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**Dříve (ne)znamená lépe -
otázka rané výuky angličtiny v českém školství**

Diplomová práce

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**The Earlier Means/Does Not Mean The Better -
The Problem of Early English Language Learning in Czech
Education**

Dilpomová práce

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Práce se zaměří to, jak/zda raná výuka cizího jazyka ovlivňuje výstupní úroveň v jazyce u dětí základní školy. Praktická část zmapuje tuto problematiku ve zvoleném regionu a pokusí se zhodnotit výsledky šetření.

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

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Klíčová slova: anglický jazyk, ranná výuka, porovnání

Annotation

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This thesis focuses on the fact, whether/how the early education in a foreign language influences the final level in the language at pupils at the primary school. The practical part will concentrate on this issue in a chosen region and will try to evaluate conclusions of the inquire.

Keywords: English language, early education, comparison

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to find out whether an early start of learning English as the second language is all in all beneficial for learners. By the early start is meant the age of three or four years. As the title suggests, an objection, that such an early education can cause problems in the future language development, is also taken under consideration.

The teaching of a foreign language is massively misunderstood in the Czech Republic due to the instant underestimated perception of the position of a teacher in our society. This consequently leads to, among other things, the false presumption that teachers at the primary level do not have to be as well educated in the foreign language as their colleagues who teach older students - as their pupils learn only the simple language covering numbers, colours, animals and some nursery rhymes and songs. Sometimes we can even come across the idea that it is enough for such a teacher to be just a few lessons ahead of his/her pupils. This approach is of course a clear example of a monumental failure considering teaching practise in general, no matter the subject, students' age or the type of a school. The younger the pupils are, the higher is the necessity to understand them and to know how they make sense of the world. The knowledge about children's learning process is crucial.

Therefore, the first part of this paper focuses on the theoretical background. This includes description and comments on the general concepts of learning a foreign language determined by the age of learners, a brief introduction into developmental psychology namely Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruners's theories, and also other suggestions which can be helpful considering the planning of lessons. Furthermore, it deals with the question of the first and second language interconnection and a supporting environment for learning.

The second part consists of three types of questionnaires. One set has been distributed to parents, whose children currently attend a nursery school, the second one to teachers teaching English at primary schools and the third set has been given to headmasters and headmistresses. All originals can be seen in attachments as well as filled-in questionnaire from each set. There is also a chapter devoted to

comparison of pupils who started learning English at the age of three or four and those who started at the age of the third class.

The methods to be used are mainly studies of various works concerning learning English as a second language. The second part contains the analysis of collected questionnaires.

The sources for the theoretical part are all listed at the very end of the thesis. Nevertheless, I would like to name authors, whose works are more significant for this paper - Lynne Cameron, Susan Halliwell, Jeremy Harmer, Wendy A. Scott and Lisbeth H. Ytreberg. Concerning quotations and references, their sources are mentioned in the text as used or discussed, giving the name of the author, the year of publishing and the number of the page or pages in a bracket. When the author is mentioned in the paragraph or that particular part, the name is omitted.

Throughout the following chapters, expressions such as pupils, young learners and students are often mentioned. Terms "pupil" and "young learner" refer to children up to eleven years of age. "Students" corresponds to learners of all ages in general. Various suggestions are often illustrated with examples based on my teaching experience. I have been teaching English for two years now at a private language school which offers language courses from the age of three. Although I do hold several courses for adults, I mainly teach children. Due to this fact, I have experience with children from three to twelve years.

This thesis attempts to prove that in the long term, positive results of an early start of learning English are not so verifiable. Furthermore, that the advantage of such a head start over those learners who begin for example in the third class or later, can be quickly reduced even to a minimum level by a competent and diligent teacher.

1. THE THEORETICAL PART

1.1. Features of learning determined by the age

One of the major issues that has a great impact on the educational system is the argument over how much of a foreign language can a child absorb during a lesson. The general idea is that children learn only the simple language because that is all they can comprehend. This is undoubtedly true for some children, but as some teachers can confirm, there are some whose pace could be quickened without serious difficulties.

This brings us to the most crucial and - in the same time - the most problematic point - every pupil is unique! What fits for one, does not necessarily work for the other. No one has yet come up with a concept that would be universal. There is also a question whether such a concept even exists. Nevertheless, there are experts who focus on the process of learning from the pupils' point of view.

More or less they all agree that there is at least one criterion that can be applied in general. Age of the pupils can say a lot about their average abilities. Again, the word average is important here, meaning that the majority of children of a specific age can do a certain thing, they react in a certain way that can be predicted and therefore provoked or prevented and their attention can be caught by certain methods. That is why it is extremely important for a teacher to be aware of what a child of a specific age is capable of.

Scott and Ytreberg, who deal with the issue of education of young learners, present a system dividing children into two groups - five to seven years old and eight to ten years old.

According to them, five to seven years old children are capable of the following:

- *“They talk about what they are doing.*
- *They can tell you about what they have done or heard.*
- *They know that the world is governed by rules. The rules help to nurture a feeling of security.*
- *They understand situations more quickly than they understand the language used.*
- *Their own understanding comes through hands, eyes and ears. The physical world is dominant at all times.*
- *They have a very short attention and concentration span.*
- *They love to play, and learn best when they are enjoying themselves. But they also take themselves seriously and like to think that what they are doing is ‘real’ work.*
- *They are enthusiastic and positive about learning.” (1990, p.1)*

This gives us a very clear idea of how the lesson should look like. Obviously, it is important to appeal all the senses. Spoken word is not enough for it concerns only the hearing, written word is meaningless as the children cannot write nor read. However, it is possible to let the children feel the language. For example, verbs concerning the movement such as jump, stand, run, walk, raise (the hand) can be inculcated through physical exercises. All kinds of colours, animals and plants can be illustrated using the pictures or models. There is also a way to make the pupils taste the language. For example, while presenting various types of fruits we can let them eat the real fruit such as an apple or an orange. The new expression will be quickly bound with a very clear idea of a specific object.

For all of this teachers need a lot of supplementary materials. The exercise book is simply not enough. In fact, at this level it is the other way around. The book becomes a supplemental material, while all those pictures, models, and other tools overtake the role of the major source of learning the language.

Routines are another helpful means to teach a second language. Each lesson should have an established order. For example – at first comes the revision of what we have learnt the previous lesson, the homework is assigned at the end of the

lesson. Once the children get used to the system they feel secure and therefore more relaxed and enthusiastic about the learning.

Routines can also be used for the development of the language itself. Bruner claims that they “*combine the security of the familiar with the excitement of the new...*” (Cameron, 2001, p.9). They provide a space for language growth. A familiar sentence which presents a certain task can be modified by using more complex language and in such a way encourage the development.

I can confirm that routines are extremely handy in practice. Speaking for modification of spoken instructions, once my pupils are able to follow simple ones themselves without me showing them what to do, I give the same instruction at the language level of teenage or adult students. Children have no problem to get used to it.

Rhymes and songs represent a wonderful tool to teach young pupils whatever the teacher aims. Some sort of *hello* and *goodbye* songs should be a part of every lesson, no matter how long or short they are. I sing with pupils at least three songs every lesson because I have found them highly effective. I try to support the songs with physical movements that reinforce the meaning of the words. Sometimes, this is rather difficult as I want to be sure, that there will not be any misunderstanding. Therefore, from time to time I check the meaning pupils get by asking them directly.

There are also songs that cannot be backed by any physical response, not any I am aware of anyway. These songs are nevertheless used to learn and practise certain phrases, such as - *How are you? I'm fine, thank you*. Even three years old children are able to respond to the question in a very short time and with no mistake. Another way how to encourage the understanding of words in songs are pictures. For instance, a rhyme with preposition can be at first presented with pictures and after that practised by physical exercises.

It is true that a concentration span is very short at this age. Nevertheless, there is a very easy way to keep pupils' concentration and that is to change activities. For example, to practise the verb “to have” you can either play a game where children

are sitting in a circle on the floor or where they stand in a circle but one of them is in their midst. For both you need a set of flashcards that the children are already familiar with. In the first one mentioned, one of the pupils takes a flashcard while others keep their eyes closed. Once knowing what is in the picture, the others ask the question *Have you got ... ?* in order to find out what it is. During the secondly stated game, children standing in the circle are holding flashcards and the child in the midst has his/her eyes closed. I turn him/her around and when I stop, the task is to say correctly what is in the picture that is holding the child opposite using the phrase *She/he has got... .*

Children are more eager than older students to please a teacher and fulfil the expectation in order to get praised. It is easier to motivate them to hard work and we can see that they are really doing their best to accomplish the task. At such a moment it is vital to let the children know that you have noticed their effort and praise them for the outcome however small it is.

At the same time, pupils should be aware of what they are praised for. And in my opinion, it must also be done with great caution. Otherwise, they get used to it too much and will expect it all the time without making effort at all. I emphasize great caution because I think there is a very thin line between pupils who are unconcerned about showing their best as they believe they will be praised anyway and those who try hard but are simply not good enough. In the first case, a teacher should let the child know, that s/he is aware of that and s/he does not appreciate it, while in the second case the teacher should find a way how to encourage them.

Alongside this, another problem rises; there might be a child in the classroom who must win otherwise they do not like the game. They rather refuse to take part than to be the second or worse. Face to face to this, I implemented a rule in my lessons: You either participate in all games or in none. If you do not want to play anything, sit on the chair and draw something. I am pleased to say that it has been working so far.

Young learners are undeniably more opened and do not feel embarrassed during various activities. This lack of inhibitions causes that they are more likely to play with the language, to repeat sentences using a proper intonation and try to speak regardless of mistakes they could make. A teacher should definitely make some use of this. On the other hand, s/he should be also cautious. Any mistake that is not corrected at the moment can become a bad habit - meaning that a pupil can learn the particular phrase, intonation or pronunciation incorrectly. We are witnesses of this all the time, when a child adopts the wrong pronunciation of his/her teacher. Once the damage is done it is incredibly difficult to change it.

Eight to ten year olds are characterised in the following way

- *“They can tell the difference between fact and fiction.*
- *They ask questions all the time.*
- *They rely on the spoken word as well as the physical world to convey and understand meaning.*
- *They are able to make some decisions about their own learning.*
- *They have a developed sense of fairness about what happens in the classroom and begin to question the teacher’s decisions.*
- *They are able to work with others and learn from others”*

(Scott and Ytreberg, 1990, p. 3)

While five to seven year olds play with the foreign language at the beginning of the learning process just as they did with their mother tongue when they started to use it for the first time, eight to ten years old children become aware of the language itself. Therefore, they need to learn through other means such as writing and reading. This way language turns to be permanent and separated from events taking place around them.

From my experience, children of this age ask me one specific question: *What does it mean in Czech?*. Younger pupils never ask this. You show them a picture and it is clear for them. It seems to me, as if the older children want to make sure they understand it correctly.

Speaking of making their-own decisions during learning English, I think that the age of eight years is too early. A notebook can serve as a good example. When you let children in the fourth class decide how their notebook will look like and how they are going to make notes, it will look like a mess at the end – in most cases anyway. For that, I either make copies that they simply stick down or I tell them precisely what to write and where. From the fifth class I only recommend what the notebook should look like. Although sometimes I reckon that even pupils in the seventh class and older would do better with copies.

The sense of fairness plays a very important role for me being a teacher. I think, that ignoring this can cause enormous problems concerning the classroom atmosphere. Once the children start to feel insecure or even frightened, because they are not sure what to expect from the teacher the fruitful environment for learning is damaged and the process of learning itself is disarrayed.

That leads me to the question of an appropriate reaction to misbehaviour. I prefer avoiding extra homework. I found out that leaving children out of games they like is far more effective. There is a nine years old boy in one of my groups. It took only two games to make him understand that he can never win by cheating. Other times I simply do not count points gained by cheating.

Lately, I also started to use a very specific phrase in certain groups - *I do not help naughty children*. Although, I was not sure about it at first, it has proved to be highly efficient. Especially, when there is new vocabulary to learn, pupils need hints in order not to fail in games. Surprisingly, it took only one round of the game for them to realise that, too. Unfortunately, this effect lasts only for a short time and does not work at all concerning bright children.

1.1.1. Content versus Attitude

Susan Halliwell presents two sorts of goals: the content goals and the attitude goals. “*Content goals are concerned with the elements of language and ways in which they are used.*” Attitude goals are those “*which relate to the kind of learning experiences we set up and the relationships and atmosphere of the language classroom*” (1992, p.10). She further claims that the balance between them poses the main difference between primary and secondary language education. I think, that all the teachers with even minimal teaching experience must agree on this point of view. I reckon that the impact of both these types of goals can be measured.

There are two possible approaches to compare students and their language skills in the class. You can either focus exclusively on their set of knowledge – their vocabulary, grammar skills, how well they cope up with listening exercises – or you can try to find out by observation what is their attitude towards the language itself – whether they are willing to try the “new” they have learnt during the lesson, if they cooperate, how they are able to face up the negative assessment, how they react when confronted an unexpected challenge, whether they want to learn anything at all.

In terms of the firstly mentioned approach, it is not so difficult to draw level with someone who is considerably better at the starting line. As a proof I put my experience. I began to learn English in the first year at the grammar school. There were only seven of us from sixty students who had never studied this language before. Nevertheless, one year later, again at the beginning of the school term, we all wrote a benchmark test and I achieved the best results from the whole class.

The reason why I got so good so quickly was mainly our teacher and the fact that I loved playing computer games and my older brother refused to install them in Czech. Considering the teacher, every time we started a new topic we got about forty of fifty new words written on the board and we knew that we would have to learn them till the next lesson. My English teacher also got tired very quickly of me having most of the exercises in my text book and workbook done before we managed to do them during the lesson. I was at least one unit ahead because I simply enjoyed discovering English on my own. Soon she began to give me extra homework and from time to time even extra lessons.

Although I do not consider my-self exceptionally good at English, I believe that my attitude is rather rare in these days. Of course, I realise that I was extremely lucky to have such a devoted teacher who was willing to do extra work in order to encourage me. As I have noticed lately, this is probably even scarcer. In conclusion, from my point of view, the age when someone starts to learn a foreign language does not matter. It is the attitude that is principal.

To develop a “friendly” attitude towards a foreign language is far more complicated and challenging for the teacher than any other task and it plays a major role in pupil’s future education. As this paper concentrates on young learners, I think the development of a positive attitude should be a key goal of all teachers across all subjects.

1.2. Developmental psychology

Nowadays, it is generally agreed that the needs of pupils should be placed in the centre of teaching and the curriculum planning. In order to do so we inevitably must deepen our knowledge about the children’s learning. That means to focus on the developmental psychology, namely its two main theorists: Piaget and Vygotsky and also Bruner who considers language indispensable for the cognitive growth.

1.2.1. Piaget

In Piaget’s approach the child is in instant interaction with its surroundings solving various problems. To manage that, s/he puts a certain action to the test. This is the moment when learning occurs. Once the procedure is tested, it becomes internalised. According to Piaget, the action is fundamental to cognitive development.

There “*are two ways in which development can take place as a result of activity: assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation happens when action takes*

place without any change to the child; accommodation involves the child adjusting to features of the environment in some way” (Cameron, 2001, p.3). An example of assimilation would be adapting a new tool for an action that was previously accomplished by using another tool. During accommodation the child reveals the new possibilities given by the new tool and makes use of them.

Furthermore, in his theory, Piaget also claims that the development occurs in a series of stages. At each of these a child is capable of certain types of thinking - for example the thinking using rules of logic is unavailable to children before they reach eleven years of age or more.

The Piaget’s theory was however extensively criticised. Underestimating children’s abilities was one of the reasons. His opponents objected that the way of thinking Piaget held as too advanced for a specific age, can be developed by using appropriate language and tasks. Another objection was raised due to the fact that the theory neglects the social dimension of life. The child is not considered as a member of a society, where communication plays an important role in interpersonal relationships.

I must agree with these opponents. I witnessed pupils who are able to outdo two or three years older children. In terms of language learning, there is a boy in the fifth class who passes KET tests (Cambridge English: Key) with no worse outcomes than 90 %. The key of his success is the individual approach. If it can work in one case, why not in others? Managing that in a larger scale is an entirely different question. It seems to me, that the only possible way how to provide teachers with the opportunity to pay attention to every pupil individually is to drastically lower the number of them in the class. However, this is not feasible in the current educational system. Nevertheless, the possibility exists.

Based on the child’s characteristic as an active learner and thinker we can make one positive conclusion at least. As the child interacts with the world around, *“the environment provides the setting for development through the opportunities it offers the child for action”* (Cameron, 2001, p.5).

1.2.2. Vygotsky

Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky does not omit the social aspect of the child's development. Adults play an important role here for they help children to learn and through that they mediate the world for them. So it is the action in a social context with other people around that comes first. The independence in both doing and thinking is developed gradually through the years.

Moreover, he stresses the importance of language as a generator of a fundamental shift in cognitive development. "*Language provides the child with a new tool ... for organising information through the use of words as symbols.*" (Cameron, 2001, p.5) As children we all tend to speak aloud in order to make sense of the world. As we grow up, we abandon this way of organising information and adapt a new one – we create an "inner speech". This shift is called internalisation. However, at the beginning of the process a single word that comes out of a child's mouth carries a whole message. Later, the language develops and we are able to put together a whole sentence.

Personally, Vygotsky's theory is far more closer to me, as it puts emphasis on the social aspect. When we are little, we perceive the world as the people around us – family – present it. Not until we are older, we start to decide for ourselves what to believe in. Without people around us we would be hardly motivated to do so. I dare say that without them, our development would stop at the point necessary for surviving.

1.2.3. Bruner

Scaffolding is a term used to label the talk through which parents/adults support a child in carrying out a certain activity. The experiments showed that throughout scaffolding children are far more interested in the given task as the parents make it easier for them by breaking it down into smaller steps. The frustration that children might sometimes feel during achieving the goal is controlled as the adults provide a demonstration if necessary and also point out what is

important. As was explained above, the talk is essential for scaffolding which implies that for Bruner the language is the most important tool for cognitive growth.

Scaffolding is a useful technique during teaching. When I think of my practice I use it almost every lesson. The main purpose of it is that it keeps pupils motivated throughout the whole task, although they might feel discouraged at the beginning, because of its demanding character. It also helps me to achieve the aim I plan. I have noticed that even when you set a task that is too difficult for pupils at the time, they find a way to deal with it. Nevertheless, they use what they already know instead of the new they have just learnt. Speaking of English lessons, they use an old piece of grammar they are familiar with very well rather than the new one. In view of this fact, I try to cut the task into smaller, less demanding steps to avoid this.

1.3. Other theories & suggestions

1.3.1. The Critical Period Hypothesis

It suggests that the reason why young students learn the second language more effectively than older ones is that “*their brains are still able to use the mechanisms that assisted first language acquisition*” (Cameron, 2001, p.13). Accent is given as a concrete proof. Those who start to learn the second language in older age can never achieve the same levels of proficiency. The objection, however, reminds that while the benefits of an early start concerning native-like proficiency is undeniable, in term of communicative skills those benefits are not so convincing.

In my point of view, this theory cannot be applied in the Czech Republic or any other country where English is not the official language. Most teaching here is done by Czech teachers and therefore children have no chance to learn the native accent. I know people who have been learning English from kindergarten age and still do not master using the accent much more than I do. Of course, the situation is different when pupils are taught by a native speaker all the time but this happens very rarely.

For students learning English as a foreign language there is only one way to achieve such proficiency - live there for some time and adjust.

1.3.2. The Competition Model

This theory relies on cues. Each language contains various cues. For English it would be the word order. With the knowledge of the fixed word order we can deduce the meaning of the sentence – what is the subject and what is the object. The problem emerges when the first and the second language rather differ in types of cues than share them. That subsequently causes young learners more difficulties to cope up with the second language and they often need help to notice the new cues.

I reckon the relationship between Czech and English is more likely problematic. I try to avoid comparison because in the past it raised more questions than brought answers and consequently caused more problems than it solved. In terms of grammar these two languages are simply too different.

In conclusion, these theories and suggestions tell us how a child makes sense of the world. This knowledge helps us to organise the lesson in order to make the learning process for children as effective and friendly as possible. Nevertheless, some of them are held from the position of the native speaker teaching English and cannot be implemented in the Czech educational system.

1.4. First & Second Language interconnection

Cameron pays close attention to the effect of the first language development on the second language growth. Based on the studies and experiments of other experts she suggests several ideas.

Firstly, the language skills we adopt in our mother tongue pretty much determine our potential abilities considering a foreign language. Therefore, a teacher should notice which parts of mother tongue are most advanced and be aware that the same parts will be likely developed in a foreign language as well.

Secondly, students reproduce the language type used by their teachers. It is true that nowadays children are surrounded by English on every step – music, films, computer games, online games, books. Due to all these sources we can say that they are exposed to the language in a great amount. On that account they should be able to learn and mainly use it not only in the classroom but also outside the school. Unfortunately, many students omit these great opportunities just because they are not interested in it. Their English teacher becomes the only intermediary and his/her role increases even more.

Here I would like to emphasise a key difference between boys and girls I noticed during teaching. Most of boys between ten to sixteen years of age spend a lot of their time playing computer games. Even more, online games are extremely popular today. Due to that boys are in contact with English almost every day because they need the language to understand it and to succeed in it. All of my students – boys older than twelve - mentioned playing those games and some of them use English during communication with players from foreign countries. On the other hand, girls usually do not have such an interest and therefore there is no occasion for them to practise the language outside the school.

1.4.1. The Language in the classroom

The modern trend of the second language education imposes that only the foreign language should be used during lessons. This policy was accepted with bigger or lesser success all over the world. The general idea is that speaking foreign language only ensures that the exposure is as large as possible. In connection with the students' lack of interest in the second language outside the school, this is beyond all doubts an appropriate approach.

Nevertheless, I usually break this “rule” during the first lesson with very young pupils – three or four years old. In my own experience, being an aunt as well, when children see a teacher for the first time they are a little bit scared. This feeling of insecurity can be even strengthened by an unknown surrounding. For all of this, it is very typical that for some children smile is not enough. So when I notice that they are close to tears I switch to Czech and try my best to make them feel good. Once a friendly relationship based on trust is established I can continue in English without jeopardizing pupils’ positive attitude towards the aimed language.

Great emphasis is also put on the fact that the foreign language must be used in so called “day-to-day communication”. Teachers sometimes omit this crucial rule during the lessons. Real communication does not mean the presentation of new vocabulary or a commentary to a new piece of grammar. It includes communication based on the real life – *How was your day so far? What do you think about the trip your class is going to? Did you like the film we saw yesterday at the cinema?* and so on. Using the second language strictly for the purposes of the lesson can lead to perceiving English only as a subject.

However, Cameron presents several situations when the mother tongue seems to be more effective than the foreign one. The point is that especially with young learners this policy might not be as beneficial as it ought to be. Imagine that due to a rising commotion in the class the teacher is forced to tell students off. Doing so in the foreign language will probably not have the desirable effect. If you truly want to tell somebody off, you should do so in their mother tongue. Otherwise the main message - such as: *You’ve misbehaved* - is likely to be lost in translation.

Cameron also claims that using the second language in moments that are or might be stressful and unpleasant for the pupils - such as testing or reinforcing the authority of the teacher - can unintentionally develop the negative attitude towards the language itself. Hence the teacher should rather avoid using the foreign language during such occasions at least at the beginning of the learning process in order to get round this problem.

Although most of the teachers are aware of the impact of their usage of the foreign language on their pupils, the fact is that the mother tongue is still vastly used during the lessons. I noticed that during observations I experienced as a necessary part of my studies. I have witnessed more than twenty lessons of English and not even once the teacher avoided using Czech completely.

There are several reasons for this. One of them might be the lack of self confidence considering teachers themselves. They often do not feel so secured in above mentioned real communication. Look at it from the position of the second level's teacher, who is teaching English children of approximately eleven to fifteen years of age for let's say ten years. It is highly improbable that s/he will use English while talking to her/his colleagues or at home with her/his partner or in the company of their friends, except the situations when some of these people would be an actual foreigner. During the lesson they should keep up with their pupils' level, so they would understand. Therefore, their level of English in terms of "real communication" slowly but steadily decreases.

Another opportunity is explaining – grammar, words, collocations etc. Especially in the first case, it is not a bad idea. Children often have problems to understand certain pieces of grammar even if they are explained in Czech.

Cameron sets up a list of occasions when the mother tongue is used during the foreign language lesson.

Teachers' use of the first language

- *“Explaining aspects of the foreign language*
- *Translating words or sentences*
- *Giving instructions*
- *Checking understanding of concept, talk, text, instructions*
- *Eliciting language*
- *Focusing pupils' attention*
- *Testing*
- *Talking about learning*
- *Giving feedback*

- *Disciplining and control*
- *Informal, friendly talk with pupils”*

(2001, p. 201)

When I think of my own usage of Czech during lessons it always depends on the students' level of English. For example, with grown-up beginners I speak in Czech to make sure they understand instructions and during giving feedback, because I want them to clearly understand what they did wrong and more importantly what they did right. Currently, I have such a group of beginners consisting of three students and two individual courses. These students differ very much concerning their personalities, attitudes towards English, main reasons for studying English, but they all share one feature that, I reckon, is typical for all adults who start to learn anything new – they have no or limited self-confidence when it comes to so-called performance of the language. They seem to not to notice their progress much but they are strongly aware of their mistakes. I use Czech to point out their improvement and emphasize that it does not matter how many mistakes we make during trying something new as long as we learn from them.

Speaking of translation of unknown words or phrases, I try to avoid it. I prefer explaining them in other words to make students to find out the meaning on their own. But this does not work in all cases. There are some students who simply do not want to guess the meaning. There are others who would like to try, but as their vocabulary is limited I cannot think of an appropriate explanation.

With younger pupils the situation is different. First of all, they never hold back. They usually "bombard" me with so many ideas that I am very soon forced to stop them either because they found the right word or because they strayed too far from it. Even when I have to translate a phrase myself I connect it with some kind of a movement. For example the verb "know" – I put my forefinger on the temple. I use this during a game called "How many do you know?" which we play from time to time. In this game pupils have to name as many animals, colours, parts of clothes they know. It takes pupils some time, but after a few goes they know what the word "know" means.

In order to maintain a certain level of discipline, which is necessary, I slip to Czech more often than I would like. On the other hand, it is the only effective tool how to keep some naughty children under control.

1.5. Supporting environment and classroom tasks

Cameron points out that in order to provide a fruitful environment for foreign language learning there are several principles a teacher should keep in mind while planning the lesson. One of them is the urge for learners to understand the meaning and purpose of activities they are supposed to participate in.

The reason for this is very simple. If they do not comprehend they may do exactly what the teacher wants them to do without any clue what they are doing. And as a result, they learn nothing. It is usually caused by the fact that young pupils are eager to please the adults. Therefore, a teacher must be very careful and check this aspect every now and then to make sure the lesson will not be just a waste of time.

This is one of the moments when I find using Czech language necessary. A misunderstanding occurred in my lesson with the class “Klokánek”, where there are children from three to five years of age. We practised the phrase *I have got* using flashcards with family members. There was one girl who named every family member that was displayed. At first, I did not realise there is something wrong. There were parents, grandparents, siblings plus an aunt, an uncle and a cousin. I figured that she simply did not want to leave anybody out. Nevertheless, when we did the same activity with flashcards of animals this girl used all the pictures again. At that moment I became aware that she does not understand what the phrase means at all. So when we played the game again, I firstly asked the question in Czech and then repeated it in English. The effect was immediate. She named only two animals and that was it.

Another issue are demands. Cameron distinguishes two main types of these – cognitive and language demands (2002, p.24). As an example of cognitive demands

she states understanding the way a grid used in the lesson works – it should be read from left to right across columns and top to bottom from one row to next. Among language demands she presents knowledge of vocabulary, putting the words together in the right order, pronunciation, understanding teacher’s instructions, explanation and feedback.

Cameron also mentions graphics which help pupils to fulfil demands as they concretise abstract ideas without using the mother tongue. For example, when I present days of the week, I use a grid on the board myself. Graphics are very handy also while introducing parts of the day for the first time. I use a very simple drawing to explain *morning, noon, afternoon, evening and night*.

Concerning demands, Cameron emphasises that the amount of learning pupils are able to reach depends on “*the dynamic relationship between demands and support*” as well. “*If the demands are too high, learners will find the task too difficult; they are likely to ‘switch off’ and to finish the task, or to finish it as well as they can, ... but not using the language intended*” (2001, p. 26).

Knowing this, I always set a limit when a pupil becomes a winner. In terms of teaching very young pupils I make sure, that they all win. For example, we have this board game. Various vocabularies from many different areas are displayed there – about thirty altogether. At the beginning I put tokens on every picture. Anyone who gains at least five tokens is the winner. I must say that this game is still very popular although it is highly exacting for many of them.

1.6. Learning spoken language

As a teacher of very young learners, every now and then I must face the question how effective can it be. Is there any effect at all? Locke suggests that although young children operate with only partial understanding of the language they hear, it does not stop them using it. The understanding and accuracy come with the age. And that this path should be followed in the foreign language as well (Cameron, 2001, p.38).

To demonstrate on my own practice, I use a game “The Shop”. As they bring their "social knowledge" in the classroom, pupils know that when they come to a small shop like a bakery or a cafe, in order to get something they must ask for it in an appropriate way.

Cameron pays attention to listening as an active use of language. The difference between speaking and listening is that while we use the first one to make sense of ourselves, the other one – if handled - provides access to other people’s meanings.

She points out that children might be able to understand the story told in a foreign language from a book with pictures whereas re-telling it in the same language might be out of their reach, because such a production requires a vast knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and syntax.

I strongly fall in with this opinion. When I do listening with pupils from first to third class I ask them to re-tell the story in Czech. They do not find this much difficult. They proceed from one picture to the other. Sometimes they use English words to complete the story - ... *a pak vešli do tý cave a tam byl dragon*. In first three classes the activity ends there. But in fourth and upper classes pupils have to re-tell the story using grammar they know plus some new words from the book. For example: *It’s raining. They go in the cave and see the dragon* (a cave and a dragon being the new words). Of course, some pupils manage this with a bigger success than others, but the main point of this activity is to try; to use a knowledge and produce a meaningful piece of a spoken language.

Studying conversational skills of young pupils, Cameron claims that children begin to develop their understanding of other people’s actions and minds around four years of age. But that is still far away from a full awareness of the process. Therefore, tasks that pupils encounter in the classroom should follow patterns they are familiar with.

Here rises a problem for all teachers. Not all tasks that pupils find familiar are feasible in the classroom. Or in other words, things that are close to them in their lives through their experience of the world might be too far away in terms of their foreign language abilities. Six years olds will describe their trip in the second they

realise you are listening to them. They will do some minor mistakes on the way but that does not jeopardize the understanding of their speech. They would never get anywhere near to do the same in the foreign language. Even though they understand vocabulary such as *go, run, swim, mum, dad, car, camp, tent*, they are not able to put them in a sentence and bind them with a joint meaning.

Luckily, there are cases, when something familiar for very young learners can be brought in the classroom; for example, when they are asked about their pet. Recently, I happened to have a conversation with a six-year old boy about his dog.

T: Kubo, have you a dog?

K: Dog.

T: I have got...

K: I have got a dog.

T: What is his name?

K: Jak se menuje? Rocky.

T: That's a nice name? How many legs Rocky has got?

K: Kolik má nohou? One, two, three, four... Four.

T: Tell me the whole sentence Kubi. Rocky has got four legs.

K: Rocky has got four legs.

I am aware, that it is an extremely short conversation. But still, it is a conversation. And it was possible only due to the fact, that it was about something very close to the pupil.

Cameron deals with the written language as a support of learning of spoken language. She states that as young pupils are still learning to read and write in the foreign language, writing should become only a subsidiary tool. Nevertheless, it should be always in regard to the current level of literacy development of the learners.

Speaking for myself, I rather discourage pupils from reading when they are younger than in the third class. I noticed that children of this age rely on the written word too much as they are used to in Czech and pronounce the word as it is written. Either due to their short experience with the foreign language or the lack of attention, it is as if they ignored the fact that written and spoken English varies significantly. From third class up we read in lessons regularly. Learners know most of basic vocabulary and its pronunciation is well established in their minds.

To close this chapter about learning words, I would like to emphasize several other opinions that Cameron introduces concerning this topic. Vocabulary being the base for further development of grammar (2001, p.72) is probably the one that I hold to most. Every set of vocabulary is connected with certain grammar. In terms of teaching very young learners - age from three to six years old – it is primarily done in the form of using appropriate phrases of asking questions, short answers and others.

Vocabulary concerning food can be also used with the phrase *I like, I don't like*. Clothes serves immediately to tell what the pupil is wearing. Verbs help to practise *can, can't*. *Have got* is initially practised with the set of family flashcards. Later, I use it with any kind of pictures. One pupil takes a card and the others have to guess what it is using a question *Have you got?* And the pupil answers either *Yes, I have* or *No, I haven't*. For present continuous tense – second class and older pupils – are once again used verbs. In my opinion, without such a close link between vocabulary and grammar, my teaching would be nothing more than an enormous effort to turn the bright heads into useless dictionaries.

According to Cameron, pupils can learn approximately 500 words a year (2001, p.75). That depends on our understanding of the word “learn”. For instance, to me it means that when I show a pupil a picture of something, s/he is able to name that thing. Therefore, I believe that this number is highly overestimated. With little pupils – those who do not attend school yet – I dedicate some lessons to revising. With older children I revise from time to time through games such as *Simon says* or *Bingo*, but that includes only basic knowledge – such as colours, numbers, days of the week etc.

If, on the other hand, you are a supporter of the opinion, that what pupils once learn stays in their minds and that they will be able to use it later when time comes to build on it further, then I suppose the number of 500 is more or less accurate.

Nevertheless, my teaching experience proved me otherwise. Although pupils recognise the picture almost instantly and tell me that they have already learnt this, they are not able to tell me what it is. Of course, there are some, who are able to recall most of the words they have once learnt in a moment, but as I see it in daily practice, these cases are rather rare.

The other approach however leads me to another Cameron's idea. Learning vocabulary is a never-ending process in which pupils at first learn new words and then when they encounter them again they extend the "*knowledge of what the words mean and how they are used in the foreign language*" (2001, p. 74).

That is certainly true; although concerning very young pupils, it is still like teaching the words all over again. But they undeniably use them in new, different ways. For example, pupils learn colours and pieces of furniture separately. Later, they use them together to describe a room. They distinguish whether it is singular or plural and they use the phrases "there is, there are".

All of these suggestions are highly connected with the following one concerning memorising activities. I agree with Cameron that these are needed in order to keep vocabulary active (2001, p. 87).

It is vital to use here a vast range of various activities to keep pupils interested and keen. The teacher should also keep in mind that what works in one group does not necessarily have to work in others and vice versa. In my opinion, whatever activity you decide to use, it should not take more than 15 minutes. That, in my experience, is the maximum time in which pupils are able to focus on one thing.

2. THE PRACTICAL PART

2.1. Questionnaires for parents

The questionnaires meant for parents focused mainly on the parents' attitude towards their children's learning English in the early age. In general, my goal was to find out why parents want them to study English and how they support this learning. I distributed fifty questionnaires and received twenty-seven. I must admit that without friends among headmistresses, headmasters, teachers and parents I would never be able to collect more than ten. These friends of mine asked on my behalf and were much more successful in collecting. I cannot say I was surprised by the cold reception from people who did not know me but I do not understand this approach either way. There were only five questions which means that it could not take more than fifteen minutes. Still, some of those parents looked at me with great displeasure. Their excuse was that they do not have time. Nevertheless, as I have said above, thanks to my friends I received enough filled in questionnaires to work with. I gave them Czech versions which can be seen in attachments.

In your opinion, what is the meaning of the ability to communicate in English nowadays?

In hindsight, this question could have been phrased better. Apparently, its meaning for the respondents was rather broader than I anticipated. Therefore, some of the answers - although they explain why parents want to pay for extra education in foreign language in the early age of their child – do not present a clear idea whether they believe that an active knowledge of English is reasonably important.

Nevertheless, on the whole it is evident that the main reason why parents want their children to attend English lessons from an early age is by far a deep conviction that it will provide a better position while applying for a job. This is understandable; concerning that all parents want the best for their children and in the eyes of many a well-paid job is the cornerstone for such a life.

On the other hand, speaking of higher positions in business, the knowledge of English is more or less taken for granted. When you look through the jobs' offers nowadays, usually at least one foreign language is required. However, in terms of small towns surrounded by even smaller villages, the person who can actually communicate fluently in English has a great advantage. It is difficult to estimate how this situation will change in twenty years.

One could say, that even in ten years basic knowledge of English will not be a problem for anyone who successfully finishes secondary education. This presumption would be based on the fact that English has been an obligatory subject for quite a bit of time now and therefore pupils should be able to speak this language at least at the level A1 without much difficulties when they finish secondary school. Nevertheless, the sad truth remains that only some are able to use this language naturally in real life situations. This is not only my own experience. Many other English teachers confirm this opinion too. Majority of pupils achieve good or better results from written tests and they are able to react to questions. However, when a native speaker comes to their class, the level of communication drops below zero as they are not willing to say a word in front of her/him.

Another reason parents mention is the possibility to travel and learn about other cultures through speaking with foreigners. From my point of view, this is a better way to think about advantages of such knowledge. While travelling, you get to know places, you get to know the people and through this you gain a huge source of experiences on which you can build regardless of your future job.

Plus, based on my own experience, people are in favour of those employees who have practical rather than theoretical skills. In other words, when there are two people both applying for the position in which they would be responsible for communication with foreign partners and therefore they are expected to speak on daily bases, decision whether to chose someone who lived abroad for some time and someone who only presented necessary titles is quite easy. In the real world the practical knowledge prevails the theoretical one. Luckily, this does not stand for teaching English. Appropriate degree is also demanded nowadays and that is what I absolutely agree with.

There was also one group of parents who seem to think that the importance of English is overestimated and the only reason to invest in such education is the fact, that it is an obligatory subject at schools. From my point of view, in the world where “one out of four of the world's population speak English to some level of competence”¹, this approach is rather disappointing. To study something purely because someone else tells me I have to is discouraging and meaningless. This in combination with the fact that parents see no good reason to study English and therefore do not support children in it, can cause serious damage concerning pupils attitude towards the language.

Few opinions concerned the possibility to communicate with relatives or friends living abroad. This is the best initial footing for all the students of English no matter the age. They have the opportunity to practise the language in a real life. Most probably they will never ask the question that irritates all the teachers sooner or later: *Why do I have to learn this?* They will see the point from the beginning.

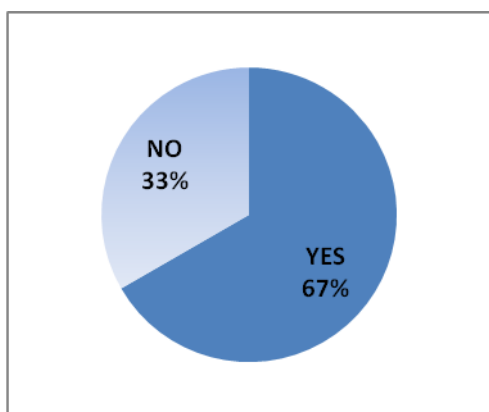
2) Have you consider the overall approach towards teaching English while you were deciding which nursery school/club your child should attend?(for example the books that are used during the course or to what measure is the teacher speaking English during each lesson)

3) Do your children attend English lessons anywhere else than in the nursery school, for example in some sort of a club?

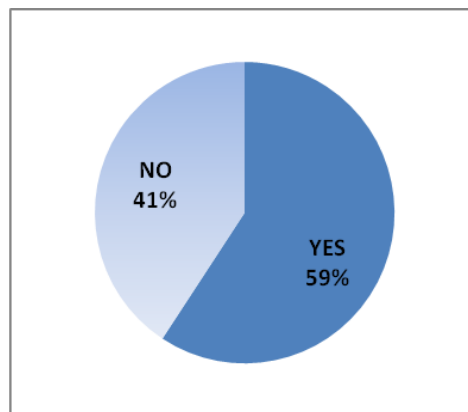
If so, describe the lesson please - how long the individual lesson takes, how often and where it is held.

I decided to put these two questions together because they are closely connected. To the question number two nine respondents answered no, eighteen yes. For the question number three eleven answers were negative and sixteen positive.

¹ British council accessed 10.4.2014; <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-faq-the-english-language.htm>



Question 2



Question 3

Here we can see that most parents think carefully about where to invest their money. Based on the questionnaires it is clear that all the children of respondents who ticked no in the first question have English lessons only in the nursery school. This is no shock. In most cases parents are grateful that there is a place for their child. The insufficient number of nursery schools in general is a big problem nowadays. On the other hand, all parents have to pay no less than about three thousand crowns every six months. I would expect them to consider the aspect of methodology more carefully. Speaking of my-self, I would make sure I know what I am paying for.

Children of thirteen out of sixteen respondents are currently pupils of the same language school where I work. They attend our English course for children from three to six years of age called *Klokánek* which is held once a week from eight to half past eleven every Tuesday or Friday. The methodology is very simple to explain - we teach purely through games, songs and rhymes. To practise listening I also use something that might be called a brain teaser. I play a part where an animal is described and the pupils are supposed to find it in the picture and tell me its number. When they get accustomed to this activity, there are more complex descriptions such as *Alex is playing football with a yellow ball*. In general, no activity takes more than 15 minutes.

I have a younger group which includes from three to five years old children. I must confess, that I am truly impressed with how much pupils of this age can learn. It is not only about vocabulary, I am mainly surprised by their ability to comprehend

in English. I can play *bingo* with them. A three years old child is able to count and recognise numbers up to twelve. They can all say the alphabet already so I plan to start practising spelling words before the term is over. They can also describe the picture. I ask the question and they answer in a very simple way: *Is the sofa red? Yes, it is. Are there two pillows? No, there aren't.* They can distinguish colours, animals, clothes, rooms, various activities, etc. Not all the pupils can do all of this of course, yet their progress is remarkable.

Three remaining pupils attend other English clubs, but their parents did not describe them, saying only that it is a private course. I can only guess that the lessons are held in similar approach to ours.

In my opinion, the aspect of methodology is not so determinant, as I take it for granted that every course of English at the pre-school age is based on games, songs and rhymes. Of course, it is important to know whether the teacher communicates with children in English or whether they have some kind of an outline for each term. Nevertheless, what would be the most important issue for me as a parent is the atmosphere during the lesson itself. This cannot be checked in advance. Therefore, I would expect parents to come and see. None of them has ever done so. Again, in my case, I would make sure I know what I am paying for.

4) What do you expect from preschool learning of English - what should a child learn at this age in your opinion?

Altogether, it was these answers I was most interested in. I hoped that among other things, it would provide me with ideas of what I should do with pupils in lessons. Only one respondent did not give an answer and one more has no expectations at all. Others were more or less the same. Parents expect nothing special. Majority used the words games, fun, songs and rhymes. This is no surprise. Probably everybody nowadays is aware of the fact that children in general learn best through games and other activities when they can enjoy themselves.

Another point often mentioned was vocabulary. In my opinion, this is the only result that can be measured at the moment and therefore clearly visible for

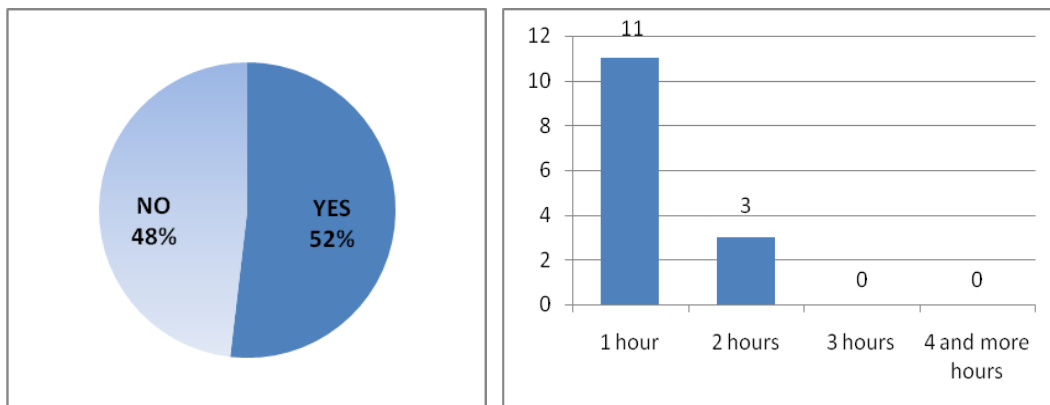
parents. Can you say this? Can you say that? Wonderful! Can you use it? Of course not, you are too little for that. Some parents perceive their child's progress purely through the level of knowledge of vocabulary. As I have explained above, I do not appreciate this attitude. I always get the impression of changing pupils into books or dictionaries.

However, there are seven answers which speak about developing a friendly attitude toward English and gaining acquaintance with it. For me, this is the most important issue. Lead pupils so that they will enjoy learning English and hopefully this feeling will prevail in them through the coming years.

5) Do you practise English with your child at home?

If so, how many hours a week?

I expected that most of the parents would answer no, although as a teacher I hoped for the other option to win of course. I was positively surprised by the almost equal results. It means that slightly more than half of the respondents actively support their child in learning English.



In the other graph we can see how many hours they spent with this. I think that one hour a week is enough. At this age it is vital that children take this learning purely as fun and drilling of any sort would definitely ruin it. In my opinion, it is great news that parents take an active part in their child's education. However, it is important to keep the feet on the ground and not to expect children to speak English

fluently after few years and therefore not to force their progress. For me as a teacher this means setting the course and letting it go by its own pace helping and encouraging at all the steps.

To summarize, most of the respondents perceive English mainly as a useful tool to get a well-paid job. Others think of it as a personal advantage that enables to travel and communicate with foreigners. I use the word personal, because I see it as a personal issue, not professional. There was also an opinion, that English itself is not very important in the long term and the only reason to study it is that it is required at schools. Fortunately, this attitude appeared rarely and majority of respondents seem to believe that English is a true advantage nowadays.

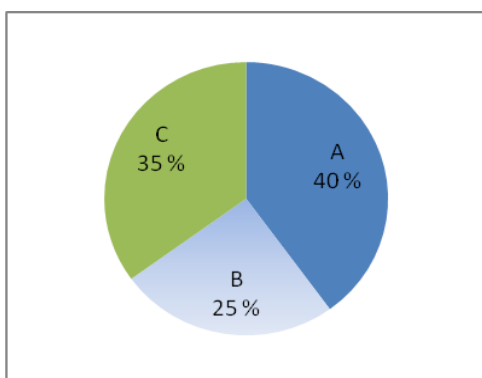
For question two and three, we could have seen that about one quarter of parents had not considered the methodology. From the questionnaires was clear that their children attend the courses at nursery schools. I quite understand that the place at the school is far more relevant than the quality of the course. Speaking for the rest, it is only right that they weigh all the facts about the course they can gather before they decide. On the other hand, in my opinion, the methodology is more or less the same everywhere, being based on games, rhymes, songs and other enjoyable activities for children. I believe so, because I have witnessed that on many occasions while I was looking for the job and visiting various schools and organisations focusing on educating very young pupils. Therefore, I reckon that more significant than this, is the atmosphere and how much a teacher speaks English during the course. Consequently, I would await parents to come and observe at least one lesson or so. No parent have ever done so, what so ever.

It was relieved when I learned that most of the respondents do not expect anything special. They often stated vocabulary, which is quite understandable for it is the immediate result and most visible one as well. Some also mentioned developing a friendly attitude towards the language itself and learning it too. As I have already written several times before, this is a crucial feature of a high-quality course of English at the pre-school age.

The last question concerned the issue, if the parents learn English with their children at home. I was positively surprised to find out that slightly more than half of them do support the learning in this way. I think it is great news. However, it must not be taken too seriously. We all ought to keep in mind, that at this age it is mostly about having fun while learning something new.

2.2. Questionnaires for teachers

I received twenty filled-in questionnaires. Based on my first impression, I was afraid that I would not get any. Teachers were not excited when I asked them and most of them said they have no time for such things. I think the problem is not time but the willingness. It is not their problem, they do not care. Every extra work is annoying. As I have mentioned above, I was lucky that I have friends among teachers at primary and secondary schools and I also personally know two headmasters. When they asked, the teachers did it as a personal favour. I received only two forms from schools at which I do not know anybody.



1) What is your qualification?

A) Primary school

B) Secondary school

C) Other

I was taken by surprise when I learned that only six of twenty teachers are qualified to teach English at secondary schools. Eight teachers have qualification for primary schools. It is better than nothing. However, I am painfully aware of how deep they study teaching specifically English during their preparation, so in my opinion in terms of English in general it is not a satisfying view.

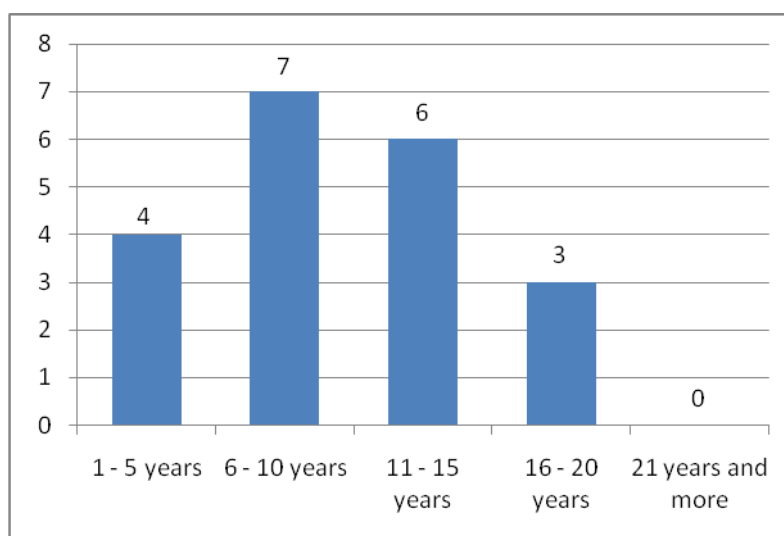
Nevertheless, six teachers are specialised in other areas of teaching such as “special education” or other subjects such as Maths or Geography. And here lies the biggest problem of teaching English at primary schools. Non-qualified teachers who are just a few lessons ahead of their pupils, who do not know the system, nor the proper (effective) methods and who are not aware of the importance of combining vocabulary and grammar together.

Personally, I do not understand how this can be possible. There are so many qualified teachers who cannot find the job, when in the same time the position is held by incompetent people. I do not claim that all such teachers are bad, but I have witnessed how much damage can be caused. Several of my pupils have joined our language school just recently and their pronunciation in some cases is dreadful. The word *sausage* pronounced as [su:sadz] or *eyes* as [eis] and *ears* as [ɜ:rs]. Hopefully, the situation will change now, when only qualified teachers are required.

2) Please, describe your teaching practice (how long teach and the type of school you teach at).

3) How long do you teach English?

These two questions were supposed to serve me some perspective about the teachers whose opinions are involved in this work and which are commented. The graph below shows how long each one of them teaches English.



From the four teachers in the first group not even one of them is qualified at English. Two have graduated from teaching at primary school but they have specialization other than English. One of them has about twenty years of practice in general and only three of English.

Speaking of the second group, it gives much better impression as five of them are qualified to teach English and they have been teaching it for whole of their practice. The remaining two have studied teaching at primary schools. However, they specialized in other areas. Altogether they have approximately fifteen years of teaching practice.

In the third group, once again, there is no one with a qualification for teaching the language. Three teachers of primary schools have about twenty-five years of practice. The others have been teaching for about fifteen years now. One of them is not a graduated teacher at all. Nevertheless, due to the newly implied rules, he has stated to study the pedagogical faculty in Prague recently.

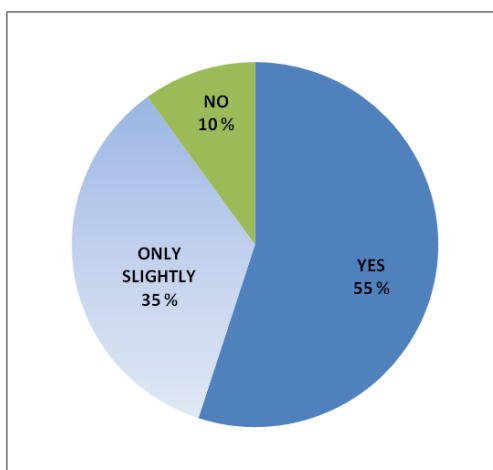
For the three remaining teachers, one of them has a teaching practice in general for almost forty years. The last two have been teaching for about twenty years now. Their specializations are teaching at the primary school and other subject such as PE or biology.

To summarize, it is not very impressive stepping stone but it is the reality of the system of education in our country. As I have already mentioned above, I believe that the situation of non-qualified teachers will improve now thanks to the new rules set up by the ministry of education.

4) Can you see any difference between children who start to study English as a part of obligatory education and those who have studied it before; for example in some sort of an English club?

If so, describe the most obvious impact, please.

Here, two teachers see no difference at all. I reckon their answers might have been influenced by their attitude towards the pre-school English lessons. I base this assumption on the fact that in the last questions they also claim that to start learning English in the third class is more than sufficient.



Nevertheless, most of them can see the difference. It is mainly in the knowledge of vocabulary, rhymes, songs and better pronunciation. Others also mentioned the ability to orientate themselves better during the lessons and to master the written form, the fact that the pupils are not afraid to speak in English or their excitement because they know the word.

Vocabulary, rhymes and songs are probably the most obvious outcomes of previous learning as pupils can reproduce them and prove what they have learned. Therefore, these are also very important for parents. From my own experience, it is this that decides what they think about the course in general. Once their children learn some new vocabulary every lesson, it is meaningful in their eyes. In the moment the teacher is not able to produce such results, parents tend to believe that there is no progress at all and their children learn nothing.

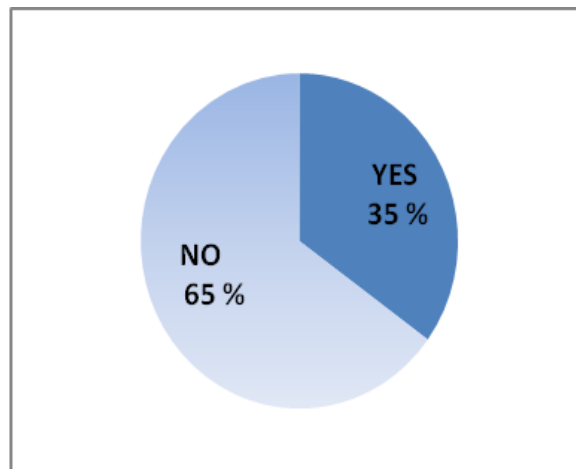
However, for me as a teacher, the rest is more important. I feel that no matter how many words pupils learn, without revision they forget them sooner or later. Of course, most of them are able to restore the knowledge quickly once they come back to it or are brought to it. Nevertheless, far more important for the future learning is the fact, that they are not afraid to speak and their so called "better orientation". In practice this means that pupils will try to use the language regardless of mistakes they make. And that is very similar to what we all do when we are learning our mother tongue – natural progress. I am also fond of the excitement pupil experience when they come across something familiar. It develops a friendly attitude - which is basic in my opinion, as I have already mentioned several times before.

Speaking of good pronunciation, it depends on teachers. Although we all teach the same language, sometimes it happens that we all speak a little bit differently. This is, of course, influenced by the accent we adopt during our studies and travels to English speaking countries. In some cases it can lead to confusion among the pupils. Few days ago, a girl from the third class, who has been attending lessons in our school for several years by now, told me, that they started learning the alphabet at her primary school, but it is not the same she knows from our school. Few letters pronounced slightly differently made her think it is another alphabet. All in all, I do not reckon that minor deflections such as these can cause any damage concerning the language growth. Still, all the teachers – trained or not - should be aware that their pupils are most probably about to adopt their pronunciation and therefore be careful during every lesson.

5) Is it necessary to adjust the lessons' plans? If so, in what way?

I was keen to read these answers particularly. I think such a situation occurs in lesson of every teacher sooner or later. Every pupil is unique and subsequently, in one class we can have a mixture of so called average learners, those who are below this average norm and those who are in general labelled as talented in that particular subject. It is a question whether it would serve any good to separate these “groups” and have talented pupils in one class, average in other and children who are weak in yet another. The advantage of this approach is obvious. The teacher could choose suitable methods that would suit best for each group. On the other hand, there is also an obvious objection. Although it is undeniably good for the talented pupils, the two other groups would miss someone to lead, someone who would be a motivation for others to make more effort in order to equal the “smart ones”. Another way how to deal with this situation is to prepare suitable materials for each group and then try the best to cope up with it during the lesson. In my opinion, this is not a long-term solution. In general, nowadays teachers have so many lessons that only preparation for the lessons would take so much of their time that they would soon have to decide whether to live or teach. When you add managing the lessons themselves, having

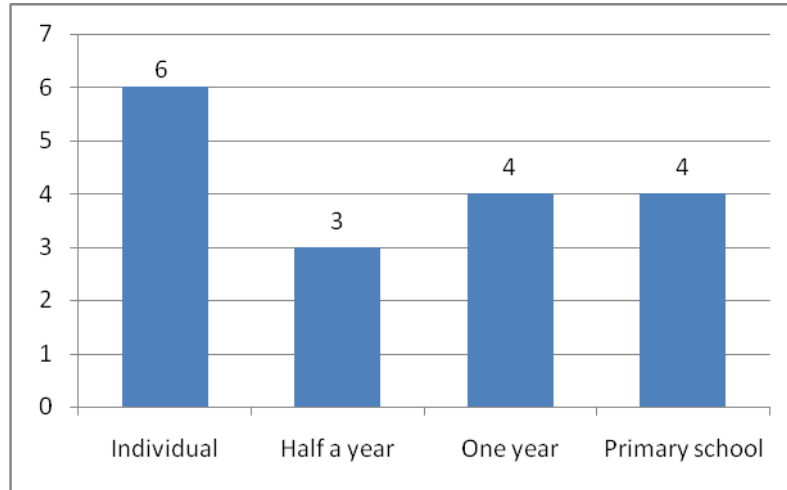
three different groups in one class, the situation becomes extremely demanding and time-consuming for any ordinary teacher.



As we can see in the graph, thirteen teachers out of twenty solve this easily – they do not do any changes due to advanced pupils. Most of them think that it takes only few months (half a year top) to wipe away the differences and from that point they can proceed as in any other class. Seven however bring extra materials for advanced pupils in order to keep them busy. As I have already explained, I do not think this is manageable for a long time, nevertheless I can see the positives of this approach. It gives the teacher time to teach the rest the basics and then they can continue united, being almost at the same level. Once again, it is a question how the class would react to the situation when the teacher pays attention either to one group or the other. It could slow the whole lesson and prolong the time of having two groups in class.

6) If there are any differences, how long does it take to remove them? Is it even possible?

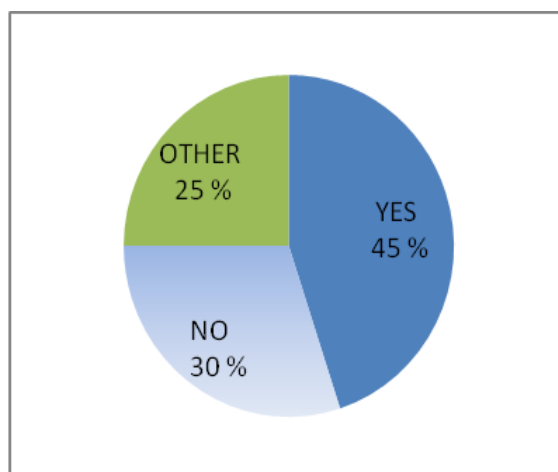
Three teachers did not answer here. Two of them are those who claimed that they see no difference at all. For the third one, I can hardly understand why s/he omitted this question. I asked about their-own experience and the questionnaires were anonymous. Remaining answers are following.



As we can see, some teachers believe that the process of unification is completely individual. This corresponds with my belief that learning abilities of every pupil are different. On the other hand, for the purpose of my work this answer is as good as none at all. Obviously it is individual, but I reckon that it is possible to state a period that can be implied in general. Half a year seems to me as a reasonable estimation. Speaking of other suggestions, if two years are not enough – four in some cases as some schools start with obligatory English in the first class – I think that the head start of advanced pupils will be evident permanently. In my opinion, it does not include vocabulary nor grammar. It cannot last more than one year to cover this area. It leads us back to advantages that are not so apparent at the first sight. I am mainly speaking about the overall attitude towards the language - the fact that pupils are not afraid to use it, to play with it. They do not see it as a school subject but as fun and therefore they enjoy it much more.

7) In your opinion, is it useful for learners to start studying English as a part of pre-school education? Justify your answer please.

Again, three teachers did not answer. Other two explained that pre-school course of English has its advantages and disadvantage so they are not decided. In the graph, these are represented as "other". Remaining fifteen teachers answered as following.



Firstly, I am going to focus on those, who say no. One teacher did not clarify their opinion. Two of them think that young pupils should firstly master their mother tongue and only then start with another language. In my opinion, this is not necessary. It does not matter that they make mistakes when they try to put together sentences in Czech or that they do not realise the proper use of pronouns. However, the standpoint that should be taken into consideration is their skill to pronounce. It happens that pupils cannot pronounce certain consonants properly in Czech and therefore they have problems in English too. The main danger is that they will learn the word but they will not be able to reproduce it as the teacher intends and consequently they might remember it in the wrong way. Although it can be fixed in later years, it takes a lot of time and energy from the teacher to do so.

Three teachers see no obvious advantage or results that can be achieved by pre-school learning of English. I do not agree with this point of view at all. I believe that with a competent and diligent teacher there must be a positive outcome of such education. Nevertheless, the question for every parent is, whether this is the best way for their child how to spend time during their early childhood.

Now I am going to concentrate on those answers claiming that it is useful to start with English so early. The teachers mentioned one reason particularly. It is the notion that pupils get used to the language and create a positive attitude towards it. They also get familiar with the pronunciation and consequently they do not have big

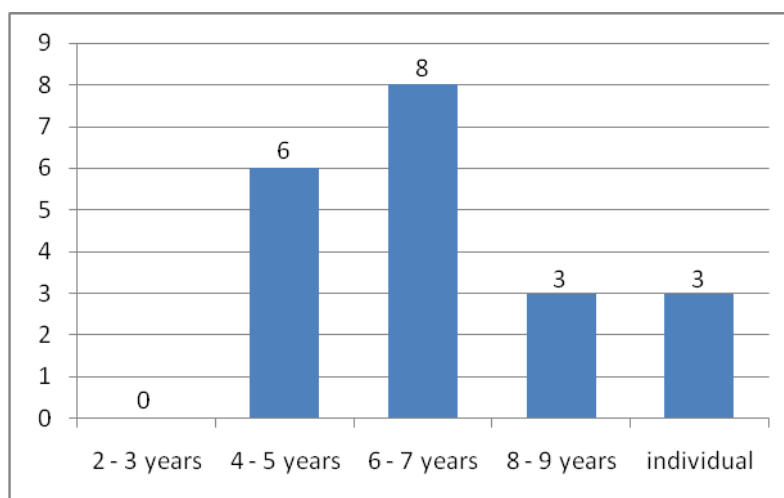
problems with it later. Another point is the fact that at this age learning a language is a natural process and therefore the children should continue with it.

I can only support these ideas with my own experience. I can compare the situation due to the lesson with the first class at our language school. There are three children who have attended pre-school lessons at the nursery school and two who have never come across English. When I bring a completely new set of vocabulary, pupils with some experience of the language are much quicker in comprehending. They also repeat after me with no hesitation while the others wait until I call them by name. They also speak very quietly as if afraid of mistakes.

Nevertheless, I believe that a good teacher should be able to set conditions in which pupils get used to this and break free of this shyness and hesitation. Although it is a very long process and the teacher must be very patient, it works in most of the cases.

8) In your opinion, what age is optimal to start the learning of English? Justify your answer please.

Although all the teachers answered here, seven of them did not explain their statement. I can only assume that they base this on their teaching experience. Here is the graph showing the answers.



As we can see, six teachers believe, that the pre-school English education makes sense. However, only three mentioned why. In their opinion, children of this age have basic knowledge of the world around them. They recognize colours, can name the animals and some food. They also have developed certain habits from nursery schools so they are ready to attend the lesson without their parents. On that account, they can broaden their horizons and start to learn through playing.

Nevertheless, the majority of teachers reckon, that the first class is the most suitable for the beginning of learning English. As a reason for this one teacher mentions, that all the pupils start at the same level, which is in general more motivating for the class as a whole. Another teacher see no difference between those who have already learned some English and therefore there is no reason to start earlier. The others only described how the lessons should look like or how many of them should pupils have in a week.

For the third group, they all share one main reason. Pupils of this age can write and read, which can be linked up with the second language. They also have basic knowledge of system of Czech and can benefit from this during learning English. The last group of teachers do not recommend any age at all, for they think it is purely matter of individual abilities of each learner and partly their parents' ambition.

From the beginning, it was my intention to leave this question as the final one. It summarizes all that was said above. It is very clear here, that only six out of twenty teachers champion the idea of pre-school learning of English. I am not very surprised. In my opinion, the thing that has a great impact on these results is the fact, that these are the teachers who have to deal with the situation during the lessons. I have already explained previously how difficult it can be for them to handle the class of pupils with different levels of knowledge of the second language. I understand that the majority would prefer one starting point for all their pupils. On the other hand, the idea that all the children would start at the same age might be tempting for some, but it is not feasible in reality.

To sum up the chapter dealing with the questionnaires filled in by teachers, it presented various ideas concerning teaching English during the pre-school term and at the primary schools. There is a serious matter of non-qualified teachers. Fortunately, this problem will be solved in the near future, due to the law set by the Ministry of Education.

Slightly more than half of the questioned teachers see more significant differences between pupils who start to learn English at nursery schools and those who start later as a part of obligatory education. The main contrast is spotted in the knowledge of vocabulary, better orientation in the foreign language, familiarity with the pronunciation and the enthusiasm during lessons. The rest see either only a slight difference or none at all. In my opinion, there must be some contrast at least at vocabulary. Nevertheless, how vast it can get, that always depends on the learning abilities of the individual learner.

We also witnessed that most teachers do not adjust their lessons' plans on the ground of having pupils with different knowledge of English in their class. Although I agree that bringing extra materials for the advanced group might serve good for them, I understand that in long-term perspective it is not a suitable solution for the teachers in question. For them it is a highly demanding and time-consuming effort in addition to their usual work. On top of that, in most cases it is not appreciated at all.

As the estimation of how long does it take to equalize the differences among pupils caused by earlier lessons of English, most teachers supported the idea that this process is purely individual. Nevertheless, there was also an opinion that it lasts for the whole period of primary education. I reckon, that this suggestion is highly overestimated in terms of feasibility. If even two years are not sufficient to balance the differences, then I am convinced, that the contrast will be permanent.

To the question, whether it is useful to start English as a part of pre-school education, the results were not very convincing. One of the objections of the opponents of this idea was that pupils should firstly master the pronunciation in their mother tongue and only then start with the second language. They point out that this standpoint is often ignored and that it causes problems in future learning. I must agree with them in this matter. However, there are many children who are younger

than six years and still can speak very well. Therefore, I believe it is this and not the age that should be the criterion. The proponents emphasize advantages such as better orientation in the foreign language, familiarity with the pronunciation and positive attitude towards new learning. Here I object, that in my opinion this can be caught up even later with a skilled teacher. All in all, I reckon, that once the pupils learn to pronounce properly, there is no other obstacle considering the early start with English. At the end, it all comes to whether the parents are willing to invest in this part of their child's education.

In the last question, concerning the age when children should start to learn English, most respondents chose the third option referring to the age from six to seven years, which corresponds with the beginning of the first class at primary school. I believe, that to some level it is connected with the fact that many teachers have to deal with the uneasy situation of teaching pupils who are at different levels of the second language's knowledge and it often causes them considerable difficulties. At the same time, the third class is too late for most of them. Three teachers suggest it is individual. I did not include this option in the questionnaire, which might have been a mistake. On the other hand, throughout the whole paper, I have been expressing my conviction that every pupil is unique as well as his/her abilities to learn. My goal was to find out what works in most cases and therefore can be set as a criterion based on teachers' experience.

Altogether, I have expected that majority of teachers would be in favour of learning English at the pre-school age. I was slightly surprised by answers. And still, several teachers confirmed that there are positive results at pupils who have started earlier. Except for the problem concerning pronunciation, no other negatives were mentioned. Therefore, for me the conclusion is following - once pupils master pronunciation of their mother tongue, they can start to learn the second language.

2.3. Questionnaires for headmasters and headmistresses

For this part, I sent out fifteen questionnaires by e-mail to primary schools, all in Vysočina region. I did not receive any of them back. Therefore, I went to ask face to face, hoping, that a personal request might bear fruit. However, I was turned down by majority of them, because of their lack of time. At least, that was their explanation. I was able to collect only two filled-in questionnaires. I realise, that it is not even nearly sufficient number for the purpose of this thesis. Nevertheless, that is all I can work with. The original can be seen in attachments.

1) From what class is English an obligatory subject at your school? If need be, is it possible to start learning it sooner? If so, in what class?

2) What school clubs or other extracurricular activities focused on English language does your school offer?

At the first school English is obligatory from the third class. Before that, pupils get in touch with it through another subject called "prvouka" to which the language is integrated. I was highly interested in how this works and asked whether I could observe a lesson. However, the headmaster explained, that they let in only students who are on a teaching practice at their school. They offer English lessons for pupils from the first class. For other activities, a week-long language course, which is held every June, was mentioned, and that during the previous year there was a native speaker taking part in lessons. At the second school, English is obligatory from the first class and they organize a week-long trip to England every two years.

Altogether, I believe that the presence of a native speaker is definitely beneficial for the language development, but it should not be a permanent part of every lesson. Once a week or even a fortnight is more than sufficient in my opinion. Pupils can play some games or the speaker can ask pupils various questions, have a simple conversation. As for the language course, it is a great idea, although it might be better to hold it during the summer holiday, when it could be more intense, rather than during a regular school term. As for the second school, I reckon, that their

approach is good, but should not be taken too seriously. A teacher should fill lessons with games and other enjoyable activities, in which pupils would not be aware of the fact, that they are learning. The possibility to visit England and its most famous places is definitely a wonderful opportunity for every learner.

3) How many teachers teach English at your school?

How many of them are qualified English teachers?

How many of these are qualified for the primary level?

4) How many applicants with the qualification for teaching English at the primary level do you approximately register?

5) Is the qualification for teaching English language a determinant factor for you concerning teachers at the primary level?

At the first school, there are six teachers teaching English, from which only three are qualified to do so, and from these three, two at the primary school. At the same time, two applicants with the qualification for teaching English at the primary level are registered at this school. To be honest, from my point of view, it does not matter whether a teacher is trained to teach at the primary or secondary level. The important factor is, if it is English s/he has studied. Which corresponds with the headmaster's attitude. If not, they should never do it. On the other hand, I realise how much the headmasters and headmistresses are limited in this matter, so I do partly understand, why this occurs so often.

Speaking of the second school, there are twelve English teachers, but only one of them is qualified for it, and that is only for the secondary level. In my opinion, this is a catastrophic view. It is true, that with no applicants with qualification for English at the primary level the choices are slightly limited. Nevertheless, as I have written above, the crucial point is the study of an English language in general. The situation at this school is obviously caused by the headmaster's attitude towards choosing new teachers. He emphasises personal features of an applicant and their didactic skills. I agree that personality is important, but only to a certain level. Having two or three teachers without a necessary qualification is acceptable, but

eleven is too much. For cases like this, I am grateful for the changes recently set by the law concerning this matter.

6) *Are you planning any changes concerning learning English? If so, describe them, please.*

Several innovations were described at the first school. Among others, it is the continuing cooperation with a native speaker, new textbooks, equipment for interactive learning and occupational training of teachers. It all seems great, but the question is, how feasible it is. For example, textbooks and interactive equipment must be quite demanding for the school budget in one year. But as I did not set a clear stretch of time for such changes, it all might be meant for a longer period.

The second school have submitted an application for an assistant for learning foreign languages as a part of a European Union's project. This holds opportunity for all the pupils to get in touch with different cultures and to get used to communication with foreigners, which would be undeniably beneficial.

7) *In your opinion, is it useful for pupils to start learning English at the pre-school age?*

8) *In your opinion, in what age is it optimal to start learning English? Justify your answer, please.*

Here both headmasters are against the idea to start earlier. One justified his answer by stating, that it is more important to master the basics of the mother tongue in the first place and only then continue to other languages. Nevertheless, he mentioned one exception when one of the parents is a foreigner. The other headmaster did not explain his opinion. While the first one is in favour to learn English through games, songs, listening and other interesting activities in the first class and to take it more seriously from the third class on, the other one believes, that pupils should not start before the fourth class, as there is no point to learn it unless

children get in touch with the language on other occasions, such as watching TV programmes.

As I have already mentioned above, my conviction is, that all pupils should be able to pronounce properly in their mother tongue. That is the only barrier for me when thinking about early - that means the pre-school period - start of learning English.

For the last part of this chapter, it is quite difficult for me to summarize it in any way, as I have had only two samples to work with. Nevertheless, I was astonished by one or two facts. Firstly, at some schools the qualification is not so important as I assumed it would be. As a result, the high number of unqualified teachers was rather shocking for me. Once again, this is already changing due to the new rules given by the Ministry of Education. All in all, I cannot deduce any reasonable conclusions due to the low number of questionnaires. Still, one great positive we could have witnessed here is, that there are ideas how to innovate learning process, which is very important.

2.4. Comparison

In this part I am going to compare the results of a standard test for pupils who are currently at the sixth class. This test was downloaded from the official website of the Ministry of Education ². As there was no possibility to download tracks for listening, I have decided to use KET tests (The Key English Test) for this part. The original of the whole test can be seen in attachments as well as a sample of a filled-in test.

However, the essential problem was to find pupils who would be appropriate for the purpose of the comparison. My intention was to compare results of two groups. The first one would include children who have started learning English at the early - that is pre-school - age. The second group would consist of pupils who have been studying English since the third class. While for the second one I have managed to gather some volunteers, speaking of the first one, I was able to find only one suitable candidate. Nevertheless, I asked them all to take the test and collected the paper afterwards. A group of five against one pupil. I am about to include the tests and comments on them in this thesis, although I am fully aware that the conclusions cannot be taken very seriously as they could change rapidly with a bigger number of tested students.

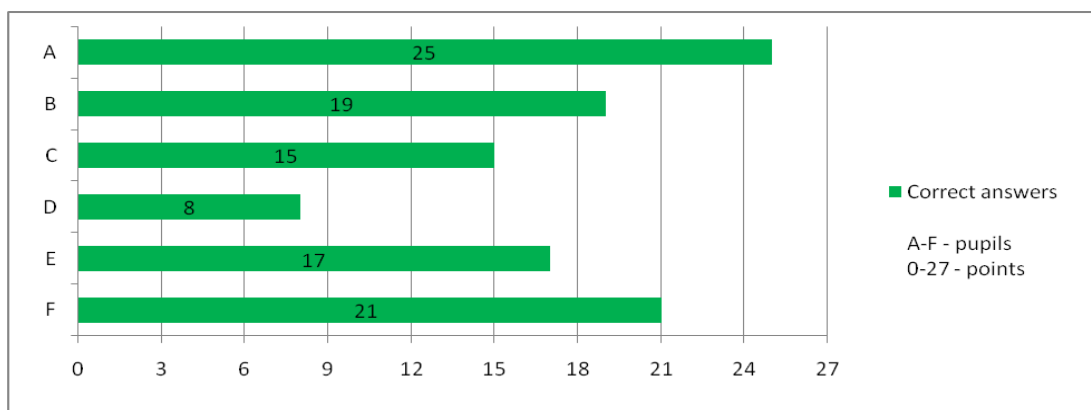
There are three parts of the test - reading with comprehension, writing and listening. In my opinion, all these in general can be easily trained in order to achieve high results. Therefore, I do not expect big differences. And yet, especially listening depends on student's ability to comprehend a spoken language which is heavily influenced by his/her previous experience with it. That implies that, at least in this part, time does matter and that it works to advantage of those who have started earlier. I also meant to include a speaking part. I believe, that the main differences - if there are any - would show up here. However, after a discussion with children and their parents, teachers responsible for the pupils did not allow me to make a record during the test. On that account, I had to omit this part, as I could not give any evidence of it.

² <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/zakladni-vzdelavani/standardy-pro-zakladni-vzdelavani-1>

In all parts, each pupil is represented in the graph by a letter. *A* refers to the one who has started learning English at the age of four. The rest started in the third class.

2.4.1. Reading with comprehension

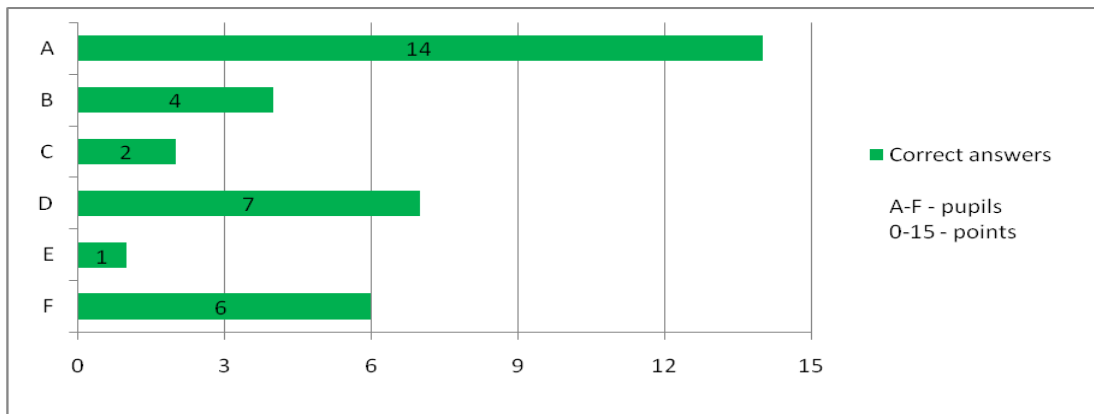
I did not expect much differences in this type of exercise. Reading is often practised at schools no matter what books are used. So far, I have not witnessed a lesson in which this specific skill would not be included in some way. Sometimes, it was in a form of an introductory article of a new unit, another time, it was an exercise with various tasks. Therefore, I have assumed that all the pupils would receive at least twenty points. Obviously, I have overestimated them.



The reason for such low results in some cases might have been the lack of talent for the language or motivation for achieving good score at the test. Nevertheless, we can see that the pupil *A* gained twenty-five points. On that account, we could say that longer practice pays off. However, compared to pupil *F* the results are not so convincing. So all in all, speaking of this part, I reckon, that early start does not seem to be highly beneficial.

2.4.2. Writing

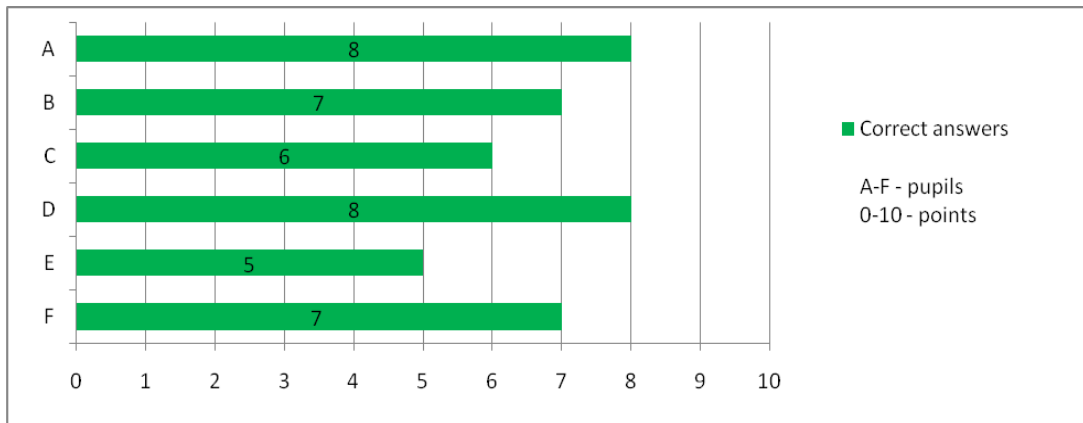
I believe that writing is a unique skill. It needs to be trained as any other skill, but not so heavily, for its main core consists of the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. There are several rules that a learner should know in order to accomplish a writing task, for example, the form of a formal letter, its proper start and end. I have expected results to be more balanced.



In my opinion, the gap between the pupil A and the others was caused by the lack of practising. I base my assumption on the fact, that they all omitted the tasks where they were supposed to fill in the gaps in the postcard and answer the email. It is my personal conviction, that they have never been asked to do anything like that and that they had no idea what to do with it. This is a very bad view in general. Although I agree, that there are more pressing issues and things students need to learn, I reckon, that a student in the sixth class should be able to answer a simple email such as the one that appeared in this test.

2.4.3. Listening

Here I have expected much bigger differences and yet it is this part in which all tested students are at the same or at least very similar level. Concerning all three parts of the test, the last one surprised me most. I reckon, there is no doubt that in terms of listening skills, earlier start does not seem to lead to outstanding results.



From the results we can see, that the only part in which the pupil A exceeded the rest was writing. It is difficult for me to estimate any conclusions from this chapter as there is such a low number of tested pupils. Nevertheless, based on these tests, I dare to say that there is no obvious and verifiable proof that learning English from the early age influence the final level in the language at pupils at the primary school. Although there were bigger differences in other two parts of the test, I believe, that these might have been caused by the lack of practice. In other words, with a different teacher, who would spent more time training writing skills and reading, the other pupils might have achieved a higher score. But once again, this conclusion is based on a very low number of tests and therefore cannot be taken at face value.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this thesis was to support or deny the idea that an early start of learning English as the second language is profitable for learners in general. My hypothesis was that the final level in a language is not determined by the age when a student starts to learn, but that it is mainly influenced by teachers and overall environment and atmosphere in which the learning process occurs.

The first part is devoted to the theoretical background concerning various concepts and suggestions about learning a foreign language. Many ideas of how to teach or what to teach at a specific age are presented. Some are held from the position of a native speaker and therefore cannot be implied effectively in the Czech educational system. However, the majority of them set a useful scheme which leads to efficient and encouraging environment for learning.

The second part contains the analysis of questionnaires distributed to parents, teachers and headmasters and the comparison of pupils who started learning English at different ages. I have had problems with finding a sufficient number of respondents among headmasters/mistresses and pupils. Hence, conclusions from those two chapters should not be taken at face value. Nevertheless, I have decided to include them in this work either way.

Summarizing the first group of questionnaires, majority of parents want their children to study English at the nursery age, because it is an important skill these days. Parents whose children learn English at their nursery school do not consider the methodology relevant. That might be caused by the fact, that in many places there is not enough nursery schools for all children. Others weigh the features of individual courses before choosing one. As for expectations, knowledge of basic vocabulary such as colours and numbers, learning through games and songs and development of a friendly attitude was emphasized. Based on the suggestions from the first part we know, that learning through games is most effective at this age. But while the knowledge of vocabulary can vanish, the friendly attitude prevails and therefore every teacher should take special care of this aspect of teaching. We could also see that more than half of the parents take part in their children's learning. They study

with them at home, which is definitely good news. Nevertheless, it should stay in certain limits so that it does not spoil the fun of learning English in the first place.

The main issue in the second chapter, dealing with questionnaires collected from teachers teaching English at primary schools, was whether they see any negative or positive results of an early start of learning English. Although they mentioned several positive impacts such as better orientation in the foreign language and enthusiasm during lessons, and only one negative which was the adoption of incorrect pronunciation, most of them incline towards the idea to start with English in the first class. Nevertheless, as only the matter of pronunciation was mentioned as a possible danger of learning of English at pre-school age, I have suggested that once a pupil masters this aspect of his/her mother tongue, they are ready to start learning the second language. In other words, the ability to pronounce properly should become the criterion, not the age.

The main purpose of the third group of questionnaires given to headmasters was to find out what is their position on non-qualified teachers concerning English and also what is the most suitable age for learning the second language. For the first issue, they prefer other features of teachers and the qualification is not a determining factor for them. The first class is considered as the optimal age to start learning the second language as pupils should firstly master basics of their mother tongue. Unfortunately, due to an extremely low number of questionnaires no serious conclusions can be inferred from this chapter.

Similar thing can be said about the comparison. Although I think it could provide a reliable proof whether earlier does (not) mean the better, with the given number of tests it becomes rather a base for a further discussion. Nevertheless, the only part in which a pupil who started learning English at the age of four exceeded the others was writing. This, in my opinion, was not influenced by his early education, but by the fact that the others have not been practising this type of task during lessons at all. Therefore, I believe that there are no verifiable proofs that learning English from the early age has an obvious impact on the final level in the language.

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DOTAZNÍK PRO RODIČE DĚTÍ V MATEŘSKÉ ŠKOLE

Dobrý den,

jmenuji se Eva Malečková a ráda bych Vás touto cestou požádala o pomoc při realizování praktické části mé diplomové práce. Název této práce zní: „Dříve (ne)znamená lépe - otázka rané výuky angličtiny v českém školství“. Cílem je zjistit jak/zda raná výuka cizího jazyka ovlivňuje výstupní úroveň v jazyce u dětí základní školy. Dotazník je anonymní. V případě jakýchkoliv problémů či nejasností při vyplňování dotazníků, se na mě prosím neváhejte obrátit, buď elektronickou cestou eva.maleckova@uhk.cz či tel. 775 998 378.

Předem Vám velmi děkuji za Vaši ochotu.

1) Jaký význam má podle Vás znalost angličtiny (schopnost domluvit se) v dnešní době?

Světový jazyk by měl znát každý!

2) Hráí přístup k výuce (miněno AJ roli při výběru škol/kroužků pro Vaše dítě?

a) ano b) ne

3) Setkávají/ly se Vaše děti s AJ i někde jinde než ve školce, například v podobě kroužků?

a) ano b) ne

Jestliže ano, popište prosím, o jakou výuku se jedná, jak dlouho trvá jednotlivá lekce a kolikrát týdně probíhá.

V jazykové škole je kurz jednou týdně pro malí děti: od 8:00 - 11:30.

4) Co očekáváte od výuky angličtiny v předškolním věku - co by se podle Vás mělo v tomto věku dítě naučit?

Že se tam budou učit hrát.

5) Učíte se doma s Vaším dítětem angličtinu?

a) ano b) ne

Pokud ano, kolik hodin týdně se učíte s Vaším dítětem?

a) 1 hodinu b) 2 hodiny c) 3 hodiny d) 4 a více hodin

Dotazník pro vyučující

Dobrý den,

jmenuji se Eva Malečková a ráda bych Vás touto cestou požádala o pomoc při realizování praktické části mé diplomové práce. Název této práce zní: „Dříve (ne)znamená lépe - otázka rané výuky angličtiny v českém školství“. Cílem je zjistit jak/zda raná výuka cizího jazyka ovlivňuje výstupní úroveň v jazyce u dětí základní školy. Dotazník je anonymní. V případě jakýchkoliv problémů či nejasností při vyplňování, se na mě prosím neváhejte obrátit, buď elektronickou cestou eva.maleckova@uhk.cz či tel. 775 998 378.

Předem Vám velmi děkuji za Vaši ochotu.

1) Jaká je Vaše aprobace?

- a) Výuka na I. stupni ZŠ b) AJ pro II. stupeň ZŠ c) Jiná (uvedte konkrétně)

2) Popište prosím svou učitelskou praxi (délka, typ školy).

3) Jak dlouho učíte AJ?

- a) 1 – 5 let b) 6 – 10 let c) 11 – 15 let
d) 16 – 20 let e) 21 a více let

4) Spatřujete nějaký rozdíl mezi dětmi, které se učí AJ od úplného začátku v rámci povinného předmětu, a těmi, které se setkaly s AJ již dříve například formou kroužků či výuky v předškolním věku?

- a) ano b) pouze nepatrně c) ne

Pokud ano, v čem se to nejvíce projevuje?

5) Je nutné tomu přizpůsobit výuku?

- a) ano b) ne

Pokud ano, jakým způsobem?

6) Jestliže zde nějaké rozdíly jsou, za jak dlouho podle Vaší zkušenosti se je podaří vyrovnat, případně zda vůbec?

7) Je podle Vás pro žáky užitečné začít studium AJ již v předškolním věku?

- a) ano b) ne

Zdůvodněte prosím Vaši odpověď.

8) V jakém věku je podle Vás optimální začít s výukou AJ? Svou odpověď prosím zdůvodněte.

- a) 2 – 3 roků b) 4 – 5 let c) 6 – 7 let d) 8 – 9 let

DOTAZNÍK PRO VYUČJÍCÍ

Dobrý den,

jmenuji se Eva Malečková a ráda bych Vás touto cestou požádala o pomoc při realizování praktické části mé diplomové práce. Název této práce zní: „Dříve (ne)znamená lépe - otázka rané výuky angličtiny v českém školství“. Cílem je zjistit jak/zda raná výuka cizího jazyka ovlivňuje výstupní úroveň v jazyce u dětí základní školy. Dotazník je anonymní. V případě jakýchkoliv problémů či nejasností při vyplňování, se na mě prosím neváhejte obrátit, buď elektronickou cestou eva.maleckova@uhk.cz či tel. 775 998 378.

Předem Vám velmi děkuji za Vaši ochotu.

1) Jaká je Vaše aprobace?

- a) Výuka na I. stupni ZŠ b) AJ pro II. stupeň ZŠ c) Jiná (uvedte konkrétně) *č - Rj*

2) Popište prosím svou učitelskou praxi (délka, typ školy).

15 let - základní škola

3) Jak dlouho učíte AJ?

- a) 1 – 5 let b) 6 – 10 let c) 11 – 15 let
d) 16 – 20 let e) 21 a více let

4) Spatřujete nějaký rozdíl mezi dětmi, které se učí AJ od úplného začátku v rámci povinného

předmětu, a těmi, které se setkaly s AJ již dříve například formou kroužků či výuky v předškolním věku?

- a) ano b) pouze nepatrně c) ne

Pokud ano, v čem se to nejvíce projevuje?

*snalost kmitček
myšlenek a přátku výuky*

5) Je nutné tomu přizpůsobit výuku?

- a) ano b) ne

Pokud ano, jakým způsobem?

6) Jestliže zde nějaké rozdíly jsou, za jak dlouho podle Vaší zkušenosti se je podaří vyrovnat, případně zda vůbec?

- rozdíl se vyrovná během půl roku

7) Je podle Vás pro žáky užitečné začít studium AJ již v předškolním věku?

a) ano

b) ne

Zdůvodněte prosím Vaši odpověď.

- nejake v předškolním věku
nežijí, lepší rozvoj k AJ
- děti si učení
ale jinak pro předškolní věk ne
- děti si učení
ale jinak pro předškolní věk ne

8) V jakém věku je podle Vás optimální začít s výukou AJ? Svou odpověď prosím zdůvodněte.

a) 2 – 3 roků

b) 4 – 5 let

c) 6 – 7 let

d) 8 – 9 let

- děti umí psát
- mají větší znalosti
k AJ

Dotazník pro ředitele/ky

Dobrý den,

jmenuji se Eva Malečková a ráda bych Vás touto cestou požádala o pomoc při realizování praktické části mé diplomové práce. Název této práce zní: „Dříve (ne)znamená lépe - otázka rané výuky angličtiny v českém školství“. Cílem je zjistit jak/zda raná výuka cizího jazyka ovlivňuje výstupní úroveň v jazyce u dětí základní školy. Dotazník je anonymní. V případě jakýchkoliv problémů či nejasností při vyplňování dotazníků, se na mě prosím neváhejte obrátit, buď elektronickou cestou eva.maleckova@uhk.cz či tel. 775 998 378.

Předem Vám velmi děkuji za Vaši ochotu.

1) Od jakého ročníku je na Vaší škole AJ povinný?

- a) První b) Druhý c) Třetí

Je případně možné ho absolvovat formou nepovinného předmětu dříve?

- a) Ano b) Ne

Pokud ano, v jakém ročníku?

2) Jaké kroužky či jiné mimoškolní aktivity zaměřené na výuku AJ Vaše škola nabízí?

3) Kolik učitelů vyučuje AJ na Vaší škole?

Kolik z nich je kvalifikovaných v oboru učitelství AJ?

Kolik z těchto učitelů má kvalifikaci na první stupeň ZŠ?

4) Kolik žadatelů o místo s kvalifikací k výuce AJ na prvním stupni přibližně evidujete?

5) Je pro Vás rozhodující kvalifikovanost v oboru učitelství AJ u učitelů na prvním stupni?

- a) Jednoznačně ano b) Spíše ano c) Spíše ne d) Vůbec ne

6) Chystáte v rámci výuky AJ nějaké změny? Popište prosím jaké.

(například zavedení AJ jako povinného předmětu již od první třídy, navázání

spolupráce s rodilým mluvčím, koupě nových učebnic, atd.)

7) Je podle Vás pro žáky užitečné začít studium AJ již v předškolním věku?

- a) Ano b) Ne

Zdůvodněte prosím Vaši odpověď.

8) V jakém věku je podle Vás optimální začít s výukou AJ?

- a) věk 2 – 3 roky b) 4 – 5 let c) 6 – 7 let d) 8 – 9 let

Svou odpověď prosím zdůvodněte.

DOTAZNÍK PRO ŘEDITELE/KY

Dobrý den,

jmenuji se Eva Malečková a ráda bych Vás touto cestou požádala o pomoc při realizování praktické části mé diplomové práce. Název této práce zní: „Dříve (ne)znamená lépe - otázka rané výuky angličtiny v českém školství“. Cílem je zjistit jak/zda raná výuka cizího jazyka ovlivňuje výstupní úroveň v jazyce u dětí základní školy. Dotazník je anonymní. V případě jakýchkoliv problémů či nejasností při vyplňování dotazníků, se na mě prosím neváhejte obrátit, buď elektronickou cestou eva.maleckova@uhk.cz či tel. 775 998 378.

Předem Vám velmi děkuji za Vaši ochotu.

1) Od jakého ročníku je na Vaší škole AJ povinný?

- a) První b) Druhý c) Třetí

Je případně možné ho absolvovat formou nepovinného předmětu dříve?

- a) Ano b) Ne

Pokud ano, v jakém ročníku?

V 1. a 2. TŘÍDE VYUČUJEME AJ INTEGROVANOU V PŘEVUCE. OD 3. ROČNÍKU JE POUVNNÁ. VE 4. A 5. ROČNÍKU VEMKAJÍ JAZYKOVÉ SKUPINY A 1 HODINA NAJÍC NEPOVINNÉ KONVERZACE.

2) Jaké kroužky či jiné mimoškolní aktivity zaměřené na výuku AJ Vaše škola nabízí?

NABÍZÍME KROUŽEK OD 1. TŘÍDY, DÁLE MÁME V ŽERUNU 1 TYDENNÍ JAZYKOVÝ KURZ. V LOUŠKÉM ZOOE PŮSOBIL NA ŠKOLE RODILÝ MLUVČÍ.

3) Kolik učitelů vyučuje AJ na Vaší škole? 6 UČITELŮ

Kolik z nich je kvalifikovaných v oboru učitelství AJ? 3

Kolik z těchto učitelů má kvalifikaci na první stupeň ZŠ? 2

4) Kolik žadatelů o místo s kvalifikací k výuce AJ na prvním stupni přibližně evidujete? 2 ŽADATELE

5) Je pro Vás rozhodující kvalifikovanost v oboru učitelství AJ u učitelů na prvním stupni?

- a) Jednoznačně ano b) Spíše ano c) Spíše ne d) Vůbec ne

SPÍŠE PREFERUJEME KVALIFIKOVANOST S APROBACÍ AJ.

6) Chystáte v rámci výuky AJ nějaké změny? Popište prosím jaké.

(například zavedení AJ jako povinného předmětu již od první třídy, navázání spolupráce s rodilým mluvčím, koupě nových učebnic, atd.)

ODĚTOUVĚ NAVAZAT SPOLUPRÁCI S RODILÝM MLUVČÍM (NEJEN AJ ALE I FJ),
NÁKUP NOVÉ ŠABY PROJECT ENGLISH, VYBAVENÍ UČEBEN, CIZÍCH JAZYKŮ
INTERAKTIVNÍ TABULÍ A ОБЕАМЕН, MODERNIZOVAT OZVUČENÍ, DOPLNIT VÝUKOVÉ
PC PROGRAMY, VĚDEĽAVAT PEDAGOGY, APOD.

7) Je podle Vás pro žáky užitečné začít studium AJ již v předškolním věku?

- a) Ano b) Ne

Zdůvodněte prosím Vaši odpověď.

NE, POKUD NEŽIJÍ VE DVOJAZYČNÉ RODINĚ.
DÁVAM PŘEDNOST NAVĚT ŽÁKY NEJPRVE ZÁKLADY MATEŘSKÉHO JAZYKA A POTÉ
CIZÍ JAZYK!

8) V jakém věku je podle Vás optimální začít s výukou AJ?

- a) věk 2 – 3 roky b) 4 – 5 let c) 6 – 7 let d) 8 – 9 let

Svou odpověď prosím zdůvodněte.

OD 1. TŘÍDY, FORMOU HER, POSLECHŮ, PÍSMÍ A RŮZNÝCH ZAJÍMAVÝCH AKTIVIT.
OD 3. TŘÍDY ZÁKLADY GRAMATIKY.

The Test

Přečti si text a vyřeš následující úkoly.

Dear Peter,

My Grandpa's house is in the country. I stay there during the school holidays. There aren't many cars, and I ride my bike a lot. I go for long walks with Grandpa's dog. I like Grandpa's country home.

During the school term, I live with Mum and Dad in a flat in Liverpool. It's a big city. When I'm there, I go shopping with Mum. I go to the cinema with Dad. There are lots of cars so I don't ride my bike in the city. I play computer games.

Please write soon.

Love,
Amy

1. Vyhledej v textu, s kým chodí Amy na procházku.

Vyznač vhodný obrázek.



A



B



C

2. Označ, čemu se Amy věnuje ve volném čase.

- A She goes for long walks with Grandpa's dog.
- B She plays the piano.
- C She draws pictures.
- D She plays computer games.

Přečti slovesa a přiřaď k obrázkům.

WRITE

CUT

DRAW

READ

CLOSE THE BOOK



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

Přečti si komiks a označ obrázky čísly 1-6 podle smyslu textu.
Dva obrázky jsou již očíslované.

HERBIE



1

A

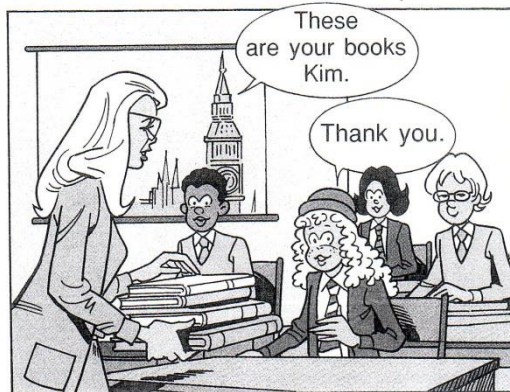


5

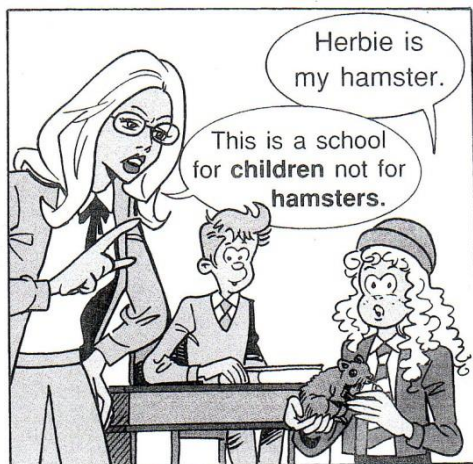
B



C



D



E



F

Přečti si text a vyřeš následující úkoly.

John loves sports. He does some sport nearly every day. He goes swimming on Mondays after school. Then he goes running with some friends. He comes home for dinner. He also plays in two school teams – on Wednesdays he plays basketball and on Thursday evenings he plays in a football team. On Friday and Saturday mornings he goes running again. On Fridays he plays tennis with his father in the afternoon. He also cycles to school every day. Cycling is his favourite sport. On Sunday he has a free day.

1. Napiš správný název dne pod následující obrázky.



a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____

2. Označ správnou odpověď.

John doesn't do any sport _____.

- a. on Tuesdays
- b. on Thursdays
- c. on Sundays
- d. on Mondays

He does more than two sports _____.

- a. on Fridays
- b. on Saturdays
- c. on Thursdays
- d. on Sundays

He enjoys most.

- a. running
- b. basketball
- c. cycling
- d. tennis

3. Označ v tabulce správnou kolonku.

	Monday	Wednesday	Saturday	Friday
He does some sport at school.				
He does sports with a member of his family.				
He comes home for dinner.				

Přečti si text a vyřeš následující úkoly.

Tom Twitter is thirty years old. He lives in a small village called Kennington near Oxford. He drives a train. Every weekday he drives trains from Oxford to London. He likes driving a train. He wants to move to a big town because there is not much to do in the village. In his free time he plays football, he watches TV and he likes reading.

1. Odpověz na otázky.

1. Where does Tom live?

In _____

2. What is Tom's job?

3. Does Tom enjoy living in the village?

4. Does Tom work at the weekends?

5. Does Tom like his job?

Doplň pohlednici z prázdnin. Můžeš se inspirovat tímto obrázkem.



<p>_____ Nicol,</p> <p>I am _____! My holidays are super because _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><u>Love,</u></p> <p>_____</p>	<div data-bbox="1161 1093 1286 1227" style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; width: 78px; height: 60px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <p><u>Nicol Smith,</u> _____</p> <p><u>32 West St,</u> _____</p> <p><u>Brighton,</u> _____</p> <p><u>BN1 2 RT</u> _____</p> <p><u>England</u> _____</p>
--	---

Přečti si Petrův e-mail. Poděkuj mu a odpověz, že přijdeš.

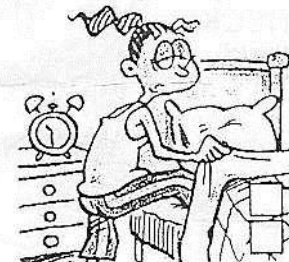
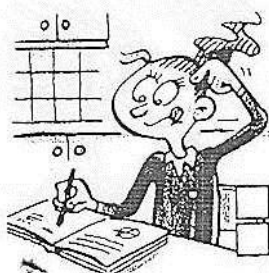
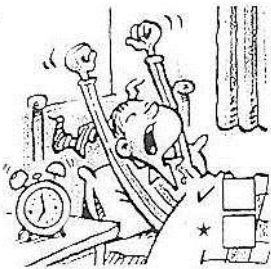
Dear Kim,

It's my birthday next Saturday (4th February). Can you come to my party at 2 p.m.? It will be great fun!

Přečti si text .

Napiš 5 vět o tom, co dělá Ann každé ráno. Obrázková osnova Ti pomůže.

Ann _____ at 7 o'clock. She _____ in her bathroom and brushes her teeth. She has cereal and milk for _____. She likes it. After breakfast she goes to school. Usually she _____ or takes a bus. Lessons start at quarter to nine. Her favourite lesson is Science. She likes animals a lot. She has lunch in the school canteen. She _____ tennis on Tuesdays. On Fridays she has piano lessons. She likes music. Ann has dinner at half past six, after dinner she watches TV or _____ music. She goes to bed at nine, she reads books or comics for twenty minutes and then she _____ sleep.



Přečti si krátký text. Kde se rozhovor odehrává?

Peter: Hey, look! These T-shirts are really cool.

Daniel: What? I'm sorry. I don't understand – what does "cool" mean?

Peter: Oh, it means "great".

Assistant: Good morning. Can I help you?

Peter: Yes, can I have a T-shirt, please?

Assistant: Yes, of course. What colour do you want?

Peter: Black, please.

Assistant: Small, medium or large?

Peter: Have you got a small one?

Assistant: Yes, we have.

Daniel: Small! Is it for you?

Peter: No, it 's for Sue. It's her birthday on Wednesday.

PAPER 2 LISTENING (approximately 30 minutes including 8 minutes transfer time)

PART 1

QUESTIONS 1-5

You will hear five short conversations.

You will hear each conversation twice.

There is one question for each conversation.

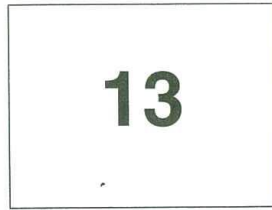
For questions 1-5, put a tick (✓) under the right answer.

Example:

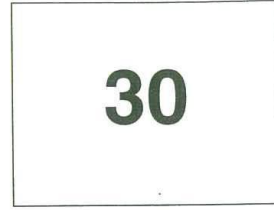
0 How many people were at the meeting?



A



B

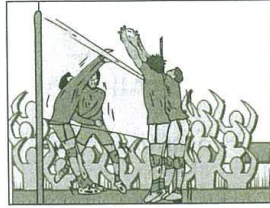


C

1 What's George doing now?



A

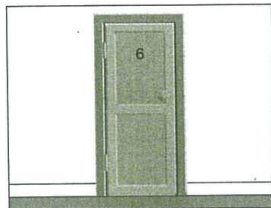


B

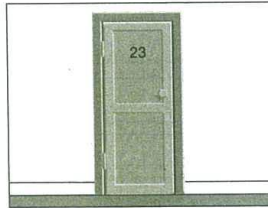


C

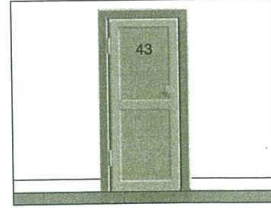
2 Which room will the woman stay in?



A



B



C

60

3 What will the boy wear in the race?



A



B



C

4 What colour will the room be?



A

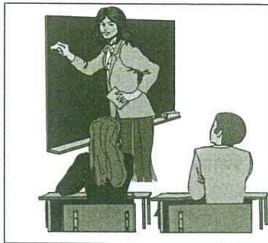


B



C

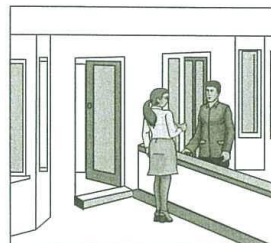
5 Where did Minnie and Richard first meet?



A



B



C

PART 4

QUESTIONS 16–20

You will hear a woman talking to a shop assistant about buying a video film for her daughter.

Listen and complete questions 16–20.

You will hear the conversation twice.

<i>VIDEO</i>	
Actor in film:	Brad Smith
Name of film:	16 Blue
For people:	17 years old or more.
Cost:	18 £
Video shop in:	19 Street
Opposite:	20

1. Reading with comprehension

Přečti si text a vyřeš následující úkoly.

Dear Peter,

My Grandpa's house is in the country. I stay there during the school holidays. There aren't many cars, and I ride my bike a lot. I go for long walks with Grandpa's dog. I like Grandpa's country home.

During the school term, I live with Mum and Dad in a flat in Liverpool. It's a big city. When I'm there, I go shopping with Mum. I go to the cinema with Dad. There are lots of cars so I don't ride my bike in the city. I play computer games.

Please write soon.

Love,
Amy

1. Vyhledej v textu, s kým chodí Amy na procházku.

Vyznač vhodný obrázek.



A



B



C

1/1

2. Označ, čemu se Amy věnuje ve volném čase.

A She goes for long walks with Grandpa's dog.

B She plays the piano.

C She draws pictures.

D She plays computer games. ✓✓

1/2

Přečti slovesa a přiřaď k obrázkům.

WRITE

CUT

DRAW

READ

CLOSE THE BOOK



1. ✓



2. ✓



3. ✓



4. ✓



5. ✓

5/5

Přečti si komiks a označ obrázky čísly 1-6 podle smyslu textu.
 Dva obrázky jsou již očíslované.

HERBIE



1

A



5

B



2 ✓

C



4 ✓

D



6 ✓

E



3 ✓

F

4/4

Přečti si text a vyřeš následující úkoly.

John loves sports. He does some sport nearly every day. He goes swimming on Mondays after school. Then he goes running with some friends. He comes home for dinner. He also plays in two school teams – on Wednesdays he plays basketball and on Thursday evenings he plays in a football team. On Friday and Saturday mornings he goes running again. On Fridays he plays tennis with his father in the afternoon. He also cycles to school every day. Cycling is his favourite sport. On Sunday he has a free day.

1. Napiš správný název dne pod následující obrázky.



- a) Thursday ✓ b) Monday ✓ c) Friday ✓ d) Wednesday ✓
- 4/4

2. Označ správnou odpověď.

John doesn't do any sport _____.

- a. on Tuesdays
- b. on Thursdays
- c. on Sundays ✓
- d. on Mondays ✓

He does more than two sports _____.

- a. on Fridays
- b. on Saturdays
- c. on Thursdays ✓
- d. on Sundays

He enjoys most.

- a. running
- b. basketball
- c. cycling ✓
- d. tennis

3/3

3. Označ v tabulce správnou kolonku.

	Monday	Wednesday	Saturday	Friday
He does some sport at school.		X ✓		
He does sports with a member of his family.				X ✓
He comes home for dinner.	X ✓			

3/3

Přečti si text a vyřeš následující úkoly.

Tom Twitter is thirty years old. He lives in a small village called Kennington near Oxford. He drives a train. Every weekday he drives trains from Oxford to London. He likes driving a train. He wants to move to a big town because there is not much to do in the village. In his free time he plays football, he watches TV and he likes reading.

1. Odpověz na otázky.

1. Where does Tom live?
In Kennington near Oxford ✓
2. What is Tom's job?
He drives a train ✓
3. Does Tom enjoy living in the village?
No. He wants to move to a big town. ✓
4. Does Tom work at the weekends?
Yes. He does. X
5. Does Tom like his job?
Yes. He does. ✓

4/5

25/24

2. Writing

Doplň pohlednici z prázdnin. Můžeš se inspirovat tímto obrázkem.



<p><u>Hi</u> Nicol,</p> <p>I am <u>on holiday</u> My holidays are super because <u>I can swim</u> <u>in the sea</u></p> <p><u>Love,</u> <u>Kate</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><u>Nicol Smith,</u> <u>32 West St,</u> <u>Brighton,</u> <u>BN1 2 RT</u> <u>England</u></p>
---	---

7 obsahové splnění úkolu: 212
gramatická správnost: 111

Přečti si Petrův e-mail. Poděkuj mu a odpověz, že přijdeš.

Dear Kim,

It's my birthday next Saturday (4th February). Can you come to my party at 2 p.m.? It will be great fun!

Hi Peter,
Yes, I will come. Thank you for the e-mail.
Bye
Kim

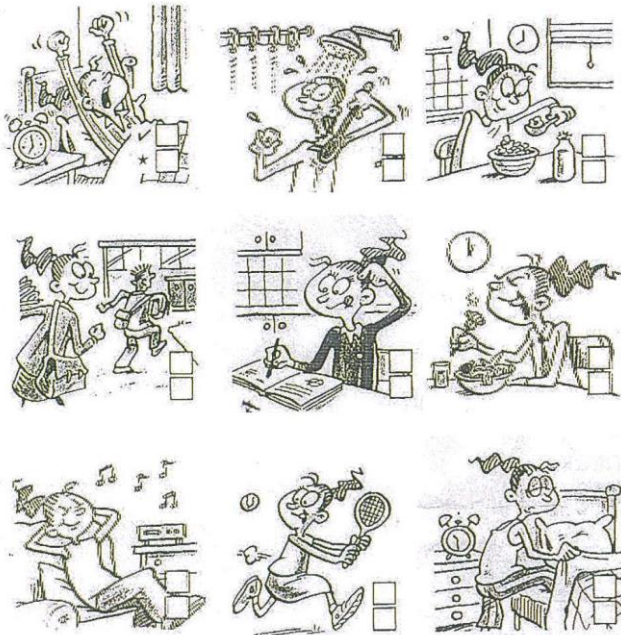
obsahově splnění úkolu: 2/2
stylistická správnost: 1/1
gramatická a pravopisná správnost: 1/1

Přečti si text .

Napiš 5 vět o tom, co dělá Ann každé ráno. Obrázková osnova Ti pomůže.

Ann gets up ✓ at 7 o'clock. She shower takes a bath in her bathroom and brushes her teeth. She has cereal and milk for breakfast ✓. She likes it. After breakfast she goes to school. Usually she walks there ✓ or takes a bus. Lessons start at quarter to nine. Her favourite lesson is Science. She likes animals a lot. She has lunch in the school canteen. She plays ✓ tennis on Tuesdays. On Fridays she has piano lessons. She likes music. Ann has dinner at half past six, after dinner she watches TV or listens to ✓ music. She goes to bed at nine, she reads books or comics for twenty minutes and then she goes to ✓ sleep.

6/4



Přečti si krátký text. Kde se rozhovor odehrává?

Peter: Hey, look! These T-shirts are really cool.

Daniel: What? I'm sorry. I don't understand – what does "cool" mean?

Peter: Oh, it means "great".

Assistant: Good morning. Can I help you?

Peter: Yes, can I have a T-shirt, please?

Assistant: Yes, of course. What colour do you want?

Peter: Black, please.

Assistant: Small, medium or large?

Peter: Have you got a small one?

Assistant: Yes, we have.

Daniel: Small! Is it for you?

Peter: No, it 's for Sue. It's her birthday on Wednesday.

In the shop ✓ 1/1

14/15

PAPER 2 LISTENING (approximately 30 minutes including 8 minutes transfer time)

PART 1

QUESTIONS 1-5

You will hear five short conversations.

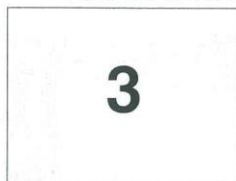
You will hear each conversation twice.

There is one question for each conversation.

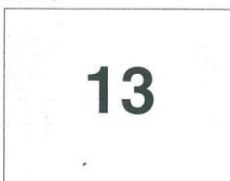
For questions 1-5, put a tick (✓) under the right answer.

Example:

0 How many people were at the meeting?



A



B



C

1 What's George doing now?



A

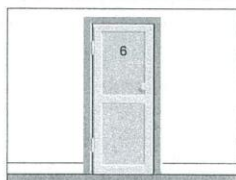


B

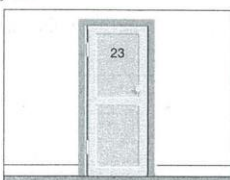


C

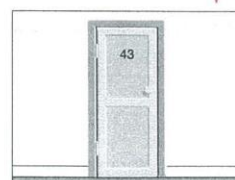
2 Which room will the woman stay in?



A



B



C

60

3 What will the boy wear in the race?



A



B



C



4 What colour will the room be?



A



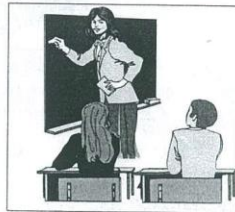
B



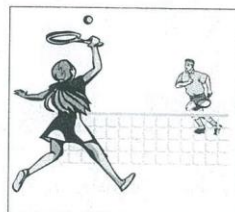
C



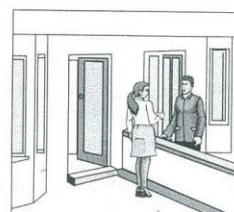
5 Where did Minnie and Richard first meet?



A



B



C



PART 4

QUESTIONS 16-20

You will hear a woman talking to a shop assistant about buying a video film for her daughter.

Listen and complete questions 16-20.

You will hear the conversation twice.

VIDEO	
Actor in film:	Brad Smith
Name of film:	16 Blue <u>coffe</u> ✓
For people:	17 <u>12</u> years old or more. ✓
Cost:	18 £ <u>5.99</u> ✓
Video shop in:	19 <u>sh</u> Street ✗
Opposite:	20 <u>bank</u> ✓

8/10