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Teaching and Practising Articles in English

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Prohlášení

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V Olomouci dne

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1. Introduction

In my diploma thesis I am going to deal with teaching and practising articles in English within the scope of the category of definiteness. I will focus on articles and other determiners.

First I am going to contrast article marked English with Czech language to explain why it is so difficult to grasp the usage of determiners for the Czech learners.

Then I am going to present some brief information about teaching grammar in general and correcting errors in the usage of determiners.

Next, using some general pedagogical principles I am going to deal with the category of definiteness in the light of pedagogical grammar.

Afterwards I am going to comment on the category of definiteness as far as recommendations in the Teacher's Book and exercises in the Students' Book and Practice Book of the course book *Reward* are concerned. The part and parcel of this chapter will be a table overview of those exercises and recommendations which will be included in the appendix.

The next chapter is going to deal with exercises from some other practice books focusing on articles and some other determiners to show what kind of exercises are used for their practising.

Then I am going to create a grammar box with a brief overview of the usage of articles, which I miss in course books.

Afterwards I am going to deal with a questionnaire which I am going to administer to some Czech secondary school students to find out how they have mastered the usage of determiners. A discussion of results of the test will follow.

2. Category of Definiteness on the Background of the Czech language

I decided to deal with teaching and practising articles because I had found out that there are no methodology sources dealing with this area of grammar in a complex way and there are not many exercises focusing on the usage of determiners in course books and advices for teachers in teacher's books either. I wanted my work to be useful and practical that is why I had chosen this topic.

I first realized in the second year of my university studies how difficult appropriate usage of determiners is. At that time I was studying at the University of Potsdam in Germany where I was attending a seminar in German-English translation. I was the only foreign student among all the Germans, who were used to using articles in their mother tongue. The professor, who was of British origin but married to a German, knew that I am from the Czech Republic and she told me that she had noticed that I had much bigger problems with the usage of determiners than the Germans did. She was the first to explain to me that it is because the Germans use articles in their mother tongue but the Czechs do not.

After I had started writing this diploma thesis I asked some of my German and Norwegian acquaintances about their problems with the usage of articles in English. They told me that there are none. It is because there are articles in their mother tongues.

Speakers of article marked languages do not realize that the determiners can for somebody represent a special problem. An Australian who for the sake of interest has read one part of my diploma thesis told me that first then he realized that somebody had to learn determiners. Hopefully it is rather because he is not a

linguist but in general the British course books lack complex exercises and more explanations as far as the articles are concerned.

Mastering of the usage of articles is difficult for the speakers of Czech and for speakers of other languages which are not article marked. Such learners do not understand the meaning and function of the articles. They can think that when articles are not in their mother tongue, they are not so important and they do not have to use them. The articles are something really abstract for them and they can not interpret it. The learners can feel hopeless and they can be afraid that they will never be able to understand it.

Appropriate usage of articles and other determiners can be learnt only gradually and that is why it is important for the students not to fear the articles or to omit them but to come to terms with their existence from the very beginning. The teacher should not be too strict because students' errors are inevitable.

The articles are necessary for successful communication. Changing one article for another may often lead to misunderstanding. But determiners are context dependent, which means that a determiner creates a meaning together with its context. In other words if we make a mistake in the usage of a determiner, there is still the context which should help us to deduce the intended meaning of the speaker. The definiteness is a very complex category which is taught gradually. It is not as easy as for example the rule of adding *-ed* when making past simple tense of regular verbs or adding *-s* at the third person singular of verbs in the present tense. There are just some basic rules which we have to learn but we will never be error-free in using of articles.

3. Teaching Grammar

Grammar is an important part of language teaching. It can not be separated from vocabulary. Grammar and vocabulary have to be used together to create language which is correct and comprehensible for the others. There are three stages of teaching grammar: presentation, practice and production.

Different grammatical structures can be taught.

“Some have exact parallels in the native language and are easily mastered; others have no such parallels but are fairly simple in themselves; while yet others are totally alien and very difficult to grasp” (Ur 1988, 5).

The last given example is in the Czech background the case of articles. It is a grammatical structure which we do not have in Czech and that is why it is difficult to understand for the Czech students.

There are two approaches to grammar teaching:

Covert grammar teaching – the students do not realize that they are learning grammar, they are learning it subconsciously.

Overt grammar teaching – the students are learning grammar consciously. They know which grammatical structure they are practicing and they are provided with rules and explanation by their teacher (Thornburry 1999, 23).

Both ways of teaching are important. The students need some space to communicate their ideas automatically using rules

they have learnt, which helps to increase their motivation because they can see that the grammar which they have been practicing has its practical usage. But they need rules, explanation and conscious learning to master the language as well. Both the types of teaching have to be applied (Harmer 1987, 3).

When presenting new grammar we distinguish from deductive and inductive teaching.

Deductive teaching – the teacher gives the students rule and examples – or the students look for some examples by themselves.

Inductive teaching – the teacher gives the students examples and they discover the rule by themselves.

If it is possible, it is good to use both of these types. Some learners like applying given rules and some learners like discovering the rules by themselves because they remember them better then.

When practicing and testing grammar, we distinguish between **fluency** and **accuracy**. Both of them are important but sometimes greater emphasis is laid only on one of them. As far as the category of definiteness is concerned we put greater emphasis on fluency in speaking activities where possible errors do not cause misunderstanding. On the other hand, accuracy is important in exercises where articles are practised and where the usage of a wrong article causes misunderstanding.

There are a few methods or approaches applied when teaching and practising grammar, e.g. grammar-translation method, direct method, audio-lingual method, silent way etc.

On one hand, **Communicative Language Teaching** (= **Communicative approach**) is very effective when teaching the usage of articles and other determiners. They have to be presented and practised in context because the context influences the usage of articles and other determiners. But also the other way round –

determiners can influence the context. We have to know which determiner to use when we want to say something. We use communicative activities to practise fluency and to create comprehensible language manifestation.

On the other hand, translating and drill activities emphasized by **grammar-translation method** can be very useful when the emphasis is laid on the accuracy. We use drill activities to practise the usage of articles especially in sets and phrases (Thornburry 1999, 22).

When practising grammar all the skills have to be included – speaking, writing, reading and listening. The activities have to be well balanced and the teacher has to consider the age of his/her learners, type of the course and the purpose for which the language will be used by them. We will choose different approach to students of a business academy, to children in kindergarten or to adults in an evening course.

Jeremy Harmer names three areas in which English grammar is complicated for the students.

These are:

Function and form - the students have to be explained how the particular grammatical phenomena works, where do we use it, for which purpose, which forms it has – how do we make them and if there are more forms, how can we distinguish them from each other and how does their usage differ.

Contrasts with other languages - when presenting new grammar, we can contrast it with phenomena in students' mother tongue (Czech). If there are any similarities in both the languages, it can be very useful then. When literal translation is possible, it is helpful to do it. It can be an advantage when both the teacher and the students know another foreign language. Speaking in concrete terms about the Czech background and the category of definiteness, it can help

at least at the beginning when both the teacher and the students have basic knowledge of German or other Germanic or Romanic language where articles occur.

Exceptions and complications

As Comenius said, when teaching something new we go from known or easier information to unknown and more complicated information. When teaching grammar it means that the teacher first teaches the easiest structures, i.e. the regular ones and when they are mastered by the students, he/she teaches exceptions and irregularities (Harmer 1987, 9).

4. Correcting Errors in the Usage of Determiners

The teacher faces errors made by his/her students in the usage of determiners not only when directly practising articles and other determiners but also when practising in context any other grammatical structure.

As far as the errors in the usage of determiners are concerned, the students either do not use a determiner or they use a wrong one – they tend to use only either the definite or indefinite article if any. They forget to use other determiners such as possessive, demonstrative or indefinite pronouns. Then they use for example the definite article instead of a possessive pronoun (e.g. **He was shaking the head.*). The students' attention should be drawn to their errors by their teacher.

When the students make errors, it does not always mean that learning has not taken place. There are two basic types of errors:

A developmental error, which is a part of the learning process and indicates that the students need more practising and a **fossilized error**, which is a systematic error in student's performance and he/she has to get rid of it for example by supplementary exercises.

The teacher has to distinguish between errors made in a fluency activity and in an accuracy activity. Errors made in the spoken and written language are corrected in a different way as well.

In a **fluency activity**, e.g. when the students are speaking about the topic hobbies and free time, the teacher should let the student speak and he/she should make notes of the student's errors. The teacher should give the feedback as far as the errors are

concerned first after the oral performance (= **delayed/post correction**). As long as the rest of the class is not held up, the student should get the opportunity to correct at least some of his/her errors, which is more effective than when the teacher says the correct answer instead of him/her. If the student does not know the correct answer, it is useful to ask somebody else from the class.

In an **accuracy activity** it is necessary to correct the error immediately (= **immediate/hot/on the spot correction**), e.g. when doing a fill in exercise focusing on the usage of *a/an* and *the*.

Since the articles and other determiners occur at every learning stage in exercises practising all the skills – whether speaking, writing, reading or listening, it can complicate correcting of errors if the students are practising only one particular grammatical structure. Some teachers then ignore other errors at least unless they prevent understanding. As an example I can give a fluency activity practising the past simple tense. The students can be asked to talk about what they did in the morning. A student can start speaking: **“I got up at half past six; I brushed the teeth and had a breakfast.”* The usage of past simple was correct but the student failed in the usage of determiners. Now it is up to the teacher if to draw the student’s attention to it, or if to ignore it. Usually the errors are corrected differently in view of what is the focus of the exercise. But these errors are quite basic and obvious and if the students have already learnt the phrase *have breakfast* and *brush one’s teeth*; the student should get a chance to correct the sentence after the whole performance.

Or there is a possibility of **nonverbal correction** when the teacher uses flash cards with *a/an*, *the*, *possessive pronoun*, *some* or *any* written on them. If the student makes a mistake (slip), the teacher raises the appropriate card and the student makes immediate correction. This is a quick way of correcting which is suitable when the correction does not need an explanation and when the mistake arises rather from student’s inattention than from his/her ignorance

of a grammatical rule and when the learner can self-correct immediately.

Another possibility are the teacher's gestures and facial expressions (e.g. raised eyebrows, erected index finger) signaling a mistake which has to be corrected.

As far as the **spoken errors** are concerned, the teacher can use either on the spot correction, which is either verbal or nonverbal. The teacher can also help the student to correct himself/herself by repeating the sentence after the student till the spot of the error (e.g. *I got up at half past six, I brushed ...*) or if the student still does not know the correct answer, the teacher can say the first letter of the right word (e.g. *I got up at half past six, I brushed m...*).

Or when correcting spoken errors, the teacher can use delayed correction made in the best case by the student or by other students from the class. There are three kinds of the delayed correction:

- a) in the lesson
- b) later
- c) indirect

The teacher does not have to correct the mistakes in the lesson in which they were made; it depends on the dynamism of the lesson. He/she can incorporate the correction in games, tests or warm ups in next lessons.

When correcting **written work**, the teacher can develop a system of abbreviations of errors which is clear to all of the students. The teacher writes these abbreviations in the margin of a page to indicate an error. In concrete terms the error in the usage of a determiner could be indicated by an abbreviation A (= article), which would include errors in the usage of demonstrative, indefinite and possessive pronouns (Doff 1988, 194).

A missing determiner could also be indicated by the mark √ put before a noun.

The students could be asked to write a correction of their errors to realize them. First after they correct those errors, the teacher marks their free writing. This way of correcting can be a little bit time consuming but could be used from time to time because it is an effective way of improving students' knowledge.

If there are any frequent errors in the written work, the teacher can mention them and explain them to the whole class or make some students explain them.

In general it holds true that the teacher should show interest in a student's answer and he/she should correct the student in a positive way and give him/her a chance to correct himself/herself. The errors and mistakes belong to the learning process and that is why the teacher should not get angry when they are made but he/she should learn how to handle an error to prevent its repetition.

5. Category of Definiteness in the Light of Pedagogical Grammar

The category of definiteness or determination is a semantic-grammatical category. Determiners establish the meaning of a noun from a semantic and grammatical point of view.

The category of definiteness includes the definite article, the indefinite articles, the zero article, demonstrative, indefinite and possessive pronouns and in the wider sense also numerals and quantifiers. The determiners are dependent clause elements.

For our purposes it is not necessary to deal with all the determiners. We will concentrate only on the definite article (*the*), the indefinite article (*a/ an*), the zero article, demonstrative pronouns (*this, these, that, those*), possessive pronouns (*my, your, his...*), indefinite pronouns (*some, any, no*) and some quantifiers. It is sufficient for our use.

I am going to deal with articles and the other determiners in the light of pedagogical grammar. The teacher faces tough work firstly because he is going to explain structures which do not exist in Czech and secondly because the elements of the category of definiteness appears at every learning stage from the elementary to the advanced one. This is the main aspect which distinguishes this category from the other grammatical phenomena which can be presented and explained in one lesson, practised in three following lessons and then tested.

The students will come across individual functions of articles and other determiners gradually, again and again in new

contexts. The use of articles emerges from the need to understand and the students have to realize that although the article is just a short little word, it can change the meaning of an utterance.

Greenbaum and Quirk say that nouns appear in noun phrases and the kind of reference such a noun phrase has depends on the accompanying determiner. (Greenbaum, Quirk 1990, 72)

In practice the students learn at first that in English there “has to be something” before a (countable) noun, e.g. *a jacket* or before other words which specify or describe a noun and stand before it e.g. *a new blue jacket*. Then, gradually, they will come across the intricacies of the usage of this part of speech. All the examples of the occurrence of the articles should be presented in context.

When dealing with the articles from the point of view of pedagogic grammar I will distinguish between the use of articles and other determiners in a context and in fixed phrases (incl. sets) in the following text. I will point out that the articles are first taught in a context and fixed phrases and sets are taught later.

The indefinite article

The indefinite article is the first element from the category of definiteness which the students meet.

First reason for it is that the indefinite article is in general used when we speak about information which is not known, it has not been mentioned yet, e.g. *I have a book*. In this case we can translate the indefinite article into Czech as *nějaký, jeden, jakýsi*. This translation can help the students a lot.

Another reason is that the indefinite article has only singular form which means that plurals are not used with the indefinite article. And students learn the nouns in singular first.

And the last reason is that even short utterances make very simple meaningful context in which the indefinite article can be explained and used.

The learners come across concrete countable nouns and should hear and see them with the indefinite article from the very beginning. Then the students can start adding the definite article to the first nouns which they learn. It means that the students should combine the vocabulary (esp. nouns in our case) gradually and systematically with grammar at the same time.

First the students are presented the indefinite article form *a*. Soon they learn nouns that need the form *an*. The age of the learners plays an important role here. Pupils can meet the form *an* after a year of having English. They first learn only nouns whose initial letter is pronounced as a consonant. But older learners or adults can meet with the both forms of the indefinite article at the same time or in sequence because they are presented more extensive vocabulary.

Soon the students usually start learning the names of occupations which are used with the indefinite article, e.g. *a doctor*, *an electrician*.

When the students meet with first adjectives, they learn to use them with the nouns and with the indefinite article of course. To both the definite and indefinite article applies the rule that the article is put either directly before a noun or before the words which specify, characterize or describe a noun and stand before it, e.g. *a house*, *a big house*, *an unfinished letter*. But it is also possible that the learners will acquire this function naturally, from exposure to context.

Soon the students are taught the phrase *there is*. This phrase itself is difficult to be understood by the students because they may feel that they do not need to say it when they speak about a placement of a thing, place, person etc. and even in later stages they often forget to use the phrase and they make mistakes such as,

**books are on the table.* The students have to be explained that this phrase does not carry any lexical meaning but has to be used so that the sentence is grammatically correct.

First the students use *there is* with indefinite article and nouns in singular, e.g. *there is a book on the table* and they are explained that we use the indefinite article because we speak about new information.

Later they start to use the phrase *there are* with nouns in plural and with the zero article, e.g. *there are books on the table.* And again, we speak about new information that is why, we use zero article.

Later on the students come across indefinite pronouns *some* and *any* and they start using them with the phrase *there is/are* as well. The students make simple questions and negative sentences using *any*, e.g. *Are there any books on the table? There aren't any books on the table.* And they make simple declarative sentences using *some*, e.g. *There are some books on the table.*

This grammar is easy to practise – the students can describe a picture, things in a classroom or their own house.

Later some fixed phrases are taught. The students have to remember them with help of repeated practising.

The phrases are for example *to be in a hurry, it's a pity.*
(Dušková 1988, 80)

Later the students come across some other occurrence of the indefinite article:

When we speak about the nationality, e.g. *He's a Frenchman/ an American*, the political affiliation, e.g. *He's a Socialist/ a Republican* or the religion, e.g. *She's a Catholic. /He's an Anglican.*
(Alexander 1988, 58 – 59)

The definite article

The students meet the definite article after they have come across the indefinite article. The explanation of the usage of the definite article requires context of at least two utterances. The first occurrence of the definite article in *Reward Starter* is in unit 11. This unit deals with talking about prices. There are sentences like *How much are the black shoes?* or *How much is the green sweater?*

First the students meet the simplified rule that the definite article is used when we speak about something which is known and has been mentioned in the previous context. It can be information which is mentioned for the second time, e.g. *I have a book.* (Mám jednu knihu.) *The book is really interesting.* (Ta kniha je opravdu zajímavá.) The definite article is also used when the noun is determined by a situation or when it is generally known information. Then it does not depend on whether it is mentioned for the first or for the second time.

Or we can use quotation from *Collins Cobuild Student's Grammar*: "You use 'the' when the person you are talking to knows which person or thing you mean." (Sinclair 1991, 24)

The article *the* can be used before a singular countable noun, e.g. *the table*, a plural countable noun, e.g. *the spoons*, and an uncountable noun, e.g. *the water*.

The zero article

The zero article is in fact the first article which the students use when they learn English. The first phrases which the students learn in English are: *My name is... I live in...* And when they say their names and the name of a town or a city where they live, they use the zero article. The zero article is the absence or no usage of the indefinite article.

British course books of English call this kind of article the zero article. But they do not say much about it in students' books at early stages. Only the teacher meets with this term in his/her teacher's book more frequently. In his first volume of *Angličtina pro jazykové školy* Peprník says "bez členu se používá" (= without an article is used...). Later he uses the term "nulový člen" (= the zero article)

The students start systematically learning the zero article in a context.

They have met with the zero article before as I said above but they were not explained that it is the zero article (= no usage of an article) because it was not necessary.

With the usage of the zero article are connected the categories of number and countability. At this stage the students have already learnt to form the plural by adding *-s* to the end of the word. The students should be presented the category of countability. The learners learn that the countable nouns can be counted, e.g. *one apple/orange, two apples/oranges, and two biscuits*. On the other hand, nouns which can not be counted are uncountable. The students learn to distinguish the countability and uncountability. They start using the zero article with simple common uncountable nouns (e.g. *flour, milk, chocolate*). In good course books these go along with the introduction of some (see below).

The teacher should pay greater attention to the usage of articles of the students now because when the students learn that there is the possibility of not using the indefinite article before a noun in singular, they may start omitting both articles, which is one of the extremes in using the articles. The other extreme is the exaggerated usage of the articles (e.g. *I live in the Jičín).

While being taught the category of countability, the students meet in texts with the indefinite pronouns. And that can serve as a help to understand the usage of the zero article.

The indefinite pronouns are often used in textbooks with the help of simple English recipes or shopping lists. The students come

across ingredients, food and drinks which are uncountable. They start using the indefinite pronoun *some* with uncountable nouns, e.g. *some milk, some flour* or *some juice*.

Then they continue with using a number or *some* with plural countable nouns (*two/some books, three/some pupils, four/some apples*) so that they understand that also things which can be counted but they are not closer specified can be used with *some*.

And later they are taught that nouns which are uncountable can be counted if we use them with the unit in which they can be measured or weighed, e.g. *two kilograms of flour, three litres of milk, four bars of chocolate*.

Later the indefinite pronoun *any* is taught. The students learn to distinguish the usage of *some* and *any*. They are presented the simplest rule that *some* is used in positive sentences and *any* is used in negative sentences and in questions.

For a start the students have to be able to distinguish between countable and uncountable nouns so that they are sure about the usage of the indefinite article with countable nouns, e.g. *a book* and the usage of *some/any* with uncountable nouns, e.g. *some milk*.

Later they understand the indefinite pronouns to that extent that it helps them when they have to decide whether to use *a/an* or *the*, e.g. *He has a book. (some), He has the book. (that, this)*.

Soon the students come across the names of days, months, and holidays e.g. *Tuesday, April, Easter Monday*, names of daily meals e.g. *breakfast, supper* and names of languages e.g. *English, German*. The students are taught that no article is used with them. It is not necessary to draw students' attention to it because it is evident that it is not used with any article and the students learn it subconsciously and reinforce this knowledge by using these words in exercises.

The topic sport is an easy one to speak about even for the beginners, so the students will soon learn that the names of sports are not used with any article, e.g. *ice hockey, football, gymnastics*.

The students can understand by themselves that some proper nouns, such as names of people, e.g. *John, Martina, Aldous Huxley* + names with titles, e.g. *Mr Brown*, and cities are not used with any article.

Later on, however, they will come across the Browns, meaning members of the same family.

The students usually make no mistakes in it in speaking activities or in real conversations with native speakers. But in my teaching experience I found out that if the students have to complete a fill in activity and they see a gap before a proper name they start thinking of filling in an article and the result can be: **I live in the Lomnice nad Popelkou*. If I ask them then to translate orally the utterance *Bydlím v Londýně*, they translate it correctly as *I live in London*. From this experience results the importance of fill in activities practising the usage of articles.

Demonstrative pronouns

The students are taught the demonstrative *this* as the first one of all the demonstrative pronouns. The students learn to ask: *What's this?* And to answer: *This is a pen*. And when the students are familiar with the way of making the regular plural, the demonstrative pronouns are taught as a whole.

The students have to be taught that as far as the demonstrative pronouns are concerned we distinguish number (is it one or more?) and distance (is it close/known or far/rather unknown?). The students have to master the simple rules of their usage to be sure of usage of the demonstrative pronouns.

Demonstrative pronouns are common in Czech as well (ten, tento, tenhle, onen, takový, týž, tentýž, sám...). That is why the Czech students don't need to have such problems with

understanding and learning them. Czech translations can be helpful when students learn this group of determiners (e.g. *This book (here) is interesting. Tato kniha (tady) je zajímavá. Those students (there) are smart. Tamti studenti (tam) jsou šikovní.*)

Possessive pronouns

The students use the possessives *my* and *your* as the first ones from all the possessives when they are asking about each others names: *What's your name? My name is Marielle.* Other phrases such as *What's your favourite sport? My favourite sport is gymnastics.* will follow.

After being familiar with the possessives *my* and *your*, the students learn the rest of the possessive pronouns. At this stage the students meet in context only dependent possessives. The reason why we will not even later deal with the independent possessive pronouns is because they do not function as determiners. Only the dependent possessives do. The students have to learn that the possessive pronouns, like the articles, are used either directly before a noun or before other words which stand before a noun and describe, characterize or specify it. We use either an article, e.g. *the books* or a possessive pronoun, e.g. *my books*. They can never be used together, e.g. **the my books*.

Since the possessive pronouns are used in a different way in Czech, it can make problems for Czech students of English. English possessives refer to parts of the body and objects of personal use. We do not use possessives for this purpose in Czech. A Czech student of English can then tend to use the definite article instead of a possessive pronoun for example in the cases which Dušková mentions. This tendency is also supported by the definite character of the possessives, which causes that the students understand the parts of the body or the things of possession as definite, known or determined by a situation.

Dušková compares the usage of possessives in Czech and English:

*He dropped his stick. Upustil hůl. (*Upustil jeho/svou hůl.)*

*She raised her eyes from her book. Zvedla oči od knihy. (*Zvedla její/své oči od její/své knihy.), (Dušková 1988, 107).*

Indefinite pronouns

Existential quantifiers which belong to central determiners are indefinite pronouns *any*, *some* and *no*.

As opposed to Czech *nějaký*, English has two means: *any* and *some* which are distinguished according to the distribution. Both *any* and *some* are used with countable or uncountable nouns.

Any

[see p. 17 Zero article]

Some

[see p. 16 Zero article]

No

If the students haven't come across the rule of one means of negation in an English sentence yet, they learn it now. The students are concerned with the usage of *no* in alternation with *any* or an article. They have to be explained that if negation has to be expressed and there is no means of negation in a sentence, they use *no* and if there already is a negation in a sentence, they use *any* or an article, e.g. *He does not have any friends. He has no friends. or He has not got the books. He has got no books.*

Cardinal numerals

The common numerals, e.g. *one, two, three* are taught very soon. First the students learn to count from one to ten and later they learn higher numbers. When the students learn to form plurals of nouns, they start combining the nouns with numerals, e.g. *one girl, two girls, three girls* and then they start using the numerals in sentences, e.g. *I have got two brothers.*

At a more advanced level the students are presented utterances such as *two boys* and *the two boys* and the difference in the meaning between them. The utterances have to be put into sentences to be better understood, e.g. *I need two boys to help me. Call the two boys who were absent yesterday.* The students should understand that the example without the definite article signifies some two unspecified boys, the other one with the definite article signifies two concrete specified boys (= those who were absent yesterday).

Ordinal numerals

The students have to be taught that the ordinal numerals, e.g. *first, second, third* are used either with the definite article or with a possessive pronoun because there is always only one thing, person, and event etc. of that kind, e.g. *the first man on the Moon, his first success.*

Closed-class quantifiers

The students meet with these determiners first when they are acquainted with the category of countability.

First the students learn to distinguish the usage of *much* and *many*. Both the words have the same meaning in Czech – *hodně* but there is a difference in grammatical usage between them.

Many is used with countable nouns, i.e. with those which have a plural form and *much* is used with uncountable nouns, i.e. with those which do not have a plural form.

Later the students meet with *few* and *little*. They both mean *málo* in Czech but *few* is used with countable nouns, i.e. with those which have a plural form and *little* with uncountable nouns, i.e. with those which do not have plural forms.

Then the students are presented *a few* and *a little*, which is really a tricky section of article usage. They learn to distinguish the usage of *few* and *a few* and *little* and *a little*. The usage of *a few* and *a little* with countable and uncountable nouns is the same as with *little* and *few*. But there is a difference in semantic meaning between *a few* and *a little*. That is why the students learn the meaning of these two words with help of Czech equivalent. *A few* means *několik* and *a little* means *trochu*, e.g. *a few oranges* – *několik pomerančů*, *a little milk* – *trochu mléka*.

A lot (*hodně*) is a quantifier which is used with both countable plural and uncountable nouns.

The students have to remember the expressions and their meanings and practise them by doing exercises.

Special Groups and Sets

When teaching and learning appropriate use of the determiners, we have to distinguish between content-dependent usage of the articles, indefinite pronouns and quantifiers on the one hand and in the fixed phrases or sets on the other. Into the first group belongs the usage of articles which follows our intention what to say. We have to apply the rules which we know about the

usage of determiners and use the appropriate determiner. If we make a mistake in choice of an article in this case, it can lead to misunderstanding, e.g. *buy a textbook* – *buy the textbook*. This means that these mistakes are worse than those made by a wrong choice of an article with a word from a set.

As far as the fixed phrases or sets are concerned, there is not so much to be explained. It all comes gradually in the course book and it is up to the students to memorize the sets and the fixed phrases and to use them correctly. But if they make a mistake, it usually does not influence the meaning. The hearer (receiver) can notice it, but it does not have to lead to misunderstanding. But there are some exceptions as well. Some of the fixed phrases can be used with both articles and each of the used articles gives a different meaning to the utterance. The teacher has to point out those cases of occurrence. Some of the sets can be taught systematically at once but all the cases can never be taught at once. More common situation is that the students come across them gradually.

Concrete Examples of Sets and Fixed Phrases

There are fixed phrases in English which consist of a phrase but in Czech the same semantic meaning is expressed by one verb. This can be confusing for the Czech students and they tend to use only the variant with one verb which is sometimes possible but has a slightly different meaning, e.g. *have a bath*, *to bath* or they can create own verbs from nouns which they know. But such verbs sometimes do not exist, e.g. *a shower*, **to shower*.

Some of the fixed phrases have form have a -, e.g. *have/take a shower*, *have a bath*, *have a look*, *have a swim*, *have a walk*, and *have a wash*. These verb nominal phrases are derived from verbs, e.g. *smoke* (kouřit) – *have a smoke* (zakouřit si). The students have to be explained the difference in the semantic meaning of the verb

nominal phrases and the verbs, e.g. *to look* (dívat se) and *have a look* (podívat se).

There is another group of expressions consisting of a phrase in English but expressed by one word in Czech. Their form is *have* + zero article + a noun. These are verbs signifying eating the daily meals, such as *have lunch/breakfast/dinner* etc. It is not so difficult for the learners to understand this set because there is no other possibility how to express the meaning – i.e. the students do not try to create new verbs from the nouns (e.g. **to lunch*) as it was in the previous group of verb nominal phrases. But the problems can begin when the students have to translate these phrases into Czech. For example an utterance “we had dinner at 7 o’clock” can be translated by the students as “měli jsme večeři v sedm hodin” instead of “večeřeli jsme v sedm hodin”.

A special group is made by the geographical names. The use of the articles with these names is fixed but some of the names are logically deductible (e.g. *the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom*) and the teacher should point out these names to make the learning easier for the students and so that they do not have to memorize all the geographical names.

There are also some geographical concepts which have the same proper name but they stand for different with a different article, e.g. *Mississippi* stands for a US state and *the Mississippi* stands for a river. The teacher has to point out those cases of occurrence.

The students learn the names gradually when they come across them in a course book or in some texts. The age of the learners, their subject of study, or their job and the type of the language course will play an important role in the fact which of the names and in what extend the students will learn.

Both the teacher and the students should know that it is alright if the students are not completely sure about the usage of articles with these names because they can check it in reference sources. The teacher should inform the students about the possibilities where and how to find the geographical names with the correct article – it can be handbooks, textbooks or some reliable web pages.

There are some other fixed expressions which the students learn in the beginning phases. These are used for describing the course of a day and human life:

Nouns such as *school, hospital, church, bed, and table* are used with the zero article when they signify the purpose for which they are used, e.g. *go to school, go to bed, go to hospital.* (ibid. 79) On the other hand there are phrases such as *go to the cinema, go to the theatre* where the definite article is used and *go to a concert* where the indefinite article is used. These phrases can not be explained and the students have to memorize them. These phrases are important and frequently used and that is why they should be practised properly so that the students are certain about them.

Expressions consisting of *go/travel + by + means* of transport, e.g. *go by car, go by bus, go by train.*

Names of the parts of the days after prepositions *at, by, after, before*, e.g. *at noon, after midnight, at night.* (ibid. 80)

Later the students learn also cases such as: *in the morning, in the afternoon.*

All these fixed expressions are difficult for the students because they know some of the general rules of the usage of articles and these expressions go beyond them, such as *I go to bed at 9 p.m.* The students can ask why *go to bed*, why without article when it is *my bed* – a concrete thing. They can tend to use it with the definite article - **I go to the bed at 9 p.m..* Or why *go to the theatre* when they speak about it for the first time? And they can tend to use it

with the indefinite article or with the zero article - **I went to a/theatre*. The students have to memorize the expressions by practising them so that their usage becomes automatic.

Suggestions for practice:

- The teacher asks the students questions using these problematic phrases, e.g. *When do you go to bed? Do you go to school by bus?* And the students have to answer in a full sentence, repeating the phrase, e.g. *I go to bed at 10 p.m. Yes, I go to school by bus.*
- The teacher can assign to the students few phrases, e.g. *go to school, go to the cinema, at night* and they have to think out a story using these phrases.
- The students practise these phrases when speaking about themes such as timetable, travelling, hobbies or free time.

Infrequent cases of the usage of articles

There are many other occurrences of the articles which are less frequent and the learners meet them only at an advanced level. These cases are usually not included in course books which we are focusing on but the students can come across them in texts of fiction literature which they read in the course, in fiction which they read by themselves or in films. There are some examples:

The indefinite article is used:

With surnames because there are usually more members of one family, e.g. *He doesn't look like a Burton*. (ibid. 76)

When classifying people etc. – Alexander mentions that *a/an* can be used to refer to ‘an example of a class’, e.g. *It’s a Picasso. It’s a Dickens novel.* (Alexander 1988, 59)

The zero article is used:

With names of some illnesses, e.g. *measles, chicken pox.*

A special case of use of the definite article with the proper name represents the restrictive attribute, e.g. *the Norway I know.*

There are some fixed phrases, e.g. *face to face, hand in hand, make friends* which the students can come across in a text.

Some uncountable nouns such as *guidance, permission, progress, news, information* will certainly be used by the students later as well.

6. Critical Commentary on the Teacher's Book and Exercises of the Course Book *Reward*

After I had made an overview of exercises, explanations and instructions in the course book *Reward*, I could see some faults as far as the practice and instructions in the teacher's book are concerned. I also have some suggestions for other practice in the field of the category of definiteness.

The components of the course book *Reward* published in 1997 are Student's Book, Practice Book and Practice Book cassette. For the teacher it is Teacher's Book, Class cassettes and Resource Pack.

The Teacher's Book and Student's Book were made by Simon Greenall. The Practice Book was made by Diana Pye and Simon Greenall.

Reward was published in the United Kingdom for learners of English from many countries of the world. The usage of articles is typical for some Germanic and Romance languages. This grammatical structure is not typical for Czech and other Slavic languages. That is why the students whose mother tongue is one of the Slavic languages need to familiarize with it properly as with a completely new grammatical category and their demands for practising it are also bigger. That is the evidence that we have to take into account the nationality and the native language of the students when we are choosing a course book.

The Teacher's Book takes the teacher through every exercise. It does not always or not in detail say what the teacher should say but it gives an opportunity to him/her to concentrate on what is necessary or useful for his/her students.

The Teacher's Book does not draw teacher's attention to possible mistakes of his/her students but in case of an international course book which is used by teachers and students of many nationalities and mother tongues it would not be possible because students with different mother tongues will make different mistakes. The teacher has to rely on his/her experience and foresee possible problematic points by himself/herself.

But the teacher is also confronted with some problems.

The first problem concerns presentation. The presentation of articles is sometimes insufficient for students who meet with this structure for the first time. These students do not understand the meaning and the function of this category. The Czech teacher of English should point out every occurrence of the articles and some demonstrative, possessive and indefinite pronouns at least to the beginners. The author of the book probably takes for granted that the students know articles from their mother tongues. It is a course book of English for the whole Europe and every language has its special characteristics and that is why it is the duty of the teacher to point out the phenomena which can be problematic for his/her group of students.

Another problem the teacher is confronted with is practising. There are not many exercises concentrating on articles and other determiners. I am afraid that this is a problem of many foreign textbooks of English. In fact the determiners are practised only through cloze tests and speaking activities. I did not find any complex exercise in this course book. The exercises are usually for practising only individual phenomena. This means that the students have to fill in only either *any* or *some* or only two of three possible articles. The category of definiteness as a whole includes the definite article, the indefinite articles, the zero article, demonstrative, indefinite and possessive pronouns and in the wider sense also numerals and quantifiers. A fill in activity where the articles and other determiners as a whole are practised is missing. A possible reason could be that sometimes more correct answers are

possible and it is not easy to say which answer is the most correct one. But still it is possible to make an exercise with clear answers or it is possible to discuss the answers if there are more correct ones so that the students are clear about them. The students learn the usage of articles and other determiners gradually. And my suggestion for teachers would be to give the students an exercise after every lesson where an element from the category of definiteness has been presented and practised. In an exercise like this would occur some clear example sentences testing all of the structures which the students went over and not only the structure which was practised in the topical lesson. In this way the students will practise the usage of articles and other determiners repeatedly. An exercise like this could be followed by a class discussion when the students and the teacher analyze all the answers. Because of the gradual learning of the articles and other determiners not everything can be tested just after a few lessons. But it is a structure which appears at every learning stage from the very beginning.

The mistakes made by the students in their tests, homework or speaking activities can serve the teacher well too. He/she can prepare an exercise using the grammatically wrong sentences and ask the students to correct them. It helps the students to realize their mistakes and to improve their knowledge.

Let's now have a look at chosen lessons of the course book *Reward* systematically.

I would suggest a listening – based gap fill exercise concentrating on oral perception of articles in lesson number four. There is not the first occurrence of the indefinite article and the students already know some English nouns in this lesson. So it could be a good moment when to do this listening activity to reinforce the ability to hear an article in an unstressed position. The students could listen to a recording of individual words which are known for them. The words would be used either with the indefinite article *a* or with *an*, according to whether they begin with a vowel

or with a consonant. The students would have to fill in the right form, e.g. ... *name*, ... *job*, ... *number*.

In lesson five the teacher should highlight that the adjectives made from the names of the countries are, as opposed to Czech, always written with capital letters, e.g. *Czech beer*, *české pivo*. There should be some exercises practicing the usage of names of countries with the definite article and the zero article. The teacher could also teach the students the phrase *speak/understand English* etc. now because otherwise they will meet with it first in lesson 26 which includes too many different phrases.

In lesson seven there could be some complex exercise for article usage within the context of this unit.

In lesson eight the teacher could make the students to recall the possessives *my* and *your* by themselves because they have already learnt them. He/she could ask the students about the phrases in which the possessive pronouns *my* and *your* appear. The students would mention phrases such as *What's your name? My name is... What is your telephone number? What is your job?* And after teacher's presentation of the possessives *his* and *her* the students could replace *my* and *your* for *his* and *her* in the phrases which they have mentioned, e.g. *What's his name?*

The term possessive adjective is used for possessive pronoun in this book.

I suggest an exercise in lesson nine, e.g. *she is a doctor and they are nurses*.

In lesson twelve the students come across to information that something is in somebody's pocket, e.g. *Nicolas's glasses are in her coat pocket*. The students can accept and learn the expression *her/his/my/your coat pocket* in a sentence like this subconsciously and develop it gradually but the teacher still could draw attention of smart students to it and highlight that sentences **Nicola's glasses are in the coat pocket* or **She has the glasses in the coat pocket* would be wrong if we assume that it is in her coat.

The drill activities in lesson 13 are just for practising the morphology of pronouns. The usage of the right pronoun should be reinforced. From now on the students know all the possessive pronouns apart from *its*. And so there could be a cloze test where the students have to fill in any of all the possessives except of *its*.

In this lesson could already be a simple exercise where the students have to decide if to use the definite article, the indefinite article, the zero article or a possessive pronoun. An exercise like this is missing in the course book. This is an example of a suitable exercise:

This is uncle Peter. He is British. He lives with family in house in London. He is teacher and he likes job.

In lesson 14 there is an opportunity to practise the articles in free expressions, e.g. *he is tall*, *he is a tall boy*.

In lesson number 16 the students are taught prepositions *in* and *to*. The students concentrate only on the prepositions *in* and *to* and their attention is not drawn to the use of articles. The teacher should point out that nouns such as *school*, *hospital*, *church*, *bed*, and *table* are used with the zero article because they signify the purpose for which they are used, e.g. *go to school*, *go to bed*, *go to hospital*. The thing is that later the students will learn that also phrases *go to the school*, *go to the hospital* etc. are possible but the semantic meaning is changed.

On the other hand expressions such as *live in a flat* or *work in an office* can be used either with the definite or with the indefinite article.

There is a good opportunity for a listening activity in this lesson. Sometimes the indefinite article occurs in an unstressed position which means that the vowel quality is reduced. The sound of the reduced quality is called 'schwa', a phonetic symbol [ə]. This phenomenon appears in phrases such as *live in a flat*, *work in an office*. The students first learn to pronounce the indefinite article in these phrases as if it was in a stressed position, so they can have problems with hearing the article there if it is pronounced by a

native speaker. The listening activities can help the students to perceive the pronounced schwa sound so that they can then start pronouncing the article in an unstressed way too. The students would listen to a recording of these phrases together with phrases like *go to school*, *go to work* which are used only with the zero article in this lesson. The expressions could be given into sentences to be in a context. The students would be asked to fill in either the indefinite article or the zero article.

But these listening based gap fill exercises are also suitable for practising other sounds which are in unstressed positions. There is an opportunity to practise also indefinite pronouns or personal pronouns as far as determiners are concerned.

In lesson 17 the students learn to tell the time. The teacher should point out that in verbs *have* + meal (*have breakfast...*) no article is used. It is important for the students to know it because later they will learn that there are verbs with combination *have* + noun where the indefinite article is used (*have a shower...*) – see lesson 30.

In lesson 18 the students are taught the preposition of time – *on* and apart from other things they learn some common words and expressions which often go together. The teacher should explain the difference between phrases such as: *listen to music* x *listen to the music* (*He listened to the music which was recommended to him by his friend.*), *write a letter* x *write the letter*, *read a newspaper* x *read the newspaper*. And he/she should stress that expressions such as *go to the cinema* or *go for a walk* are the fixed ones and are used only in these forms. Practising of the phrases should be reinforced. The teacher could assign to the students a translation from Czech to English concentrating on these phrases.

In this lesson the teacher could also present phrases *play* + *the* + music instrument so that the students have more complex overview of the usage of *play* + article, i.e. of *play* + zero article (*play tennis*) and *play* + the definite article (*play the piano*). The

students will meet with phrases *play + the + music instrument* in lesson 26 but it is better to explain it now at once.

The topic of lesson 19 is sport. The teacher should point out that there are no articles used before names of sports – e.g. *swimming, gymnastics, and football*.

In lesson 20 the students learn phrases such as *leave home, arrive at work/school, start work, finish work, go home* and concentrate on the verbs and their ending *-s* in the third person singular. But the teacher should also draw the students' attention to the use of the zero article in the presented phrases and he/she should want the students to be accurate in using it.

The teacher should highlight that the phrases such as *go by bus, go by car* which occur in lesson 21 are used with the zero article. Later when the students are more advanced, they can be explained that the phrases such as *go by bus, go by car* can be extended and then the article can be used, then also the meaning of the phrase is changed, e.g. *We went by the blue car*.

The students learn names of some food and drink in lesson 22. The teacher could highlight sentences such as *When do you have breakfast?* and *What do you have for breakfast?* making a questionnaire which the students have to fill in so that they realize the difference of the meaning between them and to revise and remember not to use the article in verbs *have + meal*. The names of food and drinks presented in this lesson are used with the zero article. The teacher should explain that these words (mass nouns) are used with the zero article when we speak about them in general, such as *drink tea*. Later in the course the students will be taught that we use the definite and indefinite article before the names of food and drink as well. The definite article is used when the food or drink are determined in greater detail, e.g. *He liked the pizza we had yesterday*. And the indefinite article is used when a certain kind of food or drink or a countable unit of it is named, e.g. *This is a very good juice*.

In lesson 23 there is a useful expression - *go on holiday*, which the teacher should point out. The teacher could also supply the students with the expression *go on a trip*. I would suggest that the students note down in a notebook not only new vocabulary but also all these useful expressions. They would organize the vocabulary according to topics, such as transport, activities, sport, etc. *Go on holiday* would be included in the topic free time, *go by bus* in transport and *have breakfast* in food and drink etc. And if a small dictionary is already a part of the course book and the students do not write down the vocabulary, they could still have a special notebook for these verbs and expressions.

In lesson 24 the students are presented sentences containing the phrase *there is/are* followed by the indefinite article, number or by the indefinite pronoun *any*. There is no explanation included. So the teacher should point out that the phrase *there is/are* is followed only by the indefinite article, number or by *any* because we speak about new information.

The teacher can ask one student to say what the day is today before every English lesson. This expression of time and some other ones are taught in lesson 25. They are revised and some other ones are taught later in lesson 22 in *Reward Elementary*. The teacher could also stress the difference in the use of articles in expressions such as: *lesson (number) five/ the fifth lesson* or *page (number) four/ the fourth page*. And he/she and the students could use either the version with the cardinal or with the ordinal number in every lesson. The exercise where the students have to write 1/7 as the first of July etc. can confuse them later because they will never meet with this written form. It would be better if they just write a note how the dates are read and would practise it only orally.

In lesson 27 the teacher could do a vocabulary revision and start the lesson with a brainstorming activity. The students would have to recall as much words from the topic food and drink as possible. If the teacher did not do it before – in lesson 22 where the first occurrence of this vocabulary was - he/she should point out

now that these words (mass nouns) are used with the zero article when we speak about them in general, such as *drink tea* (as it was in lesson 22). Then it is easier for the students to understand the meaning of the names of food and drink combined with their countable units.

In lesson 28 the students come across to some names of streets and buildings. The teacher could stress the use of articles with these names. The students could note that the names of streets are used with the zero article. And the names of buildings are usually used with the zero article too, with the exception of the names where a noun is in the first place, e.g. *The Houses of Parliament, The Tower of London*. The students could also practise it by saying in which street they live and by naming of some buildings of their city in English.

The students practise expressions such as *make lunch/dinner, have lunch/dinner; have a bath/shower* in lesson number 30. There is no direct practice of the verbs *have* + noun. It would be useful to add a cloze test where the students have to decide if the article is used or not (e.g. *have dinner, have a shower*).

The students come across to a name of a cinema and a name of a theatre in lesson 32. The teacher could point out that the names of cinemas and theaters are used with the definite article and the students should write this note down. The students could say the name of the cinema and the theatre of their city in English.

The students come across to some new geographical and proper names in lessons 33, 37, 38 and 39. The teacher should make the students repeat the names after him/her to practise the pronunciation. The students could also write these names in a notebook. Another idea would be to put a big blank map of the world up on a wall so that it is visible for everybody and when the students come across to a geographical term, they would write it down with the correct article in the map, or on a card and stick it on the map. The teacher should then point out that in reality the

geographical names are not used with articles in maps. Such approach would also create a connection with geography.

Czech learners of English have very specific demands as far as explaining and practising the articles and other determiners are concerned and English textbooks published in Britain do not always fulfil them. The teacher must manage by himself/herself with other texts and exercises from several different books. A good source of information and exercises for practising the articles is Cobuild publication number three – *Articles* by Roger Berry or *Oxford Practice Grammar, Advanced* by George Yule. And as I have already said the teacher can also use wrong answers from the tests or homework which the students were given and to create a test from the answers from time to time. If the teachers cooperate they can also provide themselves with some examples and sentences which were problematic for their students.

The students should come into contact with English language as often as possible to master the usage of articles and other determiners. They should be motivated to read in English, listen to English and to speak in English. They could discuss the use of the articles in newspaper articles and other works of literature with the teacher from time to time.

The advices concerning teacher's explanation of grammar to the students in the Teacher's book are not always adequate for the Czech teacher. One possible solution would be a manual for the teachers published in a particular country (the Czech Republic) which would concentrate on concrete grammatical phenomena which are usually problematic for concrete (Czech) students. Such a manual would be based on contrastive analysis between English and the mother tongue (Czech). In view of English level of the students it would comprise more detailed advices for the teacher, more examples, examples contrasting English and Czech, different contexts of occurrence, and additional exercises as far as, in our case, the articles and other determiners are concerned.

Another possible solution crossed my mind when I was browsing through the course book *Opportunities*. On the dust cover the authors and publishers thanked some people for their help in the development of that course. Those people were ordered according to their countries and there was also a name of a woman from the Czech Republic. It would be great if also her e-mail address would be attached so that the teachers could consult possible problems or ideas with her. Or there could be contacts to specialists from different countries on the web pages of a certain course book so that the teachers could approach the person from their country if they need help or advice.

7. Exercises from some other Practice Books

Although there are in general not many exercises focusing on articles and other determiners in course books, on the Czech market there are a few useful practice books which include exercises focusing on articles and other determiners. These publications can be a good support to a course book which is used in English lessons. There are not many types of exercises which are suitable for practising determiners. The most common ones are fill in exercises, choosing a correct sentence from two given ones, true/false exercises and drill activities. I noticed that drill activities are more common in course books than in supplementary sources which I leafed through.

The first book I want to introduce is *The Heinemann English Grammar* (1992) for the intermediate level. I find this practice book useful; it can be a good source both for the teacher and the students. There is always a short presentation of particular grammatical structures and a few exercises for practising. This is a list of types of exercises in this practice book:

Articles: *a/an* and *the*

Pronunciation and article usage exercise: Dividing given words into two groups according to their initial sounds: either *a* and *the* /ðə / - e.g. *clock* or *an* and *the* /ði:/ - e.g. *orange*.

Fill in exercises:

A or *an* where necessary

A, *an* or *the*

The where necessary

Completing sentences using *the* and the most suitable noun in a box,
e.g. The blue whale is the largest animal in the world.

Writing names of nationalities to given countries

Practising the phrases a) go to school, go to bed b) go to the cinema, go to the theatre

Fill in – adding *the* where necessary

Geographical names

Fill in *the* where necessary

Review of articles in sentences

Fill in of all previously practised occurrences of articles

(A) little, (a) few

Fill in exercise; these quantifiers sometimes make problems to the students, they have to realize if a noun is countable or uncountable and what meaning they want to express.

Choosing correct sentences, e.g. *He has very a few/few friends and he gets rather lonely.*

Next I want to mention *Grammar in Use* by Raymond Murphy, which is one of the best known and most used reference and practice books in the Czech Republic. The title has three parts, each for a different level: *Essential Grammar in Use* (1990), *English Grammar in Use* (1985) and *Advanced Grammar in Use* (1999). As far as the category of definiteness is concerned, it contains a lot of good and more complex exercises. The exercises and their examples which I am citing are from *Essential Grammar in Use*. The exercises practicing the usage of determiners in the intermediate and advanced level include exercises practicing the

same grammatical structures but they are more difficult as far as vocabulary is concerned. The students also practise the usage of articles with geographical names or abbreviations. The students are asked to make more complicate sentences as well.

The indefinite article *a/an*

Deciding if a thing is countable or uncountable and using it either with *a/an* or with the zero article

True/false exercise

Taking things from a picture and writing phrases using the units in which they can be measured or counted

Usage of *a/an* or *some*

Using things from a picture and making sentences using *I bought...*

Writing sentences with *Would you like a ...?* or *Would you like some...?*

Usage of *a/an* or *the*

Fill in exercise

Putting *a/an* or *the* where necessary

Completing sentences with words from lists and using *the* where necessary

Practising phrases: a) *go to work, go home* b) *go to the cinema...*

Completing sentences with *the* where necessary

True/false exercise

Geographical names

Completing sentences using a map, a list of geographical names and *the* where necessary

(A) little, (a) few

Answering questions using *a little* or *a few*

Fill in exercises

True/false exercise

The next practice book I want to introduce is the third publication from the series of Collins Cobuild English Guides called *Articles* (1993). The first part of the book presents the occurrence of articles and the other part includes exercises. The exercises include true/false and fill in exercises as well as choosing the correct sentence from two given ones. Since it also includes such elements as names of diseases or fill in exercises using linguistic terminology or deciding if a noun refers to a generic reference, the exercises are suitable first from the intermediate or post intermediate level but we also take into consideration the subject which the students are studying because the exercise practising names of diseases could be useful for example for students of a medical school.

The last practice book I want to mention is *Nová cvičebnice anglické gramatiky* (1998). I chose this Czech publication for its translation exercises. But there are not as many translations as one would expect. The translations focus only on demonstrative pronouns, e.g. *Znáš tamtoho kluka?* and on possessive pronouns, e.g. *Zavřela oči.* which are especially problematic for the Czech students. Some of them would probably translate this sentence as * *She closed the eyes* instead of *She closed her eyes*. The Czech students tend to translate sentences including parts of body using the definite article (**She brushed the teeth*, etc.). I find translation activities necessary because Czech students fill in a determiner in a fill exercise if they are asked to do it but they forget to use

determiners when translating from Czech into English. Translation exercises can help to make their usage of determiners automatic. There are a lot of fill in exercises where the usage of *a/an, the*, the zero article and demonstrative pronouns are practised. The exercises focus on countable and uncountable nouns, geographical names and phrases.

Practising of the usage of determiners does not have to be boring or stereotypical though. In her book *Grammar Practice Activities* (1988), Penny Ur gives some examples of games through which practising of articles can be interesting and creative.

“Expanding headlines” is an activity when the students are given headlines cut out of English-language newspapers and they are asked to insert *a/an/the* or leave the space blank, where they feel appropriate. The students’ attention should be drawn to the fact that the headlines in English are used without articles. The students work in pairs or in groups and the final variants of the headlines are then discussed together with the teacher. This activity is suitable for students of the intermediate or higher level.

When playing “Cooperative poem” the students are given a title of a poem which is rich in associations and connotations. Penny Ur gives ‘*Night*’ as an example. The students have to think out a noun phrase describing an association the topic has for them. She gives examples again: *Darkness. An owl calling. The world at rest.* The result is a kind of impressionistic poem, says Ur. The main aim of this game is not practising articles but it is a suitable game for creative students (Ur 1988, 53).

“Piling up stores” is an amusing memory game. The teacher says for example: *In my kitchen store I have a carrot.* The first student can say: *In my kitchen store I have a carrot and some sugar.* The other students continue repeating and adding one thing until the sentence becomes impossible to remember. If the students make a mistake, the teacher has to provide the students with a correct

sentence, which means that he/she will say the line correctly (ibid. 89).

There are more examples of games practicing the usage of determiners in the publication by Penny Ur. It is a pleasant way of practising the articles and other determiners, so the teacher could include them into his/her lessons. And if the teacher is not lacking in imagination, he/she can certainly think out some other games as well.

8. Brief Overview of the Usage of Articles

An idea of making a suggestion of a brief overview of the usage of articles crossed my mind when I was browsing through some course books and practice books.

The course books usually include brief grammar boxes of the usage of different grammatical structures, such as verbal tenses or comparison of adjectives etc. but they lack more complex overviews of the usage of articles. I myself lacked an outline like this when I was at a secondary school. Sometimes the sets or phrases where articles are used are presented in a messy way in the course books.

In my opinion, a grammar box can help the students to make a better system in the usage of articles. The examples given to each point can help the students to memorize it better. If there is a grammar box of the usage of articles in a course book, the students can have a look into it whenever they need and if there is some free space under the table, the students can note there other cases or more examples of the occurrence of articles which they can come across in literature or other sources.

This is my suggestion of an overview of the basic usage of the articles:

Indefinite article (a/an)	Definite article (the)	Zero article (no indefinite article)
Used when we speak about something which is not known and has not been mentioned in the previous context (<i>I have a book.</i>)	Used when we speak about something which is known and has been mentioned in the previous context (<i>This is the book which I like.</i>)	Used with things that can not be counted (<i>I drink water.</i>)
Nationalities (<i>a Czech, an American</i>)	<i>Play + the + music instrument (play the piano)</i>	<i>Play + sport (play football)</i>
<i>have a shower, have a bath, have a look, have a swim, have a chat, have a smoke</i>	Countries containing a noun (<i>the Czech Republic</i>)	Names of people or animals (<i>Jane, Harry Potter, Lassie</i>)
<i>go to a concert</i>	Mountain ranges (<i>the Alps</i>)	Continents, countries, states, regions, and cities (<i>Europe, Norway, London</i>)
<i>be in a hurry</i>	Islands in plural (<i>the Shetlands</i>)	Mountains (<i>Mont Blanc</i>)
<i>it is a pity</i>	Countries in plural (<i>the United States</i>)	Islands in singular (<i>Crete, Sicily</i>)
	Proper names having the form noun + <i>of</i> + a proper name (<i>the Cape of Good Hope</i>)	Streets, parks, and buildings (<i>Oxford Street, Hyde Park, Westminster Abbey</i>)
	Channels, lakes (only without the expression <i>Lake</i>), oceans, rivers, seas, straits (<i>the English Channel, the Ontario, the Atlantic Ocean, the Nile, the Mediterranean Sea</i>)	Universities with the form proper name + <i>University</i> (<i>Palacky University</i>)
	Universities with the form <i>the University</i> + a proper name (<i>the University of London</i>)	<i>have breakfast, have lunch, have dinner</i>
	<i>in the morning, in the afternoon</i>	<i>go to school, go to bed, go to hospital</i>
	<i>go to the cinema, go to the theatre</i>	<i>go by car, go by bus, go by train</i>
		<i>at noon, after midnight, at night</i>

Notes:

9. Questionnaire Survey

For the purpose of finding out how the Czech secondary school students master the articles and other determiners, i.e. the usage of the definite article, the indefinite article, possessive pronouns and indefinite pronouns, I gave them a fill-in test which I had created myself. The students, who were so kind to fill in the tests for me, were attending the last year of a secondary school and English was their first foreign language. There were twenty of these students.

I did not focus only on accuracy of their answers but I was also interested to know what made them decide for the particular article or pronoun.

The students were given the instruction to fill in either *a/an*, *the* or zero article (= no article) or *some*, *any* or *my*, *your*, *his...* (possessive pronouns). After they had filled in a suitable article or pronoun, they were asked to tick what had made them decide as they did. They could choose from: grammar rule (they were allowed to answer in Czech), intuition, guess and the last possibility was that they have seen a sentence like that one in a textbook. Two examples were had been given to them so that they were sure about what to do.

Discussion of Questionnaire Results

After I had collected the tests I analysed them and made a brief conclusion:

The average accuracy of all the answers was 69%.

Sentences:

1. *There is **an** envelope on the table.*

Correctly completed 13 Ss

<i>Some</i>	3 Ss
<i>The</i>	2 Ss
<i>A</i>	1 S
<i>Your</i>	1 S

The answers *some* and *your* are not completely wrong. I found out that students at secondary schools often use *some* with singular countable nouns without knowing the exact meaning of this usage. “Some is used here in the sense of unknown. It often suggests lack of interest, or contempt” (Swan 1992, 564).

Eleven students decided for the correct answer according to a grammar rule – they said that “we speak about the envelope for the first time”. Five students decided according to intuition, three guessed and one student decided according to an inappropriate grammar rule – “it is a concrete envelope, because we can see it” and filled in *the*.

2. *Would you like **some** tea?*

Correctly completed	4 Ss
<i>A</i>	13 Ss
Zero article	2 Ss
<i>Any</i>	1 S

Two students decided for the correct answer according to a grammar rule and stated that “it is an uncountable noun and it is an offer.” One student decided for a wrong answer according to an inappropriate rule - “somebody offers us some tea and we do not know which kind of tea it is – it can be green tea as well as black tea” and filled in *a*. Fourteen students decided according to intuition and three students guessed.

3. ***The** Thames flows through London.*

Correctly completed	16 Ss
Zero article	4 Ss

Ten students decided according to the rule that “names of rivers are used with the definite article”, four students decided according to intuition, one student guessed and one student has seen a sentence like this in the textbook. Three students decided according to an inappropriate grammar rule – they said that “names of rivers are used with the zero article” and they used the zero article.

4. *There are **some** eggs in the fridge.*

Correctly completed 17 Ss

An 2 Ss

The 1 S

Seven students decided according to a grammar rule and stated that “*some* is used because *eggs* are in plural and they are in uncertain amount”. Nine students decided according to intuition, three students guessed and one student stated an inappropriate rule that “the eggs are there, we know about them and we know where exactly they are” and filled in *the*.

5. *Where is **the** book that you bought yesterday?*

Correctly completed 17 Ss

A 1 S

That 1 S

Your 1 S

Sixteen students applied the rule that “we mean a certain book which we have already spoken about” and four students used intuition.

6. *There is **some** water on the floor.*

Correctly completed 7 Ss

Zero article 8 Ss

<i>A</i>	4Ss
<i>The</i>	1 S

Two students applied a grammar rule and said that “water is uncountable and there is uncertain amount of it on the floor” and one student said that “it is a positive sentence” – all of these students used *some*. Nine students used intuition and one student guessed. Seven students used an inappropriate rule: two of them stated that “the water is not specified or concrete” and used *a* and five students said that “water is uncountable” - two of these used the zero article and the other three used *some*.

7. *What time do you usually have breakfast?*

Correctly completed	6 Ss
<i>A</i>	12 Ss
<i>Your</i>	2 Ss

Your is not completely incorrect, it modifies the phrase, which is possible. But we do not know if the student filled in *your* because he/she was more certain about it than about the phrase *have breakfast* or if he/she used *your* because he/she knew the phrase *have breakfast* and wanted to show creativity by using *your* instead of the zero article.

When deciding three students applied an appropriate grammar rule and said that “there is no article used with phrases of having meals”. Nine students used intuition, one student guessed and one student has seen a sentence like this in the textbook. Five students applied a wrong rule and said that “**have a breakfast* is a phrase which we have to remember”, somebody of these students even said that this is the same as *have a shower*. All of these students filled in *a*. One student said that “we speak about breakfast in general” and filled in *a*.

8. *Do you like swimming?*

Correctly completed 19 Ss

A 1 S

When deciding six students applied the rule that “we do not use an article with names of activities and sports”. Five students said that we use *-ing* form after *like*. Seven students decided according to intuition, one student guessed and one student has seen a sentence like this in the textbook.

9. *What is the capital of **the** Czech Republic?*

Correctly completed 15 Ss

Zero article 5 Ss

Nine students decided according to the rule that “names of countries containing *state* or *republic* are used with the definite article”, one student said that “only one such country exists in the world, that is why we use *the*” and four students said that “names of countries are used without an article” and used the zero article. Four students decided according to intuition, one student guessed and one student has seen a sentence like this in the textbook.

10. *You have to add **some** flour into the dough.*

Correctly completed 9 Ss

Zero article 5 Ss

The 3 Ss

A 3 Ss

Six students applied the rule that “we speak about uncertain amount and flour is uncountable”, one student said that “we speak about a concrete thing” and filled in *the* and one student said that

“flour is uncountable” and decided for the zero article. Ten students used intuition and two students guessed.

11. *We were skiing in **the** Alps last winter.*

Correctly completed 16 Ss

Zero article 4 Ss

Eight students decided according to the rule that “names of mountain ranges are used with the definite article”, one student said that “names of mountain ranges are used without an article” and filled in the zero article and one student said that “it is a concrete mountain range” and filled in *the*. Seven students used intuition, two students guessed and one student has seen a sentence like this in the textbook.

12. *What about having **a** walk now?*

Correctly completed 18 Ss

Zero article 1 S

Some 1 S

Four students decided according to a grammar rule and they said that “*have a walk* is a phrase which we have to remember”. Two students said that “it is an uncertain walk” and one of them filled in *some* and the other one filled in *a*. One student filled in *a* and gave this reason: “it is not a concrete walk and we do not know how far or where we are going to go”. Ten students used intuition and three students guessed.

13. *He was shaking **his** head.*

Correctly completed 15 Ss

A 2 Ss

Her 1 S

The 1 S

Zero article 1 S

Seven students decided according to a grammar rule: three of them said that “we are talking about *his* head not anybody else’s”, other three said that “it is possessing” and one student said that “*shake one’s head* is a phrase” and all of them filled in *his*. Twelve students decided according to intuition and one student has seen a sentence like this in the textbook.

14. *Can you play **the** guitar?*

Correctly completed	15 Ss
Zero article	3 Ss
<i>A</i>	2 Ss

Ten students decided according to a grammar rule and said that “*play* + music instrument is used with the definite article”. Seven students decided according to intuition, two students have seen a sentence like this in the textbook and one student guessed.

15. *I was in **a** hurry yesterday.*

Correctly completed	11 Ss
Zero article	9 Ss

Two students decided according to a grammar rule and said that “*be in a hurry* is a phrase”. Three other students decided according to an inappropriate rule and said that “**be in hurry* is a phrase” and used the zero article and one student gave a rule that “it is an abstract term” and used the zero article as well. Eleven students decided according to intuition and three students guessed.

16. *Have you ever been to **Dublin**?*

Correctly completed	19 Ss
<i>The</i>	1 S

Fourteen students stated the rule that “names of cities are used without an article”, one student stated that “names of cities are used with the definite article” and filled in *the*, five students used intuition.

17. *Mary combed **her** hair.*

Correctly completed 17 Ss

The 2 Ss

A 1 S

Six students decided according to a grammar rule and stated that “it is possessing, we say *comb one’s hair*” or they used Czech word “*svoje*” to explain their decision to use *her*. Twelve students decided according to intuition, one student guessed and one student has seen a sentence like this in the textbook.

Sentences	Average Accuracy	What made the students most often decide for that particular determiner?
1. There is <u>an</u> envelope on the table.	65 %	55 % grammar rule
2. Would you like <u>some</u> tea?	20 %	70 % intuition
3. <u>The</u> Thames flows through London.	80 %	50 % grammar rule
4. There are <u>some</u> eggs in the fridge.	85 %	45 % intuition
5. Where is <u>the</u> book that you bought yesterday?	85 %	80 % grammar rule
6. There is <u>some</u> water on the floor.	35 %	45 % intuition
7. What time do you usually <u>have</u> breakfast?	30 %	45 % intuition
8. Do you like <u>swimming</u> ?	95 %	35 % intuition
9. What is the capital of <u>the</u> Czech Republic?	75 %	45 % grammar rule
10. You have to add <u>some</u> flour into the dough.	45 %	50 % intuition
11. We were skiing in <u>the</u> Alps last winter.	80 %	40 % grammar rule

12. What about having <u>a</u> walk now?	90 %	50 % intuition
13. He was shaking <u>his</u> head.	75 %	60 % intuition
14. Can you play <u>the</u> guitar?	75 %	50 % grammar rule
15. I was in <u>a</u> hurry yesterday.	55 %	55 % intuition
16. Have you ever been to <u>Dublin</u> ?	95 %	70 % grammar rule
17. Mary combed <u>her</u> hair.	85 %	60 % intuition

From the results registered in the table we can see that the most problematic structure was the indefinite pronoun *some*. But it was especially when it was used with uncountable nouns (*tea, water, flour*). The students are probably more certain as far as the usage of *some* with countable nouns is concerned (*eggs*).

The students obviously do not know in which cases to use *some* and they mix it up with the indefinite article.

For some students “uncountable” means something like indefinite, so they use uncountable nouns either with the indefinite or zero article.

Some of the students seem not to know that *some* has the function of a determiner which can replace the definite article and they seem to be afraid to use it:

For example in sentence number ten: **You have to add flour into the dough*. The sentence is not incorrect but has a slightly different meaning from the sentence where *some* is used. We use the zero article when we know how much flour we have to add, for example a recipe instruction can say: “Add flour”. But if the dough is too thin, we add some flour (= indefinite amount of it). The student probably decided for the zero article not because he/she wanted to express that concrete meaning but because his/her usage of *some* in this case of occurrence was not automatic.

The usage of phrases *have breakfast* and *be in a hurry* is not automatic for the students either. On the other hand 90% of the students are familiar with the phrase *have a walk*.

80 % of the students were certain about *the Thames, the Alps* and 95 % were certain about *Dublin*. In general the students made fewer mistakes in geographical names than in the rest of cases. The geographical names are probably easy to remember for them and they can just apply the rule.

But the usage of article with geographical names and phrases can be found in reference sources. The students have to be certain especially about the usage of determiners which can be logically deduced. But they were not.

It seems that the only rule which they know about the usage of the definite and indefinite article is that the definite article is used with known things and the indefinite article is used with things which are not known. And they try to apply this rule to inappropriate cases:

For example in sentence number two a student decided to fill in the indefinite article (**Would you like a tea?*) and the reason he gave was that “somebody offers us some tea and we do not know which kind of tea it is – it can be green tea as well as black tea”.

Or the indefinite article was chosen in sentence number seven (**What time do you usually have a breakfast?*) because “we mean breakfast in general”, said that student.

From the questionnaire also results that when deciding for a particular determiner, the students most often used intuition – in ten in seventeen cases and they used a grammar rule in the remaining seven cases. One could expect that if the students decided mostly according to a grammar rule, their answers should be mostly correct. But this does not hold true because sometimes the students stated a grammar rule which made them decide for a particular determiner but the rule was inappropriate. On the other hand decision based on intuition was sometimes quite reliable. I expect that to decide according to intuition does not only mean that they had a feeling that a particular determiner read best in that sentence but that the students probably have come across the particular occurrence of a determiner and they recalled it correctly now. This

may mean that the rule is already functioning automatically. It is also possible that the students knew the correct answer and were sure about it but did not know the grammar rule and then they ticked intuition.

The students did not tick guess very often and they rarely ticked the possibility that they have seen a sentence like that in the textbook.

The results of the test confirmed the importance of practising articles and other determiners systematically and in a complex way so that the students have an integral idea of the usage of articles and other determiners. The students have to practise it again and again so that their usage of determiners became automatic.

The development of the students' grammatical competence as far as the usage of determiners is concerned can be also supported by a grammar box containing some basic rules of the usage of articles. Although there are some reference sources about the usage of articles on market, the students should have an overview of the usage of articles in their textbooks to have the possibility to have a look into them during their English lessons or immediately after a test focusing on articles has been finished. The immediate check-up of the accuracy of students' answers is important and helps to improve their knowledge of the usage of articles.

There are usually exercises focusing on different grammatical phenomena in textbooks. The teachers sometimes have some photocopiable revision tests at their disposal. But more complex exercises which focus on articles and other determiners are missing in textbooks and the teachers do not know if the students are certain about the usage of determiners in a complex way. The reason why there are no complex exercises in textbooks is probably that the students meet with determiners during the whole language course in new and new contexts. But there should be a determiners-focused exercise in every lesson of a textbook because the

determiners occur in each lesson in every activity – whether speaking, listening, reading or writing.

The teacher can find out what make the students the biggest problems only through such exercises and he/she can then work on their elimination.

Through the test which I assigned to the students I found out that the usage of articles is not automatic for them at all and it is a pity because the students are quite smart. A lot of them were able to describe the rule which made them decide for a certain determiner in English. Even if their decision was not correct, they seem to like English and are able to communicate. These students are able to understand and to express themselves. Even if they make a mistake in the usage of a determiner, the intention of what they want to say emerges from the context. Or they are able to explain what they want to say in other words. But the students could be more certain as far as the general rules of the usage of articles and indefinite pronouns are concerned.

The teachers of these students did not systematically focus on the usage of articles of the students during their English lessons. The teachers were even glad that I assigned the test to their students because they wanted to do revision of grammar with them. But it is too late to assign to the students such complex determiners based test first towards the end of a secondary school.

10. Conclusion

The theoretical part of my diploma thesis argues that the articles have to be taught gradually according to what the students meet in the context. To get used to using articles and other determiners, the students should be taught from the very beginning that there “has to be something” before a (countable) noun or before other words which specify or describe a noun and stand before it. They learn their first words with the indefinite article, and then they gradually come across a variety of contexts in which the definite article and also the zero article are used. The students also have to understand that this word does not have to be only an article but also another determiner, such as *some* or *any* or a possessive or demonstrative pronoun.

The practical part deals with some problems the Czech teacher is confronted with as far as teaching of articles and other determiners according to British course books is concerned. Those problems concern presentation and practising. I suggested supplementary exercises practising the usage of determiners and made some recommendations for their presentation and explanation.

The practical part of my dissertation was supplied by a special questionnaire for Czech secondary school students and by a discussion of their results. The students’ general knowledge about the usage of determiners was not very good and could be improved. In many cases the students were not able to decide correctly which grammar rule to apply when filling in articles and other determiners. They seemed not to be able to connect all their knowledge about the usage of determiners because they were not used to being focused on articles and other determiners in a complex way.

This experience only supports the idea of constant practising of the usage of determiners as a whole. I also believe that a grammar box with a brief overview of the usage of articles would be useful when included in course books. My suggestion of such overview is also part of my dissertation.

When writing the chapter dealing with exercises from some other practice books, I realized that there could be more Czech – English translation activities in practice books, than there are because they improve the students' accuracy of the usage of articles and other determiners not only when writing but also when speaking.

In conclusion I want to point out that although the students have problems with the usage of articles, it is important to realize that it is only one part of English grammar and the teacher should acknowledge students' mastering of some other grammatical structures and definitely their interest, will, creativity or courage to communicate in English. The improvement of the appropriate usage of articles will come with time when supported by an appropriate approach of the teacher and also by reading fiction and newspapers in English or watching English films with subtitles.

11. Resumé

Tato diplomová práce pojednává o problematice výuky a procvičování členů v angličtině. Na členy je v této práci pohlíženo v rámci kategorie určenosti, protože v některých případech si členy s jinými determinátory konkurují a je tedy třeba zohlednit širší gramatickou oblast.

Má práce začíná seznámením s problematikou členů ve výuce v českém prostředí. Vysvětluji, že členy jsou pro Čechy jevem naprosto neznámým. Oproti jiným studentům angličtiny, kteří jsou rodilými mluvčími jiných germánských či románských jazyků, kde se členy běžně používají, jsou čeští studenti v nevýhodě. Pro české studenty jsou členy velmi abstraktní a neuchopitelné a bez vhodného přístupu a výkladu učitele často nepochopitelné. Mnozí studenti považují členy za nedůležité a pro sebe svůj postoj zdůvodňují tím, že v češtině členy nejsou a lze se bez nich tedy pravděpodobně obejít i v angličtině.

V teoretické části se věnuji výuce členů z pohledu pedagogické mluvnice. Zde jde tedy o konkrétní pohled na výklad členů v rámci kategorie určenosti. Vedle členů se zde zabývám neurčitými, přivlastňovacími a ukazovacími zájmeny a vybranými kvantifikátory, které si jako determinátory se členy konkurují. V této kapitole zdůrazňuji, že členy se vyučují postupně, podle toho, jak se s nimi studenti setkávají v kontextu. Z toho tedy vyplývá, že používání členů vychází z potřeby dorozumět se.

Dalším obecným, ale důležitým aspektem je, že členy se váží ke kontextu. Je možné říci, že členy ovlivňují kontext, ale kontext zároveň ovlivňuje použití členů. Především ale platí, že i když student použije chybný člen, stále je tu ještě kontext, z něhož

většinou lze odvodit, co chtěl mluvčí, i přes chybně zvolený determinátor, sdělit.

A odtud možná pramení důvod, proč se členům při výuce angličtiny nevěnuje dostatečná pozornost. Pokud chybně zvolený determinátor nezpůsobí nedorozumění v komunikaci, lze říci, že vše je relativně v pořádku. S tím lze souhlasit, pokud jde o mluvenou podobu jazyka, kde je zdůrazňována plynulost ve vyjadřování. Pokud ale jde o psanou formu, kde je kladen větší důraz na jazykovou přesnost a správnost, nepůsobí chybně zvolené použití členů příliš dobře. Bez přímého kontaktu příjemce s mluvčím, který může použití chybného členu opravit dalším vysvětlováním, je totiž možné, že dojde k nedorozumění.

Pravidla užívání členů a jim příbuzných determinátorů můžeme ve výuce rozdělit do dvou skupin. Do první z nich patří obecná pravidla, která studenti musí pochopit, aby je mohli úspěšně aplikovat – sem by tedy patřilo například použití určitého členu u věcí obecně známých či v kontextu již zmíněných nebo použití neurčitého členu u věcí, o nichž mluvíme poprvé a jejichž existence dosud nevyplývá z předchozího kontextu nebo pravidla pro použití neurčitých zájmen *some* a *any* atp.

Do druhé skupiny bychom pak zařadili fráze, ustálená spojení a tzv. sets – to jsou významově příbuzná slova, která lze řadit do skupin – např. dny v týdnu, které se užívají bez členu.

Ze srovnání těchto dvou skupin vyplývá, že studenti si musí osvojit především ta obecná pravidla. Pravidla pro užívání členů s geografickými názvy nebo třeba spojení vyjadřující konzumaci denních jídel (*have breakfast*) lze najít v gramatických příručkách, o kterých by učitel měl studenty informovat, aby vždy věděli, kam nahlédnout, když danou informaci hledají. Zde mě napadá známý výrok od amerického psychologa Frederica Skinnera: „Vzdělání je to, co zůstane, když zapomeneme, co jsme se učili.“

V praktické části práce se věnuji rozboru cvičení zaměřených na členy a výše uvedené determinátory z učebnice *Reward Starter*. Dále se zaměřuji na výklad a rady, jak jsou

prezentovány v knize pro učitele (Teacher's Book) ke zmíněné učebnici. Součástí této kapitoly je i tabulka s přehledem těchto cvičení a výkladu z učebnice Reward. Tabulka je uvedena v příloze. Z této kapitoly vyplývá, že britské učebnice nezohledňují studenty angličtiny, kteří se prostřednictvím angličtiny se členy setkávají poprvé a potřebují tedy přístup odlišný od studentů, pro které jsou členy běžným jevem, který znají ze svého mateřského jazyka. Nevytýkám zahraničním učebnicím jejich přístup. Učebnice vydané ve Velké Británii jsou mnohdy používány po celém světě a protože každý jazyk má svá specifika, není možné, aby tyto učebnice braly ohled na všechny své možné uživatele. Právě proto se zde snažím poukázat na možná slabá místa, kde český student potřebuje více pozornosti, procvičování, výkladu a příkladů. Od toho je tu pak učitel, který dokáže na pozadí češtiny odhadnout, kde je potřeba podrobnější vysvětlení nebo třeba doslovný překlad do mateřštiny. Má také k dispozici různé další zdroje, ze nichž může čerpat při zadávání dodatečných cvičení. V neposlední řadě také zmiňuji možnost vytvářet cvičení čerpající z chyb žáků v testech. I tímto způsobem lze zpevnit znalosti týkající se užívání členů a eliminovat chybování studentů ve stále stejných případech.

Doplněním praktické části mé práce je pak dotazník, který jsem zadala studentům střední školy. Dotazník se skládal ze sedmnácti vět, do kterých bylo třeba doplnit určitý, neurčitý nebo nulový člen a dále neurčité nebo přivlastňovací zájmeno. Jednalo se tedy o doplňovací cvičení. U každé věty mě ale ještě zajímalo, na základě čeho se studenti rozhodli pro daný determinátor. V nabídce bylo gramatické pravidlo – zde jsem chtěla, aby pravidlo popsali – ať už česky nebo anglicky, intuice, tipování a nakonec možnost, že takovou, či podobnou větu viděli v učebnici. Dotazník je k nahlédnutí v příloze.

Z dotazníku vyplynulo, že studenti nemají o používání členů ucelený přehled. Nejčastěji se řídí intuicí, která ale bývá ve většině případů spolehlivější než gramatické pravidlo, protože se studenti často rozhodují na základě pravidla, které je pro daný případ

neadekvátní. Studenti se často při volbě determinátoru řídí intuicí nejen proto, že jim ten konkrétní člen „zní dobře, nebo vypadá dobře, když je v dané větě napsaný“, ale i proto, že se s podobným případem už někde setkali, možná ani nevědí na základě jakého pravidla to tak má být, ale „někde v hlavě to mají“ a něco jim říká, že tak je to správně. A právě takového usuzování může svědčit o osvojené znalosti studenta. A spontánní správné užívání členů je cílem, kterého se snaží dosáhnout všichni, kteří se angličtinu učí.

Zde ale chci zdůraznit, že chybování při užívání členů je nevyhnutelné a učitel by tedy neměl být při hodnocení příliš přísný. Učitel by měl studenty povzbuzovat, vysvětlit jim, že členy, i přesto, že jsou to jen krátká slovíčka, k angličtině patří a nesmíme ji o ni ochuzovat. Měl by studenty motivovat a podporovat v četbě anglicky psané literatury, novin a sledování filmů v angličtině, protože právě to je způsob, jak příjemnou a nenásilnou formou přijít do kontaktu s praktickou angličtinou, která nás o užívání členů hodně naučí.

Overview of Exercises in Reward and Suggestions for the Teacher

S. Greenall, *Reward*, Heinemann 1997
Starter

Note:

Ss – the students

T- the teacher

PB – Practice Book

SB - Students' Book

SE – supplementary exercise

FW – frontal work

GW – group work

PW – pair work

CD – category of definiteness; this note in the column lesson means that there is an exercise practising the usage of *a/an*, *the* or possessive pronouns in the lesson.

☼ - missing explanation

Lesson	Students' Book	Practice Book	Teacher's Book
1 – Asking and saying names	Possessive pronouns <i>my</i> and <i>your</i> in phrases: <i>What's your name? My name is Frank.</i> Pronunciation practice - Listening activity: repeating. Fill in activities, phrases: <i>What's your name? My name is...</i>	Practising the phrases <i>What's your name? My name is...</i> - writing and completing a dialogue	
2 – CD The indefinite article <i>a/an</i> ; talking about jobs	Practice: Fill in activity (<i>a/an</i>) Speaking: dialogues (jobs) Putting given words into sentences	Fill in activity (<i>a/an</i>) Practice: Putting given words into sentences	Indef. article with jobs; choice between <i>a/an</i> . The usage should be as accurate as possible at this stage.
3 – Greeting people; asking for and saying telephone numbers	Learning and practising the question: <i>What is your telephone number?</i>		

<p>4 – Asking and saying names; spelling</p>	<p>Speaking: GW-guessing the jobs of the others (<i>Are you an actress? Yes, I am.</i>)</p>	<p>Asking about the partner's job: <i>What's your job? I'm a doctor.</i> Asking about the partner's name: <i>Are you Jane? No I'm not.</i></p>	<p>SE - listening – based gap fill exercise</p>
<p>5 – CD; Saying where people are from and what nationality they are</p>	<p>Names of countries and nationalities, e.g. <i>Thailand, the United States of America, Brazilian, British.</i></p> <p>Practice: matching countries and nationalities. Pronunciation practice: Reading sentences such as: Henry Fuller is American. He's a waiter and he's from New York. Article-focused exercise: Putting words into sentences.</p>	<p>Practice: Fill in activity (a/an/-)</p>	<p>T is advised to teach the students the name of their country and their nationality in English and to point out the similarity of the name in English with the name in the students' own language. My advice is to do the same with some other countries.</p>
<p>6 – CD; Yes/no questions and short answers</p>	<p>Practising the usage of names of jobs and nationalities. Practice: listening and reading a short dialogue. Matching the questions and answers.</p>	<p>Writing questions to the answers, e.g. <i>Is she British? No, she isn't. She's Canadian.</i> Writing activity: Ss write about themselves including name, nationality,</p>	

		country and job.	
7 – Asking and saying how old people are; present simple (review)			SE – some complex exercise for article usage within the context of this unit
8 – CD; <i>Who</i> and <i>what</i> ; possessive adjectives: <i>my, your, his, her</i>	New possessives – <i>his</i> and <i>her</i> . Practice: Making questions using <i>who/what</i> and the possessives, e.g. <i>Who's your favourite actor?</i> and making affirmative sentences.	Modified cloze (<i>his/her</i>) Putting given words into sentences. Modified cloze (<i>a/an/-</i>)	Revision of the possessives <i>my</i> and <i>your</i> and presentation of the possessive pronouns <i>his</i> and <i>her</i> .
9– Present simple: <i>we're, you're, they're</i> ; plurals			SE (e.g. <i>she's a doctor and they're nurses</i>)
10 –CD; Demonstrative pronouns: <i>this/these, that/those</i>	Listening: acoustic-visual stimulus FW – S listen and point, e.g. <i>This is a pen.</i> Ss point at a pen. PW – Ss say what objects in a picture in the SB are, e.g. <i>What's this? It's a football.</i>	Practice: Writing questions to the given answers. Completing the questions using the demonstrative pronouns.	T is advised to explain that the distinction between these words is one of distance and number.
11 – CD; Talking about prices; position of adjectives; the definite article <i>the</i>	First occurrence of adjectives and the definite article – adjectives preceded by the definite article, e.g. <i>the blue jacket.</i>	Practising of the usage of demonstrative pronouns and the definite article by writing questions such as <i>How much is this shirt?</i> Listening: correcting wrong information	

		and completing information in given sentences.	
12 – Prepositions of place: in, on, under; possessive ‘s	Practising the usage of the demonstrative pronouns by looking at a picture and asking and saying the words they know, e.g. <i>What’s this? It’s a chair.</i>		
13 – CD; Possessive adjectives <i>our, your, their</i>	Multiple choice Completing the pairs: personal and possessive pronouns, e.g. <i>I</i> is given, <i>my</i> has to be filled in. Speaking: Ss talk about their families.	Underlining the correct form, e.g. <i>Tony is our/ *are son.</i> Drill activities: Completing personal and possessive pronouns. New geographical names and names of nationalities: <i>Japan, Birmingham, Bonn, and German.</i>	SE - cloze test
14 – Talking about appearance and character; has got	Writing: a description of someone Ss know. PW: one chooses somebody in the class and describes him/her, the other says who it is.		SE – CD practised in free expressions, e.g. <i>he is tall x he is a tall boy</i>
15 - Imperatives			
16 – CD; Present	Without any explanation Ss	Putting the words in the	SE – listening based gap fill exercise

<p>simple: regular verbs <i>I, we, you, they;</i> prepositions of place <i>in, to</i></p>	<p>listen and repeat expressions such as: <i>live in a flat, work in an office, go to school, and go to work.</i> Focus is on the prepositions <i>in</i> and <i>to</i>; their attention is not drawn to the use of articles.</p>	<p>right order and making sentences. A substitution table - adding an article where necessary, e.g. <i>I live in a flat.</i></p>	
<p>17 – CD; Telling the time (1); present simple: <i>have</i>; prepositions of time: <i>at, in</i></p>	<p>Listening and repeating of verbs: <i>have breakfast, have lunch, and have dinner.</i> No other verbs with combination <i>have + noun</i> are taught in this lesson.</p>	<p>Writing about themselves incl. job, living place, time of their meals.</p>	
<p>18 – CD; Present simple: negatives; preposition of time: <i>on</i></p>	<p>Pronunciation practice: Listening and repeating of expressions of time, e.g. <i>on Monday, in the morning.</i> Collocation activity – matching of a verb and a noun – e.g. <i>listen to music, write a letter.</i> Writing and speaking: a paragraph about what Ss do during the week</p>	<p>Putting words into three groups according to what can be played, read and listened to, such as <i>play tennis, read a book, listen to music.</i> A drill activity: writing positive and negative sentences, e.g. <i>I don't work in an office.</i></p>	<p>SE – the practise of the phrases in this lesson should be reinforced; translation ☀ presentation of phrases play the + music instrument</p>
<p>19 – CD – revision; indirect practise; <i>Yes/no</i> questions and short answers</p>	<p>The topic is sport. Asking yes/no questions revising phrases such as <i>Are you a doctor? Do you work in an</i></p>	<p>Putting given words in order and writing sentences, e.g. <i>Do you have lunch at home?</i></p>	

	<i>office?</i>	Writing questions for the given answers.	
20 – Telling the time (2); present simple: <i>he, she, it</i>	Presentation of phrases such as <i>leave home, arrive at work/school, start work, finish work, go home</i> and focus on present simple (he, she, it) True/false exercise	Writing sentences with <i>he</i> or <i>she</i> using the given words.	SE for lessons 20, 21, 22 – answering questions; speaking about timetable; Ss have to think out a story from given words
21 – <i>He/she /it; Yes/no</i> questions and short answers; <i>by</i>	Presentation of phrases: <i>go by bus, go by car</i> . New geographical terms: <i>Asia, Europe</i> . Practice: Ss find somebody who goes to school/work by car, by taxi, by train, by bus... Listening: completing a chart concentrating on how the people get to work.	Writing questions for the given answers. Ss tick statements which go for them, e.g. <i>I don't go to work by train</i> .	SE (see lesson 20)
22 – Present simple: <i>Wh</i> -questions	The topic is food and drink. Pronunciation practice: listening and repeating words such as <i>milk, yoghurt</i> . Making sentences using the given words, e.g. <i>What does he have for breakfast?</i>	Listening: ticking the right sentence. Writing activity: writing about the favourite meal.	SE (see lesson 21)
23 – topic:			

Activities			
24 – CD; <i>There is/are;</i> <i>any</i>	Describing a picture in the SB using <i>there is/are</i> . Reading a text - a description of a house, containing <i>there is/are</i> and <i>any</i> . GW with information in the text. The usage of <i>there is/are</i> and <i>any</i> is presented in a grammar box.	Writing: describing houses in pictures in the PB. Ss complete sentences with information which goes for their house/flat.	☀ <i>There is/are</i> is used with indefinite article T is advised to explain the use of <i>any</i> with plural negatives and questions, such as <i>Are there any chairs in the kitchen? There aren't any cupboards in the bathroom</i> and to say that this simplified rule is useful at the moment, but will require further examination later in the course.
25 – CD; Present simple: adverbs of frequency	The first occurrence of ordinal numerals. Ss learn to say the dates such as <i>1st January (the first of January), 8th August</i> . First practising by listening and repeating, and then saying the dates by themselves.	Practice: writing the dates, such as <i>1/7 – the first of July</i> . Fill in - filling in the dates which go for S and for their country, such as <i>In my country we never work <u>on</u> the <u>first of</u> <u>January</u></i> .	SE – saying what the day is today before every English lesson Writing <i>1/7</i> etc. as <i>the first of July</i> can confuse Ss – they will never see it written like this.
26 – CD; <i>can</i> for ability	Presentation of the phrases such as <i>play the piano, play the guitar x play football, tennis; ride a bicycle, use a computer, speak French, English</i> . Matching activity: words from two boxes, such as <i>play the piano</i> . Pronunciation practice: listen and repeat.	Matching and drill activities.	The phrases <i>play</i> + sport were presented in lesson 18, which is not systematic. T is advised to point out that <i>play</i> + music instrument is used with the definite article (<i>play the piano</i>). But the expressions <i>play</i> + sport are used with the zero article, e.g. <i>play tennis</i> . Combinations of other verbs and nouns are used with the indefinite article or with the zero article (<i>ride a bicycle, use a computer, speak/understand English/French</i>). Names of some nationalities were presented in lesson 5 – at

			that stage Ss could have already been taught the phrase <i>speak English/French</i> etc.
27 – CD; Talking about food and drink	Learning names of food and drink combined with their countable units, such as <i>a cup of tea, a glass of wine, a bottle of water, a piece of cake.</i>	Listening and repeating phrases like <i>a cup of coffee</i> , matching activities, completing a dialogue in a restaurant.	
28 – CD; Asking for and giving directions	Occurrence of some names of streets, e.g. <i>North Street, South Street</i> . There is a simplified map of the centre of London in the SB. Through some listening, writing and reading activities Ss are informed about some sights and interesting places, such as <i>Sherlock Holmes pub, Odeon cinema, Covent Garden market, Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace, and The Houses of Parliament.</i>	Practising asking for and giving directions like <i>go along West Street, turn right into North Street, it's on the left</i> on some simple fictitious maps, usage of names of streets, e.g. <i>Oxford Road, Broad Street.</i>	SE - Ss say in which street they live and name some buildings of their city in English Ss meet with a name <i>Odeon cinema</i> but four lessons later they meet with the <i>Odeon</i> . Both names are correct but they do not have to meet with both of them now because it only confuses them.
29 – Present continuous	True/false based listening – phrases such as <i>a stand in x standing, a read in x reading</i>		
30 – CD; Present continuous: negatives;	Practising of expressions such as <i>make lunch/dinner,</i>	Practice: collocation activity (matching),	Better solution would be to teach the two different groups of phrases separately.

questions	<i>have lunch/dinner, have a bath/shower.</i>	listening.	SE – cloze test (e.g. <i>have dinner, have a shower</i>)
31 – Present continuous (3): future plans	New geographical names: <i>Australia, Sydney, New South Wales, and Port Stephens.</i>		
32 – CD; Making suggestions; accepting and refusing; talking about the cinema and theatre	Presentation of phrases <i>go to the cinema, go to the theatre</i> and names of a cinema and a theatre – <i>the Odeon, the Theatre Royal.</i> Practising by listening and speaking activities.		See lesson 28 (<i>the Odeon</i>)
33 – Past simple (1) <i>be: was/were</i>	New geographical and proper names: <i>Paris, France, the Hotel des Amores.</i>		
34 – Past simple (2): <i>yes/no</i> questions and short answers			
35 – Past simple (3): <i>had</i>			
36 – Past simple (4): regular verbs			
37 – Past simple (5): negatives	New geographical and proper names: <i>Spain, Madrid, the Prado Museum.</i>		
38 – Past simple (6): <i>yes/no</i> questions and	New geographical names: <i>Ohio, Pennsylvania,</i>		

short answers	<i>and Tokyo.</i>		
39 – Past simple (7): questions; irregular verbs	New geographical names: <i>New York, Broadway, and Central Park.</i>		
40 - Tense review: present simple, present continuous, past simple			

Questionnaire for Students

Complete these sentences using *a/an, the* or zero article (=no article) or *some, any* or *my, your, his...* (possessive pronouns).

What made you decide like this?

		Grammar rule. Please explain the rule. (Můžete odpovědět v češtině.)	Intuition	A guess	Sentence like this in the textbook
	<p><u>Examples:</u> I bought ...a... present for John.</p> <p>We live in ...-... Europe.</p>	<p>O tomto dárku mluvíme poprvé (první zmínka), není to pro nás nic známého, proto neurčitý člen <i>a</i>.</p> <p>Jména kontinentů se užívají bez členu.</p>			
1.	There is envelope on the table.				
2.	Would you like tea?				

3. Thames flows through London.				
4.	There are eggs in the fridge.				
5.	Where is book that you bought yesterday?				
6.	There is water on the floor.				
7.	What time do you usually have breakfast?				
8.	Do you like swimming?				

9.	What is the capital of Czech Republic?				
10.	You have to add flour into the dough.				
11.	We were skiing in Alps last winter.				
12.	What about having walk now?				
13.	He was shaking head.				
14.	Can you play guitar?				

15.	I was in hurry yesterday.				
16.	Have you ever been toDublin?				
17.	Mary combed hair.				

Anotace

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Počet znaků	101 411
Počet příloh	2
Počet titulů použité literatury	22
Klíčová slova	Determinator, article, teaching grammar, types of correction, types of errors in the usage of articles, types of exercises practising the usage of articles
Charakteristika diplomové práce	Tématem diplomové práce je výuka a procvičování členů v angličtině v rámci kategorie určenosti. Teoretická část pojednává o výuce členů za použití pedagogické mluvnice. Praktická část se zabývá rozбором cvičení zaměřených na členy a další determinátory z učebnice <i>Reward Starter</i> . Dále se zaměřuje na výklad a rady, jak jsou prezentovány v knize pro učitele ke zmíněné učebnici. Doplněním praktické části je zpracování dotazníku, jež byl zadán studentům střední školy.
Anotace v angličtině/Abstract	The subject of this diploma thesis is teaching and practising articles in English within the scope of the category of definiteness. The theoretical part deals with determiners in the light of pedagogical grammar. The practical part is represented by the critical commentary on the Teacher's Book and the exercises of the course book <i>Reward</i> . The practical part is supplied by a discussion of results of a questionnaire which was assigned to the Czech secondary school students of English.

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