UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

PEDAGOGICKÁ FAKULTA

Ústav cizích jazyků

Diplomová práce

Bc. David Rouš

Acquisition Through Receptive Skills in Lower Secondary School EFL Classroom

Olomouc 2020   vedoucí práce: Mgr. Josef Nevařil, Ph.D.

Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou práci vypracoval samostatně a použil jsem jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Olomouci ___. __. ____

....

vlastnoruční podpis

Abstract

The diploma thesis focuses on highlighting receptive skills in terms of their potential to improve one's EFL proficiency as compared to productive skills. The work is divided into two parts. The first – the theoretical part describes acquisition and its related aspects and hypotheses as a basis for the practical part, which presents the results of a two-phase quantitative research conducted on four lower secondary schools in the Olomouc region. The research was done on a large-enough sample to show certain trends in learners' and teachers' preferences, but due to the global circumstances of the year 2020, during which most of this work was done, the sample is not large enough to provide conclusive evidence, and further research needs to be done. The questionnaires are mainly focused on teachers' preference in terms of productive vs. receptive skills and on learners' preference related to their free-time consumption of English as a foreign language. Furthermore, two theoretical lesson plans are proposed.

CONTENTS

Introduction

The thesis focuses on acquisition of English as a foreign language through receptive skills – listening and reading. It attempts to show that receptive skills are superior to productive skills in terms of efficiency as well as usefulness when acquiring English as a foreign language. The main argument behind this thesis is that teachers, as well as learners, focus perhaps too much on the ability to *speak* English, and not enough on the ability to *understand* English.

The work is broken down into two parts – the theoretical part and the practical part. The theoretical part presents a synthesis of essential information and principles regarding foreign language acquisition, mostly via receptive skills. It names and briefly describes all four language skills, their mutual comparison, as well as problems teachers might face while teaching these skills. It describes important factors that need to be considered in relation to language acquisition, such as age, the role of the mother tongue, affective filters, etc. It presents hypotheses proposed by specific authors that directly underline the argument of the thesis and explain the importance of comprehensible input. Additionally, it briefly relates acquisition to aspects of English that are usually focused on in lower secondary schools, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

The practical part then presents results of a quantitative research conducted at four lower secondary schools in the Olomouc region. The questionnaire attempts to discover learners' and teachers' preferences and views regarding the four essential language skills. These are compared in a manner that shows whether learners/teachers assign appropriate importance to receptive skills. The answers are then compared with hypotheses proposed in the practical part. The practical part attempts to point at the lack of attention paid to receptive skills in lower secondary schools.

The aim of the thesis is to find out whether learners and teachers focus more on producing English as a foreign language, rather than understanding it. The main argument that this thesis points at is that receptive skills are a rather more adequate way of utilizing the amount of lessons and effort that is put into EFL instruction during a children's school years. It attempts to find out whether learners/teachers believe English can be acquired through listening and reading only, whether productive skills can be acquired from well-developed receptive skills, which skills learners/teachers consider to be indicators of good EFL proficiency, etc.

While the word *motivation* is rarely mentioned in the work, it is an essential idea underlying it. Motivation, in its most basic form, can be described as a vision of an end-goal. Teachers can be motivated by the vision of their pupils speaking English on a vacation, or by the vision that their pupils utilize English for consuming vast amounts of interesting content that is available because of today's technology. In my opinion, the direction of this simple end-goal vision makes a great difference.

Objectively, an insignificant number of learners will go on to live the rest of their lives in an English-speaking country. Most of them will only travel. The question is whether trying to teach them to **speak** English so that they can communicate with foreigners on a vacation is sufficient motivation for a foreign language class that learners take multiple times a week for approximately thirteen years. The argument that I deeply believe in, and share in this thesis, is that English is better utilized when used for receiving input, or **understanding**.

Although the phrase *'to speak English'* is often used to describe an overall competence that includes all four skills, throughout this work, I deliberately avoid using the phrase in this sense in order to make the point that it subconsciously brings too much focus on the *speaking* part, and neglects *understanding*. The phrase 'to speak English' is thus only used in relation to the *speaking skill* throughout this work.

THEORETICAL PART

The theoretical part of the thesis is broken down into four chapters. First, the broadest topics are presented, such as introducing language skills themselves in Chapter 1. Slightly narrower problematics are discussed in Chapter 2, particularly factors that need to be taken into consideration when talking about acquisition. The most concrete matter is introduced in Chapter 3 – three major hypotheses that should underline the main argument of this work – that certain language skills are much more efficient for learning English than others. The theoretical part is concluded with Chapter 4 where the acquisition is associated with the most commonly used aspects of English in Czech lower secondary schools.

1 Language skills

The chapter lists and describes the four language skills and their most common pitfalls, as well as ways they are taught in schools. The two productive skills are briefly summarized, as the thesis focuses on the acquisition of English as a foreign language through receptive skills – reading and listening. These are described more in-depth, so their share in this chapter includes a broader view of how they are taught in schools and ways these skills and along with them language itself are acquired.

Although Harmer (2007, p.265) introduces his chapter about language skills with the immediate argument that in real-life situations, language is used in tandem, typically we come across four types of language skills. This type of division is most often used by teachers. They are, of course, speaking, writing, reading and listening. Husain's (2015, p.2) article's graphic suggests that each of the four aforementioned skills always belongs into two of the four following categories: **Productive skills, Receptive skills, Aural-Oral skills and Graphic-Motor skills**. Productive skills include speaking and writing, while receptive skills include the other two – reading and listening. The other division sees listening and speaking as Aural-Oral skills and reading and writing as Graphic-Motor skills (see Figures 1 and 2 below).
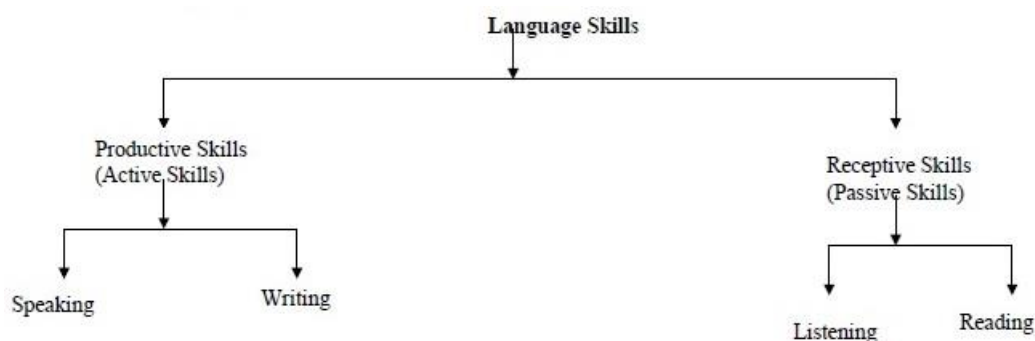
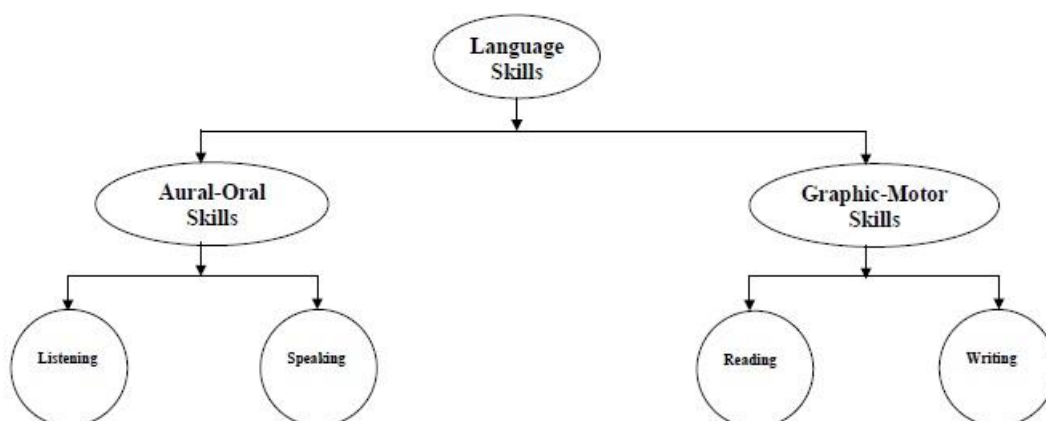*Figure 1: Productive and receptive skills (Husain, 2015, p.2)*

Figure 2: Aural-oral and graphic-motor skills (Husain, 2015, p.3)

Since the thesis aims to present arguments for receptive skills being superior to productive skills, this distinction is the better suited one for the work. Common sense will certainly agree with Harmer's (2007, p.265) statements that even in class, when one learner is to produce output – that output becomes input for other learners. Then there is the teacher's feedback, another input. In my opinion, input far outweighs output. It is difficult to imagine a situation where there would be output without input preceding it. This opinion is supported with the work of Stephen Krashen and others in Chapter 3, where the so called *Input Hypothesis* is introduced.

1.1 Speaking

The name of each individual skill is fairly self-explanatory. Learners have acquired the skill of speaking if they are able to produce language using their oral orifices. Because of the linearity of speech, Thornbury (2005, p. 2) names severely limited time for planning as the main complication during speech, especially in a foreign language. Moreover, planning for the next sentence usually overlaps with another sentence being currently uttered. Speech, compared to

for example writing, can thus be described as mostly **spontaneous**. Not all the time, however. (Thornbury, 2005, p. 2)

There are further distinctions to speaking. Harmer (2007, p. 343) lists several distinctions based on speaking events. Aside from regular conversation, which is usually unplanned, there are occasions such as a lecture or a wedding speech, during which planned speech occurs. Another important general distinction is the level of interaction. Buying a newspaper at a news kiosk could be described as **interactive speech**, whereas leaving a voice message is **non-interactive speech**. (Harmer, 2007, p. 343)

There are several common problems surrounding the speaking skill in our schools. First and foremost is the lack of confidence during speech. Thornbury (2005, p. 28) attributes this problem to the shortage of opportunities for practice. In his view (other authors share the same view; e.g. Stephen Krashen, Jeremy Harmer), practice of speaking in EFL is often only devoted to rehearsing grammar or other specific items. (Thornbury, 2005, p. 28)

However, for most efficient practice of speaking, conversations should occur for the sole purpose of interactive speaking itself, sometimes even without correction of errors. After all, that is how children learn to speak their first language – mothers and caretakers do not correct every error in every utterance in a child's speech. They only focus on the content and meaning of what the child is saying. If a child says "The sky green.", then it is much more likely that the mother will tell the child that the sky is blue, rather than telling him/her that he/she forgot to use the auxiliary verb *is*. The latter is always easier to acquire through listening to other people speaking than the former. Thornbury's main objection to teaching speaking is that "All language teaching methods (apart from the most bookish) prioritize speaking, but **less as a skill in its own right** than as a means of practicing grammar" (Thornbury, 2005, p. 28).

1.2 Writing

Compared to speaking, writing is a slower, more thought through process. Although in most situations, there is more time to plan written discourse than there is to plan speech, there is also higher demand in several aspects. The most obvious ones would be spelling, punctuation, etc., which, if done incorrectly, may "not often prevent the understanding of a written message, [but] it can adversely affect the reader's judgement" (Harmer, 2007, p. 324).

Particularly in the English language, spelling problems are often generated by the fact that the sound of a word very rarely corresponds with its written form. This issue is underlined

by the fact that there are multiple varieties of English (Harmer, 2007, p. 325). Furthermore, Ur (2009, p. 161) lists overall organization as one of the main differences between speaking and writing. While the writer has more time to work out what they are going to produce (which, according to Harmer [2007, p. 326] can turn into a disadvantage, given that a lesson is typically time-restricted), it is expected of them that the written text "conforms more to conventional rules of grammar, and its vocabulary is more precise and formal" (Ur, 2009, p. 161).

Furthermore, speech often allows for the use of dialects, while written discourse usually only has one standard form in each language. And perhaps the most important difference between speaking and writing is that, in a speaker's native language, speaking is most often acquired, whereas writing is in most cases deliberately taught and learned. (Ur, 2009, p. 161)

In school, there are various purposes for which writing can be done. Harmer (2007, p. 330) distinguishes between writing for learning and writing for writing. This distinction can be applied to any of the four skills. The main idea is that there is a difference between making learners write only for the purposes of for example testing their knowledge or simply as a device for learning the language. If we are to teach writing for writing's sake, we need to do more. For building the writing habit, for example, Harmer (2007, p. 329) suggests that it is important to engage the learner by making them write about something of their own interest. This should eliminate the block that a learner may have from lack of confidence or enthusiasm. However, it still needs to be done in a carefully organized way.

1.3 Reading

Harmer (2015, p. 99) lists many reasons reading is useful in one's life, spanning from reading for pleasure to work-related purposes. He declares that "reading is useful for language acquisition. Provided that students more or less understand what they read, the more they read, the better they get at it" (Harmer, 2015, p. 99).

Grellet (1990, p. 8) challenges the old notion that receptive skills are passive skills, calling reading an *active skill*, and justifying it by saying that it requires constant active cognitive processes such as *guessing, predicting, checking,* etc. "Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible" (Grellet, 1990, p. 3). As he puts it, "reading is a constant process of guessing, and what one brings to the text is often more important than what one finds in it" (Grellet, 1990, p. 7). By this, Grellet means that when a learner approaches a text, they need to do so with certain presuppositions in mind,

respectively something they can associate the text with. That is why he calls for the need to lead learners to "use what they know to understand unknown elements" (Grellet, 1990, p. 7).

Ur (2009, p. 138) warns that reading, in the *skill* sense of the word, means 'reading and understanding', signaling that the ability to read individual words but not being able to comprehend the meaning of sentences and/or the general meaning of larger structures, cannot be considered *reading* but "merely decoding" (Ur, 2009, p. 138). Grellet (1990, p.6) remembers that not long before he wrote his book, it was a standard way of teaching reading using only sentences and units shorter than the sentence. He says that sentences in relation to each other were viewed as, though thematically connected, separate units. Grellet expresses his disapproval of this way of teaching, writing: "If reading is to be efficient, the structure of longer units such as the paragraph or the whole text must be understood" (Grellet, 1990, p. 6). This is partly why Ur points out that it is "generally preferable to begin reading only after the learners have some basic knowledge of the spoken language, so that reading becomes as quickly as possible a matter of recognizing meanings rather than deciphering symbols" (Ur, 2009, p. 141). Grellet even suggests that reading exercises should at first only aim at teaching learners to extract the main idea of a text, or its gist, before moving on to reading into the text in greater detail, recognizing grammar, vocabulary, etc. (Grellet, 1990, p. 6)

There are many ways people can read in their own language, and this, of course, is applicable to English as a foreign language. Grellet (1990, p. 4) lists two main reasons for reading: reading for pleasure, and reading for information. Based on these, the reader selects the manner in which he/she is going to read the text. These are fairly commonly known, at least in English-speaking countries. The four following quotations are definitions as Grellet (1990, p. 4) summarizes them in his work *Developing Reading Skills*:

- Skimming: "Quickly running one's eyes over a text to get the gist of it."
- Scanning: "Quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information."
- Extensive reading: "Reading longer texts, usually for one's own pleasure. This is a fluency activity, mainly involving global understanding."
- Intensive reading: "Reading shorter texts, to extract specific information. This is more an accuracy activity involving reading for detail." (Grellet, 1990, p. 4)

1.4 Listening

The span of reasons for why one should want to master the skill of listening is possibly the broadest of the four skills, ranging from simply wanting to understand other people during face-to-face conversations or speeches, wanting to understand lyrics in music, to wanting to watch film, TV shows, internet videos, etc. Harmer (2015, p. 133) explains that listening is good for our learners' pronunciation, because "the more they hear and understand English being spoken, the more they absorb appropriate pitch and intonation" (Harmer, 2015, p. 133). Even though most usually the main source of listening to English is the teacher, Nakic (2015, p. 7) believes that learners should be led from the earliest stages to try and understand spoken English in more varied aspects. This does not necessarily mean the use of authentic materials, as Nakic argues that authentic texts have too much variety in respects to intonation, dialect, etc., and listening at the beginning level should instead be accompanied by dedicated material. Instead, Nakic (2015, p. 7) advocates for practice via *speaking*, so that the learner strengthens what they have learned. The same principle can be seen for example when acquiring motor skills for a specific type of handywork – the learner will observe how the motion is done and then will try to replicate that motion on their own. However, though significantly harder, it is not impossible for the learner to try and work out the motion on their own without a visual example, whereas it is impossible for a learner of English as a foreign language to speak words that they have never heard or read.

As with reading, listening can be *intensive* or *extensive*. Harmer (2015, p. 134) describes extensive listening as listening often done away from the classroom, for pleasure or any reason other than working on listening itself. The material the learner consumes should be one they enjoy. Harmer (2015, p. 134) also suggests that a form of extensive listening could be watching an English film with subtitles. Harmer does not state whether he means subtitles in English or in the learner's native language, but believes that this leads to absorbing the language.

Based on my own experience with acquisition of English, I believe it is best to omit subtitles completely and accept the fact that understanding the dialogue is a challenge. This way, learners are forced to try and understand. I believe subtitles only generate complacency and, if not done solely for the purpose of learning the skill of *listening*, the viewer will eventually adapt and ignore the spoken dialogue and only rely on the subtitles.

Where subtitles are necessary, I would recommend using English subtitles for *intensive* listening. It would still be listening for pleasure, and of one's own choice, but the learner would

be knowingly watching the film for the purpose of acquiring the *listening* skill. If learners are doing this on their own time, they can always pause the film and look up any word or phrase they did not understand in the dictionary.

Intensive listening is mostly done in school, however. As Harmer (2007, p. 304) names the technological devices a teacher has at their disposal in our day and age, he goes on to name advantages and disadvantages of this type of teaching listening. Putting aside the technological advantages, which are even more significant today than they were at the time Harmer wrote his work *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, he points out the significance of, once again, how important and beneficial it is that the learners hear other people speaking apart from their own teacher. Even when the recorded material is not a seemingly spontaneous dialogue, but only an extract of a written text, it is still good for the learner to hear different voices. As he names disadvantages, Harmer (2007, p. 304) expresses concern over the acoustics of a larger classroom and the audibility of an audio recording. However, this problem can be resolved by a dedicated classroom equipped either with additional speakers at the back of the room, or a classroom with desks arranged in a horseshoe shape, with over-ear headphones for every learner, all controlled from a central computer. This, however, still does not offer a solution for Harmer's further concern about the speed at which different students are able to comprehend the same text. Teachers may find a solution for this at a classroom equipped with computers with headphones, which could allow for each learner to work individually, at his/her own pace.

