

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI  
PEDAGOGICKÁ FAKULTA

**Bakalářská práce**

2021

Jana Muzikantová

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

PEDAGOGICKÁ FAKULTA

Ústav cizích jazyků

**Grammar and Skills in English Lessons at Lower  
Secondary School**

Bakalářská práce

Jana Muzikantová

Olomouc 2021

vedoucí práce: doc. PhDr. Václav Řeřicha, CSc.

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně. Veškeré použité podklady, ze kterých jsem čerpala informace, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury a citovány v textu podle normy ČSN ISO 690.

V Olomouci dne

.....

Jana Muzikantová

I would like to thank my supervisor doc. PhDr. Václav Řeřicha, CSc. for his guidance, advice, and patience throughout the process of writing. My grateful thanks also belong to my family and my partner for their support and tolerance. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to all respondents, who helped me realize the practical part.

## Table of Content

Introduction.....	10
Theoretical Part.....	11
1 The Concept of English Grammar and its Qualities .....	11
2 Historical Overview of English Grammar .....	14
2.1 Grammar Translation Method .....	14
2.2 Natural Approach.....	14
3 Communicative Grammar .....	16
3.1 The Method of Communicative Language Teaching .....	16
3.2 Grammar and its Relation to Speaking and Writing Skills.....	17
3.3 Presentation of Grammar .....	18
4 Framework Educational Programme.....	21
4.1 Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety .....	22
4.2 Remote Learning.....	23
Practical Part .....	25
5 Research .....	25
5.1 Methodology .....	25
5.2 Aims and Desired Outcomes .....	25
5.3 Interviews.....	25
5.4 Research Questions .....	26
5.4.1 Research Question 1 .....	26
5.4.2 Research Question 2.....	27
5.4.3 Research Question 3.....	29
5.4.4 Research Question 4.....	30
5.4.5 Research Question 5.....	32
5.4.6 Research Question 6.....	34
5.4.7 Research Question 7.....	35

5.4.8 Research Question 8.....	36
5.4.9 Research Question 9.....	38
5.5 Comparison of Coursebooks.....	39
Conclusion .....	42
Bibliography .....	44
Appendix 1: Research questions.....	48

## **A List of Abbreviations**

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
DM	Direct Method
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FEP	Framework Educational Programme
GTM	Grammar-Translation-Method
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
SEP	School Educational Program
R	Respondent

## **A List of figures**

Figure 1: Three-dimensional Grammar Framework

Figure 2: Covert grammar rules

Figure 3: Scripted dialogue

Figure 4: Written revision of grammar

Figure 5: Comparative adjectives in CLT speaking activity

Figure 6: Grammatical phrase there is/there are for communicative purpose



## **Abstract**

Despite the fact that grammar plays a significant part in the English language, the practical part of this bachelor's project showed that lower secondary schoolchildren do not use grammatical elements automatically. Instead of creating their own sentences, they seem to repeat written phrases from scripted speaking exercises, which cannot improve their communicative skills at all. Although the main purpose of remote learning should be aimed at practising already acquired knowledge, it limits lower secondary pupils in their opportunities for speaking in terms of time limitations, reduced classes, and a lack of motivation.

## **Introduction**

Nowadays, there are plenty of ways of mastering a foreign language. Therefore, the significance of grammatical rules might be perceived as either the most relevant, or as the least relevant. Nevertheless, grammar is a fundamental part of any language, differentiating us from one another, making us human. However, we can make ourselves understood even without the perfect use of grammar, and thus grammar should be looked at as a component of the learning process, not as the main aim of language learning. While in the past, most of the emphasis was put on this invented system of rules, which helps us form sentence structures, at present, English teaching techniques focus more on communicative competence. And if one cannot spell Armageddon correctly, it is not the end of the world.

This bachelor's project examines the value of English grammar. The use of grammar is a rather controversial topic. But how does grammar really affect and encourage the communicative speaking ability in English lessons at lower secondary school? This thesis discusses this question in both the theoretical and the practical part. First, the theoretical part defines English grammar and its value, explores the concept of grammar over the course of the years, and specifies the relationship between the Framework Educational Programme (henceforth FEP) and student speaking time among lower secondary schoolchildren. The empirical part delineates the level of utility of grammar elements in spoken English. Based on interviews with lower secondary school teachers, the results are analysed and compared with schoolbooks.

## Theoretical Part

### 1 The Concept of English Grammar and its Qualities

The importance of grammar and the way it is presented may represent diverse values for every single English learner (Thornbury, 1999, p. 8). Even though there are infinite ways in which to express ourselves, Nassaji and Fotos (2011, p. 1) state that grammar comprises the most essential part, the roots of any language.

Although there are countless definitions of English grammar, its interpretations usually describe grammar as a set of rules which serve to form a communication unit, mostly by means of sentences:

- *“Grammar is a meaning-making resource. It is made up of lexicogrammatical form, meaning, and use constructions that are appropriate to the context and that operate at the word, phrase, sentence, and textual levels.”* (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016, p. 2)
- For Strauss et al. (2018, p. 2), *“grammar is equivalent to “diagramming sentences,” “rules of word order and syntax,” and even “standards by which to judge how people use language.”*”
- Kolln et al. (2015, p. 5) present grammar as *“the system of rules in our heads”, “the formal description of the rules”* and *“the conventions of common usage, sometimes called linguistic etiquette.”*

As Harmer (2007, p. 32) writes, *“studying grammar means knowing how different grammatical elements can be strung together to make chains of words”*. When speaking, we need to be aware of the message we want to express. While we are forming a sentence, our mind has already determined which grammatical number, tense of verbs, and countability of nouns the structure will include. Knowing grammar at an advanced level enables us to express the same thought in numerous possible ways (Harmer, 2007, p. 26; p. 33). On that account one does not have to remember long phrases or learn whole sentences, which opens the door to limitless eventualities in a language (Drout, 2008, p. 12; p. 14).

However, to be able to participate properly in a conversation, having a certain knowledge of basic grammar rules is a necessity. Drout (2008, pp. 12-13) presents an example of the difference between two words in both spoken and written language. In the written form of the words *“boys”* and *“boy’s”* a certain variation is visible, whereas in speaking one can

hardly distinguish the difference without a context. Being familiar with grammatical forms is an essential part of polished language and language proficiency. The listening skill is also crucial for a correct response in speech. We need to focus on its meaning and comprehend its message in order to react, because sentences may sometimes be shortened by means of auxiliary verbs. These brief answer forms are commonly used to save our time, because we do not have to repeat the whole statement, such as in “*I do*” answering to “*Do you really think this is a good idea?*” (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016, p. 2).

“*Language is nothing but a set of human habits, the purpose of which is to give expression to thoughts and feelings, and especially to impart them to others. As with other habits it is not to be expected that they should be perfectly consistent. No one can speak exactly as everybody else or speak exactly in the same way under all circumstances and at all moments*”, as Jespersen (2006, p. 1) states. Grammar was invented to reduce these differences between two or more speakers, because word structure varies in every single language. Thus, this assemblage of grammatical rules should be of help to mutual comprehension (Jespersen, 2006, pp. 1-2).

According to Thornbury (1999, p. 4), grammar is considered to be a useful tool which is instrumental in the comprehension of meaning. Therefore, to master a language we should not learn grammatical rules for the sake of knowing them but be able to use their meaning in speech. Thornbury (1999, p. 3) also argues that the ability to form sentences does not ensure meaningful conversation. Sentences such as “*A plane is looking furiously at the reading sun, praying for cats to bark at a book at 9 o'clock*” might be correct from the grammatical point of view, nevertheless, in the context of asking somebody the time, it would make no sense. In Thornbury’s opinion (1999, p. 4), grammar is not necessary in those situations where the action is obvious, and we already know enough information from the context. Therefore, asking someone “*May I?*” while indicating a desire to pet their dog would not require other words.

Another argument in favour of how grammar encourages speaking activity called “*the sentence-machine argument*” resides in useful phrases and language economy. Remembering effective conversation tips may help to make contact with other people, and a phrasebook might enable complete beginners to make themselves understood at elementary level (Thornbury, 1999, p. 15). Even the simplest bits of speech may carry meaning and refer to another, following piece, such as by means of indefinite and definite articles in sentences “*Yesterday I saw a dog chewing his big bone*” and “*That is the dog that bit me*”, referring to the time of their first mention (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016, p. 2).

Carter and McCarthy (2006, pp. 828-831) present a common feature of spoken and written language, described as “*cluster words*”. These grammatical formations are defined as something more than words, but not as large as phrases or sentences. Although the main purpose is to make our speech more natural and fluent, they may also encourage the listener to answer (“*you know what I mean?*”, “*don’t you think?*”), refer to time/place (“*in the middle of*”, “*the edge of the*”), continue (“*and then*”, “*on the other hand*”), and provide indefinite answers (“*kind of*”, “*that sort of thing*”) (pp. 834-837).

Either way, grammar serves collectively with vocabulary to promote meaningful social interaction by way of sentences (Givón, 2018, p. 27). It provides limitless opportunities of altering the meaning as a result of creating, adding, removing, developing, or modifying our sentences. Although grammar greatly influences the appropriate usage of a language, its qualities might often be overrated. Thornbury (1999, p. 25) mentions that to master a language, a perfect knowledge of grammatical rules is not enough.

## **2 Historical Overview of English Grammar**

This chapter briefly describes the transformation of how grammar was perceived and taught from its origin to the present-day approach. Its content also refers to two of the main teaching methods, which are the Grammar Translation Method (henceforth GTM) and later the Direct Method (henceforth DM), and how its purpose differs from the contemporary one.

### **2.1 Grammar Translation Method**

Regardless of the perception of the importance of grammar, it has played a significant part in developing improved language teaching methods. While nowadays the use of grammar quite differs from the use in the past, there is still a visible influence of ancient times. Especially in the linguistic sphere, a relic of the GTM is still recognisable in literal translations. This kind of method was invented primarily in order to translate texts from Latin and the grammar element ruled in language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 1986, pp. 2-7). A foreign language was a matter of using grammatical forms to create sentences, and therefore little attention was focused on the skill of speaking. However, today's purpose of learning a new language resides in communicative ability, the then grammar was predestined only for passive usage (Harmer, 2007, p. 63). Therefore, the student speaking time consisted only of the verification of grammar exercises. This concept started being modified in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Latin fell into oblivion (Richards and Rodgers, 1986, pp. 2-7).

### **2.2 Natural Approach**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a revolutionary movement emerged, for which precise translations were no longer enough. A lot of language learners endeavoured to create a new method for teaching a foreign language. With the foundation of the International Phonetic Alphabet (henceforth IPA) in 1886, public lessons focused more on the speaking skill because of the need for proper pronunciation (Richards and Rodgers, 1986, pp. 7-12). The GTM was more criticised and foreign languages were taught with an emphasis on active usage. School curricula demanded a new approach, which resulted in the DM. Therefore, literal translations were no longer needed, and grammar started being related to concrete functions, which helps to define the grammatical purpose (Harmer, 2007, p. 63). This new approach to teaching foreign languages was based on the basis of a natural learning process, just as children learn to talk in their mother tongue. Mastering the English language required active participation, appreciated by teachers in the function of supervisors. Another innovation was based on a suggestion that native speakers should become an essential part of foreign language education. The DM,

however, was found disadvantageous because of the teacher's lack of knowledge, students' conversational skills, and time limitations (Richards and Rodgers, 1986, pp. 7-12).

The GTM formed the educational ideal until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a new approach to learning was necessary to satisfy learners' requirements. New expectations gave birth to the DM taking proper pronunciation into consideration, while focusing more on the oral aspect of a language, which has remained the case until today.

### **3 Communicative Grammar**

Since the rise of the DM, the grammar function and its communicative purpose have started to be more at the centre of discussion. Nowadays, grammar is still part of the elementary school syllabus and plays a significant role in learning for students who study English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL). EFL students are usually familiarized with English grammar, yet many of them are incapable of fluent and natural participation in a conversation without considerable difficulty. Being competent to use grammar properly requires not only learning its rules, but also having a certain skill to apply them (Savage et al., 2010, p. 2; Shastri, 2010, p. 109).

#### **3.1 The Method of Communicative Language Teaching**

Being able to participate actively in a conversation was not the main purpose of foreign language teaching until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Communicative competence started gaining importance and becoming comparable to its grammatical counterpart. In the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (henceforth CLT) appeared as a response to mechanical habit formation, arguing that there is a significant difference between knowing grammatical rules and applying them properly in a conversation (Richards, 2006a, p. 3). Although more emphasis was put on the speaking skill, the knowledge of grammar rules was still considered necessary for proficiency in a language (p. 6).

The purpose of CLT is first and foremost aimed at the communicative ability in the English language. Knowing how to utilize a language appropriately according to its purpose, setting, participants, or function requires more than just a certain knowledge of grammatical rules. Role playing has become integrated into language lessons, providing participants with the chance to share their inner thoughts and opinions. Also, the role of a teacher has gone through a modification. Instead of insisting on constant and mechanical drills of grammatical forms, the present objective is to assist and motivate their pupils. Through conversation, learners form authentic real-like language and are encouraged to do so by obtaining new findings and information (Harmer, 2007, p. 69-70).

This opinion is shared by Lee and VanPatten (2003, pp. 10-11), who depict the teacher as an advisor and agent of classroom interaction, arguing that communication and conversation might have a lot in common, but nevertheless are not equal. EFL students should be given the opportunity to answer a question beyond the expected answer, such as yes/no questions or complete fixed dialogue exercises. Speaking freely might help them to discover a personal style



of communication, which, however, is usually a cause of many grammatical mistakes, but on the contrary, the more errors that are made, the more advanced and experienced the speaker becomes since he or she learns from them (Makodia, 2008, pp. 47-49). Since the main purpose of interpersonal communication is to be capable of demonstrating our inner desire to share a message, our speech need not be perfectly flawless, but it must be understood. Nevertheless, thanks to grammar, our words are neatly glued together, enhancing our utterance (Makodia, 2008, pp. 46-47).

### **3.2 Grammar and its Relation to Speaking and Writing Skills**

Drout (2008, p. 12) points out that “*grammar evolved along with language long before writing*”. From this statement one might deduce a conclusion that grammar and speaking ability have been living in a symbiotic relation since the birth of humanity and both are of equivalent value regarding interpersonal communication. Perhaps, grammar and speaking should not be perceived as two discrete spheres shaping a language, but rather as essential elements which complement each other.

Nowadays, grammar is commonly associated with a refined writing skill (Drout, 2008, p. 12) or is contrasted with oral activities in classrooms. When speaking, the CLT method emphasizes correcting potential mistakes, but nevertheless not unconditionally. Putting too much emphasis on accuracy might discourage pupils from any attempt to practise their speaking ability (Larsen-Freeman, 2015, p. 7). One of the reasons why foreign learners may find English difficult to utilize is the fact that the spoken and written forms often differ. This may cause problems not only in reading but also in speaking (Drout, 2008, p. 24). Therefore, the way to flawless speech lies in grammatical correctness and knowledge of the English sounds in the IPA as well.

Even though grammar appears in both spoken and written language, its form may seem to be more important in writing. Writing provides a greater amount of time for an answer, whereas speaking is limited in terms of time. Our speech is usually interrupted, which means the answer is never fully planned, leading to pauses and repeating. Therefore metaphors, phrases, and complex formal sentences are commonly used in communicating through technology or on pieces of paper rather than in dialogues taking place in real time. Speaking also provides social contact and an instant response, and thus colloquial language is used rather than a formal type (Goh and Burns, 2012, pp. 77-87; Carter and McCarthy, 2006, p. 168).

Speaking is the dominant communicative medium. Nowadays, it is more important to be able to speak than write. Owing to grammar, we can express ourselves beyond the border of making simple sounds. Grammatical rules help us to speak effectively, appropriately, accurately and on an educated and elevated level (Drout, 2008; Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016, p. 1). Nevertheless, in some cases, imperfect use of grammar does not always destroy the speaker's intention, as in this example "*Rachel love cooking; she cook every day*". Even though it is grammatically incorrect, the message is comprehended. We know that Rachel is a person and therefore the -s at the end of a verb in the present simple, third person singular does not change the meaning of this sentence, because we suggest that there is only one Rachel present (Savage et al., 2010, p. 14).

### **3.3 Presentation of Grammar**

Thornbury (1999, p. 23) presents two main concepts of grammar methodology, where one is more inductive and might be negotiated from specific situational examples by pupils themselves, described as "*covert*", whereas "*overt*" teaching method is more open, demonstrated directly through given grammatical rules, supplemented by the teacher's explanation, which are usually practised later in exercises. Thornbury (1999, p. 24) also suggests that explicit grammar presentation may be crucial for beginners while broadening their communicative skills owing to grammatical patterns. Because determining which of these two grammar teaching styles should prevail might be disputable from many points of view, there is another opinion regarding this issue. Harmer (1987, p. 5) is convinced that if grammar should encourage speaking, it ought to be taught as a function related to a specific purpose, such as describing, inviting, apologising, promising, advising, offering, or refusing rather than as a set of rules without any context. Learning how to speak naturally might also reduce stress when talking, and increase linguistic skills, contributing to a quicker and more confident response.

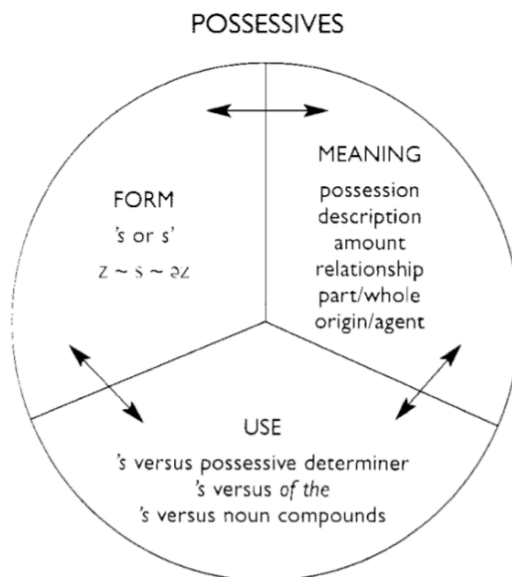
This opinion is shared by Richards (2006b), who deals with CLT's aim to communicate properly and fearlessly in his student book "*Person to Person: Communicative speaking and listening skills*". Its content is divided according to the principles of CLT. All twelve units provide effective grammatical instructions on how to respond in concrete situations. Understanding the learning purpose is key for applying new knowledge beyond the borders of the class.

Another communicative purpose of grammar may be found in its unconscious usage. As we grow up, we learn how to communicate by listening and repeating what we have heard, acquiring new vocabulary and grammar, and suddenly understanding the meaning of our

speech. Our ability to speak is built up unconsciously on the basis of the grammatical structure of our mother tongue. Grammar is rooted in those patterns, being part of the language itself (Harmon and Wilson, 2006, p. 4; p. 13).

As Thornbury (1999, p. 18) writes, “if you take the language-is-skill point of view, then it follows that, like bike riding, you learn it by doing it, not studying it”. As already mentioned before, the main aim of any language is mutual comprehension. Owing to the CLT method, pupils are given more chances to use their speaking language skills in real-like contexts, participating in genuine conversations. If the grammar is taught efficiently and for practical needs, the opportunities to apply it are increased (Larsen-Freeman, 2015, p. 267).

Larsen-Freeman (2001, pp. 252-255) presents grammar as the unity of the morphological, semantical, and pragmatic elements which a grammatical form consists of. According to her “*Three-Dimensional Grammar Framework*”, it is important to learn grammar in those three sections rather than as a separate structure. Its parts must be perceived as a continuous process, which may not be acquired immediately, but with experience and time. After all these dimensions are mastered, the sophistication and quality of language proficiency will appear.



*Figure 1: Three-dimensional Grammar Framework*

This chapter dealt with English grammar and its significance for enhancing our speech. Since the main purpose of communication is to comprehend and simultaneously to be comprehended, grammar does not play a crucial role in speaking, because even with some

mistakes the message might be intelligible. Nevertheless, a deeper knowledge of grammar provides more cultured and polished language. To reach this language level, it is important also to learn grammar gradually, with the help of overt grammar teaching, to have a basic command of English.

## 4 Framework Educational Programme

Communicative competence plays a significant part not only in an EFL student's personal life, but also in their attainment of an elementary education level. Regarding the area of foreign languages, FEP defines expected outcomes in both primary and lower secondary schools. At the end of the final year pupils' grasp of the English language should be on the A2 level. In compliance with Act No. 561/2004 (Collection of Laws, on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary, Professional, and Other Education), there are two major curricula documents according which education in the Czech Republic takes place. The FEP follows the state's education policy and provides a standard proposal for syllabuses for each school's SEP. Every school subsequently creates its own individual curriculum based on the FEP, which must be respected and its requirements met (MŠMT, 2021, pp. 5-16).

However, the FEP puts stress on practical use in real life; to be able to understand and actively utilize the acquired knowledge beyond the classroom; a report from the Czech School Inspectorate has shown that lower secondary pupils struggled in the field of grammar, with a 60% success rate. In comparison with eight-year grammar school learners, participants from primary schools scored about 20 points less. According to the collected data, the research ascertained that there is a big difference between testing in the spoken and written spheres, with the number of oral examinations being equal to more than twice the number of written exams. (ČŠI, 2018, p. 6, p. 14, p. 29). On the evidence of another survey (Najvarová and Najvar, 2011), communicative competence is not sufficiently accomplished. Its data showed that although pupils use English commonly, their speaking is regulated by scripted dialogues and imitating the teacher's speech. Despite this fact, their communication is only performed, and their language skills may not be practised properly at all. Problems in spoken language remain in existence till today. According to the results, pupils seem not to be comfortable when using their own language and both productive skills signify a lack of language proficiency (Hanušová et al., 2014, p. 251; ČŠI, 2019, p. 25).

Goh and Burns (2012, pp. 75-77) argue that contemporary English teaching is not in compliance with the aims of CLT. School coursebooks usually contain plenty of exercises for language skills, but as far as speaking is concerned, the dialogues are lacking in authenticity. Pupils are guided to take part in dialogues based on prescribed passages rather than using their own ideas and language (Dobrovolná, 2016, p. 108). Despite the importance of practising new grammatical rules safely, proceeding only with written phrases may reduce the learning of new

vocabulary and speaking skills. Encouraging pupils to find new ways to express, ask, or explain enriches their flexibility and communication skills more than rote teaching does.

On the contrary, coursebooks should not be the only medium which provides all the materials for learning a language. Their main beneficial effects are supporting the teacher's lesson management and summarizing schoolwork and grammar into united and connected sections. A good coursebook must engage the learner's attention and willingness to study on their own. Its content must entertain, inform, educate, and not be monotonous; otherwise, EFL students will be bored (Harmer, 2007, pp. 182-183).

Another drawback regarding speaking might be the fact that EFL learners are taught to be familiar with grammar and be able to complete grammatical forms correctly in exercises. Usually, these exercises offer a multiple choice, which reveals a solution. The question arises of whether young EFL learners study to know a language or just its structure (Nunan, 2005, p. 70). Nunan (2005, p. 73) also suggests that EFL learners should be informed about more complex grammatical structures for the purpose of using more advanced language. If the pupils are limited in their thinking by reading a prescribed assignment, the development of their language skills will not be satisfactory for their further education. However, this does not mean beginners should not work with simplified worksheets containing written instructions and dialogue fractions, because at the beginning their skills require a more secure way to learn the internal structure of a language.

Despite the fact that the FEP puts an emphasis on responding appropriately, it does not specify this requirement exactly (MŠMT, 2021, p. 27). The pupils are supposed to be capable of talking about certain subjects according to their language level; however, grammar is not mentioned at all.

#### **4.1 Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety**

Speaking with people might sometimes become stressful, especially when we are not using our mother tongue, but a foreign language. He (2018, p. 4) describes this fear as "*an individual's fear or nervousness associated with either real or anticipated oral communication in a foreign language.*" This negative feeling may be experienced not only by beginners, as it may be assumed, but even by advanced learners (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012, p. 472). Although there might be more variables affecting speaking anxiety, the most common inconveniences reside in communication with other people itself, in self-doubt that their communicative skills

are not sufficient and in the worry that their speech will be compared to other learners' speaking ability (Horwitz et al., 1986, pp. 127-128).

Despite the fact that the FEP demands good speaking proficiency, the English language lessons at Czech elementary schools are designed only for three classes a week for each type of lower secondary school (NÚV, 2011, p. 3). In this time span, EFL learners are guided to acquire skills providing participation in conversations on basic topics, including asking questions and talking on their own on a selected topic (MŠMT, 2021, p. 27). Apart from the issue of student speaking time, another disadvantage regarding pupils' motivation to talk might reside in inappropriate testing, because the major examination is practised for by means of written tests rather than oral ones (ČŠI, 2018, p. 29). The natural speaking ability is also influenced by the form of testing. It is crucial to ask questions which can be answered without knowledge in a specific area. Pupils tend to react better in the case of personalized tasks such as "*Why do you like swimming?*" rather than "*Who is the monarch of the United Kingdom?*". Otherwise, they are not examined on their speaking ability, but rather general knowledge (Bilanová et al., 2010, p. 22, pp. 36-37). To sound natural and become more fluent, drilling and practising are the most significant factors. If there was more time devoted to pupils' utterances, the answers might be formulated in full sentences rather than in a few words and their speech would not copy the pattern of prescribed questions from worksheets.

## **4.2 Remote Learning**

Nowadays, since the beginning of the COVID pandemic in 2019, the major approach of Czech education has had to be adapted to continue teaching safely by means of online teaching. Although many pupils spend a lot of time on their computers, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports recommends them to take a break after three online classes instead of being taught continuously, as in full-time study (MŠMT, 2020, p. 12). This may have a bad influence on the student speaking time in classes because of a lack of time. On the contrary, according to the FEP, remote learning provides a great opportunity to encourage pupils to talk in online sessions, because lessons aim at practising their acquired knowledge. Meanwhile primary pupils follow frontal teaching, lower secondary pupils are guided to improve their language ability through teamwork, discussions, or group projects, and the educational programme focuses on the expected outcomes at the end of elementary education (p. 18).

Although remote learning is not appropriate and suitable for healthy psychological and sociological growth and from the point of view of the quality of education (MŠMT, 2021, p. 18), many EFL learners may find speaking in front of a camera as natural as when playing

computer games or video calling with friends online. Thus, children may practise their speaking skills even more. Nevertheless, teachers must know how to equip them with the proper grammatical knowledge.

Since communicative competence has been implemented into school syllabuses, the FEP endeavours to make English teaching very practical as the language should be usable beyond the classroom. Despite this effort, the English language may sometimes cause difficulties, mostly in terms of the oral approach. EFL learners seem to have a lack of self-confidence and knowledge to speak on a proficient level. For many of them speaking is the most threatening factor causing nervousness or, worse, the inability to react. To prevent such behaviour, the pupils should be given more chances to practise their own language. Instead of talking about general topics based on the basis of prescribed exercises, EFL learners should experience what it is like to communicate truly and naturally. As far as pupils use their personal speaking style, the grammar will really be contributing.



# **Practical Part**

## **5 Research**

English grammar plays a dominant part in learning the language and together with vocabulary it makes interpersonal communication possible. Although grammatical rules are significant for mastering a language at a more advanced level, beginners may only have a basic knowledge of how words can be linked together and still be able to conduct a conversation. Therefore, many EFL learners may consider that learning English grammar is pointless. The empirical part of this bachelor's project deals with grammar and its contribution to speaking among lower secondary school pupils.

### **5.1 Methodology**

For more precise examination of the thesis and more accurate findings, the method of qualitative research was selected. The research techniques used were structured dialogues with a group of six lower secondary school teachers and one lower secondary grammar school teacher and subsequently a comparison of coursebooks. Because of the COVID pandemic situation, the number of participants was limited to seven volunteers and the interviews were realized through online meetings. The research questions were sent in advance, and therefore, all of the English teachers had the same conditions and enough time to consider their responses.

### **5.2 Aims and Desired Outcomes**

The aim of the empirical part is to examine how English grammar enhances speaking among lower secondary pupils. The research questions reflect the connection between grammar and speaking by asking for significant aspects which demonstrate the impact of grammar on communicative skills and other issues which may influence communicative ability.

### **5.3 Interviews**

The interviews were realized by means of an online environment, mostly via Skype and MS Teams. The group of people who were interviewed consisted of six lower secondary school teachers and one lower secondary grammar school teacher of English. The names of the participants are omitted intentionally, preserving their anonymity. In place of their real names, the interviewees will have a number from 1 to 7 in chronological order substituted for "respondent" (henceforth R). R2 is a teacher of lower secondary grammar school, who was added on purpose because of the varied findings. The data that was received represents answers

from both genders; nevertheless, the number of women predominates over that of men in a ratio of 5:2.

## 5.4 Research Questions

The research questions were constructed on the basis of the knowledge discussed in the theoretical part. Because of the research method of structured interviews, the research questions were sent to the participants several days before the interviews. In the event of doubts, the teachers could inquire about clarification. The last question was left open intentionally, in case something relevant was omitted. Each interview was recorded in written form because not all interviewees did agree to an audio recording being made, and then, transcribed and analysed.

### 5.4.1 Research Question 1

- *How much instrumental do you consider English grammar with respect to communicative ability? (Do you agree with a statement that to know grammar does not ensure meaningful communication?)*

Grammar and vocabulary are the most crucial aspects of every language. Without those two components, there would be no sentences, only sounds. To master speaking, we need to practise our grammatical and communicative skills; however, at elementary level, basic grammatical mistakes are so common as to obscure the message.

#### Respondent 1

R1 agrees that **grammar plays a significant role** but argues that the most important aspect of learning English is vocabulary. We can make ourselves **understood** even **without grammar**.

#### Respondent 2

R2 agrees that **grammar is important** and claims that for more **advanced learners grammar is more relevant**, making their speech **intelligible** and **polished**. Making **grammatical mistakes** may improve our speaking; however, the teacher should be aware that **too much correction discourages** pupils from **using new knowledge** and makes them feel obtuse.

### **Respondent 3**

This teacher insists that **grammar is essential** in acquiring a language. It helps us to comprehend and be comprehended as well. **Knowledge of grammatical rules** provides an opportunity to speak **properly** and **correctly**, using differences between tenses as an example.

### **Respondent 4**

According to R4, **grammar** is required for **accurate expression** and **comprehension**. Regarding **idioms** and **phrases**, being able to produce grammar actively is very important, because in such cases deducing and **negotiating** the meaning is **impossible**.

### **Respondent 5**

R5 considers **grammar** to be **the basic unit** of a language. Especially in the case of fixed phrases such as “*how much does it cost?*”, grammar helps us to be comprehensible. In addition to grammar, **gesture** and **facial expressions** also make the meaning easier.

### **Respondent 6**

R6 **agrees** with the statement and suggests that **grammar incorrectness** is a matter that is **typical** of **Czech EFL learners**. According to his words, Czech speakers are **afraid of talking** in order not to make possible mistakes.

### **Respondent 7**

The last R presents **grammar** as **the most important aspect** in the process of learning a language. Together with vocabulary, it ensures us **a conversation of high-quality**.

The respondents made a big contrast between the significance of grammar and of vocabulary. Without a lexicon, grammar may be perceived as pointless, because there are no words which can be linked together. Although fixed phrases and idioms cannot be understood without knowledge, their meaning may be described. Grammar, however, refines our speech, making the message clear such as in tenses; “*she went shopping*” and “*she has gone shopping*” or “*I live in Prague*” and “*I’m living in Prague*”; the interaction may be affected by non-verbal communication and the desire to practise speaking skills as well.

#### **5.4.2 Research Question 2**

- *How does the grammar included in a coursebook contribute to achieving the expected outcomes in concordance with the FEP and SEP? (Do you consider that grammar is efficiently and sufficiently explained in your coursebook? Are those*

*grammatical exercises usable in real life? Do you think that your coursebook lacks something? Should there be more/fewer grammatical exercises/explanations?)*

Since the purpose of the FEP is to create and propound useful guidelines to help the SEP to create their syllabuses individually, the coursebooks should assist in acquiring a language and improving pupils' knowledge in order to fulfil the expected outcomes at the end of the final year. Therefore, the chosen coursebook should be in harmony with those requirements and initiate entertaining and pleasant lessons. Exercises ought to be practical and grammar should serve for daily usage; however the main role of education is played by teachers and their pupils.

### **Respondent 1**

The coursebook *Project* is perceived as **sufficient**. It provides **many exercises** which **enrich** language skills.

### **Respondent 2**

R2 perceives the student book *More!* as a **useful** learning tool. Its exercises aim at **grammar** used in **everyday life**, such as with *going to* referring to the near future. The grammar is introduced gradually, and its rules are divided into chapters.

### **Respondent 3**

The *Project Explore* student book's enhancement is seen in **communicative tasks**, encouraging entertaining conversations. **Grammar** is presented and practised in a lot of forms, such as multiple-choice questions or gap-filling, becoming more and more difficult.

### **Respondent 4**

R3 claims that *Project* provides **sufficient** material for the school curriculum. Although the student's book contains good content, the **pupils** are, according to the teacher's answer, **short of motivation** and it is up to the tutor to stimulate the pupils' will to think and educate themselves.

### **Respondent 5**

*Project* is said to **fulfil** the general requirements, and owing to the inductive method, the comprehension of **grammatical rules** is claimed to be **negotiated** from the diverse texts.

### **Respondent 6**

R6, on the other hand, is convinced that *Project* **does not provide sufficient learning material** and that the **teacher** is responsible for the learning source and subject matter. This

participant also teaches from **several different sources** and uses the student's book as a **supplement** to his teaching.

### **Respondent 7**

R7 is **satisfied** with the *Project* coursebook; however, it **lacks explanations** and **practice** in some areas, such as in the present perfect, which cannot be rehearsed enough later.

The student's books provide a great number of diverse exercises, which not only encourage the pupil's participation in class, but also supplement their knowledge with regard to applying grammar. On the contrary, R6 underlines the role of the teacher, who bears the responsibility for the educational content and progress of learning.

### **5.4.3 Research Question 3**

- *What difficulties do lower secondary pupils face in their speaking from the grammar point of view?*

Speaking fluently requires a lot of skills and knowledge. Grammar provides limitless speaking options to those who know how, when, and why to use it. In the event of unfamiliarity, it enables an indirect description. On the other hand, tenses may be too complex for beginner EFL learners, because the slight nuances in meaning often cause confusion.

### **Respondent 1**

R1 claims that it is very **individual**. The more **advanced pupils do not** have serious problems; nevertheless, the grammar must be mastered in order not to make elementary mistakes. Pupils often tend to make mistakes in choosing the proper **tense**.

### **Respondent 2**

At grammar school, EFL learners usually omit to add **-s** in the **present simple third person singular**, especially in the negative forms of auxiliary verbs, and thus they say she "*don't*" instead of "*doesn't*". Although they seem not to use tenses wrongly, sometimes grammatical errors appear as well.

### **Respondent 3**

Apart from the neglected **-s** in the **present simple third person singular**, **word order** is another typical mistake. Last but not least, **Czenglish expressions** and **literal translation** from the mother tongue cause difficulties for lower secondary pupils.

## Respondent 4

R4's answer is almost identical to the previous (R3) one. Apart from **subject-word agreement** and **word-for-word translation**, pupils appear not to know correct **past irregular verb forms** and **idiomatic expressions**.

## Respondent 5

According to R5, the **phrase** “*there is x there are*” commonly confuses pupils. Another typical issue is the wrong usage of the preposition “*on*” while describing **pictures**. Also, this interview confirms the statement that children tend to omit **-s** in **third person singular present simple tenses** and that **tenses** are often difficult to make and use, because pupils mistake them for each other. Another interesting finding is the fact that **younger lower secondary pupils** are more likely to talk regardless of whether they make grammatical or phonetic mistakes. On the contrary, **older EFL learners** are influenced by their pubescence and thus may react more shyly and pay more attention to their language in order to sound more literate.

## Respondent 6 + Respondent 7

These answers correspond with the previous results, and thus; **tenses**, inflectional **-s** in the **present simple** tense, **word order**, past verb forms, and a tendency to create **sentences** based on **Czech**.

According to the outcomes of the interviews, pupils tend to be wrong in both basic mistakes, such as inflectional **-s** regarding the present simple tense third person singular and the past participle of irregular and regular forms, and more serious ones, for instance word order, wrong translations from Czech, or tenses, which can alter the meaning and make their speech difficult to understand. On the contrary, having decent basics is key to learning progress, which is embodied in expected outcomes. The more student speaking time there is in class, the better the practice opportunities for the children to connect their grammar knowledge with the speaking skill are. Young EFL learners also require more time to release stress and consider their own mistakes as an experience rather than ignominious failure. Nevertheless, grammar must be acquired from all three of the points of view Larsen-Freeman presents (2001, p. 252), or it cannot enhance speaking properly.

### 5.4.4 Research Question 4

- *Do pupils apply the grammar they have acquired in conversational tasks because they are being asked to (an exercise in a coursebook, practice of a new grammar rule/form) or spontaneously (an effort for comprehensibility,*

*speculation over which grammar element is more suitable for expressing their thoughts, whether their participation in communication aims for the purpose of the exchange of information and personal experience)?*

Being able to apply acquired knowledge properly is key to the mastery of a language. This also requires inner motivation, which encourages willingness to speak. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic situation pupils are educated through online classes, which are reduced and thus limit their speaking time. On the other hand, the online environment may lower their shyness as a result of being off-camera and in home surroundings. Lastly, we may not forget other aspects that influence motivation to speak, such as foreign language anxiety.

### **Respondent 1**

Depending on **diligence**, some pupils try their best, while some speak in order to fulfil requirements for marking. It has been shown that **PC games** and **online chatting** with friends **enhance the quality of language skills** and desire to participate in conversational exercises. This teacher is wary of **correcting grammatical errors** overmuch. Too much pointing out failure may result in **fear of talking**; however, when it is done properly, pointing out the most frequent mistakes, the children seem to learn from them rather than avoid speaking.

### **Respondent 2**

R2 has a similar opinion, that the **diligent pupils** usually **speak more** in the classes; **drilling** is indispensable for using the grammar properly in communication. The children need to master grammatical elements in order to be able to include them into their daily speech.

### **Respondent 3**

Pupils use grammatical enhancements **only when learning** and **practising** new subject matter.

### **Respondent 4**

Owing to **lack of motivation** and **drilling**, pupils usually only participate in speaking tasks when assigned to do so.

### **Respondent 5**

The effort for **flawless** and **natural speech** is usually balanced with time and therefore pupils may react slowly. The grammar appears in conversations provided that the pupils have already mastered its specific functions. Depending on their **inner motivation**, some children

speak **regardless** of their **imperfections** in order to participate, whereas others may stutter for an effort for the **perfect speech**.

### **Respondent 6**

Pupils hardly ever speculate about the appropriate usage of grammar. The grammatical rules are applied through **mechanical drilling** while learning new subject matter; however, there are some **exceptions** among children who would like to improve their speaking ability.

### **Respondent 7**

R7 suggests that spontaneous use of grammatical components is **almost equal** to commanded practice. **Drilling** is more common and necessary for mastery of grammar.

Despite the fact that pupils are familiarized with grammatical rules, they seem not to apply this knowledge automatically. One of the possible factors discouraging spontaneous speech may be poor motivation. Good marks might appear to be enough of an incentive; however it might be beneficial to determine long-term and pragmatic aims such as learning the phrase ‘there is/ there are’ in order to describe something. Grammar should therefore serve as a summary of standard language, not as a main purpose in itself. Although one learns by one’s mistakes, drilling and rote learning occupy significant positions in language learning.

#### **5.4.5 Research Question 5**

- *According to your opinion, does the coursebook you work with assist in grammar comprehension and the suitability of its usage in communication in certain situations or does it merely teach pupils how to create particular grammatical forms?*

Coursebooks are chosen individually by a school. Because of the SEP, the school is responsible for fulfilling the requirements propounded by the FEP at the state level. Therefore, educational tools and materials should be in concordance with the expected outcomes of the FEP standard.

### **Respondent 1**

R1 **agrees** that the coursebook *Project* is appropriate and helps to improve grammatical functions. Especially the texts and articles are **interesting** and **modern**, which makes them more acceptable to children. However, sometimes pupils just **repeat fractions of grammar** used in the coursebook, instead of negotiating the meaning from context. Contextual comprehension is essential for acquiring new pieces of knowledge.



## **Respondent 2**

R2 admires the student book *More* for depicting **grammar in real-life situations**, such as *going to* expressing plans for the near future. The coursebook enriches not only grammar, but also vocabulary, because of its engaging articles. Another benefit resides in **the division of the grammar that is presented**. Every chapter starts with an article which contains new grammar. Children are at first exposed to unknown grammatical rules **inductively** and their explanation comes later with exercises. Thus, even more difficult areas such as conditional clauses may be presented naturally.

## **Respondent 3**

This interviewee is **more than satisfied** with the coursebook *Project Explore* because of its **communicative purposes**. Communicative tasks are highlighted, and **authentic situations** are emphasized. The grammar included in those exercises is presented in an intelligible way and provided skills for **real-life communication**.

## **Respondent 4**

R4 assumes that regardless of the **good-quality** content of *Project*, **not all** pupils are advanced enough to **interconnect** the **grammatical aspect** with **communicative purposes**. Thus, other educational materials are required as well, such as film scenes, which may also educate them in other areas, e.g. history.

## **Respondent 5**

*Project* assists in the comprehension of grammatical rules and their explanation and usage. Because of the abundant listening exercises, children are exposed to **real conversations**.

## **Respondent 6**

R6 believes that *Project* **teaches only the formation of grammatical forms**. This interviewee is also convinced that it is **the role of teacher** which matters the most and how the grammar is presented and practised. Coursebooks are just useful tools.

## **Respondent 7**

*Project* is said to **unite grammatical functions into everyday life situations** and thus, serves to provide essential tasks for communicative purposes.

The respondents state that the coursebooks they teach with present grammar clearly and stimulate children to develop their communicative competence. These findings may seem to be inconsistent with the results from the preceding research question 4, which showed that lower

secondary pupils do not use the grammar they have acquired on their own, but mostly when practising or learning something new. R6 is of the opposite opinion, holding the view that the coursebook shows how to form grammatical patterns and therefore it only teaches morphological structures. This fact may indicate a statement that it is not always the available sources that matter the most, but the pupil's determination to apply their speaking skills in order to really know how to speak.

#### 5.4.6 Research Question 6

- *Is the grammar included in the coursebook presented inductively or deductively?*

Presentation and the way of teaching are crucial for the further development of grammar skills. Some children may be likely to remember grammatical rules from direct rules, some may learn them more easily through exposure to examples and negotiating the meaning themselves.

##### **Respondent 1**

In *Project* the grammar is presented **inductively** because children, owing to their acquired knowledge, try to guess the meaning and usage of grammatical forms on their own.

##### **Respondent 2**

Because of the effort put into correct deduction from various texts and articles, *More!* is represented **covertly**.

##### **Respondent 3**

Grammar in *Project Explore* is perceived mostly as **implicit**.

##### **Respondent 4**

*Project* shows grammatical rules **overtly**; however, the pupils are asked to think about a specific example and encouraged to guess the grammatical meaning and purpose.

##### **Respondent 5**

The presentation of grammar in *Project* is believed to be **inductive**. Each chapter includes a listening or a text at first, and pupils have to create a correct form without knowing the specific grammatical rule. They are not shown the explanation until they have finished the tasks following the patterns in the texts.

## Respondent 6

Depending on their age and language proficiency, the **younger children** are exposed **directly** to the grammar rules, and more **advanced learners** try to **negotiate** the grammatical functions by themselves; however, *Project* presents grammar **covertly**.

## Respondent 7

R7 works with the coursebook *Project* in both ways. While for the topic of **regular** and **irregular verbs** the grammar is **explained**, for **question tags** and **tenses** the grammar may be **negotiated** from the examples that are given and the pattern.

Although the student books are mostly perceived as presenting grammar covertly, there are two interesting findings. One is the way in which schoolteachers work with the content of coursebooks' exercises, teaching grammar in a way that is convenient for their schooling and easier comprehension for their pupils. The second surprising outcome is that according to schoolchildren's language level, the way of presenting grammar may differ and therefore, younger pupils are exposed directly to new grammatical structures, while more advanced EFL learners seem to have enough suitable conditions to speculate about grammatical rules and their usage themselves.

### 5.4.7 Research Question 7

- *Do you use the CLT method? Provided that you do, what is your opinion of this approach? What are those strengths/weaknesses? Have you noticed any change in pupils' way of communication?*

Since the beginning of the CLT approach, communicative competence has begun being contrasted to its grammatical counterpart. This method emphasizes the need for speaking skills for success in conversation for real communicative purposes. On the other hand, drilling is also crucial for natural speech.

## Respondent 1

R1 pointed out the matter of **language proficiency**. This method may not support the **less advanced pupils**, who need more time, explanation, and practice to master grammatical rules. Despite this fact, the **classes** are usually crowded and to organize working groups and keep an eye on the whole class is exacting. Another drawback relates to classroom management, because **speaking activities** are usually **time-consuming**.

## **Respondent 2**

At grammar schools, the teacher encourages pupils to speak by means of **personalization**. Children tend to create dialogues about personal experiences. Thus, showing them proper grammar to help them express their thoughts is beneficial for both communicative and grammatical competence.

## **Respondent 3**

R3 **does not apply** the CLT method.

## **Respondent 4**

Sometimes CLT cannot provide better circumstances for the development of speaking. **Children with a handicap** such as dyslexia require extra assistance and thus CLT activities such as role play may be too difficult and result in the opposite effect to that wished for. Therefore, the CLT method **cannot be used every time**.

## **Respondent 5**

The CLT method is great because it **eliminates stress** and makes the speech sound more natural. On the contrary, role-playing activities may be hard because of a **lack of vocabulary**.

## **Respondent 6**

R6 **does not use** the CLT method.

## **Respondent 7**

R7 uses this method to create **realistic situations**, e.g. a dialogue in a shop, buying a ticket, or at a post office.

Although the CLT method seems to encourage pupils to participate in speaking activities, allowing children to talk about their personal experiences and learning, making their performance sound natural, in contrast to pupils who need supporting measures, the CLT method may be perceived as pointless. It requires a lot of time, knowledge, teacher supervision, and independence from the pupils' side.

### **5.4.8 Research Question 8**

- *Do you consider that teaching grammar in remote learning is modified substantially? How does remote learning impact on communication?*

Although technology is an inseparable part of our lives, education through online meetings is perceived as somehow deficient. Even though remote learning should aim at

practising knowledge rather than at developing new knowledge, pupils are short of social contact and opportunities to practise speaking skills because of time limitations.

### **Respondent 1**

Instead of further teaching, online sessions usually serve to **clarify grammar incomprehension**. This teacher calls on every pupil in a class; however, the speaking activities take **a lot of time**. Children sometimes attempt to avoid conversations and use internet issues as excuses.

### **Respondent 2**

R2 does not notice any difference from the grammar presentation point of view. Regarding speaking, remote learning deprives pupils of communication. Without motivation, it is **difficult to encourage participation in speaking activities**.

### **Respondent 3**

R3 agrees that grammar is presented in the same way as in full-time study. On the other hand, speaking tasks are influenced by **children's desire to talk, the organization of groups, and time**.

### **Respondent 4**

Grammar teaching remained the same; however, the fact that there are **fewer classes** has a negative impact on enhancing communicative skills. The teacher also lacks **feedback from pupils** such as non-verbal communication. **Forming working groups** is another difficulty.

### **Respondent 5 + Respondent 6 + Respondent 7**

R5-7 provide the same findings as the previous responses (**no significant change** in grammar teaching, **degradation of speaking, time limitations**).

Although remote learning focuses on the practical part of primary school education, the pupils seem to lack motivation to participate in online classes. R1 states that children sometimes even try her patience, claiming they did not hear the question or that the internet connection is poor. R1 also states that her online classes focus on further explanation of grammatical rules in case of need, because not all the pupils are proficient enough in self-study. These circumstances, together with the reduced number of classes, seem to have a bad influence on the development of speaking skills and the usability of grammar.

### 5.4.9 Research Question 9

- *Would you like to add anything regarding the impact of grammar on communication?*

This extra question provides respondents with the opportunity to comment on this subject.

#### **Respondent 1**

R1 believes the **fear of speaking** is an attribute of Czech EFL learners. To learn to speak properly, we need to **practise speaking in any situation**.

#### **Respondent 2**

The more advanced the **language level** is, the more **skills** it **demand**s. Grammar constitutes 40% of the success; a larger amount is comprised of **vocabulary**.

#### **Respondent 3**

Teachers **should not insist on perfect speech** more than on any attempt to communicate.

#### **Respondent 4**

The problem is also a matter of **lack of personal motivation** and **contact with the language beyond the classroom**.

#### **Respondent 5 + Respondent 6**

No comments.

#### **Respondent 7**

The ability to understand and be understood is **not always conditioned by following grammatical rules**.

R3 emphasizes an important aspect of motivation, suggesting that accuracy and flawlessness should not dominate in pupils' speech. Therefore, grammar should not be a goal in itself, but its purpose is to show the direction of how to improve our language skills and become more native-like. Nevertheless, to reach such an aim, EFL learners cannot rely only on school education; they also need to be surrounded by the language in real life.

## 5.5 Comparison of Coursebooks

This chapter focuses on the presentation of grammar in the coursebooks the interviewees teach with, and the examples that are given illustrate how grammar contributes to speaking skills.

### Project

Grammar is presented inductively and thus children have a good opportunity to negotiate its formulation and meaning from the context. The questions for speaking activities contain new grammatical items and despite the fact that the children may not know how to use the rules in a conversation, they may find the grammatical structure in the texts. On the other hand, one may argue that pupils just copy the grammatical form; we should not forget that if we want to learn grammar, we should pay attention to those morphological patterns, their semantic value, and their application. (Thornbury, 1999, p. 25; Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 252).

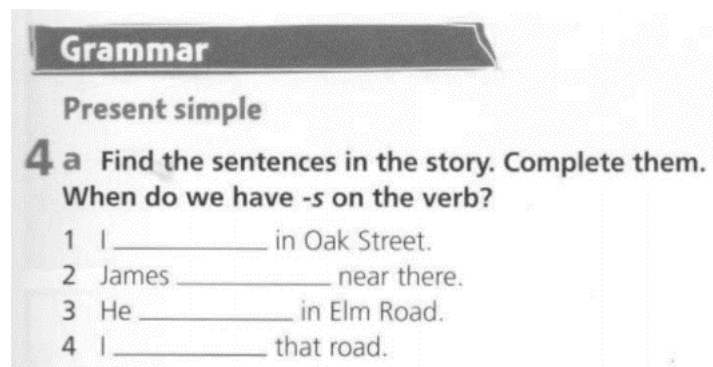


Figure 2: Covert grammar rules

The exercise above may also connect grammar with a communicative purpose because the children may discuss what aspects determine the occurrence of the ‘-s’ ending in the present simple instead of following the scripted dialogues, as in the example below:

- 1 How did they find the thing? What were they doing?
  - 2 What did they do with it?
  - 3 Where is it now?
- 6** Work with a partner. One person is the DJ and the other is a caller. Choose one of the other things in the photos. Make dialogues. Use the questions in exercise 5c to help you.

Figure 3: Scripted dialogue

On the other hand, *Project* also usually portrays grammar in written revision, where children use grammatical forms to fill empty spaces. Unfortunately, there are no similar grammar exercises to improve communicative skills.

**1 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs.**

buy do go

- What did you <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ on Saturday?
- I <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ some homework in the morning, but I didn't <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ much in the afternoon. What about you?
- I <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ shopping.
- Did you <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ anything?
- Yes, I <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ a pair of jeans.

Figure 4: Written revision of grammar

### Project Explore

This example shows the practising of new grammar, specifically comparative adjectives. Not only may the children choose what they want to talk about, but they also need to think about the morphological (big-bigger), semantic (an elephant is big), and pragmatic (an elephant is bigger than a mouse) suitability of the grammatical forms.

**Speaking**

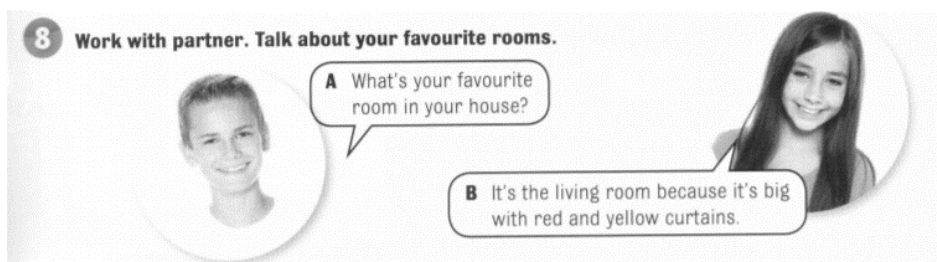
**8 Get ready to speak Choose five animals. Think of some true or false sentences to say about them. Use comparative adjectives.**

Figure 5: Comparative adjectives in CLT speaking activity

### More!

For a comparison with grammar schools the *More!* students' book has been included. Its 'Communication' section provides new grammatical subject matter which is a part of speaking activities such as this example, where children ought to use a *there is/there are* phrase; however, they are not asked directly to apply it for descriptive purposes. Nevertheless, this subject matter of the *there is/there are* phrase is a part of this unit, and therefore the pupils are already familiar with it.





*Figure 6: Grammatical phrase there is/there are for communicative purpose*

The illustrative examples show that grammar commonly occurs in speaking activities; however, its form is not always the same. Although the presentation of grammar seems to be expanding on basic knowledge that has been learned, the design of the scripted dialogues prevents pupils from using their own skills and almost invites them to parrot the written sentences without thinking. This, however, does not make the schoolbooks inappropriate, because if we take the pupils' level of English into consideration, they are just beginners. Therefore, explicit grammatical rules and suggestions for speaking may be truly helpful.

## Conclusion

While in the past, grammar dominated in language teaching, nowadays, grammatical rules might be perceived as being of secondary importance, although some may speculate about how significant grammar is with respect to language learning, its utilization and, regarding this thesis, its importance for speaking as well. The theoretical part illustrates several factors that affect how it enhances the communicative skills among lower secondary schoolchildren. In addition to the fact that grammar and vocabulary form language, grammar helps us to express ourselves more accurately, more appropriately, and on a more educated level. Depending on how it is presented, an inductive teaching method may also make grammatical structures a part of our thinking process and help us to express our thoughts on a proficient level. Perhaps, if grammar were taught inductively, the children might comprehend its patterns better and be familiarized with its usage, just as in their mother tongue.

As stated in the first chapter, a language is a result of human habits. Without grammar, a language would consist only of making sounds. Grammatical functions make possible concrete actions, such as inviting, complaining, offering help, apologizing, refusing, etc. Thus no one needs to speculate about the meaning of our speech. Schoolchildren need to know these grammatical elements in order to fulfil the outcomes expected by the FEP, chiefly being able to participate in real-like conversations. Owing to clusters of words, we do not need to hesitate while talking, but to be fluent with word fillers; do you know what I mean? Despite the fact that a language is believed to be a collection of human habits, grammar allows us to sound more intelligible and accurate, using similar sentence structures to native speakers.

The main problem regarding using grammar in conversations seems to consist of inappropriate usage. According to the findings in the practical part, the majority of pupils do not use the grammatical elements they have acquired in their speech, and if they do, they usually tend to repeat scripted dialogues instead of using their own language. Although most of the respondents use the CLT method in their classes, the young EFL learners appear to be lacking motivation and courage to participate in speaking activities. The main purpose of remote learning is aimed at practising in order to meet the requirements of the FEP. However, to judge from the results of the interviews, children speak much less than in full-time teaching. Grammar may enhance the communicative skills the most in those cases, where the communication is real. Perhaps, if there were more oral testing, the emphasis on using grammar while speaking would be increased. Beginners do not need to have perfect grammar to be understood; however, having good basics of English is a key factor in becoming an advanced speaker and

comprehending how the structures of the language work. Therefore, schoolchildren need grammar to fulfil the outcomes expected by the FEP; however, how far grammatical knowledge is beneficial to their language is a matter of individuality and contact with the language.

## Bibliography

BILANOVÁ, Markéta et al., 2010. *Metodika výuky anglického jazyka na 2. stupni základních škol a středních školách z pohledu pedagogické praxe: náměty pro začínající učitele*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita. ISBN 978-80-7368-881-3.

CARTER, Ronald and MCCARTHY, Michael, 2006. *Cambridge Grammar of English: A Comprehensive Guide: Spoken and Written English Grammar and Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-85767-3.

DOBROVOLNÁ, Alena, 2016. *Ústní interakce a rozvoj komunikační kompetence při výuce angličtiny s interaktivní tabulí*. First edition. Brno: Masarykova univerzita. ISBN 978-80-210-8485-8.

DROUT, D.C. Michael, 2008. *The Modern Scholar: A Way with Words Part III: Understanding Grammar for Powerful Communication*. Recorded Books, LLC. ISBN 978-1-4361-2927-5.

GIVÓN, Talmy, 2018. *On Understanding Grammar*. Revised edition. John Benjamins Publishing Company. ISBN 978-90-272-1252-8.

GOH, C. M. Christine and BURNS, Anne, 2012. *Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-1-107-01123-6.

HANUŠOVÁ, Světlana et al., 2014. *Povaha žákovských promluv ve výuce anglického jazyka*. In: *Pedagogika*. Univerzita Karlova, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 238-255. ISSN 0031-3815.

HARMER, Jeremy, 1987. *Teaching and Learning Grammar*. London: Longman. ISBN 978-0582746237.

HARMER, Jeremy, 2007. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Fourth edition. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. ISBN 978-1-4058-5311-8.

HARMON, R. Mary and WILSON, J. Marilyn, 2006. *Beyond Grammar: Language, Power, and the Classroom*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. ISBN 978-0805837155.

HE, Deyuan, 2018. *Foreign Language Learning Anxiety in China: Theories and Applications in English Language Teaching*. Singapore: Springer. ISBN 978-981-10-7661-9.

KOLLN, Martha et al., 2015. *Understanding English Grammar*. Tenth edition. Pearson. ISBN 978-0-13-401418-0.

- LARSEN-FREEMAN, Diane, 2001. Teaching Grammar. In: M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, Third edition. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, pp. 251-266. ISBN 978-0-8384-1992-2.
- LARSEN-FREEMAN, Diane and CELCE-MURCIA, Marianne, et. al, 2016. *The Grammar Book: Form, Meaning, and Use for English Language Teachers*. Third edition. Boston: National Geographic Learning. ISBN 978-1-111-35186-1.
- LEE, F. James and VANPATTEN, Bill, 2003. *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Company. ISBN 0-07-365517-1.
- MAKODIA, V. Vipul, 2008. *Advanced English Grammar and Communication*. Jaipur: Paradise Publishers. ISBN 978-81-905349-3-2.
- NAJVAROVÁ, Veronika and NAJVAR, Petr, 2011. Komunikační prístup ve výuce cizích jazyků: záležitost politických dokumentů či reálné praxe? In: PUPALA, Branislav and KAŠČÁK, Ondřej (Eds.). *Škola – statistický element v sociálnej dynamike*. First edition. Bratislava: Iura Edition, pp. 166-172. ISBN 978-80-8078-450-1.
- NASSAJI, Hossein and FOTOS, Sandra, 2011. *Teaching Grammar in Second Language Classrooms*. Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-80204-8.
- RICHARDS, C. Jack, 2006a. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-92512-9.
- RICHARDS, C. Jack, 2006b. *Person to Person: Communicative Speaking and Listening Skills*. Third edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-430209-8.
- RICHARDS, C. Jack and RODGERS, S. Theodore, 1986. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-32093-3.
- SAVAGE, K. Lynn et al., 2010. *Grammar Matters: Teaching Grammar in Adult ESL Programs*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-1-107-90730-0.
- SHASTRI, Dave Pratima, 2010. *Communicative Approach to the Teaching of English as a Second Language*. Mumbai: Himalaya Publishing House. ISBN 978-93-5024-543-9.
- STRAUSS, Susan et al., 2018. *Grammar, Meaning, and Concepts: A Discourse-Based Approach to English Grammar*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 978-1-138-78526-7.
- THORNBURY, Scott, 1999. *How to Teach Grammar*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. ISBN 0582-339324.

## Online Sources

*Doporučené učební osnovy předmětů ČJL, AJ a M pro základní školy.* [online]. Praha: NÚV, 2011. [cit. 2021-05-30]. Retrieved from: <http://www.nuv.cz/file/189>

HORWITZ, K. Elaine et al., 1986. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. In: *The Modern Language Journal* [online], [cit. 2021-05-23], vol. 70, no. 2, pp. 125-132. Retrieved from: [doi.org/10.2307/327317](https://doi.org/10.2307/327317)

LARSEN-FREEMAN, Diane, 2015. *Research into Practice: Grammar Learning and Teaching* [online]. Cambridge University Press [cit. 2021-05-05], vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 263-280. Retrieved from: [doi:10.1017/S0261444814000408](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444814000408)

MAHMOODZADEH, Masoud, 2012. Investigating Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Within the EFL Learner's Interlanguage System: The Case of Iranian Learners. In: *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* [online], [cit. 2021-05-23]. vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 466-476. Retrieved from: [doi:10.4304/jltr.3.3.466-476](https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.3.3.466-476)

*Metodické doporučení pro vzdělávání distančním způsobem,* [online]. Praha: MŠMT, 2020 [cit. 2021-06-03]. Retrieved from: <https://www.msmt.cz/file/53906/>

NUNAN, L. Susan, 2005. Forgiving Ourselves and Forging Ahead: Teaching Grammar in a New Millennium. In: *The English Journal* [online], [cit. 2021-05-24]. vol. 94, no. 4, pp. 70-75. Retrieved from: [doi.org/10.2307/30046463](https://doi.org/10.2307/30046463)

*Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání.* [online]. Praha: MŠMT, 2021 [cit. 2021-05-10]. Retrieved from: <https://www.msmt.cz/file/54860/>

*Rozvoj jazykové gramotnosti na základních a středních školách ve školním roce 2018/2019.* [online]. Praha: ČŠI, 2019 [cit. 2021-05-10]. Retrieved from: <https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Dokumenty/Tematicke-zpravy/Tematicka-zprava-Rozvoj-jazykove-gramotnosti-na-ZS>

*Rozvoj jazykové gramotnosti v základních a středních školách ve školním roce 2016/2017.* [online]. Praha: ČŠI, 2018 [cit. 2021-05-10]. Retrieved from: <https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Dokumenty/Tematicke-zpravy/Tematicka-zprava-Rozvoj-jazykove-gramotnosti-v-zak>

## Figures

Figure 1 LARSEN-FREEMAN, Diane, 2001. Teaching Grammar. In: CELCE-MURCIA, Marianne (Ed.). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Third edition. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, p. 253. ISBN 978-0-8384-1992-2.

Figure 2 HUTCHINSON, Tom, 2013. *Project 3: Student's Book*. Fourth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 5. ISBN 978-0-19-476457-5.

Figure 3 HUTCHINSON, Tom, 2014. *Project 4: Student's Book*. Fourth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 9. ISBN 978-0-19-476458-2.

Figure 4 HUTCHINSON, Tom, 2013. *Project 3: Student's Book*. Fourth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 18. ISBN 978-0-19-476457-5.

Figure 5 PHILLIPS, Sarah and SHIPTON, Paul, 2019. *Project Explore 1: Student's Book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 37. ISBN 978-0-19-425570-7.

Figure 6 PUCHTA, Herbert et al., 2014. *More! 1: Student's Book*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 37. ISBN 978-1-107-65645-1.

## Appendix 1: Research questions

1. Do jaké míry považujete gramatiku důležitou z hlediska schopnosti komunikace? (Souhlasíte s tvrzením, že znát gramatiku nezaručuje smysluplné dorozumění se?)
2. Jak gramatika obsažená v učebnici napomáhá k dosažení očekávaných výstupů RVP/ŠVP? (Myslíte si, že je gramatika v učebnici srozumitelně a dostatečně vysvětlena a že svými cvičeními napomáhá k praktickému využití? Chybí podle Vás v učebnici něco? Měla by obsahovat více/méně gramatických cvičení/vysvětlení?)
3. Co dělá žákům problémy v komunikaci z hlediska gramatiky?
4. Používají žáci v komunikaci gramatiku, protože jim byla zadána (cvičení v učebnici, procvičování během učení se nové gramatické formy – př. Přítomný čas průběhový) nebo spontánně (snaží se sami o srozumitelnost, přemýšlí, kdy je jaký gramatický tvar vhodný, mluví za účelem výměny informací či osobních prožitků)?
5. Myslíte si, že učebnice napomáhá k pochopení gramatiky a vhodnosti jejího používání pro komunikaci v daných situacích nebo pouze učí žáky, jak tvořit jednotlivé gramatické formy?
6. Je podle Vás gramatika v učebnici předána induktivně nebo deduktivně?
7. Používáte CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)? Pokud ano, jaký máte na tuto metodu názor? Jaké jsou její klady/zápory? Pozorujete u žáků změnu v jejich komunikaci?
8. Myslíte si, že se význam učení gramatiky při distanční výuce razantně změnil? Jaký dopad má distanční výuka na komunikaci?
9. Doplnující otázka: Chtěl/a byste něco dodat k tématu vliv gramatiky na komunikaci? Myslíte si, že jsem opomenula něco podstatného?



## Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá vliv gramatiky na komunikační dovednosti žáků 2. stupně základních škol. Analýzou rozhovorů bylo zjištěno, že žáci, ačkoliv mají dostupné vhodné vyučovací materiály a podklady pro vzdělávání, nevytvářejí gramatické vzorce ve svém mluveném projevu podle svého vlastního uvážení, nýbrž mají tendenci používat již vytvořené fráze ze cvičení v učebnici. Dále se potvrdila nevhodnost distančního vzdělávání. Ta žáky značně omezuje na možnostech uplatnění již dosažených jazykových znalostí i navzdory tomu, že je distanční výuka doporučena MŠMT zejména pro rozvíjení a schopnost uplatnění již osvojených dovedností, které mají pomoci žákům dosáhnout požadované jazykové úrovně A2 na konci 9. ročníků jejich základního vzdělání.

## ANOTACE

Jméno a příjmení:	Jana Muzikantová
Katedra:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	doc. PhDr. Václav Řeřicha, CSc.
Rok obhajoby:	2021

Název práce:	Gramatika a dovednosti ve výuce anglického jazyka na 2. stupni základních škol
Název v angličtině:	Grammar and Skills in English Lessons at Lower Secondary School
Anotace práce:	Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá přínosem gramatiky z hlediska jazykové dovednosti mluvení žáků na 2. stupni základních škol. Teoretická část nejprve seznamuje čtenáře s pojmem gramatika a její důležitostí v jazyce. Dále poukazuje na proměnu gramatické kompetence a zvětšující se důraz na mluvenou stránku jazyka. Později CLT metoda demonstruje faktory podmiňující komunikaci a jak je jazyková schopnost mluvit propojena s RVP. Na základě výsledků z rozhovorů a srovnání použitých učebnic zkoumá praktická část jak gramatika přispívá k mluvení.
Klíčová slova:	Gramatika, komunikační metoda učení (CLT), komunikační dovednosti, rámcový vzdělávací program (RVP), žáci druhého stupně základních škol, jazyková dovednost mluvení
Anotace v angličtině:	This bachelor's project deals with the contribution of grammar to speaking of lower secondary schoolchildren. At first, theoretical part presents the concept of grammar and its significance in a language to the reader. It later shows the transformation of grammatical competence over the course of the years and increasing emphasis on spoken language. CLT method subsequently illustrates the factors which determine communication and how is speaking connected to the FEP. On the basis of the results from the interviews and comparisons of the coursebooks, the practical part examines how grammar enhances speaking.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Grammar, communicative language teaching (CLT), communicative skills, Framework Educational Programme (FEP), lower secondary schoolchildren, speaking
Přílohy vázané v práci:	1
Rozsah práce:	34
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina