



# Problems Ninth and Eleventh Grade Students Face While Studying and Preparing for English Language Exams

K. A. Terenteva – Ivanovo State University, Institute of Humanities, 1<sup>st</sup> year Bachelor in International Relations

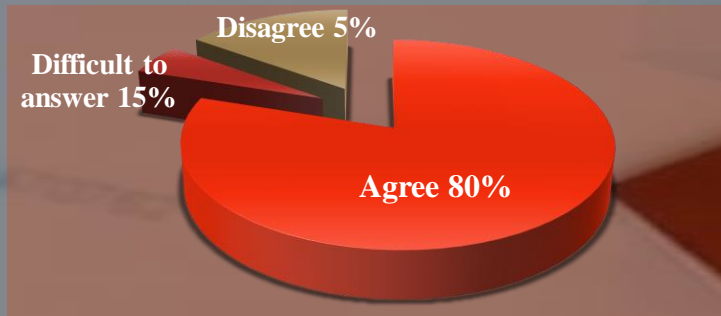
## Introduction

It is argued that it is quite difficult to pass **English language exams** in *grades 9 and 11*. However, the popularity of the *Unified State Exam* and *Basic State Examination in English* is growing every year, because the importance of learning English is increasing day by day.

Therefore, we decided to conduct an **online survey**, which helped us to identify the *tasks graduates consider to be the most difficult*. They include *grammar, pronunciation* and *spelling* tasks.

The **purpose** of the survey is to *attract school teachers' attention* to the problems students face studying English and preparing for English language exams.

About 80% of 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade students believe that English language exams *neither check nor evaluate the level of English proficiency* because there are **typical tasks** that require knowing **typical vocabulary and contents structure**. Other 15% of the respondents find it difficult to answer; only 5% disagree with the statement.



**The results** deserve close attention, because schoolchildren do not feel it is their knowledge that is assessed. Much depends on how well they are familiar with the *structure of the exam, introductory phrases* and *certain words and expressions*. Moreover, the *difficulty level of the tasks* school graduates come across is another significant factor.

## English language exams include several sections:

Listening

Reading

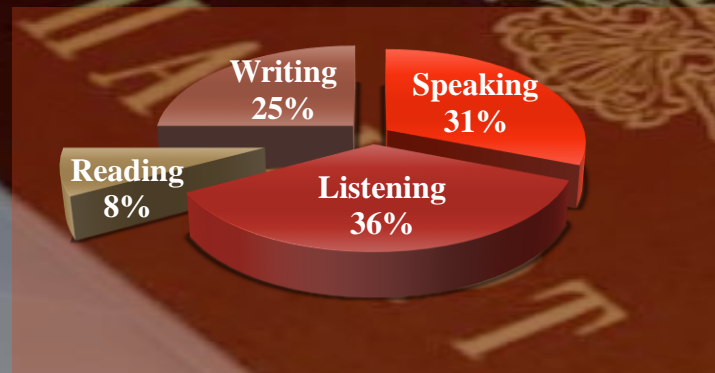
Grammar and Vocabulary

Writing

Speaking

**Listening, writing** and **speaking** are considered the most difficult. Not all students have the *audio perception skills*; many do not distinguish *accents* and do not understand *speech* in general.

Very often, schoolchildren are not immersed in the *language environment* and, thus, do not have a chance to develop their *listening comprehension skills*.



The most important point to highlight is that students do not possess the **skill of spontaneous speech**; they do not know how to express their thoughts *fluently*. They are either afraid of speaking English or feel shy. This fear appears due to *lack of grammar knowledge* and *limited vocabulary*. Only 15% of graduates say they can speak English fluently.



## Results of the Online Survey

1. It was conducted among *forty 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students* from *Lyceum № 22*.
2. The results of the research will help to *improve English teaching strategies* at secondary schools. It will become clear which topics seem hard to students, which questions need closer attention, and, moreover, which skills should be improved.
3. During the online survey, students were asked *why they had chosen to take an English language exam after grades 9 and 11*. The most common answer was that English is necessary to enter a university and choose a major one likes. Besides, graduates stated that English is a language every educated person should know.
4. The respondents most frequently selected *grammar, spelling* and *pronunciation* as *difficult areas of the English language*.
5. The students were asked if *the number of English lessons at school is enough to pass the exam successfully*. The majority answered *negatively* (75%).
6. The *lack of free and reliable exam preparation resources* must be addressed.