1.5 Comparison of reading and listening

Though in real-life conversation the listener can occasionally interrupt the speaker and ask for clarification, this is much less common in class. That is why reading is much easier in this aspect, as "written discourse is fixed and stable so the reading can be done at whatever time, speed and level of thoroughness the individual reader wishes" (Ur, 2009, p. 159). Furthermore, while real-life conversation is accompanied by body language and overall mood of the conversation, and even a tape recording usually gives away some sort of intonation, written discourse needs to be far more explicit in order to correctly provide all the information needed. (Ur, 2009, p. 159) Still, even with the need for additional information in a written text, it takes longer to get information from spoken word than from a text, because the speaker will often generate redundancy by using pauses, fillers, repetitions, etc. (Ur, 2009, p. 159)

Summary of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 has introduced the four commonly known language skills – **speaking, writing, reading, listening** and listed the most significant complications for teaching each of these skills as well as mutual comparison and complementarity. The chapter discussed the significance of receptive skills in comparison to productive skills. In class, it is more likely that output will become input than vice versa. Furthermore, since receptive skills require active cognitive processing, they are, contrary to popular belief, active skills. And very efficient ones to utilize for acquiring English.

2 Second language acquisition and its important factors

This chapter introduces second language acquisition and with it the most influencing factors that need to be taken into consideration when thinking about acquisition. The chapter is broken down into seven subchapters – one on acquisition itself and then six factors which were selected based on their prevalence in linguistic publications. The first factor, which is something every teacher faces regularly in their lessons, is the role of the mother tongue; followed by a brief description of *the silent period* and a phenomenon called *falling back* on mother tongue. Then follows a subchapter on arguably the most important factor that needs to be considered when putting together a course of EFL – age of the acquirer. After that, *affective filters* are looked at, the hypothesis of how the attitude of the acquirer affects the efficiency of the process. As a final point, the chapter is closed with a subchapter on how efficient language teaching along with acquisition is.

2.1 Acquisition

The term second language acquisition can be understood in two ways. In a broader sense, it simply describes the learning of a language, specifically a second language after the first language had already been established. In a narrower sense, which is the one that concerns this thesis, second language acquisition stands for "picking up" a language on the go, without conscious effort – one could say *subconsciously*. (Second language acquisition [SLA], teachingenglish.org.uk)

However, in Ortega's point of view, *second language acquisition* "is interested in understanding the acquisition of second languages in both naturalistic and instructed contexts. Naturalistic learners learn the L2 through informal opportunities in multicultural neighborhoods, schools and workplaces, without ever receiving any organized instruction on the workings of the language they are learning. Instructed learners learn additional languages through formal study in school or university, through private lessons and so on" (Ortega, 2013, p. 2).

I would like to insert an anecdote which I came across during the days of working on this thesis, while watching an episode of The Simpsons in its original language. Bart Simpson was sent on a student exchange program to France, but it turned out not to be quite the vacation he had expected. The men with whom he lived on a farm harshly exploited him for wine-field work, made him sleep on the floor, and never even let him speak. One rainy day, they sent him

to town to buy antifreeze, which they illegally added to wine. Bart, devastated by the way he had been treated, ran into a French policeman and tried to talk to him about his troubles, but the policeman did not speak any English. So Bart turned around and started walking away in disappointment, saying: "Oh, forget it. I'm so stupid. Anybody could have learned this dumb language by now. Here, I've listened to nothing but French for the past deux mois. Et je ne sais pas un mot. Eh, mais je parle français maintenant. Incréable!" Realizing he speaks French, Bart ran back to the policeman and arranged to have the bad men taken away to justice. Although in real life it is not as simple, it struck me as a witty example of subconscious acquisition.

Second language acquisition is a considerably novel field of language study. Having succeeded from fields such as language teaching, linguistics, or child language acquisition, it began in the late 1960s and only earned its status of an autonomous discipline by the end of the century. (Ortega, 2013, p. 2)

Despite the fact that learners in Czech lower secondary schools mostly learn English as a **foreign language,** I use the term *second language acquisition*. But as Ortega (2013, p. 2) points out, although many teachers carefully distinguish between **second language** and **foreign language**, the field of acquisition actually allows for a fair amount of interchangeableness, as the word *second* in *second language acquisition* "is often used to mean either second of foreign" (Ortega, 2013, p. 6).

In her paper, Eddy (2011, p. 12) explains that the difference between *second language* and *foreign language* is that a second language is usually one of two languages spoken in one country simultaneously, whereas a foreign language is a language of another country that a person usually learns by choice. Despite the fact that there are significantly more environmental opportunities for input of a *second language* than there are for *foreign language*, authors such as Krashen, Burt, Dulay, etc. use the terms interchangeably and usually refer to the language simply as *language two* – L2. They justify this by saying that even though a second language is often acquired in the environment, it is, just as a foreign language, acquired only *after* the first language had already been established to some level. (Eddy, 2011, p. 12)

2.2 Role of the first language

According to Harmer, "there are some powerful arguments in favor of English-only classrooms" (Harmer, 2007, p. 132). He states that if English is the only way to communicate in a classroom, it should eventually leave the learners no other option but to start attempting to

use English despite possible errors. Harmer names various disadvantages of this manner of teaching, saying for example that the learner's *identity* is often tied to their first language. However, even when not using the mother tongue in an EFL class, the mother tongue will find its way to creep into the learner's L2.

As Krashen (1981, p. 64) draws from previous research (e.g. Lado, Banathy, Trager, and others), he makes clear the misconception that had been prevalent for many years that all L2 errors come from the influence of the learner's first language. Many errors "are common to second language performers of different linguistic backgrounds" (Krashen, 1981, p. 64).

Nonetheless, there are some errors that are generally associated with being influenced by a learner's mother tongue. As noted by Krashen (1981, p. 66), first language influence is rare in child second language acquisition, and in comparison to *second* language acquisition, is considerably more frequent in environments where English is taught as a *foreign* language. He attributes this to the scarcity of natural input opportunities and the over-usage of translation exercises.

Krashen (1981, p. 65) names *complex word order* and *word-for-word* to be areas in which first language interference is the strongest source for learners' errors. The first example that Krashen presents on this issue incidentally concerns a study of *Czech* students (conducted by Dušková) and their tendency to place the direct object *after* an adverbial, as in "I met there some strangers" (Krashen, 1981, p. 65). Another example is the tendency of Czech students for word-for-word translations such as "another my friend" instead of "another friend of mine".

Concerning morphology, Krashen finds that first language influence is "weaker in bound morphology" (Krashen, 1981, p. 65). Although the study done on Czech students showed several errors in morphology, it was concluded that most of them were not due to the influence of the first language, but rather "interference between the other terms of the English subsystem in question" (Krashen, 1981, p. 65). It was counted that "of 166 morphological errors, only nineteen were judged as due to Czech interference" (Krashen, 1981, p. 66).

2.3 Silent period

In first language acquisition, the silent period allows for the grasp of the most parts of a language. For example, Lightbown (2006, p. 6) says that it takes many months to reach first vocalization, although children begin to show understanding of such simple and frequently

repeating utterances such as "bye-bye", to which a baby might react by waving their hand at the age of one year.

According to Krashen, "the explanation of the silent period in terms of *the input hypothesis* [described in Chapter 3 of the thesis] is straight-forward – the child is building up competence in the second language via listening, by understanding the language around him [/her]. In accordance with the input hypothesis, speaking ability emerges on its own after enough competence has been developed by listening and understanding" (Krashen, 1987, p. 27).

2.4 Falling back on mother tongue

Concerning the role of the first language, there is also a phenomenon referred to as *falling back* on the mother tongue. Since learners in formal language classes, as well as adults, are usually not allowed a *silent period* in second language acquisition, they are forced to literally revert back to their mother tongue to help to express themselves. If the utterance an acquirer is trying to produce is slightly above their level of EFL competence, they will likely substitute the structure that they are missing with one that comes from their first language. This is often referred to as *interference.* (Krashen, 1987, p. 27) "For example, Spanish speakers often have a long period in their acquisition of English in which they produce *no + v* [verb] for the English negative … it may be the case that earlier *no + v* is the case of the L1 rule" (Krashen, 1987, p. 28). Krashen concludes that "first language influence may thus be an indicator of low acquisition, or the result of the performer attempting to produce before having acquired enough of the target language. It is … found most often in foreign language, as opposed to second language situations" (Krashen, 1981, p. 8).

2.5 Age of the acquirer

Lightbown (2006, p. 92) point at the importance of age for acquiring a second language using a simple example. He says that immigrants will eventually embrace the language of their new community, but it is the younger members of the immigrant family who will be the most likely to reach native-like levels, while the adults may face significant problems. Lightbown introduces something called *the Critical Period Hypothesis* and states that just as there is a critical period for acquiring a first language, there is a critical period for acquiring the second one too.

The critical period is argued to differ in various aspects. Lightbown (2006, p. 93) says some researchers believe that the critical period ends around puberty, while others believe it ends much sooner. Similarly, the critical period may vary based on what aspect of the language a person is trying to acquire – "the ability to acquire the pronunciation patterns of a new language may end earlier than the ability to acquire vocabulary" (Lightbown, 2006, p. 93). Lightbown justifies the differences between young and adult second language learning ability by various reasons, saying that adults may have to rely on more general learning strategies, while young learners still have more specific learning capacities available to them.

Furthermore, adults are usually immediately introduced into environments where there is much less room for errors and more pressure to communicate efficiently than in the case of young learners. Although research as well as observations generally agree that language instruction is most efficient when started at a very young age, some factors actually show to favor older learners. Adults usually have at their disposal general learning strategies and problem-solving abilities that young learners haven't developed yet. (Lightbown, 2006, p. 93) Harmer (2007, p. 81) finds younger children more apt for acquiring a new language, but sees teenagers as better equipped for learning environments.

Also, Ortega (2013, p. 16) presents the idea that although the notion of younger learners being better at acquiring a second language is perceived as such an undeniable truth as the earth used to be perceived as flat, research shows that the advantage may actually incline towards older learners. "For example … two oft-cited studies … found that adults and adolescents were better than children in terms of what they could learn in a 25-minute instruction session up to a year of naturalistic exposure" (Ortega, 2013, p. 16).

Nevertheless, Ortega cites a seminal article of Stephen Krashen, Michael Long and Robin Scarcella, saying that they've "put a grain of salt on these findings. They concluded that older is better initially, but that younger is better in the long run" (Ortega, 2013, p. 16). This is, again, due to the learning strategies that adults are able to employ, but when comparing learners over a long period of time (span of years to decades), young starters were conclusively better than adult starters. (Ortega, 2013, p. 17)

2.6 Affective filters

Lightbown (2006, p. 106) summarizes *the affective filter hypothesis* as a reaction to the observation that some people may be severely exposed to *comprehensible input* (explained in

Chapter 3), and yet not acquire language successfully. "The 'affective filter' is a metaphorical barrier that prevents learners from acquiring language even when appropriate input is available. *Affect* refers to feelings of anxiety or negative attitudes that … may be associated with poor learning outcomes. A learner who is tense, anxious, or bored may *filter out* input, making it unavailable for acquisition" (Lightbown, 2006, p. 106).

Krashen names three main categories that can be considered an affective filter:

1. **Motivation** – "Performers with high motivation generally do better in second language acquisition"
2. **Self-confidence** – "Performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition"
3. **Anxiety** – "Low anxiety appears to be conducive to second language acquisition, whether measured as personal or classroom anxiety" Krashen (1987, p. 31).

Each learner has an *affective filter* on a different level, and this, according to Krashen, influences their ability to acquire language (see Figure 3 below). If the negative effects of an affective filter are too strong, the acquirer may understand the input, but it will not reach the part of the brain, in which acquisition occurs, and thus the input will be lost upon understanding (Krashen, 1987, p. 31).
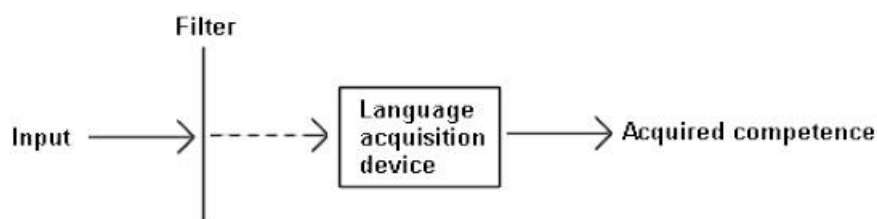

Figure 3: Affective filter (Krashen, 1987, p. 32)

2.7 Language teaching

Krashen (1987, p. 33) views it as reasonable to believe that the classroom is especially valuable for beginners – those who cannot yet harvest the input from informal environments. On the other hand, it will not be as valuable to those who have access to sources of comprehensible input and are already on such a linguistic level that they can utilize it (Krashen writes this in 1987, and I reckon access to comprehensible input was limited back then. Obviously, today, we literally carry the whole of recorded human knowledge in our pockets).

Krashen then points out that the question should not be *whether* teaching helps, but rather *when* does it help. "A possible answer is this: language teaching helps when it is the main source for low filter comprehensible input, this is, for beginners and for foreign language students who do not have a chance to get input outside the class" (Krashen, 1987, p. 34). Once again, the idea that children have no access to input outside the class is far outdated, since, especially with today's overwhelmingly spreading Anglo-American culture, children are exposed to many English stimuli every day (e.g. YouTube, videogames, everyday products such as message T-shirts, etc.)

There is virtually no chance that if a person enters any store, they will not be able to find at least one product with an English word on it. To take this even further – if one stands in any street with the presence of commerce and looks around themselves, there is almost no chance they will not find at least one English word. So the question for today is not whether a learner of English as a foreign language has enough access to comprehensible input (which is, as Krashen [1987, p. 36] summarizes, likely to be the best way not only to *acquire*, but to *teach* English as well), but whether a learner is motivated enough to use and take advantage of that input.

Summary of Chapter 2

The longest chapter of the theoretical part introduced the concept of acquisition and the main factors associated with the term. If each aspect is taken into consideration when composing an EFL lesson, it could prove highly efficient in improving learners' English proficiency. For example, the *silent period* very likely cannot be implemented in its full form, however, it may inspire the teacher to be patient with learners and let them take in comprehensible input without forcing them to use it right away. Or perhaps the teacher takes into consideration the way affective filters may unnecessarily obstruct progress and turn the knowledge of the affective filter into an advantage by presenting the right kind of motivation. The chapter has also shown that age is a highly significant factor that needs to be accounted for – people of different ages may require different approaches. Lastly, the knowledge of the phenomenon known as *falling back* on mother tongue may be used as an indicator of areas in which learners need to receive further instruction.

3 Major Hypotheses About Acquisition

This chapter summarizes the main ideas of selected hypotheses – the input hypothesis as the main argument for acquisition over learning and receptive skills over productive, and the monitor hypothesis and the natural order hypothesis to support the arguments that the input hypothesis presents. I have selected the input hypothesis deliberately because it represents exactly how I believed language acquisition works before gaining any formal insight into the problematics.

3.1 The Monitor Hypothesis

If I may, I would like to open this paragraph by drawing an analogy from my own experience – since I know that monitoring is something that also occurs during, or more precisely (and importantly, since this is the main similarity with L2 utterances), *at the later stage of* music composition. After a song has been written, recorded and mixed, the process of mastering follows – that is where *monitoring* occurs. The speakers that composers use are actually called *monitor speakers* and they are used for recognizing flaws in the sound of a song – unwanted frequencies, velocity balance, etc. To compare it to language, we could say that the melody of the song is the *fluency*, or the main idea we want to deliver; and sound quality is the *accuracy* – which, if done poorly, may not disrupt intelligibility, but will most certainly render the listening experience much less pleasant. To sum up, monitoring only focuses on polishing *accuracy* errors.

Back in the linguistic world, Krashen (1987, p. 16) describes the *monitor* as an abstract device in our minds that we created by *learning* language rules. "Normally, acquisition 'initiates' our utterances in a second language and is responsible for our fluency. Learning has only one function, and that is as a Monitor, or editor. Learning comes into play only to make changes in the form of our utterance, after it has been 'produced' by the acquired system" (Krashen 1987, p. 15).

3.2 The Natural Order Hypothesis

Titled "one of the most exciting discoveries in language acquisition research in recent years" in 1987 by Krashen (p. 12), the natural order hypothesis claims to have found that there is a predictable order to acquiring grammatical structures of a language. The order is not the same for all acquirers, but there are statistically significant similarities. Morphology is said to

be the most prominent – research has found that, "for example, the progressive marker *-ing* (as in 'he is playing baseball') and the plural marker /s/ ('two dogs') were among the first morphemes acquired, while the third person singular marker /s/ (as in 'He lives in New York') and the possessive /s/ ('John's hat') were typically acquired much later, coming anywhere to six months to one year later" (Krashen, 1987, p. 12).

Based on other findings also published in Krashen's *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition,* research suggests a correlation between the order of acquired elements and their difficulty level.

The last notable observation from the natural order hypothesis is that, though there are similarities, the order of acquisition for the second language is different from the order of acquisition for the first language. (Krashen, 1987, p. 13)

3.3 The Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis is the main hypothesis of this chapter, for which the previous two were 'setting up'. "The single most important source for L2 learning is comprehensible input, or language which learners process for meaning and which contains something to be learned, that is, linguistic data slightly above their current level" (Ortega, 2013, p. 59). Ortega also mentions that however crucial comprehensible input is, it has been proven that on its own, comprehensible input is *not enough* for sufficiently acquiring a language. Learning must occur.

Nevertheless, Stephen Krashen (1987, p. 20), who is the original author of the input hypothesis, uses *the monitor hypothesis* and *the natural order hypothesis* as valid arguments in his favor. He used *the monitor hypothesis* to support the following statement: "If the Monitor hypothesis is correct, that acquisition is central and learning more peripheral, then the goal of our pedagogy should be to encourage acquisition" (Krashen, 1987, p. 20). He then incorporates *the natural order hypothesis* to introduce a simple formula for acquiring language:

"Given the correctness of the natural order hypothesis, how do we move from one stage to another? If an acquirer is at 'stage 4', how can he [or she] progress to 'stage 5'? More generally, how do we move from stage i, where i represents current competence, to i + 1, the next level? The input hypothesis makes the following claim: a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to move from stage i to stage i + 1 is that the acquirer understand input that contains i + 1, where 'understand' means that the acquirer is focused on the meaning and not the form of the message" (Stephen Krashen, 1987, p. 21).

In other words, Krashen (1987, p. 21) set a condition for something to be called acquisition – a process can be called acquisition when the acquirer understands slightly beyond his current knowledge of the language. It may sound paradoxical, but Krashen justifies this by saying that, aside from their language competence, the recipient of an utterance utilizes "context and extra-linguistic information" to understand. "Good second language teachers do this by using visual aids, by using extra-linguistic context" (Krashen, 1998, p. 32).

In his work *The Natural Approach*, Stephen Krashen extends the input hypothesis' legitimacy by offering an example using caretaker speech. He says that when a mother or a caretaker are talking to a baby, their motivation for communication is simply to be understood, not to teach language. For that reason, a caretaker will often select a simplified version of speech, one that we would call incorrect in terms of grammar. With careful selection of topics appropriate for very young children, a caretaker "teaches" language by altering their language to children. Krashen (1998, p. 32) argues that teachers often teach language in an opposite direction to the input hypothesis – they teach structures and rules first, whereas the input hypothesis pushes for acquisition first.

Once again, however, learning must occur. Without it, there would be no monitoring, and a speaker might resort to 'wild guessing' when trying to utter a structure. It is also important to point out that not all linguists agree with the input hypothesis. Ortega (2013, p. 60) argues that Krashen had not presented any empirical evidence and that there are researchers who have shown to prove that there is less association between comprehension and acquisition than previously thought. "Some studies have shown that learners can comprehend more than they acquire and can acquire more than they comprehend" (Ortega, 2013, p. 60). Nevertheless, there are indicators that the input hypothesis is a legitimate concept, since it is consistent with other language acquisition phenomena such as *the silent period* from Chapter 2.

The last argument of the input hypothesis I would like to present in the thesis has to do with succession. Krashen (1987, p. 25) makes a case against the grammatical syllabus, saying that a common way of introducing grammar is to have it incorporated into the lesson of the day – each lesson usually has exactly one new grammatical item. The problem is that most students will be easily able to tell which item is new. Getting used to always having exactly one new structure can become routine.

In addition, not all students are on the same level. What is i + 1 for some, can be i or i + 2 for others. Furthermore, there are always learners who are absent. They have missed their one

opportunity to learn a new structure and before they get the opportunity to acquire it – the course has moved on to a new structure. Finally, having a strict succession of new rules keeps the focus on grammar and leaves less room for discussion that would allow for more fluency practice. Krashen (1998, p. 33) calls this type of input with strictly given succession *finely-tuned input*, and presents an opposite of it, the *roughly-tuned input*, which circles once again back to the caretaker speech. This is when the speaker casts something that Krashen (1998, p. 33) calls *the net*, which is an abstract field of new inputs that the recipient can connect to their i, their current level.

In addition, Harmer (2007, p. 53) presents other linguists' (e.g. Merrill Swain, Jane Willis) research that built on Krashen's ideas of *comprehensible input* and conducted an innovative lesson which generated something they later called *comprehensible output*. The idea that 'language learning will take care of itself' sparked an attempt to abandon grammar, morphology, etc. instruction, and instead try to devote "their efforts to exposing students to English and getting them to use it" (Harmer, 2007, p. 52). "If the language teacher's management activities are directed exclusively at involving the learners in solving communication problems in the target language, then language learning will take care of itself" (Allwright, 1979, p.170). The course that Harmer (2007, p. 53) describes had learners do tasks such as interviewing people and searching for library books. That involved them in speaking and reading. There were also communication games in which for example two students have been assigned to perform the same task with the same outcome, but could not look at each other's work and only use communication to reach that particular outcome. "The results, though not scientifically assessed, were apparently favorable" (Harmer, 2007, p. 53).

Summary of Chapter 3

Despite Krashen's hypotheses having repeatedly been criticized for not being possible to test in empirical research, his work is said to be important and influential during a period of transition from structure-based approaches that emphasized learning rules and memorizing dialogs to methods that emphasized using language with a focus on meaning. (Lightbown, 2006, p. 108) The hypotheses introduced in this chapter represent the main argument for the superiority of receptive skills over productive skills in their capacity to improve one's English proficiency.

4 Acquisition and various aspects of English

For the last chapter, I have selected aspects of English that are most likely to become subject matter, whether explicitly or implicitly, in lower secondary school have been selected. The first part of the chapter combines morphology and grammar, as most research done on one concerns also the other. The second, slightly more overlooked aspect of acquisition, is vocabulary. And lastly, one of the least discussed topics in English acquisition – phonology.

4.1 Morphology and grammar

As described in Chapter 3, Nunan (1991, p. 143) views the natural order as a common occurrence that transcends age and nationality. Common patterns have been found in people from Spain and from China, in people at lower secondary school age, as well as in adults. Morphemes have been acquired in a very similar, sometimes even the same order. As a result, it is hypothesized that there are "innate processes which guide L2 acquisition" (Nunan, 1991, p. 144).

Nunan (1991, p. 143) presents the notion that we can overlook the influence of the first language when it comes to grammar, due to the findings that most grammar-related errors are very similar regardless of what the first language of the speaker/writer is.

Although the morpheme order research that found patterns of acquisition order have been widely criticized for years after being published, which is detailed by Nunan (1991, p. 146), "subsequent research has provided substantial evidence that certain grammatical items appear in predetermined sequences" (Nunan, 1991, p. 146).

There are the four most common errors in their chronological order:

Stage 1: 'no + verb'	No work / No understand.
Stage 2: 'don't + verb'	I don't like / He don't can swim.
Stage 3: 'auxiliary + negative'	She can't go / He don't stay.
Stage 4: analyzed don't	He didn't stay.

In terms of correcting a grammatical error, Ellis (2006, p. 341) has conducted a research on the comparison of implicit and explicit feedback. In his case, he worked with *recasts* for *implicit* feedback, a recast being "a reformulation of all or part of a learner's immediately preceding utterance in which one or more non-target like items are replaced by the

corresponding language form(s), and where, throughout the exchange, the focus of the interlocutors is on meaning not language as an object" (Ellis, 2006, p. 341). And he worked with two types of *explicit* feedback, one being explicit correction, "in which the response clearly indicates that what the learner said was incorrect (e.g. 'No, not goed–went')" (Ellis, 2006, p. 341), and the other being metalinguistic feedback, which is defined as "comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the learner's utterance" (Ellis, 2006, p. 341).

Ellis (2006, p. 364) has concluded that **explicit feedback** in the form of *metalinguistic information* is the more efficient way to provide feedback to learners than implicit feedback, and "contributes to system as well as item learning" (Ellis, 2006, p. 364).

Another study, published in an article by Zhang (2010, p. 13) concluded that after monitoring an Indonesian family during their one year work/study stay in Australia, they have not acquired sufficient morphology capability in its full range. For example, the father has reached 80 percent accuracy for the morpheme of plural -s. Zhang's findings thus "corroborate other studies in that 1) the higher one's L2 proficiency level is at the time of arrival in the target language environment, the more beneficial the environment is for the learner to further develop her [or his] L2; 2) mere exposure does not give the learner the advantage in the rate of L2 morphology development; 3) formal instruction is helpful in promoting a faster and more accurate learning outcome for adult L2 learners" (Zhang, 2010, p. 14).

4.2 Vocabulary

Though Nunan (1991, p. 128) admits vocabulary and lexical-related disciplines had not received as much attention in relation to acquisition, he presents some findings done by other researchers, e.g. Peter H. Johnston or Joana Channell. Nunan summarizes Channell's position on vocabulary acquisition by calling learning "a process and acquisition the end result of vocabulary development … a new vocabulary item is acquired when the learner can identify its meaning in and out of context and it can be used naturally and appropriately" (Nunan, 1991, p. 130).

The most prominent occurrence that was found was that acquirers of English used one word of a lexical pair significantly more frequently than the other. For example out of a pair good/bad, it was found that at post-beginner and low-intermediate levels, 'good' occurred fifty times, while 'bad' occurred only once. Similarly, the word 'easy' was only half as frequent as the word 'hard'. This is explained by the acquirers somewhat crafty way of 'saving memory' by

only acquiring one word of the lexical pair and then *substituting the second word of the pair with using 'not + first word'.* (Nunan, 1991, p. 128)

In the same Johnston's research (which I was unable to find, so I do not have access to the full sample size), Nunan (1991, p. 129) summarizes the frequencies of other words used by pre-intermediate learners, among which the most prominent were **prepositions:** *in (506 instances), to (203), for (153), about (75), with (63), etc.*; and **pronouns:** *I (1154 instances), my (432), you (311), he (231), they (194), me (157).* Nunan adds that the frequency of use does not indicate whether these words were used correctly or not. (Nunan, 1991, p. 129)

Johnston's research has concluded three main pieces of advice for teachers:

1. "As learners have great difficulty learning at one time sets of items that are closely related (such as pronouns), do not teach these as paradigms"
2. " In the same way, lexical opposites such as *narrow/broad* should not be introduced in the same lesson or even the same unit of work"
3. "As learners tend to equate a single form with a single function, words that have more than one function should not be introduced at the same time (for example, the word 'there' which can act as either an existential subject or a demonstrative)" (Nunan, 1991, p. 129).

4.3 Phonology

Saalfeld (2011, p. 2) lists names of many researchers (e.g. Arteaga, Derwing, Munro, Elliott, etc.) who all agree on the notion that "pronunciation has been largely neglected in the L2 classroom" (Saalfeld, 2011, p. 2). The reasons for this are many, from the more common-sense ones such as the realization that poor pronunciation is probably the least problematic of all aspects in terms of mutual understanding, to the ones supported by research, such as the trend of shift from audiolingualism, or the research from the 1960s that proposed that after certain post-pubescent age, it is impossible to acquire native-like accent. (Saalfeld, 2011, p. 2)

"According to Flege, phonetic categories or mental representations of speech sounds in the L1 are stabilized by the age five to seven. After that point, new phonetic contrasts will be processed through such an L1 filter, and hence it is more difficult, although not biologically impossible, to detect and produce L2 categories that are not salient" (Ortega, 2013, p. 23). Flege (1999, p. 125) believes this is not due to a loss of the ability to learn to pronounce in a second language, but rather due to the already established ability to pronounce well the first language.

"The likelihood that L2 learners will establish new categories for L2 vowels and consonants decreases as the age of exposure to an L2 being learned naturalistically increases" (Flege, 1999, p. 126).

Ortega (2013, p. 23), however, names some cases of exceptional students who have developed such native-sounding accents that they were not categorized as foreigners even under close scrutiny of the laboratory environment. He further explains that they all had one thing in common – "they had all received considerable amounts of high-quality L2 instruction and they all reported high levels of motivation and concern to sound native-like" (Ortega, 2013, p. 23).

Saalfeld (2011, p. 146) has conducted an experiment using two groups of students. *The experimental group* was assigned recorded homework, enrolled in a phonetics course which spanned many aspects of L2 pronunciation, took quizzes every week – in summary, received high quality instruction. The other group – *the control group* – participated in courses such as literature, composition, conversation, etc., none of which included any hint of specific pronunciation instruction. Saalfeld (2011, p. 146) concluded that the experimental group, which had received instruction on pronunciation, proved to be more accurate in their L2 pronunciation. She concludes, however, that though pronunciation instruction "is effective – it is still largely absent from language instruction at all levels" (Saalfeld, 2011, p. 150).

In my experience, I believe most non-native speakers can acquire native-like pronunciation only up to a point. Formal instruction in this respect may prove very helpful. The ear can only pick up a limited amount of information, and one might be able to think up or perhaps deduce some 'rules' of their own. But consciously knowing that for example most English words have stress on the second syllable is tremendously helpful. An example of attempted deduction may be found in Czech singers who try to sing a cover of a song in English. Very often they make the impression as if delivering native-like English pronunciation to an untrained ear, but it is obvious they are attempting to mimic the pronunciation based on listening to the original song.

Summary of Chapter 4

The last chapter of the theoretical part presented research on selected aspects of English in connection to acquisition of the language. Each of the aspects has its share of the academic spotlight, with grammar being the most scrutinized. Acquisition of phonology proved to be more efficient when accompanied by phonology instruction, which is still a rather neglected aspect.

PRACTICAL PART

1 Questionnaire research

1.1 Introduction and methodology

The theoretical part presented what I consider to be relevant information about acquisition through receptive skills. The practical part focuses on the same topic from a slightly different angle. The claim still is that receptive skills are superior to productive skills and that acquisition is slightly more efficient than learning when trying to master the English language.

While working on the research, several questions and statements were first created, and were then kept in mind while constructing the questionnaires. Two initial questionnaires were created using the Microsoft Forms web application, an application that allows for a fair amount of dynamic answering compared to paper research. One of the questionnaires was aimed at lower secondary school learners, and the other at their EFL teachers.

Due to the unfortunate circumstances of the 2020 global health crisis, during which the research was conducted, all Czech teachers' workflow was completely disrupted and many of them had to face new technologies and forms of teaching. As a result, the willingness to take part in diploma thesis research decreased visibly. About twenty schools were contacted in the span of two weeks. Of those, four took part in both the online questionnaire for learners and for teachers. Slightly more teachers were willing to at least answer the questionnaire for teachers. Still, the numbers are sufficient to suggest a local trend, but for any conclusive evidence on the hypotheses made, further research with larger samples of respondents needs to be done.

The research was done in two phases. First I approached several schools by contacting their management via e-mail, asking for an e-mail address of one of their English teachers. A small fraction of the principals had answered, so I then politely contacted the teachers and explained that the questionnaires were made intentionally time-undemanding. Each of the teachers who have agreed to take part received two questionnaire links, and were asked to set a maximum of a one-week deadline for the learners to fill in their questionnaires.

The learners were asked to fill in their names in the questionnaires – in order to respect their privacy, I have asked them for their first name and two initial letters of their last name. That was enough for their English teachers to recognize them, which was the only purpose of taking the names. Approximately a week after the initial questionnaire links were sent, another

online form, which contained the names of the learners of each individual school, was created, and under each name, there was a scale from 0 through 10. The second phase simply consisted of the teachers' evaluating their view of each learner's overall English proficiency. The reason I have done this is because I wanted an objective evaluator, which could better indicate how efficient each individual learner's preferences and attitudes projected into the questionnaire are in terms of improving EFL proficiency.

Since the whole research was done remotely, there is no particular insight into any of the classes or schools presented in the thesis. There is no climate to be described, the only peripheral information to the questionnaires is the teachers' evaluation. The schools that took part in both learner and teacher questionnaires are: *ZŠ Tršice, ZŠ Pňovice, FZŠ Hálkova,* and *FZŠ Tererovo náměstí.*

Since anonymity was promised to the participating schools, and since the schools' names are of no relevance to the research – from this paragraph forward, the schools are be referred to in a **changed** order as *School A, School B, School C,* and *School D*. However, since this work did not focus on comparing schools, but rather focused on the overall group as well as sub-groups based on the teacher evaluation, this distinction is rarely used in the following chapters.

Referring back to the unfortunate global situation at the time this thesis was written, perhaps due to the teachers' unfamiliarity with new technologies, perhaps due to the teachers' losing traction because of the lack of personal contact with their pupils, the total sum of learner questionnaire respondents is 77. That is **14** learners from School A, **32** from School B, **16** from School C, and **15** from School D. The respondents span lower secondary school grades 6 through 9.

1.2 Research questions and hypotheses

Once again, the very first step of working on this thesis was forming research questions and hypotheses. Those were based partly on my core beliefs about acquisition and language skills and partly on my experience with EFL teaching in lower secondary schools. A multitude of questions and hypotheses was initially proposed, of which the following were selected after consultation.

Research questions:

- Are skills taught in EFL balanced in lower secondary schools?
- Are teachers more concerned with teaching pupils to use the language to produce or to understand?
- Do teachers think it is possible to acquire productive skills mainly through receptive skills?
- Do pupils want to speak or understand English?
- Do pupils devote their own time to consume input in English?

Research hypotheses:

- Learners/teachers focus on the ability to speak English rather than the ability to understand English
- Teachers put significantly more focus on developing productive rather than receptive skills in English lessons

Though there are two statements which represent the main hypothesis, they are basically the same idea from two different perspectives. These questions and statements were the basis for building one questionnaire for learners and one for teachers. For the sake of saving the respondents' time and energy, **the questionnaires were all done in Czech**. The results have been **translated and are presented in English in this thesis**.

2 Learner questionnaire

The learner questionnaire aimed to find out learners' attitudes and preferences in terms of language skills in relation to school as well as free-time activities. Those were then put into perspective with the help of teachers' evaluation. All of the graphs for the learner questionnaire are color-coded. Blue color represents the full sample of **77** learners, grey represents all learners evaluated 0 through 9, and yellow represents learners whom their particular teacher evaluated 10. The reason I have chosen to separate only learners evaluated 10 and not for example 10 *and* 9 is because I believe that the teachers saved 10 for their exceptionally good learners and wanted to highlight them. The most exceptional learners are used as an indicator of any differences between the preference of all learners and of higher-graded learners only, who could show a more efficient way of acquiring English than what most learners believe.

The distribution of learners evaluated 10 is not very balanced – There is **1** 10-graded learner from School A, **2** 10-graded learners from School D, and the most generous teacher from School B evaluated **9** learners with grade 10 – the highest grade in case of this research. The teacher from School C decided not to mark any of their learners as exceptional at English. That makes for a total sum of **12** learners evaluated 10 out of the total of **77** learners who took part in the questionnaire.

The structure of the questionnaire was divided into four separate short sections in order to maintain learners' attention, better highlight some of the instructions, and not overwhelm the learners with a long-looking questionnaire.

2.1 Learner questionnaire – Section one

The first section consists of three questions utilizing the Likert scale in its traditional use (as opposed to Section two, where the Likert scale is used slightly unusually). Each question is represented as a start of a sentence, which then continues into four individual Sub-questions. Every Sub-question in Part one was to be rated **Definitely yes – Rather yes – Partly – Rather no – Not at all.**

Question: *1. If your English was perfect, would you rather…*

a) …watch movies / shows / short videos in English than in Czech?

b) …read books/articles in English than in Czech?

c) …speak with people in English than in Czech?

d) …write in English than in Czech?

Sub-question: *a) If your English was perfect, would you rather watch movies / shows / short videos in English than in Czech?*

Sub-question a) received the highest share of *Definitely yes* of all four Sub-questions in Question 1. Of **77** learners, **24** said they would Definitely like to use their hypothetical high English proficiency for movies / shows / short videos, therefore *listening*. *Definitely yes* was not, however, the most frequent answer among all **77** respondents. The most frequent answer was *Partly*. Nevertheless, exactly half – **6** of **12** learners evaluated 10 marked *Definitely yes* as their answer.
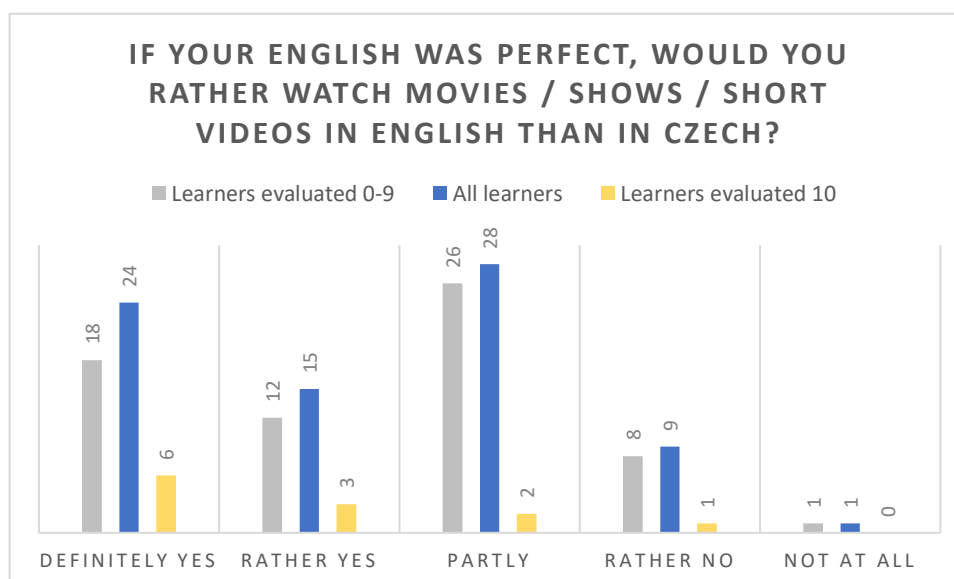
Figure 4: Hypothetical movie / show / short video preference

This is not surprising since video is one of the most gripping forms of entertainment. Especially for children, who often have a lot of free time at their disposal. Given the today's trend of the so-called 'YouTubers', a format which is entirely taken over from America (as is the majority of popular Czech TV formats), it is understandable that children are curious as to what the original videos are about. Furthermore, children are probably aware of the fact that

36

movies and shows that come from English-speaking countries are far more authentic in their original language. This shows that capturing the learners' interest should not be very hard using authentic video.

Sub-question: *b) If you English was perfect, would you rather read books/articles in English than in Czech?*

Sub-question b) saw a significant drop in positive answers in comparison to Sub-question a). Not only that, the average inclined toward the negative side of the spectrum, as **26** learners marked the middle option – Partly, and **26** more learners marked Rather no. Only **11** learners selected Rather yes as their answer. And Definitely yes, as well as Not at all both received **7** points. In the case of learners evaluated 10, their overall trend leans toward the positive side, but only by one point, as **3** learners selected Rather yes and **3** more Rather no; **5** learners selected Partly; and **1** learner decided that he/she would Definitely use his/her English for *reading*.
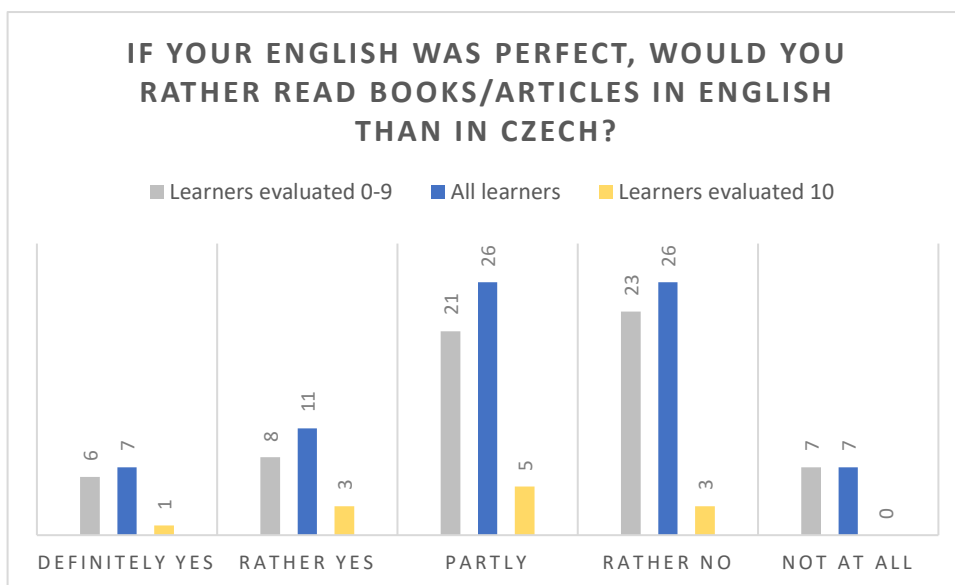
Figure 5: Hypothetical book/article preference

The reasons for this choice may be multiple. Either learners are expressing the decreasing popularity of reading as a whole, or they are not yet at an age at which books are properly appreciated, or they are simply pointing at the fact that most of the world's classical literature is translated to Czech, so there may be no need to read in English, since the content does not change much upon translation. In comparison to video entertainment, where intonation plays a large role and Czech dubbing rarely properly captures the correct emotion that the actors are trying to portray, books do not require such complexity, and Czech language is said to be

one of the most florid languages, so there might simply be no need to *read* in English. It is necessary to point out, however, that many high-quality *non-fiction* books do not boast a Czech translation, and reading non-fiction books is one of the best ways to improve in nearly any area of personal or professional interest. Books always offer a deeper insight into any topic than for example tutorial videos. That, however, is not yet likely to capture the interest of a lower secondary school learner.

Sub-question: *c) If your English was perfect, would you rather speak with people in English than in Czech?*

Sub-question c), like Sub-question b), is more on the negative side in results from all **77** learners, but opposite to Sub-question b), Sub-question c) is on the negative side *even* in results from learners evaluated 10. While **26** learners answered positively, with **13** of them selecting Definitely yes and **10** selecting Rather yes, **30** learners answered negatively – **20** of which would Rather not speak with people in English, and **10** of them Not at all. **24** learners answered that they would only Partly prefer speaking with people in English than in Czech. Meanwhile, while **6** 10-graded learners answered Partly, **4** answered Rather no. The remaining two votes of 10-graded learners were distributed equally between Definitely yes and Not at all.
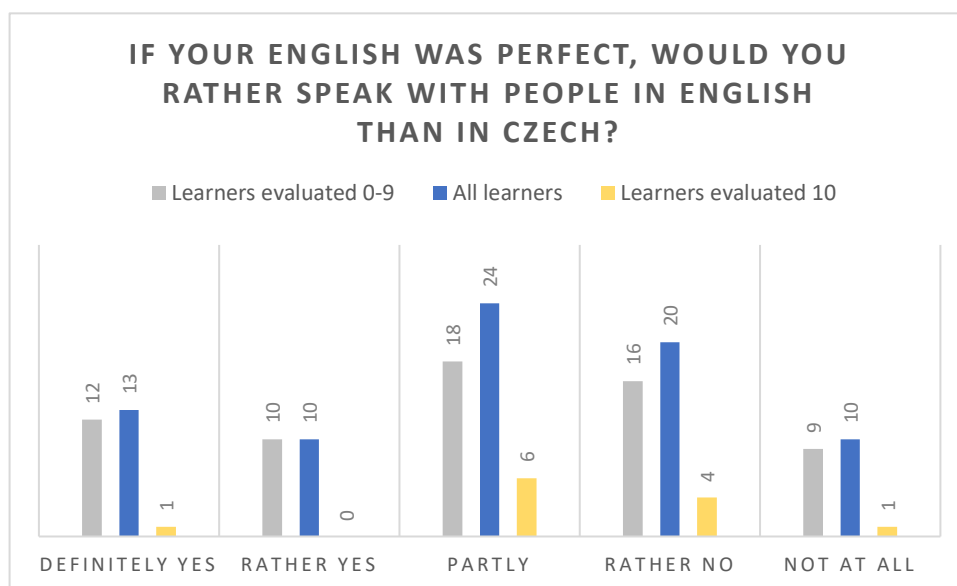
Figure 6: Hypothetical conversation preference

The answers show that *speaking* English may not be as popular as could initially seem to be. While there are more learners overall who would rather speak with people in English than those who would rather read in English, learners evaluated 10 show that speaking English may not be their utilization of choice in the hypothetical state of having perfect English. Since

learners are likely to have already formed friendships within their school environment, they see no need to speak with people in English since Czech perfectly suffices for the purposes of their communication. There is a close-to-zero number of situations in which a Czech child or an adolescent will need to *speak English* as their only resort outside of the classroom. Thus, speaking should be used mostly for practicing and solidifying acquired systems, and also for lowering affective filters such as low self-confidence in relation to speaking in a foreign language.

Sub-question: *d) If you English was perfect, would you rather write in English than in Czech?*

While Sub-question d) received two more Definitely yes answers than reading (at the total of **9** learners), it received significantly more Not at all answers (at the total of **14**). The total of negative answers (Not at all + Rather no) for writing is **35** while the total of positive answers (Definitely yes + Rather yes) is **18**, and **24** learners remained neutral (Partly). Comparing that to **33** negative answers for *reading*, fewer of which were in the extreme, it can be concluded that *writing* is the least popular skill among lower secondary school learners. However, not among 10-graded learners. Their least favorite skill is *speaking*, while showing relative neutrality towards writing, with **7** learners answering Partly, **2** learners answering Rather no, and the rest of the answers received one point each.
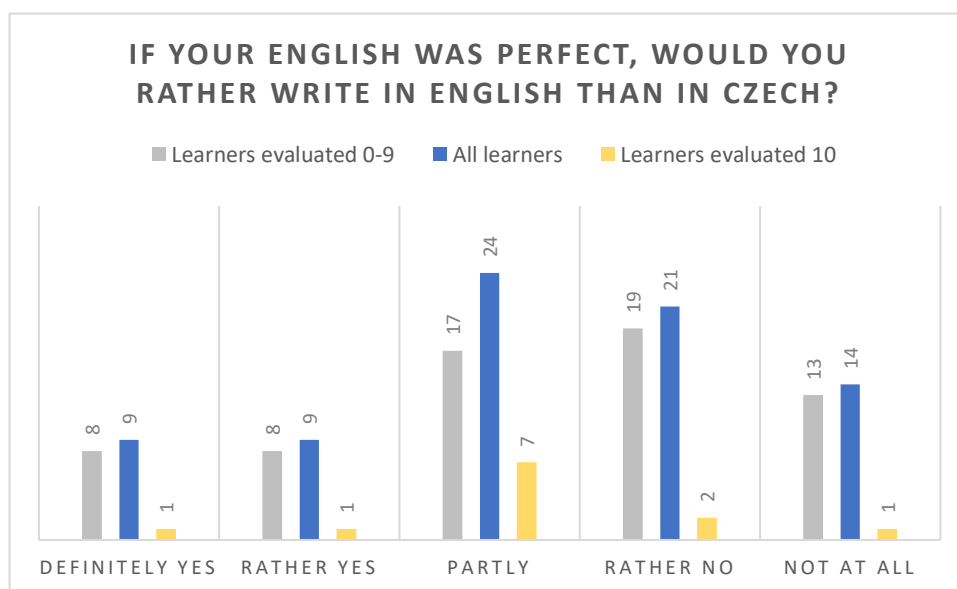
Figure 7: Hypothetical writing preference

Despite writing being arguably a more useful skill than speaking for an EFL speaker in his/her home country, since there are more situations in which writing can be utilized, such as meeting new people on the internet for fun or managing formal situations via e-mail, it comes

out as the least popular among learners. At lower secondary school age, it could be argued that *writing* has the fewest imaginable uses for the purposes of entertaining the learners' minds. It could also be considered one of the hardest skills to acquire, since written English requires more precision in terms of aspects such as grammar or spelling than speaking.

Summary of Question 1:

In terms of comparing receptive and productive skills, learners would use their hypothetically perfect English proficiency mostly for *receptive* skills, which, as is shown in later results (e. g. Question 5), is in contrast with what learners believe could improve their English. The total of negative points (Not at all + Rather no) for receptive skills is **43** while the total of negative points for productive skills is **65**. On the other side of the spectrum, the sum of positive points (Definitely yes + Rather yes) for receptive skills is **57**, while the sum of positive points for productive skills is **41**. It can thus be concluded that within the frame of this particular research, learners see more use for *receptive skills* than for *productive skills* as a foreign-language complement to their mother tongue.

Question: *2. Do you think that if you only learned to…*

a) *…read in English, it would on its own result in you also being able to write in English?*
b) *…understand spoken English, it would on its own result in you also being able to speak English?*
c) *…write in English, it would on its own result in you also being able to read in English?*
d) *…speak English, it would on its own result in you also being able to understand spoken English?*

Sub-question: *a) Do you think that if you only learned to read in English, it would on its own result in you also being able to write in English?*

The results for Sub-question a) are fairly balanced, with **5** learners in both extremes (Definitely yes and Not at all), and **20 learners** in the middle (Partly). The only difference maker is the *Rather* part of the Sub-question, in which **22** learners leaned towards Rather yes, and **25** learners leaned towards Rather no. The overall opinion, thus, is *negative.* The opposite

is true for learners evaluated 10, among whom **5** of **12** answered Rather yes, tipping the scale of the overall opinion in this particular group towards the positive side. **1** 10-graded learner answered Definitely yes, **3** answered Rather no, and **3** believed it could be done only Partly.
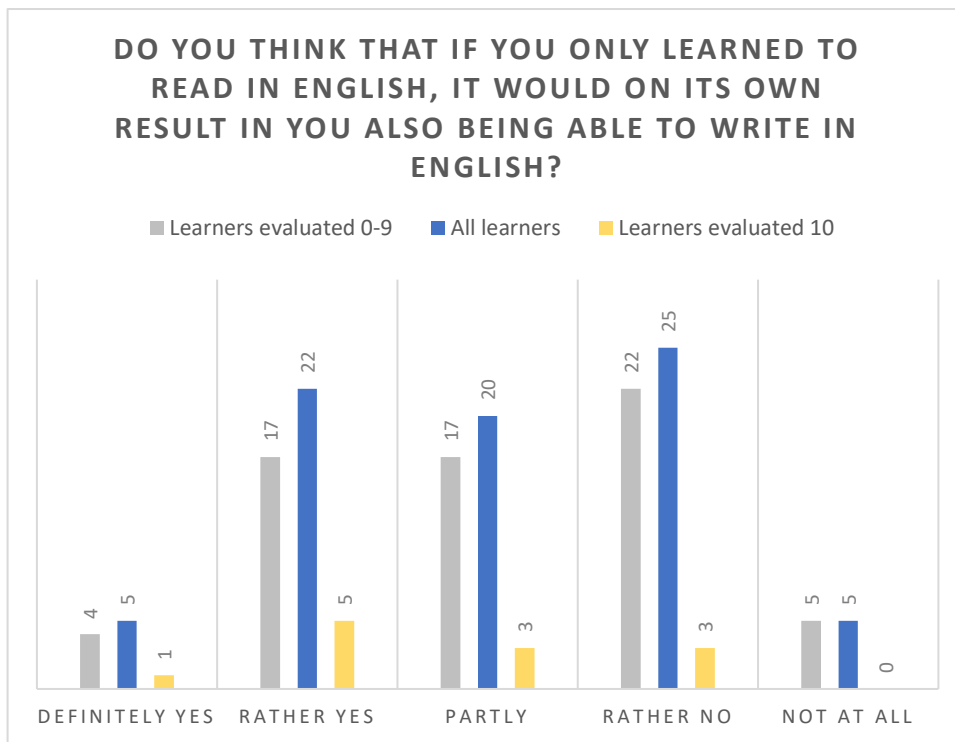

Figure 8: Acquisition of writing through reading

The fact that learners with higher proficiency are more likely to believe that they can acquire a productive skill from a receptive skill despite the overall trend going in the opposite direction could be an indication that the higher the learners' English proficiency, the more they are likely to believe in their ability to acquire English. Also, more skilled learners have objectively more experience to draw from when trying to figure out exactly how they got better.

Sub-question: *b) Do you think that if you only learned to understand spoken English, it would on its own result in you also being able to speak English?*

Both the overall as well as the 10-graded-learner trends tilt towards believing that it is possible to acquire the *speaking skill* from *listening*. Of **77** learners, **12** answered Definitely yes, **25** answered Rather yes, and **20** said it could be done Partly. **17** learners Rather do not believe they could acquire *speaking* from *listening*, and **3** say it is Not at all possible. Among the three who answered Not at all, none were evaluated 10. Of the learners evaluated 10, **3** answered Rather no, **2** answered Partly, **3** answered Rather yes, and the highest number of **4** Definitely believe it is possible.
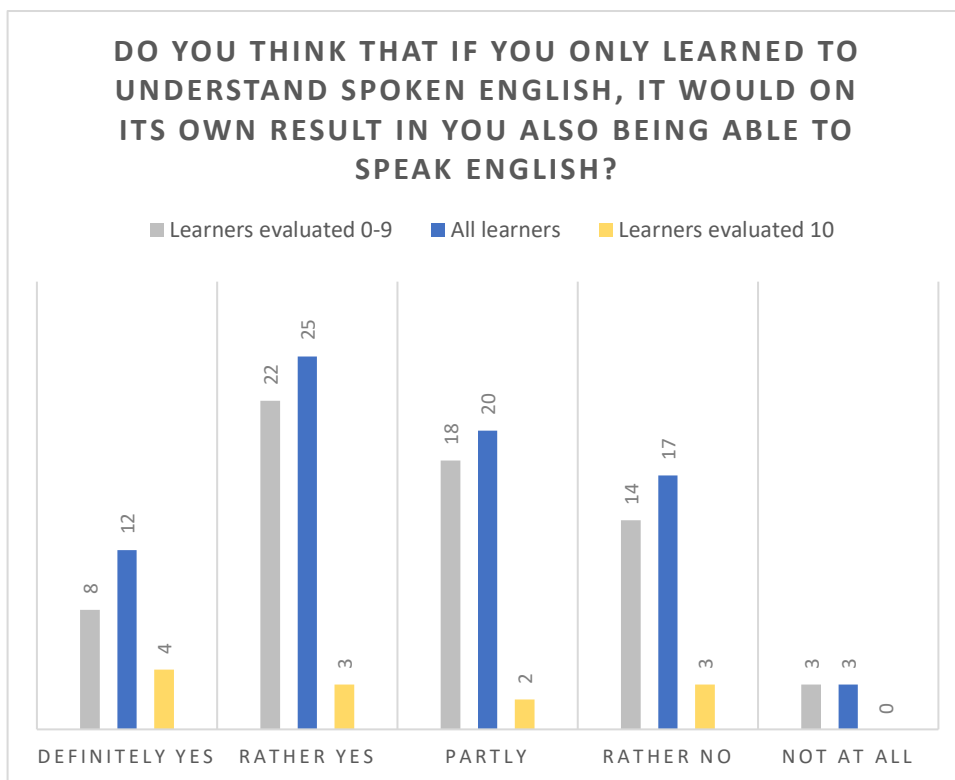
Figure 9: Acquisition of speaking through listening

Question 2 was designed mainly to underline the argument that productive skills can be acquired from well-developed receptive skills. Sub-question b) indicates that this in fact could be the case. Sub-question b) is the most believed-in statement of the four in Question 2.

Sub-question: *c) Do you think that if you only learned to write in English, it would on its own result in you also being able to read in English?*

Curiously enough, the trends in Sub-question c) are exactly the opposite to those of Sub-question a) – while in the case of Sub-question a) learners evaluated 0-9 answered overall negatively, learners evaluated 10 answered overall positively. With Sub-question c), which is the reversal of Sub-question a), learners evaluated 0-9 are inclined more towards believing in the possibility of acquiring the *reading skill* through *writing*, while 10-graded learners are more skeptical. In terms of numbers, **23** believe in can be done Partly, another **23** believe that it Rather can be done, and **20** believe it Rather cannot. **7** learners of **77** answered Definitely yes, and **4** learners answered Not at all. While in the extremes, 10-graded learners lean towards the positive side, with **1** learner answering Definitely yes, and **none** answering Not at all, only **2** 10-graded learners answered Rather yes, **4** answered Partly, and **5** of **12** learners who were evaluated as top of the class by their teachers answered Rather no.
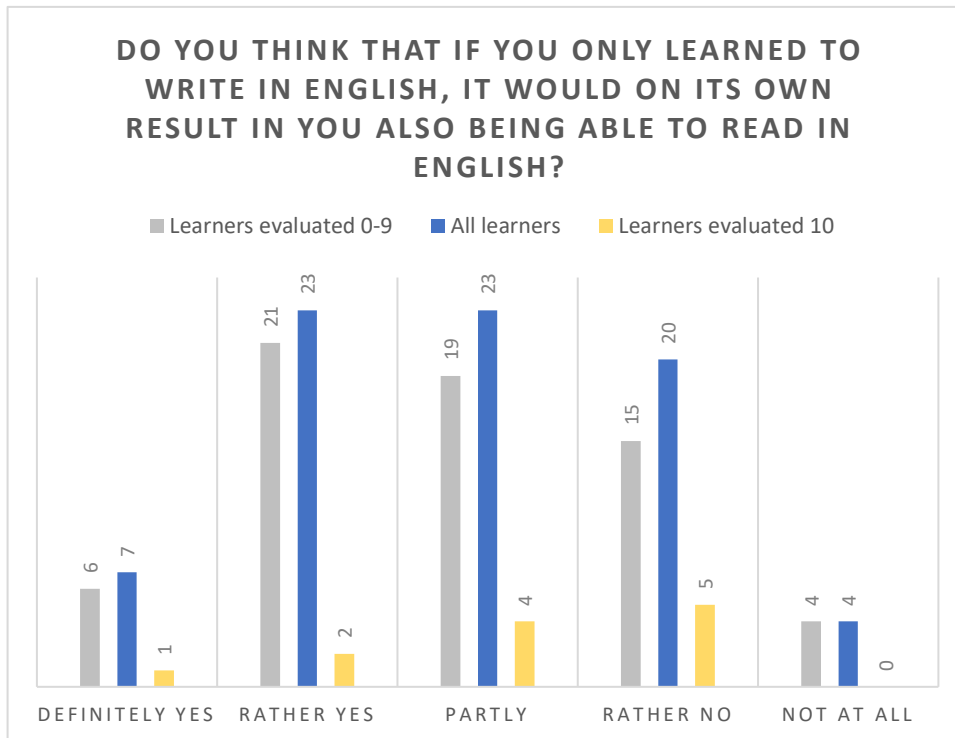
Figure 10: Acquisition of reading through writing

As in the case of Sub-question a), more advanced learners may be able to reflect on more experience as to how they have gotten better at English as a foreign language. As a result, it is easier for them to recognize that *writing* is not the device for acquiring language, but the result of acquiring it.

Sub-question: *d) Do you think that if you only learned to speak English, it would on its own result in you also being able to understand spoken English?*

Sub-question d) is the most neutral-answered Sub-question of Question 2 with **26** learners overall answering Partly, as well as **6** of **12** 10-graded learners answering Partly. The majority of both the main group of respondents and its 10-graded subgroup are more inclined towards the persuasion that *listening* can be acquired from learning to *speak* English. Of overall **35** positive answers, **12** are for Definitely yes, and **23** are for Rather yes. **16** of 77 learners are skeptical in regard to the statement, with **2** learners answering Not at all, and **14** Rather no. **2** learners evaluated 10 answered Rather no, **1** answered Rather yes, and **3** answered Definitely yes.
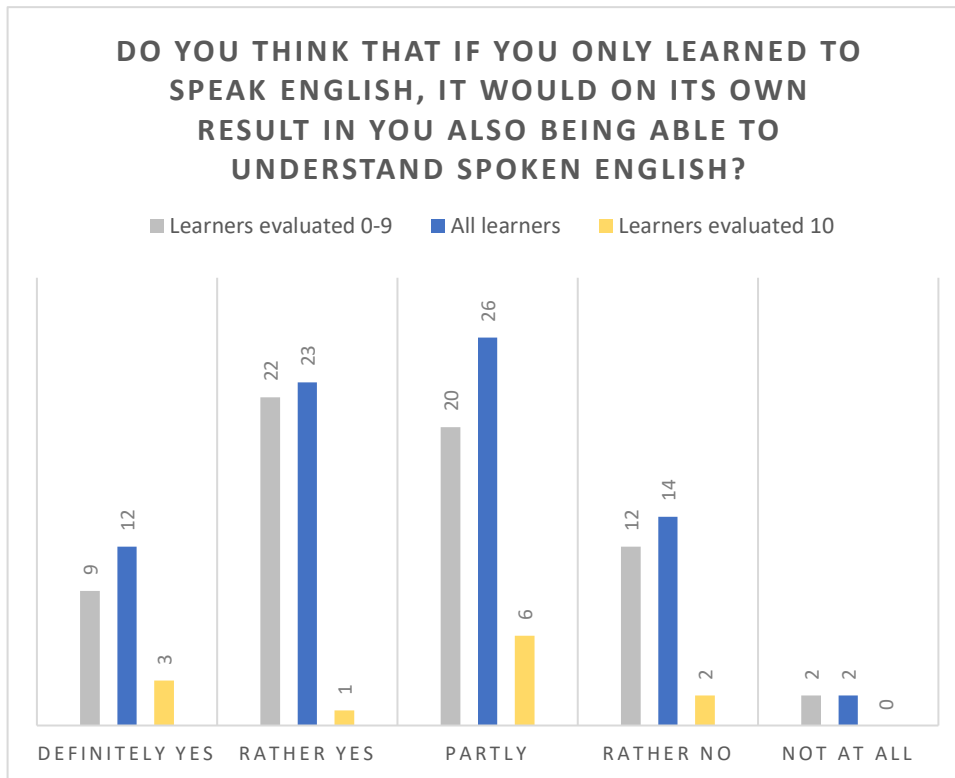
Figure 11: Acquisition of listening through speaking

With three 10-graded learners voting Definitely yes as their answer, Sub-question d) is the second highest in Definitely yes answers. The highest remains Sub-question b), regarding *listening*, with four votes. The highest share of neutral (Partly) answers could indicate that learners are not sure, but believe that being able to *speak English* can to some extent grant them the ability to understand others speaking English, but because of the hypothetical lack of practice, they cannot be sure.

Summary of Question 2:

Question 2 is a question intentionally designed to create bias between receptive and productive skills. The overall results are in favor of the statement that learners focus too much on productive skills. However, after separating the group of most exceptional English learners from each school, the trend is rather in favor of the core conviction of this thesis – that receptive skills are more efficient of a tool for learning/acquiring English. Of **77** learners, acquisition of productive skills through *receptive skills* received **64** positive points (Definitely yes + Rather yes), and **50** received negative points (Rather no + Not at all). The hypothetical acquisition of receptive skills through *productive skills* received **67** positive points, and **40** negative points. All learners combined are slightly in favor of productive skills being the superior aid for acquiring English. However, the sum of positive points for the former among the **12** 10-graded

44

learners is **13**, and the sum of negative points is **6**; and the sum of positive point for the latter is **7**, while the sum of negative points is also **7**.

Question: *3. Would you say that English lessons at school are developing your ability to…*

a) *…speak English?*

b) *…write in English?*

c) *…read in English?*

d) *…understand spoken English?*

In all four Sub-questions of Question 3 for both the main group, as well as the 10-graded-learner sub-group (with the exception of *reading*), the dominant answer was Definitely yes. *Writing* among 10-graded learners is tied between Definitely yes and Rather yes at **6** points each. Since none of the sub-questions was evaluated negatively, the deciding factor for which language skill is most paid attention to according to learners lies in the comparison of Definitely yes points, and positive points (Definitely yes + Rather yes) of all four Sub-questions.

Of **77** learners, **33** voted Definitely yes for *listening*, **44** for *reading*, **47** for *writing*, and **31** for *speaking*. The sum of positive points, or the combination of Definitely yes and Rather yes answers for *listening* is **54**, for *reading* **71**, for *writing* **68**, and for *speaking* **60**. If considering only Definitely yes answers, learners see *writing* as the skill that is being developed the most in school. If, however, all positive points are taken into consideration, it is *reading* that the learners feel is being most paid attention to. Either way, the results show that of **77** learners, most believe that graphic-motor skills are the prior focus of their classes.

The most frequent Rather no answer was for *listening* with **6**. *Reading* received **5**, *speaking* received **4**, and *writing* received **2**. **None** of the learners marked Not at all as their answer for any of the Sub-questions.
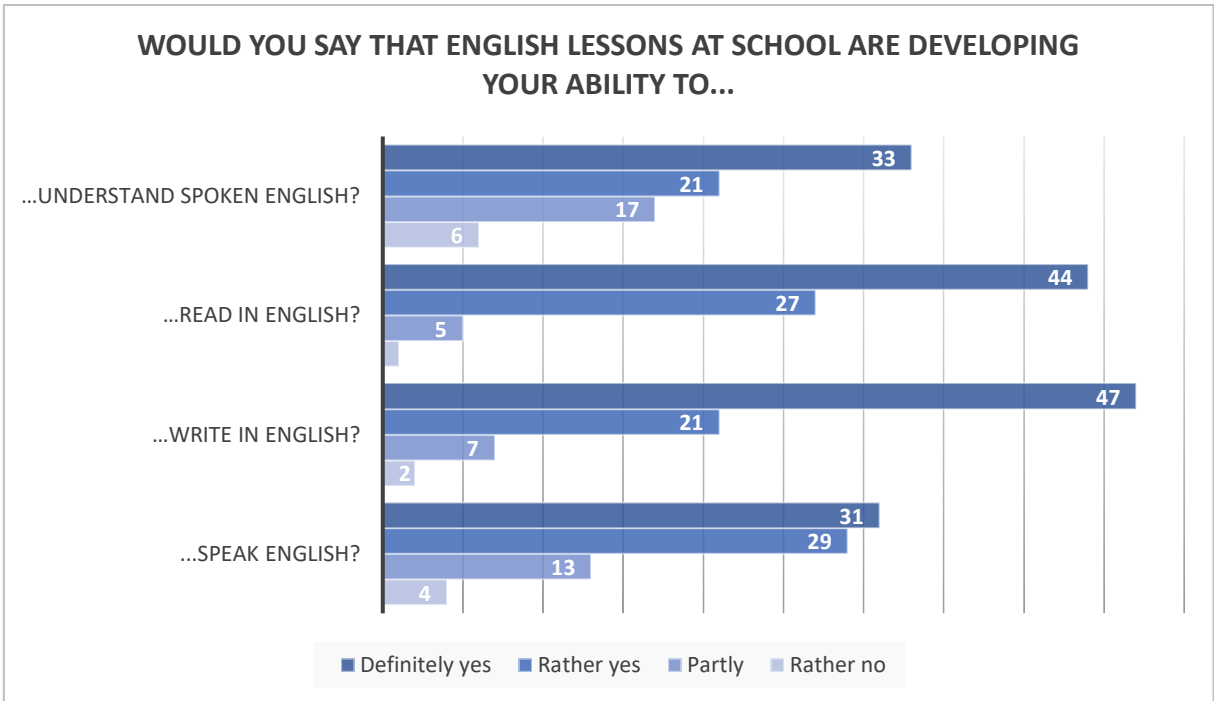
Figure 12: Opinion on language skill distribution at school

The results are not very different in the case of learners evaluated 10. *Listening* received **5** Definitely yes answers, and **8** positive points, *reading* received **6** Definitely yes answers and **12** positive points, *writing* received **8** Definitely yes answers and **12** positive points, and *speaking* received **6** Definitely yes answers and **11** positive points. In overall positive points (Definitely yes + Rather yes), the most dominant skills in school according to 10-graded learners are once again *reading* and *writing*, or graphic-motor skills.
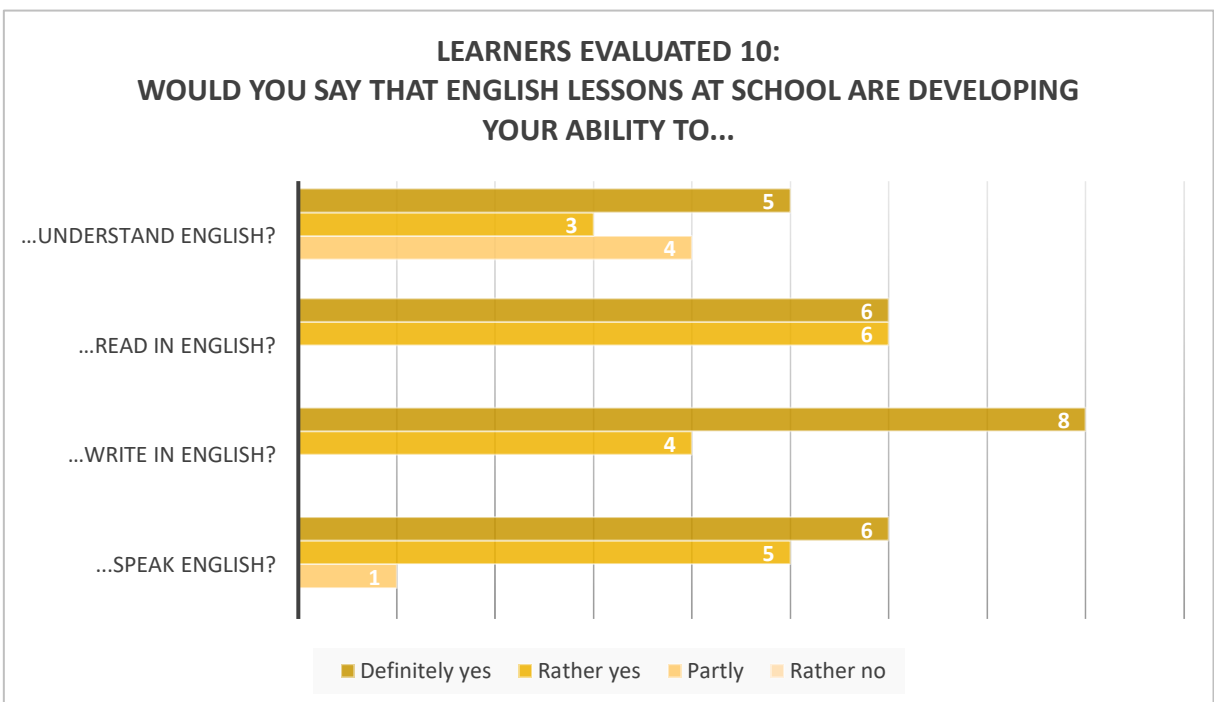
Figure 13: Opinion on language skill distribution at school – sub-group: learners evaluated 10

46

It is also appropriate to add that even after taking the full sample of all **77** learners and removing the **12** 10-graded learners, the sample of the remaining **65** learners evaluated 0-9 still shows clear preference for graphic-motor skills.

Summary of Question 3:

As shown in Chapter 3 of the practical part – Question 1, these findings are in direct contrast with the answers the teachers provided for their questionnaire. Perhaps a perception distortion has had an effect on the learners' decision-making, since writing and reading can feel as though more effort needs to be put into them than into speaking and listening, and they provide more visible feedback, it might lead to learners remembering having done more work on those skills than on speaking or listening. Another possible explanation is that the learners feel most competent in these two areas of the English language, and since they do not know of the effects of acquisition outside of the classroom, they may think that their being better at graphic-motor skills means that those are the skills that are most paid attention to in school.

2.2 Section two

The next section of the learner questionnaire utilized the Likert scale as well, but in a different way, and with additional instructions for the learners. Learners were no longer answering using words, but were rather assigning points to specific categories. Question 4 is presented as a **statement** rather than a question, but for the purposes of clarity and uniformity, it is still referred to as a Question.

Question: *4. You would say that your English is good when you…*

  a) *…speak perfectly.*
  b) *…write perfectly.*
  c) *…understand perfectly while reading.*
  d) *…understand perfectly while listening.*

Rules: The statements of Question 4 are not to be looked at separately, but rather as a whole. The learners were asked to assign from 0 up to 5 points to each of the statements based on how true they feel they are. That would make up to a maximum of **20** assigned points. The **condition** for Question 4 was that the learners had only **14** points at their disposal, and they had to

distribute those carefully. The number 14 was chosen because it is not divisible by four, and thus a preference is bound to stand out. Despite the fact that each statement contains the word 'perfect', which could be argued as being in contrast with the restriction of assignable points, the main descriptor of the statement is the word '**good**' in *"You would say your English is **good** when you…"*, meaning *good enough*, therefore not perfect. It is also necessary to point out that most learners did not use all fourteen points.

The skill that received most points was *reading* with **229** points. Following closely behind is *writing* with **224** points. *Speaking* received **217** among **77** learners, and last came in *listening* with only **208** points.

The results slightly differ when looking into the two sub-groups of learners evaluated 10 and learners evaluated 0-9. While 10-graded learners also prefer *writing* with **42** points, their second best choice is *speaking* with **40** points. The third place is a tie between *writing* and *listening* with **37** points each.

The rest of the full sample, or learners evaluated 0-9 assigned **187** points to both *reading* and *writing*, and **171** points to both *listening* and *speaking*.
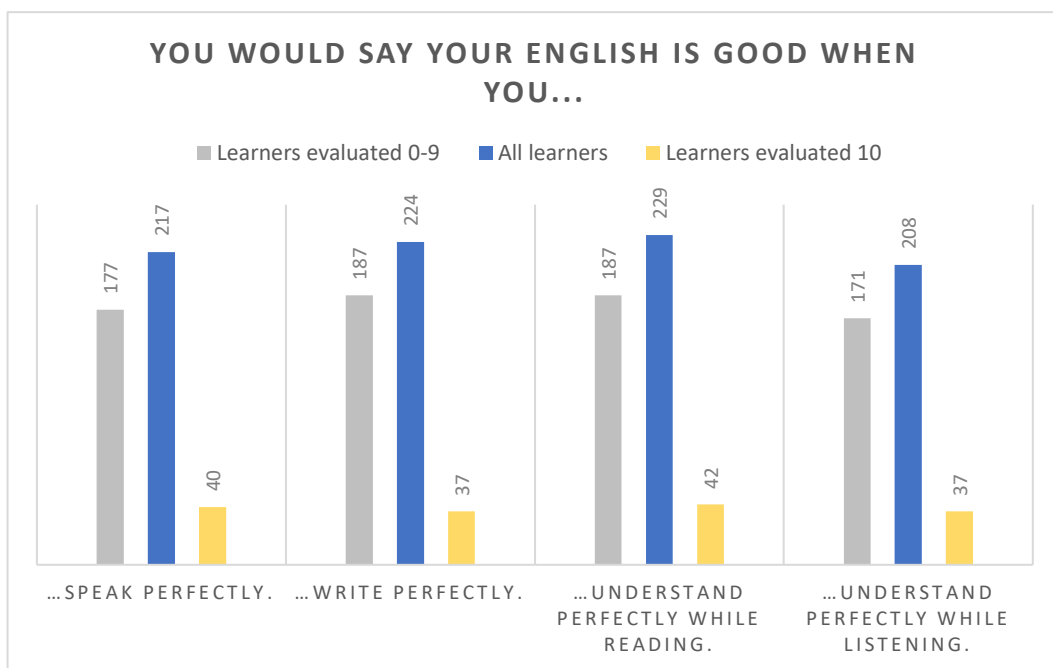
Figure 14: Language skills as criteria for assessing EFL proficiency

Summary of Question 4:

Most trends of Question 4 seem to confirm the popularity of graphic-motor skills over aural-oral skills, except for the sub-group of 10-graded learners, who seem to slightly prefer *reading* and *speaking* as indicators of their English being good.

Question: *5. What do you think is the best way to improve you English?*

    a) Watching movies / shows / short videos with Czech subtitles.

    b) Watching movies / shows / short videos with English subtitles.

    c) Watching movies /shows / short videos with no subtitles.

    d) Reading books and articles in English.

    e) Speaking with native English speakers.

    f) Texting with native English speakers.

    g) Living in an English-speaking country.

Rules: The last utilization of the Likert scale in the learner questionnaire saw the most unusual use. The learners were asked to sort the answers by their perceived importance using numbers 1 through 7 – 1 being the least important, and 7 being the most. The problem with this type of question was that there was significant room for error, as there was no way of prohibiting learners to mark the same number for two or more different answers other than writing it in the instructions in capital letters. Since the error occurred in a significant number of cases (**24** of **77**), the results are presented in three groups: The group of all learners who answered correctly, the group of 10-graded learners who answered correctly (only **1** of **12** learners evaluated 10 answered incorrectly, which could among other things indicate that learners who are more prone to read and comprehend what is written in front of them are more likely to gain language proficiency), and the group of learners who have misread the instruction.

The first group showed clear preference for *Living in an English speaking country*, which has received **305** points. The second, fairly closely behind, was *Speaking with native English speakers* with **273**. The last in the range of two-hundred-plus was *Texting with native English speakers* with **209** points. After interaction with native English speakers came *Reading books and articles in English*. The three last places are all occupied by video-related answers.

Movies / shows / short videos with English subtitles received **178** points, video with Czech subtitles received **173** points, and video with no subtitles was last with only **159** points.
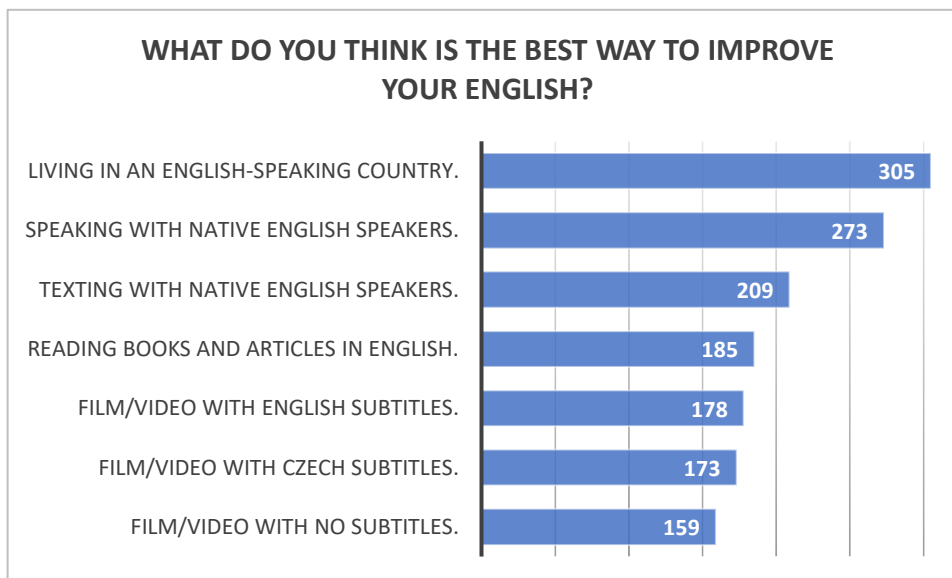

Figure 15: Opinion on the efficiency of various activities for EFL proficiency

Learners evaluated 10 had a similar order of preference, with a few slight differences. Their number one choice was *Speaking with native English speakers* with **69** points, and *Living in an English-speaking country* came close after that with **66** points. *Texting with native English speakers* again came in third with **47** points. 10-graded learners also believe *Movies / shows / short videos with English subtitles* to be the most efficient of the three video-related answers, and also consider this particular one to be more efficient than *reading*, as it received **35** points and *Reading books and articles in English* received **33** points. *Video with Czech subtitles* received **30**, and video without subtitles once again came in last with **28** points.
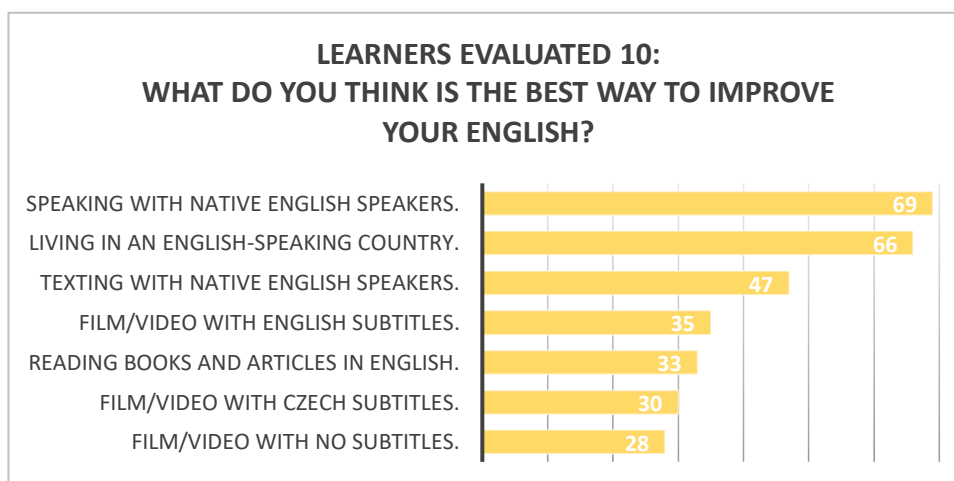
Figure 16: Opinion on the efficiency of various activities for EFL proficiency – sub-group: learners evaluated 10

The last group did not follow the instruction, thus assigned points freely. Nevertheless, the favorite answer was also *Living in an English-speaking country* with **129** points. *Speaking with native English speakers* was second with **118**, closely followed by *Movies / shows / short videos with English subtitles* with **113** points. *Video with Czech subtitles* received **110** points, *Texting with native English speakers* received **106** points, *Reading books and articles in English* received **96** points, and *Video without subtitles* once again came last with **90** points.
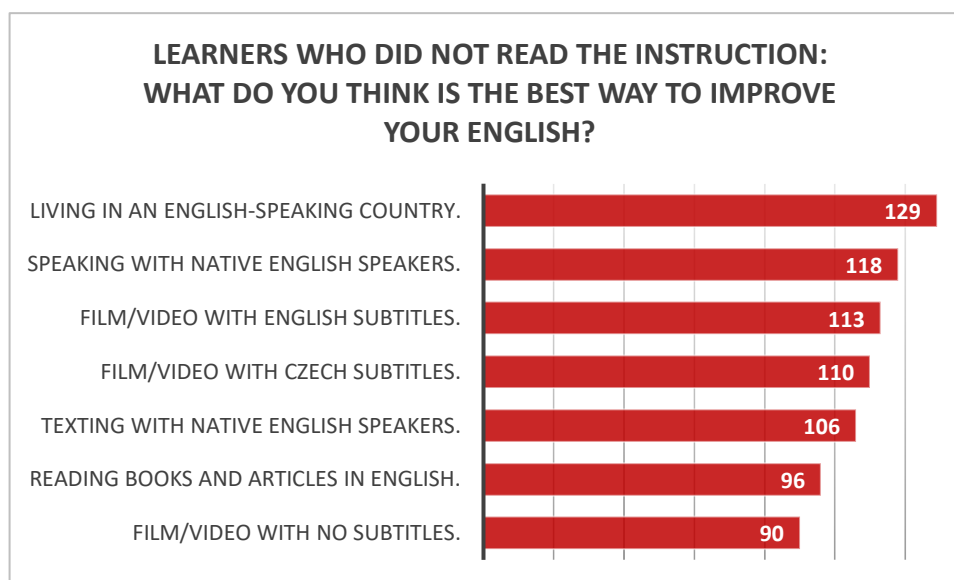
Figure 17: Opinion on the efficiency of various activities for EFL proficiency – sub-group: learners who misread the instruction

Summary of Question 5:

The unanimously unfavorable answer was watching movies, shows and short videos without subtitles. There appears to be a clear preference among learners for interaction with native speakers. Perhaps the learners think that their taking part in the dialogue will somehow make them better. Neveretheless, a conversation with a native speaker is usually limited to the level of the person with lower English proficiency. What learners also seem not to realize is that by watching video material without subtitles, they are essentially exposed to native speaker input, which – native speakers – seem to have been the learners' compass for deciding acquisition efficiency. Furthermore, even a fluent conversation with a native speaker every day can rarely provide more input of authentic spoken English than an average one and a half hour long movie once every few days.

Perhaps the learners' rejection of video without subtitles stems from their age-related proficiency level – at lower secondary school age, it is unlikely that learners have enough

proficiency to take away anything from a subtitleless movie in English. That does not change the fact that they could have though about it on a hypothetical level.

Drawing from my own experience, and from some of the research presented in Chapter 4 of the theoretical part, I would say that living in an English-speaking country is severely overrated. One of my relatives lived in the UK for more than two years, and her English is at best at average grammar school level, with easily recognizable errors, and deteriorating over time with the absence of using English back in the Czech republic. In comparison, I have never been to an English-speaking country, yet I have native-like receptive skills (can fairly objectively state that because of my ratio of following Anglo-American media to Czech media being approximately 19:1).

2.3 Section three

Part three of the learner questionnaire utilized a set of separate questions, and had learners evaluate each on the scale of 0 through 10, based on their perceived frequency. Each of the questions asked the learners *How often* they do certain actions in English. The scale spans from 0 being Never to 10 being All the time. As opposed to previous questions, the video-related questions in this case were divided into short videos *and* movies / shows. As shown in the following results, the difference between these proved to be significant.

Questions: *How often do you…*

6. *…talk to someone in English?*
7. *…write something in English?*
8. *…watch movies and shows in English without subtitles?*
9. *…watch movies and shows in English with Czech subtitles?*
10. *…watch movies and shows in English with English subtitles?*
11. *…watch videos (YouTube etc.) in English without subtitles?*
12. *…play videogames in English?*
13. *…read books in English?*
14. *…read articles in English?*

The results of Questions 6 through 14 are presented as an average value of answers for each individual Question and then sorted by that value. From all **77** learners, *playing videogames* emerged as the most frequent activity at an average of **6.13**. The next most frequent activity was *watching short videos (YouTube etc.) in English without subtitles* at the average of **5.13**. *Watching movies / shows with Czech subtitles* followed with **4.53**, which was closely followed by *writing something in English* with **4.45**. After a slight gap, *talking to someone in English* followed with **3.39**, and *reading articles in English* with **3.35**. *Watching movies / shows without subtitles* has shown to be done slightly more frequently (**2.64**) than *watching movies / shows with English subtitles* (**2.39**). *Reading books in English* ended up last with **1.25**.
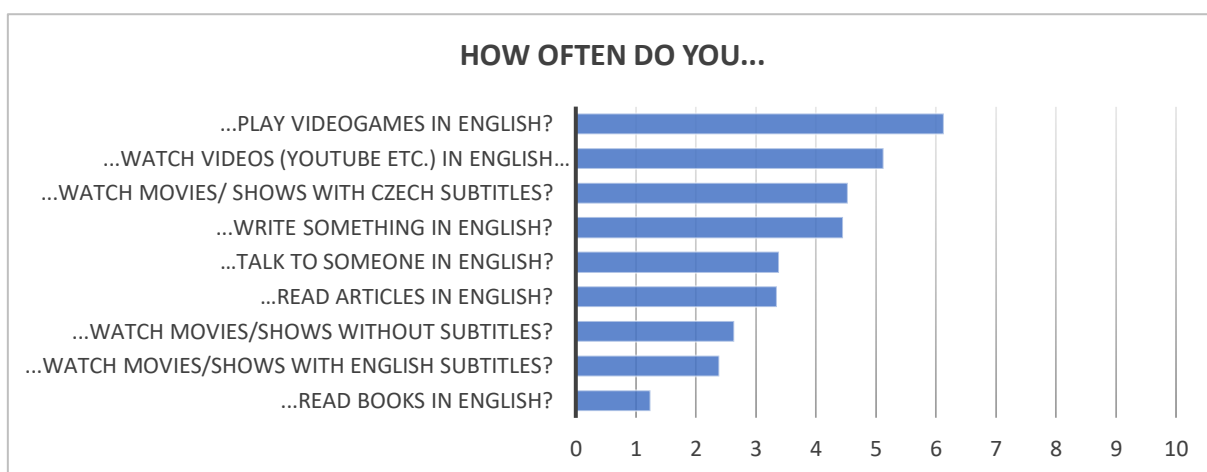
Figure 18: learners' activities related to English

The number one spot changes in the case of learners evaluated 10. *Watching videos (YouTube etc.) in English without subtitles* was the most frequent answer with an average of **6.83**. *Playing videogames in English* came second with **6.17**. *Watching movies / shows with Czech subtitles* was also in the third place among 10-graded learners, with an average of **5.25**. *Writing something in English* received an average of **5.00**, *reading articles in English* received **4.17**, *watching movies / shows with English subtitles* received an average of **4.00**, and *watching movies / shows without subtitles* received **3.92**. A surprising drop in comparison to the complete sample occurred in *talking to someone in English* which ended up second to last among 10-graded learners with the average of **3.50**. The last place was once again occupied by *reading books in English* with an average of **1.67**.
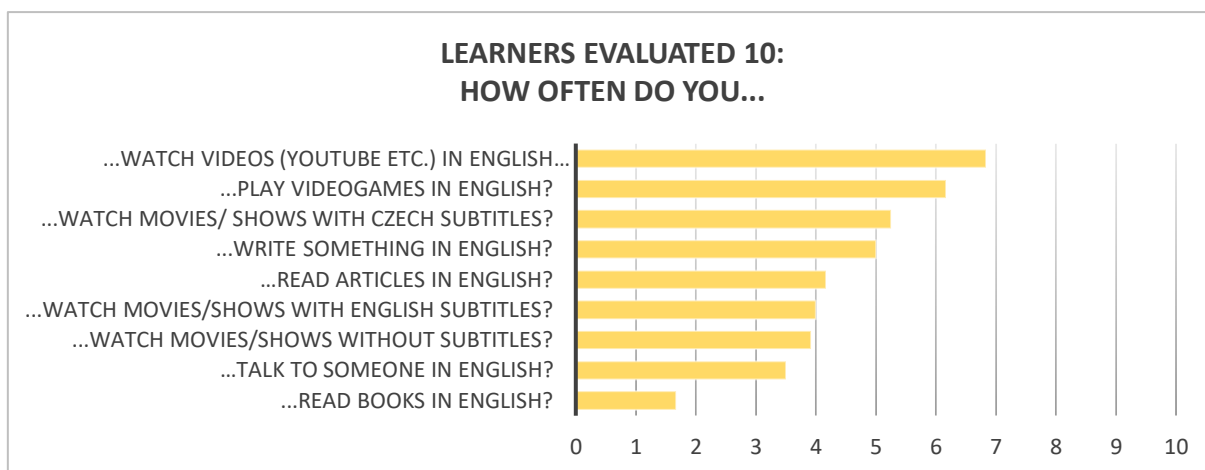
Figure 19: learners' activities related to English – sub-group: learners evaluated 10

Summary of Questions 6 through 14:

With the rise of new forms of entertainment such as short videos or videogames, which are deliberately designed to provide a simplistic form of a feeling of accomplishment and reward, and thus appear more appealing and entertaining than for example books, a shift in learners' activities is visible. However, it is understandable that, since learners in lower secondary school are not yet at an age at which they can properly appreciate a book in their native tongue, let alone a book in a foreign language, reading books came in last.

It is also necessary to note that 8 of 12 of the learners who were evaluated 10 by their teachers are girls, which could have influenced the results of 10-graded learners, since girls enjoy videogames far less often than boys, thus videogames were not the favored answer in that particular sub-group.

Nevertheless, videogames are a tremendously efficient source of input for EFL acquisition, since they offer interaction. There is, however, not much need to utilize them in EFL lessons, since children are usually prone to wanting to play videogames on their own time because of the games' providing an illusory sense of accomplishment. Short videos, however, could prove to be a strong aid in an EFL classroom.

Summary of the learner questionnaire:

While it is not as clear as to which language skill is the favorite among any of the groups that took part, it is clear that learners focus on productive skills more than on receptive skills. Despite their English-related activities consisting mainly of receptive entertainment in the form of video or gaming, learners clearly believe that the best way to learn English is through

productive skills. No preference for the listening skill was shown in any of the questions. Thus, it can be concluded that within the frame of the sample, learners focus too much on speaking English, rather than understanding English.

3 Teacher questionnaire

The teacher questionnaire focused on the teachers' preference in terms of language skills in a more explicit way than in the case of the learners. The teachers were asked four simple questions which are in correlation with the questions the learners were asked. A total of **10** teachers took part in the questionnaire, **one** per each school whose pupils took part in the questionnaire, plus **six** more teachers, who do not represent any parts of the learner sample. All **10** teachers are from lower secondary schools in the Olomouc region. In this chapter, most of the results are presented from all **10** teachers as a group.

Three of the four teacher questionnaire questions utilize the Likert scale, two of them in an unusual way and one in a traditional way. The fourth question utilizes a rating scale from 0 through 10.

The graphic representation of the results is once again color-coded. In the first two questions, dark blue color represents *speaking*, light orange represents *writing*, dark yellow represents *listening* and light green is for *reading*.

Question: *1. From a total of 10 lessons, how many lessons would you devote to each skill?*

As previously stated in the learner questionnaire, this particular teachers' preference directly contradicts that of the learners, as the teachers have predominantly selected aural-oral skills. The **10** teachers would devote **35** lessons (out of **100** available to the full sample) to *speaking*, **31** lessons to *listening*, **20** lessons to *reading*, and only **14** to *writing*.
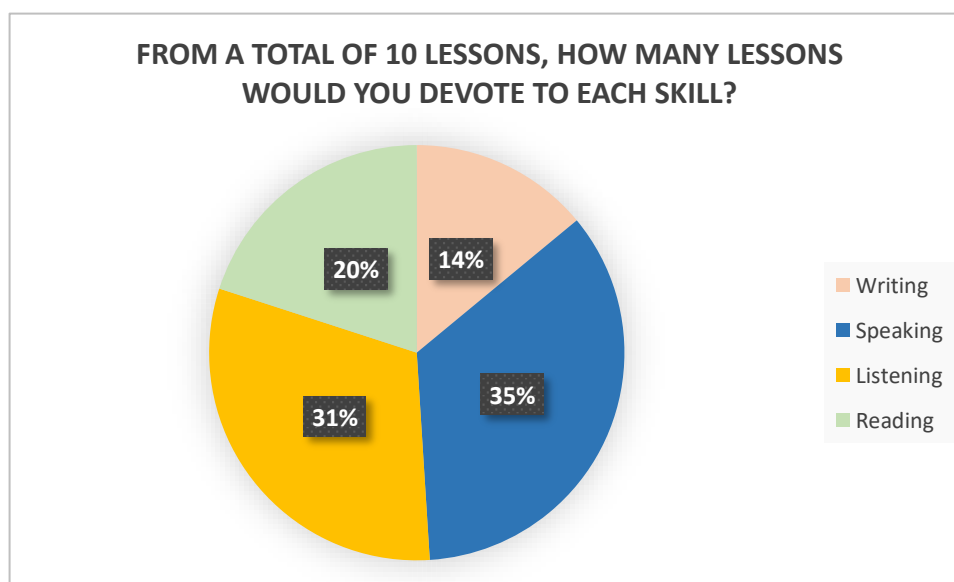
Figure 20: teachers' hypothetical distribution of language skills

Summary of Question 1:

The teachers' preference and field of focus seems not to lie in the division of receptive skills vs. productive skills at all. Instead, the teachers' focus seems to be aimed at aural-oral skills, which could point at the proposition that teachers are mainly envisioning their pupils utilizing English for face-to-face communication in foreign countries (e.g. on a vacation).

Question: *2. You would say that a pupil's English is good if he/she…*

This question was limited in number of assignable points, similarly to Question 5 of the learner questionnaire. The teachers could assign each skill a number of points from 0 through 5 – 5 being the highest. They were, however, limited by the amount of points in total which they could assign. Each teacher had **14** points at their disposal which she/he could distribute among the four skills. Once again, the number 14 was intentionally selected for its indivisibility by four, and thus forcing a preference.

Once again, the preference is visibly in favor of aural-oral skills, with *speaking* receiving **48** points, and *listening* receiving **41**. *Writing* was evaluated at **26** points, and *reading* received **23** points.
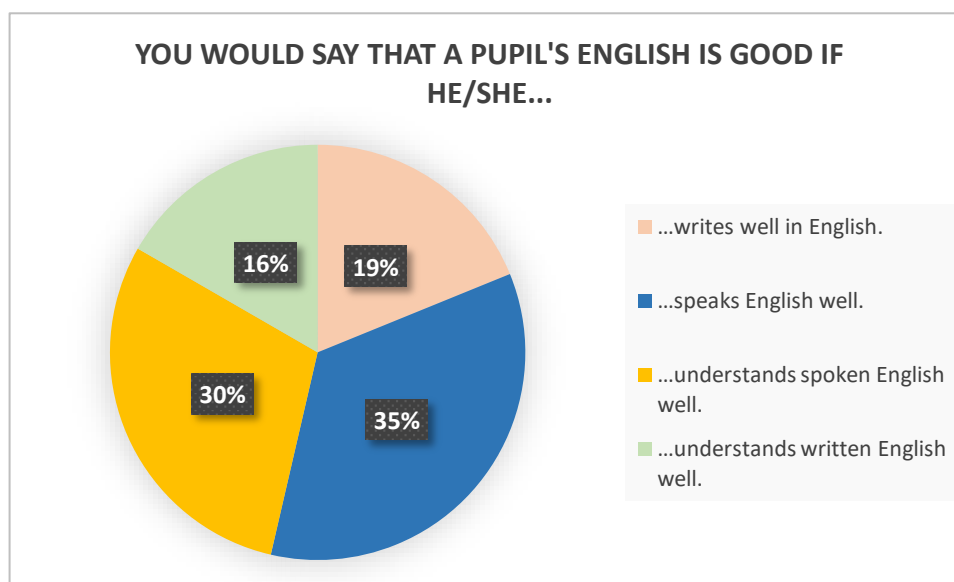
Figure 21: language skills as criteria for assessing EFL proficiency

Summary of Question 2:

While the ratio of the preference of speaking to listening remains fairly similar to the previous question, a shift in the graphic-motor skills occurs. Teachers would assess learners more positively based on a good writing ability, but would devote more lessons to reading.

Perhaps this shift occurs because it is easier to asses a learner based on production, since reception assessment is much harder to do thoroughly. While productive skills provide immediate feedback, it often takes time to find out whether receptive skills have been acquired properly.

Question: *3. If we ONLY developed the learner's…*

   a) *…listening skill, he/she would pick up speaking on his/her own.*
   b) *…speaking skill, he/she would pick up listening on his/her own.*
   c) *…reading skill, he/she would pick up writing on his/her own.*
   d) *…writing skill, he/she would pick up reading on his/her own.*

Once again, although the question is formulated as a statement, for the purpose of uniformity, it is referred to as a *question*. For this question, a traditional use of the Likert scale has been employed. The teacher chose from five possible answers **Definitely agree – Rather yes – Maybe partly – Rather no – Definitely disagree**.

Sub-question: *a) If we only developed the learner's listening skill, he/she would pick up speaking on his/her own.*

1 teacher Definitely agrees with this statement, **4** teachers answered Rather yes. **3** teachers selected Maybe partly, **2** said Rather no. There is **no** teacher who would Definitely disagree.

Sub-question: *b) If we only developed the learner's speaking skill, he/she would pick up listening on his/her own.*

While Sub-question b) sees the same number of teachers who answered Definitely agree (**1**) and Rather yes (**4**) as Sub-question a), there is one more teacher who answered Maybe partly (for a total of **3**), and one less who answered Rather no (for a total of **2**). **None** of the teachers Definitely disagreed.

Sub-question: *c) If we only developed the learner's reading skill, he/she would pick up writing on his/her own.*

Sub-question c) was the only Sub-question which received **2** Definitely agree answers instead of one. **3** more teachers answered Rather yes, and **3** answered Maybe partly. **2** teachers answered Rather no, and, once again, no one Definitely disagreed.

Sub-question: *d) If we only developed the learner's writing skill, he/she would pick up reading on his/her own.*

The answers Definitely agree, Rather yes, and Maybe partly, all received **1** vote each. There were **6** teachers who said Rather no to this statement, and **1** who selected Definitely disagree.
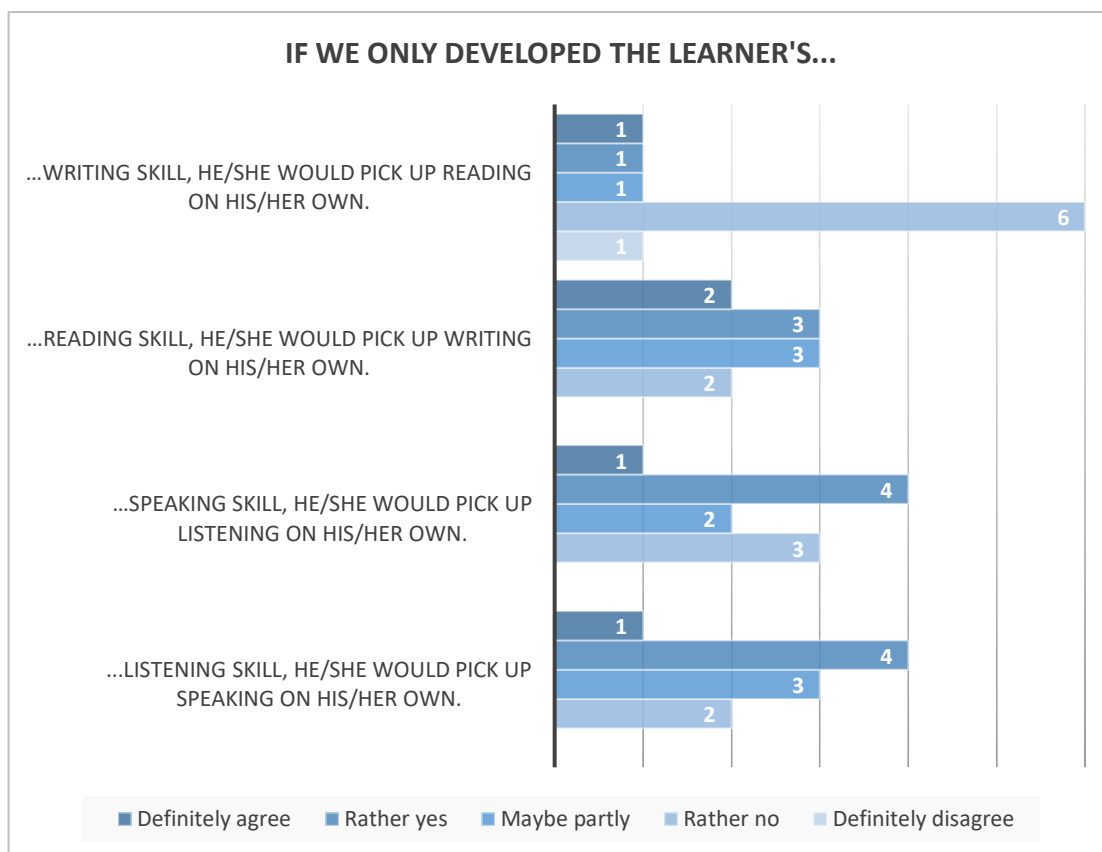
Figure 22: Hypothetical mutual acquisition between graphic-motor skills and aural-oral skills

Summary of Question 3:

Different to the learners' answers, the teachers' answers seem to be in agreement with the thesis' agenda that productive skills can be picked up through developing receptive skills. While the number of positive points (Definitely agree + Rather yes) is the same for *listening, reading*, and *speaking – speaking* received more negative points, thus it is slightly less agreed upon than *listening*.

Question: *4. How effective do you find the influence of today's free-time media in English on children's English proficiency?*

This question utilized a simple rating scale of numbers 0 through 10, 0 being Not effective at all, and 10 being Very effective. The average number of all of the teachers' answers is **7.5**. Teacher from School A answered **3**, teacher from School B answered **7**, teacher from School C answered **9**, and teacher from School D answered **5**. The remaining answers include one **10**, two **9**s, two **8**s, and one **7**.

Summary of Question 4:

The average number is fairly positive except for the teachers from School A and School D. Perhaps their judgement was influenced by the manner in which some of the media are presented – those types of media content that are the most expressive, and thus capture the most attention, often come across as least intelligent. Nevertheless, taking into consideration that children are children and will usually grow up to be wiser, one could overlook the unintelligent-seeming nature of the content for the time being, and face the fact that the exciting content that children follow on the internet is possibly one of the best and most natural motivators for them to want to learn English.

Summary of the teacher questionnaire:

The questionnaire given to teachers has shown a clear preference for aural-oral skills in terms of teaching and assessing English as a foreign language, which neither agrees with, nor denies the hypothesis that teachers focus too much on productive skills at the expense of receptive skills. The third question suggests that teachers believe that productive skills can be acquired through receptive skills rather than the opposite, which is in agreement with the thesis' argument. The last question has measured the opinion the teachers have about today's free-time media in English.

4 Lesson plans

4.1 Introduction

Despite already being employed as a full-time teacher, the practical part of this thesis was worked on during the government-issued stay-at-home order of the year 2020, which had all schools in the country closed. Therefore, all lesson plans proposed in this chapter are purely hypothetical. Furthermore, since it is unrealistic to design a profound lesson, for which the preparation takes over two hours, while having a 21-lesson workweek, the lessons were designed in such a manner to be feasible with regard to a realistic amount of time available for lesson preparation.

4.2 Lesson plan 1

Topic:	Being different, "The world's too big, mom", scene from Man of Steel
Grade:	8, 9 – lower secondary school
Length:	45 minutes
Teaching aids:	Computer classroom – computer and headphones for each learner, scene from a movie available on YouTube, whiteboard, data projector, miscellaneous classroom objects as optional props
Methods:	Individual work, pair work, class discussion
Source:	Man of Steel
Aims:	• Learners get acquainted with how English sounds delivered from a native speaker. • Learners will understand English spoken by a native speaker. • Learners will correctly associate native speech with individual words and their meaning.

1. Warm-up activity: Discussion

A discussion in English on the topic of various ways people can differ from each other, and things and life conditions that make some people stand out in the real world. The discussion is teacher-learner oriented, meaning that the learners share their ideas with the teacher. Only one person speaks at a time, which simultaneously provides input for other learners who are listening. The discussion takes about 5 minutes.

2. Pre-listening activity: Vocabulary

Before playing the scene "*The world's too big, Mom*" (YouTube, 2013), the teacher has a list prepared containing all words representing the learners' *i + 1*. The teacher writes one word at a time on a whiteboard, demonstrates its pronunciation multiple times, and asks whether any of the learners know the word. They can either (preferably) provide an explanation of the word in English, or its Czech translation. The teacher then writes a short explanation of the word on the whiteboard. This is done repeatedly until all the words above learners' level of expected proficiency are written and explained on the whiteboard. This activity takes 8-10 minutes.

3. Listening and while-listening activity: Transcription

The teacher explains the instruction. The learners are to form pairs, and decide who will focus on which character. One of the learners will focus on the character named Clark, and the other will focus on Clark's mother. All learners have 20 minutes to transcribe their particular character's dialogue in English, no translation required, and prepare a reenactment of the scene. The learners are told that two pairs will be selected to perform the reenactment in front of the class.

All learners are encouraged to play the video (any particular part) as many times as they need. They are also encouraged – if they do not understand a certain part – to continue watching, and perhaps they will be able to deduce the misunderstood part from the context of the following dialogue. Learners work on their own, and can only discuss any problematic parts with their partners, or can raise their hand and call for the teacher's assistance. The assistance is provided in English only. This activity is devoted 20 minutes.

4. After-listening activity: Reenactment

After the listening activity, during which the teacher walked around the class and watched the learners' progress, and assessed which transcription is best suitable for as correct reenactment as possible, the teacher calls out the first pair to perform the dialogue in front of

the class. After that, the second pair follows. The learners are free to use any objects in the classroom as props. Since the scene is two and a half minutes long, and the dialogue between Clark and his mother is even shorter, the reenactment takes approximately 5 minutes.

5. Conclusion: Reproduction

In order to make sure that all learners' errors are clarified, the teacher plays back the scene one more time using the data projector and classroom speakers. The teacher pauses the dialogue after each sentence, and pronounces each sentence again in an exaggeratedly intelligible way. All learners are encouraged to raise their hand anytime anything is unclear. The conclusion is devoted the rest of the lesson, circa 5 minutes.

Summary of Lesson plan 1

This lesson plan proposes a way of introducing learners to native speech through authentic video in an attempt to remove the affective filter of perceived unintelligibility, which could intimidate learners from trying to understand native speech. Through individual work and available repetition, the learners should put together a comprehensible transcription, which could lead to better recognition of similar pronunciation patterns in the future.

4.3 Lesson plan 2

Topic:	Love, "The Love-Master", an excerpt from White Fang
Grade:	8, 9 – lower secondary school
Length:	45 minutes
Teaching aids:	Tablets, Monolingual learner's dictionary
Methods:	Individual work, class discussion
Source:	White Fang by Jack London
Aims:	• Learners will use technology to search for missing information. • Learners will comprehend the meaning and message of a longer text structure.

1. Warm-up activity: Discussion

As a warm-up activity suitable for this particular excerpt, a discussion is held about the relationship of humans and dogs. The discussion is learner-learner oriented, learners discuss in groups of three, the teacher occasionally listens to one of the conversations. The learners have 5 minutes for their discussion.

2. Pre-reading activity: Preparation

The teacher hands out papers with excerpts of the authentic text, as well as a papers containing questions, and tablets that will serve as dictionaries. Each learner gets one excerpt, one paper with questions, and each tablet is shared by two learners. The learners are asked to turn on their tablets and open the webpage **learnersdictionary.com**, which is a monolingual dictionary, which will be crucial for the text that contains plenty of expressions above the learners' proficiency level. The purpose of presenting learners with new vocabulary is in this case not necessarily to teach them those particular words, but rather to teach them to make sense of sentences as a whole, and teach them to look up missing information in order to comprehend larger blocks of text such as sentences and paragraphs. The preparation should take no more than 5 minutes. While everything is being prepared, the teacher briefly summarizes the preceding events in the book in order to acquaint the learners with the context. Nevertheless, the context of the previous story in the book is not crucial for comprehending the excerpts in this particular case.

3. Reading activity: Answering questions for Part 1

The teacher instructs the learners to read the first part of the text and announces that after 10 minutes, learners will be called out at random to read one of their answers out loud. Learners read the first part of the text and answer the questions about the text in English. They are encouraged to read the full sentence first, if they do not understand any part of it. The teacher does not provide assistance, as it is provided by the monolingual dictionary. The teacher walks around the class and monitors the learners' progress. Learners have 10 minutes to complete Part 1.

4. Post-reading activity: Summary of Part 1

The teacher calls out learners at random to read one of their questions (in order to the questions' succession) out loud. Other learners are encouraged to react to that answer. The teacher then either acknowledges a correct answer, or presents the correct answer if none was

provided by the learners. Some of the questions have multiple correct answers. 5 minutes should suffice for the amount of questions in Part 1.

5. Reading activity: Answering questions for Part 2

After the summary of Part 1, learners begin to read Part 2, and once again attempt to answer all questions presented for that particular part. 20 minutes are devoted to reading of Part 2.

6. Post-reading activity: Summary of Part 2 and the whole excerpt

Questions for Part 2 do not have as specific answers as those of Part 1. They are rather designed to provoke a discussion. The discussion is learner-teacher oriented. Only one person at a time speaks, but learners are allowed to react to, or follow up on their classmates' answers.

Summary of Lesson plan 2:

Lesson plan 2 is designed to introduce learners to text above their level of competence in order to teach them to extract meaning from the text without necessarily knowing all of the words contained in the text. Learners are led to looking up any missing information using modern technology, particularly a tablet, which is a very similar device to a smartphone – a device that every learner owns.

Summary of the Practical Part

The practical part has asked questions regarding the comparison of receptive and productive skills in relation to EFL acquisition. The hypotheses proposed that learners and teachers focus too much on producing English and not enough on understanding. The questionnaires have shown inconsistent results, as learners believe graphic-motor skills to be the most efficient means of acquiring English, while teachers believe aural-oral skills to be more important. If asked from a different perspective, however, such as whether learners would use their hypothetical perfect English proficiency for producing or understanding, they have only shown preference for the skill of *listening*. Aside from two, most teachers seem to view contemporary media in English rather optimistically in their potential influence of learners' EFL proficiency. Lastly, two lesson plans aimed mostly at removing the affective filter of being intimidated by native speech/text were proposed.

Conclusion

The diploma thesis dealt with the topic of acquisition of English as a foreign language through receptive skills. The theoretical part mapped the basic terms regarding language skills and acquisition, provided a synthesis of ideas and factors most relevant to the topic and to the practical part. It summarized all four language skills, mutually compared them, and presented problematic areas in the EFL classroom.

The practical part presented several research questions and hypotheses and attempted to answer those utilizing the methods of quantitative research. Three questionnaires in total were used. One for learners and two for teachers. The learners answered fourteen questions regarding their preferences and opinions in relation to language skills. They have provided their first names and first two letters of their last names. The initial questionnaire for teachers was designed in a similar manner as the one for learners. The second questionnaire for the teachers presented the names of the learners and the teachers were asked to grade each learner on a scale of 0 through 10. This allowed for a separation of a learner sub-group of exceptional learners and thus an insight into how they view acquisition of English.

Though the sub-group of 10-graded learners answered slightly differently, their preference is still not in agreement with the thesis' argument – that English is best acquired through receptive skills, listening and reading. The overall opinion of learners seems to indicate that they believe their English is good when having well-developed graphic-motor skills (reading, writing), which is in direct contrast with the teachers' answers, who showed a preference for aural-oral skills (listening, speaking). Learners believe that the most efficient way to acquire English language proficiency is by living in an English-speaking country, and by speaking with native speakers. The most available (and arguably effective) source of native speech – video without subtitles – ended up as the least preferable means of acquisition. Learners' favorite English-related activities include playing videogames which are usually in English by default, and watching short videos in English on internet platforms such as YouTube.

While in most questions, the teachers that took part in the research show an overwhelming preference for aural-oral skills, in one of the questions they show a slight inclination towards believing that productive skills can be acquired through receptive skills rather than vice versa. While the former does not clearly point at the trueness of the hypothesis that teachers focus too much on learners being able to speak English at the expense of

understanding English, the latter disproves the thesis' hypotheses by indicating that teachers do indeed realize that receptive skills are the superior means for EFL acquisition. However, they seem not to believe it to such extent as to project those beliefs on their learners, since some of the learners' answers suggest that they do in fact focus slightly more on productive skills.

Finally, it is necessary to remind that the research was conducted on a full sample of seventy seven learners and ten teachers, which is an insufficient amount of respondents for any conclusive evidence, and further research needs to be done on the topic.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage all to consider the significance of receptive skills in regards to the availability of today's foreign media. The insight into another culture is not only compelling, it is enriching in knowledge, wisdom, and many other aspects. It is very educating as well as entertaining. Thirteen years of EFL instruction are not worth being used for introducing oneself or asking for directions on a vacation. Each new language acquired represents an entire new world to be explored. Let us lead our pupils to take advantage of that.

Sources

Bibliography

- ALLWRIGHT, Richard. Language learning through Communication Practice. In C. J. Brumfit and K. Johnson (Eds.) *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. ISBN 9780194421256

- FLEGE, James E. Age of Learning and Second-language Speech. In D. Birdsong (Ed.) *Second Language Acquisition and the Critical Period Hypothesis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999. ISBN 9780805830842

- GRELLET, Françoise. *Developing reading skills: a practical guide to reading comprehension exercises*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. New directions in language teaching. ISBN 0521283647.

- HARMER, Jeremy. *How to teach English*. New ed., 2nd impression. Harlow: Pearson, 2007. How to. ISBN 9781405853095.

- HARMER, Jeremy. *The practice of English language teaching*. Fifth edition. Harlow: Pearson, 2015. ISBN 978-1-4479-8025-4.

- KRASHEN, Stephen D. *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Prentice-Hall International, 1987. Language teaching methodology series. ISBN 0137100477.

- KRASHEN, Stephen. *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning.* Alemany Pr, 1981. ISBN 9780080253381

- KRASHEN, Stephen. *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom.* Janus Book Pub/Alemany Pr, 1998. ISBN 9780136099345

- LIGHTBOWN, Patsy M. *How languages are learned*. 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Oxford handbooks for language teachers. ISBN 9780194422246.

- NUNAN, David. *Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers.* Prentice Hall, 1991. ISBN 9780135214695

- ORTEGA, Lourdes. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition.* 1st edition. Routledge, 2013. ISBN 9780340905593

- NAKIC, Anuska. The use of authentic sound materials for beginners. In *The Teaching of Listening Comprehension.* London: The British Council, 2015. ISBN 9780901618498

- SAALFELD, Anita. Pronunciation for Second Language Learning & Teaching. In *The Acquisition of L2 Phonology*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011. ISBN 9781847693754

- THORNBURY, Scott. *How to Teach Speaking*. New York City, NY: Pearson Education, 2005. ISBN 9780582853591

- UR, Penny. *A course in language teaching: practice and theory*. Repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Cambridge teacher training and development. ISBN 0521449944.

Online sources

- EDDY, Eva. On the Interconnections Between Selected Aspects of English Grammar in Slovak Learners' Acquisition [online]. 2006. Available from: http://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Eddy1

- ELLIS, Rod, LOEWEN, Shawn and ERLAM, Rosemary. Implicit and Explicit Corrective Feedback and the Acquisition of L2 Grammar. In *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* [online]. 2006. Vol. 28, no. 2, p. 339-368. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263106060141

- HUSAIN, Noushad. Language and Language Skills [online] 2015. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274310952_Language_and_Language_Skills

- Second language acquisition (SLA). *TeachingEnglish BBC* [online] London: British Council [cit. 2020-06-07]. Available from: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/second-language-acquisition-sla

- The world's too big, Mom. *YouTube* [online]. [cit. 2020-06-07]. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRfpZD2ggx0

- ZHANG, Yanyin and WIDYASTUTI, Ima. Acquisition of L2 English morphology: A Family case study. In *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* [online]. 2010. Vol. 33, no. 3, p. 29.1-29.17. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263106060141

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Original Learner questionnaire

1. Kdybys uměl/a perfektně anglicky... *

	Určitě	Spíš ano	Tak napůl	Spíš ne	Vůbec
...díval/a by ses na filmy / seriály / krátká videa raději anglicky než česky?	○	○	○	○	○
...četl/a bys knížky/ články raději anglicky než česky?	○	○	○	○	○
...mluvil/a bys s lidmi raději anglicky než česky?	○	○	○	○	○
...psal/a bys vše raději anglicky než česky?	○	○	○	○	○

2. Myslíš si, že kdyby ses učil/a POUZE... *

	Určitě	Spíš ano	Tak napůl	Spíš ne	Vůbec
...číst anglicky, sám/sama od sebe bys uměla i psát anglicky?	○	○	○	○	○
...rozumět mluvené angličtině, sám/sama od sebe bys uměla i mluvit anglicky?	○	○	○	○	○
...psát anglicky, sám/sama od sebe bys uměla i číst anglicky?	○	○	○	○	○
...mluvit anglicky, sám/sama od sebe bys i rozuměl/a mluvené angličtině?	○	○	○	○	○

3. Řekl/a bys, že tě hodiny angličtiny ve škole připravují na to, abys... *

	Určitě	Spíš ano	Tak napůl	Spíš ne	Vůbec
...uměl/a mluvit anglicky?	○	○	○	○	○
...uměl/a psát anglicky?	○	○	○	○	○
...uměl/a číst anglicky?	○	○	○	○	○
...rozuměl/a mluvené angličtině?	○	○	○	○	○

4. Řekl/a bys o sobě, že umíš dobře anglicky, pokud... (POZOR: součet bodů ve všech čtyřech řádcích musí být MAXIMÁLNĚ 14 – čím víc bodů na řádku, tím víc souhlasíš) *

	5 bodů	4 body	3 body	2 body	1 bod	0 bodů
...perfektně mluvíš.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...perfektně píšeš.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...perfektně rozumíš při čtení.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...perfektně rozumíš při poslechu.	○	○	○	○	○	○

5. Čím si myslíš, že se můžeš nejvíc zlepšit v angličtině? (POZOR: žádné číslo se nesmí opakovat; seřaď od nejdůležitějšího k nejméně důležitému; 7 = nejdůležitější, 1 = nejméně důležité) *

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Sledováním filmů / seriálů / krátkých videí s českými titulky.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sledováním filmů / seriálů / krátkých videí s anglickými titulky.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sledováním filmů / seriálů / krátkých videí bez titulků.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Čtením anglických knih a článků.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mluvením s rodilými mluvčími.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Psaním si s rodilými mluvčími.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Bydlením v anglicky mluvící zemi.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6. Jak často s někým mluvíš anglicky? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

7. Jak často něco píšeš anglicky? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

8. Jak často se díváš na filmy a seriály anglicky a bez titulků? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

9. Jak často se díváš na filmy a seriály anglicky a s českými titulky? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

10. Jak často se díváš na filmy a seriály anglicky a s anglickými titulky? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

11. Jak často se díváš na videa (YouTube apod.) anglicky a bez titulků? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

12. Jak často hraješ videohry, které jsou anglicky? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

13. Jak často čteš knihy anglicky? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

14. Jak často čteš články anglicky? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Vůbec   Pořád

Appendix 2 – Original Teacher questionnaire

1. Kolik hodin byste z 10 vyučovacích hodin věnoval/a kterým dovednostem? (součet hodin ve všech řádcích musí být 10) *

	5 hodin	4 hodiny	3 hodiny	2 hodiny	1 hodina	0 hodin
Listening	○	○	○	○	○	○
Speaking	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reading	○	○	○	○	○	○
Writing	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. Řekl/a byste, že Váš žák je dobrý/á v angličtině, když... (prosím, ať součet všech čtyř řádků vychází maximálně 14 bodů) *

	5 bodů	4 body	3 body	2 body	1 bod	0 bodů
...mluví dobře anglicky.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...píše dobře anglicky.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...rozumí mluvené angličtině.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...čte dobře anglicky.	○	○	○	○	○	○

3. Kdybychom u žáka rozvíjeli POUZE... *

	Určitě souhlasím	Spíše ano	Možná částečně	Spíše ne	Určitě nesouhlasím
...listening, zvládal by sám od sebe časem i speaking.	○	○	○	○	○
...speaking, zvládal by sám od sebe časem i listening.	○	○	○	○	○
...reading, zvládal by sám od sebe časem i writing.	○	○	○	○	○
...writing, zvládal by sám od sebe časem i reading.	○	○	○	○	○

4. Jaký vliv mají podle Vás současná volnočasová média v anglickém jazyce na rozvoj angličtiny u dětí? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Nic jim nepřidají   Velký potenciál pro zlepšení v AJ

74

Appendix 3 – Learner questionnaire in English

1. If your English was perfect, would you rather... *

	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Partly	Rather no	Not at all
...watch movies / shows / short videos in English than in Czech?	○	○	○	○	○
...read books/articles in English than in Czech?	○	○	○	○	○
...speak with people in English than in Czech?	○	○	○	○	○
...write in English than in Czech?	○	○	○	○	○

2. Do you think that if you ONLY learned to... *

	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Partly	Rather no	Not at all
...read in English, it would on its own result in you also being able to write in English?	○	○	○	○	○
...understand spoken English, it would on its own result in you also being able to speak English?	○	○	○	○	○
...write in English, it would on its own result in you also being able to read in English?	○	○	○	○	○
...speak English, it would on its own result in you also being able to understand spoken English?	○	○	○	○	○

3. Would you say that English lessons at school are developing your ability to... *

	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Partly	Rather no	Not at all
...speak English?	○	○	○	○	○
...write in English?	○	○	○	○	○
...read in English?	○	○	○	○	○
...understand spoken English?	○	○	○	○	○

4. You would say that your English is good when you... (ATTENTION: the sum of all assigned points must be equal to or less than 14 – the more points on a line the more you agree) *

	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
...speak perfectly.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
...write perfectly.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
...understand perfectly while reading.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
...understand perfectly while listening.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

5. What do you think is the best way to improve your English? (ATTENTION: no number may recurr; sort from most important to least important; 7 = most important, 1 = least important) *

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Watching movies / shows / short videos with Czech subtitles.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Watching movies / shows / short videos with English subtitles.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Watching movies / shows / short videos with no subtitles.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Reading books and articles in English.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Speaking with native English speakers.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Texting with native English speakers.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Living in an English-speaking country.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

6. How often do you talk to someone in English? *

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Never   All the time

7. How often do you write something in English? *

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Never   All the time

8. How often do you watch movies and shows in English without subtitles? *

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Never   All the time

9. How often do you watch movies and shows in English with Czech subtitles? *

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Never   All the time

10. How often do you watch movies and shows in English with English subtitles? *

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Never   All the time

11. How often do you watch videos (YouTube etc.) in English without subtitles? *

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Never   All the time

12. How often do you play videogames in English? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Never   All the time

13. How often do you read books in English? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Never   All the time

14. How often do you read articles in English? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Never   All the time

Appendix 4 – Teacher questionnaire in English

1. From a total of 10 lessons, how many lessons would you devote to each skill? (the sum of all lines must be 10) *

	5 lessons	4 lessons	3 lessons	2 lessons	1 lesson	0 lessons
Listening	○	○	○	○	○	○
Speaking	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reading	○	○	○	○	○	○
Writing	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. You would say that a pupil's English is good if he/she... (please make the sum of all lines 14 at maximum) *

	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
...speaks English well.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...writes well in English.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...understands spoken English well.	○	○	○	○	○	○
...understands written English well.	○	○	○	○	○	○

3. If we ONLY developed the learner's... *

	Definitely agree	Rather yes	Maybe partly	Rather no	Definitely disagree
...listening skill, he/she would pick up speaking on his/her own.	○	○	○	○	○
...speaking skill, he/she would pick up listening on his/her own.	○	○	○	○	○
...reading skill, he/she would pick up writing on his/her own.	○	○	○	○	○
...writing skill, he/she would pick up reading on his/her own.	○	○	○	○	○

4. How effective do you find the influence of today's free-time media in English on children's English proficiency? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

They add nothing   Great potential for improving EFL proficiency

Appendix 5 – Lesson plan 1 – Vocabulary

- **Honey, Sweetie** – A way to address a loved one
- **Focus** – To direct your attention or effort at something specific
- **Pretend** – To act as if something is true when it is not true / To imagine
- **Towards** – In the direction of

Appendix 6 – Lesson plan 2 – White Fang: Excerpt and questions

Part 1 – Text LONDON, Jack. *White Fang*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1989

"As White Fang watched Weedon Scott approach, he bristled and snarled to advertise that he would not submit to punishment. Twenty-four hours had passed since he had slashed open the hand that was now bandaged and held up by a sling to keep the blood out of it. In the past White Fang had experienced delayed punishments, and he apprehended that such a one was about to befall him. How could it be otherwise? He had committed what was to him

sacrilege, sunk his fangs into the holy flesh of a god, and of a white-skinned superior god at that. In the nature of things, and of intercourse with gods, something terrible awaited him."

Part 1 – Questions

- What happened just before what the text describes? *(White Fang bit his master's hand)*
- Who / what is White Fang? *(a mixture of dog and wolf)*
- What does the word "god" refer to? *(humans)*
- Why does the author use this word to refer to it/them? *(humans are referred to as gods so that the reader leans towards the animal's perspective when reading the book)*

Part 2 – Text LONDON, Jack. *White Fang*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1989

"Weedon Scott had set himself the task of redeeming White Fang—or rather, of redeeming mankind from the wrong it had done White Fang. It was a matter of principle and conscience. He felt that the ill done White Fang was a debt incurred by man and that it must be paid. So he went out of his way to be especially kind to the Fighting Wolf. Each day he made it a point to caress and pet White Fang, and to do it at length.

…

As the days went by, the evolution of like into love was accelerated. White Fang himself began to grow aware of it, though in his consciousness he knew not what love was. It manifested itself to him as a void in his being—a hungry, aching, yearning void that clamoured to be filled. It was a pain and an unrest; and it received easement only by the touch of the new god's presence. At such times love was joy to him, a wild, keen-thrilling satisfaction. But when away from his god, the pain and the unrest returned; the void in him sprang up and pressed against him with its emptiness, and the hunger gnawed and gnawed unceasingly.

…

But most potent in his education was the cuff of the master's hand, the censure of the master's voice. Because of White Fang's very great love, a cuff from the master hurt him far more than any beating Grey Beaver or Beauty Smith had ever given him. They had hurt only the flesh of him; beneath the flesh the spirit had still raged, splendid and invincible. But with the master the cuff was always too light to hurt the flesh. Yet it went deeper. It was an expression of the master's disapproval, and White Fang's spirit wilted under it.

In point of fact, the cuff was rarely administered. The master's voice was sufficient. By it White Fang knew whether he did right or not. By it he trimmed his conduct and adjusted his actions. It was the compass by which he steered and learned to chart the manners of a new land and life."

Part 2 – Questions

- What is White Fang's relationship to Weedon Scott?
- How do you think they have met?
- What do you think is the best way to gain someone's trust or love?
- Why does Weedon Scott's soft cuff hurt White Fang more than anything else?

RESUMÉ

Diplomová práce je zaměřena na téma akvizice anglického jazyka především prostřednictvím receptivních dovedností – poslechu a čtení. Hlavní myšlenkou práce je, že anglický jazyk je nejlépe rozvíjen pomocí receptivních dovedností, a produktivní dovednosti poté slouží především k upevnění. Práce je rozdělena do teoretické a praktické části. Teoretická část poskytuje shrnutí základních pojmů týkajících se jazykových dovedností, jejich vzájemné srovnání a časté problémy, se kterými se učitelé setkávají. Dále teoretická část nabízí syntézu relevantních faktorů týkajících se akvizice anglického jazyka, jako je věk, vliv rodného jazyka, afektivní filtry, atd. Jsou také prezentovány tři hypotézy jiných autorů, které podtrhují hlavní argument celé práce. Závěr teoretické části popisuje akvizici z pohledu nejčastěji se vyskytujících aspektů angličtiny na základních školách, tedy z pohledu gramatiky, slovní zásoby a výslovnosti. Praktická část poté nastoluje několik výzkumných otázek a hypotéz, které naznačují, že učitelé a žáci se možná příliš soustředí na to, aby žáci mluvili anglicky a nedostatečně se soustředí na to, aby žáci anglicky rozuměli. Toto je pomocí dotazníku pro žáky a pro učitele zkoumáno na čtyřech základních školách Olomouckého kraje. Výsledky napovídají, že preference závisí na úhlu pohledu. Žáci si myslí, že nejvíce jsou známkou dobré znalosti angličtiny čtení a psaní, zatímco učitelé si myslí, že jí jsou poslech a mluvení. Žáci neprojevují velké přesvědčení, že by se receptivní dovednosti daly získat z produktivních, ovšem učitelé jsou spíše nakloněni právě tomuto přesvědčení. Pokud však žáci byli otázáni, ke kterým ze čtyř dovedností by nejvíce využili svou hypoteticky perfektní angličtinu, téměř jednoznačně se přikláněli k poslechu. Celkový vzorek pro výzkum představoval osmdesát sedm respondentů, z toho sedmdesát sedm žáků a deset učitelů. Nutno tedy podotknout, že pro definitivní závěry je třeba provést rozsáhlejší rešerši. Na závěr praktické části jsou navrženy dvě teoretické vyučovací hodiny se zaměřením na zmírnění afektivního filtru vycházejícího ze zastrašení nesrozumitelností rodilé anglické mluvy či autentického textu.

ANOTACE

Jméno a příjmení:	David Rouš
Katedra:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Josef Nevařil, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2020

Název práce:	Acquisition Through Receptive Skills in Lower Secondary School EFL Classroom
Název v angličtině:	Acquisition Through Receptive Skills in Lower Secondary School EFL Classroom
Anotace práce:	Práce je zaměřena na akvizici anglického jazyka pomocí poslechových a čtecích dovedností. Teoretická část shrnuje základní termíny a principy vztahující se k jazykovým dovednostem a akvizici. Praktická část nastiňuje výsledky kvantitativního výzkumu pomocí dotazníků pro žáky a učitele a snaží se poukázat na preferenci produktivních dovedností ve srovnání s receptivními.
Klíčová slova:	akvizice, poslech, čtení, receptivní dovednosti, jazykové dovednosti
Anotace v angličtině:	The work focuses on acquisition of English as a foreign language through listening and reading skills. The theoretical part summarizes the basic terms and principles related to language skills and acquisition. The practical part outlines the results of a quantitative research conducted using learner and teacher questionnaires and attempts to point at the preference of productive skills in comparison to receptive skills.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	acquisition, listening, reading, receptive skills, language skills
Přílohy vázané v práci:	6 příloh
Rozsah práce:	83 stran (67 stran + 12 stran příloh)
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina