

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to **PISA 2018**, reading proficiency is essential for a wide variety of human activities – from following instructions in a manual; to finding out the who, what, when, where and why of an event; to communicating with others for a specific purpose or transaction. Every PISA test assesses 15-year-old students' knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics and science; in 2018, reading was the main subject assessed in the 79 participating countries and economies.

In all these countries and economies, girls significantly outperformed boys in reading – by 30 score points, on average across OECD countries. Moreover, girls reported much greater enjoyment of reading than boys. The largest gender gap in enjoyment of reading was observed in Germany, Hungary and Italy and the smallest in Indonesia and Korea. However, on average across OECD countries in 2018, both boys and girls reported significantly less enjoyment of reading than their counterparts did in 2009.

PIRLS, the global standard for monitoring reading achievement of fourth grade students, collected in 2021 high-quality data from 57 Countries, revealing a general decrease around the world in reading achievement among fourth grade students. However, it is important to note that while girls scored higher in 51 countries and no differences between boys and girls were found in 6 countries, in no country did boys score higher.

All these results, although concerning two different student populations by age group, highlight a shared problem: there is a gender gap in the reading proficiency and boys are the ones who struggle to achieve higher results.

SOURCES

PISA 2018:

- https://www.oecd.org/pisa/combined_infographics_PISA2018.pdf
- https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Combined_Executive_Summaries_PISA_2018.pdf

PIRLS 2021:

- https://www.iea.nl/sites/default/files/2023-05/PIRLS%202021%20Infographic%20Presentation_1.pdf

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

BoysLingo results

In light of such gender gap between primary and secondary school students in reading, eventually affecting the development of all language skills, the BoysLingo project developed:



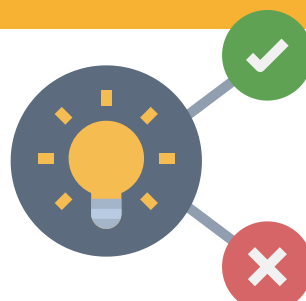
1 need analysis,

involving 84 teachers from both primary and secondary schools in each partner country, to understand the current needs, practices, and challenges faced by teachers in teaching literacy skills to boys and to produce effective results



1 handbook

for school staff and leaders, providing an overview on students reading attitudes, preferences and habits, with a focus on male students; a thorough literature review in the 5 partner countries (Poland, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Ireland); and a collection of methods and digital tools for enhancing boys' literacy;



1 collection of 25 best practices

to inspire teachers in their daily practice;



1 App

fostering language proficiency through mobile and gamified learning scenarios, with a focus on reading skills, available for Apple and Android devices

Download now!



Specifically, the App, developed with the help of 4 teachers in all partner countries in 2023, was piloted in primary and secondary schools in Poland, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Ireland from January to March, 2024, involving:

200

students in Poland

195

students in Cyprus

200

students in Ireland

229

students in Italy

216

students in Greece

The App hosts **40 interactive and learning scenarios** aligned with the national school curriculum of each partner country ensuring the pedagogical value of the material.

8 learning scenarios were created in each partner language: 4 for primary and 4 for secondary school students, but all of them are also available in English, thus allowing students to test out their language competences both in their native language as well as in English and help them build their language skills.

During the piloting, the teachers supported the collection of students' feedback which will help us to further develop the App.

The piloting was a success in each partner country, as stated by the teachers and students themselves:

"Students are keen to use the tool. They evaluate it as an effective form of teaching"

Teacher, Poland

"Students expressed enjoyment with the app and actively engaged with the learning activities"

Teacher, Cyprus

"Through collaborative efforts and interactive sessions, the piloting demonstrated the potential of the BoysLingo app to enrich language learning endeavours"

Teacher, Ireland

"I liked the fact that you can learn while playing a game"

Student, Greece

"The feedback [received after selecting the answer] were my favourite part: they really guided you in understanding why the answer was wrong and bring you to choose the correct one with confidence"

Student, Italy