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# The Present Perfect Tense as a Critical Issue in the Lower Secondary School Curriculum

# Předpřítomný čas jako kritické místo ve výuce anglického jazyka na 2. stupni ZŠ

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## Poděkování

Ráda bych vyjádřila své poděkování doc. PhDr. Lucii Betákové, MA, Ph.D., která mi při vedení diplomové práce poskytovala cenné rady a směřovala mě správným směrem. Její vstřícnost a flexibilita mi byly velkou oporou. Dále bych ráda poděkovala pedagogům, kteří se účastnili výzkumu, za jejich ochotu při spolupráci. V neposlední řadě děkuji svým rodičům a manželovi, kteří ve mě vždy věřili a podporovali mě.

## Anotace

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá předpřítomným časem jako kritickým místem kurikula 2. stupně základních škol. Předpřítomný čas v anglickém jazyce byl identifikován učiteli jako kritické místo v rámci projektu IPUP KA7 – Inovace přípravy učitelů pro praxi. Tento fakultní projekt zkoumal tzv. kritická místa kurikula a byl založen na akčním výzkumu, který se stal podkladem pro tuto diplomovou práci.

V teoretické části diplomová práce nejprve definuje kritická místa obecně a poté konkrétní kritické místo analyzuje z lingvistického a didaktického hlediska. V empirické části se věnuje metodologii výzkumu a stanovuje jeho fáze, které dále realizuje. Součástí empirické části je konfrontace poznatků teoretiků v oblasti výuky předpřítomného času s praxí učitelů a z toho vzniklá doporučení do praxe. Tato doporučení jsou aplikována na modelovou výukovou hodinu, jejímž cílem je navrhnout řešení jak toto kritické místo překonávat.

Klíčová slova: kritické místo kurikula, kurikulum, RVP, SERR, předpřítomný čas, výuka gramatiky, akční výzkum

## Abstract

This diploma thesis examines the Present Perfect tense as a critical issue in the curriculum at the lower secondary schools. The Present Perfect tense in English was identified by teachers as a critical issue in the IPUP KA7 project - Inovace přípravy učitelů pro praxi. This faculty project investigated critical issues in the curriculum and included action research that provided the basis for this thesis.

In the theoretical section, the thesis first defines critical issues in general and then analyses our chosen specific critical issue (the Present Perfect tense) from a linguistic and methodological point of view. In the empirical section, it discusses the research methodology and sets out the stages of the research, which it then implements. The empirical section includes an examination of the findings of scholars in the field of teaching the Present Perfect tense in comparison with teachers' practical classroom experience and also includes resulting recommendations for practice. These recommendations are applied to a model lesson to suggest solutions on how to overcome this critical issue.

Key words: critical issues in curriculum, curriculum, Framework Education Programme, CEFR, present perfect, teaching grammar, action research

# Contents

# Introduction

This diploma thesis entitled *The Present Perfect Tense as a Critical Issue in the Lower Secondary School Curriculum* is based on the results of the action research conducted at the Faculty of Education at the University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, from 2019 to 2021. The research identified grammar as one of the critical issues in the lower secondary school curriculum. The verb tenses were recognised as one of the most challenging areas of grammar, and among them the grammatical structure of the Present Perfect tense was found to be very critical. Therefore, this thesis focuses on this particular critical issue.

This thesis is divided into two sections, the theoretical and the empirical one. The theoretical section of this thesis (discussed in the first chapter) describes the critical issues that arise – what they are and the manner in which they manifest. The second chapter focuses on the Present Perfect tense from a linguistic point of view (its form, meaning and usage), as well as its comparison with the Past Simple tense. In addition, the second chapter enumerates the essential differences between the Czech and English systems of tenses, which is the basis and the starting point of the empirical research described in the next section. The last chapter of the theoretical section deals with the specifics of teaching grammar at lower secondary schools. The subchapters of the last chapter investigate the presence of the Present Perfect tense in the curricular documents, focus on the methods of teaching grammar and provide detailed information on the inductive approach, which is used in the last subchapter. The last chapter also describes the principles of the Present Perfect tense and offers methods on how to effectively present this tense.

The empirical section begins with the summary of the results observed in the action research results and answers the question: *Why do teachers consider the Present Perfect tense a challenging and critical teaching matter in a learner's understanding and grasp of English?* Based on the results of the action research, this thesis proposes solutions to the most frequent problems teachers encounter when presenting the Present Perfect tense and suggests a lesson plan which includes activities and materials. The proposed lesson plan will be tested in practice in a classroom setting with the intention that this will provide

learners with greater clarity on the usage of the Present Perfect Simple when they first encounter it.

The aim of this thesis is to find answers to the research questions *Why is the Present Perfect tense a critical issue?* and *How to present this grammatical structure to the learners to avoid misinterpretation?* We will work towards the fulfilment of our goals in the theoretical section, in which we will focus on discovering the cause of the critical issue through linguistic analysis which will provide us with a comparison of the Czech and English verb tense systems. Both sections, the theoretical as well the empirical, will contribute to the achievement of the second aim. In the theoretical section, we will focus on the ways different authors present grammar and the Present Perfect tense. This will then be applied to the creation of the lesson plan in the empirical section. Approaches to teaching grammar will also be applied in the actual trial teaching of the proposed lesson plan. The empirical section will also include a brief focus on designing solutions that answer teachers' most common problems as identified in the questionnaires collected during the action research.

# Theoretical Section

The theoretical section firstly focuses on the explanation of the critical issues. The first chapter of this section describes what the critical issues are, when they arise and what can cause them. The second chapter addresses the linguistic analysis of the Present Perfect tense. It provides a description of the form, meaning and use of the Present Perfect Simple. There is also a comparison of the Present Perfect tense with the Past Simple because they are very often the two most easily confused tenses by non-native learners of English, including Czech learners. The last chapter focuses on teaching grammar and the Present Perfect in particular. The analysis of these two tenses, the important differences between Czech and English tense systems, and the presentation of current and proposed approaches to the teaching of the Present Perfect will be the drivers for the empirical section and for meeting the objectives of this thesis.

The abbreviations for the Present Perfect Simple (PP) and the Past Simple (PS) have been introduced to improve clarity and readability of the text. The abbreviated and unabbreviated versions are used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

# 1 The Critical Issues in the Curriculum

The introductory chapter of this thesis addresses the critical issues of the curriculum. Critical issues of the curriculum are a relatively new concept in the Czech scientific field, therefore literature available on this topic is very limited. Until 2019, research focused on critical issues mainly in the teaching of mathematics and natural sciences. Since then, extensive research on critical issues has covered not only mathematics and natural sciences but also the humanities.

This recent research was carried out by the Faculty of Education of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice. The research culminated in a collective monograph entitled *Critical Issues of the Curriculum in Selected Educational Disciplines (Kritická místa kurikula ve vybraných vzdělávacích oblastech)*, which presents not only the critical issues

in various disciplines, including those in the humanities, but also provides a theoretical basis for identifying and examining these critical issues.

## 1.1 The Curriculum

In order to clarify what the critical issues are, it is necessary to first introduce the term *curriculum*. According to Průcha et al. (1998) curriculum can be defined as an educational programme or a plan, the course and content of studying, or any experiences that learners gain during their studies, including their planning and assessment.

Curriculum also describes the linking of educational content to educational objectives. The curriculum has two forms, the static form and the dynamic form. The static form is represented by curricular documents as well as students' books or the records of the learners. The dynamic form, on the other hand, is the process of acquiring the practical experience that the learner gains in education. The critical issues occur in the static form of the curriculum, but manifest in the dynamic one (Nohavová and Stuhlíková 2021).

## 1.2 The Critical Issues

As mentioned above, a critical issue arises when the static and dynamic forms of the curriculum do not correlate. There is therefore a mismatch among the learning content, the learners' actions, and the learning objective. This results in an occurrence of the critical issue (Janík et. al 2013).

When we examine scientific disciplines, we discover that each scientific discipline is dynamic and contains key information to help understand the field. Furthermore, all disciplines contain dynamic places, which are those that lead to the acquisition of new knowledge. Keeping track of these dynamic places can be difficult for teachers and, above all, academic publishing houses are unable to immediately reflect this situation in student textbooks. These dynamic places become critical when problems arise in them, and they need to be dealt with systematically (Nohavová and Stuchlíková 2021).

This criticality can occur at several levels. According to Nohavová and Stuchlíková (2021), the problem may be the curriculum itself, the teacher, or the learner.

- With regard to the curriculum, it may be complicated or challenging theoretical content that is difficult to transfer over to practical teaching.
- Another factor may be the teacher. The teacher may not like teaching the material that creates the critical issue. In addition, the teacher may have insufficient knowledge of the critical issue or find it uninteresting and unimportant.
- Finally, the teacher's experience and skills, as well as the preparation for the lesson, play a role in the resolution of the critical issue.
- The last factor mentioned is the learner, who may misunderstand the critical issue, find it uninteresting or complicated

In summary, it is important to seek out and address critical issues at all levels because failure to do so creates breakdowns in the learning process that hinder or at the very least, complicate the achievement of learning objectives.

# 2 The Linguistic Analysis of the Present Perfect and the Past Simple tenses

As mentioned in the Introduction, in the action research held at the University of South Bohemia in 2019, the Present Perfect tense was identified by teachers as a critical issue and potential impediment in the teaching of English to non-native learners. Therefore, this chapter provides an overview of the Present Perfect tense from a linguistic perspective. The form of the Present Perfect is summarized in the first section. This is followed by a section which describes the diverse academic approaches to the use and function of the Present Perfect. The chapter then goes on to analyse the Past Simple in a similar manner and includes a comparison of both tenses. The last section presents a contrast between English and Czech.

Before providing an analysis of the above-mentioned tenses, it is necessary to make a clarification of the difference between two terms: *time* and *tense*. *Time*, as stated by Dušková (2003), is an extralinguistic entity. On the other hand, she defines *tense* as something that describes the relationship between the speaker and the time of speaking in the linguistic reality. The actions which take place at the same time as the speaker is speaking are viewed as the present to the speaker; antecedent to the time of the speech represent the past; succedent to the time of the speech represent the future.

Quirk and Crystal (1985: 175) asserts the definition of *time* in this manner:

> *… time can be thought of as a line (theoretically, of infinite length) on which is located, as a continuously moving point, the present moment. Anything ahead of the present moment is in the future, and anything behind it is in the past.*

Downing and Locke (2006: 352-354) agree that *tense* "anchors an event to the speaker's experience of the world", in other words, it anchors the *time* of an event to *a point of reference.* The point of reference can be thought of as constantly moving *now,* and, in agreement with Quirk and Crystal, anything happening before is viewed as past, while anything happening after is thought of as future.

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 47-48) add the definition of *tense*. They explain that oppose to *time*; *tense* is a grammatical category which is manifested by verb inflection. This fact reduces three possibilities of perception of *time* (past, present, and future) to two possible *tenses* - past and present - because future verbs are not inflected in English. "Tense is a grammatical category that is realised in English morphologically on the verb. In accordance with this criterion, English has just two tenses: the Present and the Past," concur Downing and Locke (2006: 353)

For a complex view on the issue, a term *aspect* has to be added. According to Quirk and Crystal (1985), *aspect* is a grammatical category which anchors the actions on the timeline and provides us with the further notion of the completion of the action. It can be either complete (perfective) or incomplete (imperfective or progressive).

Before proceeding to further analysis of the Present Perfect tense, we can conclude the introduction with a statement by Leech and Svartvik (2013: 46): "Tense and aspect relate the happening described by the verb to time in the past, present, or future." They also add (Leech and Svartvik 2013: 285):

> *By tense we understand the correspondence between the form of the verb and our concept of time (past, present or future). Aspect concerns the manner in which a verbal action is experienced or regarded (for example as complete or in progress).*

## 2.1 The Present Perfect tense

According to Dušková (2003), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Quirk and Crystal (1985), tenses in English can be divided into two categories: simple tenses and compound tenses (complex in Quirk and Crystal 1985). The simple form occurs only in affirmative sentences of the Present Simple and the Past Simple, in which a simple verb form of the main verb is used. On the other hand, the compound tense consists of one or more auxiliary verbs and the past participle or the infinitive of a lexical verb. The Present Perfect tense belongs to the latter group as illustrated by the explanation of the form below.

Based on our research of various publications (ESL Student books as well as grammar books for teachers), we have arrived at the conclusion that the Present Perfect Simple is always presented before the Present Perfect Progressive. Therefore, the Present Perfect

Progressive is intentionally not covered in this paper, and the presented analysis of the Present Perfect is adequate for the aim of this thesis. Also, the term *the Present Perfect,* used in this paper, always refers to *the Present Perfect Simple*, unless it is written differently.

### 2.1.1 The Form of the Present Perfect

Present Perfect affirmative is formed by an auxiliary verb *have* in its present form and *a past participle* of a lexical verb. There is a person-number concord between the subject and the auxiliary verb, thus *have* changes into *has* in the third person singular. The past participle may be regular or irregular. Regular forms are identical with past tense forms; formed by a suffix *-ed*. For irregular verbs, there are their own special forms of past participles (Parrot 2010, Scrivener 2010, Murphy 2012).

The negative of the tense is constructed similar to the affirmative. The auxiliary verb *have* is in its negative form – *have not*. Respectively, the third-person singular *have* changes into *has*, therefore *has not* is used. The rest of the sentence remains the same (Scrivener 2010).

The mentioned forms above are commonly found in the written language. On the contrary, the spoken language aims to be more economic; for this reason, the forms of an auxiliary verb are contracted to *'ve* and *'s* in the Present Perfect affirmative, to *haven't* or *hasn't* in the negative of the tense (Scrivener 2010, Murphy 2012).

Scrivener (2010) states that there is another possibility on how to convey negative meaning. Instead of using *not, never* can be used, i.e., *have/has + never + past participle*.

Present Perfect interrogatives are created by inversion of the subject and the auxiliary verb, as can be seen in the example: *"I have been to London." "Have you been to London?"*

Dušková (2003) adds that we might encounter negative questions, in which the particle *not* can be placed in two positions. First, *not* is connected with the auxiliary verb by an apostrophe, the subject and an auxiliary verb is inverted, and the rest of the sentence remains the same, i.e. "*Haven't you been working?"*. Second, *not* is not connected with the

auxiliary verb, thus it is placed between the subject and the past participle, as demonstrated in the following example: *"Have you not been working?"*

An overview of the affirmative, negative, and interrogative forms can be found in the tables below:

**Table 1: The Present Perfect Affirmative**

| SUBJECT | HAVE/ HAS | PAST PARTICIPLE | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I/ You/ We/ They | *have/ 've* | *seen* | her. |
| He/ She/ It | *has/ 's* | *been* | to Paris. |

**Table 2: The Present Perfect Negative**

| SUBJECT | HAVE/ HAS + NOT | PAST PARTICIPLE | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I/ You/ We/ They | *haven't/ 've not* | *seen* | her. |
| He/ She/ It | *hasn't/ 's not* | *been* | to Paris. |

**Table 3: The Present Perfect Interrogative**

| QUESTION WORD | HAVE/ HAS | SUBJECT | PAST PARTICIPLE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (When) | *have* | I/ you/ we/ they | *seen* | her? |
| (When) | *has* | he/ she/ it | *been* | to Paris? |

### 2.1.2 The Meaning and Usage of the Present Perfect

In contrast to the form, which is relatively straightforward to the learners, the meaning and usage are more challenging. (Parrot 2010, Scrivener 2010) Therefore, this subchapter investigates the possible meanings of the Present Perfect presented by various authors because, for the next chapter *Teaching Grammar at Lower Secondary School*, it is crucial to clarify the meaning and usage of this tense to be able to decide how and when to present both the Present Perfect and the Past Simple to the learners.

#### 2.1.2.1 The Meaning and Usage by Jim Scrivener

Scrivener (2010) provides three types of meanings and usages.

Firstly, he describes using the Present Perfect tense in questions about **a past experience in someone's life, where the time of the event is not stated**. For the interrogative, the phrase *Have you ever…?* is used, in which *ever* means 'at any time in one's life'. He also mentions that it is common to start a conversation with the Present Perfect question and follow by a Past Simple answer.

*A: Have you ever been to the Middle East?*

*B: Yes, I visited Egypt last year.*

Secondly, he mentions situations that "happened in **the very recent past – very close to 'now'.**" These are realised linguistically by the Present Perfect Simple, though in American English the Past Simple is usually preferred in such instances. Typically, *just* can be found in these sentences.

*British English: He's just gone out for a few minutes.*

*American English: He just went out for a few minutes.*

Thirdly, he presents the use of the PP in situations that happened "in **an unfinished period of time that started in the past and continued up to now**." The connection to *now* may not be always obvious but can still be guessed.

*We've been burgled! (and now we don't have a TV)*

Finally, he adds that verbs like *increase, grow, or fall* indicate the usage of the PP as well, because there has occurred a change over time.

*Sales have shown a slight improvement this year.*

*The business has grown very fast.*

#### 2.1.2.2 The Meaning and Usage by Martin Parrot

According to Parrot (2010: 236-240), the Present *Perfect* "links the past to the present, focusing on the effect or result at the time of speaking or writing." He continues with an explanation of the two main possible usages of the Present Perfect.

Firstly, he mentions using this tense in **uncompleted actions or events**, which generally expresses duration until now. The expression '*until now'* is vague, therefore he provides an explanation with examples contrasted with the Present Perfect Continuous.

- When talking about *'an open choice'* (when the beginning of a present action is specified), we use either the Present Perfect Simple or the Present Perfect Continuous. Our choice can be influenced by the presence of *for, since*, or an expression *How long…?*

- The Present Perfect Simple is preferred when we want to emphasise a long duration of an action.

  *Present Perfect Simple: I've worked here most of my life. (i.e., long-term)*

  *Present Perfect Continuous: I've been working here for just a few days. (i.e., short-term)*

- To emphasize that something has happened once or twice, and not repeatedly, we use the Present Perfect Simple rather than the Present Perfect Continuous.

  *Present Perfect Simple: I've used the swimming pool since we moved into the district.*

  *Present Perfect Continuous: I've been using the swimming pool since we moved into the district.*

- Some state verbs are not used in *-ing form*, so they tend to appear in the Present Perfect Simple rather than the Present Perfect Continuous, usually "those describing existence, mental states and possession."

  *I've known about the inspection for weeks*

Secondly, the usage of the Present Perfect tense is common in **completed actions or events**. Those are actions which are completed, but the period of time in which they have been happening is unfinished. To enhance the unfinishedness, the expressions like *this year, today* can be used, but sometimes it is just implied in the words themselves (i.e., a life of an alive person).

*I've had two accidents this week.*

*I've never been outside Europe.*

Unlike Scrivener, Parrot (2010) is sceptical of presenting the Present Perfect tense in connection with the expression *'now'*. He says: "This is very vague and we can argue that everything we express has present relevance regardless of the tense we choose (why else would we be saying or writing it?)" (Parrot 2010: 239). However, he is aware that teaching these examples, such as *"I've lost my keys.",* in connection with the present is necessary, so he suggests showing these examples to learners rather than explaining (for more information on teaching and presenting the PP tense see chapter 3.3).

Angela Downing and Philip Locke (2006: 364) also mentions *'current relevance'* of the Present Perfect. They agree with Parrot that sometimes the meaning *'up to now'* of the PP can be viewed as the most important. They prefer to consider the current relevance as "a pragmatic implication deriving from the combination of time-frame, perfect aspect and verb type." The authors show the difference in two examples: *"They have been out."* vs. *"They went out."* The first one implies that 'they' are back now, the second does not contain such an implication.

## 2.2 The Past Simple

This subchapter briefly describes the form of Past Simple, its usage and function. The analysis does not investigate the Past Simple in such details as it has described the Present Perfect. The usage of the Past Simple is later presented in contrast with the Present Perfect rather than separately from each other because the aim of the theoretical section is to provide a linguistic background for presenting the PP to learners and, more importantly, eliminate the confusion between the two tenses.

### 2.2.1 The Form of the Past Simple

In contrast with the Present Perfect, the Past Simple tense in affirmative is a representation of the simple tense, i.e., the form does not contain any auxiliary verb (Dušková 2003).

The affirmative sentence is, therefore, formed by subject + *verb in the past tense form*. The past tense form can be either regular or irregular. Regular forms are formed by adding a suffix *-ed* (walk – walked) or *-d* to verbs already ending in *-e* (like – liked). Sometimes the final consonant is doubled according to certain rules; and there are special past tense forms of irregular verbs as well. Nevertheless, a deeper investigation of the spelling rules and past tense forms is not relevant to the aim of this paper, thus you can find further information in Scrivener (2010: 132, 139) or Murphy (2012: 10, 292-293, 298-299).

The negative sentence, though, is not a simple tense, but a complex tense because there is used an auxiliary verb *did*. To form a negative statement, this structure is used: *subject* + *did* + *not* + *base form of the lexical verb*. The *did* + *not* can be contracted to *didn't* (Scrivener 2010).

Oppose to the PP, the question is not formed by an inversion, but with the help of an auxiliary verb *did*. The structure is as follows: the facultative use of *a question word* + *did* + *subject* + *base form of the lexical verb*. As Scrivener (2010: 142) says, a negative question can be formed as well and they are quite common, e.g. *'Didn't you know?'* (Scrivener 2010, Parrot 2010).

The only exception to the above format is the verb *to be*. There are two forms of the PS – with *I/He/She/It* the form *was* is used, whereas *We/You/They* are followed by *were*. The question is formed by an inversion of the subject and verb *be*. *Were + not* (respectively *was* + *not*) forms the negative of the sentence. Also, the contracted forms *weren't* or *wasn't* are common.

### 2.2.2 The Meaning and Usage of the Past Simple

Before proceeding to the comparison of the PP and the PS, we will briefly cover the meaning and usage of the Past Simple.

According to Downing and Locke (2006: 358), the basic meaning of the Past Simple is to "locate an event or state to the past". They also present the Past Simple as a definite past event or state and also mention the semantic role of the tense. A crucial thought, which distinguishes the Past Simple from the Present Perfect, is that the speaker locates the whole event to the anterior time of the act of speaking. Therefore, the past event occurred at some specific time in the past, it is independent from the present, and most importantly, it is viewed as definite by the speaker.

Parrot (2010: 219-220) agrees that the Past Simple is used in finished periods of time and when the speaker establishes the time frame of events or states. Authors are consistent with the possible usage of time expressions like *last week, 6 years ago, at the weekend,* or *in 1935* to specify the finishedness of the event. Nevertheless, they all conclude, when using the Past Simple, it is not necessary to specify the time expression, because the specific time is implied in the situational context, e.g. *"Did you go to the party? (on Sunday)"*.

Apart from the two usages mentioned above, Parrot (2010: 219) adds the third; using the Past Simple when giving precise details about an event. Usually, we say "*I've had my appendix out"* but once the details (such as manner or place) are specified, we change the tense to the past, e.g. *"I had my appendix out in Warsaw"*.

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 50) classify three types of use of the Past Simple.

- *The Event Past* refers to a single occasion in the past. It is of no significance whether the occasion is a point in time or of longer duration.

  *The plane left at 9 a.m.*

  *The Normans invaded England in 1066.*

- *The Habitual Past* refers to the occasions that occurred repeatedly.

*We spent our holidays in Spain when we were children.*

- *The State Past* refers to *'a single unbroken state of affairs in the past'*.

  *I once liked reading novels.*

## 2.3 The Present Perfect vs. the Past Simple

After reviewing the observations in the preceding paragraphs, we observe considerable challenges in a non-native learner's choice of whether to use the Present Perfect or the Past Simple. Whereas the meaning and usage of the PS do not cause many problems and can be described in a satisfactory manner, the PP causes a higher degree of confusion to a non-native learner.

Quirk and Crystal (1985) describe the challenge of differentiation between the Present Perfect and the Past Simple as one of the most complicated issues in English grammar because there is an overlap between *aspect* and *tense*, both of which play roles in deciding which tense to use in speech or writing. In his description of the present perfective, he deliberately chooses the Past Simple as a point of reference and provides the explanation of the Present Perfect only in contrast with the Simple Past. He proves that referring to the PP as *'a past with current relevance'* is not satisfactory, because this can be accurate only in some cases. For example, the two questions: *'Where did you put my purse?'* and *'Where have you put my purse?'* have probably the same aim (to find the purse) but using the Present Perfect elicits more current relevance (the speaker asks where the purse is now). In this manner, Quirk and Crystal illustrate the indefinite and definite past. The events which take place in a period of time, which leads up to the present, are equivalent to those time-framed in the past (i.e., *definite past*), but the time of the event is not defined, i.e., *indefinite past*.

For further clarification, he focuses on the difference between the two constructions, especially differences in their meanings. The meanings of the Present Perfect are (Quirk and Crystal 1985: 192):

- States leading up to the present

  *That house has been empty for ages.*

*Have you known my sister for long?*

- Indefinite event(s) in a period leading up to the present

  *Have you (ever) been to Florence?*

  *All our children have had measles.*

- Habit (e.g. recurrent event) in a period leading up to the present

  *Mr. Terry has sung in this choir ever since he was a boy.*

  *The province has suffered from disastrous floods throughout its history.*

In opposition to the three meanings of the Past Simple (by Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 50), Quirk and Crystal (1985: 192) clarify: The first "corresponds to the 'state past' (…) but differs from it in specifying that the state continues at least up to the present moment". In the third case, the continuation up to the present is also necessary to distinguish between *recurrent events* and the *'habitual past'*. The second differs in the definiteness of the time period. The question *'Have you (ever) been to Florence?'* implies an indefinite period of time (a person's life), while examples in the subchapter 2.2.2 *'The plane left at 9 a.m.'* or '*The Normans invaded England in 1066.'* contain definite time expressions.

Parrot (2010) summarizes the key differences and similarities. The Past Simple and the Present Perfect are both used when talking about finished events, but the Past Simple is used when the event took place in a finished period of time, whereas if the period of time is unfinished, the Present Perfect is preferred. The PP is also preferred when giving details about a living person; on the other hand, the PS is used when talking about someone who is deceased. In addition, the PS is also used to tell stories.

Parrot (2010) points out that the Present Perfect causes problems to the learners, mainly because they cannot think of this tense as something that refers to the past in some cases and to the present in others. He agrees with Scrivener (2010) that the difficulties with this tense are caused by the absence of the PP in learners' mother tongues.

Smith and Swan (2001: 152, 169) support this by recognizing the nonexistence of the Present Perfect in Slavic languages, such as Polish or Russian, which causes the substitution of the Present Perfect with the Present or Past Simple. He presents these examples:

** How long you be/are here? (Instead of 'How long have you been here?')*

** I saw that film. (Instead of 'I've seen that film.')*

Similarly in Czech, learners make the same mistakes. Dušková (2003) reveals why. She emphasizes the difference between the Czech and English tense systems. There are three tenses in English – preteritum, perfectum, and plusquamperfectum - for expressing the past, whereas the Czech tense system uses only one past tense - preteritum. This dissimilarity causes misunderstanding of the Present Perfect tense, as well as confusion in learners when deciding whether to use the Present Perfect or the Past Simple, which has also been conclusively observed in the action research conducted at the University of South Bohemia (Betáková and Dvořák 2021).

Awareness of the differences between the Czech and English systems, as well as a thorough linguistic knowledge of the Present Perfect and the Past Simple, is crucial background for the next chapter (*3 Teaching Grammar at Lower Secondary School*), and more importantly, for teachers to be able to effectively present the tenses and prevent confusion among learners.

# 3 Teaching Grammar at Lower Secondary School

In the second chapter, we presented some key points about the linguistic theory of the Present Perfect and the Past Simple that we can build on later in this chapter. Before proceeding to how to teach the Present Perfect and how to avoid common pitfalls in presenting the structure to learners, we need to characterize the specifics of lower secondary school learners, as well as their acquired knowledge at this stage.

Lower secondary school learners in the Czech school system are those attending 6$^{th}$ to 9$^{th}$ forms, or the respective forms of Grammar school; therefore, the learners' ages range from 11 to 15. This stage may bring both positives and negatives in teaching grammar, more so while teaching challenging grammatical structures like the Present Perfect.

It is a common belief that young learners are thought to have significantly higher aptitude for learning new languages; on the other hand, older learners are thought not to be so successful. The *critical period hypothesis* (which was later challenged) was presented in the 1970s. It suggests that a critical period in learning a language is puberty, after which acquisition of a new language becomes harder (Richards 2015). Whether the above-mentioned hypothesis is true or not, it doubtlessly brings a milestone in learners' learning, which must be considered when teaching.

Teenagers are usually a challenging group to teach because of several factors (Scrivener 2005): they change physically, which can lead to insecurities about how they appear and are perceived. Also, their emotions change, so they may become unconfident; their motivation to learn can drop; their interests switch quickly, therefore, they get bored easily; the selected activities may be rejected for various reasons (romantic feelings in class, learners are forced to do something they do not want to, etc.). The advantage, on the contrary, is that teenagers, as well as adults, have the ability to utilize more sophisticated learning strategies and cognitive skills, which can enhance the learning process. For example, when teaching a grammatical structure that is not present in the first language of the learners, an ability to employ abstract thinking is helpful, as is their prior language learning experience. Additionally, their advanced skills in technologies and

social networks may be supportive – it can liven up the classes as well as enrich the presented grammar material (Richards 2015).

The previous language learning experience of the learners is the most beneficial: in Czech schools, the Present Perfect is traditionally presented in the 7th or 8th form. According to the state's teaching strategy, learners start learning a foreign language in the 3rd form (some of them as early as the 1st year of compulsory education), so when faced with sophisticated grammar structures, they have already been learning English (or another language) for 4 to 6 years. When learners encounter the Present Perfect, they already have a basic command of the English tense system and they are familiar with some of the simple and progressive tenses (Present Simple and Progressive, Past Simple and sometimes Past Progressive).

Just like the outcomes and objectives of every subject in a Czech school, both outcomes and objectives for English are embedded in the Czech Framework Education Programme as well. The following subsection focuses on the wording of the outcomes and objectives for English in the Czech and European curricular documents and the presence of grammar knowledge requirements in them.

## 3.1 The Presence of the Present Perfect in the Czech Framework Education Programme and the Common European Framework of Reference.

The Czech Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education (RVP ZV = Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání) defines standards for learners at the end of the 5th form (which is the final year of the first stage of compulsory education) and 9th form (the final year of compulsory education). RVP ZV mentions the requirements of grammatical knowledge in this manner:

- A learner at the end of the 5th form can use basic grammatical structures and sentences which were acquired lexically (mistakes can be tolerated if the conveyed message is comprehensible).[1]

[1] základní gramatické struktury a typy vět, jsou-li součástí pamětně osvojeného repertoáru (jsou tolerovány elementární chyby, které nenarušují smysl sdělení a porozumění).

- A learner at the end of the 9th form expands on using grammatical structures to realize her/his purpose of communication (mistakes can be tolerated if the conveyed message is comprehensible).[2]

(Translated from RVP ZV 2021: 26, 28)

As seen above, RVP ZV does not mention any particular grammatical structures that learners are required to learn.

Also, RVP ZV (p. 18) states that learners finishing compulsory education should reach A2 level according to CEFR and it describes outputs in each individual skill. A deeper investigation of the outputs reveals that knowledge of various tenses may help learners with level-appropriate language production. Namely, a relevant (for our purposes) aim of speaking is described as follows:

- A learner can narrate a simple story or event; can describe people, places, and things from his/her own personal life.[3]

The aim of the written production is similar:

- A learner can write simple texts about her/himself, family, school, free-time activities, and other acquired topics.[4]

(Translated from RVP ZV 2021: 27)

Betáková and Dvořák (2021) point out that if we want to find any language function which requires describing the past (therefore using the PP or the PS), we must examine detailed level descriptors of the productive skills that are expected to be mastered by the end of compulsory education. The descriptors for oral production include the following:

[2] rozvíjení používání gramatických jevů k realizaci komunikačního záměru žáka (jsou tolerovány elementární chyby, které nenarušují smysl sdělení a porozumění).
[3] Žák vypráví jednoduchý příběh či událost; popíše osoby, místa a věci ze svého každodenního života.
[4] Žák napíše jednoduché texty týkající se jeho samotného, rodiny, školy, volného času a dalších osvojovaných témat.

- The learner narrates a simple story as a sequence of individual events using sentences in sequence or connected by e.g., conjunctions and, but, or, because and the adverbs first, then, finally.[5]
- The learner describes the event using sentences in sequence or connected, for e.g., the conjunctions and, but, or, because and the adverbs first, then, finally.[6]

And descriptors for written production:

- The learner writes a simple story as a sequence of individual events using sentences in sequence or connected, for e.g., conjunctions and, but, or, because and adverbs first, then, finally.[7]
- The learner describes the event using sentences in sequence or connected, for e.g., the conjunctions and, but, or, because and the adverbs first, then, finally.[8]

(Translated from https://digifolio.rvp.cz/view/view.php?id=10588)

Nevertheless, in RVP ZV, there is no concrete reference to the Present Perfect. As mentioned above, there is a hypothetical need to use the Present Perfect when narrating a story. On the other hand, when Parrot (2010) describes the differences between the PP and the PS, he states that using the Past Simple is preferred in telling stories.

The real need for the correct use of the Present Perfect is found in the curriculum document for grammar schools, which sets the outcomes at B2 level. Students are required to use grammatical structures accurately and correctly. In addition, a more detailed description of past, present and future is required which in practice requires mastery of more than one past, present, and future tenses (Betáková and Dvořák 2021).

[5] Žák vypráví jednoduchý příběh jako sled jednotlivých událostí za použití vět řazených za sebou nebo propojených např. spojkami a, ale, nebo, protože a příslovci nejdříve, potom, nakonec.
[6] Žák popíše událost za použití vět řazených za sebou nebo propojených např. spojkami a, ale, nebo, protože a příslovci nejdříve, potom, nakonec.
[7] Žák napíše jednoduchý příběh jako sled jednotlivých událostí za použití vět řazených za sebou nebo propojených např. spojkami a, ale, nebo, protože a příslovci nejdříve, potom, nakonec.
[8] Žák popíše událost za použití vět řazených za sebou nebo propojených např. spojkami a, ale, nebo, protože a příslovci nejdříve, potom, nakonec.

According to the RVP ZV, the learner's knowledge by the end of compulsory education is at A2 level according to CEFR. Let us now look at what specific outcomes at this level the CEFR presents and whether it explicitly requires the knowledge of the Present Perfect to master them.

Based on CEFR's global scale (p. 24), the A2 level learner is a basic user who

> *can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.*

The CEFR also provides a more detailed description of the milestones for each language skill (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and gives a full analysis of the individual linguistic competences that help learners reach the expected level in each language skill. The output of the grammatical competence is relevant to this thesis. A learner "uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes – for example tends to mix up tenses and forget to mark agreement; nevertheless, it is usually clear what he/she is trying to say." (p. 114)

We agree with Betáková and Dvořák (2021) that the selected critical issue of the curriculum is not explicitly identified anywhere as necessary for the achievement of A2 level, nor is its mastery crucial to meet the teaching objectives set by the RVP ZV. This is probably the reason why the Present Perfect tense is perceived as problematic when trying to reach A2 level – it is not easy for teachers to teach in addition to being too challenging for some learners.

Betáková and Dvořák (2021) state that the very general goals of education defined in the RVP ZV call for revision, since the syllabi of the textbooks recommended by the MŠMT (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic) for teaching at the Lower Secondary school require mastery of the Present Perfect. Schools draw up their curricula according to the syllabi of textbooks available on the market – which include the

PP, and this often results in problems in the learning of the Present Perfect as well as in the teaching of this tense.

To conclude this sub-chapter, it bears mentioning that the aim of this paper is not only to reveal the causes of the critical issue but also to provide instructions on how to teach it, so we will progress fluidly to the next chapter which addresses how to teach grammar in general and specifically, the Present Perfect tense.

## 3.2 Teaching Grammar Methods

According to Richards (2015: 279-280), current trends in the teaching of grammar can be divided into two main approaches. The first can be characterized as *"grammar first"* i.e., a deductive approach, the second as *"grammar last"* i.e., an inductive approach. He provides a further explanation of both: "In an inductive approach, students are encouraged to 'discover' the rules themselves, based on the input presented to them. In a deductive approach, the rules are given to the students, along with language exemplifying them."

This supports Thornbury (1999: 29): "a deductive approach starts with the presentation of a rule and is followed by examples in which the rule is applied; an inductive approach starts with some examples from which a rule is inferred".

In order to be able to analyse the presentation of the Present Perfect in the textbooks listed in the empirical section, it is necessary to briefly introduce the methods of teaching grammar.

### 3.2.1 The Deductive Approach

As has already been mentioned, the deductive approach is rule-driven and Thornbury (1999) adds, it is traditionally associated with Grammar-Translation Method. He also points out that teaching through the deductive method does not necessarily have to be based on translation.

According to Thornbury (1999), the grammar presented through the deductive method is rarely as well retained as grammar presented through demonstrations. This

approach also detracts from the teacher's ability to focus on learner-oriented teaching and inclines to a teacher-oriented classroom.

As Ur states (2012: 81), "the deductive process is more common in both textbooks and classroom teaching. However, if the students can work out the rule themselves, then they are more likely to remember it." Therefore, the next subsection deals with the inductive approach in greater detail, as it is a method that is applicable to the teaching of the Present Perfect.

### 3.2.2 The Inductive Approach

The inductive approach is suggested by CEFR as a suitable one for learners when learning grammar, as it effectively develops their grammatical competence, which is defined as "the ability to understand and express meaning by producing and recognising well-formed phrases and sentences in accordance with these principles (as opposed to memorising and reproducing them as fixed formulae)." (p. 112-113)

According to CEFR (p. 152), learners may (be expected/required to) develop their grammatical competence:

a) inductively, by exposure to new grammatical material in authentic texts as encountered;
b) inductively, by incorporating new grammatical elements, categories, classes, structures, rules, etc. in texts specially composed to demonstrate their form, function and meaning;
c) as b), but followed by explanations and formal exercises;
d) by the presentation of formal paradigms, tables of forms, etc. followed by explanations using an appropriate metalanguage in L2 or L1 and formal exercises; e) by elicitation and, where necessary, reformulation of learners' hypotheses, etc.

What does *'inductively'* mean?

The inductive approach is characterized as a rule-discovery method. It means that learners encounter the target structure through examples from which they derive the rule.

This method has a higher efficacy because learners integrate the newly discovered structures in a network of those they have already mastered. It also requires the learners to be engaged and active in the process of acquiring and discovering the new language, which leads to increased motivation and participation in the class as opposed to the inductive method in which a learner is a passive recipient of the rules (Thornbury 1999).

Scrivener (2005) suggests that learning rules by heart is not 'learning grammar', reciting rules is not 'understanding grammar', and doing exercises is not necessarily 'learning grammar' as well. Learning should occur when learners use the language themselves. He adds, that to gain the grammar and be able to apply it to learners' productive skills, they need to:

- have exposure to the language;
- notice and understand items being used;
- try using language themselves in 'safe' practice ways and in more demanding contexts;
- they need to remember the thing they have learnt.

Being exposed to the language means to have a lot of input. The input should be comprehensible and a little above a learner's level. In this manner, learners are still exposed to a new language, but the texts (either written or spoken) are not too challenging and do not prevent learners from understanding (Ur 2012, Scrivener 2005).

The texts, to serve their purpose, have to contain sufficient examples of the targeted grammatical structure, but there is no need to create artificial texts. The adjusted and well-chosen authentic texts provide adequate exposure to the structure and are suitable for learners to isolate the structure that is being taught (Ur 2012, Scrivener 2005). Scrivener (2010) adds that it is crucial to provide a good context. This guarantees a natural use of the target language. From a good text with a comprehensible context, a teacher can elicit knowledge of the taught structure without unnecessary in-class explanation.

To understand the new grammatical structure means to understand its form, meaning and use. When teaching form, it is important to teach both the oral and written forms of the structure. Ur (2012: 80) provides the reason why: "… students might need to

use the grammar in both speech and writing, but also because students vary in their learning styles and preferences." She adds that some learners have visual memory and some learn better when they listen. Another above-mentioned aspect of the grammar structure is the meaning. Ur (2012) emphasizes teaching both form and meaning, but how much time one devotes to each is the teacher's choice. The teacher should take into consideration the difficulty and complexity of the form and meaning, especially the presence of the grammatical structure in the learners' mother tongues (L1). Those structures that do not exist in learners' L1 might demand careful explanation and thorough focus on the meaning.

What then is the ideal way to present grammar?

Ur (2012) adds several practical principles that teachers might find useful in the classroom. Apart from presenting the grammar in a suitable context, presenting both the written and oral forms of the structure, and teaching both form and meaning, she suggests implementing the following:

- Teachers should decide on using grammatical terminology according to the learners' level. When teaching younger learners, the terminology might be redundant.
- Teachers should explain grammar in the learners' L1, except when teaching advanced classes as using only English in beginner and elementary classes may be time consuming and teachers may lack time for practice.
- If it is possible, compare the grammatical structure with learners' L1. Pointing out similarities and differences helps to prevent mistakes. She provides an example (Ur 2012: 80-81): "… you might point out that the use of the present perfect in a sentence with 'for' or 'since' (I have worked here for six years) is likely to correspond to the use of the present tense in the students' L1."
- Providing an explicit rule may be useful, but the teacher has to find a balance between accuracy and simplicity. The rule has to cover the vast majority of instances that learners may encounter.

The next step in mastering a grammar structure is to practice it in various types of exercises. In teaching grammar, it is usual to progress from exercises that do not allow the learners to use the newly discovered grammar freely and in a different context, i.e., closed-exercises, to exercises that provide the learners with the opportunity to use the newly acquired grammar in a different context and without limitations, i.e., open-exercises (Ur 2012).

Closed-exercises are more controlled and focus on accuracy, whereas open-exercises encourage learners and enhance their ability to express their own ideas and therefore concentrate on fluency and the communicative aim of the conversation. According to Scrivener (2005) learners start with restricted output activities which focus on accuracy and on the limited options available for communication and use of language. These might include substitution drills, transformation drills or drills in which the learners give real information. These exercises are followed by ones oriented towards an authentic output, in which the learners implement the new grammatical structure in language that is already known and use them together in communicative activities (e.g. dialogues, free sentence composition, structure-based and free discourse composition) (Ur 2012).

This sub-chapter is concluded by the organization of grammar teaching by Ur (1988). She presents a general framework which is applicable to most grammatical structures:

1) **Presentation**

   This is a beginning stage, when learners are presented with a text which contains several instances of the presented grammatical structure. During this stage, learners perceive the form and the meaning of the structure and take it to the short-term memory.

2) **Isolation and explanation**

   The second stage focuses on the grammatical structure itself. The main goal of isolation and explanation is to extract form, meaning and usage from the text.

**3) Practice**

The practicing stage aims to transport the grammatical structure from short-term to long-term memory, which is aided by well-chosen exercises. When practicing more complex structures, it is advisable to devote a few exercises to the acquisition of the form before moving on to its meaning.

Examples of these exercises include:

- *Slot-fillers* (the learner inserts the appropriate item)
- *Transformation* (the learner changes the structure in some prescribed manner)

Extension exercises that still focus on the production or perception of form but already contain meaning (however, still not anchored in discourse) are as follows:

- *Translation*
- *Slot-filling,* or *multiple-choice* based on meaning
- *Slot-filling,* with choice of answers not provided
- *Matching*

The third group of exercises focuses on production or comprehension of meanings. These exercises are more attractive to learners as they are open-ended, and their aim is beyond the coursebook (they focus on communication). These include information- or opinion-gap communication techniques and free production.

The mentioned order is the most common one but does not have to be necessarily followed.

**4) Test**

The purpose of testing is to provide feedback to both the learner and the teacher.

Ur (1988) states that this framework is applicable to most of the grammatical structures and is followed by many student's books, therefore the next sub-chapter investigates the approaches and principles of teaching the Present Perfect.

## 3.3 Teaching the Present Perfect Tense

Teaching the Present Perfect tense is a challenging issue. The authors of the methodologies are aware that this grammatical structure is absent in many languages, so they not only describe the methodology of how to present the PP, but also how to deal with the difficulties that arise when presenting this phenomenon.

Parrot (2010) points out that the difficulty of the Present Perfect tense lies largely in the fact that learners cannot perceive the PP as a tense that sometimes expresses the past and sometimes, the present. This is mainly because many languages do not have such a grammatical tense or, if they do, it expresses something else. Slavic languages lack this tense in language and Czech is no exception, therefore all the presented pitfalls in the methodologies are relevant for Czech learners as well.

Parrot (2010) suggests two areas that appear to be problematic for learners. The first is comprehension. This happens particularly in questions with the phrase *How long...?* or in sentences containing a phrase beginning with *for*. Learners confuse the meaning of the present perfect and the present tense. Compare these examples:

*How long **have you been** (waiting) here for?* *How long **are you** (waiting) here for?*

*I **have been** (staying) here for a week.* *I **am** (staying) here for a week.*

The sentences on the left imply the meaning 'until now', whereas the ones on the right express 'the length of time in total'.

This phenomenon also occurs when learners speak or write. Parrot (2010: 243) adds:

> *This problem can lead to serious misunderstanding when the present continuous is used with 'How long …?' or 'for …' in place of the present perfect continuous, because the sentences may be structurally correct, but express something the learner doesn't intend.*

Another struggle that can arise from the use of the above-mentioned phrases in combination with the Present Perfect is that learners associate the phrases with the exclusive collocation with the Present Perfect tense and use the PP even in the situations for which a different verb tense is appropriate (Parrot 2010: 244).

Another obstacle that Parrot (2010) mentions is irregular verb forms. Learners confuse the forms for past and past participles or choose the regular form where they are supposed to use the irregular one.

Not only is the mixing of forms of the past and the past participle a problem, but also the mixing of the respective tenses. Parrot (2010: 244-245) introduces choosing the Simple Past instead of the Present Perfect simple as the most noticeable mistake:

**Has she been there last year?*

**When I was 9 we have moved to a large house.*

Scrivener (2010: 165) also notices this problem. He challenges the meaning of the Present Perfect as *'a connection to now'*. He states that the connection with the present is not so clear. This instruction, which learners often receive from their teachers, is hard to apply in practice. He prefers to choose the differentiation between the PP and the PS rather based on how 'live' the speaker wants to present the situation. He adds that we use the PP in situations that appear live and recent (*'Kimanji's won the election'*), in which we want to emphasize that it is news or a current situation. On the other hand, the PS in the same sentence simply states the facts (cf. *'Kimanji won the election')*.

Therefore, Thornbury (1999) suggests showing the characteristics of the Present Perfect and the Past Simple through minimal pairs. He presents identical sentences, which differ only in the tense, but convey a diametrically different meaning. The contrast between the sentences helps learners to grasp the difference more clearly. It is a method for showing the differences, and not for presenting the Present Perfect tense, because he presupposes the knowledge of both structures. The example minimal pairs can be seen below:

*1a) I've seen all of Jim Jarmusch's films.*
*1b) I saw his latest film last month.*

*2a) Since 1990, she's worked for three different newspapers.*
*2b) She worked for The Observer in 1996.*

*3a) Have you ever been to Peru?*

*3b) When were you in Peru?*

He also adds that there is a danger of misunderstanding or developing wrong hypotheses due to the lack of context. Thus, through the minimal pairs, it is convenient to teach adults or learners who have already developed an analytical approach to language learning. Moreover, younger learners may find this approach too grammar-oriented (Thornbury 1999).

In summary, grasping the correct meaning and use of the Present Perfect causes problems to the learners and even after mastering it passively, learners tend to make mistakes. It takes time and thorough productive practice of this structure (both speaking and writing) before learners acquire and incorporate it into their active knowledge. To facilitate the acquisition, it is advisable to teach the different meanings of the Present Perfect separately (cf. Scrivener 2010, Parrot 2010).

## Empirical Section

The empirical section of the thesis is devoted to the conducted action research. In the fourth chapter, we discuss the action research, its already conducted phases, as well as those elaborated in the following chapters of this thesis. We apply the individual phases to a particular faculty project, which we also characterize in the first chapter of the empirical section. We describe the methodology that was used and discuss the data analysis and the results that emerge from it. The results of the analysis form the basis of the fifth chapter which proposes solutions to the most common problems that make the Present Perfect critical in the curriculum. It draws on the findings developed in the theoretical section and also incorporates the suggestions for solutions from the teachers' questionnaires and interviews. The last chapter presents a model lesson that integrates the findings and insights from the research so far. It is followed by the last phase of action research, which is its testing in practice and subsequent feedback.

# 4 The Critical Issues in English – Action Research

The action research was carried out as part of a project at the Faculty of Education at the University of South Bohemia. The faculty project was implemented under *IPUP KA7 – Inovace přípravy učitelů pro praxi, klíčová aktivita „akční výzkum", (reg. č.: CZ.02.3.68/0.0/0.0/16_038/0006960)* in the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21. The results of the first stage of the action research form the basis of the empirical section of this thesis.

In order to be able to elaborate on the empirical section, it is necessary at this point to discuss the theory of action research. This will provide the basis for the specific steps of our action research, which is the essence of the empirical section.

## 4.1 Action Research

Let us consider action research and its phases. This will provide us with insights which will help us understand the process that was applied in the faculty project. This is followed by the research of this thesis. Action research is classified as applied research in the social sciences. According to Hendl (2005), it emerged as a response to conventional academic research, which is 'enclosed', and its results have only a limited impact on practice. The objects of inquiry in action research are topics that are identified from practice and further addressed in action research. The essence of action research is not the method but the subsequent intervention and implementation of the proposed actions in practice. Therefore, action research in pedagogical settings allows us to form a comprehensive and detailed picture of the situation, to reflect on pedagogical practice and to improve it (Nezvalová 2002). Action research is also characterised by the fact that the researchers and the participants involved stand on the same level, cooperate, and are partners with each other. In contrast with conventional academic research, in action research, practice and research are on the same level (Hendl 2005). According to Hendl and Remr (2017), action research is valuable because both the researcher and the researched participate in change. All involved are encouraged to work together to find solutions to the situation, as was the case in our action research carried out at the faculty, and later in this thesis, in collaboration with the teachers from practical classroom experience.

Action research is always a long-term and cyclical process that consists of several phases. Nezvalová (2002) suggests the following steps of action research:

- Collect data that are used to diagnose the situation.
- Analyse the data.
- Distribute the data and define the changes that will follow.
- Attempt new approaches.
- Observe how others respond.
- Collect data to diagnose the situation.

Looking at the process of the faculty research, this workflow was followed as well. Some of the steps were realized during the faculty research and others follow in the theoretical section of this thesis. We focus on them specifically:

1. The first step was the collection of data through a questionnaire surveying teachers of different school levels. This enabled us to get a picture of the current situation of English teaching in schools. Based on the teachers' responses about the issues they face, we know that the situation is not ideal and critical issues in the curriculum do occur.

2. The second step was to analyse the responses from the questionnaire survey. After the analysis, we identified a critical subskill – grammar – as one of the critical issues in the English curriculum. After further analysis, we revealed the Present Perfect tense as the most critical issue within grammar.

3. In the next stage, we set the analysis of this critical issue (the Present Perfect tense) as a research problem. In order to attempt new approaches to this problem, we had to set up a phase of mapping the theoretical background and existing approaches to teaching the PP. At the same time, we investigated the cause of the criticality of this grammatical tense. This was the focus of the theoretical section of this thesis.

These three steps are followed by others, which are the subject of the empirical section:

4. As the fourth step, we chose to confront the experts' views presented in the theory with the teachers' suggestions for solutions. From the questionnaires, we selected the four most common problems that teachers find most difficult in teaching the Present Perfect and we sought to propose solutions for them, based on the theoretical background of English methodologists.

5. The penultimate step of the empirical section is a lesson proposal that integrates the theory from the experts, the findings from the teachers' questionnaires and the teachers' experiences shared with us during the interviews.

6. In the last step, we analyse and reflect on the realized proposal lesson. We focus on whether we were able to meet the objectives of the lesson, whether our

proposal is realistic and can be adopted in the curriculum, and most importantly, whether it has the potential to eliminate this critical issue from the curriculum.

## 4.2 The Critical Issues – The Research at the University of South Bohemia

The Faculty Project on critical issues was implemented at the Faculty of Education at the University of South Bohemia from 2019 to 2021. The project was inspired by previous research in the Czech Republic, which investigated critical issues mainly in mathematics and science. The innovative aspect of our project is that it explores other educational areas, including those in humanities (e.g., the English language, German language, Psychology, etc.), in which research has not been conducted so far within the Czech scientific landscape. In action research we involved teachers from primary, secondary and university schools in the form of a questionnaire survey or interviews in which they identified what they found difficult or challenging in their teaching experience. The difficulty of a critical issue was assessed in four areas: the syllabus, the learners, the teacher and the teaching objectives. However, the questionnaire was designed only for teachers and their perspectives on teaching. This research provides an opportunity, for example, for further research that explores critical issues from the learners' perspective.

One of the areas investigated was the teaching of the English language at lower secondary schools conducted at the English Department of the Faculty of Education. Data collection began in the autumn of 2019 with the distribution of questionnaires among schoolteachers. Subsequently, at the beginning of 2020, the data was processed and analysed in order to be presented later at an online conference in December 2020. Thereafter, in 2021, the outcomes were published in the collective monograph about the critical issues.

The action research was interfered with by the then epidemiological situation caused by the coronavirus, therefore the last phases of the first cycle of action research could not be realised. In this thesis, we therefore devote ourselves to the design of the solution of the critical issue and the testing of the proposed in praxis. However, before we move on to the action plan proposal, we look in greater detail at the collection and analysis of the

questionnaire survey data that provided the springboard for the empirical section of this thesis.

### 4.2.1 Methodology

As already mentioned, the research on critical issues in the English Department was conducted in the form of a questionnaire survey. The aim of the questionnaires was to map the current situation at the schools. One of the sub-objectives was to reveal whether the English secondary school curriculum contains critical issues and if so, what kind of issues they are. Another sub-objective was to find out detailed information about the critical issues. The questionnaire for English can be found in Appendix 1, but it is only in the Czech language, therefore we describe it in detail.

The questionnaire was structured as follows:

- In the first part, teachers provided professional data about themselves. They stated what their degree was and the length of their teaching experience. We also asked about the subjects they taught at the time and how long they had been teaching them. The next step involved teachers deciding which subject they would assess critical issues in and at what level they taught the subject at the time.

- The second part of the questionnaire was unique to foreign languages. It focuses on the assessment of skills and subskills. Teachers rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 whether they considered the skills or subskills to be completely problem-free (1) to very problematic (5). The ratings were made for all receptive (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). Similarly, for the subskills, they evaluated the difficulty of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling.

- The third part of the questionnaire focuses on specific critical issues. Teachers could address up to three critical issues in greater detail. First, they identified a critical issue and then answered why the issue was listed as critical from several perspectives – subject matter, learner, teacher and learning objectives. The teachers also had the opportunity to add any other perspective. This was

followed by questions about how teachers overcome the issue and what suggestions they have for overcoming the issue. Lastly, they also ranked the issues' importance and popularity amongst themselves and their learners.

The questionnaires were distributed to approximately 40 teachers. We received 21 completed questionnaires, which formed the basis of our data analysis.

### 4.2.2 Data Analysis and Results

Within our data analysis set, there were 18 women and 3 men. 12 participants taught at the lower secondary school, 4 taught at the primary school as well as at the lower secondary school, and 5 participants taught at the lower level of grammar school.

As this thesis is concerned with grammar, we are interested in answers relating to subskills, grammar in particular. Grammar was chosen for this thesis because of its clear prevalence among all the subskills. To illustrate that teachers mentioned teaching of topics as difficult twice, in three instances they complained about the teaching of pronunciation, vocabulary was mentioned four times, while grammar far outnumbered the others – it was mentioned 35 times.

Of the 35 occurrences of grammar, teachers most often mentioned verb tenses (22 times) in various forms (either describing the tenses used to express a particular time in general or mentioning a specific tense), which means that approximately two-thirds of the grammar problems were related to verb tenses. Teachers mentioned the strong dissimilarity of the Czech and English verb systems as the reason why this is the case. When we take a closer look at the verb tenses listed in the teachers' responses, we observe that the Present Perfect is the tense most frequently mentioned. It was identified as a particularly critical issue by 5 teachers. Moreover, it was mentioned twice in connection with past tenses. In sum, this critical issue represents approximately 30% of occurrences among verb tenses and 20% of all grammar occurrences. These numbers convince us that the Present Perfect is indeed a problematic issue in the curriculum and it is desirable to seek solutions to eliminate or at least minimize its problematic status.

Why is the Present Perfect critical? The teachers also contributed to answering this question. As mentioned, they listed the reasons in terms of the subject matter, the

learners, the teacher, and the learning objectives. There was unanimous agreement that understanding the Present Perfect tense is difficult for learners mainly because it does not exist in Czech. Therefore, it is incomprehensible to learners, and as a result, they often do not use it even after they have practised and tested the material. Teachers describe that Czech and English do not correspond in this area, which is why learners avoid the PP and use the Past Simple instead. At the same time, previously learned, more complex linguistic knowledge is needed to form the PP correctly, which learners often either don't possess or if they do, they fail to apply it. One teacher described that from his perspective, the difficulty of the issue is because it requires more preparation on his part as it is difficult to find enough appropriate examples and activities that the learners can understand (because of their limited vocabulary). Time is also an issue in terms of the amount of time available to teach the PP. Teachers also see it as crucial that in the classroom, not enough time is allocated for this complex grammar. They explain that the Present Perfect is a demanding and complex structure to explain, and the introduction of its form and meaning is time consuming with not enough time left for sufficient practice. Another reason, which can cause criticality of this issue, is rather general – teachers describe learners as lacking motivation to learn grammar, because it is not attractive for them to study. This can also be seen in the results in the last part of the questionnaire in which teachers rated the popularity of the critical issue. From the teachers' point of view, both grammar in general and the Present Perfect tense in particular receive an average score. On the Likert scale, it is roughly in the midpoint, so it is neither popular nor unpopular. In contrast, among learners, teachers rate the PP as rather unpopular, and they polarize even more strongly towards almost completely unpopular for grammar in general. However, the data also show that both learners and teachers are aware that knowledge of grammar in a foreign language is essential and therefore lean towards it being important on the scale.

For the next phases of the action research, which suggest how to overcome this critical issue, it is crucial to realize, on the part of both learners and teachers, that grammar is an important building block in foreign language acquisition. This fact can be beneficial to us in terms of motivating both learners and teachers to overcome this critical issue. Suggestions on how to overcome the critical issue of the Present Perfect will be discussed in the next stages of the action research, i.e. in the following chapters of this thesis.

# 5 Proposal of a Solution to the Research Problem

After the identification of the research problem and providing an adequate theoretical background, the next step of the action research is finding solutions to the research problem based on the findings of experts and teachers' tips from the questionnaire survey. In addition, we supplemented the questionnaires with interviews with several teachers during the research. Experiences from teaching were shared by an experienced teacher from J. Š. Baar elementary school in České Budějovice and teachers from Gymnázium Písek, where a trial lesson was subsequently conducted. Our findings show that the PP is critical for several reasons. From the teachers' responses, we have extracted below the four most common aspects of the critical issue of teaching the PP for which they sought solutions:

1. Teachers find it hard to explain the Present Perfect and they run out of ideas on how to clarify its complex meaning.
2. Teachers lack time for explanation and practice when teaching the Present Perfect.
3. Learners easily confuse the use of the Past Simple and the Present Perfect due to the absence of the latter in the Czech tense system.
4. Grammar is not attractive to the learners, and they are not interested in it.

When designing solutions, it is important to remember that these aspects combine and interconnect to form a single package and therefore it is not possible to provide solutions to individual problems without taking the others into account. The responses of the teachers reveal that the ways in which these points are overcome are also intertwined. Therefore, taking these factors into account, we provide a complex solution proposal for teaching practice.

The questionnaires revealed that teachers often struggled with not knowing how to explain the Present Perfect and therefore might tend to adopt outdated academic models that had been introduced to them in their own school years. Thus, instead of an explanation, learners often receive only a definition ('the present perfect is something that began in the past and continues into the present') which, as we investigated in Chapter 2, does not correspond to theoretical knowledge or linguistic reality and is therefore of no further use to the learners. This is supported by Parrot (2010) who warns teachers against

using the rules of thumb. Learners welcome these rules, but teachers have to be cautious because the rules often cannot be applied to the majority of the instances of the grammatical structure. The way to avoid using the above-mentioned definition as a rule of thumb is to teach the Present Perfect inductively. As stated in Chapter 3, the inductive approach to grammar helps us avoid using theoretical definitions but instead teach through examples. Teaching grammar inductively is also suggested by CEFR. According to CEFR, the inductive approach enhances the learners' ability to understand and express the meaning of the grammar. It supports grammatical competence, which is an important step in achieving communicative competence (to be able to speak and to be understood). Some teachers indirectly mentioned this method in their questionnaires in response to the question *"How do you overcome this issue?"*. Teachers responded that they tried to find as many example sentences and situations for the grammatical tense as possible, which helped learners understand the meaning of the Present Perfect. During the interview, another teacher also mentioned using authentic texts and songs for presenting the structure. To sum up, the interviewed teachers are in agreement with the experts, that for fully grasping the meaning of the tense, there has to be enough comprehensible input.

We can see from the above that teachers are looking for phrases and situations that would make it easier for learners to understand the Present Perfect. This is the key to an inductive approach as well as to solving two problems that arose from the research – how to clarify the PP's complex meaning and how to avoid learners' doubts about when to use the Present Perfect and when the Past Simple.

Instead of risking overwhelming learners with all the meanings of the Present Perfect tense, it is advisable to present different meanings and contexts separately. Experts suggest starting with the *'experiences'* meaning (cf. Scrivener 2010, Ur 1988). It is very easy to grasp the structure of the question *'Have you ever …?'* which is a tool for asking about someone's experiences and represents one of the functions of the Present Perfect. Later, it is useful to teach the PP in contrast with the Past Simple in accordance with the theoretical background (indefinite vs. definite past) (cf. Parrot 2010, Scrivener 2010). If learners are confronted with the Present Perfect as a contrast to the Past Simple, it is easier for them to distinguish between specific situations in which to use the PP and those in

which to use the PS. It bears mentioning here that according to RVP and CEFR, it is not necessary at A2 level to ask learners to express statements about other people or to describe difficult situations in the Present Perfect. Let us recall that the descriptors for productive skills at this level only require learners to express statements about themselves and simple topics related to them. One teacher supports this by reporting that she engages learners in activities in which they use the Present Perfect in the most frequently used phrases and sentences, especially within the spoken word.

Supporting fluid communication is crucial not only in teaching the Present Perfect, but also when teaching any grammatical structure. Learners should be made aware that while learning grammar itself is not the ultimate goal when learning a foreign language, it is a vital tool to express what one wants to convey in practical communication. Thus, grammar is an essential and valuable aid to gaining communicative proficiency in the foreign language. Unfortunately, teachers often described that for overcoming the problems connected with the Present Perfect, they relied on exercise drill exercises in the classroom. At the same time, some of them added that they were seeking more engaging ways to teach the Present Perfect.

When teaching the Present Perfect, it is especially necessary to stress its importance in the English tense system. From the teachers' experience, the fact that this verb tense does not exist in the Czech language is determined by learners to be unimportant and they do not incorporate it in their active knowledge. We agree with Ur (2012) and Scrivener (2005) that for demonstrating how frequent and important the Present Perfect tense is, authentic materials are useful in the presentation of the structure. By listening to pop songs or watching popular reality shows and TV series, learners will record the use of the Present Perfect several times while getting an idea of the context in which to use this tense. As opposed to dry, unattractive grammar, the use of engaging, authentic materials is crucial when trying to encourage learners to actively use the Present Perfect. The textbooks teachers use in their classrooms respect the inductive presentation of the different meanings of the Present Perfect tense. Nevertheless, the interviewed teachers found them outdated and from their experience, the texts and recordings presented in them were not attractive to learners. Therefore, teachers found authentic material

elsewhere, though they often found that the vocabulary present in authentic texts was too difficult which made the texts incomprehensible.

The process of acquiring complex grammatical structures can be facilitated by the fact that by the time they first encounter the Present Perfect, learners are already capable of analytical and abstract thinking due to their ages. In addition, the acquisition process is facilitated by the fact that learners have already completed, on average, 3-4 years of English language study and at this stage, they should already have sufficient linguistic experience to master at least the basic use of the Present Perfect (see Chapter 3. p. 18-19).

Previous language experience, as well as the ability to use advanced cognitive skills, can also save time in the classroom. The insufficient amount of time that is allocated to the acquisition of the Present Perfect is one of the most frequently mentioned answers by teachers both in the questionnaires and during interviews. Teachers suggested more time allocation as one of the changes they would like to see in their lessons as this would make it easier for them to remove a critical issue. Based on my experience at schools and the interviews with the teachers, one of the time-saving strategies commonly used by teachers is preparing learners for the learning of the PP's structure in previous grades. In order to elicit the correct form of the PP, it is important for learners to know the past participle forms of irregular verbs. The experts describe that while the form of the PP is relatively easy to grasp, acquiring knowledge of the extensive list of irregular past participles at the time of teaching the Present Perfect can be very time consuming. These verbs are encountered earlier in the Past Simple and are usually learnt by heart. At that point, teachers work with learners not only on the verb forms for the Past Simple but also for the Present Perfect, which ensures they have more time for adequate practice when teaching the PP. We have not found this advice in any of the methodology books, nevertheless it appears to be working quite well in practice.

Other strategies that teachers find useful when trying to overcome this critical issue is incorporating English in learners' everyday lives. They suggest that extracurricular activities like watching films or series, listening to music, playing computer games in English, or talking to native speakers enhance the learning process enormously. It supports

the fact that grammar should not be the teaching objective of a lesson, but its knowledge should be required by learners out of their internal motivation, because they should be aware that grammar enables them to be better understood and develops their ability to communicate clearly (Ur 2012). In accordance with the knowledge, we have extracted from the RVP ZV and CEFR for A2 level, a suggestion by one teacher who points out that it is not necessary to rely on the accuracy of the grammar, but it is important to promote communicativeness, fluency, and the desire to express oneself. This teacher is absolutely right, because let us draw attention once more to the RVP ZV, as well as CEFR descriptors for A2 level. Both these documents state that the A2 level learner makes mistakes or even mixes up tenses.

In conclusion, we would like to summarize the experts' recommendations and teachers' experiences. These emerging outcomes will be the basis for the creation of a model lesson presented in the next chapter.

- Present the Present Perfect inductively.
- Present the different meanings of the PP separately.
- Use authentic and attractive materials to present and practice the structure.
- Use grammar of the PP as a tool to develop communicative competence.
- Focus more on fluency and the ability to express oneself rather than on accuracy.

# 6 A Model Lesson Focusing on the Present Perfect Simple in the Meaning of '*Experiences*'

This last chapter focuses on the design of the model lesson and its testing in the classroom. First, we are going to present the activities of the model lesson plan which we are later going to test in practice. The second part of the chapter contains a record of the lesson and its feedback, including comments focusing on the achievement of the set knowledge objectives, and obstacles that had to be overcome. These two steps also represent the final steps of the action research that we discussed in Chapter 4. This is therefore the completion of the first cycle of our action research.

The trial lesson was originally scheduled to take place in 2020, in the faculty research phase. However, the entire process was complicated by the coronavirus situation and related restrictions and the trial lesson was not successfully completed until 2022. The structure and content were initially designed with a teacher at ZŠ J.Š. Baara in České Budějovice but for reasons we have mentioned the venue was later changed to Gymnázium Písek, a grammar school in Písek. In cooperation with an experienced teacher, we consulted and completed the lesson to suit the characteristics of the target group. A minor modification was made to the process - we took into account that the learners had already been taught the past participles of irregular verbs when they had earlier been introduced to the Past Simple; this practice is common in schools as we mentioned in the previous chapter.

We used several sources of scholarly as well as practical classroom knowledge to build the model lesson.

- The outline of the lesson is constructed in accordance with Ur's (1988) design for grammar presentation, a detailed description of the inductive approach which we described in the theoretical section in Chapter 3.2.2.
- Firstly, we respect Scrivener's (2010) recommendation to present the different meanings of the Present Perfect separately. Secondly, this recommendation also emerged from interviews with teachers from the collaborating schools.

The third reason we chose one isolated meaning, namely 'experiences', is that textbooks commonly used in lower secondary school use it as the first contact with the communicative function of Present Perfect. Though each of the mentioned schools uses a different set of textbooks[9], they are consistent in the learners' first contact with the Present Perfect. The fourth and final reason for choosing 'experiences' was that this meaning is easy for learners to grasp and they can relate to the activities used for presentation and practice by talking about themselves. In this manner we also respect the objectives of the RVP ZV and CEFR for A2 level.

- In order to maintain the authenticity and attractiveness of the materials used for the presentation, we decided to design a lesson that mainly does not use materials from the textbook. For inspiration, we referenced different internet portals for ESL teachers[10]. Some of these were used in the design of our model lesson while others served only as inspiration[11].
- The last principle we tried to follow in the design was to focus on the fact that the exercises we chose should support communication and encourage learners to speak and form mini dialogues.

## 6.1 A Model Lesson

Based on the above-mentioned strategies, we are proposing a model lesson, which can serve teachers when they first present the Present Perfect to learners. The proposed lesson focuses on learners' first active contact with the Present Perfect. The emphasis is on the practical use of the newly acquired grammar as well as on the communicative

[9] Project by Hutchinson; English Plus by Wetz and Pye, both published by Oxford University Press
[10] Sources used: https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/grammar-videos/grans-adventures; https://www.teach-this.com/grammar-activities-worksheets/present-perfect-ever; https://en.islcollective.com/english-esl-worksheets/grammar/present-perfect-simple-tense/have-you-ever/81443
[11] The resources for each exercise are located in footnotes on relevant pages.

aspect of the language. In other words, apart from the grammar, learners will practice listening comprehension and speaking.

One lesson of 45 minutes should be sufficient to introduce and practice the target meaning of the Present Perfect. During this lesson, learners will learn the question *'Have you ever...?'* and the affirmative and negative answers *(Yes, I have. No, I haven't)*. They will also elicit and acquire the form of the PP. The objectives of the lesson are therefore:

- The learner asks about the experiences of others.
- The learner responds positively or negatively to a question about his/her own experience.

Equipment and materials needed for the model lesson are an interactive board or a projector, handouts for the learners (Appendix 2) and three pieces of paper for each learner (approximately 5cm x 5cm). The teacher is equipped with a handout with correct answers (Appendix 3).

Before proceeding to the detailed characteristics of the individual activities, we present below an overview of the lesson plan:

**Table 4: Lesson Plan**

| Lesson Plan | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Topic:** | Experiences | **Time:** | 45 minutes |
| **Lesson Objectives:** | | | |
| 1) | The learner asks about the experiences of others. | | |
| 2) | The learner responds positively or negatively to a question about his/her own experience. | | |
| **Skills:** | | **Subskills:** | |
| listening, speaking | | grammar (the Present Perfect interrogative and short answers) | |
| **Equipment and Materials:** | | | |
| an interactive board or a projector<br>a picture of experiences (Appendix 4)<br>handouts (one for each learner) (Appendix 2)<br>three pieces of paper for each learner (approximately 5cm x 5cm) | | | |
| **Resources:** | | | |
| Video *Gran's adventures:* https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/grammar-videos/grans-adventures | | | |
| **Lesson Structure:** | | | |
| **Time:** | **Activity:** | **Details:** | **Materials:** |
| 0:00-0:05 | Lead-in | elicting the topic | Appendix 4 |
| 0:05-0:15 | Presentation | watching and listening to the video<br>understanding the video (T/ F exercise - HO Exercise 1)<br>grammar presentation (HO Exercise 2) | Video<br>Handouts |
| 0:15-0:25 | Isolation | isolating the structure from the transcript (HO Exercise 3) | Handouts |
| | Explanation | deriving the structure and the rules (HO Exercise 4 and Rules) | |
| 0:25-0:42 | Practice | practicing the form of the *Have you ever …?* questions (HO Exercise 5 - part 1) | Handouts |
| | | mini-dialogues - Find who - using the Present Perfect questions and short answers (HO Exercise 5 - part 2) | |
| | | drawing game - guessing the classmates' experiences using the Present Perfect interrogative - developing production and comprehension | three pieces of paper for each learner |
| 0:42-0:45 | Summary | summary of the acquired grammar on the whiteboard (teacher and learners together) | |

### 6.1.1 Lead-in[12]

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher displays pictures[13] that depict experiences (Appendix 4). The pictures show various souvenirs and objects that represent experiences. The teacher elicits answers such as: *the Eiffel Tower, Japan, the pyramids, scuba diving, etc.* by asking: '*What can you see in the pictures?'* The aim of the lead-in is to elicit the topic of the lesson, the teacher asks: *'What do these pictures stand for?'*, expected learners' answers are: *holidays, souvenirs, experiences*.

### 6.1.2 Presentation

Subsequent to the introduction and after the learners have revealed the topic of the lesson, we move on to the presentation of the grammatical structure. The aim of this part of the lesson is to present a question structure *'Have you (ever) ...?'* and short answers *'Yes, I have. No, I haven't.'* through a listening comprehension activity. We emphasize that the presentation part of the lesson cannot be omitted, otherwise the inductive approach would not be followed.

Learners watch a video called *Gran's adventures*[14]. After the first watching, learners answer two questions (see below) whose aim is to ensure, for the teacher as well the learners themselves, that the listening was comprehensible. Also, they provide the information that the learners understood the content and the topic of the video.

1) What are Gran and Kitty doing in the video?
2) What are they talking about?'

Learners then watch the video again. They now focus on more detailed understanding. They are also already encountering the target grammatical structure. However, their relative lack of familiarity with it does not prevent them from

[12] The lead-in activity was inspired by Scrivener (2010: 156).
[13] All used pictures are available for free at: https://pixabay.com/
[14] Video: https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/grammar-videos/grans-adventures
Transcript: https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/sites/kids/files/attachment/grammar-videos-grans-adventures-transcript.pdf

understanding and successfully completing the task. This is mainly possible due to their previous language experience. The exercise in which the learners decide whether a given sentence is true or false can be completed thanks to the fact that they already know the function of the particle 'not' in English or they know the lexical meaning of the presented verbs.

**1) Watch the video and answer[15]:**

| | |
|---|---|
| a) Gran hasn't been to Egypt. | TRUE/FALSE |
| b) John hasn't been to Egypt. | TRUE/FALSE |
| c) Gran hasn't seen the Eiffel Tower. | TRUE/FALSE |
| d) Gran has eaten sushi. | TRUE/FALSE |
| e) Gran has been to Tokyo. | TRUE/FALSE |

The last step of the presentation is listening to the audio track of the video. Learners are provided with a transcript of the recording with gaps. The video is no longer screened so that the learners are not distracted and concentrate only on the audio and text of the video. The learners are filling in the gaps with the target grammatical structure – the Present Perfect interrogative *'Have you (ever) …?'*. This exercise is the last step before isolating the grammatical structure, so it is necessary for the learners to focus their attention on it. The aim is for each learner to notice this structure, and it also helps them better orient themselves in the text during the next step of the lesson – isolation. Learners do not invent the structure but only match the prompts already provided to the text. The given prompts are identical to the target structure that the learners acquire later in the lesson.

Checking for accuracy of the answers for both exercises is done collectively with the teacher.

[15] Exercise adopted from: https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/sites/kids/files/attachment/grammar-videos-grans-adventures-worksheet.pdf

**2) Watch the video again and fill in the gaps[16]:**

| Have you ever eaten | Have you been | Have you seen |
|---|---|---|

GRAN: Kitty, what are you doing?
KITTY: Max is going to Cairo with his school this weekend. He's so lucky! I asked him to buy me a mini pyramid.
GRAN: Oh, you mean something like this?
KITTY: Wow! Did you go to Egypt?
GRAN: I'd say 'Have you been to Egypt?'
KITTY: OK, so _____ to Egypt?
GRAN: No, I haven't, actually! John has been to Egypt a lot and he bought me this when he went last year. I collect souvenirs, you know. Look.
KITTY: Oh, cool! Can we play a guessing game with your souvenirs?
GRAN: OK, here are some clues from my adventures
KITTY: _____ the Eiffel Tower?
GRAN: Yes, I have.
KITTY: Ooo la la! And what are these? _____sushi … in Tokyo?
GRAN: Well, I have eaten sushi. I ate some yesterday. But I haven't actually eaten sushi in Tokyo. I ordered a take-away from Tokyo Chop last night.
KITTY: So you haven't been to Tokyo, but you have eaten sushi!
GRAN: Yes! Ooh. I'm hungry now. Shall we order some pizza from Italy?

To summarise, at this stage, learners were exposed to the target grammatical structure. This structure was presented to them an adequate number of times in order for them to be able to isolate it in the next step. In addition to passive exposure to the question and short answers, the aim of the presentation was to note the meaning and to retain both of the above in short-term memory.

### 6.1.3 Isolation and Explanation

The next step of the inductive approach is concerned with isolating the grammatical structure from the text, discovering and acquiring the form, and deriving a rule for usage. In order to maintain the principles of the inductive approach, the teacher acts as a moderator and not as a lecturer. It is desirable that the learners experience the

[16] Transcript: https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/sites/kids/files/attachment/grammar-videos-grans-adventures-transcript.pdf

eureka moment and discover the form and meaning on their own. The teacher can facilitate this process by asking targeted questions using the scaffolding method.

First, the learners are asked to do Exercise 3. In it, they fill in the gaps according to the text they have just worked with in Exercise 2. This part of the isolation should not cause any difficulties.

This part of the lesson can be done in a traditional frontal classroom setup, but we recommend dividing the learners into groups. Research and classroom experience show that learners benefit from group work. In case a learner does not know what to do, the teacher does not need to intervene, but the solution is found together in the group with the others. Similarly, when there is a misunderstanding of either the form or the meaning, peer to peer explanation is beneficial for both parties – the learner who explains reinforces the rule for herself/himself, and the learner who is given the explanation is usually more receptive to the explanation in the learner's language and from a classmate. Of course, it is necessary for the teacher to always monitor the groupwork but our observation, supported by scholarly research as well as by teachers in the classroom is that peer to peer learning results in long-term retention of learning content.

**3) Fill in the gaps:**

| | |
|---|---|
| A: _____ the Eiffel Tower? | A: _____ sushi in Tokyo? |
| B: Yes, I _____. | B: No, I _____. |

After isolating the form from the dialogue, learners are asked to derive a rule for it. Exercise 4 in the handout is used to enable them to do this on their own. The learners fill in the boxes with their guesses. We assume that learners will not use linguistic terms. This is not even desirable because their unfamiliarity does not prevent them from using the Present Perfect in a functional way. So, we do not set familiarity with linguistic terms as the goal of this phase of the lesson. It will be sufficient if the learners bring out structures such as: *Have + you + (ever) + been/ seen/ eaten …?, Have + subject + been …?*.

At this step, we expect a setback to appear. We assume that some learners will incorrectly conclude that Simple Past forms are used instead of the past participles.

Teacher intervention will possibly be needed to identify and name the past participles. As an aim, therefore, it is sufficient if learners notice that the form is different from the Past Simple and that they can look for such forms in their study materials, and, like the Past Simple, that it is different for regular and irregular verbs. It is helpful if the teacher uses scaffolding and guides learners on where to find the forms of past participles and how to form them by asking questions such as:

- *What is the past to the verb 'see'?*
- *Is it the same as in the handout?*
- *Do you have a tip where to find these forms?*

Apart from that, the teacher could ask the learners to look at the appropriate place in the textbook or workbook where the irregular verbs are listed. Thereafter, a follow-up question about the regular and irregular forms is asked. Learner should already know the difference. The positive and negative answer should not cause any problems, because learners are familiar with the form of the verb *have* from the beginning of their English learning journey, and therefore it can be elicited quite easily.

**4) Fill in the boxes.**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | (ever) | | …? |

Yes, I ____ .  No, I ____ .

Learners then choose the correct options to form the rules about the Present Perfect interrogative to make sure they understood the meaning. If the teacher did not mention it until this moment, it is advisable to point out to the learners the name of the tense.

**Choose the correct option to make rules[17]:**

We use the present perfect to talk about experiences in the ***past / present*** which are important ***now / in the future***.

We make present perfect questions by using Have / Has + subject + (ever) + ***infinitive / past participle*** + other words.

At this stage, learners know both the form and the target meaning of the Present Perfect. There should therefore not be anything that hinders them from practicing it.

### 6.1.4 Practice

The aim of practice is to master the form and meaning of the grammatical structure so that learners are able to integrate it into their existing knowledge and implement it in the communicative situations they encounter, in Ur's (1988) words, to transfer it from short-term to long-term memory. The general recommendation (cf. Ur 1988, Ur 2012, Richards 2015) when practising is to progress from closed exercises to open ones. We follow this procedure in the proposed lesson as well. We have chosen the exercises with an emphasis on communication, so the learners are mainly practicing the speaking skills.

Learners work on Exercise 5. The exercise is aimed at practising form. We have chosen the transformation exercise. Although it is a closed exercise that practises the written form of the structure, it also serves us in the next step in forming mini dialogues. In it, learners form questions in the Present Perfect by varying the model sentence and answer with a short answer about themselves. Note that prior knowledge of past participles is necessary. In the proposed lesson, we base our strategy on the fact that the common practice in schools is to teach the past participle forms of irregular verbs at the same time as the forms for the simple past, as we reported in Chapter 5. Although learners have already acquired these forms in the past, it may be necessary to refresh them. At this stage, a brief matching exercise can be included to practise these forms, or learners can

[17] The rules were adopted from English Plus 2 (2011)

be allowed to look at the list of irregular verbs as they complete the exercises. Review is done in groups and then with the teacher.

After reviewing, learners proceed to mini dialogues in which they have to find out information about their classmates. They look for a classmate who has experienced the situation written in the question. This is a drill exercise that aims to strengthen the structure of the *Have you ever...?* question and to prompt short answers before progressing to the open communication exercises.

**5) Form the questions according to the example. Then answer and find a classmate who has experienced it.**[18]

| | | QUESTION | ME | MY CLASSMATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | *(be/London)* | *Have you ever been to London?* | *Yes, I have.* | *Peter* |
| 2) | (eat/octopus) | | | |
| 3) | (be/Japan) | | | |
| 4) | (see/UFO) | | | |
| 5) | (ride/an elephant) | | | |
| 6) | (watch/horror movie) | | | |

The last exercise of the lesson focuses on communication. This exercise allows learners to freely form 'Have you ever ...?' questions and practise their answers. The aim of the exercise is to form the structure they have just learnt on their own without prompts and answer it according to their own experiences. The learner asks about the experiences of others. In doing so, learners achieve the set objectives of the lesson – they ask about the experiences of others and respond positively or negatively to a question about their own experience. Exercises in the form of a game have a motivating effect on learners and they are likely to participate willingly and actively.

[18] The exercise was adapted from https://www.teach-this.com/images/resources/find--someone-who-have-you-ever.pdf

In the last exercise, learners need three pieces of paper (approximately 5cm x 5cm).

- Instruct the learners to secretly draw three pictures which represent their experiences (one picture on each piece of paper).
- The learners then try to guess in a group what experiences the other learners have.
- The learners take turns. The first learner shows the picture to the others, and they guess one by one what is in the drawing.
- They form the questions *Have you ever ...?*. If a learner answers yes (Yes, I have), the guessing learner gets a point (i.e., the drawing).
- The learner with the most points (i.e., collected drawings) wins.

It is necessary to monitor the groups again to be sure the learners correctly use the structure of the Present Perfect interrogative.

At the end of the lesson, it is desirable to make sure that the learners have mastered the structure and, above all, that they know what its function is and how to use it. It is recommended to use a short brainstorming session on the board to elicit from the learners what they have learned and to encourage answers that include both describing the form and function of the Present Perfect.

## 6.2 A Trial Lesson

The model lesson was tested in practice in June 2022. Before proceeding to the actual lesson, it is necessary to characterize the school and especially the class in which the trial lesson took place.

The trial lesson was conducted at Gymnázium Písek, a grammar school in Písek. In addition to the four-year and six-year programmes, Gymnázium Písek also offers an eight-year programme. The first four years of this programme are taught in accordance with the RVP ZV. Upon entering the grammar school, learners study English four hours a week, and this protocol is repeated in the second year. In the third and fourth years, the time dedicated to studying English is reduced to three hours per week, but learners have the opportunity to choose an elective subject, English conversation, which is taught for an hour

each week. We know from teachers that English conversation is almost always chosen by the entire group of learners. In practice, therefore, they continue to have four lessons per week with one teacher in the third and fourth years. The language teaching is carried out in two groups, the classes being divided in half according to the level they enter from primary school. Currently, the school does not have a native speaker teaching English classes.

In the lower years of the grammar school, learners begin their English language study with the English Plus textbook series. Usually, two volumes of the textbook are taught over three years. Teaching is widely supported by extension materials such as Gate and Bridge magazines or simplified books for graded readers. After completing two volumes of English Plus, learners switch to the Maturita Solutions or English File series, depending on class and teacher preference.

In terms of technical support, English is taught either in learners' stem classrooms or in language classrooms. Teaching in language classrooms is prevalent. The language classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards, computers, whiteboards, and audio equipment. The spatial arrangement of the desks is U-shaped in most language classrooms as was the case in the classroom where we realized the model lesson. The capacity of the classrooms is approximately twenty learners and so the desks are often arranged all the way to the sides, leaving little room for moving desks, creating work islands, etc.

The model lesson was taught in 3.O (the third year of an eight-year programme). There were 16 learners in the group, 5 boys and 11 girls, and no one was absent. The class was quite homogeneous in terms of performance, with only one boy and one girl outperforming the others. This fact was pointed out to us in advance by the class teacher. The language level of the class corresponds to the fact that they are finishing the second part of the English Plus 2 textbook, which is rated A1-A2 by the textbook authors. In regard to their language experience relevant to our lesson, the learners have already mastered the Past Simple as well as the irregular verb forms for the past and past participles.

Although the trial lesson was held during the sixth lesson on Friday, the learners were motivated, focused and actively engaged almost throughout the entire lesson. For

some learners, we noticed a slight drop in concentration only in the last 5-10 minutes, which we attribute to the fact that it was the last lesson before lunch. Group work was managed perfectly with the learners forming groups easily and working with dedication. It was evident from the atmosphere of the lesson that there was no antipathy between the learners or towards the teacher, and the learners appear to generally enjoy their English lessons. The friendly atmosphere was also evident after the completion of the lesson when the learners' class teacher spoke with them.

Now, we will proceed to a more detailed description of how the different parts of the lesson worked. We will also focus on how we met the objectives of the lesson and of the individual exercises. In addition, we will detail whether the expected obstacles arose, if any unexpected ones occurred, and how we overcame them.

### 6.2.1 Beginning of the Lesson and Lead-in

After we began the lesson and briefly introduced ourselves, we displayed the pictures on the board (Appendix 4). The learners named the objects and activities as we expected (souvenirs, the Eiffel Tower, Japan, etc.). When we were attempting to elicit the answer 'experiences', learners needed one extra instructional sentence prompt (*Imagine, this has happened in a person's life. What can you call all these activities altogether*?). We informed the learners that this would be the topic of the day's lesson and fluidly progressed to the next activity. We had planned 5 minutes for the introductory part of the lesson, but in practice, it took us only 3 minutes. We did not have to write down any absences or other classroom issues as they were dealt with before the lesson by the class teacher.

### 6.2.2 Presentation

After introducing the topic, we named the two main characters in the video, Gran and Kitty, to help the learners navigate more quickly. We had two questions prepared on the board for the learners to focus on during the first viewing. After first watching the video, the learners answered: *1) chatting, talking together, sitting on a couch* and *2) talking about Gran's life, talking about souvenirs, about Gran's experiences*. It is clear from the learners' responses that they understood both the topic and the content of the video.

At this stage, we distributed the handouts to the learners. We instructed them that during the second viewing they were to decide which of the answers was true and which was false. The learners did not find the exercise difficult and none of them questioned the use of the Present Perfect in the sentences. We were thus assured that their unawareness of this grammatical structure did not hinder their comprehension, mainly, in our opinion, due to the fact that they had already had previous linguistic experience and used it to understand this newly-introduced structure.

The last step was to listen to the video. For some learners, the last listening was redundant; approximately half of the learners were able to fill in the gaps before listening. However, we still consider this step important, as it focuses the learners visually on the target grammatical structure, which they need to retain in their short-term memory for later parts of the lesson. Also, by writing the text in the gaps, they are then better able to navigate it when isolating the grammatical structure.

We observed that presentation did, in fact, require the 10 minutes we had allocated for it. As we have indicated, for the faster learners a third listening was redundant. The solution might have been to conduct only two viewings. If the other half (*'slower'*) learners had been told to complete Exercise 2 after the second viewing, they would probably have completed it as well. The second suggestion we had for teachers, is to do the second viewing in the form of listening. Learners would have to concentrate more carefully; comprehension would be more difficult as it is more difficult to understand just listening without visual support.

### 6.2.3 Isolation and Explanation

After Exercise 2, we progressed to Exercise 3, which already focused on the isolation of a grammatical structure. Before initiating Exercise 3, we divided the learners into four working groups of four learners each. This required moving learners and chairs around the classroom because, as we wrote in the lesson introduction, the language classroom was not spacious enough to form work islands. However, the learners are used to working in groups in this arrangement and were not surprised by our call to form groups and responded promptly. The learners worked with the transcript of the recording and did

not find the isolation of the structure difficult. They were checking with each other in groups while the teacher only monitored the activity.

The learners progressed to the next step – revealing the structure of the question and short answers. First, we allowed the learners to reflect on the structure in groups, then we wrote it on the board. As we expected, learners did not use precise linguistic terms. What surprised us, however, was that after the question that is in the first position in the sentence, they searched for the English term for the auxiliary verb. We translated the expression but agreed that it was enough for us to know at this point that *have* or *has* (depending on the person) comes first, but not in the sense of possessing something. When asked what takes the second place, they answered subject. To make sure they really knew what subject meant, we asked the learners to give some examples. Only finding out what was in the third place brought more discussion. We indeed encountered the expected setback. Two groups confused the past participle with the past. The two remaining groups referred to the past participle as the third column of the verbs. From this response, we continued on using the scaffolding method to discover together where to find the forms of past participles and what they are. We used questions in this order: *What is the past to the verb see? What is the form in the handout? Are they the same?* Learners answered: *saw - seen - no*. *Where can you find the past to the verb see, if you can't remember what it is?* Learners answered: *in the workbook*. Therefore, we asked the learners to find it in the workbook. We found the verb *see* and asked the learners to find the name of the column in which the form *seen* is located. We went on to ask if all English verbs were listed there, and together we found the answer that these were only irregular verbs. When asked about regular verbs, every learner was already sure of the correct answer, that they are formed regularly by adding *-ed* even for the Present Perfect. After writing the past participle in the box in the handout, we moved on to the short answers. As expected, these were unproblematic.

The learners continued to work in groups to find the correct options in the rules. There were no problems when we checked together, so we were confident that the learners understood the form and use and continued to the exercises.

Although we lingered on the explanation of the form, the time allocated for this part was adequate.

### 6.2.4 Practice

The last part of the lesson was practice. We started as planned with Exercise 4. Some learners completed the questions and answers about themselves without any problems, some looked in the workbook for the forms of past participles or discussed their forms collectively. As expected, a little refresher on the forms would have been useful. On the other hand, if an incorrect verb form is used in a question that has the structure of the Present Perfect, and is used in the correct communicative context, and is furthermore reinforced by *ever*, this incorrect verb form does not hinder a learner's comprehension. However, in this part of the lesson, when practising the correct form, it is necessary to encourage learners to use the correct form, so we made sure to cross-check with the learners the correct forms of the past participles.

Learners continued with mini dialogues around the classroom. They asked questions using the Present Perfect and looked for the person who experienced the particular thing. In two cases, the learners did not find anyone, so it might have been appropriate to introduce more common experiences into the exercise. The problem arose when looking for a person who *had ridden an elephant* and who *had been to Japan*. A substitution for *a horse* and *Italy* might have been more appropriate. The fact that we did not find anyone on two occasions had a benefit as well. Learners had to ask multiple times because they didn't get a yes answer the first time they asked. They therefore addressed the question and the answer in an accurate manner.

The last activity of the lesson was, as expected, attractive for the learners. They willingly shared their experiences with others and came up with the most curious ones they had experienced, so the activity met its aim and the lesson objective – *ask about the experiences of others and respond positively or negatively.* Learners drew 3 pictures on pieces of paper and then guessed what was on them. At the beginning of the activity, we did not set a time for drawing, so the learners were very different in the speed of completing the activity. Some learners took a very long time to draw pictures and we had

to remind them to hurry up. This resulted in each group starting the game at a different point in time, so the completion point of the game was quite varied. We let the faster groups draw one more picture and do one more short round of guessing. We then had brief conversations in the groups that had already finished - asking *who won, what was the most interesting experience, what was the most dangerous*. However, what we encountered here was that the learners had to start forming affirmative sentences in the Present Perfect (*Honza has ridden a camel.*) Surprisingly, the learners formed them with only minor errors (for example, using *have* instead of *has* or using the wrong form of the past participle). On the contrary, these mistakes did not hinder comprehension and the additional conversations promoted learners' communicative skills.

At the end of the lesson, due to the faster start, we had about 4 minutes left, so we carried out a group evaluation on the whiteboard, which we had erased during the previous activity. We left only the boxes in which the learners dictated the form of the question to the teacher. They elicited both short answers and example sentences. They responded to the question of *what have we learnt today* by responding with *the Present Perfect*. Since we wanted to elicit an answer *to talk about experiences*, we asked what we used the Present Perfect for and the learners answered as we requested. Even if we had not sped up at the beginning, we would have had two minutes of time left for evaluation and summary, which should have been sufficient.

In conclusion, we would like to mention that the lesson went without major problems. However, it is necessary to remember that we were testing the lesson in a class that is advanced, moreover, in a grammar school where the learners are usually talented. The learners were fully concentrated for almost the whole lesson, the exception being the last 5 minutes of the lesson when the learners were moving their chairs, feeling that the end of the lesson was approaching, and they were leaving for lunch. From our point of view, however, this problem was not preventable, such this is usually the nature of the last lessons. The learners were actively engaged in the lesson and cooperated with the teacher. The first part of the lesson (Presentation) was lengthy for this particular group. The three listenings were redundant for them. We believe that for an average group of learners or a

group with weaker learners, three listenings would have been adequate. In the second part of the lesson (Isolation and Explanation) learners responded promptly and were successful in their group work. The form of the structure did not cause any difficulties and the learners even exceeded our expectations with their linguistic knowledge. Their knowledge is so high thanks to the textbook, which uses linguistic terms such as subject or verb, and thanks to their teacher, who works with these terms in teaching English grammar. The importance of the structure was easily discovered by the learners thanks to the chosen video which explicitly points out the use of the Present Perfect when it functions as experiences instead of the incorrect Past Simple (see transcript). In the third part of the lesson, learners were keen to work in groups and share their experiences. As expected, choosing exercises that involve sharing individuals' own experiences worked well. It was appropriate that these were situations that occur in everyday conversation, therefore the development of communicative competence was easily supported. Both above-stated objectives of the lesson were met. The expected mistakes (substitution of past participle forms for simple past) were also confirmed, but we managed to overcome them according to the suggested instructions. An unexpected error was the time distribution in the last activity, where the learners significantly diverged in the time they needed to complete the exercise due to the time spent on drawing. This was followed by a minor error by the teacher who, through a methodological mistake in the conversation in fast finisher groups, required answers in the Present Perfect affirmative which the learners had not yet learnt. However, the learners coped well with this slip, and there were errors in their speech that we would classify as attempts and did not hinder comprehension. In the end, therefore, these extension natural dialogues arose from the teacher's slip and also developed communicative competence. To prevent this mistake, it would have been useful to have an extra activity for fast finishers beforehand.

# Conclusion

In the thesis, which dealt with the Present Perfect as a critical issue in the curriculum at the lower level of secondary school, we answered two research questions:

- Why is the Present Perfect tense a critical issue?
- How to present this grammatical structure to the learners to avoid misinterpretation?

The Present Perfect was identified as a critical issue in the curriculum by teachers in action research, therefore, this paper is focused on finding answers as to why this is so and what things can be applied in practice to prevent this issue from arising or at least to help teachers overcome it.

The answer to the first question was sought in the theoretical section. We arrived at the answers through a linguistic analysis of the English and Czech verb tense systems. This analysis showed that the two systems differ. The key information for the research was that three verb tenses (preteritum, perfectum, and plusquamperfectum) are used to express the past in English, whereas only one (preteritum) is used in Czech. Due to the difference in the systems, the Present Perfect is a challenging issue to learn as well as to teach, as we found in processing the theoretical findings of scholars on how to teach the Present Perfect tense.

The answer to the second question was first explored in the theoretical section. From the methodology books we drew information about how different scholars propose to teach grammar and the Present Perfect. We then cross-referenced these findings with the teachers' responses from the action research. In the empirical section, we analysed the responses from the questionnaires which they had completed as part of the faculty action research. Their responses revealed the four most common difficulties teachers encounter when teaching the Present Perfect:

1. Teachers find it hard to explain the Present Perfect and they run out of ideas on how to clarify its complex meaning.
2. Teachers lack time for explanation and practice when teaching the Present Perfect.

3. Learners easily confuse the use of the Past Simple and the Present Perfect due to the absence of the latter in the Czech tense system.
4. Grammar is not attractive to the learners, and they are not interested in it.

We sought answers and solutions to these problems based on both the findings in the theoretical section and as well as on teachers' practical experience. These resulted in five recommendations that we find suitable to apply in practice:

- Present the Present Perfect inductively.
- Present the different meanings of the PP separately.
- Use authentic and attractive materials to present and practice the structure.
- Use the grammar of the PP as a tool to develop communicative competence.
- Focus more on fluency and the ability to express oneself rather than on accuracy.

On the basis of these recommendations, in the penultimate stage of the research we designed a model lesson that respects all the above recommendations. The model lesson was then tested in practice as the last stage of the research as well as of the thesis. The lesson was generally successful and met its stated objectives. Only minor obstacles were encountered and these were resolved directly during the trial. It should be noted that the unproblematic nature of the lesson may have been due to the fact that the trial lesson took place in a grammar school classroom which is usually populated by talented learners. Furthermore, the particular group with whom the trial lesson was tested is linguistically above average. It is therefore suggested to continue with the research and to apply the proposed lesson in other classes, especially in lower secondary school classes. If the trial lesson is tested in a class where there are, for example, learners with specific learning disorders, this could also provide valuable feedback. Only a comparison of multiple lessons in relatively different settings would give us information on whether the lesson we have proposed has the potential to eliminate a critical issue in the curriculum or not.

The lesson proposal had other limitations. Only one lesson was taught, which dealt with only one function of the Present Perfect. This function is one of the simpler ones. Greater problems would probably have arisen if we had designed and taught more complex functions, especially the Present Perfect and the Past Simple comparison.

Designing additional lessons focusing on the more complicated meanings of the Present Perfect and especially on the contrast between the PP and the PS seems to be a worthy continuation of this research.

If we evaluate the whole action research, which, as already mentioned, was part of the faculty project, we find that all the proposed phases, from problem identification and data collection through data analysis and solution design and finally to the application of this solution, have been fulfilled. At this point, the first cycle of action research is over. However, as we know, action research usually has a spiral or cyclical character, so there is room for further cycles that would process the findings that emerged from the first cycle of research and apply them again in practice until the critical issue is completely eliminated. The successful removal could be aided by the involvement of the learners, as this action research does not consider their perspective at all.

In conclusion, we would like to add that this thesis has fulfilled its objectives. We hope that the resulting recommendations for practice and the model lesson will serve teachers or beginning teachers in overcoming the critical issue. From our point of view, action research is a sensible approach to confronting critical issues and should therefore be implemented more often. In the Czech Republic, this kind of research, especially in the humanities, is in its infancy. It would be unfortunate if research of this kind was not practiced more often because it brings benefits to all parties, mainly because it effectively connects two (often separate) worlds – the world of the theoreticians and the world of practitioners.

# Resumé

V diplomové práci, která se zabývala předpřítomným časem jako kritickým místem kurikula na druhém stupni ZŠ, jsme odpovídali na dvě výzkumné otázky. Proč je předpřítomný čas kritickým místem kurikula? a Jak tuto gramatickou strukturu prezentovat žákům, abychom předcházeli kritičnosti tohoto místa? Předpřítomný čas byl totiž identifikován jako kritické místo kurikula učiteli na druhém stupni ZŠ v rámci akčního výzkumu, proto si tato práce kladla za cíl hledat odpovědi, proč tomu tak je a jaké věci aplikovat do praxe, abychom vzniku tohoto místa předcházeli, či alespoň pomohli učitelům toto místo překonávat.

Odpověď na první otázku jsme hledali v teoretické části. Odpovědi jsme získali díky lingvistické analýze anglického a českého systému slovesných časů. Z této analýzy vyplynulo, že oba systémy se liší. Klíčovou informací pro výzkum bylo, že pro vyjádření minulosti v angličtině se využívají tři slovesné časy (preteritum, perfectum a plusquamperfectum), oproti tomu v češtině pouze jeden (preteritum). Kvůli odlišnosti systémů je předpřítomný čas náročnou látkou pro žáky i pro učitele.

Odpověď na druhou otázku jsme nejprve hledali v teoretické části. Z metodik jsme čerpali informace o tom, jak různí odborníci navrhují vyučovat gramatiku a také samotný předpřítomný čas. Tyto poznatky jsme posléze konfrontovali s odpověďmi učitelů z akčního výzkumu. V praktické sekci jsme analyzovali odpovědi učitelů z dotazníků, které vyplňovali v rámci fakultního akčního výzkumu. Z jejich odpovědí vzešly čtyři nejčastější obtíže, se kterými se ve výuce předpřítomného času setkávají. Jednak je pro ně obtížné předpřítomný čas vysvětlit, jednak pro vysvětlení a procvičování postrádají čas. Dalším problémem je, že žáci snadno zaměňují předpřítomný čas s časem minulým kvůli absenci předpřítomného času v češtině. Posledním zmiňovaným problémem je to, že gramatika je pro žáky nezajímavá.

Na tyto problémy jsme hledali odpovědi a řešení, které jsme opřeli o poznatky z teoretické části a o učitelské zkušenosti z praxe, které jim pomáhají při překonávání těchto problémů. Vzešlo tedy pět doporučení, která je vhodná aplikovat do praxe:

- předpřítomný čas vyučovat induktivně,

- vyučovat různé významy předpřítomného času zvlášť,
- používat autentické a atraktivní materiály,
- gramatiku chápat jako prostředek k rozvíjení komunikace, ne jako hlavní cíl výuky,
- zaměřit se více na plynulost projevu a schopnost vyjádřit se a příliš nelpět na stoprocentní správnosti.

Na základě těchto doporučení jsme v předposlední fázi výzkumu navrhli modelovou vyučovací hodinu a ta poté byla, jako poslední fáze výzkumu i diplomové práce, vyzkoušena v praxi. V praxi se vyučovací hodina celkově osvědčila a splnila své stanovené cíle. Setkali jsme se pouze s drobnými překážkami, které jsme vyřešili přímo při vyučování. Nutno podotknout, že bezproblémovost výuky mohla být způsobena tím, že zkušební hodina proběhla ve třídě na gymnáziu, kde jsou zpravidla talentovaní žáci, a konkrétní skupina, ve které aplikace výzkumu proběhla, je lingvisticky nadprůměrná. Nabízí se tedy pokračovat s výzkumem a navrhovanou vyučovací hodinu aplikovat v dalších třídách, především ve třídách základních škol. Podnětnou zpětnou vazbu by mohla přinést i aplikace ve třídě, ve které se nacházejí např. žáci se specifickými poruchami učení. Až srovnání více vyučovacích hodin by nám přineslo informaci, zda má námi navrhovaná vyučovací hodina potenciál kritické místo v kurikulu odstranit.

Návrh vyučovací hodiny, potažmo poslední fáze akčního výzkumu, měl i další limity. Byla odučena pouze jedna vyučovací hodina, která zpracovávala jen jednu funkci předpřítomného času. Tato funkce je jednou z těch jednodušších. Větší problémy by pravděpodobně nastaly ve chvíli, kdybychom navrhovali a vyučovali složitější funkce, především konkurenci předpřítomného času a prosté minulosti. Navržení dalších vyučovacích hodin zaměřených na komplikovanější významy předpřítomného času a především na již zmiňovanou konkurenci obou časů se jeví jako vhodným pokračováním tohoto výzkumu.

Zhodnotíme-li celý akční výzkum, který, jak již bylo zmíněné, byl součástí fakultního projektu, zjistíme, že všechny navrhované fáze (od identifikace problému a sběru dat, přes jejich analýzu a návrh řešení po aplikaci tohoto řešení) byly naplněny. V tuto chvíli je první cyklus akčního výzkumu u konce. Jak ale víme, akční výzkum má zpravidla spirálovitý či

cyklický charakter, proto zde vzniká prostor pro další cykly, které by poznatky, jež vyvstaly z prvního cyklu výzkumu, zpracovaly a opět aplikovaly do praxe až do úplného odstranění kritického místa. K úspěšnému odstranění by mohlo přispět také zapojení žáků, protože tento akční výzkum jejich pohled vůbec nezohledňuje.

Závěrem bychom rádi dodali, že tato diplomová práce naplnila své cíle. Doufáme, že vzešlá doporučení do praxe a vytvořená vyučovací hodina poslouží vyučujícím či začínajícím učitelům v překonávání kritického místa. Z našeho pohledu má akční výzkum velký smysl a měl by se více realizovat. V České republice je tento druh výzkumu, především v humanitních vědách, na začátku. Byla by škoda, kdyby se tento druh výzkumu vice nepraktikoval, protože přináší benefity pro všechny strany, a to hlavně z toho důvodu, že účinně propojuje dva (často oddělené) světy – svět teoretiků a svět praktiků.

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## List of Tables

# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

**Úvodní část**

**Pohlaví** (zaškrtněte)
□ muž □žena

**Aprobace**
Vypište, prosím, vystudované aprobace: ……

**Délka praxe celkově**
Dopište, prosím, délku Vaší učitelské praxe (celkově): ……..

**Současná výuka**
Vypište, prosím, které předměty nyní vyučujete a délku praxe v těchto předmětech:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. předmět | | délka praxe | |
| 2. předmět | | délka praxe | |
| další předmět | | délka praxe | |

**Analýza kritických míst v předmětu**
Zaškrtněte, prosím, kterému předmětu se budete dále věnovat:
*Zaškrtněte pouze jeden předmět. Pokud se budete chtít vyjádřit k dalšímu předmětu, vyplňte, prosím, další dotazník.*

- anglický jazyk
- německý jazyk
- český jazyk
- přírodopis (biologie)
- pracovní činnosti
- občanská výchova (základy společenských věd)
- tělesná výchova
- zeměpis
- psychologie (samostatný předmět)

**Typ školy**
Zaškrtněte, na kterém typu školy uvedený předmět vyučujete a **budete dále analyzovat**:

- základní škola – 1. stupeň
- základní škola – 2. stupeň
- střední škola – gymnázium
- střední škola – odborná

## Řečové dovednosti

Ohodnoťte a zaškrtněte z Vašeho pohledu míru problematičnosti ve výuce v níže uvedených řečových dovednostech (škála intenzity od 1 do 5; vyšší číslo – vyšší míra problematičnosti).

**poslech s porozuměním**

zcela bezproblémové 1 2 3 4 5 velmi problémové

**čtení s porozuměním**

zcela bezproblémové 1 2 3 4 5 velmi problémové

**mluvení**

zcela bezproblémové 1 2 3 4 5 velmi problémové

**psaní**

zcela bezproblémové 1 2 3 4 5 velmi problémové

## Jazykové prostředky

Ohodnoťte a zaškrtněte z Vašeho pohledu míru problematičnosti ve výuce v níže uvedených jazykových prostředcích (škála intenzity od 1 do 5; vyšší číslo – vyšší míra problematičnosti).

**gramatika**

zcela bezproblémové 1 2 3 4 5 velmi problémové

**slovní zásoba**

zcela bezproblémové 1 2 3 4 5 velmi problémové

**výslovnost**

zcela bezproblémové 1 2 3 4 5 velmi problémové

**pravopis**

zcela bezproblémové 1 2 3 4 5 velmi problémové

## Analýza kritických míst v předmětu

***Rádi bychom Vás poprosili o uvedení těch míst, které ve Vašem předmětu považujete za nejkritičtější. Vypište, prosím, 3 a více těchto míst a okomentujte je podle níže uvedených otázek.***

## 1. KRITICKÉ MÍSTO VE VAŠEM PŘEDMĚTU

| Otázky ke kritickému místu | Vaše odpovědi |
|---|---|
| Uveďte konkrétní **kritické místo** ve Vašem předmětu: | |
| Z jakého **důvodu** je uvedené místo kritické **z hlediska učiva**? | |
| Z jakého **důvodu** je uvedené místo kritické **z hlediska žáka**? | |
| Z jakého **důvodu** je uvedené místo kritické **z hlediska učitele**? | |
| Z jakého **důvodu** je uvedené místo kritické **z hlediska cílů výuky**? | |
| Z jakého **jiného důvodu** je uvedené místo kritické? | |
| Jak toto místo **překonáváte** ve výuce? | |
| Napadají Vás nějaké **změny v uspořádání** nebo **realizaci výuky**, které by mohly pomoci tomu, aby uvedené kritické místo přestalo být problematickým? | |
| Jaké **další podmínky** by podle Vás **mohly** pomoci překonat uvedené kritické místo? | |

*Na škále 1 – 5 zhodnoťte a zaškrtněte, prosím,* ***důležitost*** *Vámi uvedeného kritického místa ve výuce (pro učitele a žáka):*

Jak je podle Vašeho názoru **pro žáky toto kritické místo důležité**?

naprosto důležité 1 2 3 4 5 naprosto nedůležité

Jak je **pro Vás (učitele) toto kritické místo důležité**?

naprosto důležité 1 2 3 4 5 naprosto nedůležité

*Na škále 1 – 5 zhodnoťte a zaškrtněte, prosím,* ***oblíbenost*** *Vámi uvedeného kritického místa ve výuce (pro učitele a žáka):*

Jak je podle Vašeho názoru **pro žáky toto kritické místo oblíbené**?

naprosto oblíbené 1 2 3 4 5 naprosto neoblíbené

Jak je **pro Vás (učitele) toto kritické místo oblíbené**?

naprosto oblíbené 1 2 3 4 5 naprosto neoblíbené

**Appendix 2: Handout – learner**

# Experiences

**1) Watch the video and answer:**

a) Gran hasn't been to Egypt. TRUE/FALSE

b) John hasn't been to Egypt. TRUE/FALSE

c) Gran hasn't seen the Eiffel Tower. TRUE/FALSE

d) Gran has eaten sushi. TRUE/FALSE

e) Gran has been to Tokyo. TRUE/FALSE

**2) Watch the video again and fill in the gaps:**

| Have you ever eaten | Have you been | Have you seen |
|---|---|---|

**GRAN**: Kitty, what are you doing?

**KITTY**: Max is going to Cairo with his school this weekend. He's so lucky! I asked him to buy me a mini pyramid.

**GRAN**: Oh, you mean something like this?

**KITTY**: Wow! Did you go to Egypt?

**GRAN**: I'd say 'Have you been to Egypt?'

**KITTY**: OK, so _____ to Egypt?

**GRAN**: No, I haven't, actually! John has been to Egypt a lot and he bought me this when he went last year. I collect souvenirs, you know. Look.

**KITTY**: Oh, cool! Can we play a guessing game with your souvenirs?

**GRAN**: OK, here are some clues from my adventures

**KITTY**: _____ the Eiffel Tower?

**GRAN**: Yes, I have.

**KITTY**: Ooo la la! And what are these? _____sushi … in Tokyo?

**GRAN**: Well, I have eaten sushi. I ate some yesterday. But I haven't actually eaten sushi in Tokyo. I ordered a take-away from Tokyo Chop last night.

**KITTY**: So you haven't been to Tokyo, but you have eaten sushi!

**GRAN**: Yes! Ooh. I'm hungry now. Shall we order some pizza from Italy?

**3) Fill in the gaps:**

A: _____ the Eiffel Tower?

B: Yes, I _____.

A: _____ sushi in Tokyo?

B: No, I _____.

**4) Fill in the boxes.**

| | | (ever) | | …? |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Yes, I | | . No, I | | .

**Choose the correct option to make rules:**

We use the present perfect to talk about experiences in the ***past / present*** which are important ***now / in the future***.

We make present perfect questions by using Have / Has + subject + (ever) + ***infinitive / past participle*** + other words.

**5) Form the questions according to the example. Then answer and find a classmate who has experienced it.**

| | | QUESTION | ME | MY CLASSMATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | *(be/London)* | *Have you ever been to London?* | *Yes, I have.* | *Peter* |
| 2) | (eat/octopus) | | | |
| 3) | (be/Japan) | | | |
| 4) | (see/UFO) | | | |
| 5) | (ride/an elephant) | | | |
| 6) | (watch/horror movie) | | | |

**Appendix 3: Handout – teacher**

# Experiences

**1) Watch the video and answer:**

a) Gran hasn't been to Egypt. TRUE/FALSE

b) John hasn't been to Egypt. TRUE/FALSE

c) Gran hasn't seen the Eiffel Tower. TRUE/FALSE

d) Gran has eaten sushi. TRUE/FALSE

e) Gran has been to Tokyo. TRUE/FALSE

**2) Watch the video again and fill in the gaps:**

| Have you ever eaten | Have you been | Have you seen |
|---|---|---|

**GRAN**: Kitty, what are you doing?

**KITTY**: Max is going to Cairo with his school this weekend. He's so lucky! I asked him to buy me a mini pyramid.

**GRAN**: Oh, you mean something like this?

**KITTY**: Wow! Did you go to Egypt?

**GRAN**: I'd say 'Have you been to Egypt?'

**KITTY**: OK, so have you been to Egypt?

**GRAN**: No, I haven't, actually! John has been to Egypt a lot and he bought me this when he went last year. I collect souvenirs, you know. Look.

**KITTY**: Oh, cool! Can we play a guessing game with your souvenirs?

**GRAN**: OK, here are some clues from my adventures

**KITTY**: Have you seen the Eiffel Tower?

**GRAN**: Yes, I have.

**KITTY**: Ooo la la! And what are these? Have you ever eaten sushi … in Tokyo?

**GRAN**: Well, I have eaten sushi. I ate some yesterday. But I haven't actually eaten sushi in Tokyo. I ordered a take-away from Tokyo Chop last night.

**KITTY**: So you haven't been to Tokyo, but you have eaten sushi!

**GRAN**: Yes! Ooh. I'm hungry now. Shall we order some pizza from Italy?

**3) Fill in the gaps:**

A: Have you seen the Eiffel Tower?

B: Yes, I have.

A: Have you ever eaten sushi in Tokyo?

B: No, I haven't.

**4) Fill in the boxes.**

| HAVE | SUBJECT | (ever) | PAST PARTICIPLE | …? |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Yes, I [have] .

No, I [haven't] .

**Choose the correct option to make rules:**

We use the present perfect to talk about experiences in the ***past / present*** which are important ***now / in the future***.

We make present perfect questions by using Have / Has + subject + (ever) + ***infinitive / past participle*** + other words.

**5) Form the questions according to the example. Then answer and find a classmate who has experienced it.**

| | | QUESTION | ME | MY CLASSMATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | *(be/London)* | *Have you ever been to London?* | *Yes, I have.* | *Peter* |
| 2) | (eat/octopus) | Have you ever eaten an octopus? | | |
| 3) | (be/Japan) | Have you ever been to Japan? | | |
| 4) | (see/UFO) | Have you ever seen UFO? | | |
| 5) | (ride/an elephant) | Have you ever ridden …? | | |
| 6) | (watch/horror movie) | Have you ever watched …? | | |

## Appendix 4: Pictures of Experiences