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The Difficulties of Differentiating between Past Simple and Present Perfect Simple for Czech Learners of English

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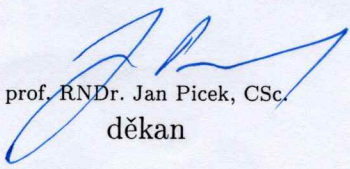
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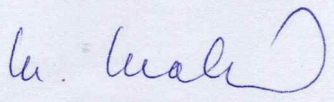
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Anotace a klíčová slova

Podstatou této bakalářské práce je zjistit, zda Čeští studenti mají obtíže při rozlišování mezi předpřítomným časem prostým a minulým časem prostým. Za tímto účelem byla provedena analýza tří běžně používaných učebnic. Bylo provedeno výzkumné šetření mezi žáky základních a středních škol, kteří tyto učebnice používají. Výsledky šetření jsou po zaznamenání do tabulek porovnány. Následně jsou výsledky analyzovány a je z nich vyvozen závěr.

Klíčová slova

Anglická gramatika, Anglický jazyk, minulý čas prostý, předpřítomný čas prostý, výzkumné šetření

Annotation and Keywords

The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether the Czech students have difficulty in differentiating between the present perfect simple and the past simple tenses. To this end, three very commonly used English school textbooks are examined. A number of students in elementary and high schools who use these textbooks are surveyed and once tabulated, the answers are compared. Then the results are analysed and conclusions are drawn.

Keywords

English grammar, English language, past simple, present perfect simple, research survey

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Introduction

Perfect tenses constitute one of the hardest parts of learning English for Czech students. Needless to say, this problem is not specific to just Czech students. Their use challenges many foreign students as well. For Czech students the problem is not just understanding the perfect tenses, but also differentiating between them and the past simple, present simple, future simple. This thesis will discuss two tenses between which Czech students have problems to differentiate - the present perfect simple and the past simple tense.

The author of this thesis chose the topic, because he himself was inexperienced in differentiating between the two tenses. Nevertheless, as this topic was brought up numerous times throughout his study career (in elementary school, high school and university), he knows how problematic this topic is for Czech students as a whole.

The first part of this thesis focuses on theory. Definitions must be established. That is done for both the present perfect simple and the past simple tense. The second part of this thesis focuses on three English school textbooks, *Motivate!* (2013), *Project* (2011) and *Headway* (2012). The parts in all three books where the present perfect and the past simple tense are introduced are examined and compared. Their connection with theory is established. The third part of this document introduces the survey that the author brought to both elementary and high schools. The survey takes form of a written test. The schools visited and surveyed are properly introduced. The surveyed student groups are also described. The results of the survey are published and included in tables and graphs. The aim is to determine if students indeed have problems in distinguishing between the two tenses. In the fourth part of this thesis the results of the surveys are discussed. Finally conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made.

Author's expectations are that the past simple will not pose as much difficulty as the present perfect simple for the surveyed students and that the books will not play a major role to the survey research results.

1 The present perfect simple tense

This chapter describes the theory behind the present perfect simple tense. It explains what the tense is, how it is formed, functions of the tense, time markers, its place among other perfect tenses, what grammarians say about the tense, the main difference between the two tenses, when do Czech students learn about the tense and finally what problems students experience with the tense.

1.1 What is the present perfect tense

The present perfect simple tense is a grammatical phenomenon, which does not exist in Czech language. Despite belonging in the present tense category, the action taking place in this tense actually begins in the past, but it binds to the present. *"Many learners find it difficult to think of the present perfect as a form that can refer to present time in some contexts, and past time in others. This is a particular problem for speakers of many European languages whose first language has a similar form which is always used to refer to past time."* (Parrott 2010, 235). We form the present perfect using the auxiliary verb *have/has* (depending on the person) + the past participle of the main verb. The past participle of a regular verb is formed by adding *-ED* to the end and for irregular verbs we use the third form of a verb which can be found in the third column in the list of irregular verbs (Pourová 2018, 60).

1.2 Functions of the present perfect simple tense

This section of the thesis will discuss, in which context is the present perfect simple tense used. The following information concerning the present perfect tense usage is based mainly on the book *Teaching tenses* (Aitken 1992, 23–27), however the author has decided to make his own explanation as a simpler explanation is more suitable for new learners of the tense.

1.2.1 Present perfect simple tense for experience

Present perfect simple is often used when we talk about an experience that occurred in the past but is of an unspecified time. We are not interested in when the experience was gained. What we want to know is whether it was gained, or it was not.

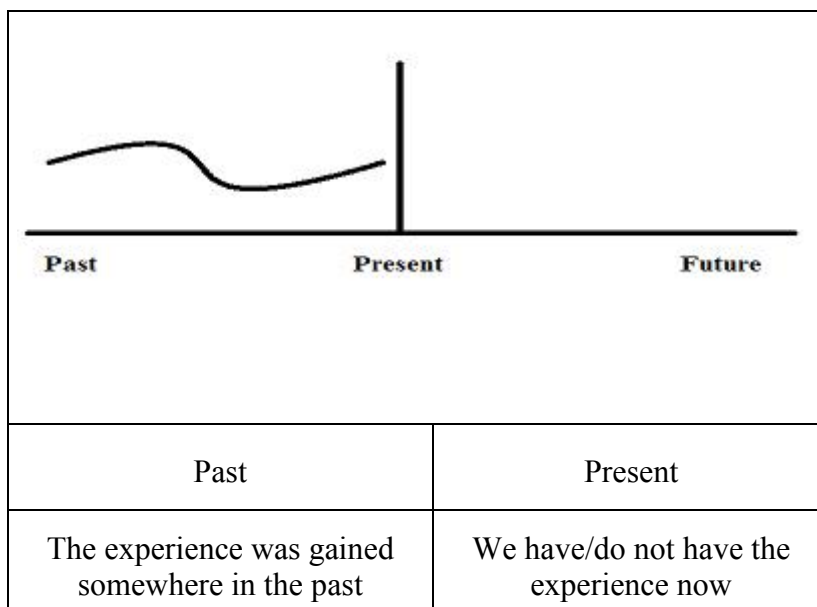


Figure 1 - Time reference for experience

Affirmative

- I have lived in Great Britain. - Žil jsem ve Velké Británii.
- She has been to the Hawaii Islands. - Byla na Havajských ostrovech.
- Mr. Johnson has seen the movie. - Pan Johnson viděl ten film.

These examples do not specify when was the experience gained. We just know now that it was gained.

Negative

- I have not lived in Great Britain. - Nežil jsem ve Velké Británii.
- She hasn't been to the Hawaii Islands twice. - Nebyla na Havajských ostrovech dvakrát.
- Mr. Johnson has not seen the movie. - Pan Johnson neviděl ten film.

Interrogative

- Have I lived in Great Britain? - Žil jsem ve Velké Británii?
- Has she been to the Hawaii Islands twice? - Byla na Havajských ostrovech dvakrát?
- Has Mr. Johnson seen the movie? - Viděl pan Johnson ten film?

Negative interrogative

- Have I not lived in Great Britain? - Nežil jsem ve Velké Británii?
- Hasn't she been to the Hawaii Islands? - Nebyla na Havajských ostrovech?

- Hasn't Mr. Johnson seen the movie? - Neviděl pan Johnson ten film?

Since the Czech language does not have the present perfect simple tense it is replaced by the past or present tense in Czech. This factor is important when the tense is explained to students for the first time.

1.2.2 Present perfect simple tense for change

Present perfect simple is also used to talk about a change. Something has changed and now it is different than it was before. This use of the present perfect is to show the result of an action. This action started in the past but now is completed.

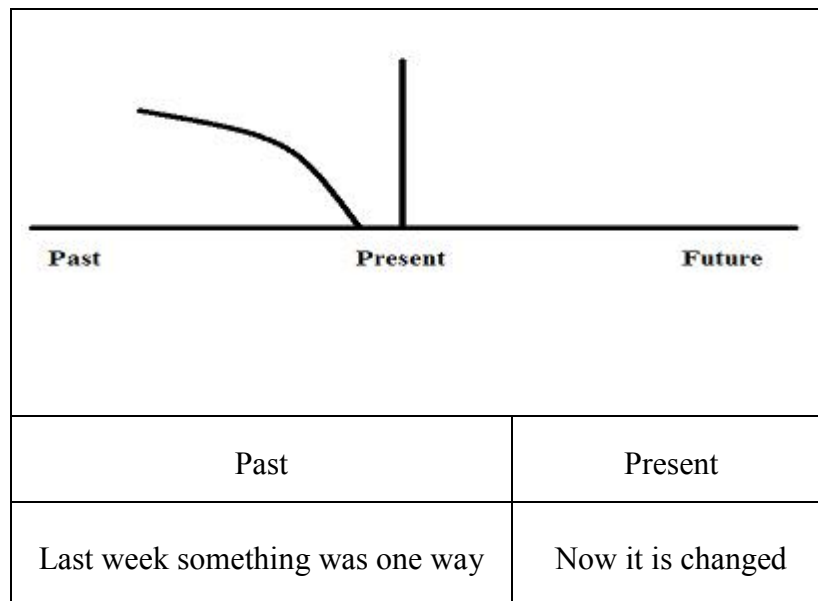


Figure 2 - Time reference for change

Affirmative

- I have become rich. - Zbohatl jsem.
- The price of gas has increased. - Cena plynu se zvýšila.
- Mr. Johnson has been arrested for a fraud. - Pan Johnson byl zatčen za podvod.

To clarify the first example. If I have become rich it must mean that I used to be either poor or of an average wealth. It used to be that way, but now it's different. Same with the Mr. Johnson example. Mr. Johnson used to be free, but now he is arrested.

Negative

- I have not become rich. - Nezbohatl jsem.
- The price of gas has not increased. - Cena plynu se nezvýšila.
- Mr. Johnson has not been arrested for a fraud. - Pan Johnson nebyl zatčen za podvod.

Interrogative

- Have I become rich? - Zbohatl jsem?
- Has the price of gas increased? - Zvýšila se cena plynu?
- Has Mr. Johnson been arrested for a fraud? - Byl pan Johnson zatčen za podvod?

Negative interrogative

- Have I not become rich? - Nezbohatl jsem?
- Has the price of gas not increased? - Nezvedla se cena plynu?
- Has Mr. Johnson not been arrested for a fraud? - Nebyl pan Johnson zatčen za podvod?

Look at the Czech examples. Every English sentence is replaced in Czech translation by either present or past tense. A clear distinction between the tenses in English has to be drawn.

1.2.3 Present perfect simple tense for continuing situation

The third use of present perfect simple is to talk about a continuing situation. Something that started in the past continues to the present and will probably continue into the future. In other words, this part of present perfect is used for states and time periods that are unfinished.

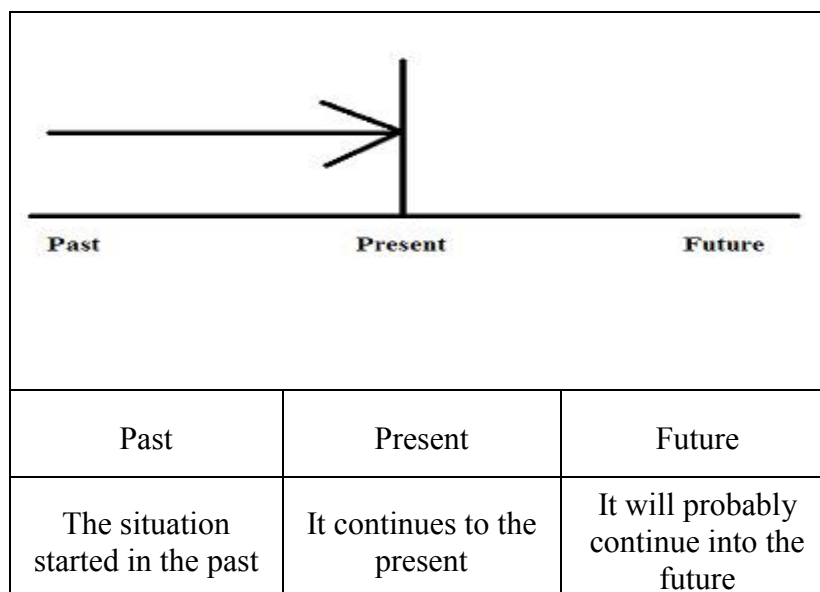


Figure 3 - Time reference for continuing situation

Affirmative

- I have known her since 1996. (Unfinished state)¹ - Zním ji od roku 1996.
- She has always played basketball. - Vždy hrála basketball.
- Mr. Johnson has been to hospital three times this year. (Unfinished time period)²

¹ Unfinished state - Is an action that has not finished and will continue further on.

² Unfinished time period - Is a period of time, in which we currently are and will continue further on.

- Pan Johnson byl letos třikrát v nemocnici.

Negative

- I have not known her since 1996. - Od roku 1996 jsem ji neznal.
- She has not always played basketball. - Ne vždy hrála basketball.
- Mr. Johnson has not been to hospital this year. - Pan Johnson nebyl letos v nemocnici.

Interrogative

- Have I known her since 1996? - Zním ji od roku 1996?
- Has she always played basketball? - Hrála vždy basketball?
- Has Mr. Johnson been to hospital three times already this year? - Byl pan Johnson již letos v nemocnici třikrát?

Negative interrogative

- Have I not known her since 1996? - Neznám ji od roku 1996?
- Has she not always played basketball? - Nehrála vždy basketball?
- Has Mr. Johnson not been to hospital three times this year? - Nebyl tento rok pan Johnson v nemocnici třikrát?

Again, in translation to Czech mostly the past tense is used. Therefore, students can easily misunderstand the difference between the past simple tense and the present perfect simple tense in English language.

1.3 Markers just, yet, already, still, ever, never, recently

This section lists time markers *just, yet, already, still, ever, never, recently*, which are associated with the present perfect simple tense. These time markers specify when the action took place and because of that we can determine the time reference of a sentence. These markers can be understood as signal words which are used with the present perfect quite often.

1.3.1 Just

This time markers show us that the time is either present or very close to it. This time marker is joined by the present perfect to express the immediate past.

- I have just finished packing up. - Právě jsem si zabalil.
- Parents have just left. - Rodiče zrovna odešli.
- She has just finished painting the picture. - Právě dokončila obraz.

1.3.2 Yet

Time marker *yet* states an action that started in the past and its result either is not finished or when there is an inquiry about the state of an action. It is usually used in

negative or interrogative sentences. Note that the time marker *yet* cannot be used in sentences that refer to actions which have already finished.

~~I played the video game yet~~ x I played the game already.

Interrogative

- Has the package arrived yet? - Přišel už ten balíček?
- Can I send the postcard yet? - Můžu už poslat tu pohlednici?

Negative

- I haven't finished my thesis yet. - Ještě jsem nedokončil svoji diplomovou práci.
- Have you already done the dishes? No, not yet. - Umyl jsi už nádobí? Zatím ne.

1.3.3 Already

The adverb of time *already* is used with the present perfect simple to emphasize that an action starting in the past has already finished. This adverb can sometimes add a surprise element to a sentence. It is often used in affirmative and interrogative sentences.

Affirmative

- I have already seen the movie. - Ten film už jsem viděl.
- He has already finished cleaning the dishes (He was surprisingly quick). - Už umyl nádobí.

Interrogative

- Has she done it then already? - Udělala to tedy?
- Have they already arrived? - Už dorazili?

Furthermore, Rosemary Aitken states "It is rarely used in negatives, except after *if* and *when* or as a question or exclamation: Hasn't the train gone already? (that is surprising). It hasn't gone already! (Bother!)" (Aitken 1992, 24).

1.3.4 Still

Time marker *still* can be used as an adverb to express that an action is still continuing; however, *still* may also emphasize the speaker's surprise or that the continuing action is undesired. It is used mainly in negative sentences.

Negative

- She still has not finished her homework. - Ještě pořád nedodělala svůj domácí úkol.
- We still have not played the new video game. - Ještě jsme tu novou videohru nehráli.
- He still has not called. - Stále nezavolal.

1.3.5 Ever and Never

Both *ever* and *never* are used to express a personal experience that happened somewhere in the past and is of an unspecified time. The adverb *ever* can be used in

interrogative sentences, negative interrogative sentences and statements whereas *never* is only used in negative sentences, in which we deny an experience.

Interrogative sentences with ever

- Have you ever had a dream? - Měl jsi někdy sen?
- Has she ever seen the movie trilogy Harry Potter? - Viděla někdy filmovou trilogii Harry Potter?
- Have they ever met any famous actor? - Potkali někdy nějakého slavného herce?

Negative interrogative sentences with ever

- Has she ever learnt how to behave? - Naučila se někdy jak se chovat?
- Have they ever tasted a cinnamon roll? - Ochutnali někdy skořicovou rolku?
- Have you ever been at the school's library? - Byl jsi někdy ve školní knihovně?

"The present perfect simple with **ever** is also found in clauses that follow a superlative. This is the best novel I've ever read. This is the most important match they've ever played." (Finnie 2010, 78)

Never in negative sentences

- Never have I seen such mess in my life. - Nikdy v životě jsem neviděl takový nepořádek.
- We have never seen the movie trilogy Harry Potter. - Nikdy jsme neviděli filmovou trilogii Harry Potter.
- I have never been to Prague. - Nikdy jsem nebyl v Praze.

1.3.6 Recently

Present perfect simple is used with adverbs *recently/lately*, which are used to talk about experiences that happened "not long ago". With present perfect simple they are usually placed at the end of the sentence. (Finnie 2010, 78)

Affirmative

- I have seen her recently. - Nedávno jsem ji viděl.
- She has been working out lately. - V poslední době cvičila.
- Things have started to get better recently. - V poslední době se věci zlepšily.

Negative

- I have not seen her recently. - V poslední době jsem ji neviděl.
- I have not had much time lately. - V poslední době jsem neměl moc času.
- Prices have skyrocketed recently. - Ceny nedávno prudce vzrostly.

Interrogative

- Have you seen her recently? - Viděli jste ji v poslední době?
- Has he been studying lately? - Studoval v poslední době?
- Has companies' revenue increased recently? - Vzrostla v poslední době tržba společnosti?

Negative interrogative

- Have you not seen her recently? - Neviděli jste ji v poslední době?
- Has she not eaten much lately? - Nejedla málo v poslední době?
- Have libraries not been so crowded recently? - Nebyly knihovny v poslední době přeplněné?

Nevertheless, time markers are also a reason why students can make mistakes in present perfect. Time markers, as stated, can help us determine the tense of a sentence; however, students can use this to their advantage, although, in order to do so, they need to know the vocabulary. Words such as *just* or *still* have more than one meaning.

- He has just left. X I stay just.
- Právě odešel. X Zůstávám spravedlivý.
- She still has not learnt. X Stay still.
- Stále se nepoučila. X Zůstaň v klidu.

If teachers do not take their time to establish, emphasize and practice what functions in a sentence these words can fulfil, it could harm the students' understanding of the present perfect.

1.3.7 Markers so far, since

This section introduces additional two time markers *so far*, *since*; it follows on the previous section.

According to Phil Williams' book *The English Tenses* (2014) the author classifies these two time markers as a "duration" in his section of the present perfect uses and says that "*The present perfect may show long-term duration, for a continuing action or event. This use demonstrates a specific timed duration up to the present, rather than an ongoing process.*" (Williams 2014,73). This explanation is more than suitable for understanding why the present perfect is used with these time markers.

- I have played five cards so far. - Zatím jsem zahrál pět karet.
- We have managed to keep the fires down so far. - Zatím jsme udrželi oheň pod kontrolou.
- I have not eaten since last night. - Od včerejší noci jsem nic nejedl.
- We have met six times since February. - Od února jsme se potkali šestkrát.

In Czech translations past or present tense is used.

1.3.8 Uses with 'How long?', 'For'

Questions starting with "How long..?" and sentences the preposition "for" are another function of the present perfect simple tense.

In the book of Rachel Finnie and others, *TOP Grammar* (2010), they state that the present perfect simple tense is also used "with the preposition for, to specify the duration of the action. (e.g. *They have been here for two hours*)" (Finnie et al. 2010, 80). They continue to specify that the preposition for is used to answer questions, which are focused on the duration of a certain situation. "Questions start with *How long... ?*, *For how long... ?* (e.g. *How long have you been on holiday? For a week.*)" (Finnie et al. 2010, 80). Additionally, sometimes it is possible to omit the preposition for. This is especially true if the preposition comes "after the verbs be and wait (e.g. *He's been away a week; I've waited an hour.*)" (Finnie et al. 2010, 80).

Interrogative sentences

- How long have you been there? For 20 years. - Jak dlouho jsi tam byl? 20 let.
- For how long have you worked as a taxi driver. For 10 days. - Jak dlouho jsi pracoval jako řidič taxi? 10 dní.
- In Czech translations past tense is used.

1.4 Present perfect's place among other perfect tenses

This section serves as a visual representation of logical sequence of perfect tenses.

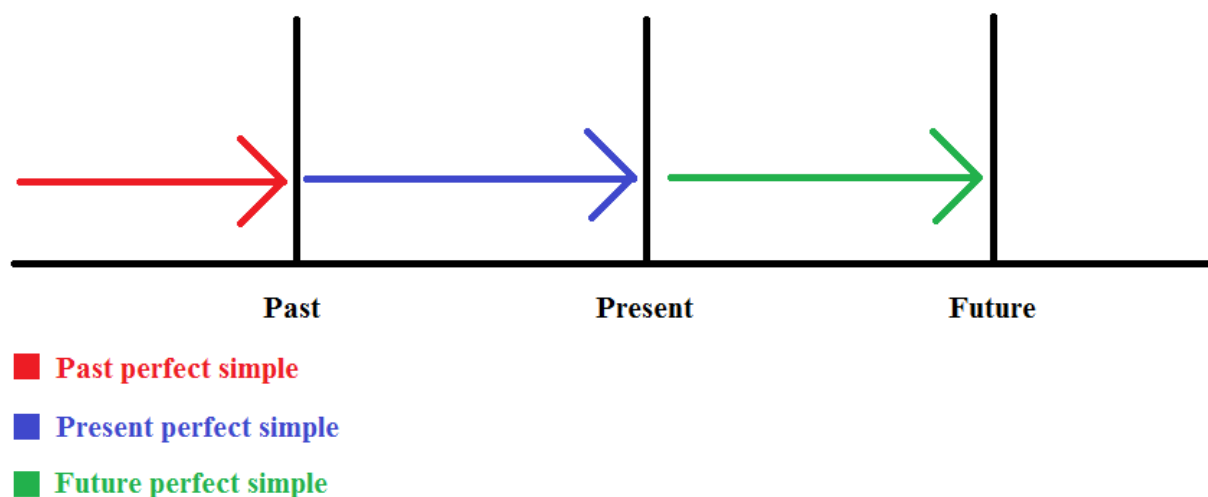


Figure 4 - Logical sequence of perfect tenses

1.5 Present perfect simple according to grammarians

This thesis explains three main uses of present perfect simple plus time markers which often signal the tense of the main verb. This of course is not the only correct way of distinguishing when to use the present perfect simple. Legitimate grammarians have their own way of explaining uses of the present perfect simple.

As stated before Rosemary Aitken in her book *Teaching Tenses* (1992) provides a different explanation and gives four main uses of the tense. The first function is to describe "*uncompleted action where both actor and results remain*" (Aitken 1992, 23), and the second function is to describe "*an action which took place in an identified period of time, which is not yet over*" (Aitken 1992, 23). In this thesis the explanation for these two uses has been simplified and merged together into "*Present perfect simple tense for continuing situation*". The third function mentioned by Rosemary Aitken is "*For an action which took place in the past; but whose results are still present.*" (Aitken 1992, 23); and the fourth one "*For an action which took place in the past, but which still relates to the present.*" (Aitken 1992, 24).

The author of *Oxford Modern English Grammar* (2011) Bas Aarts provides four uses for the tense as well the first one being "The continuative present perfect" (Aarts 2011, 258) where he addresses how this use of present perfect starts in the past, continues to the present and may possibly continue to the future. The second use is "*The present perfect of the recent past*" (Aarts 2011, 259) where he explains and demonstrates how a situation that took place in the recent past is used in the present perfect construction. Not only that, but he informs that this use is often used with time markers such as *just*. Furthermore, he includes information about how this use of the tense is utilized in reportage such as newspapers "*Note that a past tense could have been used in these cases, but this would have had the effect of the reports losing their 'hot news' feel.*" (Aarts 2011, 259) meaning the present perfect shows an emphasis on recent events and is generally more interesting in headlines. The third use "*The present perfect of result*" (Aarts 2011, 259), in which he provides little explanation and instead he focuses on examples of this usage of the tense and the fourth use "*The experiential present perfect*" (Aarts 2011, 259) where he explains "*The experiential present perfect is used to indicate that some situation obtained once or more than once during and indefinite period beginning in the past and leading up to the present.*" (Aarts 2011, 259).

1.6 The present perfect simple and the past simple

While the present perfect simple tense is used to talk about actions with an imprecise reference to the past that are still relevant to the present, the past simple tense is used to talk about actions that have already been concluded with a precise reference to the time when the action has been finished.

Present perfect x past simple

- a) They have been here all morning. x They were here in the morning.
- a) Byli tu celé ráno. x Byli tu ráno.
- b) I have not seen him recently. x I did not see him yesterday.
- b) V poslední době jsem ho neviděl. x Včera jsem ho neviděl.
- c) Have you seen him today? x Did you see him today?
- c) Viděl jsi ho dnes? x Viděl jsi ho dnes?

Example a) on the present perfect simple side implies an unfinished period, meaning it is still morning and the subject of the sentence is still present. On the right side the past simple example shows a reference to single time event.

Example b) "I have not seen him recently." implies time reference to "not long ago" while "I did not see him yesterday." shows a clear single time event reference.

Example c) "Have you seen him today?" is a wider question asking whether we saw the person at any point of the day with a possibility to see him later, whereas "Did you see him today?" implies that the possibility of seeing him is over.

In all Czech examples, the past tense is used.

(Finnie 2010, 82)

1.7 When do Czech students learn the present perfect simple

Czech students normally start learning about present perfect simple in elementary school. This topic is typically introduced when pupils are in the age group of 12-15 and they are taught its most common usage. The expected goal is for the pupils to understand when the present perfect is used, how it is formed in affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences and to be able to tell a simple story or an event, describe people, places and things from their everyday life using the present perfect tense. It is recommended to prepare multiple classes focused on just present perfect as grasping the basics of a tense which does not belong into their mother tongue can prove to be extremely difficult.

1.8 Problems Czech students have with the present perfect

The more obvious reason of why the present perfect tense is so problematic can be easily spotted in the aforementioned example sentences. Czech language has only three tenses - past, present, future with the addition of *vid*. *Vid* in Czech language distinguishes whether the verb shows action which has already been finished or will be finished. It is called the perfect verb; or it does not, which is called the imperfect verb. Nearly all of the examples the author made for the present perfect functions are translated into Czech's past tense. However, Czech's past tense is similar to English's past simple tense. Students have an extremely hard time grasping the concept of a new tense that is not present in their mother language and at the same time reminds them of the Czech tenses for past or present. In addition, this means teachers cannot give examples in Czech language that would directly point to the present perfect at a first glance, only to present simple and past simple; there is no equivalent in the Czech language for it. This also means that these listed functions, such as change or experience are used specifically to distinguish what tense to use in English and do not work in the Czech language.

Another reason could be that student's parents are not as well acquainted with English as they are with other subjects. When children need help at school, they can always ask their parents or grandparents. However, despite English being the "lingua franca" the older generation in Czech Republic has difficulties using more than the basic structures of the language.

Third reason could be the motivation to learn additional tenses. As students see the simplicity behind the past simple tense and how similar it looks to Czech's past tense a lot of students settle on the idea "that will do", because this basic usage of English will allow them to communicate in different countries with minimal effort on their part. This sort of view is ever present among young people. Motivation is key.

"The tenses play a key role in developing ESL students' expertise and skills in English language. Therefore, based on the results of the study, the students should focus on learning all types of tenses especially 'present perfect tense, and past perfect tense', in which they showed poor performance." (Javed and Ahmad 2013,25).

2 Past simple tense

This section of the thesis is dedicated to the past simple tense. It explains what it is, lists all the functions based on *Teaching tenses* and its uses.

2.1 What is the past simple tense

The past simple tense is used in English language as means to talk about a completed action in a time before present. It is also the most basic form of the past tense in English language. We form the past simple using the past participle of the main verb. With regular verbs we form the past participle by adding -ED to the end of the verb and for irregular verbs we use the second form of a verb which can be found in the third column in the list of irregular verbs (Aarts 2011, 249).

2.2 Functions of the past simple tense

This section of the thesis will talk about when the past simple is used. Necessary information is based mainly on the book *Teaching tenses* (Aitken 1992, 34–37). Functions listed are *An action in the past*, *Politeness*, *Time marker in subordinate clauses with when and while* and *Hypothetical future with if clauses*

2.2.1 For an action in the past

This section lists all possible events in the past which use the past simple tense.

2.2.1.1 Single time events

This function of the past simple indicates that the event happened precisely once in the past.

Affirmative

- You were there yesterday. - Včera jsi tam byl.
- He went to the cinema two weeks ago. - Před dvěma týdny šel do kina.
- My father was young when he went to university. - Můj otec byl mladý, když šel na univerzitu.

Negative

- You were not there. - Nebyl jsi tam.
- He did not go to the cinema two weeks ago. - Před dvěma týdny nešel do kina.
- My father was not young when he went to university. - Můj otec nebyl mladý, když šel na univerzitu.

Interrogative

- Were you there yesterday? - Byl jsi tam včera?
- Did he go to the cinema two weeks ago? - Šel do kina před dvěma týdny?
- Was my father young when he went to university? - Byl můj otec mladý, když šel na univerzitu?

Negative interrogative

- Were you not there yesterday? - Nebyl jsi tam včera?
- Did he not go to the cinema two weeks ago? - Nešel do kina před dvěma týdny?
- Was my father not young when he went to university? - Nebyl můj otec mladý, když šel na univerzitu?

2.2.1.2 Repeated events

This function of the past simple indicates that the event happened multiple times in the past but has also ended in the past.

Affirmative

- I played video games when I was young. - Když jsem byl mladý, hrál jsem videohry.
- Every Monday, my sister rode a bike. - Každé pondělí má sestra jela na kole.
- We went to the same forest every summer. - Každé léto jsme šli do stejného lesa.

Negative

- I did not play video games when I was young. - Když jsem byl mladý, nehrál jsem videohry.
- Every Monday, my sister did not ride a bike. - Každé pondělí má sestra nejela na kole.
- We did not go to the same forest every summer. - Každé léto jsme nešli do stejného lesa.

Interrogative

- Did I play video games when I was young? - Když jsem byl mladý, hrál jsem video hry?
- Did my sister ride a bike every Monday? - Jela má sestra každé pondělí na kole?
- Did we go to the same forest every summer? - Šli jsme do toho stejného lesa každé léto?

Negative interrogative

- Did I not play video games when I was young? - Když jsem byl mladý, nehrál jsem videohry?
- Did my sister not ride a bike every Monday? - Nejela má sestra každé pondělí na kole?
- Did we not go to the same forest every summer? - Nešli jsme do toho stejného lesa každé léto?

2.2.1.3 Sentences with *once*

The past simple tense with *once* indicates a single occasion, in which the action was true but is not anymore. The action could have been true for an extended period of time.

- I ate a tomato once. - Jednou jsem snědl rajče.

- Once I was 12, my mom bought me a computer. - Jakmile mi bylo 12, máma mi koupila počítač.
- I smoked cigarettes once. - Jednou jsem kouřil cigarety.

Negative, interrogative and negative interrogative forms can be made; however, they would not make sense in this particular context.

2.2.2 Politeness, with verbs of *thinking, wishing*

We use the past simple when we want to express politeness when introducing a request or a suggestion. "*It is often followed by modal verbs in the past form (could/would etc.)*" (Aitken 1992, 36).

- Please, could you repeat that? - Prosím, můžete to zopakovat?
- I wanted to thank you all for coming. - Chtěl jsem vám poděkovat, že jste přišli.
- I wondered if you could show me your butterfly collection. - Zajímalo by mě, zda by jsi mohl ukázat svoji sbírku motýlů.

2.2.3 Time marker in subordinate clauses with *when and while*

Past simple is used in:

a) Repeated background actions

He danced when he sang. - Tančil, když zpíval.

b) Continuous background actions

He danced while he sang. - Tančil zatímco zpíval.

c) Unspecified time especially in clauses with *thought*

I thought he liked me when I was young. - Myslela jsem, že mě měl rád, když jsem byla mladá.

2.2.4 Hypothetical future with *if* clauses

Hypothetical future indicates what would be if something happened. These situations are non-factual, they are probably not going to happen. These sentences follow the pattern of the second conditional. The second conditional uses the past simple after *if*.

Affirmative

- He would be rich if he worked harder. - Byl by bohatý, kdyby pracoval tvrději.
- If I played basketball, I would be a pro player. - Kdybych hrál basketball, byl bych profesionální hráč.

Negative

- My mom would be angry if I did not pass the test. - Kdybych neudělal ten test, moje máma by byla našťvaná.
- I would be homeless If I did not pay the rent. - Byl bych bezdomovec, kdybych

nezaplatil nájem.

As the clauses with *if* are subordinate, they do not change their form when put into interrogative; therefore, additional forms are not mentioned. In negative sentences we have to use the dummy operator *did*. In interrogative sentences we have to move the dummy operator *did* to the beginning of the sentence.

2.3 Past simple according to grammarians

This thesis explains main uses of the past simple according to *Teaching tenses* (1992) by Rosemary Aitken. The explanation provided by this thesis is of course not the only one relevant and therefore this section will list other explanations provided by grammarians.

The author of *Grammar for English Language Teachers*(2010) Martin Parrott provides four uses for the past simple tense. The first one is "*Finished periods of time*" (Parrott 2010, 219) and is identical to what the first function of the past simple is in this thesis is. The second one is "*Precise detail*" (Parrott 2010, 219), in which he states that "*We also use the past simple when we provide precise circumstantial detail about and event.*" (Parrott 2010, 219). Third one is "*Time anchor*" (Parrott 2010, 220), in which he states that the past simple tense is used to specify the "time frame" while telling stories or describing what happened in the past. Fourth one is "*Different kinds of events*" (Parrott 2010, 220), in which he states different kinds of past events where the past simple tense is used.

Bas Aarts, the author of *Oxford Modern English Grammar* (2011) introduces five uses for the past simple tense. The first one is "*The past tense as used to refer to past situations*" (Aarts 2011, 249), this is identical to what this thesis introduced. The second one is "*The past tense for politeness*" (Aarts 2011, 249), this function is also introduced in this thesis. The third use is "*The modal past tense*" (Aarts 2011, 250), this is explained in the "*hypothetical future*" section in this thesis. The fourth use is "*The past tense in indirect reported speech*" (Aarts 2011, 251) to this he provides a clear example to show how the past simple tense is used when a sentence written in the present simple is "backshifted". The fifth one is "*The past futurate*" (Aarts 2011, 251) to which he states "*The past futurate is a past tense that is used to talk about future situations viewed from the past (a 'future in the past').*" (Aarts 2011, 251) and provides two examples.

The authors of *TOP Grammar* (2010), Rachel Finnie and others, provide much simpler explanations for the functions of the past simple tense. The first use mentioned is *"talk about completed actions and situations in the past"*(Finnie et al. 2010, 58). The second use mentioned is *"ask or say when something happened"*(Finnie et al. 2010, 58). Third use is *"talk about actions and events that have clearly ended and that took place at a specific time in the past"*(Finnie et al. 2010, 58). Fourth is *"tell a story or a fairytale, often with words that indicate a sequence of events"* (Finnie et al. 2010, 58). Fifth one is *"talk about actions and situations that happened with a certain frequency in the past"* (Finnie et al. 2010, 58).

2.4 When do Czech students learn the past simple

Czech students are normally introduced to the past simple in elementary school. This topic is typically brought up when pupils are in the age group of 12-15 and they are taught its most common usage. The expected goal for the students is to understand when the past simple tense is used, how it is formed in affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences and describe events, states or actions which happened in the past. It is recommended to prepare multiple classes focused on the past simple tense since memorizing all regular and irregular verbs, which are necessary for using the tense, could seriously challenge the students. However, teaching the tense itself is straightforward as Czech language also contains a past tense; therefore, students should understand this topic very quickly. Furthermore, this tense is most commonly taught after the present simple tense and before the present perfect simple tense.

2.5 Problem Czech students have with the past simple tense

Since Czech language has a tense of the same meaning (unlike with the present perfect simple), the most iconic problem of this tense, is learning regular and irregular verbs. The problem is not unique to Czech students, it has always been an obstacle among ESL students. Memorization and practice are key. *"Irregular verbs are often treated as regular: I 'runned' for I 'ran'."* (Aitken 1992, 37). *"One irregular verb is sometimes falsely patterned on another: 'I drink', 'I drunk', 'I think', 'I thunk'. This can be mystifying until the mismatch is recognised."* (Aitken 1992, 37).

3 Analysis and comparison of textbooks

This chapter is aimed at the examination of three very commonly used English school textbooks with which the elementary school and the high school students tested were taught the present perfect simple and the past simple tense, this will be done in five sections total. The first section will focus on the book *Motivate!* (2013) by Emma Heyderman & Fiona Mauchline. The second section on the book *Project* (2011) by Tom Hutchinson. The third on the book *Headway* (2012) by John and Liz Soars. All three books will be examined and compared to one another in the fourth section. The fifth and final section closes this chapter with author's opinion on which of them is more appropriate regarding this thesis' topic.

3.1 Motivate!

The first book examined is *Motivate!* (2013). Written by Emma Heyderman and Fiona Mauchline, published on 30. April 2013 by Macmillan, this book is used by ZŠ Václavkova Mladá Boleslav. There is total of 4 textbooks in the series. The book this thesis will be analysing and comparing further is marked as a second level, which is recommended for students at ages 10-14. The book is completely written in English language, all ESL students can use it, not just the Czech. Emma Heyderman is a Director of Studies at Lacunza in Spain where she is involved in teacher training. She also speaks regularly at events in Spain including those of an international level (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). As for the other author, Fiona Mauchline herself is a teacher. She spent over 25 years working in ELT and regularly trains teachers in France and Spain (Macmillan English, n.d.).

The present perfect is brought up only once in unit 8. Other parts of the book are focused on other aspects of grammar. Students introduced to this unit are at ages 13-15 and their level of English is A1/A2. Before the class start learning the present perfect simple, they first have to finish unit 7, which is aimed at future time expressions, *will/won't* and the first conditional. The unit 9, which comes immediately after unit 8, is aimed at tense review and time expressions. There is a revision at the end of every third unit, which contains all the three units that have been covered. There is an overall grammar summary at the end of the book.

The book begins explaining the present perfect simple on page 100. It introduces students to an affirmative version of the tense and uses contracted forms in all persons in singular and plural. In the first exercise, the book explains the basic rules of forming

the tense. Exercises in this unit contain all three main uses of the tense (change, experience and continuing situation) from the theory chapter of this thesis; however, there is no explicit explanation of them. Later, a table for the negative form of the present perfect simple is introduced. After that, exercises are aimed at using both affirmative and negative form of the present perfect. The final part of the theory regarding this tense is made with a table showing how questions and short answers in the present perfect simple are formed. As for the time markers only one is brought up, *ever*. There is only one exercise for practicing questions and time marker *ever*. The rest of the markers motioned in the theory part of this thesis are not present in the book. The entire tense is covered in three pages in total.

The past simple is introduced in unit 3. Unit 2 is focused on the present continuous tense and unit 4 focuses mainly on the past simple continuous tense and it also contains a comparison between this tense and the past simple tense. This being the third unit, there is a revision of both this and the two preceding units to be found at the end of this unit.

The book begins explaining the past simple tense on page 30. It introduces the necessary vocabulary and follows it up with a sentence matching exercise. After this, there is a reading exercise, in which past simple is used for actions in the past. Page 32 contains tables with the forms of past simple in affirmative for regular verbs and also mentions two irregular verb examples. Right next to them is a table with negative form for both regular and irregular verbs. After this is another table containing the form of the verb *to be* in two different persons in affirmative and negative sentences. These tables are connected with a number of exercises to help students practice these forms. On page 35 is a reading based on a real life story written in past simple tense. Page 37 is split into two parts (the left and the right). The right part contains another table focused on questions and short answers. It makes students practice the usage of the dummy operator *do*. This is followed by exercises used to practice the word order of interrogative sentences and the left part which follows on it with a reading exercise. Page 40 is dedicated to listing all of the previous tables so that the students can see the contents again all on one page. Page 41 contains four types of exercises on past simple that the students have already done on the previous pages.

3.2 Project

The second book examined is *Project* (2008) written by Tom Hutchinson and published by Oxford University Press. This book is used by ZŠ Pastelka Mladá Boleslav. There is total of 5 textbooks in the series. The book was re-released and specifically adapted for Czech students in 2011 which is the version covered in this section. Tom Hutchinson is an English teacher working with the Oxford University Press and has taught in many countries. Most notably, he lectured at the Institute for English Language Education at Lancaster University(Oxford University Press, n.d.).

The present perfect is brought up once in this textbook in unit 5. The book's age recommendation states 10-15years. Again, students should be at the level of English A1/A2. Before students start unit 5 they first have to finish unit 4 which focuses on definite and indefinite articles: *the* and *a/an*. Unit 6 focuses on verbs *should/shouldn't* and *must/mustn't*. There is a revision after every unit and the book does not possess an overall tense summary at the end.

In *Project* (2011) the first time the present perfect is mentioned is on page 56, where the book makes students work immediately with the necessary grammar for this unit. Following this are two reading exercises which contain phrases with the present perfect simple. On page 57 the book starts explaining how to form the present perfect simple tense and its usage when talking about experience, it also includes information about the differences between the present perfect simple and the past simple tense. The book also revises the formation of the regular past participle and the irregular. This is followed a comic on page 58. In this comic every sentence contains the present perfect simple tense for experience. On page 59, exercise 3 is focused on how to form questions with present perfect simple and how to form short answers to those questions. Moving on, exercise 4,5,6 on the same page are focused on sentences with *ever* and *never*. The book explains the differences between the two markers, shows how to use *ever* when asking about experience and makes students talk about their experiences. On page 60 is a story focused mainly on the present perfect, which students have to read. Page 63 introduces how to use present perfect simple with recent events and *just* time marker. Exercise 5 on the same page makes students form sentences with the present perfect simple and *just*.

As for the past simple tense. *Project* (2011) introduces the tense in unit 1, right after the introduction chapter. The introduction serves as a start for the book and

explanations for the most basic English tense - the present simple tense. This is the only chapter without a revision. Unit 2 follows up with the modal verb *will* in context of future and decisions.

The past simple tense is mentioned on page 8. This being the third textbook in the series it is clear that there is a certain expectation of students' knowledge as there are no tables explaining the form of the tense whatsoever. The main appearance of past simple on page 8 is in the form of a reading exercise. Exercises that follow are intertwined with introducing new vocabulary and are of the same type as in the book *Motivate!* (2013). Functions of past simple, which are present, are actions in the past and politeness. The tense itself is not the main focus of the unit since the students are using the third textbook in the series and should have some knowledge of the tense already. It is the new vocabulary that is the focus of this unit. There is a certain emphasis on reading exercises as they are complemented by numerous drawn and photographed pictures, in which most of the vocabulary is utilized.

3.3 Headway

The third book examined is *Headway* (2012) written by John and Liz Soars and published by Oxford University Press. This book is used by Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař and Secondary technical and vocational school, Mladá Boleslav, Jičínská 762. The *Headway* book this thesis is examining is the fourth edition and it contains a total of 6 textbooks. The book is also specified as a pre-intermediate and the recommended level of English is A1/B1. It was written for any ESL student and was not specially adapted for Czech students. Liz and John Soars are highly experienced teachers and award-winning authors for their *Headway* books. Both of them worked at International House, often as teacher-trainers (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

In *Headway* (2012) the pre-intermediate version has one unit aimed at the present perfect simple. It is introduced in unit 7. Unit 6 focuses on comparatives and superlatives, synonyms/antonyms and phrases such as "What ... like?" or "What's on?". Unit 8 moves from the present perfect to verbs *have to/don't have to, must/mustn't*, clothes vocabulary and a speaking exercise aimed at visiting a doctor. There is a complete summary of everything in the book on page 118.

This textbook mentions the present perfect simple for the first time on page 54. In the first exercise students are to distinguish between regular and irregular verbs to prepare students with the necessary vocabulary for a reading exercise that comes right

after this. In this exercise, students are introduced to the present perfect simple for the first time. Every form of the present perfect simple in the reading exercise is highlighted. The next page follows up with the time markers *for* and *since*. The next two exercises focus on distinguishing the past simple and the present perfect simple with the help of time markers in interrogative sentences. On page 56, the book introduces two new time markers *ever* and *never*. It uses them in a reading exercise, in which the main protagonist talks about her experiences. The next page 57 introduces a listening exercise for distinguishing between the present perfect and the past simple. Students are supposed to fill in verbs in the correct form. Another two exercises on page 57 are focused on students talking about experiences. Page 58 contains a reading exercise included with the present perfect simple tense. Students are to analyse the text and move to an exercise on the same page, which again, is focused on distinguishing between the present perfect simple and past simple tense. Exercises on following pages include the present perfect simple tense; however, it is not the main focus anymore and exercises that follow have more than the present perfect and the past simple tense.

The past simple tense starts in unit 3. Unit 2 is focused on the present simple tense and unit 4 continues with countable and uncountable nouns. Later, unit 12 includes the second conditional, which is used in hypothetical future situations.

Unit 3, which starts on page 22, begins with differentiating between regular and irregular verbs. The textbook is clearly on a more advanced level as one of the first exercises is aimed at comparing the past simple tense with the past continuous, which is a more complex grammatical structure. It also immediately jumps to exercises on forming interrogative sentences of the past simple tense. Page 24 adds phonetics to the exercises connected with the tense. Many of the exercises that follow are aimed at distinguishing between the past simple tense and the past continuous. Additional exercises show emphasis on new vocabulary and the types of exercises are similar to those in the previous textbooks. Functions of the past simple tense mentioned are actions in the past, hypothetical future (unit 12), as a time marker in sentences with *when* and *while*.

3.4 Comparison of textbooks

This thesis will now compare these three books in order to find their similarities and differences. Starting off, both the books *Project* (2011) and *Headway* (2012) begin their units with the necessary vocabulary, whereas *Motivate!* (2013) begins right with

how the present perfect is formed in affirmative sentences. *Motivate!* (2013) uses a rather deductive way to presenting new grammar; whereas, the other two books introduce new grammar in a more inductive way. *Motivate!* (2013) also separates itself from the other two by including all three main functions of the tense this thesis introduced. *Project* (2011) and *Headway* (2012) try to highlight the use of the tense when talking about experience along with multiple time markers. Continuing on, *Project* (2011) and *Headway* (2012) introduce the most important time markers *ever* and *never*, while *Motivate!* (2013) only introduces one time marker in the entire unit and that is *ever*. *Project* (2011) also mentions another time marker, *just*, while *Headway* (2012) mentions other two time markers *for* and *since*. In terms of length, *Project* (2011) dedicates 7 pages to explain and practice the tense. *Headway* (2012) dedicates to this 6 pages and *Motivate!* (2013) only three pages. Additionally, it needs to be said that *Project* (2011) offers a revision of everything that has been introduced at the end of each unit. *Motivate!* (2013) does this in a much wider range and offers a revision after every three units. *Headway* (2012) offers a summary of everything introduced at the very end of the book; however, not in a test form, it is more of an answer check. In all three books the explanation and practice of the past simple tense was very similar. Clear difference can be seen in the book *Headway* (2012), where more advanced sentences are used in practice.

Another point of the comparison is the style and the colour scheme of all three books. While all of them are using cartoony characters and pictures, *Project* (2011) has overall the most stylized chapters, offering a huge variety of different colours, often including drawn comics as reading exercises. *Motivate!* (2013) is trying to strike a balance between a cartoony and a real life photo look. Since it is recommended for students at the age of 10-14 it needs to appeal to students of a wider age variety and therefore this balance between cartoon and photo style serves it well. *Headway* (2012) has overall the most mature feeling to it. While cartoony characters and items are present, the book leans much more to realistic pictures and photos showing people in their everyday life and related situations. Each author picks an appropriate and consistent style for their targeted age group and utilizes it properly to keep the book and its exercises interesting.

The last and probably the most significant point is the inclusion of exercises on differentiating between the past simple and the present perfect simple tense. *Headway*

(2012) makes students choose between the tenses in many exercises while introducing new rules in between them. Immediately after learning about the present perfect simple, students can learn how it works next to the past simple and a clear difference between the two tenses is shown. *Project* (2011) includes a brief explanation on when to use the present perfect simple and the past simple tense; however, that is all it does. Students will not be able to practice and will be able to dismiss this information as unimportant. *Motivate!* (2013) on the other hand does not include any sort of text or exercise for students to know how to differentiate one tense from the other.

3.5 The author's opinion

In the author's eyes, all three books were deemed appropriate. *Motivate!* (2013) while having a small selection of exercises based on practicing the present perfect simple, the book took its time with explaining the tense and including many tables with examples. In addition, it also offers a revision and an extensive unit for the past simple tense. *Project* (2011) on the other hand presents a magnificent amount of visual material to keep the students interested and make the learning more fun than it would be without the inclusion of the visual material. Nevertheless, *Headway* (2012) is in author's opinion is by far the most superior. Even if the book is for a more advanced student group, the book accomplished the most important thing. It continuously makes the students practice the difference between the past simple and the present perfect tense. Even if *Project* (2011) included some information to this subject, the sheer amount of exercises made for this subject in *Headway* (2012) makes it an extremely effective textbook. Explaining the difference between the present perfect simple and past simple tense should be as close to one another as possible so that the students can properly differentiate between the two. Regardless of the level of students, including the present perfect simple tense in a textbook, should be immediately followed by explaining the difference of the two aforementioned tenses.

4 Survey research

This chapter of the thesis will show the survey, which was taken in a total of four different schools and thirteen different classes in order to find out, how students of different age groups at different schools would manage in distinguishing which tense is more appropriate for each sentence. Every school is properly introduced here and this chapter also contains the correct answers to the survey, theory of the survey is explained and rules by which the surveys were marked are drawn.

The aim of bringing the survey to multiple schools is to prove that Czech students indeed have problems in distinguishing between the two tenses. *"Survey research is the collection of data attained by asking individuals questions either in person, on paper, by phone or online. Conducting surveys is one form of primary research, which is the gathering data first-hand from its source."* (Rouse 2017). It was decided by both the author and the supervisor of this thesis that the survey research made for this thesis should be brought to schools in a paper form. The survey was in the form of a gap filling exercise focused on distinguishing between the present perfect simple and past simple tenses. While other forms could be used as well, it would be too inconvenient for the cooperating schools and teachers. The expectations for this survey are that the past simple tense will not be as problematic as the present perfect simple and that the analysed books do not play a major role in its results.

4.1 Introduction of visited schools

All of the surveyed schools were included based on very specific factors on which the author asked the head of the English faculty in every school. Those factors were - capability of students to take the test, number of students in classes, difference in books or difference in a field of study, possibility of listing the results in this thesis and access to a copy of the textbook used by the school.

For this thesis two high schools were visited. It is important to state that these two schools were not chosen randomly, but on purpose. The first high school which the author visited is what in Czech Republic is classified as a "gymnázium", which is mainly focused on preparing its students for university to which then most of its graduates continue. The reason for this, is that institutes known as "gymnázium" are high schools mostly without a specialization, which offer to its students mostly general knowledge, but of a very high standard. Additionally, there is a much bigger emphasis on a second and a third language. Therefore, in the English language it is classified as a

"grammar school". Its full name is Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař and it is located at Palackého 211, 293 80 Mladá Boleslav. Headmaster here is Vlastimil Volf and the head of the English department is PaedDr. Alena Budínová. Upon getting in contact with the representatives of the English faculty at this school, the author was provided with background information on the classes he was going to visit. The school representatives and the author agreed that it would prove most useful to test the third-year students mostly, because they have eight different classes of that year. The important part is that the author was not going to visit all eight classes. The reason for this is that the grammar school separates students into classes based on their skill. Hence, the English teachers and the author decided on visiting classes 3.A8 and 3.A2. The number after the letter "A" is symbolizing the group's skill level. Meaning, the author went to a class with the worst skill level and to a class nearing the best skill level, since the teachers also showed interest in how well would these two classes fare against each other.

The second high school the author visited is Secondary technical and vocational school, Mladá Boleslav, Jičínská 762. Located at Jičínská 762, Mladá Boleslav III, 293 01 Mladá Boleslav. This high school provides its students with the necessary knowledge and skills so that they do not have to continue to university and can immediately do a specific job towards which they were trained after they graduate. Their study plan is not as general and the emphasis is mainly on their skills in the field of study they chose. The headmaster is RNDr. Jiří Šlégl and the head of the English department is Bc. Lenka Hyková. After meeting with school's representative, the author was informed that he could not test first year students as the school dedicates the first year to revising the basics before moving to more advanced study of the language. Nevertheless, the school allowed the author to visit a total of five classes, one of which are two courses mixed together. The author was assured by the teachers that all the classes know how to use the present perfect simple tense and know how to differentiate it from the past simple tense. In addition, all mentioned classes will finish their studies with a "maturita" exam.

ZŠ Václavkova Mladá Boleslav otherwise known as the 7th elementary school was chosen to be one of the representatives of the elementary schools mainly, because the head of the language faculty Bc. Adéla Zítková assured me that their students were properly introduced to the present perfect simple tense, the past simple tense and how to distinguish one from the other. The school is located at Václavkova 312/2, 293 01 Mladá Boleslav and its headmaster is Ing. Milada Mizerová. The school allowed to test

three classes - 9.A, 9.B, 9.C, which makes total of 42 students at ages 14-15. As stated in their school education plan, this school starts teaching present perfect simple pupils that are at ages 13-14 so the group visited should have be even more capable to take the test. In addition, each class was taught by different teacher, but all were using the same book *Motivate!* (2013).

The second elementary school chosen for this thesis is ZŠ Pastelka Mladá Boleslav otherwise known as the 9th elementary school. The school is located at 17. listopadu 1325, 293 01 Mladá Boleslav. The headmaster is Mgr. Iva Kollinová and the head of the English department is Mgr. Dana Veselá. This school also had three classes - 9.A, 9.B, 9.C with total of 43 students. The representatives of this school assured the author about their student's knowledge of the two required tenses. Furthermore, every class was taught by a different teacher using the book *Project* (2011).

4.2 Theory of the survey

The test was taken from a web page called "Perfect English Grammar", it can be freely copied and used for personal or classroom use. Some of the test lines were removed as they did not match the goal of this thesis, but the lines that stayed were deemed appropriate by both the author and the supervisor.

Students tested were to choose between the present perfect simple and the past simple tense. Every sentence was created according to the rules of either tense and in each case students had to write the verb in the brackets in its proper form. Any other tense was marked as an incorrect answer. The test was made of relatively simple sentences; every school and age group surveyed should have been able to pass it.

Students could earn 1 point for every correct sentence with maximum score being 15 points. The test contains 5 sentences made for the present perfect simple tense and 10 sentences for the past simple tense.

4.3 The survey

Choose the present perfect simple or past simple:

1. My great great grandfather _____ (have) five sisters
2. He _____ (live) in Manila for a year when he was a student.
3. Oh no! I _____ (lose) my wallet!
4. At the weekend, they _____ (play) football, then they _____ (go) to a restaurant.
5. I _____ (read) six books this week.
6. Amy _____ (live) in Portugal when she was young.
7. She _____ (visit) her grandmother last month.
8. The Vandals _____ (invade) Rome in the year 455.
9. She _____ (live) in seven different countries, so she knows a lot about different cultures.
10. I _____ (go) to the cinema last night.
11. Ow! I _____ (cut) my finger!
12. She _____ (break) her leg the day before her exam.
13. We _____ (see) Oliver yesterday.
14. They _____ (live) here for many years (and they still do).
15. King Henry the Eighth of England _____ (have) six wives.

(Perfect English Grammar 2011)

4.4 Answers to the survey

1. My great great grandfather had five sisters
2. He lived in Manila for a year when he was a student.
3. Oh no! I've lost my wallet!
4. At the weekend, they played football, then they went to a restaurant.
5. I've read six books this week.
6. Amy lived in Portugal when she was young.
7. She visited her grandmother last month.
8. The Vandals invaded Rome in the year 455.
9. She's lived in seven different countries, so she knows a lot about different cultures.
10. I went to the cinema last night.
11. Ow! I've cut my finger!
12. She broke her leg the day before her exam.
13. We saw Oliver yesterday.
14. They've lived here for many years (and they still do).
15. King Henry the Eighth of England had six wives.

(Perfect English Grammar 2011)

4.5 Results of the survey

Every school tested agreed on having the results written in this bachelor's thesis.

4.5.1 Results of elementary schools

Table 1 - the table shows all information about the elementary school classes surveyed and the score they received

Class	Age	Number of students in class	Total number of students	Book	Result (points on avg.)
Elementary school Mladá Boleslav, Václavkova 1082					
9.A	14 - 15	13	42	Motivate!	7
9.B		16			8
9.C		13			6
Elementary school Pastelka Mladá Boleslav					
9.A	14 - 15	12	43	Project	9
9.B		16			6
9.C		15			8

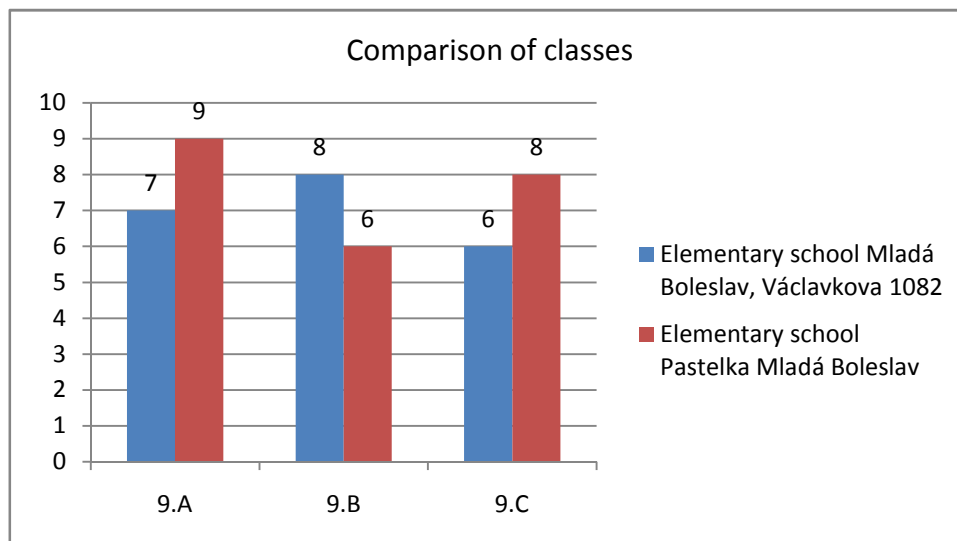


Figure 5 - The comparison of the results of classes in surveyed schools

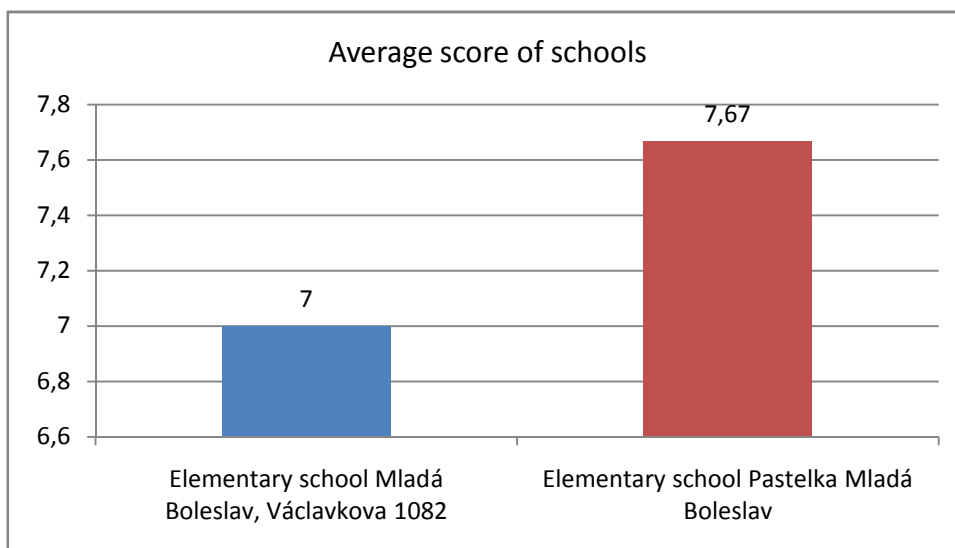


Figure 6 - The comparison of overall results of surveyed elementary schools

4.5.2 Elementary school Mladá Boleslav, Václavkova 1082

This section lists closely inspected results of the surveys brought to Elementary school Mladá Boleslav, Václavkova 1082.

4.5.2.1 Class 9.A

Starting with class 9.A, which consists of 13 students, the class achieved 7 points on average out of 15. Despite the test being used in elementary and high schools, it does not seem that difficulty of the test was the decisive factor for such a low score. With few exceptions, most of the students simply failed to form the present perfect simple in any sentences and mixed in other tenses as well despite the author emphasizing that only two tenses are to be used in the test; many students were only able to fill in the past simple tense, hence the score. Even though the author was informed that students were properly introduced to the rules of the present perfect simple, it seems as if students have already forgotten not only the rules of the tense, but also how is the tense formed.

4.5.2.2 Class 9.B

The second class the author visited at 7th elementary school consists of 16 students. This class scored the most points, precisely 8 points on average. After going through every test, it became clear that this class was clearly more experienced in usage of tenses. At least half of the class was able to fill in a correct form of the present perfect simple. This does not mean they used it in correct sentences, but at least they were able to show that they have some knowledge of the tense. Total of 7 students were able to fill in a correct form of the present perfect simple for the right sentence at least

once. At least 35% (6) of the students were able to write sentence 14 correctly. This sentence however is written with a prompter, (without it, both tenses could be used) which makes it easier to determine which tense to use. Nevertheless, this supports the fact that these students know some rules of the present perfect simple tense. Even then, almost everyone failed in using the correct tense for sentences 4 and 7 showing that these students need to revise the rules of the tense. Furthermore, what is interesting is that some students have mistaken the present perfect simple for the past perfect simple. This shows that students have some idea about the perfect tenses but cannot distinguish one from another neither by its form or place among the perfect tenses. What the author means by this is that when the students were told to form only the past simple or the present perfect simple, some of them could assume that the present perfect simple is the same as past perfect simple and therefore filled in this tense instead.

4.5.2.3 Class 9.C

The third class 9.C consists of 13 students who scored 6 points on average. What is interesting is that with few exceptions all students were able to form the present perfect simple, but the reason for such a low score is simply that they could not distinguish which tense to use in a sentence. To reiterate, students knew what the present perfect simple is or more precisely they knew what it looks like and how to form it; however, the rules behind both the present perfect simple and the past simple are unknown to these students. Unfortunately, it is impossible for the author to find a pattern regarding what this particular group of students did well and what they did not. The results are genuinely random and the solution to that would probably be to revise the rules of formation and usage of these two tenses. Whereas the author would recommend revising all the tenses to the other two classes, this class did not mix other tenses in and used mainly the tenses the author specifically told them to fill in.

4.5.3 Elementary school Pastelka Mladá Boleslav

This section lists closely inspected results of the surveys brought to Elementary school Pastelka Mladá Boleslav.

4.5.3.1 Class 9.A

The first class achieved the best results in testing of this elementary school. Total of 12 students present were together able to achieve 9 points on average. Looking at the exams, it is clear that many students forgot how the present perfect tense is formed. Precisely 83% (10) of the students used a different tense than those they were

expected to in sentence number 14. Another 67% (8) made mistakes in sentences 3 and 11 showing their lack of understanding the recent past rule of the present perfect simple tense. Moreover, 41% (5) of the students failed at the first sentence and used the present perfect simple. While some students were able to fill in some correct forms of the present perfect simple tense; generally most students are not familiar with the rules.

4.5.3.2 Class 9.B

The second class, in which 16 students were present, achieved total of 6 points on average. Out of the three classes, this one achieved the worst score. Three students achieved 0 points, completely unable to write a single correct form. Overall, the students scored so poorly it was not of any use to try and look for a pattern. This class has an enormous problem when it comes to English tenses as once again, more tenses than the present perfect simple and the past simple were included in the test by the students.

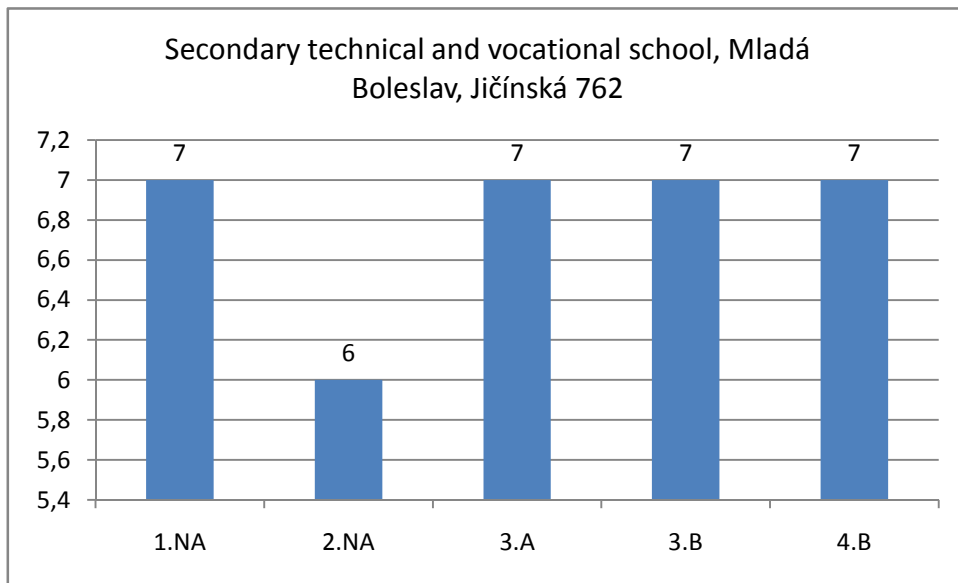
4.5.3.3 Class 9C

The third class had 15 students present and they achieved 8 points on average. Total of 93% (14) of the students filled in wrong tense for sentence number 3. Another 80% (12) of the students made a mistake in sentence number 12, 87% (13) students made a mistake in sentence number 5 and 73% (11) students in sentence number 14. There is no doubt that the percentages are extremely high and students of this class failed in distinguishing between the two tenses and in addition, they mixed in more than those they were instructed to.

4.5.4 Results of high schools

Table 2 - the table shows all information about the high school classes surveyed and the score they received

Class	Age	Number of students in class	Total number of students	Book	Result (points on avg.)
Secondary technical and vocational school, Mladá Boleslav, Jičínská 762					
1.NA	18-19	10	61	Headway	7
2.NA	19-20	11			6
3.A	17-18	19			7
3.B	17-18	11			7
4.B	18-19	10			7
Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař					
3.A2	17-18	11	21	Headway	11
3.A8		10			13



Graph 3 - The results of classes surveyed at Secondary technical and vocational school

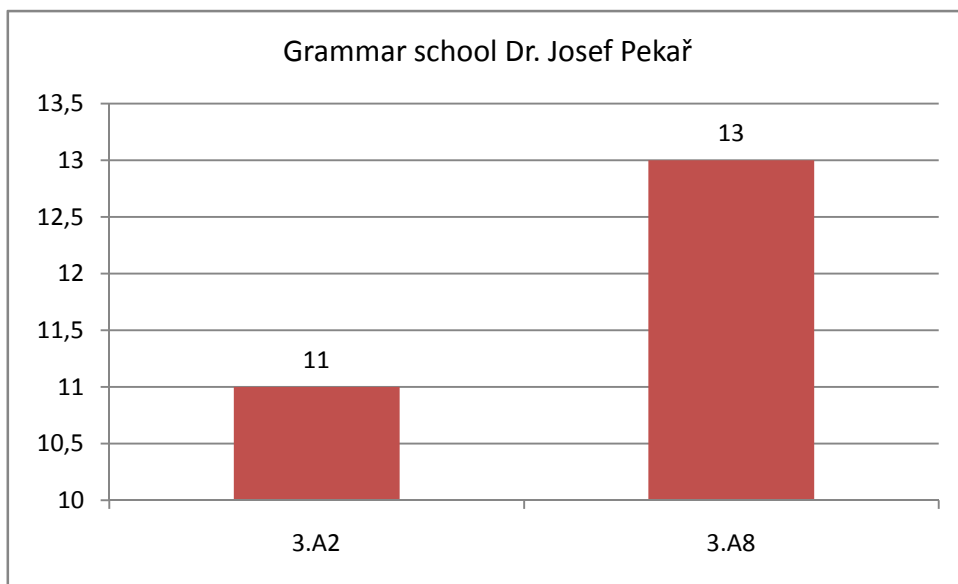


Figure 7 - The results of classes surveyed at Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař

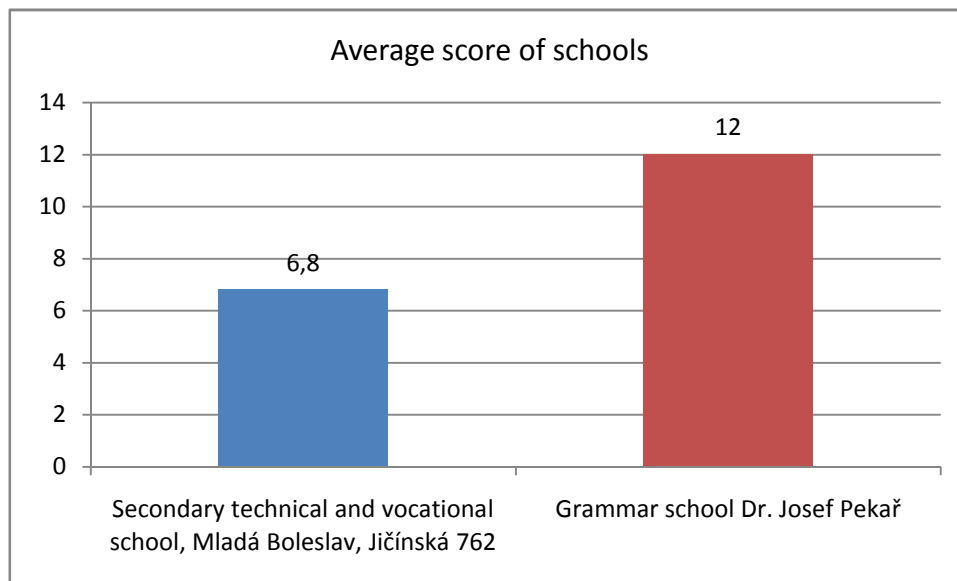


Figure 8 - The comparison of overall results of surveyed high schools

4.5.5 Secondary technical and vocational school

This section lists closely inspected results of the survey brought to Secondary technical and vocational school, Mladá Boleslav, Jičínská 762.

4.5.5.1 Class 3.A

The first class the author went to is a mix of two different courses (Public administration and Technical lyceum). Since these two classes can share general subjects such as Czech or English language it makes it easier for the school to merge these two groups together for certain subjects and split them for different ones.

This class consisted of 18 people and students were able to achieve 8 points on average. Interestingly enough, 14 students were unable to write a single correct form of the present perfect simple tense. Showing that they could not even tell the author how the tense is formed. The other 4 students were able to show that they know how to form the tense; however, with the exception of one student their tests show that it is difficult for them to distinguish which tense to use in a sentence. All four of these students made a mistake in sentence number 7, in which they all used the past simple tense, showing they have problems grasping the concept of an unfinished period of time. Excluding the one student that performed admirably and focusing more on the other three students who were able to form the present perfect simple, it does not seem as if there is a pattern to the mistakes. All three students made different mistakes in different sentences.

4.5.5.2 **Class 3.B**

The second class the author was able to visit is specialized in "Transport and logistics" course. There were 11 students present and the class achieved 7 points on average. Unfortunately, in all the tests the author received there was not a single correct form of the present perfect simple tense and every point the students achieved was obtained thanks to filling in the past simple tense. This proves that this class has no grasp of the present perfect tense and they failed completely in differentiating between them.

4.5.5.3 **Class 4.B**

The third class is also specialized in "Transport and logistics". In this class 10 people were present and the whole class achieved 7 points on average. While these students showed that they can form the present perfect simple tense, distinguishing from where to use it instead of the past simple proved to be a spectacular success. While one student was able to correctly write three present perfect tenses out of five scoring 13 points, the other nine students could not possibly tell which one of the two tenses goes with each sentence. Furthermore, the students mixed in more tenses than those the author specifically told them beforehand, showing that this class has a much bigger problems in understanding tenses.

4.5.5.4 **Class 1.NA**

The fourth class the author went to is specialized in "Business". Despite the class name saying that this is a first year class, these students have been studying in a high school for at least three years and are currently attending a fourth one. In other words, to be able to attend this course requires from a student to be in a high school for at least three years and acquire a certificate which states that they successfully finished their previous course before being allowed in this one, which extends their study plan by another two years. However, students who are able to complete this study plan will not only have a certificate from their previous course but are also allowed to take the "maturita" exam.

In this class the author was able to test 10 students, who achieved 7 points on average. After correcting all of the tests, everyone except for one student were unable to form the present perfect tense. Interestingly, that one student who actually managed to form the present perfect tense correctly achieved three points for writing it in correct sentences. However, those were the only points he was able to obtain, unable to use the

past simple tense completely. The author is unable to find any pattern in these tests, he can only tell that this class failed to distinguish between the two tenses and more importantly failed to form the present perfect simple tense.

4.5.5.5 **Class 2.NA**

The last class the author was able to test is again specialized in "Business". Students in this class have been in high school for at least five years and will be taking the "maturita" exam. This class consisted of 11 students. Unfortunately, even though this class was expected to be the best scoring, practicing for their "maturita" exam, this class was the worst scoring achieving only 6 points on average. To make matters worse, the author was able to find only one correct form of the present perfect simple in all the tests. Meaning, students cannot possibly know what the present perfect simple tense is and asking them to distinguish it from the past simple tense is an impossible task.

4.5.6 **Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař**

This section lists closely inspected results of the survey brought to Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař.

4.5.6.1 **Class 3.A8**

The first class in this school the author went to consisted of 10 people and scored 13 points on average. Upon closer observation I have noticed that 50% (5) of the students in this group had problems in sentence number 1. where they used the present perfect. Another 40% (4) of the students wrote past simple tense into sentence number 4 again putting in the past simple tense. Other than that, the tests the author received were mostly without any further mistakes. The students did a good job in this test. It should probably be expected with how much focus is aimed at their second language, nevertheless this is the class which scored the most points out of all classes tested.

4.5.6.2 **Class 3.A2**

The other class the author was able to test in this school consisted of 11 students and scored 11 points on average. To author's surprise they did worse than the worst group of the same year. Eleven points in this test is not expected from the second-best class in second language at this particular school. Their teachers told the author that despite being the second best, the students of this class are often full of themselves, thinking they can do no wrong and as a result they start to become more and more careless and are able to make mistakes even in simple exercises. This could explain the

difference in scores. This task was expected to be below their level and despite being one of the better groups in this testing, the results left a lot to be desired.

Students of this class were acquainted with the two tenses and knew how to form them. Unfortunately, finding a clear pattern for this class is impossible. Mistakes are extremely varied and there is not a particular error that most of the students made.

5 Conclusion of the results and analysis of textbooks

This section offers a closure to the survey research and it is connected to the textbooks.

In the end, it did not matter that *Motivate!* (2013) did not include exercises on differentiating between the present perfect simple and the past simple tense. Even schools with the other books where those types of exercises were present, showed complete incompetence to make a correct form of the present perfect simple. A good textbook is not all that is needed for students to understand this tense. Proof of that are results received from the Secondary technical and vocational school, Mladá Boleslav, Jičínská 762 and Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař as both schools are using the same book, yet their results are vastly different. What made the difference was the amount of practice that went into the tenses overall. Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař has a much bigger emphasis on second language than Secondary technical and vocational school, Mladá Boleslav, Jičínská 762. There is no doubt that the textbooks are not at fault here. The survey research shows that having a better textbook does not mean a better success rate, instead, it is how much focus is aimed at the tenses during the lessons.

6 Bonus survey

Even though the survey research was not focused on Technical University of Liberec since its students do not use a specific book for learning or practicing between the two tenses, the author was interested to see how well would university students fare compared to those from high schools and elementary schools. Therefore, we gave the test to two different classes at Technical University of Liberec. This university is located at Studentská 1402/2, 461 17 Liberec. The dean of this university is prof. RNDr. Jan Pícek, CSc. and the head of the English department is Mgr. Zénó VERNYIK, Ph.D. The first class consists of first year students who specialize in English and the second are primary school teachers who do not specialize in English.

6.1 Results of university

Table 3 - the table shows all information about the university classes surveyed and the score they received

Class	Students	Students total	Result
Technical university of Liberec			
Primary school teachers	16 students	33 students	11
Practical language 2	17 students		12

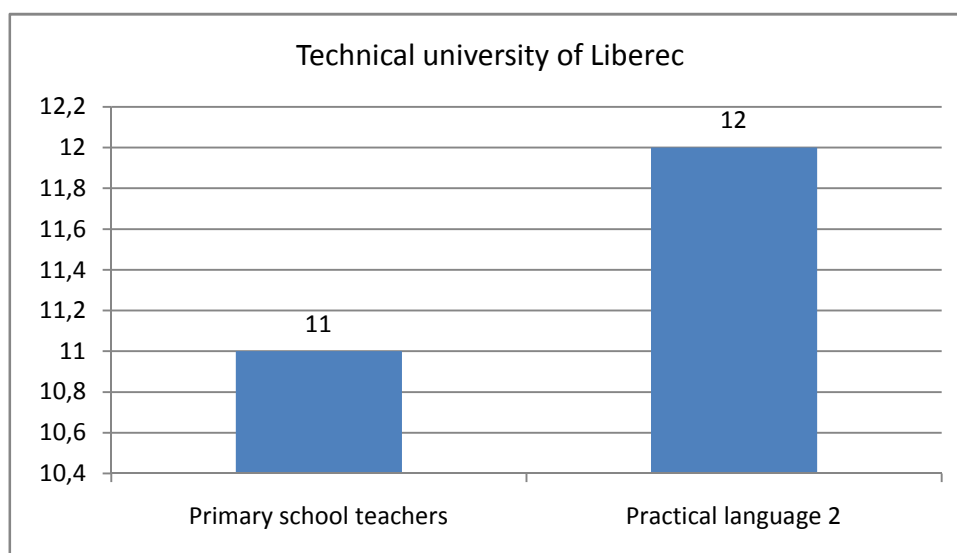


Figure 9 - The comparison of classes of the Technical University of Liberec

6.1.1 First year specialists

During the Practical language 2 class, a total of 17 students were present. Students attending the second semester of Practical language were able to achieve 12 points on average. Based on the scores gained by each person in this class, it is clear

that half of the class is much more experienced in distinguishing when and why to use these two tenses while the other struggles to differentiate them. Total of 70% (12) of students made a mistake in sentence number 13 and 59% (10) of the students made a mistake in sentence number 4. Seeing how similar these two sentences are it is clear that at least 70% of the students in this class are confused about the rule of "recent past". Continuing on with the results, 65% (11) of the students made a mistake in sentence number 7 and were unable to show their understanding of an action started somewhere in the past and continued further on. Finally, 47% (8) of the students misused the present perfect simple in sentence number 3, where the past simple tense is required.

6.1.2 Third year non-specialists

This class consisted of 16 students and was able to achieve 11 points on average. After testing primary school teachers, it can be safely said that students in this class know how to form the present perfect simple without any problems. However, after going through the tests the author was able to notice a pattern where students filled in sentences with the present perfect simple instead of the past simple. Total of 81% (13) of students made a mistake in sentence number 7, where all of them chose to use the past simple. In this sentence they should have used the present perfect simple as the sentence is leaning towards an unfinished period of time. Meaning, the week still continues, and six books is the current score, there might be more coming. Continuing on, 81% (13) used the past simple in sentence number 4 and 75% (12) in sentence number 13. Both of these sentences require the use of the present perfect simple tense as they belong under "the recent past" rule. Furthermore, 47% (8) students misused the present perfect simple in sentence number 3 where the past simple tense is required. In this sentence, the subjects speak about a specific point in his life which ended when he stopped being a student.

6.1.3 Conclusion of results

Surprisingly the results were not very different. Primary school teachers achieved the same score as class A2 in Grammar school Dr. Josef Pekař. The difference is that the Primary school teachers do not focus on second language like A2 students do. Because the Primary school teachers took the "maturita" exam, they should be on the same level of knowledge as A2 students who are younger, which might be the reason of such result.

The difference between the results of the first year specialists and the third year non-specialists is negligible. Still, both groups need to practice these two tenses and how to differentiate between them. Despite knowing how to form the tenses correctly, they still lack the complete knowledge of their functions.

7 Conclusion

As stated in the introduction part, the author himself had issues with differentiating between the two tenses. He wanted to prove that this topic is problematic not just for him, but for Czech students as a whole, by writing this thesis, surveying schools and comparing their books. It has to be said that when the author was correcting completed surveys, he was shocked by how problematic this topic actually is for Czech students. Apart from classes A8 and A2, which belong to a grammar school where the second language is their main focus. All other classes surveyed failed in differentiating between the present perfect simple and the past simple tense. The results are incredibly disappointing. Even if nearly all students were able to fill in some correct forms of the past simple tense to correct sentences, nearly all failed in being able to form the present perfect simple tense or use it in the correct sentences. Authors expectations were met as the results showed that the past simple tense indeed did not pose as much trouble for students as the present perfect simple and that the textbooks do not play a major role in the success rate.

The author does not have a universal solution to this problem; however, a recommendation can be made based on the results. Teachers need to constantly revise and practice the present perfect simple tense with their students and help them distinguish it from the past simple tense. Preparing additional exercises and revisiting the tense after the class moved to other parts of the language could be immensely helpful especially with how quickly younger students can forget older material.

For many students, the elementary school is the only chance to properly practice the present perfect simple as they do not plan on continuing to high school. Even then, out of all classes tested only one class truly showed competence in differentiating between the two tenses and that class belonged to a grammar school. There is no doubt, that understanding the rules of a tense which does not exist in Czech language is extremely difficult. That only highlights the importance of dedicating more time to this material. Seeing the low appearance of the present perfect tense in the surveys taken in the elementary schools truly shows that the most important part is to practice repeatedly. Even though the author of this thesis was reaffirmed by the representatives of the elementary schools and the vocational school (where they did not allow testing of the first year students, because they focus on the material in the second year) that the

students were properly taught the tense and how to distinguish it from the past simple, the results of the test show how little understanding of the tenses students really have.

As English becomes increasingly prominent all around the world, it will become more demanded in social life and at work to be familiar with the language. This generation could be seriously harmed in the later stages of their lives as technology continues to expand and Czech Republic is continuously more culturally enriched. Czech learners need to understand more complex English structures and distinguishing the present perfect simple from the past simple is one of the starting points. In author's opinion it is the school's job to help students accomplish understanding it.

8 References

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