

Univerzita Hradec Králové  
Pedagogická fakulta  
Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

**The Earlier Means/Does Not Mean The Better - The  
Problem of Early English Language Learning at  
Elementary Schools**

Diploma Thesis

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Studijní program: N7504 Učitelství pro střední školy

Studijní obor: Učitelství pro střední školy - výtvarná výchova  
Učitelství pro 2. stupeň ZŠ - anglický jazyk a  
literatura

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**ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE**  
(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

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**Učitelství pro 2. stupeň ZŠ - anglický jazyk a literatura**  
Název tématu: **Dříve (ne)znamená lépe - otázka rané výuky angličtiny na základní škole**  
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury**

**Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :**

Práce se zaměří na otázku rané výuky angličtiny, její pozitiva a negativa, případně vliv na další výuku cizího jazyka na základní škole. Práce bude obsahovat drobný výzkum.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Seznam odborné literatury: **viz příloha**

Vedoucí diplomové práce:

**Mgr. Olga Vraštilová, M.A., Ph.D.**

Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

Datum zadání diplomové práce: **9. ledna 2014**

Termín odevzdání diplomové práce: **5. června 2015**

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## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala (pod vedením vedoucí práce) samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne .....

## **Poděkování**

Děkuji Mgr. Olze Vraštilové, M.A., Ph.D. za odborné vedení práce, cenné rady a podněty při psaní diplomové práce a také své rodině za podporu a trpělivost.

## **Anotace**

LIŠKOVÁ, Martina. *Dříve (ne)znamená lépe – otázka rané výuky angličtiny na základní škole*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2015, 64s. Diplomová práce.

Práce se zaměří na otázku rané výuky angličtiny, její pozitiva a negativa, případně vliv na další výuku cizího jazyka na základní škole. Dále se práce zaměří na míru motivace žáků ve výuce anglického jazyka v podmínkách České republiky. Práce bude obsahovat drobný výzkum.

Klíčová slova: výuka angličtiny, raná, základní škola, motivace, Česká republika, vliv

### **Annotation**

LIŠKOVÁ, Martina. *The Earlier Means/Does Not Mean The Better - The Problem of Early English Language Learning at Elementary Schools*. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, 2015, 64pp. Diploma Thesis.

The Diploma Thesis will focus on the problem of early English language learning, its advantages and disadvantages, and the influence on following education at primary schools. The Thesis will further focus on the degree of motivation of learners of English language in the conditions of the Czech Republic. A small research will be included.

Keywords: learning English, early, primary school, motivation, the Czech Republic, influence

# CONTENT

INTRODUCTION .....	9
1 LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE .....	11
1.1 How do young children learn a foreign language .....	12
1.2 How adolescents learn a foreign language.....	14
1.3 How adults learn a foreign language.....	16
1.4 Differences in learning according to the age of learners.....	18
2 MOTIVATION OF LEARNERS .....	22
2.1 The importance of motivation – extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation .....	22
2.2 Motivating students according to the age.....	24
2.3 Exposure to the language through media and other sources .....	27
3 CONDITIONS OF LEARNING .....	30
3.1 Bilingual vs. classroom conditions .....	31
4 PRACTICAL PART – RESEARCH.....	34
4.1 The background of the research .....	34
4.2 Survey – types of questionnaires.....	36
4.3 Questionnaires for English teachers .....	38
4.4 Questionnaires for primary school learners .....	42
4.5 Questionnaires for lower-secondary learners.....	48
CONCLUSION.....	57
SOURCES: .....	60
APPENDIX A.....	62
APPENDIX B .....	63
APPENDIX C .....	64



## INTRODUCTION

The theme of this thesis explores the problem of early language learning and teaching at primary schools. Several aspects of learning and teaching English as a foreign language to young learners and other age groups will be introduced and discussed. The basic idea of the thesis is that these days most people think that children may benefit from the early start but their common claim that says “the earlier the better” has no provable evidence so far. The only thing that has been widely agreed with uninitiated public is that children are better learners than adults, which is partly a true statement if we put that in contrast.

This issue becomes more topical in the past years and in the near future it will become even more important to define strict boundaries to the minimum limit of foreign language learners. The question of age will also be mentioned along with the decreasing limit of the start with a foreign language. There are many authors who strongly support the idea of early start due to the researches that have been done in past, but their opinion is highly disputed by those who consider early foreign language learning as practically useless. On both sides of this argument there are acknowledged specialists and a number of researches have been done in order to define the optimal age for the start, but the ambition to teach younger and younger students sometimes seem more desired than approved.

The author of this thesis has chosen the topic because of the fact that at the present time children more often start to learn English compulsorily in the first grade, whereas in past decades they usually started in the third or fourth grade. There is a strong demand to start with a foreign language in the first grade or even earlier in the kindergarten, but the number of the lessons a week usually does not exceed one or two 45-minute lessons a week, in opposite to third graders (and up to the ninth grade) who traditionally have minimum three lessons a week.

So all in all we can assume that there are many important aspects of foreign language learning that have to be discussed and inquired in terms of conditions of learning, frequency and the most of all accuracy. Conditions of learning will be discussed in terms of exposure to the language within the Czech Republic and with

the comparison to other European countries. In practical part the thesis will examine the impact of motivation on young learners and if there are any possibilities to raise the degree of motivation through exposure via media and informational technologies.

Experts on this subject matter agree that there are few things that have to be done appropriately in order to gain as much as possible from the learning process and when talking about very young learners we have to take it even more fundamentally. For instance, the teacher of very young learners has to be skilled in many ways to engage the children in learning process. Some experts think that the teacher serves as a model to them and he is responsible for their future attitude to learning for it is in early process of shaping - especially when the children are of kindergarten age. It is easy to think that children take up only the benefits of it, but when you look at the facts there are not many teachers who are trained enough to teach very young pupils, and their pronunciation is often a subject to be discussed as well (if we talk about non- native speakers). And while some researchers say that children at this low stage of learning may absorb everything easily how we can make the most of it instead of teaching them wrong pronunciation?

This master's thesis will try to answer some of the questions that are generally thought to be true, so they have become a sort of dogma presented by people who are not real experts. This thesis will present the ideas from both sides while trying to find the reasonable stage of whether the younger actually means the better in conditions of primary schooling system in the Czech Republic. The second part of the thesis is dedicated to a small survey that will try to find a way to establish better pillars for young learners to gain as much as possible from the language learning process from the very beginning.

# 1 LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The first part of the thesis discusses the question of general approach to learning foreign languages to learners of various ages. Although this has been already explored by several authors, it is essential to understand the whole process of learning to maintain inspiring and effective learning, especially when talking about young learners; thus it is worth mentioning in order to explore this matter of interest – what is the most suitable age for the start of learning a foreign language?

There will be explained the most important aspects of the language that has to be highlighted in order to express the needs and reasons for starting learning a foreign language in a very young age. The descriptions mentioned below are generalisations that only give us an overall look on characteristics of particular age groups, but we need to bear in mind that each child, adolescent or adult has different experience, abilities and the level of motivation.

First of all, we will divide each group according to the age, which is not always conclusively defined. According to Harmer learners are usually described as children, young learners, adolescents, young adults or adults. Thus we can see that some of these terms are linked together because, for example, young learners definitely belong to the category of children, which is, as Harmer says, between the ages of 2 to about 14, but the division of adolescents is much more unclear. (Harmer, 2007 b, p.14) Thus children are traditionally described as young learners between the ages of 5 to 9, and then we have very young learners who are children of the kindergarten age somewhere between 2 and 5, or before the start of their school attendance.

As it has been mentioned, the border between these age groups is not always clear, because, as Harmer claims, during the time of adolescence students go through physical and emotional changes that may affect the pace of their growth so the age in this group is somewhere between 12 and 17, but it usually depends on more than one factor. (Harmer, 2007 b, p.14) Adults can be also classified as young adults, but for

the needs of this thesis it is fairly enough to divide students simply as adolescents and adults, with no special interest to older students.

### **1.1 How do young children learn a foreign language**

Nowadays there is the general agreement that has been accepted by most of our society in previous decades that everybody should learn a foreign language. When we stress English language as the dominant preference language in the Czech Republic, the result is that in most of the public primary schools everybody has to learn English as a foreign language.

This is a statement everybody is aware of, but when we look closer in this issue we can see that the age of children is being put lower and lower for there is a strong demand to make students better students of English, thus they are forced to start earlier – commonly believed that “the earlier, the better”. For example Jayne Moon claims that the younger the children, the less likely they have any reason or need for learning the foreign language. They may not even understand what it means to learn a language or why they are learning the language. The fact, that for many young children the main reason for liking English in the early stages of learning is based on whether they like the teacher, or the learning activities. (Nikolov, 1999 in Moon 2005, p. 31) This means that the teacher and the chosen activities are the most essential factors that play a key role, which may affect children attitude to language in their further language education. And we should take into consideration that children are not learning a foreign language because they want to learn it themselves, but because it is in the curriculum, which means that most of them are not aware of the reasons why they are learning it, and it is even more true when the exposure to the language is not satisfactory and therefore the degree of motivation is usually not high enough.

It is easy to think that the earlier they start, the better they will manage the language later, especially because they have to take up another foreign language in the eighth grade. But when looking at the facts in further development of their language skills it cannot be proved so easily. “To begin with language schooling in early age is even one of the priorities of action plan of the European Union to support so-called Lisbon process.” (Fenclova, 2004/2005, p. 41) So this definitely has

become a phenomenon that can be seen in most of the European countries. But among other countries that belong to the European Union, the Czech Republic is one of those who cannot offer enough exposure to foreign languages because all the media are almost exclusively broadcast in the Czech language, which may have such an influence on learners that they can assume it is not necessary to speak or understand English for they have no real input and exposure to it.

The learning process should include several aspects of the language – traditionally divided into reading, speaking, listening and writing. This is a division used in teaching older learners, adolescent students and adults, but children at low stage of schooling (first and second grade) can only learn English through listening and speaking for they had not learned how to read and write yet. “Because children who start learning a foreign language very young may encounter nothing but the spoken language for several years, the customary division into the four skills seems somewhat inappropriate, and an alternative division of language has been attempted. (Cameron, 2001, p.17) As follows the way they can learn is reduced to 2 forms – the perception of what they hear and the production of what they say or repeat. Plus they receive some tactile and/or imagery perception through pictures, colours and real things. It is obvious that the learning process is thus much more challenging for the teacher to arrange in order to ensure that children will make the most of it. But on the other hand as young learners are still exploring the world itself it is easier to attract their attention and get them motivated for they are able to be genuinely engaged in activities, albeit only for a limited period of time.

According to Moon, children give more attention to meaning rather than form. They do not pay attention to the words which are being used in the situation as their main concern is to know what is happening. This is very different from adults and teenagers who are generally more interested in the language itself. (Moon, 2005, p.31) However it has been proven that young learners can easily imitate the sounds and pronunciation of other languages, but it does not mean that they are better language learners in general. “A crucial characteristic of young children is their ability to become competent speakers of a new language with remarkable facility, provided they get enough exposure to it. They forget languages it seems, with equal ease. This language-acquiring ability is steadily compromised as they head towards adolescence.” (Harmer, 2007b, p.15) It also has been proved that in contrast to

teenagers and adults, young learners are rather slow in learning – they can benefit only from the perception during the English lesson so they need to revise very often and the teacher has to introduce the language in small units, so they are able to remember what they have learned.

This means that only when children have enough exposure to the new language they can become competent speakers of it, but their ability to remember things is still at very low stage. So if the input is deficient, then the effort becomes useless on both sides. Also the experience with the language itself seems essential, because children are eager to use newly acquired expressions and if they have no real connection between the language and the world around them it may cause that the level of their motivation will diminish eventually and instead of creating a positive attitude to foreign languages it may become counterproductive. According to Fenclová, the researches claim that extensive early learning cannot fully compensate intellectual handicaps and it may be even strongly demotivating for weaker learners so that when they are older and better prepared for the language acquisition they often lose all the interest. (Fenclova, 2004/2005, p. 42)

Children, and especially young learners, have a less complicated view of the world which can be put in contrast with older children and adults, but it does not mean that the teaching process is less complicated as well. In fact, it is vice versa. The younger the child, the more challenging and demanding the work of the teacher is. The teacher's position is often being doubted in conditions of the age of the children, but the truth is that the teacher at lower stages of primary school has to be very skilled in very high number of fields, which means that the training should not be underestimated. Among other skills the teacher must be dedicated to the job, he has to know the language well enough to be able to convey it to the children with appropriate pronunciation and be able to manage the class and the whole process of teaching and language learning. Since this is a very complex package we need to acknowledge that the training of the teachers should be taken seriously.

## **1.2 How adolescents learn a foreign language**

Each age group has specific features that are characteristic for that age and therefore we can differentiate between their learning styles, strategies, the level of

motivation and also their abilities to grasp the language structures and learn them. So far we have discussed the question of young learners and this chapter will discuss adolescents or teenagers. The age of children that belong to this group is not so strictly defined for they experience many physical and psychical changes which make the age boundary very individual according to the pace of their development.

This group of learners is very special for during this period they go through a lot of new life changes and they have to cope with their own physical and psychical development. In addition their cognitive thinking is being changed, so children in this age group undergo many changes and their intelligence development is shifted upwards so they are able to understand the world with more comprehension. One of the most important changes is the new ability to think in abstract units and therefore they are able to understand better the language itself. We usually tend to simplify the language when we talk to children – the younger the children the more simplified and shorter units we use, but when they are growing up they are likely to understand more complex words and sentences and thus it is easier for them to learn a foreign language. During the adolescence period children are able to understand abstract words and phrases so the potentiality to learn the language grows with the development of their cognitive skills.

“The relative superiority of older children as language learners (especially in formal educational settings) may have something to do with their increased cognitive abilities, which allow them to benefit from more abstract approaches to language teaching.” (Harmer, 2007 a, p.81) This may be one of the reasons why older children are better and quicker learners than young ones, although adolescents are usually considered as a problem group due to their overall development changes and puberty. “But in learning situations, teenagers are often more effective learners. Yet English is increasingly being taught at younger and younger ages. This may have great benefits in terms of citizenship, democracy, tolerance and multiculturalism, for example (Read 2003), but especially when there is ineffective transfer of skills and methodology from primary to secondary school, early learning does not always appear to offer the substantial success often claimed for it.” (Harmer, 2007a, pp.81-82) This means that even if children start learning early and their language skills are good enough, it does not mean that it will go on with the same pace in further education and especially in teenage years, because the changes in this period may

change a lot of things including the attitude to the language. Thus we can assume that adolescents are better prepared to learn a foreign language thanks to their greater ability for abstract thought, but on the other hand the process of teaching is not very easy for the teacher for we need to bear in mind that as Harmer says, adolescents search for identity and a need for self-esteem. (Harmer, 2007a, p.83) So the role of the teacher is different in opposite to young learners, because they do not appreciate the teacher's approval anymore and most of all they want their peer group approval, because in their search for identity they need to feel good among others.

It is obvious that this period is not easy for the learners and therefore it may be more challenging for the teacher to handle the class and their behaviour, but if we put in contrast the potential for foreign language acquisition between young learners and adolescents we can see that adolescents are ready to absorb more and understand it much better than young children. "It is not true that older learners are necessarily ineffective language learners. Research has shown that they 'can reach high levels of proficiency in their second language' (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p.73). They may have greater difficulty in approximating native speaker pronunciation than children do, but sometimes this is a deliberate (or even subconscious) retention of their cultural and linguistic identity. (Harmer, 2007a, pp.81-82) The accuracy of adolescent's pronunciation is being highlighted as one of the biggest problems, and it does not seem to be the most essential part of language learning compared with other elements of the learning process. So we can assume that although children may have acquired the pronunciation in previous years it does not mean that it will help them in adolescence for they can be reluctant to speak or participate on activities due to their puberty and therefore the need of their previous language schooling might be considered as pointless.

### **1.3 How adults learn a foreign language**

This chapter will examine how adults are learning foreign languages in contrast to young learners and adolescent learners. It will show how much it is important, when teaching a group of learners, to be aware of their abilities, tastes and their way of acquiring the language according to the age and the level of cognitive development.



Adult learners are undoubtedly much more disciplined than younger ones as well as they are able to concentrate on particular activity even if they are not really interested in it. This is a vital thing to have in mind, when teaching a group of adults, that they can easily hide their feelings in contrast to children. When children are bored they will let you know immediately, because they will show it to you in the way they behave, unlike adults who probably will not disturb the lesson in a way that children or adolescent would do. But tasks that are not interesting or challenging enough for them may cause serious impact on the degree of their motivation, which is one of the most important elements in the learning process regardless of the age of students.

On one hand adults are generally considered to be well-mannered during the lessons for they have a developed self-discipline, but on the other hand, as Harmer claims, they are not always problem free learners at all. They usually have some previous experience that may have been bad and therefore it affects their present learning as well. They are also much more critical both to the teacher and the teaching strategies and they are often very critical to themselves. They might not like the methods of teaching, because they either liked or did not like the previous schooling they have experienced and they are often very critical to themselves due to the fact that they are worried that their intellectual powers are diminishing with age. (Harmer, 2007a, pp.84-85) They often take it more seriously when they are not successful students, although sometimes the feeling of possible failure may result in success for they can be more hard-working and committed to the lessons.

Experience with preceding schooling undoubtedly has an impact on the learning, but it is not only the level of quality but also the time when the last studying experience was held. Certainly it is different to teach a group of people who ended their education not so long ago and a group of people who have not been studying formally for twenty years. Also their age plays a vital role when talking about their experience, because they can benefit from their experience in the way that lessons may have more interesting topics and themes, for example in discussions. Adults are students that have a lot of their own life experience that they are able to use in lessons, and they are aware of the reasons why they are learning a foreign language.

According to Harmer, this can be a good motivation to make their distant goals for the future and, as we have already mentioned, motivation is very essential part of learning so it is easier for them to make long-time goals in opposite to teenagers who are not able to fully imagine it yet. (Harmer, 2007 a, p.84) Obviously it is easier to motivate young learners, because they are simply more enthusiastic for various activities, but it is often for a very limited period of time, so even if it is more challenging to motivate adolescents and adults it lasts much longer.

#### **1.4 Differences in learning according to the age of learners**

This chapter will briefly explain why there is a strong demand of early language learning and it will also describe some expert's attitudes to this issue while explaining possible difficulties and particular problems that occur in different age groups of children.

The question of children's development has been analysed and explored many times and on account of these we are able to make particular assumptions about the learning abilities and conditions that are most suitable for each group of learners according to their age. "Various theorists have described the way that children develop and the various ages and stages they go through, for example Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, Maslow, Feurrstein, etc." (Harmer, 2007a, p.82) We know that each of them has a slightly different opinion on this issue, nevertheless the ideal start of school learning may be seen differently in accordance with particular theorist. Authors and experts on the issue held various opinions when children are best prepared to acquire a foreign language, and there are several things that have to be mentioned to give a full view of teaching and learning of children, particularly young learners.

According to Ur, there are several assumptions that are widely accepted by public. She explains several of these assumptions that are concerning primarily the age of learners. She claims that a commonly held view that young children learn languages better is based on people's experience (either their own or not) that when children are exposed to language in a foreign environment they pick up the language with apparent ease. (Ur, 1995, p.286) While it might be true that in particular

conditions children can learn a foreign language quite effortlessly, we should bear in mind that language learning that takes place maximum once or twice a week for a limited time cannot be compared or interchanged with bilingual conditions at all. Additionally the surroundings of the children plays a vital role as well, because children should feel that English is not limited to the lessons they have, but that it exists within the outside of the classroom. “The truth of the assumption that young children learn better is even more dubious if applied to formal classroom learning: here there is only one teacher to a number of children, exposure time is very limited, and the 'survival' motive does not usually apply. Moreover, young children have not as yet developed the cognitive skills and self-discipline that enable them to make the most of limited teacher-mediated information.” (Ur, 1995, p.287) In other words, they simply cannot benefit from a few lessons a week without any further practising or exposure to language and they are not able to realise the reason of learning the language without the explicit exposure to foreign language conditions. And moreover, their brains are not yet prepared to make the most of the lessons due to the fact that their cognitive skills and self-discipline are not fully developed.

On the contrary, Ur and several other experts claim that optimal age for the start of learning a foreign language is at least around 10, she also admits that in particular and even ideal conditions early schooling may turn out to be effective. “Foreign language learning in school should start early – some people have argued for the existence of a 'critical period' in language learning: if you get too old and pass this period you will have significantly more difficulty in learning; thus early learning in schools would seem essential. But this theory is not conclusively supported by research evidence: there may not be a critical period at all; or there may be several. (Singleton, 1989; Long, 1990 in Ur, 1995).” (Ur, 1995, p.287) Although experts have various opinions about the presence of the critical period, it is unlikely to deny that young learners may turn out to be good learners. But this is possible, as it has been mentioned above, only and exclusively in conditions that are not always axiomatic when talking about primary schooling. “Language acquisition seems to be almost guaranteed for children up to about the age of six. They seem to be able to learn languages with incredible facility. They are also capable of forgetting a language just as easily. It is almost as if they can put on and take off different languages like items of clothing! However, this ease of acquisition becomes gradually less noticeable as children move towards puberty, and after that, language acquisition is much more

difficult.” (Harmer, 2007b, p.46) In fact, early schooling may be a good grounding for later years of learning but it can also be counterproductive due to the fact that children forget things as easily as they learn them.

On one hand Ur admits that in particular conditions early schooling may be effective, but on the other hand she and for example David Nunan, are more opponents to this argument, which she has described in her books several times. According to some research she claims that “children may actually become more effective language learners as they get older, particularly in formal teacher-mediated learning situations means that the investment of lesson time at an early age may not be cost-effective. In other words, if you have a limited number of hours to give to foreign language teaching in school, it will probably be more rewarding in terms of sheer amount of learning to invest these in the older classes. I have heard one authority on the subject, C. Snow (in a lecture 'Using L1 skills for L2 proficiency: Why older L2 learners are better', at the Conference of the English Teachers' Association of Israel, Jerusalem, 1993) claim that twelve is the optimum age for starting a foreign language in school; my own experience is that ten is about right.” (Ur, 1995, p.287)

Ur and several other authors claim that there are no reasons for starting before the age of ten, and her opinions are undoubtedly based on research and her own experience, although she admits that in particular ideal conditions it may turn out to be productive. “Having said this, however, it is also true that an early start to language learning is likely to lead to better long-term results if early learning is maintained and reinforced as the child gets older (Long, 1990 in Ur, 1995). In a situation, therefore, where there are as many teachers and teaching hours as you want, by all means start as early as you can.” (Ur, 1995, p.287) Providing we are not limited in any way and the school can provide conditions described above, then it would probably mean that the earlier the start of the learning, the better the English would be. Unfortunately there are not many schooling institutions in the Czech Republic that could dispose of all of these conditions, so the idea is again far from the truth and cannot be taken implicitly.

The critical period itself, which is being often mentioned in the issue of young learning, has been also doubted by several authors, for example Carol Read claims: “Although a critical or sensitive period is generally agreed to exist for mother tongue acquisition (and there are strong and weak versions of this), there is little conclusive

evidence to support the idea of a critical or sensitive period for foreign language learning, except in the case of children learning a second language in naturalistic conditions, where there is lengthy exposure to the language and the degree of motivation is very high. Therefore, although ‘younger is better’ is an argument which may hold with the young children of migrant parents, for example, it will not necessarily apply in the kind of formally-organised teaching situation which most of us work in.“ (Read, 2003, p. 5) Again, the statements are disputable in terms of conditions and other aspects that can play the key role in the whole process of learning a foreign language.

Also we should bear in mind that children of different ages prefer different attitudes, strategies and tasks in the classroom, so the same activities will not apply to 5 years old and 10 years old children. “It is important, when discussing young learners, to take account of changes which take place within this varied and varying age span. Güll Keskil and Pasa Tevfik Cephe, for example, note that ‘while pupils who are 10 and 11 years old like games, puzzles and songs most, those who are 12 and 13 years old like activities built around dialogues, question-and-answer activities and matching exercises most’ (2001: 61)” (Harmer, 2007 a, p.82) Young learners are often much more self-centred so it is more challenging to conduct lessons with small children because they do not really care about others in the group, and they want to show the teacher what they have learned. And when there is not enough time for it so they do not have the opportunity to use it in and outside of the classroom, it may lead to frustration that may affect the attitude to the language itself.

## **2 MOTIVATION OF LEARNERS**

The importance of motivation in learning process is being discussed in this chapter altogether with the differences in motivating students according to their age. The last part of this chapter introduces the problem of exposure or the lack of exposure to the language and therefore the difficulties connected with motivating students in the conditions of the schooling system in the Czech Republic and the problems connected with the unsatisfactory input that may cause the decline of motivation during the years.

### **2.1 The importance of motivation – extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation**

This section is dedicated to the importance of motivation and the reasons why it is necessary to motivate students in order to gain the most of the learning process, especially the needs to motivate young learners to maintain their interest in the language in on-going years of education.

There is no doubt that motivation is one of the most essential parts of education and immodestly said it is perhaps the most significant element of learning of all. “At its most basic level, motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something.” (Harmer, 2007 a, p. 98) It is obvious that without motivation it is very hard to achieve some kind of progress, because the degree of motivation must be strong enough to keep students enthusiastic about the language for a long period of time, which is not always an easy task for the teacher, as we have already mentioned in chapter 1.2. As Harmer says in one of his books “real motivation comes from within each individual, from the students themselves.” (Harmer, 2007b, p. 21)

Consequently, the teacher disposes with only a very limited time during the lessons, so it is more or less up to the students to motivate themselves, yet this is possible only with adults or sometimes with adolescents, who are able to realize the reasons why they are learning the language and they can ask themselves the goals they want to achieve. Young learners on the other hand cannot do this on their own,

so they are reliant to the teacher's ability to motivate them, because their motivation is highly dependent on the teacher, whether they like him/her or not, and very often the activities connected with the language determine the attitude of young learners to a foreign language.

The motivation may come from the outside or from the inside, generally divided as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. For the process of acquiring a foreign language it is important to develop both of them, but intrinsic motivation is considered to be much more valuable for the learners, for it comes from within each individual and therefore it is stronger and usually it has long-lasting continuance. According to Harmer, the strength of motivation depends on how much value the individual places on the outcome he or she wishes to achieve. (Harmer, 2007a, p. 98) Again this means that motivation is highly dependent on the individual and on the effort he or she is willing to invest in order to achieve some personal goals. Both intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation are influenced by the attitudes of people in their surroundings and also by the input of the social environment. As the term extrinsic motivation suggests, the stimulus usually comes from the outside and it is affected by external sources and the final goal or achievement is more important than the process of acquiring new knowledge or information. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is the one that teachers are able to raise during the lessons, so that the teacher may influence the level of interest in the subject and may positively affect intrinsic motivation of the students by the choice of activities and by his or her attitude to the language. Intrinsic motivation causes that the process of learning itself is satisfying enough for the learner that the goals he or she achieves throughout the time are some kind of a by-product. Moreover, it depends much on the teacher whether the student will enjoy learning not because of the goals that might be achieved, but because of liking the process of learning. This applies to young learners in particular, because children's motivation can easily be affected, but to sustain children's enthusiasm in on-going years is a tough nut. And therefore it is necessary to expose learners to stimulating atmosphere not only in the classroom but also in their everyday lives.

As it has been mentioned, to motivate students might not be easy, because in the classroom there is a certain number of students regardless of their age, who are absolutely different, and each of them needs a specific attitude in order to be motivated. And again, the teacher's time to motivate students is very limited, so it

means that children should have other people around them who can mediate that, or they should be exposed to something or someone who would attract their attention and raise their fondness of foreign language learning. This means that the outer (extrinsic) motivation is highly dependent on the world around us, such as family and friends (and especially peers in case of children and adolescents), and the whole society we live in. Most people do not realize how affective is the place where we live to children and how the attitudes of their families may cause a sympathy or antipathy to foreign languages or the learning as a whole.

## **2.2 Motivating students according to the age**

Age factor plays a vital role in the question of motivating students, because each age group is specific of the needs for learning a foreign language. Children are more dependent on the skills of conducting and mediating the right achievements by the teacher while older students are more likely to push themselves by the ability to set more definite and long-lasting goals.

Young learners usually do not have a clear idea of the reasons why they are learning, and the younger they are, the more unclear their idea is. Yet they are typical of the zeal for learning because they simply love to explore everything unknown and it is not difficult to arouse their interest in the language. The drive of young learners comes purely from the inside; their intrinsic motivation is reinforced by the enjoyment of learning itself. “Adults may have clearly defined or vague goals. Children’s goals, on the other hand, are often more amorphous and less easy to describe, but they can still be very powerful.” (Harmer, 2007a, p. 98) Although young learners usually enjoy learning they also have a kind of external motivation factor for they love to be praised by the teacher or the family, so that they want to learn something new to show off to others and feel good for their achievements. Also they are fond of talking about themselves, so it is very easy to motivate them in the way they can express themselves in front of others.

According to Harmer, students may have clearly defined goals, such as exams, which may cause that these classes are more committed to the language than other classes, but they may also have other less well-defined goals, for instance to be able to converse in English or to understand English- language websites. But on the other



hand, some students may not have any real goals to learn English language; particularly younger learners are not able to make them yet, thus they acquire their attitude and motivation for learning English from other sources. (Harmer, 2007a, p. 98) In other words the attitude of the closest people around very young children is essential altogether with the attitude of the society, because when the child feels that it is normal or even useful to be exposed to English everyday through fairy-tales, songs, films and so on as much as possible, it is more likely that positive attitude towards English would last longer and it may become an aid for the teachers of foreign languages to motivate these children in older age and during their puberty.

Furthermore, Harmer mentions as other factors influencing the degree of motivation not only the people around the students, but the whole society students live in. (Harmer, 2007a, p. 99) It is obvious that the status of the language in the society is very important, for it affects the attitude to the language and therefore the motivation of students. But people who are in the closest approach to learners have the greatest impact on their attitude to foreign language and it does not matter if it is a sibling or a parent, but especially young children need to feel some kind of positive support to develop a good attitude, which may eventually become a strong intrinsic motivation if it is reinforced throughout the time and if the appropriate stimulation from the outside of the classroom is present.

“A variety of factors can create a desire to learn. Perhaps the learners love the subject they have chosen, or maybe they are simply interested in seeing what it is like. Perhaps, as with young children, they just happen to be curious about everything, including learning. Some students have practical reasons for their study. This desire to achieve some goal is the bedrock of motivation and, if it is strong enough, it provokes a decision to act. For and adult this may involve enrolling in an English class. For a teenager it may be choosing one subject over another for special study. This kind of external (extrinsic) motivation comes from outside of the classroom and it is often influenced by the attitude of the society to a particular school subject, and also family and peers.” (Harmer, 2007b, p. 20) The desire to learn a foreign language differs not only in the question of the age, but also in the reasons for learning, because while some people are able to set straightforward goals for themselves others may be studying for more vague reasons, sometimes they study just because they are being told that it is good for them. But the act of true

understanding the reasons why it is important for them gives the learner a completely new and much wider view on the process of learning, but unfortunately learners often come to that when they are out of school.

Adolescents and adults have completely different view on the language than young children, and it is often because they already know their future plans and they are trying to achieve the goals they need in their lives and career. For adolescents it is usually the need to pass their high school or the university entrance exams, and adults are often forced to study by the circumstances of their life and work. They study for practical reasons and the pleasure of learning is not always present, but when it happens and they are motivated from within, they are able to reach much better results.

It may seem that motivating students it is not as difficult, especially at the beginning of the learning or course, but it does not mean that the motivation will be sustained in following years of education. When we look closer again on young learners, they are keen on learning itself, which may be enough for the beginning, but then some other aspects have to participate in order to keep them motivated. “It is common sense that if the activity is enjoyable, it will be memorable; the language involved will “stick”, and the children will have a sense of achievement which will develop motivation for further learning. This cyclical process generates a positive attitude towards learning English, which is perhaps one of the most valuable things that primary teachers can transmit to children. Children learn a lot more than English in their English classes: the tasks and activities stimulate and continue their all-round development.” (Phillips, 1993, p. 6) The teacher himself or herself plays a vital role, because the teacher is responsible for the choice of activities and the whole process of acquiring the new language, but as children grow up, their motivation may not be as strong as it had been earlier and if the teacher does not manage to build an encouraging atmosphere, they may lose their interest as they grow older. And as it has been said, extrinsic motivation is not as strong as intrinsic and this is why teachers should try to ensure the best possible conditions of learning in order to motivate students in the classroom.

### **2.3 Exposure to the language through media and other sources**

As it has been mentioned, motivation comes from inner and outer sources and this chapter will examine how the outer conditions and particularly the exposure to the language may serve positively or negatively on the degree of motivation of the learners and it will also discuss the sources from which learners may be affected.

Children all around the world learn English in various conditions, depending on the country and the equipment of the school, but those children have not chosen it by themselves. The reason why they learn English is because it is in curriculum, and this means that most of the children have no genuine idea of the reasons for learning, which is closely connected with their motivation. Motivation to learn the language is one of the most important aspects that can positively or negatively affect their future success. In other words, the fact that English lessons have to be taught due to the curriculum is not a satisfactory explanation for learners of English and especially it is not comprehensible for the younger ones. Although teachers can make attempts to explain the necessity of language learning to their students it does not have to be always enough, because if children are not exposed to the language often they cannot thoroughly understand it as they do not see and hear it around them. The Czech Republic is an exemplary illustration of the lack of exposure of the English language, because the media uses exclusively Czech language and therefore children (and adolescent and adult learners as well) are not able to realize the right reasons for learning, because the world around them works with the Czech language, so that the effort they make to learn the language may seem useless to them, simply because they have no opportunities to speak it, hear it, or read it. Moreover, the desire to use the newly acquired language expressions is common to people of any age, not only to children.

It is very difficult to find sources that are broadcast in original versions, and if there are any, they are not usually suitable for children of primary schools. Most of the foreign films, series and other shows that are popular among students are being dubbed by Czechs, so that the exposure to English language is almost impossible.

In opposite to the Czech Republic, in some other neighbouring countries of the European Union people are exposed to English in many cases and of course through media, which causes that they have much better circumstances for establishing a high degree of motivation for the learners. It is obvious that people who can make use of it will be motivated much more than people who do not have any opportunities to use the language they have been learning, which causes that students, for instance, in Poland or Austria are much quicker and better learners than children here in the Czech Republic due to their lengthy and constant exposure to English, because most of the foreign production is being broadcast in original versions with subtitles.

The only way to get involved in English speaking world is through the internet sources, which are becoming more and more popular. Even little children can use computers and they are able to play online games themselves, without the help of their parents, although the games require the knowledge of at least some English words. The older ones are eager to use social media and they usually watch videos and read blogs, etc. which give them the opportunity to use the language, because they want to understand it which may cause that their motivation is raised in order to learn more to be able to find anything they want on the internet. “The central characteristics of foreign language learning lie in the amount and type of exposure to the language: there will be very little experience of the language outside the classroom, and encounters with the language will be through several hours of teaching in a school week. In the case of global language like English, however, even very young children will encounter the language in use on video, TV, computers and film. What they might not be exposed to is “street” use, i.e. people using the language for everyday life purposes all around them, as might happen in a second language immersion context such as learning French or English in Canada, or an additional language context, such as children of Pakistan heritage in England. (Cameron, 2001, p.11) But if children were exposed to the language everyday through media they would probably get used to listening that “street” language in conversations in radio, TV and other sources and they would be able to make the most of the learning. These days, very little English they are exposed to in PC games etc. is useful in real-life conditions, because children often learn words connected with the theme of these games that sometimes even a native speaker never come across, so in fact they learn generally useless language.

Nowadays children are learning the grammar rules and vocabulary by heart without real understanding of the usage and they usually never get appropriate chances to use what they have learned in particular situations, because they hardly ever use the language outside of the classroom. And although the teacher may be able to manage to link the language with real life conditions in the classroom, it is useless unless children are exposed to these conditions repeatedly to really master the language, because without consistent and maybe everyday contact, it is difficult to see any kind of progress.

### 3 CONDITIONS OF LEARNING

While it is important to establish a certain level of motivation and to focus on the learners as participants of the learning process, there is another topic that is vital in order to gain the best results from students. These are the conditions of learning, the environment the students are raised in and the society they live in. These conditions of learning will be discussed in following section in terms of bilingual and classroom interaction while mentioning several other aspects of learning conditions outside of the classroom.

The learning of a foreign language in the Czech Republic takes place mostly in classrooms at public or private primary schools and high schools. There are also language schools offering courses for adults, and children of any age may attend various afternoon courses of English or they have private lessons once or twice a week. As it has been already mentioned above, the number of school lessons seldom exceeds three lessons a week, which means that children are exposed to the language in school conditions roughly for about two hours (precisely two hours and fifteen minutes) of language learning a week. When we consider the fact that even though the teacher uses English as much as possible, he or she cannot use every minute of the lesson for language teaching, because the teacher has lots of other responsibilities to do during the lesson, a very little space remains to be effectively used in the lesson time. And what is more, the teacher talking time hardly equals the student talking time in the lesson, which means that children usually cannot receive enough opportunities to use the language within the school lessons.

The lack of stimuli from the environment makes it even harder for the students to make use of what they have acquired which is directly connected with the degree of motivation that was discussed in the section above. When talking about young learners, the effort to start earlier usually stands on publicly well-known misconceptions about the young children's language abilities to grasp the language effortlessly, although these statements have very little in common with the classic formal language education in school environment. The period that is known as "critical period" is the one to be mentioned very often, but there are other

misconceptions that are thought to be true, even though they have been proved to be wrong.

### **3.1 Bilingual vs. classroom conditions**

In this section the main differences between the conditions of learning in bilingual and classical classroom environment will be introduced in order to understand the reasons for early start of the language learning while not having sufficient potentiality of bilingual-like conditions.

While it might be true that young learners may acquire language relatively easily (especially the spoken form of the language and pronunciation without almost any signs of mother-tongue accent) and they are often eager to learn, so that they learn with apparent ease, still all in all they need very consistent, frequent and long-lasting conditions to really master the language, particularly in following years of education. If these conditions cannot be fulfilled for some reasons from the beginning and sustained during the time, the language learning becomes much more challenging for the teacher and for the students as well, and the early start seems to lose its advantage, because students might get bored of learning without some visible progress.

Bilingual conditions of learning a foreign language have undisputable advantages for the learners, because they are forced to speak in everyday interactions and they have enormous input of the language because they are exposed to it all the time, in opposite to normal school-like conditions of several hours of English a week. Also, as for example Ur mentions, the survival motive is essential, because they do not have the opportunity to switch to mother tongue in case they do not know some words, so they have to get by and act by all means to mediate the meaning. (Ur, 1995, p. 287) Moreover, these learners are usually exposed to real-life conversations and interactions, so that it is easier for them to understand, for not only do they hear the language, but they also see the speaker and his/her non-verbal communication features such as gestures, mimics etc., which might be very helpful to understand the meaning of the utterance.

The degree of motivation is incomparably higher in bilingual conditions, because learners can see the results immediately, their effort pays off and they can be proud of what they have learned, which helps them to improve their language skills. Because the more motivated students are the better and quicker learners they may become. And the question is, whether it is possible to enable students in formal language classes facing these bilingual conditions in order to raise the degree of their motivation? For example, the Direct method where the teacher uses only English language in the lessons was based on the idea that the input the students receive will be the same as their output, which is not a true statement, because students can actually absorb only some of what they are exposed to. On the other hand, the more they are exposed to it, the more their motivation level might rise, because they face rather similar conditions as bilingual learners.

The input and output of the language might be crucial in the classroom, but equally important is the input that learners receive from the outside, because most of the everyday usage takes place out of the classroom, such as ordering in a restaurant, buying food, asking the way etc., which means that the classroom conditions cannot completely substitute everyday-like situations to such an extent that it would provide enough experience with particular language units for everybody in the classroom. Again, the time is very limited and the curriculum contains a lot more than learners are able to master providing that they do not have enough exposure from the outside. “However, it is unlikely that the difference in quantity of language learning experience will affect the balance of benefits; in foreign language learning too, receptive skills are likely to remain ahead of productive skills; and grammatical knowledge, which is linked not just to language development but to cognitive development, is likely to develop more slowly for younger children.” (Cameron, 2001, p.17)

It is often thought that the best way to learn a foreign language is to face bilingual conditions, because the learners simply do not have other chances than to speak the second language, and it is true that most people may find this “sink or swim” conditions very stimulating. On the other hand, if there were enough foreign language stimuli from the environment that would be able to simulate the conditions with systematic exposure, even the classroom language learning would have much more positive basis to build upon. And even though the productive skills cannot



exceed receptive skills, they might be helpful for the learners to eventually improve their productive skills because of the long-term exposure.

## **4 PRACTICAL PART – RESEARCH**

The practical part of the thesis is fundamental, because it deals with questions and arguments discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis, and it was designed to examine advantages and disadvantages of an early start with a foreign language. The results of this research are an outcome of a survey that has been concluded according to a small research that has been done in order to understand the conditions of learning English language in the Czech Republic. The research is based on subjective opinions of several teachers of English language and a number of students of various ages from three different primary schools.

The general aim of this thesis lays in the field of the question of the ideal age for the start with English language in school conditions, but since this is a very complex question to be answered, it needs more background information to understand it completely. It is obvious that the opinion of respondents is highly dependent on their individual preferences and experience, and therefore it is not easy to make general conclusions on such a small scale of respondents, nevertheless in practical part of this thesis several questions will be analysed in order to find some generalisations, which could be helpful to improve the conditions of learning English language in the Czech Republic.

As it has been mentioned in the theoretical part, apart from development changes of young learners, there are also significant differences in the level of their motivation, and also every child has slightly different conditions at home, in the town or village he or she lives in, while there are many other aspects that may interfere with the conditions of learning. Nevertheless, there are at least some aspects that may be averaged and analysed in order to find some general features and agreements. Thus the research that has been done for the purpose of this thesis was trying to find some common features to build on and to make some general agreements and assessments about the age, while trying to find a resolution of age, which would be the most suitable for the start of foreign language learning.

### **4.1 The background of the research**

The survey that has been done for the purpose of this thesis took place in Hradec Králové, in East Bohemia in the Czech Republic. The survey was carried out at three primary schools, while each of them is located in a different part of the town and each of the schools has a different specialization. But they have in common the fact that I know the background of all three schools, for I am currently teaching at one of those primary schools and my teaching practice during my master's studies took place at the other two primary schools, so I am aware of the conditions of learning English language of these schools that have been surveyed.

The school where I am currently teaching is Sever Primary School situated in housing estates, and its specialization is on sports, mostly football and baseball, and above that they put an emphasis on English language and Informatics. The second school is called Milady Horákové Primary School, and it is based in housing estate full of blocks of flats, so this is a large school, and its specialization is mainly on Mathematics and Natural Science subjects, such as Physics, Chemistry and Informatics. The third one is Úprkova Primary School and Kindergarten, which is based in a very calm and quiet environment and its main specialization is on Environmental education.

The survey took place in several classes, aged from the second graders to the ninth graders, which means that pupils were in the 7 – 15 age range, and the survey was in the form of questionnaires. Both were focused on the same problem, but questionnaires were modified according to the age of learners, so in the lower stage of primary school they had predominance of close ended questions that were more focused on the sources of exposure to the language outside of the classroom, and in the lower-secondary level they had rather open ended questions that needed some of the student's subjective opinions on the sources of motivation and exposure to the language through their matter of interest.

Also a number of teachers were asked to answer a questionnaire so that we could get as much information from each school as possible and also to put in contrast the answers of children and their teachers, which turned out to be very interesting, because according to the survey, most of the teachers do not really realize the lack of outer sources their students are facing and moreover, they even think that the exposure to foreign language conditions is satisfactory. But if we compare their opinions to the outcome of the pupils' questionnaires, it cannot be taken implicitly,

for the conditions of exposure in the Czech Republic are very dependent on each student's attitude and interest. On the other hand, a vast majority of pupils being asked are fully satisfied with the lack of English exposure around them, for some answers were literally mentioning their laziness to make some effort to educate themselves by soaking up English sources around them.

#### **4.2 Survey – types of questionnaires**

Information that was essential for this thesis may have been collected in several ways, but after some unsuccessful attempts I have decided to unite the method and use only one way of questioning my respondents.

One of the ways of qualitative research is a direct interview with respondents, because it may be applied to a particular research that does not need so many respondents, so my original intension was to make an interview with English teachers from different primary schools to compare their subjective opinions on the ideal start of foreign language teaching. In the first instance I have made semi structured interviews with two English teachers that turned out to be unsatisfactory due to the fact that it did not provide the kind of information that was necessary for the purposes of this thesis. These interviews usually happened to slip to themes about the learning of foreign languages, but it did not help the research. Because of this I have decided not to use this material in the research at all, and I have used another way of questioning the respondents in the research.

Thus another way is to use questionnaires that can be printed out and given directly to respondents to fill it in the lesson, or the questionnaires can be uploaded on the website that offers distribution via internet. The last option would probably be one of the most effective and time saving, but after a consideration I have decided to use the same method of survey for all the respondents, and I only divided these respondents into three groups and I have made three versions of printed questionnaires. One of them was the Questionnaire for the primary teachers of English language (Appendix A), and others were designed as two types for the students. I have divided these questionnaires according to the stages of primary school as Questionnaire for primary school level (Appendix B) and Questionnaire for lower-secondary level (Appendix C). These types of questionnaires turned out to be

the most suitable option, because the respondents from primary school level are hardly able to fill in such a questionnaire without any help of an adult and moreover via internet, so the assistance was provided by the teacher in the lesson, which made this the easiest way to let them answer the questions in the presence of the teacher to help them understand the questions or help them with misunderstanding the questions etc.

Each of the questionnaires was created for a specific group of respondents, so that some of them had the predominance of open ended questions and some had the predominance of close ended questions, while always giving some space for specific additional information from the respondents, in case they wanted to add something to the question. All of the questionnaires were printed out and written in respondent's mother tongue in the Czech language.

The aim of the research originally intended to obtain advantages and disadvantages of the early English language learning start, but throughout the process of writing and exploring the issue of the age it was clear that there are other aspects that have to be taken into consideration to make an overall conclusion to the question, whether it really means or does not mean, that the earlier children start with English language in schooling conditions, the better their language skills will be.

First of all, the issue of the development of cognitive skills is the one to be traditionally examined, but there are usually not often discussed the conditions of learning in a particular country, which may be one of the most important indicators that affects the progression of language skills of learners. As mentioned in the theoretical part, the conditions of learning are directly linked to the degree of motivation of learners which leads us back to the reasons why it is necessary (or not necessary) to start with a foreign language so early. This question is even more interesting because of the facts that were mentioned above – that the exposure to English language through media is not satisfactory due to dubbing and translation of almost every broadcasted media in the Czech Republic.

This is why the research investigated predominantly children's preferences in playing computer games, listening to music, watching films and other shows, their interests in the internet sources and websites and also watching videos on YouTube channels. The research was designed to find out where those children get in touch with foreign languages the most and whether they have enough exposure to English language in the environment of their surroundings, including their families and peers.

The questionnaires for the teachers researched mainly the assumptions on this subject matter among teachers and whether it corresponds with the results of their students.

### **4.3 Questionnaires for English teachers**

This chapter will analyse the small survey among teachers of English language. The main purpose of these questionnaires was to make an overall view of the opinions of the teachers in contrast to their students, and to find out whether their view is based on the experience with their students' attitudes towards English language. The basic aim of this survey was to find out, whether the exposure to the language is satisfactory according to teachers, and to determine their attitudes to informational technologies used in or out of the classroom, and also to ascertain the sources of motivation of their students. This survey will be analysed in particular detail, because it was designed as qualitative questionnaire with predominantly open ended questions that needed relatively subjective answers from the teachers, thus some of these questions will be emphasised and examined in further detail. The full version of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix A.

Teacher's questionnaires were filled in by teachers from both upper and lower stages of the three primary schools mentioned above, and the total number of teachers was 8. They were asked to answer 8 questions, while 5 of them were open ended types of questions and teachers had to write brief explanations of their opinions, 1 question had a scale from 1 to 5, and 2 other questions were semi-defined concerning the start of language learning in their school and if they are upper or lower primary school teachers. The questions partly focused on the issue of the ideal age for the start of language learning, where about half of the respondents noted that the best start would be in the third grade, while having English lessons as an optional subject in the first and second grades, and a very frequent note to this question was that the emphasis should be on funny activities, learning through chants and songs and one of the teachers mentioned the need for sensory perception that may be positively stimulating for very young learners.

Concerning the question of the ideal age for the start, 2 of the respondents highlighted the problem of the difference between written and spoken language, which may be confusing for the learners, because it can feel like double start for

them and for the teachers as well. Therefore this may have become the cause of frustration, for when learners start to feel confident with using the language in the spoken form properly in the first years of learning, they eventually have to face new obstacles in the written form, and sometimes they even think they have already learned the vocabulary, so that they write the words in the phonetic form, usually using Czech letters that do not exist in English language (f. e. Czech letter “š” instead of English “sh”). And again, it may be very confusing for them, especially when they struggle with mastering their own mother tongue in written form, as it has been mentioned by another teacher in the questionnaire. Therefore these respondents consider early English learning as not strictly necessary due to later writing (and thus reading) troubles, and for those who struggle with mother tongue it may turn out as even more challenging issue to learn and understand the differences between written and spoken English, which may be partly because Czech language do not have these problems of diverse forms.

On the other hand 3 respondents agreed that first grade is ideal for the start and even preschool learning might be effective. But these opinions were in a minority and other respondents generally agreed on the second or third grade as the ideal start, and these notions are probably strengthened thanks to insufficient learning conditions and equipment during the first two years of education in primary schools.

There are some primary schools that do not use any kind of united materials such as course books with certified songs, listening exercises and so on, that are suitable for these very young learners, and they usually follow their school educational program based on the framework educational program of the curriculum that is rather vague, for it does not specify sources etc. and sometimes it is not easy to follow it in full extent. Thus the lessons are very unsystematically guided throughout the whole year, and everything is dependent on the teacher and the materials he or she brings to the classroom, which may be confusing for children not only because of the variability of sources, but principally because of the form of the materials and its diversity. For example, when there are only few materials for copying available for the teacher, the easiest way to find some extra materials is to use internet sources, and undoubtedly there are many websites offering high quality worksheets, songs, games, etc., but there might be a problem of the diversity of the sources and especially the difference between American and British English. Very often the group of thematic vocabulary is incomplete or it contains extra words (or words in

American English while children have previously learned these expressions in British English), which may cause confusion over the learning matter, and in these conditions early English learning can be hardly considered as beneficial for the learners.

While mentioning this problem of diversity as a disadvantage, the respondents often claimed that the early start sometimes might be beneficial, but the most typical answer was that in this age they can easily learn simple words because they enjoy the learning itself, and this was the most often answer for the question if preschool learning is in their opinion beneficial for the learners – most of the teachers mentioned only the advantage of providing children with basics of vocabulary. Surprisingly, none of the respondents mentioned the benefits of learning pronunciation, as little children at this stage of learning are considered to imitate the language with ease, in opposite to older children, who are not able to imitate it without problems. This gives us a kind of impression that children start learning the language only because of the few words they may learn without any emphasis on the benefits that early language learning may have.

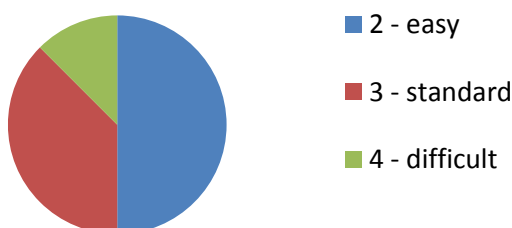
The scaled question was more focused on the motivation and respondents had to choose how difficult is motivating students in the time of informational technologies from the easiest (1) to very difficult (5). *How difficult, in your opinion, is motivating students in the age of informational technologies? Circle on the scale from 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult).* Only three of the scaled answers were chosen, and it was (2), (3), and (4). Four teachers chose number 2, three teachers chose number 3, and only one teacher chose number 4, which gives us idea suggesting that respondents consider motivating students as relatively easy in time of informational technologies, or maybe thanks to it, and this is quite satisfactory result.

Question 6 dealt with the motivation of the students, and it should have given the point of view from the teacher's perspective. *What is, in your opinion, the major source of motivation for learning a foreign language? Do you think that learners are exposed to foreign sources to a sufficient extent that it may motivate them to study languages? Give examples.* Informational technologies as the source of motivation was mentioned in terms of using internet for communication with foreigners, and as one of the reasons for self- motivation they consider the desire to understand English speaking foreigners, their favourite English songs, films, and using social networks to get in touch with people from foreign countries.



Graph No.1 - How difficult is motivating students?

Source: My own research



Respondents also mentioned that children's desire to learn English is travelling, which means for them using the language in real life conditions and practice the language when talking to foreigners. Also, Milady Horákové Primary School is organizing trips to English speaking countries every year for their students, so the respondents from this school consider as one of the sources of motivation these trips that enable students to meet foreigners and practice their language skills. Respondents from other schools did not mention any similar opportunity or desire to practice English in foreign countries. On the other hand, respondents from Sever Primary School with specialization on sports often mentioned the desire of children to improve their English skills in order to fulfil their ambitions to play professionally for foreign football teams, etc.

Question 7 dealt with the personal attitude of the teachers towards informational technologies, which comprises playing computer games, using computer for surfing the internet, watching videos, reading articles, etc. *What is your opinion on informational technologies? Do you think it may be distracting students from school, or does it serve its purpose or even motivate them to study?* A vast majority of respondents take these modern technologies as profitable when used effectively and not for the entertainment; the answers of respondents were practically similar in the view on informational technologies. They claim that it can be highly motivating and it could be used as a supporting tool to the standard lessons with additional opportunities (videos, listening, pictures and various interactive board programs) and it may be supportive in the classroom itself or even outside of the classroom. Although the opinion is generally positive, all of the respondents mentioned that it could be motivating and supporting only if it is not overused,

because in such conditions children usually lose interest in lessons at schools, so in that case it could be harmful.

The last question was more focused on the conditions in the Czech Republic, for it investigated respondents' opinion on the main subject of students' questionnaires, which is the amount of exposure they are exposed to in everyday life conditions. *Do you think that pupils in the Czech Republic are exposed to foreign sources via media (TV), ICT, Internet etc.? If so, where do you think they get in touch with the language the most?* This question examined whether teachers consider the exposure to foreign language sources, and particularly media sources as satisfactory or not, and the other part of this question examined where students get in touch with the language the most.

To sum up the results of questionnaires for teachers of the English language, we need to bear in mind that each of them is working in slightly different school environment, and their students have their own special interests in each of the schools, thus their experience is not comparable. Nevertheless, the answers of the respondents were sometimes very similar. For example in the question about the usage of informational technologies all the respondents agreed on the danger of overusing, and they recommend using these supplies as a good additional tool.

#### **4.4 Questionnaires for primary school learners**

In this chapter there will be analysed the survey among pupils attending primary school level of the three primary schools mentioned above. These children were in the age category from 7 to 11 years old, which means that the survey took place in classes from the second grade to the fifth grade. The age of learners is very important to mention, because in the final evaluation of the research certain answers differed a lot according to the age of learners. The total number of respondents from primary school level was 59. I have noticed that certain interests in specific types of games and films are usually common to children of a particular class, which gives us some kind of evidence of how much can an individual be influenced by his or her peer group during the learning process and in the social environment.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions, while most of them were close-ended questions that only needed YES / NO answers, but they often had some space

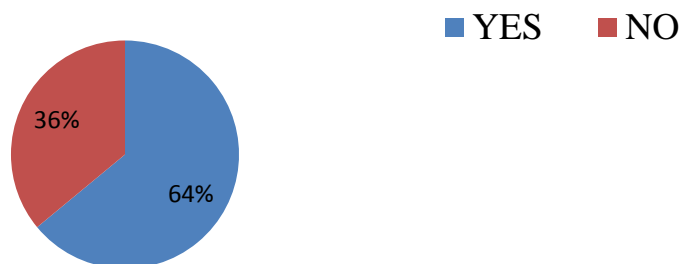
to write down a specification to their answer or there was some space for giving examples of computer games they play, etc. This type of questionnaire was chosen due to the fact that some of the respondents were too young to compose their own free answers so these close-ended questions seemed more suitable for the primary school level.

The aim of these questionnaires was to find out the main sources of external motivation of children of this age and to examine the influence of the social environment and especially people that are influential for these children the most, which means predominantly family, their teachers and peers. The questions were mainly focused on playing computer games, listening to English songs, watching fairy tales and films, and also their personal interests in the English language and lessons at school. The whole questionnaire may be seen in Appendix B.

The first trio of questions were investigating the ratio of children who play computer games in English (including PlayStation, games on tablets, mobile phones, etc.) and those who do not play it at all. The results showed that from the total number of 59 children only 10 children stated that they do not play any games, which means that a vast majority of respondents get in touch with English through various kinds of games played in English language. In the second question they were to specify the types of games they usually play, and the most often mentioned were Minecraft and GTA (Grand Theft Auto), which are English games where they can hear someone speaking, and also some words are usually written from time to time, and in these games, there are a lot of English songs. The second most mentioned games were football and strategic games, and also crosswords. According to these questions children have many opportunities to come into contact with English language, which is even supported by the third question where children were to write if they think that playing such kind of games help them to remember some new English vocabulary. We can say that according to their answers, the result is satisfactory, because 64% of respondents claim that these games help them to remember or learn some new vocabulary, as it can be seen in Graph No. 2 below.

Graph No.2 - Do computer games help you remember new English words?

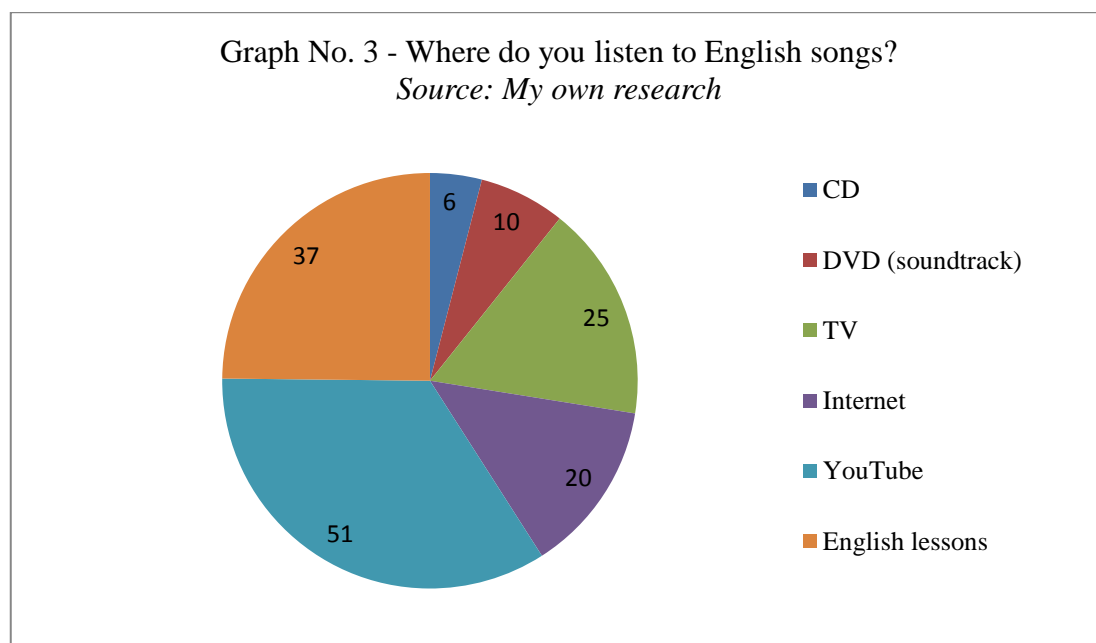
Source: My own research



On the other hand, they were to write down at least some examples of these words, and if they did so, they wrote only one or two words that are very simple, and they should probably know them even if they did not play computer games. The most often words were *play, game, game over, pass, next*, and they sometimes mentioned various kinds of weapons that they need for playing such games. Moreover, these children were not usually able to write these simple words down correctly, thus they wrote the phonetic form using Czech letters, f. e. J instead of Y. So all in all, they claim that it helps them, and with pupils from the second grade we can assume that it may provide some extra vocabulary then they would get at school, but children from the fifth grade should probably be able to obtain more complex vocabulary than these simple words.

In the next five questions the survey focused on listening to English songs and watching films and fairy tales in English language. In the fourth inquiry respondents were to circle, where do they listen to English songs (if they do so), and they could choose from six options: *CD, DVD (soundtrack), TV, Internet, YouTube or English lessons*, and there was also extra space for other own suggestions. They could choose as many answers as they wished. The most frequent answer was *YouTube*, while this was circled by 51 pupils, which means that more than 86% of respondents listen to English songs on YouTube channels. The second most frequent answer was *English lessons*, and this one was chosen by 37 pupils. From the total number of respondents it gives us the results that almost 63% of respondents are used to listen to English songs at school during their English lessons. This is a satisfactory result, although the questionnaire did not investigated the frequency of listening to these songs, we can take positively that they at least have some opportunities to listen to these songs at

school and also at home via Internet. We may consider as a surprising fact, that television got a few more votes than Internet sources, and the last two options of listening to songs on CDs or DVDs was not so significant, for the votes did not exceed 10. The results can be seen in Graph No. 3.



In question 5 pupils were to circle again, but this time they should choose where they can watch films or fairy tales in English. There were three predefined answers; these were *DVD*, *YouTube* and *TV* and again there was space to write down their own sources. As it has been in the previous inquiry, the results showed that the most frequent sources are *YouTube Channels*, with almost 60% predominance over the other two predefined sources that were almost equal of 17 and 18 votes. Twelve of the total number of respondents claimed that they do not watch English films and fairy tales at all, which is slightly more than 20%, and we can assume that this is not that poor result as it was expected.

So far the results usually showed some positive percentages, thus here comes one with not so surely defined result. In question 6, pupils were to choose, whether their parents watch English films and listen to English songs at home. Three of the respondents unfortunately did not fill in this question, so the total of answered questions is 56, of which 27 respondents circled positive answer, while other 29 respondents circled negative. This is almost evenly split, while negative answers were slightly leading, and the assumption of this result gives us the evidence that

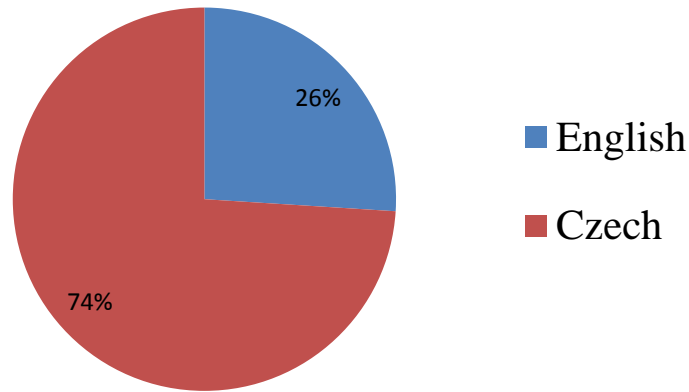
only every second child is exposed to English speaking sources by their families at home. I have stated these assumptions in the theoretical part that the exposure is not sufficient and this makes us consider the results as an area that should have been improved. A certain steps may contribute to make the amount of exposure to children more accessible, for example they could get homework in the form of watching or listening to various English speaking sources that would be either entertaining for them and they would be able to get in touch with the language more often at home.

To support this idea even more, the results of the next question gives us the ground for taking such actions as watching videos as homework. Respondents were to write down their favourite film or fairy tale in order to find out, how much they watch films of the Czech production and the production from abroad. I have found out that 86% of films that were mentioned by pupils were of American production, mostly comedies and animated fairy tales, which are being always dubbed by Czech actors. To a greater detriment these films are usually dubbed before they are played on the screen in the cinema, thus children never get the chance to watch these films in the original English versions in the cinema. And as it has been mentioned in the theoretical part, television is broadcasting films and fairy tales predominantly in the Czech language. Unfortunately, if these children are used to the versions in the Czech language they are reluctant to watch them in original versions, because they fancy the version they know, including the songs that are often translated and sang in the Czech language as well, so it is obvious that they usually do not like it when their favourite characters talk and sing in the language they do not understand well.

In question 8, the last one concerning the amount of exposure to listening to English via songs and films, pupils were to choose an answer from two options. They were asked to choose, whether they prefer watching films in the Czech language or in English language. Here the majority of all respondents prefer Czech language, precisely 74%, as it is apparent in Graph No. 4. On the contrary to the above mentioned facts, this is not such a bad result, but I have to mention that most of the votes preferring English versions were from children from the fifth grade, which means that these older children may probably understand better the reasons why it is good to listen to English somewhere else than only in the classroom environment, and this could be the reason why they prefer English versions to Czech versions.

Graph No. 4 - Do you prefer watching films in the Czech or English language?

Source: My own research



The last trio of questions aimed the objective of children's interest in English language either at school or anywhere else. Question 10: *Would you like to use or listen to English language even outside of the classroom during English lessons? If so, where would you like to use it?* The results of this part showed that most children have rather positive attitude towards English, precisely 38 pupils, which mean that almost 65% claimed that they would like to use the language outside of the classroom, which is at least a satisfying result. Among those most frequently mentioned places they would like to use English was *abroad (UK, USA) and at home* or they wrote *everywhere*, meaning in real life conditions, while these answers appeared at a different rate thirty times. The last eight answers of 38 positive, described other conditions like talking with their friends or parents, on holiday, etc. One of the respondents wrote that he/she would like to use English in specialized subjects, so in fact this pupil suggested special lessons taught in English language, as it is usually taught through the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method.

Questions 9 and 10 concentrated primarily on the motivation for learning, while asking respondents: *Would you like to learn English to the extent to understand songs, films, PC games instructions, etc.?* The results were unambiguous, showing that 93% of respondents have the desire to learn English well, but the only problem of doing so is that most of these children want to learn it without any effort, which is one of the main problems of learning foreign languages. On the other hand, if they

were exposed to the language in their lives in conditions rather similar to bilingual, would not it be more possible for them to learn it naturally and without apparent effort and drill?

This leads us to the final question of the questionnaire, where respondents were to decide whether they like their English lessons at school. To our disappointment the results showed that my assumptions were worse than I expected. Only 36 pupils claimed they like English lessons, which is 61% of all respondents, and the other 23 pupils may be divided in two halves, one half claimed they do not like it at all, and the other half claimed that they like these lessons only sometimes, or from time to time. There is an interesting finding that the vast majority of negative answers came from children of one of the schools, which makes us assume that those children are generally discontented with English lessons at their school. No matter for what reasons this is, it acknowledges the fact that environment of the learning process plays a vital role in the overall attitude towards the language itself and it has a great impact on the degree of motivation of learners.

#### **4.5 Questionnaires for lower-secondary learners**

The survey described in this chapter took place at lower-secondary level of the three primary schools mentioned above. These children were of teenage age from sixth to ninth grades, which means that they were from 11 to 15 years old. The total number of respondents of 75 is little higher than in the survey at primary school level, because it was easier for the teachers to let their own students answer the questionnaires during their lessons. The questionnaires that can be found in Appendix C consisted of 10 questions, while most of them were open ended questions where they could either choose predefined answers, or create their own and write the explanations to their answers. Four of these questions had no predefined answers and respondents had to write their opinions, thoughts or examples, etc.

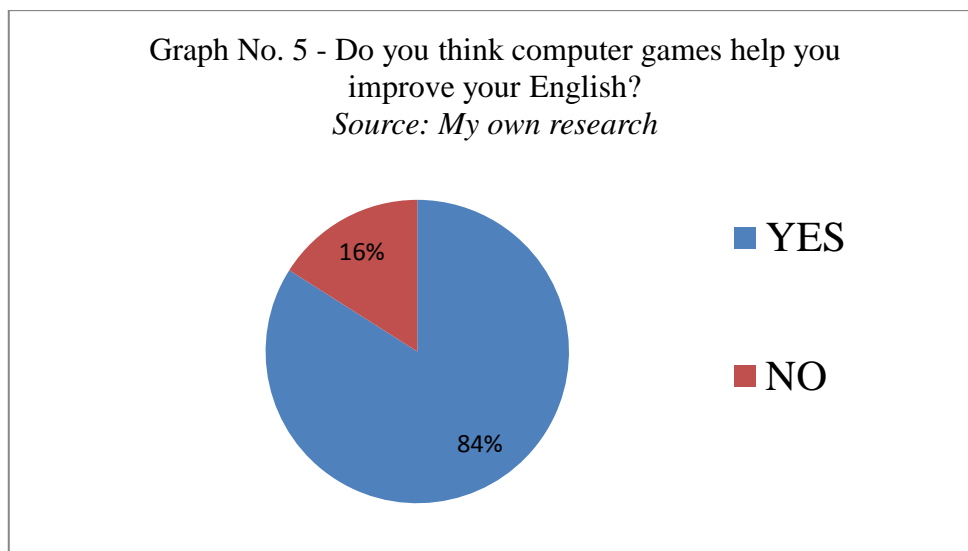
The aim of this survey was to find out whether children at lower-secondary level use informational technologies, Internet and media sources to improve their English and whether they are exposed to English language to a sufficient extent in the conditions of the Czech Republic. It also surveyed students' interests and motivation



to get in touch with English outside of the classroom. It was focused on the primary sources where they can hear English the most, which were computer games, listening to music, watching films, watching YouTube channels and looking up information or articles on the Internet.

The first two inquiries focused on playing computer games, while in the first one they were to answer whether they play them or not, and write down the names of these games. As it was among respondents from primary school level, the choice of games they play is influenced by their peer group and therefore the names of the games were usually common for respondents from each school or class. Unfortunately, they do not play any games that would be somewhat educational or that would help them to improve English through any educational activities. This is a pity; for more than 85% of respondents claimed that they play computer games or games on tablets, mobile phones, etc. Thus when we realize that this is a high amount of pupils, who could benefit from playing computer games in case they played some entertaining games that would be more educational or where they could compete with their classmates, it might have been a practical tool for improving their English skills. These kinds of games can be found on mobile phone applications, while nowadays almost every child has a smartphone that allows him or her using various applications that could be really helpful for their English. But these educational games are not so fashionable among their peers so that they do not play it often. But if these games were designed to a form that is popular and it would provide much more exposure to the language, it would really meet the requirements of entertaining educational tool.

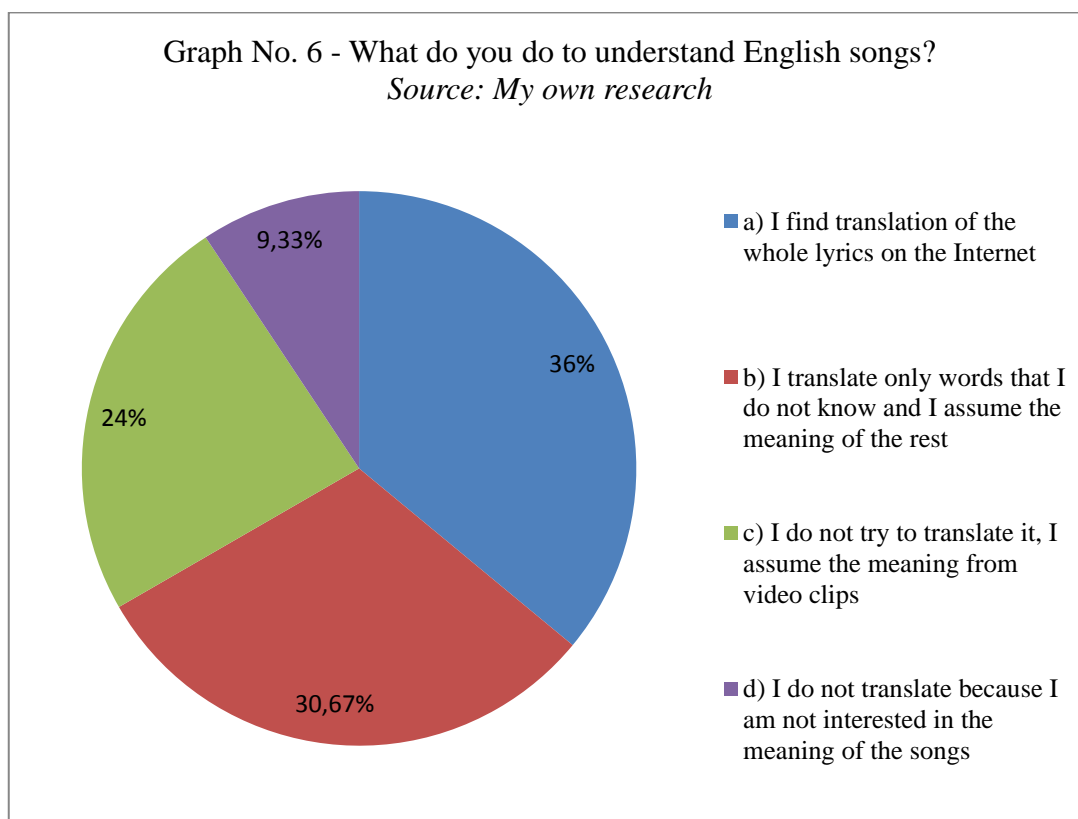
On the other hand, question 2 investigated their opinions about the usefulness of these games, concerning the advantages of playing such games. A vast majority, 84% of respondents (Graph No. 5), believe that it is helpful for their English skills, and they were to write the reasons why do they think so. I must admit that the answers differed a lot, which may be an evidence of the need of multiple approaches to the language teaching, because apparently every child found it helpful in a very different way. They mentioned the urge to look up vocabulary they do not know, and then revising of these words, learning through entertainment, easy to remember, pronunciation, everyday life vocabulary, listening to dialogues among characters and reading those dialogues as subtitles.



The note about pronunciation is especially interesting, because playing particular types of computer games may contribute to their speaking abilities, for through listening to these words they remember not only when they should use them, but they can also practice correct pronunciation, which is also one of the advantageous aspects of playing games that are a kind of simulation of real life. Respondents often mentioned *The Sims*, which is a game, where they take care of a family and its members, and these characters are talking to each other, so they practice listening with comprehension, for sometimes it is inevitable to understand these characters in order to play. And the aspect of practising pronunciation is essential, because children are often lazy to find not only the meaning of the word, but also its pronunciation, and they often do not consider it as important, because at school it is usually the least emphasized aspect of the language, for testing most often takes place in written form.

The questions 3 to 6 focused on the interests of respondents about listening to music and watching films. Question 3 consisted of three sub-questions, while the first two only needed to circle YES / NO, and the last one had 4 predefined answers. *Do you listen to music in English language? Do you understand English songs? If you do not understand, what do you do to understand them?* The first sub-question had no negative answers, so it means that all of the 75 respondents are used to listening to English songs, which is a good result, because apparently no one has negative attitude towards English songs. The second sub-question was almost equal, with leading position of NO answers, but only by one extra vote, so the result was 38

votes for NO, and 37 votes for YES. This is a very satisfying result, because listening to and understanding English songs is not so easy for these learners, and if they claim they understand it (or partly understand) it shows that they sometimes think about the lyrics and meaning of their favourite songs. Those who claimed they do not understand, they could choose from predefined answers to show what they usually do to understand them. There were 4 options they could choose from: a) *I find translation of the whole lyrics on the Internet*, b) *I translate only words that I do not know and I assume the meaning of the rest*, c) *I do not try to translate it, I assume the meaning from video clips*, d) *I do not translate, because I am not interested in the meaning of the songs*. The result is quite satisfying, for only 7 respondents chose option d), which means that most of them cares about the lyrics and the meaning of what they listen to.



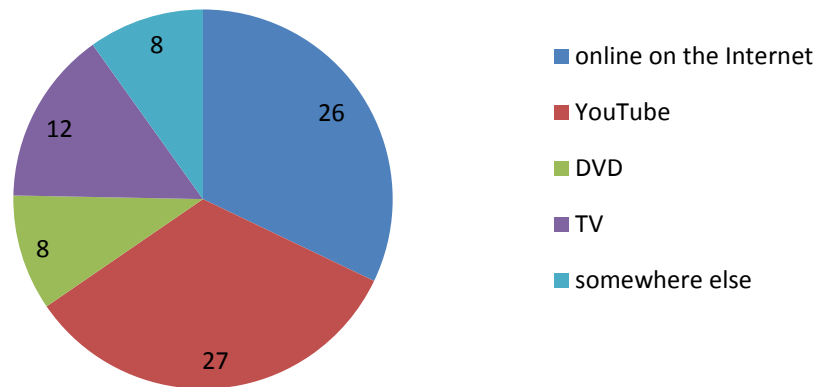
Question 4 focused on films and TV series, concerning their favourites and where they usually watch it. This inquiry was divided again into three parts, and in the first part respondents were to choose YES / NO, whether they watch films or series in English language. Over 61% of respondents claimed that they watch films in English, and the rest circled negative answer. The result is not too bad, but it shows that there are still a lot of students, who learn English for several years and

they do not want or do not have the opportunity to watch films etc. in English. It could be either because they do not have access to it, or they simply do not have the urge to listen to English language regularly, but we will probably get the explanation to this question later in question 6.

Question 4 further investigated, where respondents most often get the access to watch English sources, and there were 4 predefined answers and one additional for their own answers. The answers they could choose from were *a) watching online on the Internet, b) YouTube, c) DVD, d) TV*, and the most frequent answers were almost equally a) and b). This means that children, who want to watch their favourite series and films, they have to do it through Internet sources, and they have to make some effort to find it online or watch it on YouTube channels. Although 12 of the respondents chose TV, there are not many shows that are being broadcast in original versions except for a few TV series (often American or British) that can be seen usually very late in the night, for in primetime it is broadcast in dubbed Czech versions, and original versions may be seen very late, so it is even harder for primary school students to watch them. The whole results can be seen in Graph No. 7. Eight of the respondents claimed that they watch English shows somewhere else, and 5 answers mentioned downloading via Internet, and 3 pupils mentioned cinema. The last part of this question required examples of what respondents watch most often, and if they wrote something, it was mainly in the Czech language and only several respondents wrote they watch it in original versions with subtitles, so while 61% of respondents claimed they watch English versions (as mentioned above), they probably do not watch it regularly, because only very low number mentioned their favourite shows in English language. As the questionnaires investigated several aspects at once, it failed in answering the frequency in almost every question, which is a failure, because it may have helped to get much more accurate results.

Graph No. 7 - Where do you watch series and films in English?

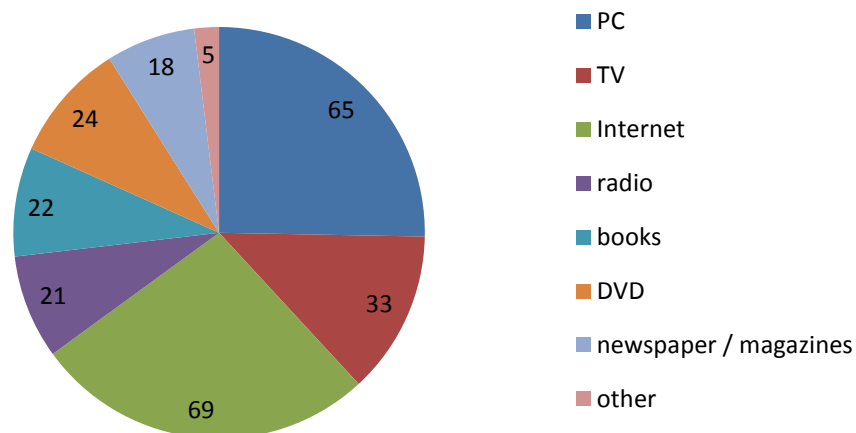
Source: My own research



In question 5, the questionnaire investigated possible sources of exposure to English language outside of the classroom. There were again some predefined answers, and they could choose more than one answer. It asked respondents: *Where do you get in touch with English the most?* The answers are in Graph No. 8 below, where can be seen that most of the respondents are in contact with English through Internet and using computer devices, while again the second most mentioned answer is television, which I consider as very surprising, because there is not English production in television superior to English production on the Internet.

Graph No. 8 - Where do you get in touch with English the most?

Source: My own research



Question 6 that concentrated on films and series investigated whether respondents prefer watching English shows in English with Czech subtitles, or dubbed in the Czech language. Apart from the answer, they were to explain the reasons why they prefer the selected option. The results show that 60% of respondents prefer Czech dubbing to original English version with Czech subtitles. Most of these answers were explained by respondents as the most comfortable option, for they often wrote that they are either lazy to read Czech subtitles, or they have troubles with reading them, because they cannot concentrate on the storyline and they claimed that it bothers them and it is difficult to read while watching a film. From those who chose original English version, the most frequent answers were listening to the language (improving their pronunciation), and the fact that they like listening to English so that they prefer it to Czech dubbed versions.

The last four inquiries focused mainly on Internet sources mentioned above, and question 7 investigated whether they try to improve their English by themselves and if so, in what ways they do it. Unfortunately, this question needed explanations and most of the respondents did not fill it in, they only wrote YES or NO. From those who answered this question (about a half of the total number of respondents) the most often answers were remedial classes, reading English books and studying at home from the textbook. The rest of the answers were in fact a repetition of previous set of questions, so they wrote answers like watching films, playing computer games, etc.

Questions 8 and 9 concentrated on YouTube channels, because of my assumptions that via Internet and YouTube students can get exposed to English much more than anywhere else. In the eighth question they were to choose whether they watch YouTube channels more often than television. As it was assumed, pupils attending lower-secondary level of primary schools watch these channels a lot, and the survey confirmed that over half of the respondents (precisely 60%) watch YouTube channels more often than television, which is a rather new actuality that has been on the rise in the last several years and it has the potential to become more significant medium than television in the future. As the ninth question investigated whether respondents watch any particular channel regularly or whether they subscribe any of these, we can say that three-fifths of all respondents claim that they subscribe or watch regularly several YouTube channels. This gives us a feeling that

these pupils may have been exposed to English more than via television, but as they were to write examples of the channels, I found out that with only few exceptions they watch predominantly Czech channels and vloggers (a vlogger is a person, who upload self-made videos on YouTube about him or her or on various topics). These vloggers are enormously popular among young people, and they create videos about sundry topics, which gives people the opportunity to choose from videos according to one's interests, which is probably one of the reasons why these channels are so popular, for they could be a kind of substitution for television programme with the advantage that people can choose from the countless number of programmes according to their liking. To even bigger detriment of our research, only very few respondents from this small survey mentioned English speaking channels, which may lead us to the impression that even though children have the opportunity to be exposed to English more through Internet these days, they are not interested in it, and in most cases they choose the very comfortable way of using Czech language only, which is again an evidence of poor motivation thanks to the lack of awareness of the importance of English language.

This leads us to the final question of this questionnaire, and this is hardly to be analysed, because it asked respondents to write relatively freely about the manner of dealing with English videos, articles, English websites, etc. It should have investigated the ways in which respondents act when they face rather contradictory situations. To be precise, they were to answer this set of questions: *Do you watch videos in English even though you do not understand well, or do you switch it off? Do you try to understand when you find interesting websites in English, or do you lose interest and switch it off? What if it is really interesting for you, what do you do? Do you try to translate at least something on your own?* The answers were very different, but we can analyse three most often mentioned answers here. To a pleasant surprise, 48 respondents (which is 64%) claimed that they try to understand as much as they can on their own, and only 13 of respondents wrote that they switch it off with any attempts to understand. On the other hand, almost 30% claimed that they use translators (especially Google translator) and they copy the whole sentences or the whole articles and try to understand it with the help of these translators. It is obvious that most of the translated texts via translators are nonsense, for it usually translates word by word, which usually causes more harm than good to the meaning

of the text. And what is more, most of the English websites that are being looked up via Google search engine offer their viewer automatic translation once he or she click on the particular website. From the survey it showed that almost 30% of respondents use this automatic translation, so they do not access the original versions at all, and instead they read the mixed English and Czech texts with lots of mistakes, misconceptions and absurdities than trying to understand the zest of the text with the eventuality of looking up unknown words in a dictionary. From the answers it was apparent that they do it, because they are lazy to think about it, and this is according to them the best option.

In my opinion the problem is much more about cultivating habits like reading, and it is the same with watching television, videos, and reading articles on the Internet or elsewhere. If pupils were more used to reading English articles on various themes, they would be probably more open to make some effort to translate texts on their own. The issue of simultaneous reading of subtitles and watching the film is the problem of habits too. If children were more used to listen to English unintentionally they would not probably have so much trouble with these things, for they would already know the most common phrases and also informal language. Unfortunately they do not learn these often at school, so once they hear unknown sentences in everyday life situations it may feel like they do not understand English at all, and this could lead to the decrease of motivation.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis was written in order to analyse the reasons for an early start of foreign language learning, because it is very frequent phenomenon in the Czech Republic and other European countries in past years. The theoretical part of the thesis wanted to show the advantages and disadvantages of it, and the practical part should have proved some of the assumptions about this issue.

Unfortunately, I did not manage to focus predominantly on the development of learners as the main factor that would stand for or against the early start, but I had to focus more on the conditions of learning English here in the Czech Republic, as it turned out as one of the most important factors to decide whether earlier really means better or not. My assumptions about this issue were based on the knowledge of the background of learning outside of the classroom and the lack of exposure to English sources in everyday life in the Czech Republic, and I have to admit that according to results of the research it turned out to be a true statement in the framework of the respondents that had been surveyed.

Although we may assume particular information about this issue I still bear in mind that these results cannot be applied generally, for the survey took place at only three primary schools and the number of respondents was rather low, so we are not able to draw any definite conclusions based on the research for the purposes of this thesis.

As it turned out it was very advantageous that the thesis tended to questions about overall conditions of learning and motivation, because it was important to show that learners in the Czech Republic face rather specific conditions and they are not exposed to English as much as learners of some other countries. This has been proved in the practical part, especially in chapter 4.5, where it turned out that the lack of exposure may have a lot to do with the degree of motivation of learners. And when we get back to the question of early start, we may assume that it is lacking the sense, for even though children start in the first grade of primary school or sometimes even earlier, how it can be beneficial for them when they do not have the language around them to the extent that they would become better learners effortlessly, or in natural conditions.

If we summarize the results in chapter 4.4 we can see that children at primary school level are not exposed to English outside of the classroom very much, and although I thought that they could probably benefit from playing computer games it showed that even if they play any games in English, there is so little language to be learned that it is almost negligible, or it is kind of impractical language. Also the survey showed that apart from English lessons they have very few opportunities to get in touch with English, and this may contribute to the conditions of learning, because little children at primary school level usually have easier access to television, where they do not hear English very often. This research proved that they listen to English songs and videos on the Internet via YouTube channels, but as the whole society tries to fight against overusing informational technologies by children, they usually have very limited time to spend in front of the computers, in opposite to television where they can watch fairy tales, and therefore it feels safer for parents, even though they are broadcast predominantly in the Czech language. But it is a shame that children have very limited access to English speaking sources around them, for they cannot build on solid foundations in later years of language education. And this in a way gives us an explanation why it is not necessary to start so early, because the conditions of exposing to English in the Czech Republic cannot provide stimulating environment to English learners.

The survey that has been analysed in chapter 4.5 indicates that children like English language and the production of songs, films, etc. in English language, but it also shows that these children do not always prefer English when they have the possibility of choice when watching TV series, shows and films, and what is more the reasons are very often dependent on the motivation of learners, because the lack of motivation causes that these children get used to comfortable Czech language around them and they never get the chance to listen to English unintentionally, which might have been very beneficial for their language skills. Not only would it provide them the exposure to the extent that they learn through listening, but it would also show them the reasons to learn it and it could raise the degree of motivation, which would probably make them better learners as well. This survey also indicates that the English production on the Internet is overwhelming in opposite to television, and teenagers watch a lot of videos, especially on YouTube channels, but as it has been mentioned, they often choose Czech channels, because they understand it without

problems and if there are videos available only in English, they may get bored very easily, because as they are not used to listening English, and because they do not understand it well enough they might easily lose interest and motivation.

To sum up the aim of the thesis, we may say that there is not a definite answer to the question about the ideal age for the start of foreign language learning, but there were mentioned aspects that contribute to this decision, and in the conditions of the Czech Republic and the lack of exposure to English language it is not really necessary to start in first years of school, for these little children do not have enough stimuli to benefit from an early start thanks to the unsatisfactory conditions outside of the classroom, which do not provide enough experience with the language.

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## APPENDIX A

Dotazník pro potřeby Diplomové práce na katedře Anglického jazyka a literatury, Univerzita Hradec Králové (dotazník pro učitele AJ)

### DP na téma „Dříve ne/znamená lépe – otázka rané výuky AJ na základních školách“

1. Jsem učitelem/učitelkou AJ a) na 1. stupni ZŠ b) na 2. stupni ZŠ c) na 1. i 2. stupni ZŠ
2. V jakém ročníku začínají s povinnou výukou AJ na škole, kde učíte?  
.....
3. Myslíte si, že je výše zmíněný ročník ideální pro start s cizím jazykem, nebo byste volil/a jiný? Vyšší či nižší? Proč?  
.....  
.....  
.....
4. Berete jako výhodu, že se některé děti učí AJ již v předškolním věku, nebo to vnímáte opačně? Proč?  
.....  
.....  
.....
5. Jak moc je podle Vás obtížné v době informačních technologií motivovat studenty? Zaškrtněte na stupnici 1 (snadné) – 5 (velice obtížné).  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
6. Co je podle Vás hlavní zdroj motivace k učení se cizímu jazyku? Myslíte si, že mají kolem sebe dostatek podnětů, které studenty motivují, aby se učili cizí jazyky? Uveďte příklady.  
.....  
.....  
.....
7. Jaký je Váš názor na informační technologie? Myslíte si, že slouží spíše k rozptylování studentů od školy, nebo jim naopak mohou sloužit, popřípadě je motivovat ke studiu?  
.....  
.....  
.....
8. Myslíte si, že jsou žáci v ČR dostatečně vystaveni cizojazyčným zdrojům skrz média (TV), ICT, internet, apod.? Pokud ano, kde nejčastěji se s cizím jazykem setkávají?  
.....  
.....  
.....

Předem Vám děkuji za vyplnění tohoto dotazníku

Bc. Martina Lišková

## APPENDIX B

Dotazník – 1. st. ZŠ .....

Diplomová práce „**Dříve ne/znamená lépe – otázka rané výuky AJ na základních školách**“

1. Hraješ hry v anglickém jazyce (počítač, mobil, tablet, playstation)? ANO / NE
2. Jaký typ her hraješ? Uveď příklady.

a) logické (piškvorky, křížovky) .....

b) akční (střílečka) .....

c) strategické (dobývání území, stavění měst) .....

d) vědomostní (kvízy) .....

e) jiné .....

3. Zapamatuješ si tím nová anglická slovíčka? ANO / NE

Příklady:.....

4. Posloucháš písničky v angličtině? Zakroužkuj, kde všude je posloucháš.

CD DVD (soundtrack) TV Internet YOUTUBE hodiny AJ .....

5. Koukáš se na filmy/pohádky v angličtině? Zakroužkuj.

DVD YOUTUBE TV jinde .....

6. Pouští si doma někdy rodiče hudbu nebo filmy v angličtině? ANO / NE

7. Jaký je tvůj nejoblíbenější film / pohádka / seriál?

.....

8. Líbí se ti víc pohádky/filmy v anglickém nebo českém jazyce? ANGLICKÝ / ČESKÝ

9. Chtěl/a bys poslouchat a používat angličtinu i jinde, než v hodinách AJ? ANO  
(kde?) ..... / NE

10. Chtěl/a by ses naučit anglicky tak, abys rozuměl instrukcím v PC hrách, písničkám, pohádkám? ANO / NE

11. Baví tě hodiny angličtiny ve škole? ANO / NE

Předem Vám děkuji za vyplnění tohoto dotazníku

Bc. Martina Lišková

## APPENDIX C

Dotazník – 2. st. ZŠ .....

Diplomová práce „**Dříve ne/znemá lépe – otázka rané výuky AJ na základních školách**“

1. Hraješ hry v angličtině (PC, mobil, tablet, PSP)? Jaké?  
.....
2. Myslíš si, že ti hry pomáhají zlepšovat se v AJ? Proč?  
.....
3. Posloucháš hudbu v AJ? ANO /NE Rozumíš písničkám? ANO / NE Pokud ne, co děláš, abys jim porozuměl/a?
  - a) najdu si celý překlad na internetu
  - b) přeložím si jen slova, která neznám, zbytek si domyslím
  - c) nepřekládám, domyslím si význam díky videoklipům
  - d) nepřekládám, nezajímá mě, co se písničkách zpívá
4. Koukáš na filmy a seriály v AJ? ANO / NE Pokud ano, kde je sleduješ?
  - a) online na internetu
  - b) YouTube
  - c) DVD
  - d) TV e) jinde .....

Napiš příklady: .....

5. Z následujících možností vyber ty, ve kterých se dostaneš do kontaktu s anglickým jazykem mimo školu: PCTV Internet rádio knihy DVD časopisy/noviny jiné .....
6. Kdyby sis měl/a vybrat, jestli budeš na film/seriál koukat s českým dabingem, nebo v původním znění s titulky, co by sis vybral/a? CZ DABING / EN + CZ titulky Proč? .....
7. Snažíš se i mimo školu zlepšovat svou angličtinu? Jak?  
.....
8. Sleduješ videa na YouTube častěji než TV? ANO / NE
9. Jsi odběratelem nějakého YouTube kanálu? (popř. jestli sleduješ nějaký kanál pravidelně) ANO / NE  
.....
10. Koukáš se na videa, i když jsou anglicky a ty moc nerozumíš? Nebo to vypneš? Co děláš, když narazíš na zajímavé webové stránky v angličtině? Snažíš se porozumět? Nebo se ti to nechce číst proto, že je to napsané anglicky, i když je to něco, co tě zajímá?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Předem Vám děkuji za vyplnění tohoto dotazníku

Bc. Martina Lišková