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**The Perception of Selected William
Shakespeare's Works at Secondary Schools**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma „The Perception of Selected William Shakespeare's Works at Secondary Schools” vypracovala samostatně a řádně jsem uvedla a citovala všechny použité prameny, které uvádím v seznamu bibliografických citací.

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Abstract

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to examine Czech secondary school students' perception of William Shakespeare's works *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. Further off, it aims to determine which teaching methods or activities teachers used to interpret his work. In order to accomplish these goals, a questionnaire was distributed among students of different types of secondary schools and we stated three hypotheses which were supposed to provide more details regarding students' perception of Shakespeare.

Introduction

Worldwide, William Shakespeare is known as one of the most famous playwrights who has ever lived. This Englishman lived and wrote his plays mainly at the peak of English Renaissance, otherwise called “The Elizabethan Era” after the queen Elizabeth I. Some of his works prove that he was reliant on the support of the court but despite being the queen’s playwright, Shakespeare was the voice of the plain people. His plays are actually illustrative of the problems of all social strata. However, there is the reason why this particular playwright has not been forgotten and his plays are frequently played. The cause is the timelessness which appears in his work as the motives used in 16th century plays are up to date in the 21st century as well. Nevertheless, the intention of this project is not to describe the playwright himself but rather to study the role and influence of his plays from the educational point of view as well as students’ perception of his work. This bachelor thesis deals with the issue of teaching Shakespeare’s work at Czech secondary schools because this matter is not so often researched in our country as in English speaking countries. For this purpose, we chose plays which belong among the most famous ones: *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. The questionnaire, especially designated for the project, examines students’ opinion and perception of Shakespeare’s plays and at the same time ascertains the methods of interpretation used in class.

1 Theoretical Part

1.1 The life of William Shakespeare

It is generally believed that the world's most famous playwright and poet William Shakespeare was born in Stratford upon Avon on 23rd April 1564 (St. George's Day) as a son of John and Mary Shakespeare. Shakespeare's birthday might be questionable but the date of his christening is clear. On 26th April 1564 in the church of Holy Trinity in Stratford a local parish clerk made a mistake and instead of *Johannis* he wrote in the local register *Guilelmus fillius Johannes Shakespere* (Ackroyd, 2009, p. 14). The fact that Mary Shakespeare gave birth to a son was a blessing because a year before William was born, she and her husband had buried their infant daughter Margaret at the age of only four months. The first born child of Mary and John was also called Joan but did not survive, as in the 16th century the infant mortality rate was very high. Eventually William had five siblings. Brother Gilbert (1566), another sister named Joan (1569), Anne (died at the age of seven in 1578), Richard (1574) and Edmund (1580) who as well as his eldest brother became an actor (Rowse, 1963, p. 32).

At the age of seven young William started to attend a local charge-free grammar school called King's New School. This was possible thanks to his father's position at the town council. His main obligation there was to learn Latin. The point of the Elizabethan educational system was to train the memory and learn most of the information by heart. According to A.L. Rowse (1963, pp. 40-41): "*Immense attention was paid to memorising, since books were scarce, and it was intended that what one learnt should stand one in good stead for life.*" William, probably as any other of his classmates, started to acquire Latin by learning a textbook by heart. It is likely that William left school a few months after his 15th birthday because his father needed his help in the household. John Shakespeare was no longer able to provide wages for his workers, so he needed his son's help. It was common that boys finished their school attendance around the age of fifteen so despite the fact William was forced to leave; his education was more or less completed (Honan, 2011, p. 61).

In the summer of 1582 eighteen year old William Shakespeare got married to Anne Hathaway. By the time the wedding was on, she was already with a child. Anne was eight years older than William and expected to end up as an old spinster. Despite the differences, it was a pragmatic match since her father Richard was a good

acquaintance of John Shakespeare and she was promised to get a decent dowry. The marriage of William and Anne wasn't probably a love match, as Park Honan (2011, p. 74) observes: "*It seems young William was driven by the urge for experiences since his school education was strict and it limited his desire to behave freely.*" Yet the young groom showed no trace of remorse. Their first born daughter Susanna was baptised on 26th May 1583 and twenty months later on 2nd February 1585 twins Hamnet and Judith were baptised and called after neighbours Hamnet and Judith Sadler of High Street, the godparents (Rowse, 1963, p. 58).

However, Shakespeare's plain life in Stratford didn't satisfy him and he decided to leave for London in order to secure his family around 1586. He believed his only possibility to succeed was in the field of theatre and by the stroke of luck the demand for actors and theatre was growing by the time Shakespeare came to London. It is certain that at the beginning of Shakespeare's days in London he mostly travelled around the country and acted for several audiences. He kept educating and improving himself by reading books and moreover started to write his own plays (Rowse, 1963, pp. 74–76). By the time Shakespeare was occupied by writing, there was a group of university intellectuals in London called "*The university wits*". This group consisted of seven university educated writers: Thomas Nashe, George Peele, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, Thomas Lodge or Thomas Kyd (Shastree, 2019, p. 1766). However, Christopher Marlowe is from this group the most famous playwright. It is probable that Shakespeare was influenced by this group because it was assumed that one of the poets (Greene) accused Shakespeare of plagiarism. There were also suggestions that Greene felt jealous of Shakespeare (Erne, 1998, p. 430).

From 1594 on, the company known as Lord Chamberlain's Men (after queen Elizabeth's death – King's Men) was the only company which performed the plays of William Shakespeare. Soon, Lord Chamberlain's Men/ King's Men was at its top among acting theatre community. The Globe theatre, which was mostly famous for performing Shakespeare's plays, was built five years later in 1599 (Ackroyd, 2009, p. 367). The fact Shakespeare was able to purchase one of the largest houses in Stratford proved that he became a rather wealthy man (Bate, 2010, p. 73).

Despite the fact that Shakespeare succeeded as a playwright, he would still perform in his own plays. There is a speculation he played Henry VI. in the play of the same name and Richard II in the other historical play of his. The Ghost in *Hamlet* should have also been performed by the author (Ackroyd, 2009, p. 401). In spite of the success and growing publicity in London, Shakespeare would still divide his time between the capital city and Stratford. Even after the death of John Shakespeare, William visited his hometown to see his widowed mother, wife and his two daughters. His son Hamnet died of plague in 1596 when he was only eleven years old (Rowse, 1963, p. 242). Nevertheless, there are documents proving that Shakespeare sent every month a decent amount of money in order to sustain his family, so he still cared for their well-being even though he lived somewhere else.

For the next five or six years Shakespeare was viewed as a reputable playwright and poet. The *Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, which was written after the death of John Shakespeare in 1601, was really outstanding with the audience (Honan, 2011, p. 259). After that William wrote other noteworthy plays such as *Macbeth* or *The Tragedy of King Lear*.

Peter Ackroyd (2009, p. 475) claims that in the summer in 1607 Shakespeare was back in Stratford to attend his daughter's wedding. Since then it seems William spent more time in his hometown than in London. According to chronicles and official documents he often had to stay in Stratford because of sudden deaths, expected births, christenings and weddings in the family. It is likely that Shakespeare eventually moved back to his hometown and spent there the last ten years of his life probably because of the plague tormenting the streets of London. It was thus no longer safe to dwell in the city for too long. Nevertheless, he didn't fully withdraw from London and from his professional life. He kept working and visiting the city due to his responsibility as a supervisor and editor of the plays which were played for the king at court. From 1610 Shakespeare's visits of the city were scarcer as well as his new plays (Honan, 2011, pp. 319–337).

At the beginning of 1616 Shakespeare gave the instructions to draw up his will. It was unlikely to draw up the will unless one suffered from some disease. After three months of an ongoing malady of unknown nature, William Shakespeare died on 23rd April 1616 (Ackroyd, 2009, p. 536). It is often assumed he died the day he was born so if it is

true, he would have celebrated his 53rd birthday on the day he died. Two days after his death William was buried in the same church where he and his children were baptised. Even today the grave of William Shakespeare is profusely visited by countless admirers and adherents. According to Peter Ackroyd (2009, p. 540): “*He (William Shakespeare) gave the world his work, and his good fellowship, not his body or his name.*”

1.2 The classification of William Shakespeare's works

According to Martin Hilský (2010) and precisely to his book *Shakespeare a jeviště svět* [*Shakespeare and the Stage of Life*] Shakespeare's work can be divided into seven categories. They are listed below including the examples.

1. Comedies

- *The Taming of the Shrew*
- *The Comedy of Errors*
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- *The Merchant of Venice*

2. Historical plays

- *King John*
- *Henry V.*
- *Richard III.*
- *Henry VIII.*

3. Tragedies

- *Romeo and Juliet*
- *Othello*
- *Hamlet*
- *Macbeth*

4. Romances

- *The Winter's Tale*
- *The Tempest*

5. Sonnets

6. Apocryphal, controversial or lost text

- *Edward III.*

7. The Poems

This bachelor thesis is going to focus mainly on the two tragedies which are the best known ones among students – *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet*.

1.2.1 *Romeo and Juliet*

The tragedy of two young lovers is probably Shakespeare's most popular one and it was probably finished between the years 1595 and 1596. By this time, he had already published *Love's Labour's Lost* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and was working on the historical play later known as *Richard II*. The end of the 16th century was also characterized by the popularity of sonnets so there is no coincidence the typical style, in which sonnets were written, is apparent in the play as well (Hilský, 2010, p. 425).

However, the plot was not an original idea of William Shakespeare. He was mostly likely to be inspired by an Italian legend written by Luigi da Porto in the first half of the 16th century but supposedly even da Porto wasn't the first one writing about ill-fated love of two young lovers whose families hated each other. The same plot appeared in the narrative of Mariotto and Ganozza by Masuccio Salernitano in 1476 but there were many other stories similar to what Shakespeare wrote, Dante's Purgatory or the narrative of Pyrama and Thisby by Ovidius included. Presumably, every tale I mentioned in this paragraph could have been familiar to Shakespeare but for certain his greatest influence was the French version of Luigi da Porto's story written by Arthur Brooke (Hilský, 2010, p. 426).

The story begins with hatred between two Verona's noble families, the house of Montague and the house of Capulet. Romeo Montague, the young protagonist of the play, falls in love with a girl named Rosaline but she does not love him back. He desperately wants to meet her, so he agrees to attend a masquerade ball of the house of Capulet even though he is actually forbidden to do so. At the masquerade he meets Juliet Capulet and immediately falls in love with her, forgetting all about Rosaline. Regardless of the family's objection and disapproval, Romeo and Juliet become lovers and decide to be secretly married. However, the young couple is not allowed to enjoy each other's company because soon after the ceremony the groom is banished from Verona for killing one of Juliet's relatives. Romeo must flee Verona and Juliet is forced to marry because no one knows she already has a husband. Juliet asks for help Romeo's friend, Friar Lawrence. He suggests that Juliet drinks a potion which would make her appear dead and he would warn Romeo to come back for her so they could leave Verona together without suspicion. But Juliet's wedding is moved a day ahead and she is forced to act. She drinks the potion and is considered to be dead; she is buried in the family tomb. Romeo never gets the warning about Juliet's fake death. He kills Juliet's fiancé Paris and kills himself

with poison alongside his wife. Juliet wakes up and beholds Romeo as he lies dead beside her. She takes his dagger and stabs herself, ending her life, this time for real. After these tragic deaths of the youngest members of the noble families, the Montagues and Capulets finally agree on a truce.

Film adaptations

The plays of William Shakespeare have been a great inspiration to film directors for many decades. There are many interpretations of the tragic love story of Romeo and Juliet in the film industry, such as:

- *Romeo and Juliet* (1936) – directed by George Cukor (USA), starring Leslie Howard as Romeo and Norma Shearer as Juliet
- *Romeo and Juliet* (1954) – directed by Renato Castellani (UK, Italy), starring Laurence Harvey as Romeo and Susan Shentall as Juliet
- *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) – directed by Franco Zeffirelli (UK, Italy), starring Leonard Whiting as Romeo and Olivia Hussey as Juliet
- *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) – directed by Baz Luhrmann (USA), starring Leonardo DiCaprio as Romeo and Claire Danes as Juliet

To sum up, Shakespeare's tragedy about two people loving each other without the possibility to actually be together is timeless and throughout the history of the last four hundred years, every generation perceives the story slightly differently. According to Araujo Agnes (2005, p. 17) *Romeo and Juliet* "...dramatizes the personal tragedy of all individual desires and aspiration repressed in youth by domineering parents and teachers..." The behaviour of the adults determines the actions of Romeo and Juliet which are not seen as acceptable or appropriate in Elizabethan society. Shakespeare addresses the audience with his intriguing dialogues, plots and his distinctive style of writing. During the period of four centuries the story has been retold in many different ways. Concerning the film industry perspective, the 20th century was the most diverse one, from Zeffirelli's version rendering the melancholy and the beauty of sadness to Luhrmann's one of gunshots being fired into the sky preventing the audience from falling into trance (Agnes, 2005, p. 24).

The narrative of *Romeo and Juliet* has its hold for audiences even after four hundred years. The death of the main characters is what makes it magical and their love everlasting as a tragedy should capture something exceptional and extraordinary, something most people only dream about.

1.2.2 *Hamlet*

The play *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare was not probably written until the autumn of 1598 because at that time a gentleman called Francis Meres published *Palladis Tamia*, a book which contained a list of Shakespeare's plays with *Hamlet* not being included. It would be unlikely for Meres not to mention *Hamlet* since the play had been popular among people from the very beginning (Hilský, 2010, p. 457).

A Danish chronicle kept by Saxo Grammaticus (12th/13th century) was the original source and inspiration for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The crucial motives of regicide, fratricide, incest, vendetta and pretended madness are all present in Saxo's story as well as in Shakespeare's, but the English author was probably more familiar with the story via French version by Francois de Belleforest. Francois de Belleforest's story (in English called *The Hystorie of Hamblet*) was translated anonymously into English in 1608 and by that time Shakespeare's version had been played for at least 8 years. In *The Hystorie of Hamblet*, traces of William Shakespeare's version could be found so the translation was most likely affected by the English version of the narration. The last source of inspiration for *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is the play which was not preserved and was commonly known as *Ur-Hamlet*. Thomas Nashe mentioned this play in the preface to one of Robert Greene's books. However, the only clear information is that eleven years before *Hamlet*, there was a tragedy called *Hamlet* as well. The Roman philosopher Seneca served as an inspiration to this tragedy and it was highly popular (Hilský, 2010, p. 462).

The tragedy *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* narrates the story about a young prince who is approached by a ghost. The ghost is prince's dead father and demands a vengeance. King Hamlet claims that he was murdered, and the killer is his own brother, Claudius. After his death Claudius becomes the king and he marries his brother's wife Gertrude. After having this dream, prince Hamlet starts to pretend to be mad and wants to find out the truth about his father's death. After one theatre performance Claudius is disturbed by the content of the play which convinces Hamlet that Claudius is guilty. Unfortunately, Hamlet accidentally kills Polonius, his beloved Ophelia's father, instead of Claudius.

The king feels threatened and sends Hamlet to England with an execution order, but Hamlet is cunning. He evades the execution and heads back to Denmark. In the meantime, Ophelia drowns since she cannot bear her father's death. Ophelia's brother Laertes challenges a duel with the prince, but it is not an honest fight because Claudius gives him a poisoned sword. Hamlet takes his rival's sword and kills him but he is wounded. Gertrude stands by the duel and she also dies as she drinks from the poisoned cup set up for Hamlet by Claudius. Hamlet eventually dies of his wound caused by the poisoned sword but before he dies, he manages to kill Claudius. In the end it is only Horatio, Hamlet's servant, who survives as his master's last command is to tell the world the true story.

Film adaptations

- *Hamlet* (1948) – directed by Sir Laurence Olivier (UK), starring Sir Laurence Olivier as Prince Hamlet
- *Hamlet* (1964) – directed by Grigori Kozintsev (Russia), starring Innokenty Smoktunovsky as Prince Hamlet
- *Hamlet* (1969) – directed by Tony Richardson (UK), starring Nicol Williamson as Prince Hamlet
- *Hamlet* (1990) – directed by Franco Zeffirelli (UK, Italy), starring Mel Gibson as Prince Hamlet
- *Hamlet* (1996) – directed by Kenneth Branagh (UK), starring Kenneth Branagh as Prince Hamlet
- *Hamlet* (2000) – directed by Michael Almereyda (USA), starring Ethan Hawke as Prince Hamlet

To conclude, the play *Hamlet* is undoubtedly one of the most famous tragedies ever written. The regicide is the essence of this play and everything that happened during the narration is somehow connected to it. Violence and desire for vengeance are the usual motives of tragedies and Hamlet is no exception, although the death of Claudius is a result of the spontaneous situation rather than a planned murder. Hamlet doubts constantly throughout the play whether his uncle is guilty or not even though the evidence is clear. The interesting fact about *Hamlet* is that the play begins and ends with poison, as Claudius murders the king with poison and his poison in the cup and in the sword actually causes the death of all the major characters. This play is full of inner monologues, doubts, errors,

states of helplessness, and failures but it is especially full of questions. According to Martin Hilský (2010, p. 529): “*These questions are eternal and at the same time are constantly changing throughout the time.*” According to the author of this thesis, these questions are the main point of the play *Hamlet*. Question of love, hatred, vengeance, honour and sanity; things that people struggle with every day.

1.3 Teaching Shakespeare

The work of William Shakespeare was originally meant for theatres. The author himself probably would not have imagined that his plays would one day be presented in classrooms as the literary work of one of the greatest writers that ever lived. According to Martin Blocksidge’s *Shakespeare in Education* (2005, p. 24): “*Many teachers believe that Shakespeare’s work conveys universal values and that his language expresses rich and subtle meanings beyond that of any other English writer.*” Students may find in his work the problems which are timeless and universal for humans. His plays mention problems between lovers and friends, enemies, vengeance, murder, violence and sex but also politics, racism or war.

William Shakespeare wrote plays which allow the readers to assess and analyze ethical and moral problems. They can explore the meaning of personal responsibility, morality and conscience. It is important for Shakespeare’s work to be involved in the curriculum as his plays let the young generation explore the values of life and the struggles in school before they are forced to face them in real life. The study of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Hamlet* can be crucial for proper personal development and education for the adolescents growing up in the 21st century (Heilmer, 2009, pp. 8-9). All young people experience the difficulties mentioned above regardless of whether they live in the 16th or in the 21st century. Therefore, these are the aspects which make Shakespeare the timeless writer.

Mary LeeAnne Laban in her work *Teaching Shakespeare: Exploring the Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Beliefs of Teachers of English* (2016, p. 22) says that: “*the beliefs of a teacher have a bearing on the teacher’s knowledge.*” In this work, it is suggested that personal views, theories and individual practice are shaped by beliefs. The beliefs of teachers are the motivation of their actions during a lesson and they also determine the way of the teaching of each individual. For example, a teacher, who believes it is important to study Shakespeare in detail, is more probable to include

a thorough analysis of one of his plays in the lesson and vice versa. A teacher uninterested in Shakespeare would just mention his work without the proper study of it. One way or the other, it is still important how the plays are taught and what the approach of teachers is.

1.3.1 How to present Shakespeare's work

Sheppard and Wade (1994) speak about **five main methods** used to teach students about Shakespeare's plays. These would be:

- 1) Play reading
- 2) Scene summarising
- 3) Literary analysis
- 4) Video watching
- 5) Theatre visiting

The classroom reading or play reading is quite a common strategy of teaching literature. It can be tedious but if it is presented with energy and commitment worthy of actors it can still be beneficial. Students must think of the text and work on their reading if they want to seize the proper mood of the passage. Everything depends on interpretation. Theatregoers visit the theatre with great expectance and wonder how the famous scenes would be acted. Nevertheless, classroom reading is certainly more valuable than sight reading or silent reading.

The summary of the scene focuses primarily on the plot. Sheppard and Wade (1994) observe: "*Scene summarizing places methodical emphasis on plot and may well be teacher-dominated. Without action research, beyond the scope of our exploratory questionnaire, we cannot confidently say how much students are allowed to join in the shaping of their own learning.*" The authors mentioned above also add that three out of the five mentioned strategies are desk-bound. These strategies do not possess the major intention of William Shakespeare which is drama performance.

As for literary analysis, it is almost on the same level of popularity as play reading. The literary analysis can often be difficult without guidance. However, there is a risk that the teacher can lead students according to his / her own conception of the play and then there would be a lack of space for their own views.

It is preferable to use videos or tapes because these days students are probably keen to watch a movie or video instead of reading the book. Nevertheless, it is suggested that the support of videos and tapes should be used critically and comparatively, wherever possible (Blocksidge, 2005, pp. 105-106).

Unlike watching films, visiting theatre is becoming less common, mainly due to financial reasons. On the other hand, taking a group of students to the theatre requires both money and the teacher's responsibility for the organisation and students. Nevertheless, teachers should be encouraged to take their students to the theatre because the "live experience" is irreplaceable. The lesson from the live performance could be more beneficial than just "watching the screen".

Teaching Shakespeare by performing

The crucial fact about Shakespeare's plays, which needs to be considered by teachers, is that they are intended for audience. In other words; they should be performed. Yet the most traditional method of teaching Shakespeare is not to actively involve students in the process of learning and exploring Shakespeare's plays. The reading of the play, the summarizing of the scene and the analysis of the literary work are the most common methods how to interpret the plays (Sutton, 2016, p. 21). The work of one of the greatest English poets and playwrights certainly possesses the ability and the potential to seize the students' attention. However, most of them still fail to absorb it because of the old-fashioned way of how is Shakespeare's work presented and taught, as students sit passively at the desks. Frank Whitehead (1966, p. 133) quotes Aldous Huxley (1927): *"Shakespeare did not write his plays to be read, with notes, by children sitting at desks; he wrote them to be acted."* Warwick Journal of Education (2017, p. 30) supports Huxley's statement: *"It is troubling that this vision of mid-twentieth - century classroom is still commonplace today; indeed, it is hardly surprising that so many students are unable to connect with Shakespeare on a meaningful level."*

This method does not encourage students to make their own opinion and often makes them adopt the opinion of their teacher because they take part in the lectures only as viewers rather than active participators. If the students were to understand one of the greatest English poets, the performance-based learning could help them. As one student observes: *"Moving and speaking as characters helped the most because it helps you paint a better picture in your mind, because they are right in front of you and you*

feel how the characters feel. You don't really get the feel(ing) when you're just reading, because you could think it was not a big deal if you get banished or you get turned down by your daughter if you're just reading but it is a big deal. I think that getting physically involved in your learning helps it stick in your mind better than just reading about it and then testing on it" (Edmiston & McKibben, 2011, p. 92).

This statement suggests that students should present at least part of the play in front of their peers. If the study of Shakespeare is based on performance, it will be more likely for children to comprehend the text and grasp the essence of the problem of every story. It does not matter whether they use their own personal experience or only the imaginary one as they try to perform a play in the group of their classmates. However, the personal experience is often more beneficial because it gives a certain space for emotions which can be well used in the performance. Not only they develop their ability to collaborate, to solve problems and to be a leader but they also improve their reading as well as the skill of interpretation. Simultaneously, it helps to understand that Shakespeare really is relevant for present students.

The integration of technology

Nowadays, technology dominates and rules the world. It is almost inevitable to avoid its usage as people utilize it daily for diverse types of activities, school obligations included. This is not necessarily a bad thing. As Deborah Heilmer (2009, p. 27) noted: *"It has been suggested that the inclusion of modern technology and media in the English classroom more appropriately reflects the way students today produce, receive and seek new information. Therefore, many students perceive studies which include the use of technology, modern media, and computer literacy skills as more personally useful and academically relevant than those which do not."* Devices of modern technology help students not to make such a huge difference between studying and their own personal life. If they could comment on Shakespeare online and discuss his stories on social media, it could be even more natural than the classroom discussion for students.

1.3.2 Teaching *Romeo and Juliet*

Michael Milburn (2002, p. 6) claims that *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most frequent plays by William Shakespeare involved in the school curriculum.

Lea J. Brown (1996) offers ways how to work with *Romeo and Juliet*. In her lesson, she begins with a vocabulary review. She explains Shakespeare's tendency to shorten the words and phrases. Also, she initiates a discussion about his style of writing and repeated use of iambic pentameter. Brown encourages her students to practise the language and link the unknown words to antonyms or synonyms. While reading the scene, she evaluates the students' rate of comprehension on: literal level, interpretive level and applied level. After that, they move on to evaluating the characters. In their analysis, they use adjectives in order to describe them.

The third activity Brown suggests is carousel activity. The point of this activity is to divide the class into groups. Each group is given the same four questions and after a certain period of time, they should present their answers. The aim is to observe the distinction of the perception of each group. The last activity applied by Brown is writing journals. Each student is given a role and is supposed to write a journal. Students represent the house of Montague and Capulet and they try to define how the main topic of the play, love versus hate, affected their lives.

In comparison to Lea J. Brown, Deborah Heilmer suggests a different sequence of activities. Firstly, the pace of progression needs to be considered. In case of a linguistically difficult text, it is not a problem if the pace of reading is slow. By giving students time, the teacher supports their comprehension skills. Another point would be watching a film. As it has been already suggested (Chapter Teaching Shakespeare by performing) Shakespeare's plays are meant to be performed rather than read. Therefore, a film is a good solution. Heilmer's suggestion is to choose a film adaptation or live videotaped performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. What's more, the teacher can choose more than one version and students may compare the different versions once they watch them. In the final part of the study, an analysis and the matter of cultural relevance should be included. The teachers are encouraged to include the analysis activities. If they do so, they create a relevant connection between the world of the play, the current world and the students' lives. The author believes that once students create such connection, they fail to resist the play (Heilmer, 2009, pp. 49-55).

1.3.3 Teaching *Hamlet*

As it has been mentioned before, in the English-speaking countries the performance-based activity is probably the most effective way how to teach and understand Shakespeare's plays. Martin Blocksidge (2005, p. 106) speaks about nine activities which were involved in the lesson when *Hamlet* was taught:

- 1) Work on religious and political context including historical outlook on vengeance, ghosts etc.
- 2) Compare the plots and the settings of other plays which are considered revenge tragedies
- 3) Comparative study of Hamlet's most famous soliloquy "To be or not to be" with other famous monologues
- 4) The classroom rehearses the scene where "*The murder of Gonzago*" appeared, students are supposed to examine the consequences and discuss the different approaches to the scene
- 5) Focus on specific moments in different film versions and compare them
- 6) Rewrite the selected Ophelia's monologues or create a new one for Gertrude
- 7) An analysis of Ophelia's character with emphasis on discontinuities and fractures without the attempt to make her character "consistent"
- 8) An examination of the political impact of cutting out Fortinbras's scenes
- 9) The discussion of the criticism of Shakespeare's works throughout the 20th century

On the other hand, Cath McLellan (Lesson plan, British Council, 2013) created a lesson plan on *Hamlet's* main theme which is revenge. In this lesson, students are aimed to practice the main aspects of language such as: listening, speaking, writing or critical thinking. Students will watch a video about *Hamlet* in order to understand the plot and characters. Then, they are supposed to work in groups and advise the main protagonist, prince Hamlet. It is possible to add alternative or additional follow up activities. In total, McLellan suggests five activities.

In the introduction, the teacher tells his/ her students a short anecdote. On the example of the anecdote, the teacher introduces the theme of revenge and asks his/ her students whether they would be for or against revenge. The second activity according to Cath

McLellan is to play a short video about *Hamlet*. An alternative is to create cards with words and definitions and students should pair them up according to the right match.

Activity number three focuses on a video about *Hamlet*. As students watch the video, they can be either provided with worksheets created by the author of this lesson plan or they utilize the word stock which they used in the alternative activity.¹ The teacher pauses the video several times and asks students diverse questions connected to Hamlet and situations he finds himself at. If the worksheet was involved, after playing the video, the class check the answers in pairs.

The fourth activity is a follow up activity. During the story, Hamlet is forced to make some tough decisions and the teacher asks students whether they think he made or did not make the right decision. To kill or not to kill Claudius is one of the decisions and students should imagine that Hamlet can ask for advice and give him some. After introducing the problematics, teacher's requirement for students is to write a letter to Hamlet according to the guideline he/ she gives them. They can work in pairs and after writing the letter, the pairs should exchange their letters. One pair answers another letter than their own and should provide the certain pair's letter with some advice. The last activity is optional, and the author provides the lesson plan with a link to a website, where can be found other additional activities.

Compared to activities which Martin Blocksidge mentions, activities mentioned in the lesson plan by Cath McLellan are more diverse. They focus on many aspects of language such as: listening, speaking, writing or practicing the pronunciation or grammar. However, both sets of activities engage students' creativity and imagination.

¹ This is possible only if the teacher decided for the alternative activity as well.

2 Empirical Part

2.1 The aims of the empirical part

The aim of the empirical part of this project is to show how students of the selected secondary schools perceive Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* from the long-term point of view and which teaching methods were applied in their lessons. Since this research aims to describe the perception of Shakespeare's work at Czech secondary schools, the examination has been based on the knowledge students acquired from Czech language and literature lessons.

Particular aims

- to examine the diversity of perception of Shakespeare's plays according to the type of secondary school
- to verify the assumption that activation methods are on the low level of usage
- to ascertain whether students remember the content of the play even after some time
- to verify three hypotheses which are connected to Q₆, Q₁₁ and Q₁₂
- to find out if students today find Shakespeare understandable and appealing at all

2.2 The method of the research

In our research study we use quantitative research. According to Peter Gavora (2010, pp. 35-36) quantitative research is characterized by:

- figures
- researcher's distance from the examined phenomena
- information classification and phenomena existence, cause and change explanation
- generalization of exact data and making predictions about phenomena
- selection of a representative sample
- verification of an existing pedagogical theory

The research method of this project is a questionnaire. A questionnaire is one of the most used methods of research in pedagogy, psychology, sociology or in the research of public opinion. It is usually defined as a method which gathers information by using written questions. In pedagogy, if the researcher wants to know the opinions or attitudes of pupils, teachers or parents, he or she would mostly utilize a questionnaire (Průcha, 1995, p. 43). There are several types of questionnaires. The unstructured questionnaire only introduces the topic and the respondent is allowed to write freely and is not limited by the choice of options. Unlike an interview, a questionnaire has the advantage of being well-arranged; therefore, it is likely to be used more frequently. The semi-structured questionnaire gives the respondent the questions, but it does not matter in which order the respondent answers them. The most frequent type is a structured questionnaire, in which the respondent must follow certain order. The standardized questionnaire used in quantitative research mostly contains closed questions, a few semi-closed questions and occasionally open and free types of questions (Reichel, 2009, pp. 118–119). The online questionnaire created for this project was distributed at four different types of secondary schools and students filled it in anonymously.

2.2.1 The structure of questionnaire

The research method used in this bachelor thesis is a semi-structured questionnaire which contains twelve questions and is written in the Czech language.² In two of these questions, the respondent has the opportunity to write his / her own opinion. In the other ten questions, the respondent is free to choose from the answers which are given. The author created this questionnaire according to the theoretical part of the thesis and according to the stated aims. There is also the thirteenth option which gives space for any comments the respondent wants to add.

The first two questions provide general information about the student. This information is the minimum the researcher has to know for a better overview of the examined matter. The third question is of a similar nature as the first two, but it is connected to William Shakespeare. All three questions are provided with options and the respondent may choose only one.

² The questionnaire, in both Czech and English versions, is accessible in appendix.

Questions which follow target the field of teaching Shakespeare. All questions are connected because the style of teaching Shakespeare (Q₄) creates students' impression of the plays (Q₅) and at the same time tells the researcher how detailed was the study of Shakespeare plays and whether students came across the original text at all (Q₆).

Question seven should confirm the author's hypothesis about which plays are taught at the Czech secondary schools. There is also an option to name other plays, not only the given ones. Questions eight to eleven should show if students remember the content of the play even after a longer period of time. Shakespeare is taught in the first year at secondary school; however, the questionnaire was purposely distributed among students in their senior years.

The last question deals with the matter of Shakespeare's significance in present day. The goal is to find out whether students tend to consider Shakespeare as old - fashioned and important only from the historical point of view or not at all or if they can identify themselves with his work even today.

2.2.2 The description of research procedure

First of all, I had to test whether the questionnaire is intelligible or not. For this purpose, I chose one senior student from a certain grammar school for her assessment. She confirmed that the questionnaire was intelligible. After that, I put the questionnaire online via Google Forms and contacted teachers who agreed to fill it in with their students. I briefly explained what the topic was and asked them whether they could distribute it to their senior year students. Furthermore, I gave them my emails address so they could contact me in case of any problem.

The deal with the teachers was that when they had some time space in their class, they would do the questionnaire. Most of the respondents filled it in within one week after it was sent to their teachers. A few respondents sent it to me after a longer period of time but there was no problem since there was a time reserve for the research. Overall, according to all information I was given, filling in the questionnaire took about ten to fifteen minutes.

2.2.3 Structure of the research sample

Respondents who participated in the research were all students of one senior year study group at the selected secondary schools³ or secondary grammar schools⁴. Information about respondents were obtained during the analysis on **Q1: Which school do you attend?** and **question Q2**, in which students stated their gender.

- 1) **Slovanské gymnázium Olomouc** [Slavic Secondary Grammar School Olomouc]
 - 27 respondents
 - the Czech language is subsidized by four hours per week (ŠVP, Slovanské gymnázium Olomouc, 2009)
- 2) **Gymnázium Kojetín** [Secondary Grammar School Kojetín]
 - 23 respondents⁵
 - the Czech language is in the senior year subsidized by four hours per week (ŠVP, Gymnázium Kojetín, 2013)
- 3) **Střední zdravotnická škola a vyšší odborná škola zdravotnická Emanuela Pöttinga** [Secondary Nursing School and Nursing College]
 - 25 respondents
 - specialization: medical assistant
 - the Czech language is in the senior year subsidized by three hours per week (ŠVP, Střední zdravotnická škola a vyšší odborná škola zdravotnická Emanuela Pöttinga, 2015)
- 4) **Střední průmyslová škola strojnická Olomouc** [Secondary Technical School Olomouc]
 - 27 respondents
 - specialization: 23-41-M/01 Strojírenství [Mechanical engineering]
 - the Czech language is in the senior year subsidized by three hours per week (ŠVP, Střední průmyslová škola strojnická Olomouc, 2009)

³ Secondary technical schools offer subjects from a specific field of study, including subjects in the state exam. After graduation, pupils are often prepared to enter the job market straight away.

⁴ Secondary grammar schools offer a wider variety of subjects (unlike secondary technical schools) to give a more complex education. Pupils from secondary grammar schools are expected to opt for tertiary education.

⁵ These students were the only ones, who attended the certain grammar school for eight years, not only for four.

In total, 102 respondents took part in the research. The figure no. 1 shows that 23 respondents are students of Secondary Grammar School Kojetín and 27 respondents are students of Slavic Secondary Grammar School. At Secondary Technical School there are 27 respondents and at Secondary Nursing School and Nursing College are 25 respondents. Altogether, 50 respondents attend a grammar school and 52 respondents attend a secondary school.

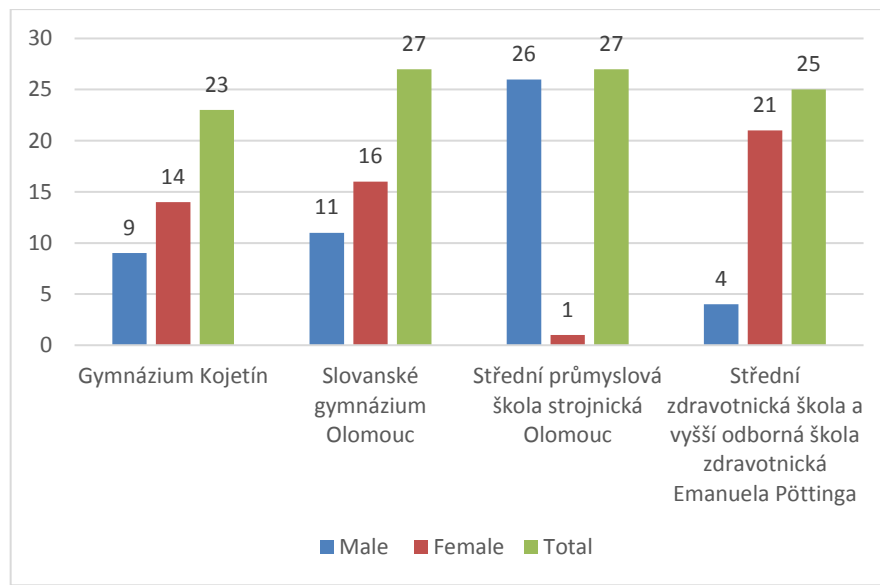


Figure no. 1: The structure of the research sample

In the figure no.1 we may see that at Secondary Technical School, there is the predominance of men as 26 students stated they were male and only one claimed she was female. On the other hand, at Secondary Nursing School and Nursing College, the predominance of women is evident because 21 students said they were females but only 4 students claimed to be men. These schools were chosen on purpose in order to balance the gender differences as such results were expected. In total, the questionnaire was filled in by 50 males and 52 females which is transparent in table no. 1.

Gender	No. of obs.	Percentage (%)
Male	50	49,02
Female	52	50,98

Table no. 1: The gender structure of research sample

2.3 Research results

Each question of the questionnaire is analysed separately. The implemented functions of Microsoft Excel spreadsheet are used in order to carry out the analysis. We also deal with gender differences in the perception of Shakespeare's plays. For this purpose, the hypotheses are defined. These hypotheses are verified according to the statistical method which is called the Chi-squared test. However, the test is applied only in questions where significant differences are expected. In order to solve and verify the statistic method, which was previously mentioned, we use statistic software called Statistica 13.

The test of independence of Chi-squared test for the contingency table is the method which was used for verification of the hypothesis. This statistical test is used when the researcher wishes to determine whether there is a relation between two pedagogical phenomena. This situation often occurs if a questionnaire is involved in the research (Chráska, 2006, p. 91). In this statistical test we compare expected and observed frequencies of given phenomena. Each hypothesis is accompanied with two contingency tables. One contingency table contains the observed frequencies whilst another contingency table contains the expected ones.

In order to do the Chi-squared test (χ^2), we must form a zero and an alternative hypothesis. According to result of Chi-squared test, we decide if the zero hypothesis was proven or not.⁶ The χ^2 test criterion is calculated using the equation $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(P-O)^2}{O}$, where P is the observed frequency and O is the expected frequency. The result of χ^2 shows us the disparity between reality and zero hypothesis. To assess the result of χ^2 , it is necessary to determine the degrees of freedom of calculated test criterion. The degrees of freedom are defined by the equation $f = (r - 1) * (s - 1)$ where r is the number of rows in the contingency table and s the number of columns (Chráska, 2006, pp. 92–93).

Now, we may begin with the analysis of questions.⁷ The figure no. 2 is connected to the third question **Q3: When did you first hear about William Shakespeare?** In this question, 49 out of 102 respondents answered that they already heard about Shakespeare at a lower secondary school whereas 30 of them attended a secondary rather than

⁶ $p < 0,05$ (5 %) – the hypothesis was proven, $p...$ the value of significance, $\alpha...$ the value of the determined significance level (these two values are compared)

⁷ We start with Q₃ because the previous questions were purely demographic.

grammar school. The second most common answer was that students heard about Shakespeare at a primary school and this was claimed by 22 respondents. 16 students stated that they did not remember where they heard about Shakespeare and the least frequent answer was that they were acquainted with him under different circumstances other than school.

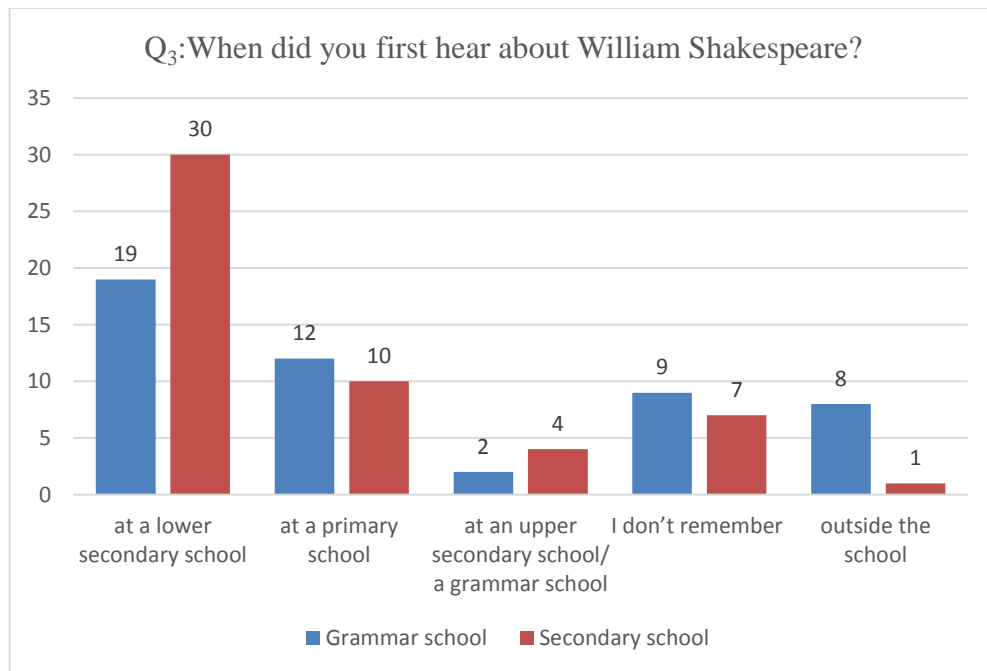


Figure no. 2: Students' first awareness of William Shakespeare

The data from the figure no. 3 **Q₄: How were Shakespeare's works handled at your school? You can choose more than one option** can be interpreted as follows: the most common form of teaching Shakespeare's plays is to tell students what the play is about. As students had the opportunity to choose more than one answer, 95 out of total 224 answers claim that respondents were told the content of the play which means 42,41 %. 29, 91 % of answers tell that students read a part from the play and 20, 54 % of answers claim that students saw a film. Only 16 out of 224 answers (7, 14 %) say that a dramatic performance (recitation, scenes re-enactment) was applied during a class.

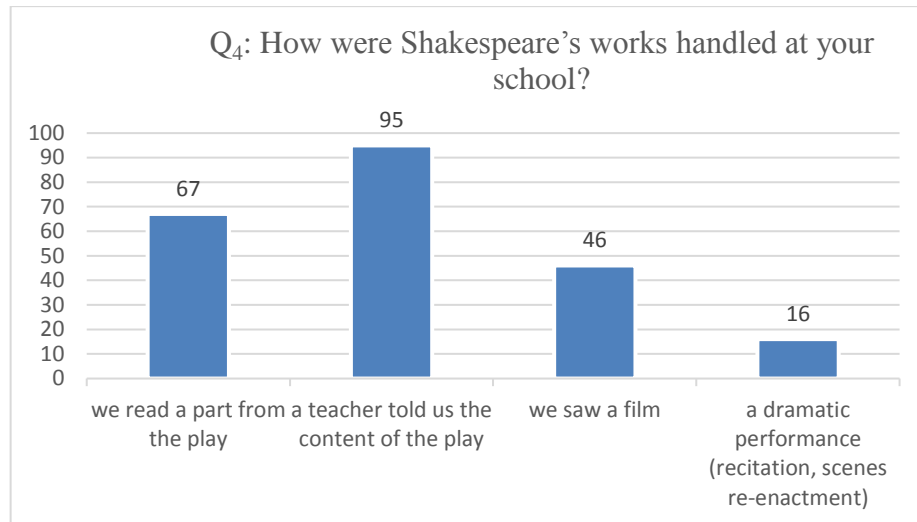


Figure no. 3: The methods of teaching Shakespeare's plays

The figure no. 4 is dedicated to **Q₅: Did the interpretation of Shakespeare's works spark an interest in you?** It is visible that most of respondents, specifically 45 of them, found Shakespeare interesting in the class but they devoted him none of their time outside the class after that. In 33 cases, respondents chose the option that they read a book/ they saw a film/ they were in the theatre, which can denote that they studied Shakespeare not only at school but in their free time as well. The least often chosen answer was in 24 cases where students stated they were not interested in the playwright's work.

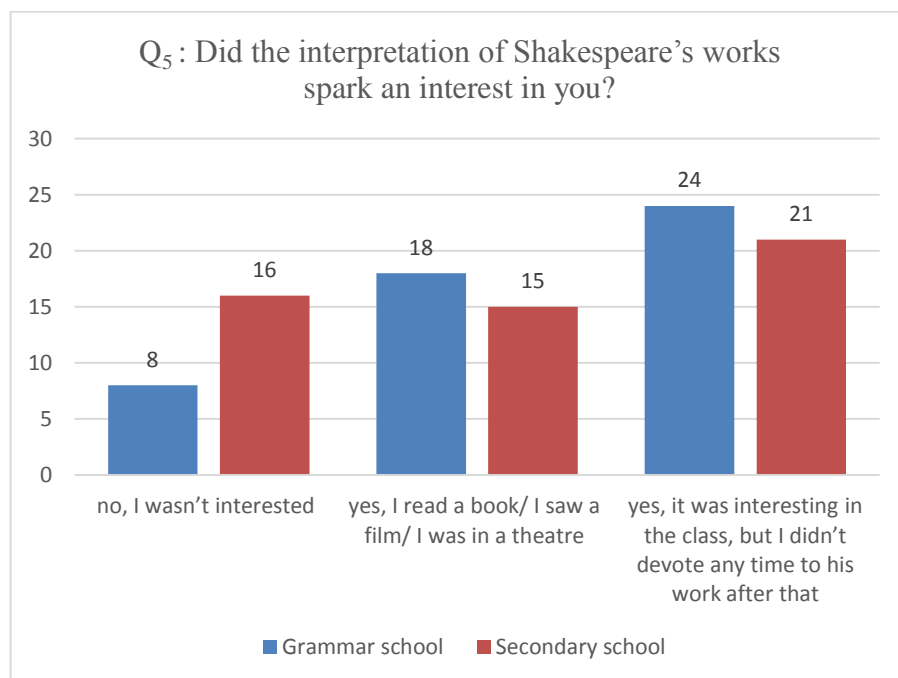


Figure no. 4: Students' interest in Shakespeare

The data consequential from the figure no. 5 are connected to **Q6: Did you find Shakespeare's work understandable?** and give evidence that Czech students understand the plays in Czech but they do not in English. 47, 05 % of respondents chose the answer "I did in Czech but not in English" whilst from the total number of 48 students, 24 students studied a grammar school and 24 of them studied a secondary school. This fact indicates it does not matter which school they attended because their comprehension in English is the same. The similar phenomenon is noticeable in the second option, where 37, 25 % of participants answered "I did; both in Czech and simplified English" whereas at both schools this option was chosen by 19 students.

The option "I did; both, in Czech and in original English" is represented by frequency of 8, 82 %, and "I don't find Shakespeare's language understandable" is the least frequent one expressed by 6, 86 %. If we compare the two least frequent answers, we may see that on this level there is a perceptible connection between comprehension and the type of school respondents study at.

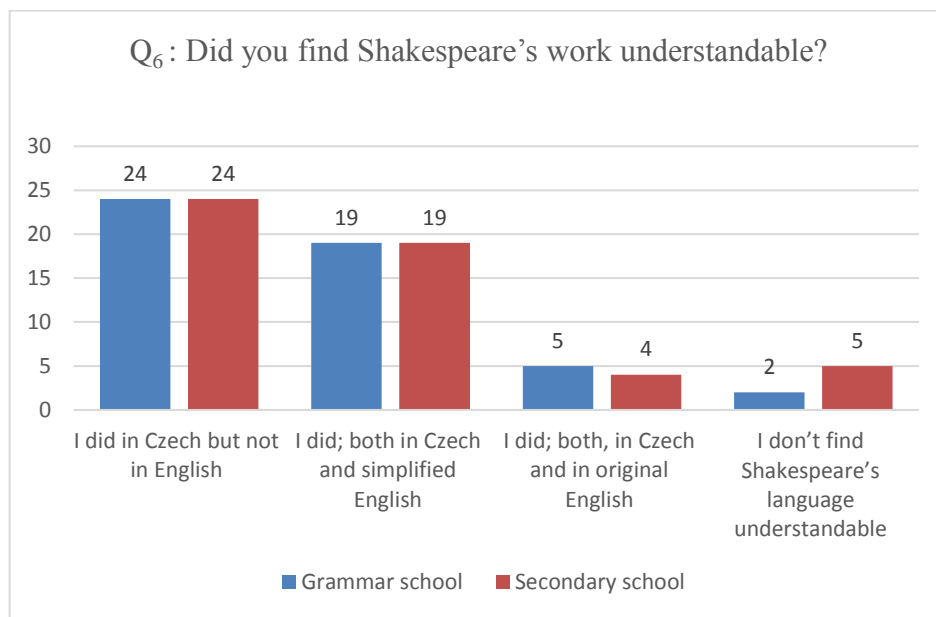


Figure no. 5: Respondents' and their comprehension of Shakespeare's language

We assume that in this question, gender differences may occur. The following hypothesis analysis focuses on gender differences.

The verification of hypothesis no. 1

H₁: The intelligibility of Shakespeare's work varies between men and women.

The aim of this hypothesis was to discover if there are any differences in comprehension of Shakespeare between men and women. The hypothesis could be verified according to answers which respondents provided in Q₆.

H₀: The intelligibility of Shakespeare's work does not vary between men and women.

H_A: The intelligibility of Shakespeare's work varies between men and women.

Summary Frequency Table (Data)			
Marked cells have counts > 10 (Marginal summaries are not marked)			
Q6: Did you find Shakespeare's work understandable?	Gender Female	Gender Male	Row Totals
I did in Czech but not in English	32	16	48
I did; both in Czech and simplified English	17	21	38
I did; both, in Czech and in original English	1	8	9
I don't find Shakespeare's language understandable	2	5	7
All Grps	52	50	102

*Table no. 2: Contingency table for observed frequencies (Chi-squared test)
(Statistica 13)*

Summary Table: Expected Frequencies (Data)			
Marked cells have counts > 10 Pearson Chi-square: 12,4501, df=3, p=,005990			
Q6: Did you find Shakespeare's work understandable?	Gender Female	Gender Male	Row Totals
I did in Czech but not in English	24,47059	23,52941	48,0000
I did; both in Czech and simplified English	19,37255	18,62745	38,0000
I did; both, in Czech and in original English	4,58824	4,41176	9,0000
I don't find Shakespeare's language understandable	3,56863	3,43137	7,0000
All Grps	52,00000	50,00000	102,0000

*Table no. 3: Contingency table for expected frequencies (Chi-squared test)
(Statistica 13)*

The value of the determined significance level α was determined as 0,05 (5 %). Calculated value of significance p is lower than 0,05 (see table no. 3) and that is why we accept the alternative hypothesis and refuse the zero hypothesis.

According to the results we can say that H₁: The intelligibility of Shakespeare's work varies between men and women **was confirmed**.

Q7: Which play did you discuss in class? meant to ascertain which of two plays we chose is involved in the school curriculum more often. In the figure no. 6 we can see that 59 respondents confirmed they discussed *Romeo and Juliet* as well as *Hamlet*. 33 respondents answered they were familiar with *Romeo and Juliet* and 5 respondents said they discussed *Hamlet* in class. Students were also given the option “different ones” which was used by 5 of them. The most frequent answer was that they discussed *The Taming of the Shrew* or *Othello*.

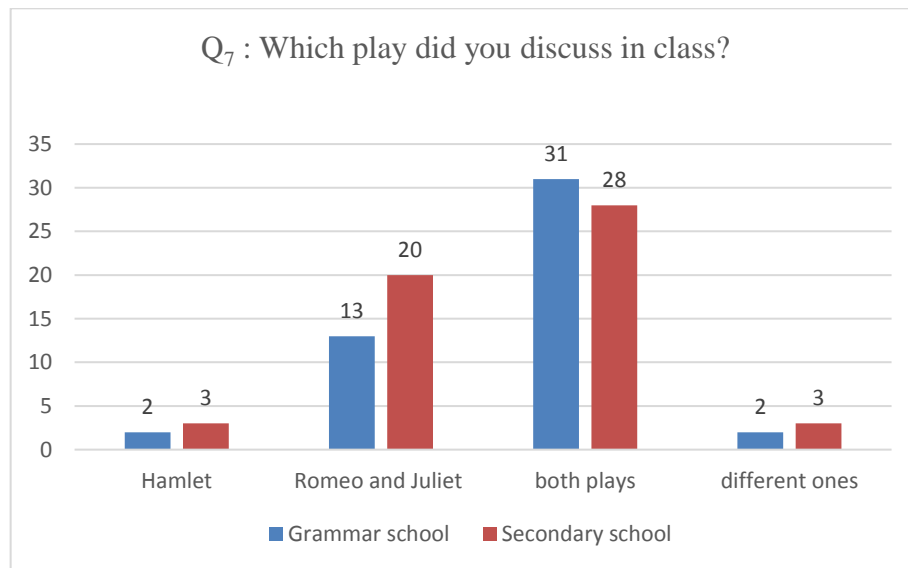


Figure no.6: Plays discussed in class

In the figure no. 7 we may see that to **Q8: If you read or saw *Romeo and Juliet*, were there any passages you would consider exaggerated, unnecessary or illogical?** 71 respondents answered “no” and 31 respondents answered “yes”. If they replied “yes” they were supposed to write which passages they had in mind. There appeared several answers, e.g. “It was pointless to kill yourself because of love” or “The expression of emotions and feelings was exaggerated” or “The play was overall exaggerated”.

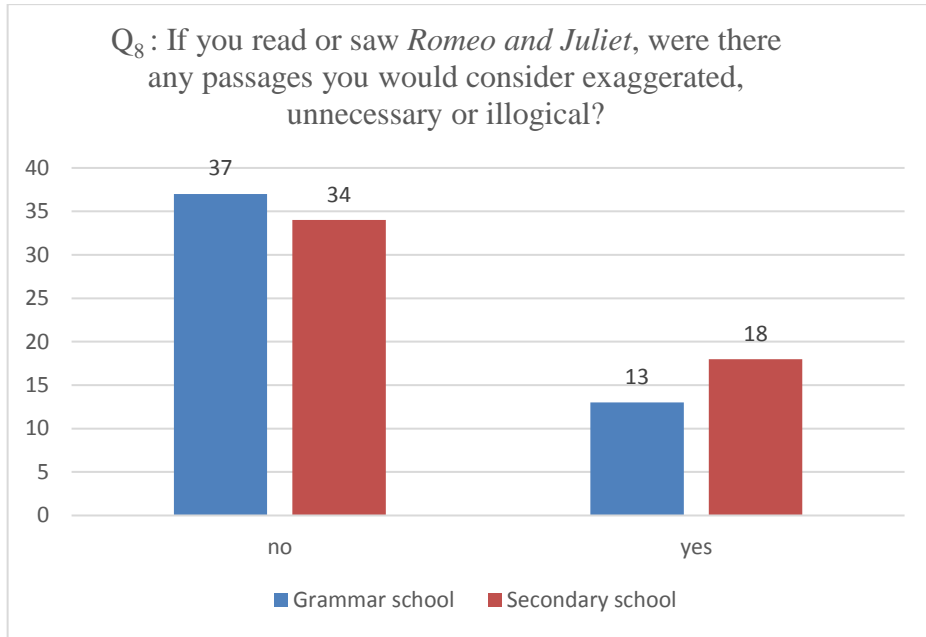


Figure no.7: Perception of logic in *Romeo and Juliet*

Results from the figure no. 8 connected to **Q₉: If you read or saw *Romeo and Juliet*, were there any comic scenes in the play?** tell us that the most frequent answer was “I don’t remember” which was chosen by 37 respondents. The second most frequent was “no” opted for by 36 respondents. The least frequent option chosen by 29 respondents was “yes”. In this figure we can see that there are significant differences between grammar schools and secondary schools in options “yes” and “no”. Answer “I don’t remember” may be considered as balanced as there were 19 students who attended grammar school and 18 students who attended secondary and they chose this option.

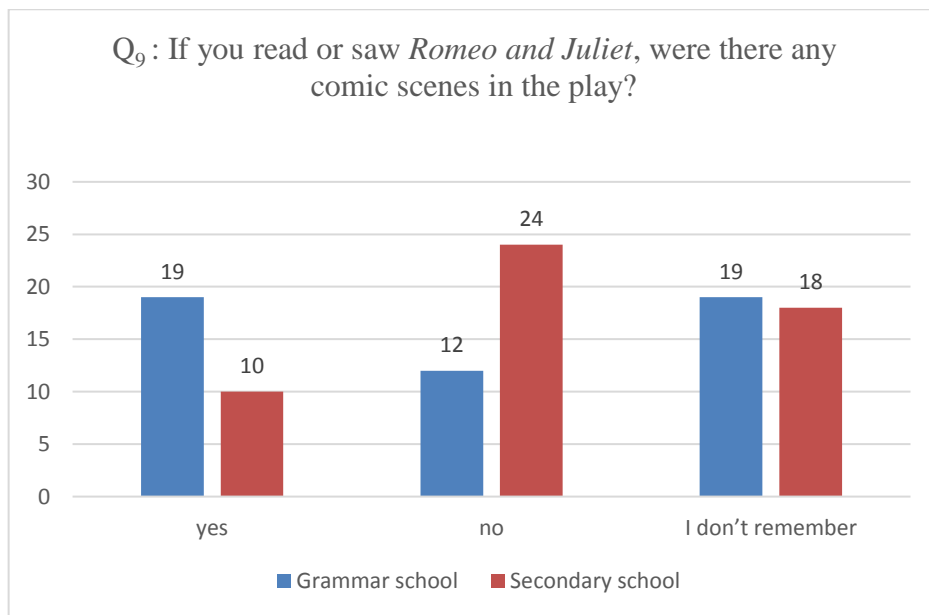


Figure no. 8: Presence of comic scenes in the *Romeo and Juliet*

In the figure no. 9 we can observe the frequency of answers to **Q10: If you read or saw *Hamlet*, whose behaviour could be called realistic?** “I cannot reflect on that” was the most frequent option, chosen by 63 respondents. According to 12 respondents, behaviour of prince Hamlet can be called realistic and 8 respondents think it is Ophelia’s behaviour. On the other hand, 5 respondents state that Claudius’s behaviour is realistic, and the same number of respondents think that realistically behave other characters than the enumerated ones. 4 respondents opted for answer “none” and 2 students, who were students of secondary school, thought that realistic behaviour was king Hamlet’s.

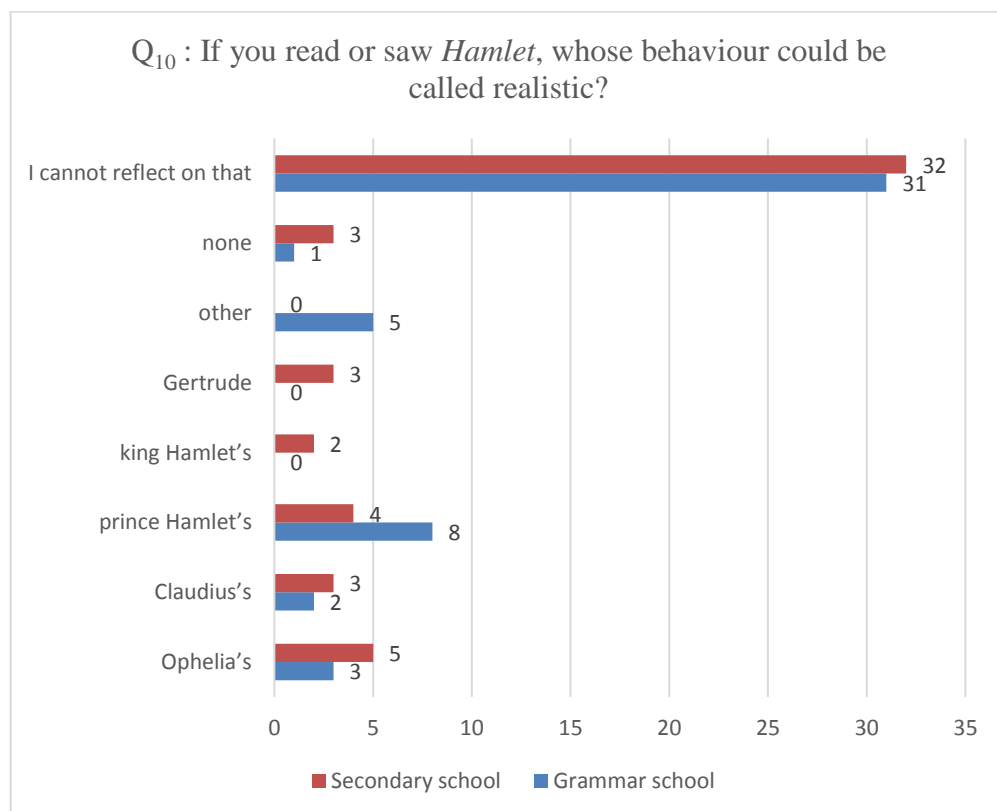


Figure no. 9: Students’ perception of characters’ behaviour in Hamlet

The consequential data from the figure no. 10 tell us the frequency of answers to **Q11: Do you think that the story of Hamlet could have really happened?** In the figure, we can see that 81 respondents (79, 41 % of researched sample) think that Hamlet’s story could have happened, but Shakespeare used not only the true story but his imagination as well. 11 respondents (10, 78 % of researched sample) have the opinion that the story really happened in the past. 10 respondents (9, 80 % of researched sample) stated that the story could not have happened. According to the theoretical part of this bachelor

thesis, Hamlet’s story is really based upon true events, yet roughly 11 % of students agreed with this statement.

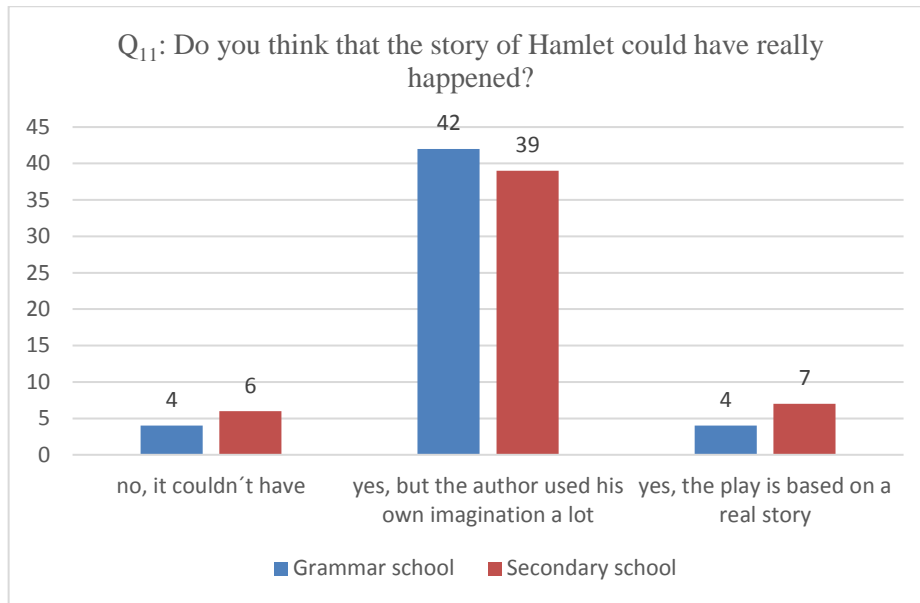


Figure no. 10: The verity in Hamlet

The perception among men and women is expected to be different so that is why the second hypothesis was stated.

The verification of hypothesis no. 2

H₂: Women tend to perceive Hamlet’s story more realistically than men.

The aim of the second hypothesis was to find out if there was any difference between men’s and women’s perception of Hamlet’s story. The verification of the hypothesis was based on answers in Q₁₁.

H₀: Women do not tend to perceive Hamlet’s story more realistically than men.

H_A: Women tend to perceive Hamlet’s story more realistically than men.

Summary Frequency Table (Data)			
Marked cells have counts > 10 (Marginal summaries are not marked)			
Q11: Do you think that the story of Hamlet could have really happened?	Gender Female	Gender Male	Row Totals
yes, but the author used his own imagination a lot	40	41	81
no, it couldn't have	6	4	10
yes, the play is based on a real story	6	5	11
All Grps	52	50	102

Table no. 4: Contingency table for observed frequencies (Chi-squared test)

(Statistica 13)

Summary Table: Expected Frequencies (Data)			
Marked cells have counts > 10			
Pearson Chi-square: ,464218, df=2, p=,792860			
Q11: Do you think that the story of Hamlet could have really happened?	Gender Female	Gender Male	Row Totals
yes, but the author used his own imagination a lot	41,29412	39,70588	81,0000
no, it couldn't have	5,09804	4,90196	10,0000
yes, the play is based on a real story	5,60784	5,39216	11,0000
All Grps	52,00000	50,00000	102,0000

Table no. 5: Contingency table for expected frequencies (Chi-squared test)
(Statistica 13)

The value of the determined significance level α was determined as 0,05 (5 %). Calculated value of significance p is higher than 0,05 (see table no. 5) and that is why we cannot refuse zero hypothesis, and this is the reason, why H_2 was not confirmed.

Based on the analysis, we may say that H_2 : Women tend to perceive Hamlet's story more realistically than men **was not confirmed**.

Q12: Do you think it is reasonable that children still learn about Shakespeare at school? was the final question in the questionnaire and the results are transparent in the figure no. 11. It shows that 48 respondents think students' awareness of Shakespeare is important because he was a significant literary figure in the past. 38 respondents state that teaching about Shakespeare is not pointless as people can identify with his work even today. 16 respondents think that it is not reasonable to teach students about Shakespeare because his work is old-fashioned. Again, we may notice that in answers "yes, I do, because even today people can identify with his work" and "no, it's old-fashioned," there is evident a certain difference between secondary school students and grammar school students.

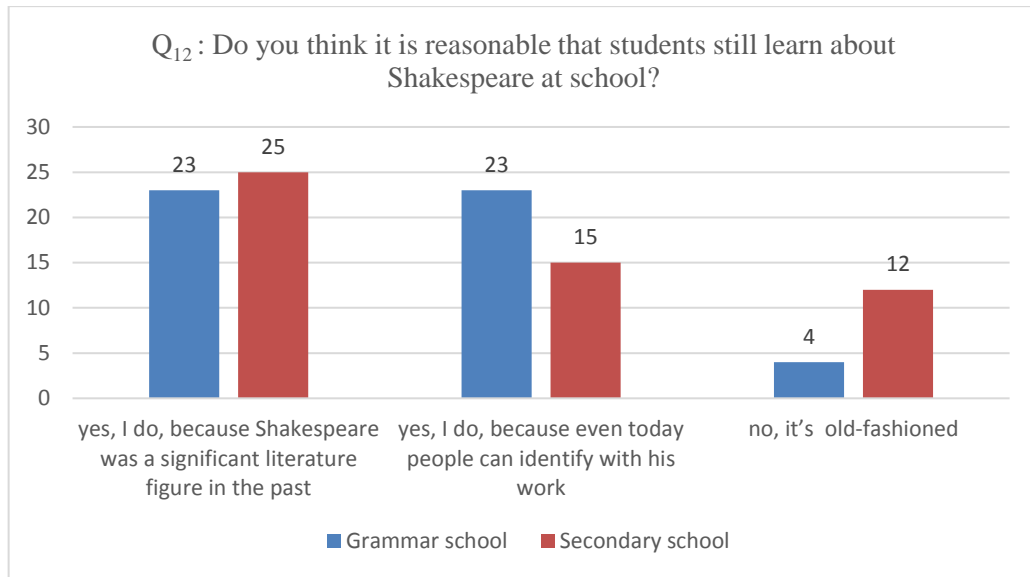


Figure no.11: Perception of Shakespeare's importance

As well as in Q6 and Q11 we assume that in this question, gender differences may occur. The following hypothesis analysis focuses on gender differences.

The verification of hypothesis no. 3

H3: There is no difference between men and women and their perception of Shakespeare's importance.

The aim of the third hypothesis was to ascertain if there was any difference between men's and women's perception of Shakespeare's work. The verification of the hypothesis was based on answers in Q12.

H₀: There is a difference between men and women and their perception of Shakespeare's importance.

H_A: There is no difference between men and women and their perception of Shakespeare's importance.

Summary Frequency Table (Data)			
Marked cells have counts > 10 (Marginal summaries are not marked)			
Q12: Do you think it is reasonable that students still learn about Shakespeare at school?	Gender Female	Gender Male	Row Totals
yes, I do, because even today people can identify with his work	20	18	38
yes, I do, because Shakespeare was a significant literature figure in the past	28	20	48
no, it's old-fashioned	4	12	16
All Grps	52	50	102

Table no. 6: Contingency table for observed frequencies (Chi-squared test)
(Statistica 13)

Summary Table: Expected Frequencies (Data)			
Marked cells have counts > 10			
Pearson Chi-square: 5,40146, df=2, p=,067157			
Q12: Do you think it is reasonable that students still learn about Shakespeare at school?	Gender Female	Gender Male	Row Totals
yes, I do, because even today people can identify with his work	19,37255	18,62745	38,0000
yes, I do, because Shakespeare was a significant literature figure in the past	24,47059	23,52941	48,0000
no, it's old-fashioned	8,15686	7,84314	16,0000
All Grps	52,00000	50,00000	102,0000

*Table no. 7: Contingency table for expected frequencies (Chi-squared test)
(Statistica 13)*

The value of the determined significance level α was determined as 0,05 (5 %). Calculated value of significance p is lower than 0,05 (see table no. 7) and that is why we accept the alternative hypothesis and we refuse the zero hypothesis.

Therefore, we may say that H_3 : There is no difference between men and women and their perception of Shakespeare's importance **was confirmed**.

The thirteenth point of the questionnaire was intended for students to write any other comments or thoughts they had connected to the topic. Most of respondents did not add any information or opinions. Nevertheless, some students commented on this point and the most common thoughts were the following ones: "Shakespeare never existed" and "Shakespeare did not write alone but worked in a group of other writers". Also, there was a comment which said that it is not bad that students learn about Shakespeare but today's generation does not welcome his work because they are not interested in something which was written so long ago.

2.4 Summary and discussion

According to the analysis, most students heard about Shakespeare at lower secondary school which means in the age group of eleven to sixteen years old. In the class, students are usually told what the play is about, some may watch a film or read a part of the play or be even part of dramatic performance. In the theoretical part, it was mentioned that the most effective way to teach Shakespeare is to engage students and do not to allow them to be passive. Nevertheless, we might see that in Czech educational system, the frontal teaching method is one of the most dominant ones as far as Shakespeare's work is concerned. We believe that the ways of teaching such as telling students the content of the play or watching a film are both passive methods and do not allow them to use their own imagination. Reading a play is not entirely a passive way to interpret William Shakespeare's plays and it gives students the possibility to absorb his style of writing. Yet, the most effective method of teaching Shakespeare's work (see theoretical part, chapter 1.3.1) is neglected in our educational system. As the answers show, students are generally interested in Shakespeare, but they are not so keen to dedicate their free time to learning more about his works. On the other hand, some students do not find Shakespeare interesting at all. The reasons for it are most certainly diverse. One way or the other, we believe it is important to say that with the increase of active participation, this students' opinions might change.

Overall, students do not find any difficulties to understand the content of Shakespeare's plays in Czech translations. Some of them are comfortable even with modified English versions or English original. Nonetheless, we predicted differences between the men's comprehension and the women's comprehension, and this hypothesis was proven to be valid. As the data suggest (see empirical part, table no. 2), women tend to be more perceptive of Shakespeare's work than men.

Plays *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* are truly the most popular and well-known ones and students are usually familiar with both. Some respondents stated that they also came across *Othello* or *The Taming of the Shrew*. Most respondents think that *Romeo and Juliet* does not contain exaggerated, illogical or unnecessary passages; still, there were students who acknowledge that killing for love is not necessary or they consider the expressed emotions or the whole play exaggerated. Most respondents do not remember whether there are any comic scenes present or they think comic scenes are not present. A similar

opinion occurred when major part of students stated they cannot reflect on if Hamlet's behaviour can be considered as realistic or not. This would suggest that students are more or less familiar with the content of plays, but they are vague about details. One of the particular aims of empirical part was to discover if students remember the content of discussed plays even after some time and this series of questions show they truly do.

81 participants in this research were convinced that Hamlet's story was based upon true events, but the author needed to improve it to a degree. Again, we presumed there were differences between men and women and their perception of credibility of Hamlet's story. We stated hypothesis no. 2 and eventually we discovered that H₂: Women tend to perceive Hamlet's story more realistically than men cannot be confirmed because there were no significant statistic differences.

In most cases, students share the opinion that it makes sense William Shakespeare is still taught in schools. Opinions differ in the cause. More students think they heard about Shakespeare because he was important in the past whilst the other students think they can identify with the themes of his work even today (see theoretical part, chapter 1.2.2). There are also a few students who think his work is old-fashioned. In relation to this question, the last hypothesis dealing with gender differences was stated. This hypothesis implies there might be a difference between men's and women's perception of Shakespeare's importance. The Chi-squared test proved it was true.

In the end, students had the opportunity to write any other thoughts which could come to their mind. Somebody suggested Shakespeare was not bad, but he wrote a long time ago and this is not appealing for today's generation. There were several opinions that claimed Shakespeare did not exist at all or did not write his plays alone. Either way, this is something nobody can ever prove. However, it is interesting to see the diversity of students' opinions.

Conclusion

In the introduction, we stated that the intention of this bachelor thesis is to show Shakespeare's role and influence in education, students' perception of his plays and teaching methods which were applied during the process.

In the theoretical part, the attention was paid to specific points such as: William Shakespeare's brief biography and work or the description of his selected plays. The second part of the theoretical part dealt with teaching Shakespeare and which methods or means can be applied in lessons. In the last two chapters, we focused on which specific activities can be used if teachers are supposed to interpret *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. Therefore, we may say that two out of three aims which were stated in the beginning were fulfilled.

The remaining aim of detection of students' perception of Shakespeare was fulfilled in the empirical part of the thesis using the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed among four secondary schools. In order to obtain more information about respondents' perception, we determined three hypotheses which dealt with diversity between women's perception and men's perception. The statistic method known as Chi-squared test determined that two hypotheses were valid.

To conclude, teachers of literature constantly search for inspiration and new ways how to make one of the greatest and at the same time most challenging poets to read more approachable and attractive. There are several aims in teaching Shakespeare. One of them is to appreciate the language use and the structure of his work. The second one is to present students with the background of Elizabethan era such as: the development of theatre; the stage where actors performed; the acting itself and dramatic reading. The third aim is connected to the themes Shakespeare speaks about. Students are intended to understand humankind, its culture and environment. He also speaks about love, hatred, betrayal or disappointment and these are topics that never get old (Aydin, 2013, p. 31).

Nevertheless, the intention of this bachelor thesis was to show that Shakespeare really does matter even after five centuries. If teachers make an effort to engage their students actively by utilizing different types of tools and methods, they might actually be successful. Overall, it appears that Czech students are interested in William Shakespeare and they understand what he wanted to tell the world. Nonetheless, one fact remains. No one can ever tell what the best way to teach Shakespeare is. The important thing is not to stop searching for it.

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Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývala percepcí vybraných děl Williama Shakespeara u studentů různých SŠ, jeho rolí a vlivem v edukačním procesu a metodami, jakými jsou jeho díla vyučována. Teoretická část je věnována stručnému životopisu tohoto dramatika a zběžnému výčtu jeho děl. Dále se zabývá popisem her *Romeo a Julie* a *Hamlet*, což jsou díla, u nichž byla percepce zkoumána. Druhá polovina teoretické části je věnována problematice vyučování Shakespeareových děl obecně a následně konkrétním aktivitám, které se dají realizovat u dvou námi vybraných děl.

Praktická část se věnuje analýze otázek, které byly obsaženy v dotazníku, jenž byl distribuován mezi studenty různých středních škol či gymnázií. Účelem dotazníku bylo nejenom zjistit, jak studenti vnímají dramatikova díla, ale také, jak probíhala interpretace těchto děl. Zároveň byly analyzovány tři hypotézy, které se zabývaly genderovými rozdíly v percepci Shakespeareových děl.

Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Markéta Faltýnková
Katedra nebo ústav:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Petr Anténe, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2020

Název práce:	Percepce vybraných děl Williama Shakespeara na SŠ
Název v angličtině:	The Perception of Selected William Shakespeare's Works at Secondary Schools
Anotace práce:	Práce si klade za cíl zkoumat percepci vybraných děl Williama Shakespeara u studentů SŠ, jak probíhá interpretace jeho děl a jakými metodami jsou díla vyučována. Práce je rozdělena na část teoretickou a praktickou. Část teoretická dává základ pro dotazníkové šetření, které je zkoumáno a vyhodnocováno v části praktické.
Klíčová slova:	William Shakespeare, percepce, vzdělávání, <i>Romeo a Julie</i> , <i>Hamlet</i> , vyučování, dotazník
Anotace v angličtině:	The project aims to research Czech secondary school students' perception of selected William Shakespeare's works, to ascertain the interpretation of his plays and which methods were applied during this process. The thesis is divided into theoretical and empirical part. The theoretical part creates foundation for the questionnaire results which were analysed and evaluated in the empirical part.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	William Shakespeare, perception, education, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , <i>Hamlet</i> , teaching, questionnaire
Přílohy vázané v práci:	5 s., česká a anglická verze dotazníku
Rozsah práce:	54 s.
Jazyk práce:	Anglický

Appendix

The Questionnaire

- 1) Which school do you attend?
 - a) Slovanské gymnázium Olomouc
 - b) Střední průmyslová škola strojnická Olomouc
 - c) Střední zdravotnická škola a vyšší odborná škola zdravotnická Emanuela Pöttinga a jazyková škola s právem státní zkoušky Olomouc
 - d) Gymnázium Kojetín

- 2) You are:
 - a) male
 - b) female

- 3) When did you first hear about William Shakespeare?
 - a) at a primary school
 - b) at a lower secondary school
 - c) at an upper secondary school/ a grammar school
 - d) outside the school
 - e) I don't remember

- 4) How were Shakespeare's works handled at your school? You can choose more than one option.
 - a) a teacher told us the content of the play
 - b) we saw a film
 - c) we read a part from the play
 - d) a dramatic performance (recitation, scenes re-enactment)

- 5) Did the interpretation of Shakespeare's works spark an interest in you?
 - a) no, I wasn't interested
 - b) yes, it was interesting in the class, but I didn't devote any time to his work after that
 - c) yes, I read a book/ I saw a film/ I was in the theatre/

- 6) Did you find Shakespeare's work understandable?
- a) I did; both in Czech and in original English
 - b) I did; both in Czech and simplified English
 - c) I did in Czech but not in English
 - d) I don't find Shakespeare's language understandable
- 7) Which play did you discuss in class?
- a) *Hamlet*
 - b) *Romeo and Juliet*
 - c) both plays
 - d) different ones:
- 8) If you read or saw *Romeo and Juliet*, were there any passages you would consider exaggerated, unnecessary or illogical?
- a) no
 - b) yes (which ones): _____
- 9) If you read or saw *Romeo and Juliet*, were there any comic scenes in the play?
- a) yes
 - b) no
 - c) I don't remember
- 10) If you read or saw *Hamlet*, whose behaviour could be called realistic?
- a) Ophelia's
 - b) Claudius's
 - c) prince Hamlet's
 - d) king Hamlet's
 - e) other characters'
 - f) none
 - g) I cannot reflect on that

11) Do you think that the story of Hamlet could have really happened?

- a) no, it couldn't
- b) yes, but the author used his own imagination a lot
- c) yes, the play is based on a true story

12) Do you think it is reasonable that students still learn about Shakespeare at school?

- a) yes, I do, because Shakespeare was a significant literary figure in the past
- b) yes, I do, because even today people can identify with his work
- c) no, it's old-fashioned

13) Other notes:

Dotazník

Dobrý den, mé jméno je Markéta Faltýnková a tento dotazník je důležitou součástí mé bakalářské práce. Mým cílem je zjistit, jak studenti SŠ vnímají Shakespearovo dílo a jakým způsobem je jeho dílo vyučováno.

Děkuji vám za Váš čas a za pravdivé vyplnění dotazníku.

- 1) Jakou školu studujete?
 - a) Slovanské gymnázium Olomouc
 - b) Střední průmyslová škola strojnická Olomouc
 - c) Střední zdravotnická škola a vyšší odborná škola zdravotnická Emanuela Pöttinga a jazyková škola s právem státní zkoušky Olomouc
 - d) Gymnázium Kojetín

2) Jste:

- muž žena

- 3) Kdy jste poprvé slyšeli o Williamu Shakespearovi?
 - a) 1. stupeň základní školy
 - b) 2. stupeň základní školy / nižší gymnázium
 - c) střední škola / gymnázium
 - d) mimo školu – napište, za jakých okolností
 - e) nepamatuji si
- 4) Jakým způsobem jste ve škole pracovali se Shakespearovými díly? Zaškrtněte libovolný počet možností.
 - a) učitel nám sdělil obsah díla
 - b) viděli jsme film
 - c) četli jsme úryvek z knihy
 - d) dramatický projev (recitace, scénka)
- 5) Vzbudil ve vás způsob podání Shakespearových děl zájem o jeho další tvorbu?
 - a) ne, nebavilo mě to
 - b) ano, na hodině mě to bavilo, ale dál jsem se jeho tvorbě nevěnoval/a
 - c) ano, četl/a jsem knihu / díval/a jsem se na film / byl/a jsem v divadle
- 6) Byla pro vás Shakespearova díla srozumitelná?
 - a) v češtině ano, v původní angličtině taktéž
 - b) v češtině ano, ve zjednodušené anglické verzi taktéž
 - c) v češtině ano, v angličtině ne
 - d) Shakespearův projev je pro mě nesrozumitelný

- 7) Kterému dílu jste se věnovali ve výuce?
- a) *Hamletovi*
 - b) *Romeovi a Julii*
 - c) oběma dílům
 - d) jiným: _____
- 8) Pokud jste četli nebo viděli *Romea a Julii*, působily na vás některé pasáže v této hře přehnaně, nadbytečně nebo nelogicky?
- a) ne
 - b) ano (uved'te jaké): _____
- 9) Pokud jste četli nebo viděli *Romea a Julii*, jsou podle vás ve hře vtipné scény?
- a) ano
 - b) ne
 - c) nepamatuji si to
- 10) Pokud jste četli nebo viděli *Hamleta*, jaké postavy se podle vás chovaly realisticky?
- a) Ofélie
 - b) Claudius
 - c) Gertruda
 - d) princ Hamlet
 - e) král Hamlet
 - f) jiné
 - g) žádné
 - h) nevím, neumím posoudit
- 11) Myslíte si, že Hamletův příběh se doopravdy mohl stát?
- a) ne, nemohl
 - b) ano, ale autor si spoustu věcí přimyslel
 - c) ano, autor byl inspirovaný skutečnými událostmi
- 12) Vidíte nějaký smysl v tom, že se o dílech Williama Shakespeara stále ve školách učí?
- a) ano, protože v minulosti byl Shakespeare pro literaturu důležitý
 - b) ano, s jeho díly se lze ztotožnit i v dnešní době
 - c) ne, je to zastaralé
- 13) Zde máte prostor na jakékoli jiné poznámky: