exercises, which usually do not arouse the interest of the student."
"If the teacher is mentally strong, they are able to interest the class and properly organize the lesson process, create motivation among the children. The teacher can even create motivation during one lesson."

Due to the prevalence of the language and the demands of the labor market, most students prefer English and are motivated to learn it. Let's present 2 comments of teachers in this regard.
"The student strives to learn English, because the demand for English is now greater in the labor market. When we read the announcements, they say: "Knowledge of English is mandatory", and about the knowledge of Russian, they say: "It will be an advantage" or "Desirable"."
"Students naturally prefer English, because it is an international language, communication, literature is mainly in English. The entire Internet is filled with English, for example, scientific literature. Now, whatever profession you choose, if you want good literature, you can mostly find it in the English language."

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

 AMONG SCHOOLCHILDRENStudents who received insufficient knowledge of a foreign language in general education schools, but who aspire to more, often have to attend extracurricular classes.

As shown in Figure 13, the majority of respondents, $62 \%$, do not attend additional foreign language classes.

Figure 13. Do you attend additional foreign language classes?


Figure 14 shows that $77 \%$ of students attend additional foreign language classes on a paid basis.






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Figure 14. If you do, do you attend free or paid classes?


According to the responses reflected in Figure 15, the monthly fee of the students attending additional paid foreign language classes, according to the answers of the respondents, was more than 5000 AMD. The fee for 15 respondents is $11,000-20,000$ AMD per month. Only one respondent pays up to 5000 AMD for additional training.

Figure 15. In case you attend paid classes, please note the monthly fee.

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| Up to 5000 AMD | 6000-10.000 AMD | 11.000-20.000 AMD | More than 20.000 |
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Figure 16 shows that the majority of respondents (22 students) prefers private, individual lessons. Respondents prefer private, group lessons relatively less, and 3 students prefer school groups.


The majority of the respondents ( $75 \%$ ) stated that if a foreign language learning center is opened in the community for free or with a nominal fee, they will participate in the courses.

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Figure 17. If a foreign language learning center is opened in Gavar for free or with a nominal fee (Approximately, 1000 AMD), will you participate in the courses?
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- Yes - No








It is clear from Figure 18 that the majority of the respondents who indicated that they would participate in the courses of the assumed foreign language learning center in Gavar, want to learn English, French, Russian and German languages more; the number of people who want to learn Spanish, Italian, Korean, Chinese, Turkish, Japanese, Kazakh, Arabic and Azerbaijani is less.










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[^4]Those respondents who do not want to participate in foreign language courses stated that they generally do not have time. Figure 19 shows that some of them do not want to attend because of transportation, and the rest simply do not want to attend any center or as they say, knowledge of a foreign language is not necessary in their chosen professional field.


The fact of attending extracurricular classes is quite common in the case of foreign languages, which, according to teachers, is a consequence of the insufficient level of foreign language knowledge of the students' parents.

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Let's listen to the teachers.
"If a parent does not know English, can he help a student who is still taking his first steps in a foreign language?" If the parents do not provide any help to the $3 r d$ grader, and only the teacher teaches, will the student be able to learn everything on time and independently?"
"...Most of the time, the parent teaches words with various distortions, so they send the child to additional classes so that the child is better prepared for the lessons. High school students also practice so that they can pass the university exams. Here, with 2 hours and a class of 20 people, the teacher is not able to fully teach the questions of the university exam."

According to the teachers, the insufficient number of foreign language lessons does not allow the students to transfer the knowledge provided by the state standards.
"...According to the state program, English is given only 2 lessons per week in each class. Even if the teacher is a magician, he will not be able to convey such knowledge to all students that will enable them to enter a higher educational institution for free."
"I believe that 4 hours a week will hardly be enough for the child not to go to the tutor."

Unfortunately, preparing for the university entrance exam questionnaire remains one of the main reasons for studying a foreign language, which is why parents and students invest a lot of additional time and financial resources. For their part, the teachers state that they are not able to study all the materials needed by the students during the lessons.






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"In each class, we try to complete one section of the questionnaire, but of course we don't make it, because it is very voluminous. We are physically not able get prepared for three questionnaires. That is why they attend additional classes. Attending a tutor starts from the 10th and 11th grades. If they start later, they practice day and night to make it."
"There is a gap between school and entrance exams, which the tutor is trying to fill. The entrance exam tasks are no longer textbook tasks. The need for a tutor can be filled if there are enough hours and the classes are divided by levels. In the "AYB" school, for example, even the best students are divided into 3 groups, but here in 2 hours what can a teacher do with three level children?"
"As for the entrance exams, in order to get high scores, the child needs to study extra, otherwise, at best, they will hardly pass the passing threshold, because the exams are based on deep knowledge of the questionnaire."
"...Our school program does not quite meet the requirements of the entrance exams. Extra work is necessary so that the applicants can pass the exams."


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Study of Foreign Language Proficiency Among
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CONLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

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The data collected as a result of the research and the analyzes made allow the following conclusions to be made.

- Among students, the level of knowledge of Russian and English is relatively high.
- The low level of knowledge of French and German is mainly due to the fact that they are compulsory subjects in unique schools and the lack of native speakers in the region.
- Interviews with teachers state that the number of lessons provided for foreign languages is at least not sufficient to ensure the expected results. The problem is more visible in the lower grades.
- In the schools of Gavar community, more importance is given to the teaching of the Russian language. English, French and German follow accordingly.
- The vast majority of schools in Gavar community are unable to provide a suitable educational environment in terms of technical equipment to apply innovative methods in the process of learning foreign languages.
- The knowledge of foreign languages acquired at school is often not sufficient for those students who are preparing to participate in university entrance exams or simply wish to improve their level of knowledge of a foreign language. For this reason, they have to turn to the help of tutors, whose service fee averages often do not correspond to the state of social welfare of the population of the region.
- Teachers, from the point of view of organizing the lesson process, have a lot of freedom, as they can make certain changes in the curriculum to suit the specific class and the expected results.
- To bring some interactivity to the classroom, teachers often have to use their own phones and provide Internet access to incorporate additional video lessons, dialogues, music, and other educational materials into the classroom.





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- According to the interviewed students, in the process of learning a foreign language, the age of the learner is of little importance, instead they attach great importance to the learner's hard work, concentration and memory.
- The process of learning a foreign language is greatly influenced by the environment, cultural awareness and the role of the teacher, which stimulate the learner's interest.
- Most of the students believe that knowing at least 3 foreign languages is a must nowadays, and besides the foreign languages included in the school curriculum, they also want to learn other languages, such as Spanish, Italian, Korean, Chinese, Turkish, etc.


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Due to the combination of the research results and the above-mentioned conclusions, we present the following recommendations, indicating their addressee structures and individuals in parentheses.

- Revising subject academic hours, allocating at least 3-4 hours a week to foreign languages (MoESCS, SCHOOL).
- Having foreign language learning centers in the community, where children will be able to study different languages and take the path of self-development for free or for a small, symbolic fee (GEGHARKUNIK REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION, GAVAR MUNICIPALITY, LOCAL NGOs).
- Taking into account the annual financial resources allocated to schools and the problems of the scarcity of certain resources in foreign language teaching, we suggest paying more attention to cooperation with various organizations that regularly announce grants, as well as to use different fundraising methods (SCHOOL).
- In case of competitive announcements, invite foreign volunteers to help teachers teaching foreign languages, thanks to which children will be able to communicate with native speakers and be more motivated to learn the language (SCHOOL).
- Frequently organize educational events introducing different cultures, which enables to acquire broader outlooks and realize the importance and the need to master foreign languages (SCHOOL).
- Carry out an analysis by combining the educational plans of different years and the to clarify what steps, actions can be added or reduced in order to increase the effectiveness of the students' learning (SCHOOL, TEACHERS).
- Discuss mechanisms of cooperation with other schools, taking into account that the problems and opportunities of schools in the region are almost the same, and cooperation can be effective (SCHOOL, TEACHERS).


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－Use the foreign language teaching guide attached to the report （Appendix 1），which was prepared by＂Bayazet＂Analytical－Research Armenian Center NGO based on the study of local and foreign experience（TEACHERS，STUDENTS）．


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Study of Foreign Language Proficiency Among Schoolchildren of Gavar Region
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Study of Foreign Language Proficiency Among

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APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX 1. A GUIDE TO LEARNING A FOREIGN

## LANGUAGE

## 1. COMMUNICATION

If there is any 'secret' to learning a foreign language, it is constant communication with people who know the language better. Conventionally, we can match a 1-hour conversation with 10 hours of classroom lessons. Each of us loves talking about some topic more than spending hours at a computer or desk learning a language.

## 2. HAVE A CLEAR MOTIVATION TO LEARN

Many people start learning a new language without knowing where or what they will use it for, doomed to failure. When the learner knows exactly what they are studying for, where they will use the specific language, they are more interested in completing the assignments and tasks that contribute to increasing the level of language knowledge.

## 3. START WITH THE 100 MOST COMMON WORDS

Having mastered the 100 most common words and some grammar, you can make simple sentences, start using the language by communicating with native speakers. Once you have mastered the 100 most common words, the next target could be 1000 words.

## 4. FOCUS ON PRONUNCIATION

Some of the languages are based on Latin, so there are many word and pronunciation similarities. For example, mastering English can make the process of learning French or German a lot more easier.

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## 5. MOVIES, MUSIC

Nowadays, the Internet offers the best opportunity for self-learning. It is available to almost everyone, almost every where and almost always. Foreign language films, music and many other types of media products (which can even be found according to the level of knowledge of our language, for example, starting from films with simpler and accessible vocabulary (A1) to the most complex (C2) level) are very important for learning a foreign language, and in particular for developing listening memory.

## 6. ONLINE COURSES

Online courses give you the opportunity to study with good professionals, regardless of where you live. There are both paid (according to average value data, quite cheaper than what tutors charge) and free courses that can be combined with school classes or work.

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## APPENIDIX 2．STANDARDIZED INTERVIEW

## QUESTIONNAIRE

## Hello

My name is $\qquad$
＂Bayazet＂Armenian Analytical－Research Center conducts research with the aim of revealing the level of knowledge offoreign languages among students of the 9－12th grade of Gavar region and the extralinguistic factors affecting learning，to create a guide to learning foreign languages，through which to achieve more effective learning of foreign languages by developing students＇ oral and written communication skills and develop and present a package of recommendations to RA MoESCS，Gegharkunik Regional Administration and schools，and the Department of Education，Sports and Culture of Gavar Municipality．

The survey consists of 17 questions and it will take you only 5 minutes to participate．

The interview is confidential．Your name will not be mentioned anywhere．The results of the study will be presented in generalized form only．Thank you in advance for your time and honesty．

1．Enter your age：
2．Enter your sex：
－Male
－Female


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- 10-n
- 11- n
- 12-n

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3.What grade are you in?
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

4. Which of the following foreign languages do you study at school?

- Russian
- English
- French
- German
- Other

5. Please indicate which of the following foreign languages you speak and at what level. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1-you do not know the language, 2-you can read and write, 3-you have adequate knowledge, 4-you know the language well and can communicate freely in that foreign language, 5 -you have an excellent command of the language).

- Russian
- English
- French
- German
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6. Do you attend additional foreign language classes?

- Yes
- No

7. If you do, do you attend paid or free classes?

- Paid
- Free

8. If you attend paid classes, please note the monthly fee.

- Up to 5000 AMD
- 6000-10.000 AMD
- 11.000-20.000 AMD
- More than 20.000 AMD

9. What kind of classes do you prefer?

- Private, individual
- Private, group
- School club
- Other

10. How has the level of your knowledge of a foreign language changed over the last two years?

- Improved
- Worsened
- Didn't change
- Other

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14. What did mainly cause the change?

- School lessons
- Classes with tutor
- Both school lessons and classes with tutor
- Other

12. Do you have experience speaking with a foreigner?

- No, never had the chance
- Once
- Yes, several times
- Yes, constantly

13. To you, is the knowledge of a foreign language a mandatory requirement, and if so, how many foreign languages should a person know?

- No, I think foreign language knowledge is not mandatory
- Yes, knowledge of at least 1 foreign language is mandatory
- Yes, knowledge of at least 2 foreign languages is mandatory
- Nowadays knowledge of 3 or more foreign languages is mandatory



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- Unұnpnnh unnunhцughwír
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14. How much do the following factors contribute to learning a foreign language? Please rank them in order of importance (with 1 being the most important prerequisite and 10 being the least important).

- The memory of the learner
- The age of the learner
- The concentration of the learner
- The motivation of the learner
- The environment
- The diligence of the elarner
- The role of the teacher
- Cultural awareness
- The curriculum
- Additional time

15. If a foreign language learning center is opened in Gavar for free or with a nominal fee (Approximately, 1000 AMD), will you participate in the courses?

- Yes
- No
16.If yes, what languages would you like to learn?
17.If no, please state the reason.


## 

## APPENDIX 3. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

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## Hello, my name is [.......]

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about teaching foreign languages in Gavar community schools. The interview is a part of the research conducted by "Bayazet" Armenian Analytical-Research Center, the purpose of which is to reveal the level of knowledge of foreign languages among students of 9-12th grade in the Gavar region and the identification of extra-linguistic factors affecting learning. You have valuable experience related to the issue under discussion, so your opinion is important to us. The interview is anonymous, but it is being recorded to make sure we do not miss anything important. The recording will be accessible only to my research colleagues and me. No names will be mentioned in the report.

- Please tell me about yourself. How long have you been working at the school, what foreign language do you teach and for how long?
- What education do you have? Do you participate in trainings?
- How do you usually conduct your teaching process? Can you briefly describe it?
- In your opinion, what should be the model of good, quality and effective foreign language teaching in our schools? To what extent is the education you envisioned/marked accessible to students today? What are the barriers that limit the availability of foreign language education?
- What do you think about the quality and relevance of the textbooks/materials you use for teaching foreign languages? What do you think are the best and worst textbooks (Hint: by subject)? Why?
- According to you, what are the current problems in schools related to the teaching of foreign languages?
- What materials do you need to improve your teaching?


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- Would you describe the features of the teacher's role and significance in the foreign language teaching process?
- How effective do you think it would be to involve foreign volunteers (for example, the Peace Corps) in foreign language learning processes in schools? In such a case, will the fact of the volunteer being a foreigner or Armenian be important?
- Please talk about the extra-linguistic factors that affect the foreign language learning process of schoolchildren.
- Finally, do you have any thoughts on the topic that you would like to express that we did not cover during the interview?


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[^1]:    3 "Foreign Languages in Armenia" scientific methodical journal, National Institute of Education of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Yerevan, 2008, p. 56
    ${ }^{4}$ According to the information provided in 2022 by the RA Gegharkunik Regional Administration

[^2]:    
    
    

[^3]:    ${ }^{6}$ At the same time, it should be emphasized that the subject content in grades 5-6 is built in such a way that by the end of the 6th grade, students have A2-level abilities.

[^4]:    
    
    
    

[^5]:    ${ }^{8}$ Due to the lack of public transport, students of the Tsakhkashen school in one of the administrative districts of the enlarged Gavar region cannot participate in various courses and classes organized in the city of Gavar.

