

Lesson 4: example commentary for slides 3 and 4

Further education is the focus of a survey published in 2012 on the Guardian website. The data examined was collected in six EU countries, namely France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK, and compiled from statistics provided by each country and UNESCO. Two key areas were the drop-out rate and tuition fees. As can be seen, in the UK fewer than one in ten (8.5%) full-time first-year students abandon their undergraduate degree course. In contrast, almost half of students in Italy (45%) drop out of the course they enrolled in. This could be attributed to two main factors.

Firstly, in the UK, applications are capped and are course specific. Applicants are selected on the basis of their grades and, in certain cases, following interviews. It is less likely therefore, that a candidate will feel unsuited and decide to drop out. In Italy instead, most courses are open to all high school graduates irrespective of their final results and students can also change course relatively easily. In other words, many students may realise they are unsuited for their chosen course and decide to leave or change to another degree course.

The second factor regards tuition fees. The annual cost is relatively low in Italy (around €2,500) whereas in the UK fees can reach £9,000, equating to approximately €10,500. In Italy, therefore, abandoning a degree course has less financial impact whereas the consequences are more serious in the UK. In other words, the financial burden for UK students may be another reason for the low drop-out rate.

(256 words)

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Table 5, from the Eurobarometer Survey for 2006 on multilingualism published by the European Commission, focuses on the three most widely known foreign languages. The survey was conducted in the EU25 and also included the official candidates at that time: namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey. Russian is listed in seven countries and is the most spoken foreign language in the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, with 66%, 70% and 80% respectively. Although their geographical location could explain these figures since all three countries border on Russia territory, the main factor is that all three states were part of the former Soviet Union and Russian was the lingua franca.

(111 words)