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Diplomová práce

**Factors contributing to the level of self-confidence of Czech
students in English communication**

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Prohlášení

Slavnostně prohlašuji, že jsem svou diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně, a to jen za použití zdrojů uvedených v seznamu literatury.

Dále souhlasím, aby byla práce uložena na Univerzitě Palackého v Olomouci a zpřístupněna ke studijním účelům v souladu s příslušnými normami.

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Abstract

This diploma thesis deals with the topic of self-confidence in communicating in English and factors that may influence it in a foreign language classroom.

The theoretical part of the thesis introduces the topic of communication and specifics of learning to communicate in a foreign language, deals with self-confidence, language learning anxiety and other concepts related to language learning psychology, and presents factors that have been associated with them and may serve as a background to understanding self-confidence in a foreign language classroom.

The practical part presents a study conducted by the author of this thesis. In the study, the author carried out ten interviews with grammar school students taught by five different teachers and chose to investigate seven main areas of interest, each dealing with a different classroom-related factor. These factors included the role of a teacher, choice of activities, relationships in the classroom, comparison, handling errors, assessment and motivation. To receive more comparable data, the author used Visual Analogue Scales. It was the intention of the author to explore students' perceptions of the factors, their relations to the students' self-confidence and to eventually offer recommendations for foreign language teachers.

Key words: foreign language communication, language learning psychology, self-confidence, language learning anxiety, factors influencing self-confidence

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List of Abbreviations

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

L1 – First Language

L2 – Second Language

VAS – Visual Analogue Scale

SLA – Second Language Acquisition

ICA – Inductive Content Analysis

FCE – First Certificate in English

CAE – Certificate in Advanced English

Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language is an essential part of school education in Czech Republic for all pupils and students from an early age. However, it is a common phenomenon that even after years of learning English, both students and adults do not feel confident enough to use it. All the acquired knowledge then cannot be utilised and over time becomes mainly passive.

From the perspective of a foreign language teacher, it is one of the main goals to help learners develop a confident and positive approach to communication. There may be various reasons why even a proficient user of English, upon being exposed to a communicative situation, hesitates. This may partly be due to their personality or family background, as well as it may be influenced by their learning experience. Unlike the students' nature and origin, what they experience in English classes can be shaped.

Since there has been significantly more research focusing on negative psychological aspects of language learning, especially language learning anxiety, the author missed a certain positive approach and decided to focus on learner's self-confidence in communicating in English. The author believed that deeper understanding of the ways learning experience may influence learners' self-confidence in communication will help teachers enhance it.

The aim of this diploma thesis is to describe the ways that factors, which can be to some extent modified, may influence learners' self-confidence in communicating in English and how are these factors perceived by learners. The author wishes this thesis to serve as a guide for language teachers on the way to understanding and therefore promoting learners' self-confidence in communicating in a foreign language.

The theoretical part of the thesis aims to provide background information to self-confidence in foreign language communication and give an overview of what has been investigated in the area. The topic was broken down into three parts. Firstly, the author introduces communication and the specifics of communicating in a foreign language. The second chapter deals with the term of self-confidence as a part of the self and explains its connection with language learning anxiety. Lastly, the third chapter presents factors which had been associated with the self in language learning and which served as the basis for the study.

The practical part of this thesis presents a study which was conducted by the author, and which explores self-confidence of students in communicating in English. It was the author's intention

to understand the ways that self-confidence can be built and decreased in a language classroom. By using semi-structured interviews and Visual Analogue Scales, the author aimed to describe what are the main differences between the confident and unconfident students, in the way they perceive chosen factors.

THEORETICAL PART

1 Communication

Communication has a significant influence on all aspects of human life that can be thought of. People are constantly exchanging information with their surroundings, both proximate and remote, consciously, and subconsciously (King, 1979, p. V). Despite being an absolute base of everyday social life, communication still tends to be underestimated and its importance taken for granted. However, in the last decades, as society started working “*under a more-faster-better philosophy of life*” (Levy, 2008, p. 512) and became more connected than ever before, the relevance of understanding the concept of communication increased immensely (Littlejohn, et al., 2011 p. 3). Realizing this, many branches of social science began to study communication more closely and add to its overall view (Miller, 1963, p. 1).

1.1 Defining communication

It can often be heard that a relationship is only as good as the communication between the partners, or that a person talks much but does not really communicate. While communication is a word used on a daily basis, its definition is not completely clear and differs from one scholar to another. This may be caused by various purposes to which these definitions serve (King, 1979, pp. 3-4; Littlejohn et al., 2011, pp. 3-4). Some of the definitions try to cover communication in its broadness across all scientific fields, while others narrow the meaning down to a specific area (Littlejohn et al., 2011, p. 4).

According to Robert G. King, we could simply define communication as “*a process in which a response is evoked, elicited or induced by a message sent and received*” (King, 1979, p. 3). As the basic condition of communication, he acknowledged a message which had to be sent, received, and which was reacted to (King, 1979, p. 3).

Similarly, in his introduction to the book *Language and Communication*, George A. Miller describes communication as a situation in which “*information is passed from one place to another*” (Miller, 1963, p. 6). Miller claims that in order to create communication, a source and a destination of the transferred information anchored in a specific time and place are needed. Together with a certain communication channel, transmitter, and receiver, these form the fundamental components of the idealized communication system (Miller, 1963, p. 6).

Krauss and Fussell, in contrast to the previous inclusive definitions, warn against communication becoming “*an amorphous catch-all term lacking precise meaning*” (Krauss, et

al., 2007, p. 3). In the Models of Interpersonal Communication, they assume human communication to be the main concern and look at communication from the perspective of social psychology. According to them, communication is understood mainly as means of affecting people and perceived as an essential concept that needs to be considered in many contexts of social psychology (Krauss, et al., 2007, pp. 3-4).

No matter from what perspective communication is being looked at, to be able to affect other people and send and receive messages, certain means of conveying the information are needed. In the case of human communication, the means or code used in communication is a language. It mediates interactions between human beings, which leads to creating and maintaining social relations (Block, et al., 2002, p. 1).

1.1.1 Levels of communication

A natural image that comes to mind when people think of communication is the one called interpersonal. The prefix *inter-*, meaning 'between', suggests that there are two individuals exchanging messages in this level of communication (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). It may also be referred to as person-to-person communication (King, 1979, pp. 4-5). However, for a deeper understanding, it is convenient to distinguish further levels of communication.

Intrapersonal communication happens inside a person. Even though it may sound strange to consider one person both the sender and the receiver of a message, it is an important aspect of communication, especially when discussing self-confidence. Intrapersonal communication may appear complicated because in the human body messages are being sent and received constantly (King, 1979, p. 4).

Another scenario that may happen within a society is a person communicating with a group. Depending on the source of the message, communication can be divided into person-to-group and group-to-person levels. In this case, the message is either sent or received by a group of people (King, 1979, p. 5). This level of communication gained importance with new communication technologies being developed (Block et al., 2002, p. 1).

1.2 Specifics of foreign language communication

When learning a foreign language, the ability to communicate effectively is likely the main goal of most learners (Zhang, 2007, p. 43). As the global economy and multilingual society evolved, communicating in a foreign language has become one of the basic conditions of the labour market and living in a multicultural environment. Besides increasing job opportunities, efficient

foreign language communication allows individuals to connect with people around the world and encourages individuals' mobility (Varečková et al., 2018, pp. 295-296; Ganschow et al., 1998, p. 248).

Learning to communicate in a foreign language is a long demanding process. It involves mastering the skills applied in the mother tongue, specifically “*the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions both in oral and written form (listened, spoken, read, written) in appropriate social and cultural contexts about someone's wishes and needs*”, all of them in another language (Natalia, 2017, p. 103).

1.2.1 What the learners need to know

All the abilities described above could be simply covered by the term communicative competence. The discussion about communicative competence originated in the 1970s when Dell Hymes reacted to a famous linguist Noam Chomsky. Hymes criticized Chomsky's view of language competence for a lack of sociocultural aspects and created a base for the current view of communicative competence (Tarvin, 2014, pp. 2-4). Mezrigui (2011, pp. 73-75) divides communicative competence into four sub-competencies – grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. By acquiring all of these, the learner can become a proficient language user (Mezrigui, 2011, p. 73).



Figure 1: Graphic representation of four areas of communicative competence (Susanto, 2017)

1.2.1.1 Grammatical competence

One of the basic aspects of communicative competence is knowledge of grammatical structures, how words and sentences are created. Regarding speaking and listening, grammatical

competence includes the ability to produce and understand the system of sounds, intonation, and stress patterns. Starting from letters and syllables in morphology up to syntactic structures, grammatical competence works as a foundation for an efficient language speaker (Mezrigui, 2011, pp. 73-75).

1.2.1.2 Sociolinguistic competence

It is not just the basic language knowledge that allows a person to appropriately use and understand the target language. Each language comes with a unique set of rules and norms accepted by the culture and society. Sociolinguistic competence enables the learner to recognize differences in performing speech acts, their nonverbal accompaniment, and appropriate timing in specific situations and apply these while communicating (Mezrigui, 2011, pp. 73-75).

1.2.1.3 Strategic competence

Richards and Schmidt define strategic competence as “*an aspect of communicative competence which describes the ability of speakers to use verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication*” (Richards et al., 2002, p. 515). In a practical situation, this means being able to maintain the flow of a conversation, from a smooth start to solving comprehension problems (Mezrigui, 2011, pp. 73-75).

1.2.1.4 Discourse competence

The discourse sub-competence completes grammatical competence by taking inter-sentential relationships into account (Mezrigui, 2011, p. 74). Some authors place discourse competence in the centre of communicative competence, as it connects other areas. Thanks to understanding the connections between sentences learners manage to create a cohesive and coherent utterance or a written text aligning with a particular situation and context (Usó-Juan et al., 2008, pp. 160-161).

1.2.2 Causes of difficulties with communicative skills

Foreign language learners may face various difficulties while trying to become efficient communicators. Despite the individual nature of these difficulties, there are a few reoccurring patterns of the sources of these issues (Mezrigui, 2011, p. 32).

One of the most common problems occurring in L2 communication appears to be interference. Linguists have shown interest in the connections between languages since the 1930s (Vašek, 1988, p. 66). Over the years of studying foreign language acquisition, researchers observed the issue of interference in the process of learning. Interference could be described as “*a penetration of foreign language elements into a language system, resulting in changes to that*

system” (Vašek, 1988, p. 67). Depending on the linguistic origin and the resulting differences between L1 and L2, learners’ difficulties pertain to all the areas of communicative competence to a certain extent (Krish et al., 2020, p. 108).

Another problem causing communication difficulties mentioned in literature is the lack of exposure to L2. According to Saladrigues and Llanes, who refer to Skehan (1998), being exposed to target language input is a basic condition for a successful L2 acquisition (Saladrigues et al., 2014, p. 135). Linguists, such as Stephen Krashen, point out the importance of appropriate comprehensive input, which, in anxious-free surroundings, supports both conscious and subconscious L2 acquisition. A problem occurs in case of insufficient exposure to the L2, for example, if the learners encounter the target language only within a formal classroom setting. Together with other variables, such as a high number of students in a class, this is likely to negatively influence learners’ L2 communication (Mezrigui, 2011, pp. 70-71; Alahmadi, 2019, p. 72).

Communication difficulties are also often associated with traditional teaching methods which overemphasize intensive, but separate learning of grammar and vocabulary (Zhang, 2009, p. 32). In his chapter about grammar teaching, Scrivener claims that there is no evidence supporting the idea that perfect knowledge of grammar rules leads to fluent and accurate communication and stresses the importance of exposure, noticing, deep understanding and using the target language (Scrivener, 2005, p. 253). Accordingly, passive and isolated learning of grammar and vocabulary leads to their limited usage in various situations and hence may create difficult communicative situations or lead to complete avoidance of talking (Difficulties in speech production of learners of English as a foreign language, 2017, pp. 666-667).

2 Self-confidence in language learning

According to Maclellan, “*the construct of self-confidence is a robust psychological element*” (Maclellan, 2014, p. 67). While self-confidence is a broadly used term, widely investigated in general psychology, in the area of education, the meaning of self-confidence is still discussed (Stankov et al., 2008). From the widest perspective, self-confidence is seen as something positive, a good characteristic which can be gained and lost, and which should be ideally achieved in the learning process (Maclellan, 2014, p. 60).

Overall, self-confidence can be described as a belief or a view someone has of themselves, in a certain domain (Marsh, et al., 2006). In the case of this thesis, the domain is language learning.

In the process of explaining what language learning self-confidence means, it is necessary to understand the self and some of the concepts closely related to language self-confidence, including the issues concerning their research and definitions. For this reason, some of the terms connected or often associated with the concept of language learning self-confidence will be explained. These include the self-concept, learner beliefs, and language learning anxiety.

2.1 Self-confidence and the self

Self-confidence is a dimension of a broader concept – the self (Marsh, et al., 2006). This concept originated in a fundamental need within people to constantly evaluate not only everything around but also within them. Individual’s abilities and opinions are automatically examined through interactions with the outside world to reach a higher objectivity. All this information stored in brains form a sense of individual’s self, their self-view. This self-view is fragmented into constructs such as self-concept, self-confidence or self-efficacy, which are often confused with one another (Maclellan, 2014). Self-confidence and its connections to other constructs are further explained in 2.1.2.

2.1.1 Initial research into the self and individuality

Modern psychology and pedagogy consider the self and individual differences among learners a key issue in many areas, including second language acquisition. Yet, the awareness and acknowledgement of individuality has resulted from only recent research of the last decades.

The very first incentive for individual differences research dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. In 1905, French psychologists Binet and Simon published a test of intelligence, which consequently launched an interest in studying individual differences in learning (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 5). In the 1970s, attempts to create a profile of “a good language learner”

appeared (Ellis, 2004, p. 526). In 1978 Naiman et al. tested language skills of Anglo-Canadian high school students in order to compare the results of successful students with their psychological profiles, expecting a unique characteristic. Surprisingly, there were wide differences in the personalities of these students. Among the few common traits, Naiman recognized perseverance, independence, and sociability, as well as higher motivation and positive attitudes (Naiman, 1978). Since 1970s individual differences have become an important area in the educational research field and understanding the self in second language learning has gained much recognition (Mercer, et al., 2014; Ellis, 2004, p. 526).

2.1.2 Definition challenges

Despite the interest that individuality of the self received since, the picture of the self remains incomplete. This is largely due to a lack of consistency in definitions (Rubio, 2014, pp. 41-42). Researchers have introduced a number of reasons for why the self appears challenging to investigate, including overlapping of the concepts and fragmented results of research.

One of the major issues appears to be overlapping and interrelation of the subordinate terms of the self, such as self-concept, self-esteem, or self-efficacy (Rubio, 2014, pp. 41-42). From the theoretical point of view, these three constructs all emphasize individual's beliefs about their attributes and abilities. What they differ in, is "*... the degree of specificity and also the relative importance of cognitive and evaluative self-beliefs involved*" (Valentine and DuBois, 2005 p.55, cited in Mercer, 2011, p. 15). While self-esteem is seen as the widest term, related to individual's values and therefore being highly evaluative, self-efficacy is considered to be connected to specific tasks and more cognitive (Mercer, 2011 pp. 15-17).

As claimed by Rubio, research in the second language acquisition area investigates mainly two concepts – motivation and anxiety. This focus on fairly few terms may contribute to the partial understanding of the self (Rubio, 2014, pp. 41-42). On the other hand, researching such a broad and deep area as the self without focusing on a more specific construct within may be time-consuming and strenuous. This may be, as claimed by Williams et al., the reason for researchers fragmenting the self into several components. Despite understanding the reasons for fragmented research, Williams, Mercer, and Ryan emphasize the importance of remembering the wholeness of the self and approaching its components as a part of a complex entity (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 43).

The problems regarding language learning psychology are well summarized by Dewaele in The Cambridge Handbook on Second Language Acquisition. In his opinion, as a result of the

fragmented research, there are barely any consistent and fruitful theories in the area of language learning psychology. In the chapter on learner-internal psychology, he points out that the existing theories “...are frequently at an inappropriate level – too molecular in that they deal specifically with the relationship between a restricted number of selected variables or too molar in the sense that by being overinclusive they are either unverifiable or unfruitful.” (Dewaele, 2013, p. 160)

2.1.3 Self-concept and learner beliefs

In Mercer’s opinion (Mercer, 2011, p. 14), “*a person’s self-concept consists of the beliefs one has about oneself, one’s self-perception*”, and usually refers to both cognitive beliefs and affective evaluation of a person’s competence (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 47). In other words, the self-concept is composed of what the person believes to be true about them, including both information and emotions into this evaluation. Such beliefs are therefore highly subjective and need not be objectively true (Mercer, 2011, pp. 13-14).

When talking about self-concept, one may refer to many different areas and different levels of specificity. For language teachers, it is necessary to consider learners’ overall academic self-concept, which includes learners’ beliefs about their standing in academic learning in general, but also much more specific levels, such as learners’ self-concepts in different language skills. Naturally, learner’s beliefs and self-concepts in different areas influence each other and cannot be isolated (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 47).

The role of learner beliefs in language learning psychology, sometimes also referred to as learner cognitions, has been a subject of debate among researchers (Ellis, 2004). The biggest issue appears to be acknowledging learner beliefs as an enduring factor – what their role is in learning in a long-term horizon.

One of the first and most influential research projects focused on language learning beliefs was carried out by Horwitz in 1987 (Horwitz, 1988). This research, investigating the beliefs of beginning university students about language learning, contributed to an increasing interest in this aspect. Since then, language learner beliefs have been perceived as one of the learner characteristics (Ellis, 2004, p. 542).

Attempting to grasp the scientific and measurable parts of beliefs and to find their place in the language learning process, some researchers remain hesitant about their persistence. To cite an instance, Dörnyei argues that beliefs may simply be a lack of cognition and knowledge, which can be overruled by rational explanations (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 214).

Mercer, on the other hand, pays much attention to the importance of learner beliefs. While acknowledging the limitations of studying the self and beliefs in particular, she points out that understanding beliefs and their role in learning may positively affect teaching and learning. If a student holds a certain belief, especially if it is a strong belief which is central to the student's self-concept, it may have a strong influence on the learning process and it can be difficult for a teacher to challenge (Williams, et al., 2015, pp. 63-64).

There are several aspects of beliefs, which should be considered. Besides addressing the strength of beliefs, i.e. whether they are central or peripheral to the self-concept of students, and thus how strongly they affect the learning process, the way in which they affect it is an important aspect. According to the positive or negative influence on the language learning process, they can also be divided into facilitative and debilitating. Facilitative beliefs are helpful and encouraging, while debilitating beliefs cause obstructions in the learning process (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 63).

One of the issues that teachers face with respect to students is generalizing self-beliefs. Based on a particular experience, such as a single failed listening test, students often create a very general belief. Not only is one experience capable of creating a specific belief that the student is not good at comprehending the foreign language, but it also might cause the student to believe they are a bad language learner. Such general belief contributes to a negative self-concept within a domain and is then both hard to overcome for the learner and difficult to handle for the teacher (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 48).

2.2 Language learning anxiety

In the area of second language acquisition, not many psychological aspects received such attention as anxiety, likely because of the intensity and frequency in which it is experienced by learners (MacIntyre, 2017, p. 11). Language learning anxiety is recognized as an unpleasant, complex emotional reaction, and has been found to significantly contribute to the feelings, thoughts, and actions of learners in language classrooms (Daubney, et al., 2017). Besides connections to other aspects of language learning, it is closely linked to self-confidence (Gardner, et al., 1993; Sampasivam, et al., 2014).

Language learning anxiety is usually experienced as a negative feeling of nervousness in a situation where the usage of a foreign language is needed. Such a situation may be very specific to each learner, ranging across all language skills. The subjective feeling of tension and worries, as anxiety is recognized, typically arouses with self-focused thinking. Disruptive thoughts in

the mind of a learner may also be accompanied by physical reactions, for instance, sweating, shaking or increased heart rate and blood flow (Boudreau, et al., 2018, p. 150; Gardner, et al., 1993, p. 5).

One of the frequent misconceptions standing in the way of understanding language learning anxiety is perceiving anxiety as a type of fear. It is a fairly common misbelief that people who experience anxiety, in our case students of foreign languages, should simply stop worrying because there is nothing to be afraid of. This might be helpful advice for someone fearing snakes or spiders, but not someone who is feeling anxious. Fear, unlike anxiety, is a response to a specific threat or a stimulus. Anxiety, even though it is closely related to fear, can be described “... *as fear with no identifiable threat that leads to a state of undirected arousal*” (Boudreau, et al., 2018, p. 151).

There is a significant correlation between language learning anxiety and self-confidence. According to Rubio, they are both cognitive conditions that affect foreign language learning (Rubio, 2007). The interconnection between these two variables was described by Gardner: “*Self-confidence could be defined as a lack of language anxiety and positive self-rated proficiency in the second language.*” (Gardner, et al., 1993, p. 6). Generally, language learning anxiety and confidence are considered to be opposites (Sampasivam, et al., 2014, p. 26).

2.2.1 Anxiety and communication

There is a close link between anxiety and communication, which makes understanding language learning anxiety important for a successful language teacher and learner. According to Dewaele, increased anxiety creates distracting negative thoughts which divert the attention from a particular communicative situation and may even lead to the need of ending the conversation. Hence the speaker, in a language classroom the learner, faces intensified communication difficulties. Besides that, physical reactions which often accompany anxiety may be uncomfortable and make the person feel less competent and therefore also less motivated to communicate (Dewaele, 2017, pp. 436-437).

Communication anxiety is considered to be one of the two main variables of willingness to communicate in a second language, together with a perception of communicative competence. This means that in order to communicate successfully in a foreign language, learners should be anxiety-free and have a positive view of their communicative competence (MacIntyre, et al., 1996). Furthermore, MacIntyre suggests that there is a connection between how competent the learner feels, and their anxiety in communication, in particular, that anxiety influences the

perception of competence. Supporting these ideas, MacIntyre and Noels discovered that while relaxed students tend to overestimate their abilities in communicating in a second language, anxious students usually underestimate their communicative competence (MacIntyre, et al., 1996, p. 7).

2.2.2 Effects of anxiety

After clarifying the definition of language learning anxiety, scholars became largely interested in the effects anxiety may have on language learning (MacIntyre, 2017). One of the first studies focused on the effects of anxiety was carried out by Steinberg and Horwitz in 1986. According to their results, people who felt anxious tried to avoid using the second language, which may over time “...have a significant impact on the communication of students in the classroom and beyond.” (Steinberg, et al., 1986; MacIntyre, 2017, p. 17).

In his chapter on language anxiety research MacIntyre summarized the effects of anxiety on language learning into three categories – academic effects, cognitive effects, and social effects according to the area that anxiety influenced, describing in short what specific problems the learner faced:

(a) Academic effects

- Lower performance on tests and lower measures of actual second language competence.
- Decreased self-perception of second language competence.
- Higher effort at learning resulting in lower levels of achievement than expected.

(b) Cognitive effects

- Increased thoughts of failure and other self-deprecating thoughts.
- Affected ability to recognize and remember structures and words from both short and long-term memory.
- Hindered cognitive performance in all three stages of learning: input, processing and output, mainly affecting speed, accuracy and quality.

(c) Social effects

- Reduced linguistic self-confidence and motivation.
- Less frequent communication.

Adapted from (MacIntyre, 2017, p. 17)

From all emotion-related concepts in second language acquisition, negative emotions and especially anxiety appear to have received the most attention. Looking from different points of view, researchers examined many variables, such as specific anxieties, their connections or independence, pervasiveness, targets, and less research focused on positive emotions and their facilitating (Horwitz, 2017; Williams, et al., 2015). This is understandable because, as Tanveer expressed, “...perhaps no other field of study poses as much of a threat to self-concept as language study does.” (Tanveer, 2007, p. 15).

However, many scholars, including Williams et al., emphasize the need to focus on the positive side of emotions. After World War II, psychology was naturally mainly concerned with addressing psychological problems, which naturally influenced also learning psychology research. Although resolving problematic areas is still an important objective, psychologists started promoting an equally significant role of psychology in generating welfare. This tendency became known as positive psychology and has been on the rise in language learning in the last decade (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 91).

2.2.3 Sources of anxiety

In comparison to research on the effects of anxiety on language learning, there have been relatively few studies investigating the factors causing anxiety. According to Boudreau et al., there are multiple sources of language learning anxiety including “...competition in the classroom, personality traits and strained relationships between teachers and students” (Boudreau, et al., 2018, p. 151).

In 2007 Tanveer conducted a study focusing on the factors which influenced language learning anxiety of Canadian university students in learning French as a second language. Using qualitative methodology, namely interviews and a focus group consisting of both students and teachers, he revealed several factors causing anxiety in students. Overall, he claims that any situation which students perceive as an exposure of their weaknesses in front of others is naturally a source of anxiety (Tanveer, 2007).

Tanveer’s results showed that in the language learning process students struggle with anxiety the most in the area of productive skills, especially speaking. The basic reason for a language classroom to provoke anxiety is, as Tanveer calls it, its evaluative nature, usually supported by considering “... a language class a performance rather than a learning place” (Tanveer, 2007, p. 61).

Among common language learning obstacles triggering anxiety, Tanveer discovered low linguistic competence, namely problems in grammar or pronunciation, and uncertainty in vocabulary usage, often in connection to hesitancy about cultural rules. Most of these factors share a background of insufficient input and practice of output in the foreign language (Tanveer, 2007).

MacIntyre provided a list of language anxiety causes organised into three categories. Similarly to the overview of language anxiety effects on language learning, the three categories are academic causes, cognitive causes, and social causes:

(a) Academic causes

- Unrealistic learner beliefs.
- Errors and their harsh or embarrassing correction.
- Testing methods.

(b) Cognitive causes

- Low self-esteem.
- Shyness or other personality traits.
- Distorted perceptions of proficiency.
- Fear of losing one's sense of identity.

(c) Social causes

- Competitiveness.
- Frequency and/or quality of contact with native speakers.
- Fear of embarrassment or being laughed at.
- Misunderstandings and cultural slips

Adapted from MacIntyre (2017, p. 21)

Understanding the effects and sources of language learning anxiety may be a very helpful tool to comprehend its opposite – language learning confidence. Therefore, this subchapter serves as a complement to the complex construct of self-confidence, showing the interconnection between self-related concepts. A certain overlap can be found especially in the sources of language learning anxiety, which correlate with factors influencing the self and self-confidence in particular.

3 Factors associated with the self in language learning

There are many factors mentioned in the literature on self-concept in language learning which are supposedly related to learning self-confidence. Besides the obvious connections to self-beliefs and personality, researchers mention motivation, academic achievement, or the role of the environment and teachers in the learning process (Marsh, et al., 2008; Maclellan, 2014; Clement, et al., 1994; Mercer, 2011). For the purposes of this thesis, some of the factors which may either positively or negatively influence the language learning confidence in a language classroom were chosen and their correlations will be further explained.

3.1 The dynamic self

Before investigating various other factors, it is necessary to acknowledge the extent to which the self is dynamic and prone to change. This largely depends on the centrality and specificity of self-concepts. It is generally considered that “...*more domain-specific self-concepts are less stable..., whereas more general, broadly-encompassing self-concepts are believed to be less susceptible to change and more fixed,*” (Mercer, 2011, p. 74). As in the case of learner beliefs (see subchapter 2.1.3), it is less difficult to change a specific self-concept in a specific domain, which could also be described as peripheral, than a general, core view of an individual’s self (Mercer, 2011).

A dynamic perspective of the self is explained by Harter et al.(1998). According to them, self-esteem can change in various contexts, such as in the presence of a friend, a teacher or a parent (Harter, et al., 1998). It seems that there is a core understanding of the self, which is consistent to a certain degree, completed by a fluctuating part, which is subject to change (Mercer, 2011). It is this changing part of the self-concept that will be looked at from different perspectives in the following chapter, focusing on those factors which may contribute to self-confidence as a part of the learner’s self-concept.

3.2 Classifying the factors

Only little research has so far focused on the factors influencing the development of self-related concepts. One of the most dedicated scholars in the area of the self in language learning is Sarah Mercer, who to a great extent inspired the choice of factors, which will be discussed and investigated. In her chapter on the development of the self, she divided factors influencing the self into five main groups of influences:

- 1) Age and demographic factors

- 2) Environment
- 3) Past achievement experiences
- 4) Feedback and reflected appraisals from others
- 5) Social comparisons

(Mercer, 2011, pp. 83-88)

A similar division was suggested by Bong and Skaalvik (2003). Skaalvik, focusing on academic self-concept in his work, identified five major factors influencing the development of self-concept (Bong, et al., 2003):

- 1) Frames of reference, where self-concept originates from social comparison. Students compare themselves to others and the standards posed by their surroundings.
- 2) Causal attributions, meaning the factors to which students connect their successes and failures.
- 3) Reflected appraisals from significant others. Simply said, people see themselves the way others see them. The opinions of people who are perceived to be important and close to a student are crucial for the development of the student's self-concept.
- 4) Mastery experiences. These are stored in the memory, creating certain self-schemas in different domains. It has been proven that mastery experiences are of high importance in building self-efficacy, therefore Skaalvik suggested these be influential in self-concept as well.
- 5) Psychological centrality. Research has shown that there is a positive correlation between the self-perceived importance of a certain quality and a person's self-esteem. In other words, if students believe a quality or area is important, and therefore psychologically central to them, their self-concept in that area is a positive one.

Adapted from Bong et al. (2003, pp.3-4)

A clear and conclusive explanation of the way self-concept is built was given in the same piece of work by Bong et al.: "*Self-concept is formed through experiences with the environment and is influenced especially by environmental reinforcements and significant others.*" (Bong, et al., 2003, p. 3)

3.3 Demographic factors - age, gender, and culture as aspects of the self

There are some factors that modify the self for longer periods of time, such as age, gender, or the culture that a person grows up in. The influence of these factors is crucial, yet beyond any

control from the individual's side (Mercer, 2011, p. 77). Also for a teacher, these factors are out of reach.

3.3.1 Age

In the course of their lives, people develop the ability to generalize, perceive themselves in relation to others and synthesize the information from their surroundings, creating a complex self-concept along the way, all that thanks to cognitive-developmental changes. Several series of stages of progress have been proposed according to what types of self-beliefs predominate in a particular period. To state an example, in early childhood children focus on their preferences and aversions, while early adolescents' main concern is interpersonal characteristics. Generally, the self-concept becomes multidimensional and more complex with age. This is typically due to increasing experience, as people receive more feedback on which they build their self-concept (Mercer, 2011, p. 78).

3.3.2 Gender

It is an overall idea, presented also frequently in the media, that girls and women tend to suffer from negative self-images. Yet, a self-image is a very general concept, which may not be relevant for the more specific self-concepts, such as the one in foreign language communication. Focusing on academic results, female performance has been proven to be higher and their grades better. However, their self-esteem does not increase with a higher-level performance, and is additionally prone to decrease when faced with outperforming by others (Gentile, et al., 2009). Supporting these ideas, Jackson during her research into the influence of transition to university on students' self-concepts found female students more prone to suffering from lower self-concepts than males (Jackson, 2003, cited in Mercer, 2011, p. 79).

On the contrary, Josephs et al. claim that there is no significant difference in the overall self-concept of men and women. There are, however, proven differences in the way women and men develop self-concepts and how their self-concepts are connected to other people. Women tend to rely more on other people and their schema of the self is likely to be based on, or at least strongly related to, their important and valued people. On the other hand, men often develop an individualistic and independent schema of the self (Josephs, et al., 1992, p. 391). Another study, conducted by Sullivan in 2009, focused on academic self-concept, discovered differences in academic domains, namely "*males having strong self-concepts in maths and sciences and girls in English.*" (Mercer, 2011, p. 80)

3.3.3 Culture

Besides age and gender differences, a notable part of the research has focused on the influences of ethnicity and culture on the perception of the self. Exploring questions like whether one test can be successfully used in a different culture, scholars revealed that cultural frames determine the understanding of the self indeed. For instance, a collectivist culture, such as Japanese or Chinese, support social and collective aspects of the self, therefore people incline toward prioritizing the needs of the society. However, researching the influence of cultures involves potential problems with bias and such studies require not only a sensitive approach but also culturally appropriate ways of conducting such research (Mercer, 2011, p. 83).

3.4 Motivation

Motivation is overall a commonly investigated aspect of language psychology, especially in relation to language achievement and self-confidence. Even though the term motivation is often used in everyday discussions, especially in a school environment, it is not entirely clear what is meant by saying that someone is motivated. According to Williams et al., there are various approaches and theories explaining motivation in different ways, mostly differing in the views of external and internal origin of motivation. Lately, learning psychology has moved towards seeing motivation as a drive that comes from within the individual. This approach, also called the cognitive perspective, has had the biggest influence on understanding motivation in language learning and shifted the focus to the learner (Williams, et al., 2015, pp. 99-102).

3.4.1 Motives to learn foreign languages

In studies by Clément and Gardner, which focused on a multi-ethnic society in Canada, self-confidence was linked with motivation to use the second language to blend into the target language group (Gardner, et al., 1993). This approach to language learning became known as the *integrative orientation*. In this case, learners' intentions usually include a deep understanding of the language and both sociocultural and nonprofessional reasons to learn it (Clement, et al., 1994, pp. 419-421). However, different groups of individuals in different settings naturally have other motives leading them to achievements and confidence in learning.

In 1990s Hungary, almost 98 % of the population were ethnic Hungarians with the Hungarian language as their mother tongue, who experienced practically no contact with English speakers besides encounters in media, international communication or in English classes. Consequently, their conditions were different from the multicultural setting of Canada, and thus their motivation was likely to differ as well. It was assumed that given the conditions, the main

motivation of Hungarians to learn a foreign language would be a practical usage of the language. This motivation, a willingness to learn for pragmatic reasons, is labelled as *instrumental orientation* and is common up to intermediate levels (Clement, et al., 1994, pp. 418-421).

However, the division of the motives is not as clear and simple. Even though originally the two orientations were treated as opposites, researchers discovered a positive correlation between them. Both motives were found to be “...*affectively loaded goals that can sustain motivation*” (Clement, et al., 1994, p. 420). Additionally, motives also depend on the social background and attitudes of learners, which may change over time. For instance, respondents in Dörnyei’s research were adults voluntarily learning in a paid course, who may have had a different perspective than for example students in high schools (Clement, et al., 1994, pp. 419-421).

3.4.2 Motivation in communication and classrooms

Motivation, as an important psychological aspect of learning, has been researched in many ways, focusing on its different characteristics. To state an example, MacIntyre et al. distinguish between interpersonal and intergroup motivation, according to the goals of communication. Learners’ goals include taking control, establishing a relationship or simply belonging to a group, which may be significant in a classroom setting (MacIntyre, et al., 1998, pp. 550-551).

In the teaching profession, motivation takes place all the time, either directly, by setting goals and tasks, or indirectly, by the way the teacher interacts and approaches the study matter. Students’ motivation may be based on deep internal goals or factors, which can seem unimportant to the teacher. To understand this and be able to work with the concept, motivation needs to be seen as a process, not a fixed trait that a person possesses. It has been proven that learning a language, or any other subject, is not about a student being either motivated or unmotivated, but rather being motivated in a certain time and place to do a specific thing (Williams, et al., 2015, pp. 110-113).

Teachers sometimes tend to force certain outcomes and try to motivate students by being directive. As the motivation comes from within the students, this approach is likely to not only fail but also result in stress on both sides, and thus negatively affect self-confidence. To support the inner motivation of students, Williams et al. suggest teachers to be attentive to students’ interests and dreams and help them on the way to achieve those (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 120).

3.5 Classroom environment and group dynamics

The research in second language acquisition and self-confidence leaned over time more towards the individual as the main subject of studying. However, social groups and environment also play an important role in forming one's beliefs, and therefore also self-confidence (Murphey, et al., 2012, p. 220; Clement, et al., 1994). Stronger group cohesion and sense of relationship is associated with higher learners' motivation, higher academic self-efficacy, and achievement (Anderson, et al., 2004).

The acknowledgement of environmental factors in SLA began in the twentieth century when a breakthrough was made by Vygotsky. His Sociocultural Theory received a considerable amount of attention and shifted focus of learning studies towards social aspects. This switch of interests and recognizing the role of the social group and socialization in an individual's learning process became known as 'the social turn' in SLA and applied linguistics (Murphey, et al., 2012).

The influence of classroom environment has been investigated in various research projects, discovering significant links between the learning process and the self (Gabryś-Barker, 2016). Myers and Claus' research showed a positive correlation between the perceptions of classroom environment and motives to communicate (Myers, et al., 2012). Focusing on relationships in the classroom, Frisby and Martin revealed that feelings of connection in the classroom lead to higher students' participation and engagement (Frisby, et al., 2010). Once the learners perceive the classroom environment positively, they become more involved and open to communicate (Frisby, et al., 2010; Myers, et al., 2012; Gabryś-Barker, 2016). The nature of the learning environment was also explored by Trautwein in 2006, who concluded that the learning environment is an important variable in the development of the self-concept (Trautwein, et al., 2006).

The need to understand the social context of self-concept has been acknowledged among the majority of researchers (Mercer, 2011). The importance of the environmental factor in connection to the self has been investigated and proven in several studies, including those by Myers et al. and Frisby et al (Mercer, 2011; Frisby, et al., 2010; Myers, et al., 2012; Gabryś-Barker, 2016). By acknowledging environment, in case of language studying the learning group, as an essential element of the learning context, dealing with a positive classroom environment becomes an important feature of teaching (Williams, et al., 2015; Murphey, et al., 2012).

3.5.1 Group dynamics

Williams et al. claim that to understand students' individual needs, such as motivation, it is necessary to comprehend the group dynamics. Each group, in case of language learning a language class, is different, and just like individuals, groups have their own group 'personality'. They evolve and behave according to the current conditions. This means that reactions to a particular activity may vary not only from one group to another but also from lesson to lesson (Williams, et al., 2015, pp. 23,118). As Murphey aptly expressed, "*a learning group tends to take on a life of its own*" (Murphey, et al., 2012, p. 223).

One of the most important characteristics of good group dynamics is a feeling of belonging. 'Belongingness', or feelings of security, is regarded as the essential human need, which is fulfilled only once people feel accepted (Murphey, et al., 2012, p. 223). Learners need to feel included, related to others and identify themselves with the group, and their individual well-being is dependent on a supportive environment in the language classroom (Murphey, et al., 2012; Williams, et al., 2015, p. 30). Learners, through belonging into the learning group, develop a stronger sense of identity and become more self-aware and autonomous, which thus enhances their interest and engagement in academic development, eventually resulting in higher academic achievement (Murphey, et al., 2012).

To gain feelings of security in a classroom, learners need to form friendships. The relationships among members in a class together with the way they feel related to the group as a whole form an important factor in the overall perception of the classroom environment. There are several ways to develop a cohesive, positive group, such as supporting cooperation and frequent communication within the group and encouraging sharing and developing of learners' ideas (Clement, et al., 1994, p. 424; Anderson, et al., 2004, p. 219).

3.5.2 Comparison

One of the classroom processes significantly interfering with classroom environment and learning in a language group is comparison (Mercer, 2012). According to Bandura, individual's self-confidence correlates with the overall confidence of the society he or she is in. He suggests that confident peers in a class can have a positive effect on other learners and their achievement (Bandura, 2006). On the contrary, different levels of competence and confidence are the main sources of comparison in the classroom. In forming one's self-concept, social comparison represents the external frame of reference without which the self, and thus also self-confidence, cannot be understood (Mercer, 2012, p. 13; Marsh, et al., 2008, p. 510).

“Classrooms provide an extensive source of these social comparisons. Because of the reward system based on academic performance, perceived teacher concern with achievement, and parental pressure to perform well, the typical classroom has an evaluative atmosphere that evokes a strong interest in children to compare themselves socially.” (Dijkstra, et al., 2008, p. 828)

Learners tend to compare themselves most commonly to their classmates in the learning group, to other peers at school or to family members. These comparisons are usually based on a perceived closeness to the person. This means that the learner either shares a physical environment with the other person or finds physical or mental similarities to refer to (Mercer, 2011). In her case study in 2011, Mercer mentions two other frames of reference. Her respondent seemed to select individuals for comparison according to supposed equality of the other person or compared herself to those “...*who might offer an advantageous comparison by being perceived as lower in ability than herself...*” (Mercer, 2011, p. 128).

There are various aspects of comparison in a classroom which have been discovered to determine to what extent and in what ways social comparison affects learners.

- 1) Age - Significant comparison among peers appears at the age 7-8 and becomes more pronounced with age. However, even though comparison becomes a highly important factor to learners, the forms of comparison become less overt to the outside world over time.
- 2) Gender - The consequences of comparison may differ depending on the gender of learners. For boys, comparing is more often used as a self-enhancing tool.
- 3) Achievement and value – Learners are affected by comparison more in dimensions which they perceive as valuable, depending also on learners’ achievement in that area.
- 4) Groups – Creating groups with significant differences and merging high achievement learners with low achievement ones can either result in assimilation in the group or create a contrast. In the latter option, learners experience a loss of self-concept.

Adapted from Dijkstra et al. (2008)

Even though comparing is a natural process and may affect learners’ performance positively, teachers are warned to be cautious (Dijkstra, et al., 2008; Young, 1991). Frequent and obvious comparison may lead, according to Young, to increased feelings of anxiety. Harmful kind of comparison does not necessarily have to be in the form of hostile reactions, as may be expected, but may appear in a much more insignificant form. Teachers may observe for instance eagerness

of learners to out-do others, putting emphasis on test results, desire to receive teacher's approval or on the contrary attempts to disengage from language learning (Young, 1991, p. 430).

3.6 Teacher's role

Teacher's role is central not only to the ways classroom environment is perceived, but also to most other aspect of the learning process. The way learners feel in a learning group depends largely on the teachers' attitude. Teachers are the central figures in developing students' self-concepts, as students base their sense of the self on their approval and evaluation (Williams, et al., 1999). Teachers' attitudes have been directly linked to self-confidence in a research project carried out by Tuncel (Tuncel, 2015, p. 2576).

“The classroom environments in which students can answer questions without hesitation, express themselves without any fear or anxiety of making a mistake or being humiliated by their teacher even if they make a mistake will promote their self-confidence. Therefore, teachers' behavior, feedbacks, and questions they ask to students, and the language teaching activities they are required to take part in are directly correlated with their self-confidence.” (Tuncel, 2015, p. 2576)

3.6.1 Communication and positivity

It is believed that good communication is the key to developing a healthy self-concept, meaning both teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions. Supporting these may have a bigger effect than any other technique (Tuncel, 2015). Maclellan supports this idea adding that learners benefit from a friendly communication with the teacher. According to his findings, having contact with the teacher outside of formalities has a positive impact on learners' feelings of intellectuality and confidence (Maclellan, 2014, p. 66).

Communication is a major topic in much of the literature describing a “good teacher” or a “feel-good” classroom. Pressley et al. mention communication in connection to forming a feeling of community, which has been previously described as one of the main factors influencing students' self-confidence (Pressley, et al., 2003, p. 162). It is not only explicit utterances that may have an impact on learners, but also implicit messages conveyed in the behaviour of the teacher. Without ever giving a commentary, the teacher may still influence learners' learning experience and therefore also their perceptions of themselves (Williams, et al., 1999, p. 200).

Besides good communication, teachers should always actively seek positivity. Focusing on the strengths of the students, positive aspects in the classroom and enhancing these helps students

follow their own progress. Being aware of the strengths and positive aspects in the classroom then leads to a positive learning environment and thus to learners' positive self-views (Maclellan, 2014, p. 66). Another advantage of positivity is that together with passion for the subject it is easily transferable to the learners (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 119) and such optimistic approach prevents learners from making negative attributions (Dewaele, 2017, p. 445).

3.6.2 A self-confident teacher

As teachers serve as role models, their views, beliefs and motivation are often projected in the class (Williams, et al., 2015, p. 119). Regarding the role of a teacher, Tuncel emphasizes the importance of self-confidence of teachers. Previously carried out studies imply that only self-confident teachers can influence students' achievements and motivation. Due to their calm nature, they manage to create a relaxed atmosphere and allow a respectful, empathetic and even entertaining communication in the lesson (Tuncel, 2015, p. 2577). Besides, it was discovered that a self-confident teacher does not force requirements which are beyond the capacities of the students and is able to communicate the demands clearly, which is eventually beneficial for students' confidence (Tuncel, 2015, p. 2577; Pressley, et al., 2003, p. 162)

3.6.3 Teacher's actions and beliefs

To get an idea of what the teacher may influence and how, Tuncel presents some examples of common situations or teachers' behaviours and their expected impact on self-confidence:

Situation/Behaviour	Expected Result
Humiliating students when they make language mistakes	Decrease in self-confidence
Expecting outstanding success in foreign language learning	Decrease in self-confidence
Explaining the language program clearly	Increase in self-confidence
Language teacher's low level of self-confidence	Decrease in self-confidence
A relaxed foreign language class atmosphere	Increase in self-confidence
A stressed foreign language class atmosphere	Decrease in self-confidence

(Tuncel, 2015, p. 2578)

Most of the actions mentioned above, as simple as they might seem, have the same origin. Every teacher's action starts in their head, in a way of thinking, in their beliefs. Teachers' beliefs in fact have a greater impact on teachers' behaviour in the lesson than their knowledge. They function as an affective filter to everything the teacher experiences including their views of learners (Williams, et al., 1997). An overview of what particular roles may be given to learners

by the teacher is presented in seven categories, inspired by Meighan and Meighan (Meighan, et al., 1990).

- Resisters – Learners are perceived as people who are unwilling to learn and who learn only because they are forced to do so.
- Receptacles – Teacher is seen as a source of knowledge and his duty is to fill the receptacles (learners) with as much knowledge as the learners are able to accept according to their IQ.
- Raw material – Metaphorically, learners could be described as building material that needs to be constructed into a solid building, a fine work of art to be created.
- Clients – If learners are seen as clients, the teacher usually acknowledges the individuality of educational needs, and the learning process revolves around fulfilling those needs.
- Partners – The teacher puts themselves on the learners' level, allowing feelings of equality and open negotiation.
- Individual explorers – The teacher becomes the facilitator of learners' explorations, as they come to their own conclusions.
- Democratic explorers – The learning group works as a whole, sets its own agenda, goals and ways to reach them, while it may or may not use the expertise of the teacher

Adapted from Williams and Burden (1997, pp. 57-59)

This categorization of learners' role in relation to the teacher may have a significant impact on how the teacher acts in the classroom. For instance, if a teacher sees learners as resisters, he or she may assume force and punishment as the most appropriate means of management. On the other hand, approaching learners as individual explorers relies to a great extent on the learners' self-management (Williams, et al., 1997, pp. 56-57).

The teacher may also influence learners' self-beliefs directly. Even though feelings of competence in a language are subjective, may often be unrealistic and difficult to change, there are ways for teachers to support more realistic views of the learners' self. As long as the teachers are aware of some misjudgements, they can notify the learners and try to clarify what has been misunderstood. In order to develop judgemental skills, learners should be challenged to always provide reliable evidence of their beliefs instead of relying on their first, and often false,

impressions or reports from others. Not only is this an important goal in general education, but it also contributes to realistic views of learners' own competence and building a healthy level of self-confidence (Maclellan, 2014, p. 64).

3.7 Classroom activities

Another major influence on learner's self-perception coming from the teacher's side is a choice of activities. A number of researchers has been trying to find the connection between learners' feelings in a language classroom and the activities they engage in. As classroom activities seem to be an important factor in forming a sense of self in the classroom, researchers have been trying to investigate which activities may prevent negative feelings in a classroom.

According to Horwitz, who researched foreign language classroom anxiety in language learning situations, there are certain activities which may threaten the self and contribute to language learning anxiety. Most commonly, students feel discomfort when they are exposed to judgements by their teachers or peers during speaking activities. She also suggested several methods in case language anxiety develops, including relaxation exercises or giving advice on effective language learning strategies (Horwitz, et al., 1986).

Looking at classroom activities from an opposite point of view, positive psychologists have several propositions what can be done in a language classroom to prevent language learning anxiety from developing and to promote positivity and confidence instead.

3.7.1 Characteristics of confidence-enhancing activities

It appears that there are two ways of influencing self-confidence: providing opportunities for strengthening emotional well-being or improving knowledge in particular domains. In other words, to promote confidence learners need to learn to talk about their feelings and acknowledge their thought patterns, as well as build a solid knowledge base (Maclellan, 2014, p. 67).

As for supporting students' emotional well-being, teachers should lead them to be attentive to their anxieties, to be able to identify them and work with them by engaging in reflection activities (Fresacher, 2016, pp. 344-346). Some learners' anxieties may stem from particular fears or be based on irrational conceptions, otherwise known as learner beliefs (see chapter 2.1.3), and their impact can be reduced by simply acknowledging these. To achieve this, teachers need to dedicate enough time to reflecting and have patience along the way. Among the specific types of activities, Boudreau suggests role playing activities and group discussions

which, together with active monitoring of feelings of anxiety, support learners on their way to healthy self-concepts (Boudreau, et al., 2018).

Not only should students recognize and examine their anxieties but they should also try to identify the opposite, i.e. their strengths. By acknowledging what is the student good at and working on that skill may increase student's self-confidence. Focusing on the strengths rather than dealing with learners' weaknesses, collectively referred to as strength-based approach, increases learners' courage to confront their anxieties (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 8).

To sustain a confidence-enhancing classroom, Maclellan (2013) provides advice for the choice of activities:

- Firstly, and unsurprisingly, students need to work on their knowledge base. Developing an expertise in any curricular area is an immense boost for learners' academic self-concept and may function as an anchor in anxious moments.
- Ideally, all lessons should include some type of metacognitive activities. During these, learners get a chance to assess their own progress and reflect on it.
- To build a healthy self-concept, learners should be encouraged to explain their reasoning and argue their opinions. This may be embedded in many classroom activities and can be supported by classroom discussions.
- It is helpful to promote learners' non-academic self-concept by including socially designed learning activities. Finding their own place within a group and feeling good in a society may have a great effect not only on their learning process, but also in learners' future life.

Adapted from Maclellan (2013), p. 68

3.8 Handling errors

Errors are a natural part of the language learning process, unavoidable and necessary on the way to becoming a proficient language user. However, they are still perceived by many as undesirable, and flawless communicating is seen as the ultimate goal (Amara, 2015). Certain ways of correcting errors in a classroom can have a major effect on learners' self-perceptions, which makes handling errors in a classroom a highly important topic for language teachers (Dekeyser, 1993; James, 1998). To understand and demonstrate the difficulty of finding the right way in which errors should be corrected for learners to develop a healthy self-concept, several main questions need to be answered.

To find an opinion and develop an approach to handling errors in a classroom, a list of five fundamental questions regarding handling errors was presented by Hendrickson (Amara, 2015; Hendrickson, 1978). Answers to these questions have been given by Hendrickson himself, attempting to give language teachers hints, which they can follow in order to succeed in developing learner's healthy self-concept (Amara, 2015; Hendrickson, 1978).

1. Should errors be corrected?
2. If so, when should errors be corrected?
3. Which learner errors should be corrected?
4. How should learner errors be corrected?
5. Who should correct learner errors?

(Hendrickson, 1978, pp. 387-398)

3.8.1 Should errors be corrected?

The first question for teachers and experts, which sets off all the others, is whether or not should errors be corrected. According to affective filter hypothesis, error correction can raise learners' levels of anxiety, and therefore hinder learning. On the other hand, simply noticing and becoming aware of errors is considered to be beneficial for the learning process (James, 1998, pp. 246-247). Similarly, second language acquisition theory sees error correction as a necessary part of the learning process, as it helps the learner consciously create the right representations of language rules (Amara, 2015). However, the answer is not as simple. There are times in which correction may indeed harm the learner. Errors should, or should not, always be corrected according to the student's language level, type of error and in line with learning goals (Amara, 2015; James, 1998).

3.8.2 When should errors be corrected?

The second dilemma standing in front of the teachers upon noticing an error in communication is whether to correct immediately, or later. Usually in foreign language classes, in which the communicative competence is crucial, delayed correcting is preferred (Amara, 2015).

Edge briefly explains the reasons for carefulness around errors and for choosing, if necessary, the delayed correction, into two points:

“Students need the experience of uninterrupted, meaningful communication if they are to learn to use the language.

If students are to say anything meaningful, they need to feel that people are listening to what they are saying, not to how they are saying it.” (Edge, 1989, p. 37)

When choosing between immediate and delayed corrections, teachers should try to distinguish between working on fluency and working on accuracy and bear their main goal in language learning in mind. Furthermore, even though delayed correction is preferred in general, learners may have different opinions, therefore the teacher should try to take these into consideration (James, 1998; Amara, 2015).

3.8.3 Which learner errors should be corrected?

There are various aspects according to which errors could be classified. To distinguish which errors should be corrected, it is useful to divide them into global and local errors (Amara, 2015; Touchie, 1986).

„Global errors hinder communication, and they prevent the learner from comprehending some aspects of the message. Local errors only affect a single element of a sentence, but do not prevent a message from being heard.” (Amara, 2015, p. 62)

In general, global errors, as they can prevent understanding of utterances, should be the main focus of corrections (Amara, 2015). Similarly, Edge suggests concentrating “...*on the most important learning points*” (Edge, 1989, p. 35). On the other hand, local errors, which do not interfere with the information transmission, should remain secondary, unless the aim of the lesson or activity is an accurate usage of that particular language item. Then, the correction is a necessity (Touchie, 1986; Edge, 1989). Lastly, common errors, frequently made by learners, should be prioritised over others (Touchie, 1986, p. 79).

3.8.4 How should learner errors be corrected?

Regarding the “how” in correcting errors there is an extensive body of answers. Among the most general advice, Edge mentions positive approach to correcting, which corresponds with the approach of positive psychology. Positive, instead of negative, emotions on both learner’s and teacher’s side have a major positive effect on learning progress and providing positive corrections may accelerate the process of learning a language (Edge, 1989; Amara, 2015).

Handling errors should be sensitive and non-threatening (Amara, 2015). If the corrections are direct and harsh, the affective filter is applied, and learners immediately dive into negative emotions. Some learners may be more sensitive to corrections than others and therefore it is advised to develop a gentle approach to avoid embarrassment or any other negative feelings.

To maintain the least loss of face possible, teachers may consider consulting with learners. It is also here that intuition and emotional intelligence of teachers may be of help (James, 1998, pp. 250-251).

3.8.5 Who should correct learner errors?

There are three sources of correction in a language classroom. Besides the teachers, who are the obvious judges in the classroom, errors can be noticed and corrected also by the mistaken learners themselves and their peers in the classroom (Amara, 2015, p. 62).

The first step upon noticing an error should be giving the learner an opportunity for a correction. Self-correction is usually the one which allows learners to save face in front of themselves and others and helps them remember the rule better. If self-correction fails, the teacher can turn to other learners for peer-correction and encourage them to help with the error. This may have several advantages, such as supporting cooperation among students and involving the whole group in thinking. Even if it may seem uncomfortable to the learners, over time they can acquire the ability to give sensitive and constructive feedback, which they may use in pair-work or elsewhere. In case no one is able to recognize and correct the error, the teacher must intervene and explain the language item for the whole class. Afterwards, repetition and practising is highly recommended to reinforce new knowledge (James, 1998; Edge, 1989).

Each of these five fundamental questions each could raise a long debate but in this case, they serve as an overview of aspects related to handling errors that may influence learners' confidence in communicating in a foreign language. The main message reoccurring throughout the points is always handling errors in accordance with teacher's intuition and learners' preferences. Besides that, Edge aptly expressed what should be the motto of handling errors in a language classroom:

"Making mistakes in language use is not only normal, but necessary to language learning."
(Edge, 1989, p. 37)

3.9 Assessment, perceptions of success and failure

Students' self-esteem and motivation in school is, especially in the adolescent age, susceptible to fluctuate according to their learning outcomes and the way they are assessed (Broadfoot, et al., 2002). Assessment comes in different forms, such as grades, points or verbal evaluation. All of these may lead to a certain categorization in the eyes of the teacher, other learners, or the

learner himself, which has a strong influence on the learner's self-concept (Meškauskienė, et al., 2016, pp. 160-161).

3.9.1 Tests

One of the most common evaluation tools for measuring skills and knowledge of learners are tests. As frequent as they are, most learners associate them with negative feelings. To avoid these, positive psychologists suggest focusing on several qualities of tests, such as face and response validity, authenticity and fairness, and enhancing these (Kusiak-Pisowacka, 2016). When the learners' feelings and reactions to the test are positive, "...they are more likely to perform to the best of their ability on the test" (Alderson, et al., 1995, p. 173).

Some of the most valued qualities of tests among learners are transparency and authenticity. This means that learners appreciate clear policy regarding the test and testing which resembles real-life situations. If the learners understand the administration and scoring of the test and they find the content and ways of testing practical, their overall perception of the test is likely to be positive (Kusiak-Pisowacka, 2016, pp. 290-293).

Assessment in the classroom, in order to be helpful and generally positive, should respect individual differences and interpretations of learners. Even though there may be seemingly clear answers on the test, the teacher should be open to discuss and allow different interpretations. This may help the learners become more involved and support their independent thinking in the language, which as a result strengthens learners' self-confidence (Kusiak-Pisowacka, 2016, p. 294; Meškauskienė, et al., 2016, pp. 169-170).

3.9.2 Success and failure

"From the psychological point of view, learners would like to see tests as elements of instruction that would give them a feeling of success, not stress and failure." (Kusiak-Pisowacka, 2016, p. 293)

The importance of success, not only in tests, but in the whole process of building the academic self, is closely related to positive psychology and building self-confidence. The reason for this is that low self-esteem is generally based on a subjective feeling that a person often fails to achieve success (Baumeister, et al., 1985, p. 451). Frequent experiencing of failure and receiving continuously negative marks in school may ultimately lead to the *"learned helplessness"*. This means that the learners start boycotting the learning process to find a reason for their "limited abilities". The learned helplessness is often associated with being labeled as a "weak/slow" student (Broadfoot, et al., 2002).

On the other hand, experiencing a feeling of control over one's own learning process leads to both higher motivation and self-confidence. By achieving success, the learners develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning. As they gradually learn to assess experiences according to their own internal principles, they become more confident and their self-concept less dependent on external factors (Meškauskienė, et al., 2016, p. 160). If self-assessment is not involved, the learning process may start appearing meaningless to learners. In that case, learners perceive assessment to be just a way of categorizing for other purposes than their own good (Broadfoot, et al., 2002).

Building an own set of internal principles affects what the learner perceives as a success or failure. It determines the perspective from which the learning experience will be looked at (Mercer, 2011, p. 142). Obstacles on the way are usually formed by expectations. Both internal and external standards and beliefs that need to be fulfilled usually belong to the main sources of anxiety. A less confident learner may feel afraid to succeed because he or she lacks the confidence that the success can be repeated. A high-achieving learner, on the contrary, may have difficulties accepting a failure and might withdraw from an activity because high self-confidence and standards do not allow a failure, or even an average performance. By experiencing control over the learning process and learning to self-assess, the learner may avoid having unrealistic expectations (Baumeister, et al., 1985).

Even though there may be different levels of both confidence and knowledge in a classroom, the way learners are assessed appear to have a strong influence on the learning process. There may be no universal guide fitting for all classes and groups, but there are several qualities to enhance when it comes to assessment. A positive and efficient assessment should build learners' responsibility, reveal their abilities and convey success, support their independence, and respect individual differences. If learners perceive assessment as meaningful feedback, it is likely to have a significant positive influence on their self-confidence.

“Meaningful assessment that strengthens self-esteem is the one, which provides learners with efficient feedback, indicates guidelines for further development and contributes to gaining of self-confidence.” (Meškauskienė, et al., 2016, p. 169)

3.10 Summary

Self-confidence in communicating in a foreign language is a complex topic that crosses many concepts from psychology, didactics and language theory. Upon defining communication and explaining the specifics of communicating in a foreign language, the author addressed self-

confidence and concepts that have been associated with it and/or may contribute to its fuller understanding. Even though being able to confidently communicate in a foreign language is one of the crucial abilities of the modern world, research focuses mainly on particular aspects of teaching and there is very little comprehensive information on self-confidence in foreign language communication.

One of the most studied phenomena of language learning psychology is language learning anxiety. As it could be considered the opposite of confidence in a foreign language, relevant findings in the area have been presented, including the factors that had been found influential. Both concepts of language learning anxiety and language learning confidence fall under the term the self, which has been studied by experts in linguistic psychology. The selection of factors discussed in the following section was based on existing knowledge in the field of the self and includes motivation, classroom environment and group dynamics, teacher's role, classroom activities, handling errors and assessment. The author decided to investigate learners' perceptions of these factors and their relevance for self-confidence in communicating in English in the practical part of this thesis.

PRACTICAL PART

4 Exploring learners' self-confidence in English communication – a study

The theoretical part of this thesis provided background information to communication and self-confidence in a foreign language classroom and factors that have been associated with it. In the practical part, the author presents a study exploring the factors influencing learners' self-confidence in English communication.

This chapter aims to explain the whole idea and procedure of the study, including the tools used for collecting data. To understand the idea of the study, the aim of the study and research questions will be presented. In the following subchapters, the author introduces information about the research participants and the methodology used in this study.

4.1 Research aims and questions

The aim of the practical part of this thesis is to investigate the connection between individual learning experience of grammar school learners and their confidence in communicating in English. For the study, altogether eight research questions were formulated, exploring the area of foreign language communication confidence.

Central research question:

RQ1: How does learners' learning experience in the classroom influence the learners' self-confidence in English communication?

Research sub-questions:

RQ1-1: How do the learners perceive the role of a teacher in self-confidence in English communication?

RQ1-2: How do the learners perceive the influence of the choice of activities in language classes on their self-confidence in English communication?

RQ1-3: How do the learners perceive the influence of relationships in the language classroom on their self-confidence in English communication?

RQ1-4: How do the learners perceive the influence of comparison in a language classroom on their self-confidence in English communication?

RQ1-5: How do the learners perceive the influence of handling errors on their self-confidence in English communication?

RQ1-6: How do the learners perceive the role of assessment in their self-confidence in English communication?

RQ1-7: What is the relationship between learners' self-confidence in English communication and their motivation?

The first research question is central to the study. It was the authors objective to explore the connection between learners' learning experience and their self-confidence in English communication. The central research question (RQ1) is an overarching question to the aspects of the learning process which were investigated. These are covered in the following research sub-questions.

Research sub-questions 1-1 to 1-6 focus on different variables of the learning process, covering the most mentioned influences on self-confidence of learners. By answering these, the author intends to describe the characteristics of learning experience associated with learners' self-confidence in English communication.

- Sub-question 1-1 focuses on the role of a teacher in self-confidence. In this question, the author aims to capture the views of research participants on teacher's influence on learners' self-confidence in communicating in English.
- Sub-question 1-2 investigates learners' perception of activities in language classes in relation to self-confidence in English communication. It is connected to sub-question 1-1 as the choice of activities depends mostly on the teacher.
- By answering sub-questions 1-3 and 1-4, the author aims to describe the ways group dynamics, according to the participants, influences self-confidence in English communication. Question 1-3 focuses on relationships in the classroom, while question 1-4 investigates specifically the influences of comparison in the classroom.
- Sub-question 1-5 aims to describe the influence of handling errors on self-confidence in English communication in the eyes of the students. Again, this question is related to the teacher as the ways of working with errors in a classroom depend on the teacher's attitude.
- Sub-question 1-6 is the last question dealing with learners' views of influences on self-confidence and it focuses on the role of assessment. Here, the author explores the

importance of assessment to the learners in connection to self-confidence in English communication.

Sub-question 1-7 investigates the connection between learners' motivation, its sources, and their self-confidence in English communication.

All the research questions are consistent with the questions which were asked during the interviews, described by using Visual Analog Scales and will be answered in the results chapter.

4.2 Research participants

For the purposes of this study, a sample of ten students in the age of 16 and 17 was chosen. The age group was chosen based on the expected capability of the learners to reflect on their learning process, which would be more difficult for younger learners. The participants attended second and third year of a four-year cycle at a small-town grammar school¹.

Gender of the students was generally not considered during the process of choosing. There were mainly two reasons for this decision. Firstly, there was an unequal number of male and female students in the classes and in the school in general. In some learning groups, there were as few as 5 boys among 10 girls. Secondly, the author chose to prioritize the aspect of perceived self-confidence, as that is the main concern of the study, over attempting to receive the same number of male and female students.

During the study, all the participants had been learning English for not less than 8 years. As students of the second and third year of a four-year grammar school, participants had completed compulsory schooling, finishing lower secondary education at the age of 15. Learning English as a foreign language is compulsory for Czech pupils from the third year of primary school, ergo ca. from the age of 9 years on. According to the information received from the participants and their teachers, most of the participants had been learning English since the age of 7.

The participants were all taught English in groups of maximum 15 students during most of their learning process. Upon arriving in the grammar school in their first week of studying, the students are divided into learning groups specifically for foreign languages. The groups are usually created according to the students' choice of a second foreign language or their level of

¹ Grammar schools in the Czech Republic are secondary schools providing general education with a school-leaving certificate. In the Czech school system, there are four-year grammar schools and multi-year grammar schools, which are eight or six years long (Gymnázia, NÚV, 2022)

that particular foreign language. The groups for learning English are therefore mostly not based on the entry level of English, and thus the groups consist of students with different language levels.

Two students participating in the study, however, had been learning English in learning groups which were formed according to learners' English language proficiency. This was an exception discussed long before by the teachers and the school management, and which was introduced due to significant differences in language proficiency in one of the third-year classes. It was assumed by the author that this difference will be reflected in the interviews of these students.

The study was conducted based on previous positive collaboration of the author and the school during the author's teaching practice. For this reason, half of the participants knew the interviewer from teaching practice lessons.

The participants were chosen intentionally to create two opposite groups. Five of the participants, who will be further referred to as Group 1, were self-confident English communicators, while Group 2 consists of five students who were less or not at all self-confident in communicating in English. The procedure of choosing participants and the study itself will be further discussed in the following chapter on research methodology.

4.3 Research methodology

Perceiving confidence as highly influential in foreign language communication, the author decided to explore the area of self-confidence in language learning in depth. To achieve deeper understanding and provide a helpful overview of classroom-related factors which may influence learners' self-confidence, a qualitative research design was created (Gavora, 2000).

The study involved a semi-structured interview rooted in the theoretical part of this thesis, complemented by using Visual Analogue Scales. Based on these, the author aims to explore the connections between learning experience of students and their self-confidence (Švaříček, et al., 2007).

4.3.1 Choosing the participants

One of the important steps of conducting the study was choosing the participants. The author decided to select 10 students, a low number enough to be able to explore individual students' experience and compare them, hoping for a deeper understanding. To cover a variety of learning experience, learners were taken from different learning groups and different teachers.

Five teachers from a small-town grammar school were contacted and asked for help with picking participants for the study. Each of the teachers, upon understanding the idea of the study, was instructed to recommend two of their EFL students to participate. Specifically, the teachers were told to pick one student who seemed confident in communicating in English classes and one who was perceived as unconfident. This was hoped to provide an interesting and helpful view of two sides of a contrast, usually labelled as *extreme case sampling* (Gavora, 2000, p. 144). These 10 participants were then interviewed.

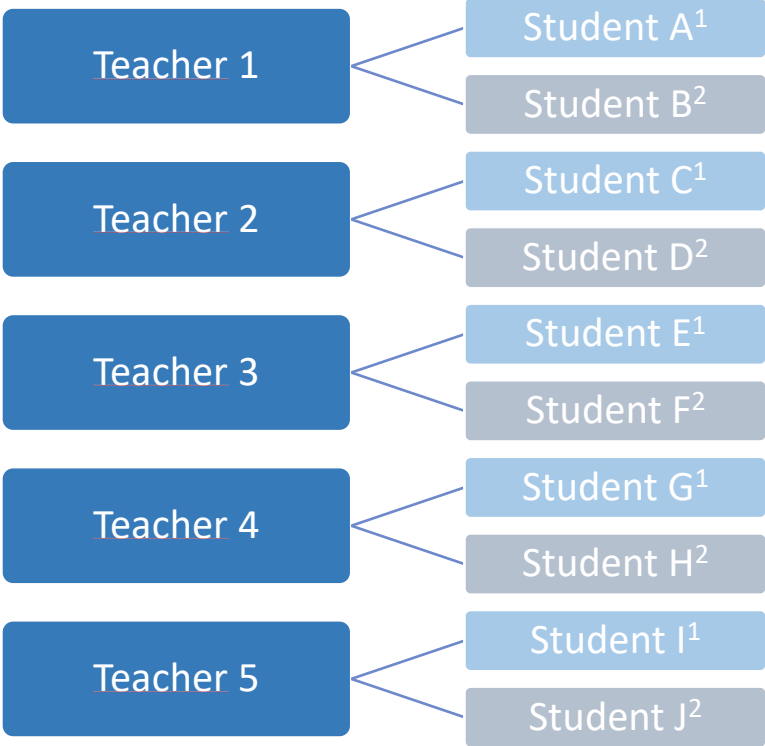


Figure 2 – Each teacher recommending two students – confident (blue – Group 1) and unconfident (grey – Group 2)

The author considered the teachers capable of estimating students’ self-confidence through long-term observation. Not relying solely on the opinion of the teachers, in the first interview question the participants were asked to express how confident they feel in communicating in English.

Throughout the whole study, anonymity of the participants and their teachers needs to be maintained, in accordance with the GDPR policy. For this reason, no personal information, including names of the participants, will be mentioned in the study. However, to be able to approach the participants’ individual experiences and views and to analyse these, it is necessary to assign the participants with a personal code. It was decided to use letters in alphabetical order, as assigned in the overview above. In addition to a letter (A-J), the students can be

distinguished by an index number of their group – 1 for Group 1, the confident students, and 2 for Group 2, the unconfident students.

4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

When the ten participants were chosen and they all agreed to participate in the study, a series of interviews was arranged by the author. Semi-structured interviews as a qualitative method were chosen to explore learners' thoughts, feelings and beliefs about learning process and the ways it influences self-confidence in communicating in English (Gavora, 2000). A semi-structured interview follows a certain structure of open questions prepared beforehand by the author, while still providing space and opportunity to inspect relevant areas (Švaříček, et al., 2007). This allowed the author to explore some relevant thoughts of the participants and understand the topic in bigger detail.

The interviews took place on the premises of the school where the participants studied, always in rooms with sufficient privacy, mostly in offices, without the presence of other people. All the interviews were conducted in May 2022. For a smooth organization and respecting students' free time, teachers agreed to excuse their students from their English lessons.

Prior to the interview, the participants had only general information about participating in the study. This means that they were not told the reason of being picked for the study and the idea and aims of the study were not revealed to them until the interview itself. This was done in order to protect their face in front of classmates and to avoid direct labelling of the students.

The interviews followed a structure prepared beforehand by the author, to ensure comparability of the answers. Each interview consisted of 10 areas with three main questions. These were usually followed by additional questions to allow the participants to express their ideas fully and gather valuable information.

During the interviews and the whole study, the author decided to focus on factors which may to some extent be modified or influenced in language lessons. For that reason, aspects such as family background, culture, or personality were not the subject of the interviews. This is partly due to the limited scope of the thesis and partly due to its practical application in the teaching profession. It was the author's intention to pick the factors which are not only likely influential, but also possible to adjust in a classroom setting.

The factors explored in the interviews include:

- the role of the teacher

- classroom activities
- relationships in a language classroom
- comparison in a language classroom
- handling errors
- assessment
- motivation

Besides the questions related to the mentioned factors, there were three additional question areas, including the sources of communicative competence in English, the level of participants' confidence, and their recommendations for language lessons.

The interviews were conducted in the Czech language, the mother tongue of all participants, to ensure natural and comfortable expressing of the participants. Conducting the interviews in English was believed to put less confident participants at a big disadvantage. Furthermore, the level of participants' English could have made it difficult or impossible to express their thoughts and opinions clearly. For the purposes of the thesis, the areas and questions in the interviews, and the subsequent analysis, were translated into English. The original can be found in the attachments.

The interviews were complemented by using Visual Analogue Scales to quantify and compare the impact of the factors.

4.3.3 Visual Analogue Scales

As a complementing tool of the interviews, the author decided to use Visual Analogue Scales (VAS). The use of VAS allows the participants of the study to accurately express their opinions and the author to compare their views (Couper, et al., 2006).

A Visual Analogue Scale is a horizontal 100 mm long line used for self-assessment. It stretches from a certain minimum to a maximum value, which is given by the focus of the question. The main difference from most of the commonly used scales is that the scale is not divided nor defined either numerically or by percentage. The participants mark their responses according to their subjective judgement on where their answer lies on a continuum from the minimal to maximal value. For a clear interpretation, the millimetres will be referred to as points from 1 to 100 (Klimek, et al., 2017; Couper, et al., 2006).

At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were given a sheet of paper with a total of 8 horizontal 100-mm-long lines. For a clearer interpretation of the results, the author chose to

refer to 1 mm of the scale as 1 point. The first scale used in the interviews aimed to report students' subjective feeling of confidence in communicating in English. The rest of the scales was focusing on factors influencing self-confidence in students and therefore the minimum and maximum value of the scales were formulated the same way. The scales were shown to the participants one by one as the interview proceeded.

4.3.4 The course of the interviews

The interviewees were invited separately for a specific time, expecting the interview to be about 30 minutes long. Upon the beginning of the interview, each participant was informed about the idea of the study. They were introduced to the aims and explained that all questions will be focused on the context of a language classroom and related to their experience with learning English. The author and at the same time interviewer instructed each participant on the expected course of the interview, including the usage of visual scales.

The participants were encouraged to state their true opinions and give as specific answers and thorough explanations as possible. Furthermore, they were ensured that there are no right or wrong answers, and anonymity will be maintained during the study. Lastly, they were asked for a consent on recording the interview for the purpose of latter analysis and encouraged to ask questions in case anything is not entirely clear.

The structure of the interview consisted of ten areas of questions. Firstly, the participants were asked where they thought they had learned English. This aimed to receive background information on the participant's view of their competence in English and areas they perceive as influential.

The first question using a scale focused on the participants' feelings about their English communication confidence. This aimed to assess the way the participants see themselves and their confidence. Besides that, it also allowed the author to assess whether the teachers' perceptions of learners' confidence were in alignment with learners' own opinions and feelings. The following main questions focused each on a different aspect of the learning process, exploring learners' experiences in a language classroom.

With every main question involving a scale, the interviewees were asked to rate on a scale how influential they considered a given aspect to be and then to justify their opinion. Afterwards, they were encouraged to add specific personal experiences. The participants were supported by follow-up questions and given time to explain and point out anything they find important to mention.

The last part of the interviews was dedicated to participants' thoughts and ideas on what could be done differently in an EFL classroom to support self-confidence in communicating in English. The participants were given time to think about what could help them feel better when communicating in English. The author believed that this could provide inspiration and introduce specific recommendations for language teachers, as well as inspect areas that might not have been discussed or highlight those that the participants considered important.

The interviews were completed with providing space for further comments or questions from the participants' side. All interview recordings were then analysed through open coding and categorized according to similarities (Vears, et al., 2022).

4.3.5 Data evaluation

Evaluation of the data received during the interviews involved descriptive statistics and inductive content analysis. The data was analysed over the course of the following months to ensure sufficient distance and repeated insights (Vears, et al., 2022; Vetter, 2017).

Descriptive statistics was applied to the values obtained from Visual Analogue Scales. The data was organized according to the questions they referred to and divided into two groups (Vetter, 2017). Group 1 values belonging to, in the opinion of their teachers, self-confident English communicators, and Group 2 values received from less confident learners. This division is shown by the different colours in the table of VAS results. Due to the small sample of respondents and the qualitative focus of the research, values obtained from VAS served as complementary and only the average values for each group were used for comparisons.

To analyse the semi-structured interviews, inductive content analysis as a method for analysing qualitative data was used. The aim of inductive content analysis is to examine the data set in order to understand the meanings of it. The process of ICA involved *coding*, during which the information obtained in the interviews was sorted into categories according to similarities and patterns in the participants' responses (Vears, et al., 2022; Gavora, 2000 p. 114).

4.4 Results

In this part of the thesis, the results of the study will be presented. The data obtained by using the selected research tools are ordered into subchapters according to the factors which were investigated. For each question involving a Visual Analogue Scale, the values indicating participants' opinions are described and analysed. Every subchapter also includes a table of categories which emerged from the ICA and their examples. This way the author hoped to

support clarity in the presentation of the results. The original results in Czech language are to be found in the appendices.

4.4.1 Areas of acquiring communicative competence in English

The first question of the interviews served as a background towards what the participants see as most influential in learning to communicate in a foreign language. This allowed the author to understand how influential the students perceive school education to be in this area. Based on the answers and specific statements of the participants, four categories of areas were created.

Categories	Students' responses
Educational institutions	school, elementary school, grammar school
Language reception	films, Netflix, series, Youtube, family and surroundings, TV
Courses and tutoring	conversation, self-study, tutoring, course
Online activities	games, internet usage

Educational institutions

Even though eight out of ten participants mentioned school in connection with acquiring communicative competence, most of them perceived learning English at school as a support or help in building the necessary knowledge, rather than the main means to acquiring communicative competence in English.

“...I don't think in school -- there (I learned) only the basics, rather outside (of school) ... in grammar school our teacher contributed to it (communicative competence).” (Student A¹)

Language reception

The second most frequent area of acquiring communicative competence in English was language reception. This involved different kinds of sources that the participants watched and listened to, and which they believed to support their communicative competence. Seven out of ten students reported either watching films, series or TV shows helped them to learn how to communicate in English. One of the participants, Student E¹, mentioned language reception as the only source of communicative competence in English. For Student J², watching TV was perceived as a source of vocabulary and phrases.

“(I learned how to communicate in English) – In the Internet, mostly by watching films, from Netflix and Youtube, ... most of all Youtube, I think.” (Student E¹)

“... I've been watching films and TV shows lately, both American and English – so I pick up a lot of vocabulary there. I've got Czech subtitles just in case I don't know what it is, so that I can look it up – because they use phrases I don't know – but it's mostly from there.” (Student J²)

Courses and tutoring

Half of the participants mentioned attending either group courses or individual lessons specifically to train English and emphasized their help for advancement in communication. Student J talked about the contribution of her individual lessons with a teacher.

“(I learned to communicate in English) Probably at the tutoring that I go to, because I'm not very good at English like the rest of the class, so I learned more at the tutoring where the teacher really talks to me, communicates – I'm there alone, so I don't have to be afraid of saying something stupid and I can talk about whatever I want – we do different topics, so it's good ...” (Student J²)

Online activities

Some type of online activities besides watching series and films was reported by three participants. These activities included reading articles, interacting on social media, and playing games. Students E¹ mentioned chatting and talking to friends from abroad, Student G¹ stated games as the main source of his communicative competence. Student I¹ saw the Internet as the most common place to encounter English and learn the patterns of communication.

“...combination of the Internet, where one probably most often meets English ... I read articles in English, so one gets used to the English vocabulary and the way of expressing oneself –” (Student I¹)

Findings and comments

The areas of acquiring communicative competence were not significantly different for the confident and less confident students. Most of the mentioned sources and areas appeared across the spectrum of participants.

The only significant phenomenon that emerges from this background question is the extent to which the students find educational institutions to be influential. The less confident students considered school to have a greater influence on their abilities, mostly describing school as the

main source of their competences. On the contrary, confident students, if they mentioned school, perceived it as a mere basis for further advancement. Furthermore, Group 1 often talked about encountering English all around and seemed aware of the benefits that come with surrounding oneself with the foreign language. On the other hand, Group 2 relied mostly on institutional education, either school or tutoring lessons.

4.4.2 Self-confidence in communicating in English – self-assessment

In the second question area in the interviews, participants were asked to report their own feelings about their English communication confidence and explain these in detail. Upon being asked a simple question whether they feel confident communicating in English, students marked their feelings on a Visual Analogue Scale.

Individual values reported in VAS:

Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G	Student H	Student I	Student J
82	51	68	28	92	1	67	21	81	47

Average values for Group 1 and Group 2:

Group 1	78
Group 2	29,6

The values obtained from VAS ranged from 1, meaning not confident at all, to 92 points of the scale. As can be seen, Group 1 students reported higher values on the scale, on average 78 points, while Group 2 students' average value was 29,6 points from a 100 mm scale. The participants thus confirmed the opinion of their teachers who classified the students from Group 1 as confident and the students from Group 2 as less confident.

Sources of attitudes towards their own self-confidence in communicating in English

The participants explained the reasons for assessing themselves on the scale the way they did, i.e. why they do or do not feel confident in English communication. The reasons and sources were sorted into six categories.

Categories	Students' responses
Communication barriers	problems with expression, feeling of discomfort, feeling of clarity in communication situations, shyness, generally more quiet, introversion, ability to "talk my way out", ability to express oneself
Fear	fear of mistakes, fear of speaking, fear of being ridiculed
Frequent contact with English	frequent reading of books and articles and watching videos, films, texting with friends from abroad, courses
Success, positive experience	mastered FCE exam, seamless understanding, experience outside the classroom
Interaction with a teacher	feedback from teachers, ability to communicate with a teacher, talking to a teacher
Uncertainty	uncertainty in using tenses, occasional gaps in vocabulary

Communication barriers

The most frequently mentioned category, appearing in the statements of six participants, are communication barriers. If present, these are usually negative feelings, or particular obstacles that students experience in communication. Even though the category may naturally imply their presence, some of the participants also expressed lack of these barriers.

When speaking about communicating in English and how confident the learners felt, they usually did so based on their own assessment of their capabilities in expressing themselves. As Student I¹ spoke about lack of any barriers in communication, feeling mostly clear on what was said and not experiencing problems.

"I would say that I understand English very well, that I have no problem understanding the context of what is being said, and therefore I have no problem responding to it I would say

that I passively understand almost everything, the usual topics, so it's not a problem to talk about them and that increases my self-confidence, I know what's going on, I have control over the situation and an idea of what's going on.” (Student I¹)

A common reason for a certain level of confidence was a communication barrier based on a personality disposition, or at least a perceived one. These included seeing oneself as an introverted or a shy person, or on the contrary perceiving oneself as capable of dealing with various communicative situations in general.

“I'm quite shy and I have trouble expressing myself even in Czech, at least in front of strangers, in English it's even worse, ...” (Student B²)

“I guess I'm simply afraid to speak English, maybe because it's rooted in me, but I don't feel comfortable speaking English, especially when speaking up.” (Student F²)

Fear

A separate category was created for expressions of fear and concerns. These were expressed in reactions of three students, all of them not feeling confident in communicating in English, and thus belonging to Group 2. The fears were connected to relationships within the classroom or general fear of speaking up.

“I look at my other classmates a lot – when I don't trust everyone, that they wouldn't laugh at me if I said something wrong, it pushes my self-esteem down, ...” (Student F²)

Frequent contact

When asked about the reasons for their level of confidence, three participants reported frequent contact with English as a foreign language. During this contact, these students experienced success, could understand and communicate, and this supported their confidence.

“— I watch various videos in English, read books and articles in English, so one gets used to the English vocabulary and the way of expressing oneself and then I don't feel afraid to express myself because I know what the topic is and I know how to react to it, ...” (Student I¹)

“I often talk to someone, a friend from Australia, I watch movies a lot and I interact with English a lot, so it's natural for me.” (Student E¹)

Being exposed to English as a foreign language, according to these students leads to a deeper understanding of the language. Furthermore, a frequent encounter with a foreign language creates opportunities for practising and eventual improvement.

Success, positive experience

A natural confidence booster is a positive experience or a particular achievement. This was mentioned by Student G¹, who considers Cambridge English certificates a guarantee of a certain language level and therefore also his level of confidence increased.

“I started taking courses, I did my FCE, now I want to do my CAE, we only speak English there, so I feel better now.” (Student G¹)

Findings and comments

According to the participants’ responses, the sources of the current level of confidence in communicating in English vary among the students. Their reactions also reflected a certain polarization – focus on either positive or negative side of language learning and usage. Those students, who reported a higher confidence (Group 1) talked about their success, experience, and progress, including places of encounter with English. The less confident students (Group 2) focused on their own weaknesses, usually personal attributes, fear of making mistakes and comparison.

These categories all together may serve as an overview of what the students perceive as influential for their self-confidence in English communication. It is necessary to acknowledge that those were the students’ immediate answers and first thoughts. To understand the sources deeper, some of the categories and thoughts mentioned here, in particular those connected to a language classroom, are further discussed in the following parts of the interview.

4.4.3 The influence of teacher’s approach

The third question area of the interviews focused on the influence of a teacher’s approach on students’ self-confidence in communicating in English, corresponding to *RQ1-1: How do the learners perceive the role of a teacher in self-confidence in English communication?*

Using the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) ranging from “*not at all*” to “*very significantly*”, participants marked the extent to which a teacher influences students’ confidence in English communication.

Individual values reported in VAS:

Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G	Student H	Student I	Student J
99	100	87	57	84	82	10	69	92	74

Average values for Group 1 and Group 2:

Group 1	74,4
Group 2	76,4

The values obtained from VAS ranged from 10 to 100 points, which means the participants' opinions differed across the whole spectrum. However, looking at the individual values, only one participant perceived teacher's influence as rather low, representing this opinion with a 10-point mark. The rest of the participants marked the approach of a teacher as rather influential, four of the students used the last 15 mm of the scale, indicating that they perceive teacher's approach as highly influential for self-confidence in communicating in English.

The average values of Group 1 and 2 are in this case very similar, differing only by 2 points with 74,4 in Group 1 and 76,4 in Group 2. However, if we exclude the highest and lowest reported value of all the participants, the average numbers change significantly. In that case, Group A's average value would be 90,5 and Group B's average value would be 70,5. The author attempted to explain these individual differences in the following interview questions.

Areas of student experience with teacher's influence on student self-confidence

After recording their subjective opinions on the scale, the participants were asked to explain and justify their views about the ways the teacher can influence learners' confidence. Their responses were analysed and sorted into six categories according to the participants' experience and what they found influential in these.

Categories	Student responses
Support	trying to help, encouraging, saying I can do it, encouraging nodding, patient explanation, good relationship, suggestions

Style of communication	smiling, questions, interest, initiative, informal questions, interesting topics, casualness, teacher initiative, not commenting on what the student said
Feedback, criticism, praise	pointing out what was right; not praising, appreciation, pointing out mistakes, accepting mistakes calmly, negative feedback only
Negative emotions	annoyance, repeated appeals, forcing, not explaining nicely, shouting, fear, fear of a bad grade, not willing to talk after humiliation
General approach to teaching	practicing, large amount of grammar, intention of the lesson, fragmentation, no system, skipping, support for speaking, support for communication, calm approach, space for speaking
Teacher's personality	forceful, rough, "dead fish", communicative, energetic, passive

Support

One of the categories appearing in various shapes and forms in many participants' responses is expressions of support. Some form of teacher's support in connection to building self-confidence in English communication came to mind of five students.

"When the teacher encourages me, I try harder, and when I have a good relationship with the teacher, I also feel better when I see that the teacher is happy that I'm doing well ... it always encourages me when I start talking, ... and I start using maybe some vocabulary, I'm glad I remembered and I can see it in the teacher – that they're also happy and – like – nodding encouragingly – and then maybe I'm less afraid to speak up." (Student C¹)

Student C¹ mentions good feelings when being encouraged and seeing the teacher respond to their successful attempts. According to this participant, a good relationship may result in a higher effort, and encouragement, even in a nonverbal form, may decrease the level of fear and anxiety in communicating. A similar opinion was shared by Student B².

"If the teacher encourages students to speak, gives suggestions, tries to think of topics, it will definitely affect the student's ability to speak and their confidence." (Student B²)

Communication and atmosphere

Communication as an aspect of teacher's influence was mentioned by three participants in different contexts and forms. Mostly, the students emphasized communicating with the teacher, either a casual, positive communication, or negative feelings when they did not feel heard and as a result were not willing to communicate. According to the vivid explanation of Student A¹, the teacher may be a significant transmitter of enthusiasm, creating a positive atmosphere through energy and communication.

“Just by the teacher coming in and being communicative, we want to be too. If they ask a question in an energetic way, I want to say the answer – when a teacher comes in with a smile, we want to ask how they are. When they ask a question, we do not stay silent – when the teacher comes and we're afraid of them, it goes south.” (Student A¹)

Negative emotions

Negative emotions in connection to teacher's influence on confidence appeared in the responses of four participants. To some extent, this category overlaps with other aspects, such as communication, feedback, or teacher's personality in their negative versions. Student F² described her experience with being forced to speak and the teacher lacking patience to deal with their anxiety to speak up. In this case, it was surprising that a student, described and perceived as anxious and shy, was able to talk openly about these issues. There was an apparent increasing gap of misunderstanding between Student F² and her teacher about what may help them build confidence and willingness to communicate. The student reported negative emotions expressed by the teacher, such as anger and shouting, which according to her words negatively affected her confidence in communicating in English.

“...when the teacher is forceful and we have experience of being shouted at when we say something wrong or they don't explain things nicely, our confidence goes down ... When I get stuck in speaking and the teacher gets angry and repeatedly asks me to do it again and maybe adds an extra sentence when they think I don't want to speak, which is a kind of means of enforcement – I think that's wrong.” (Student F²)

Feedback, criticism, and praise

Feedback was acknowledged as one of the crucial ways of how the teacher influences confidence in the reactions of four participants. In different forms, the learners receive information on how they perform. Student E¹ talked about the negative impact of criticism,

noting that just a simple follow-up question or a comment regarding the content of the utterance can be important for the learner. On the other hand, a positive experience with feedback was shared by Student C¹, as her teacher provided positive comments and explanations with a calm attitude.

“When someone talks for a long time and the teacher just points out mistakes and doesn't comment on what they said, it's sad and it brings down everything the person said...” (Student E¹)

“... if sometimes I fail or don't remember something or say it wrong, the teacher takes it easy, maybe explains it to me, and tells me what I said right in spite of what I said wrong, and that encourages me not to be afraid to say the answer next time.” (Student C¹)

General approach to teaching

For three participants, the general approach of the teacher and the way they design the lessons seemed to play an important role. Some of the mentioned tools in teaching connected to building self-confidence in communicating were practising and simply providing enough time for communication.

“...(it is important that the teachers) encourage communication and conversation, for example, that we speak English the whole lesson, and that we are given space to talk.” (Student D²)

“I would say... that it's a question of how the lesson is designed, whether it's so that the students interact, both with each other and with the teacher, or whether it's the usual "here's the board, here's the grammar" (Student I¹)

The approach to teaching and choice of activities were further discussed during the interviews as a separate area of interest.

Teacher's personality

Five participants acknowledged that a teacher's personality may be of influence in building learners' confidence in communicating. Having experience with different teaching styles and teaching performances of different teachers, the participants were able to recognize that some of the teachers are more approachable for them than others. This was expressed in the responses of Student B² and Student H².

“In lower secondary school we had a teacher who didn't talk much, we would call her “a dead fish”, and we never talked much with our classmates in those lessons, when it came to speaking,

we were all afraid, nobody wanted to say anything, we didn't know what to talk about.” (Student B²)

“In elementary school, we had an older teacher who I was afraid to talk to. I was scared of her, she was kind of really harsh and I didn't feel comfortable with her.” (Student H²)

Findings and comments

Based on the interviews, most students of both groups perceived the teacher's role in building confidence in English communication as essential. The importance of this factor was higher for those students who experienced a teacher's approach which was either significantly positive or significantly negative. Those participants, who had the possibility to compare very different approaches, saw this as a crucial aspect of building confidence in communicating in English. The lowest values reported on the VAS were justified by no negative experience. In particular, Student D² and Student G¹ shared the idea that the teacher's approach would need to be very bad in order to make a difference. Even though Student D² reported themselves as a less confident student and Student G¹ as a confident student, their level of confidence in English communication was apparently not based on their experience with teachers.

Despite the unequal number of female and male participants and factual omitting of the gender aspect in the study, it was observed by the interviewer that there were significant differences in the responses between genders. While female students tend to focus more on teacher's personality, transmitted emotions, and expressions, including feedback, male students talked more about the practicalities and approach to teaching as such.

In comparison with the other factors which were investigated during the study, the teacher's role was seen as significant, since for both groups it placed in the top three influential factors. On average, the confident students identified the teacher's influence as the second most important, for the unconfident students it was the third most important factor.

4.4.4 The influence of the choice of classroom activities

In the fourth part of the interview, the participants were asked about their opinions on the influence of classroom activities on learners' self-confidence in English communication, which corresponds to *RQ1-2: How do the learners perceive the influence of the choice of activities in language classes on self-confidence in English communication?* In particular, the students were asked to assess to what extent may the activities in language classes influence confidence,

reporting this in a VAS ranging from “*not at all*” to “*very significantly*”. To understand their opinion, the participants explained the area in more detail in another part of the interview.

Individual values reported on VAS:

Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G	Student H	Student I	Student J
74	68	78	87	99	53	37	69	92	75

Average values reported on VAS:

Group 1	76
Group 2	70,4

The individual values reported on Visual Analogue Scales regarding the influence of classroom activities ranged from 37 to 99 points of a 100 mm scale. Only one participant assessed the influence of the choice of activities in language classroom as low, with the value of 37 points. On the contrary, eight out of ten students considered this factor to be rather influential, marking their opinion higher than 65 points. Two confident students and one less confident student assessed classroom activities as highly influential, using the last 15 mm of the scale.

The difference between Group 1 and Group 2 was 5,6 points, showing that confident students perceived this factor more influential than the less confident ones. Group 1’s differences in the individual values were significantly higher than values of Group 2 since Group 1 values included both the absolute highest and absolute lowest value reported.

Students' experiences of the impact of types of activities

Categories	Students' responses
Active involvement	role exchange, active involvement, interactivity, chatting exercises, taking turns, talking to each other, thinking up questions
Atmosphere	boredom, relaxed mood, fun, games, just boring grammar, relation to the subject

Practicality of activities	silly activities, practicing, using English, impractical activities, practical topics (travelling), getting used to speaking, too specific activities, activities without concept, prepared presentation
Time for communication	setting aside a whole hour for conversation, not enough talking, a chance to talk
Use of materials	questions and topics, learning from the textbook, describing pictures, working with the book
Cooperation	working in pairs, searching for a partner, talking to more people, joined lesson, switching pairs

Active involvement

Five of the ten students participating in the study considered being actively involved in the lesson important in order to develop confident expression in English. Some of the students mentioned specific activities as examples of what they found helpful and good for their advancement and development of their confidence.

“When we do more interactive activities where we rotate between people and it's not just having a task and talk for 15 minutes – in that group, the ones who talk less are basically silent and the ones who are confident are talking – whereas when it's faster, when people rotate, it's more likely to encourage them and get them to talk more.” (Student F²)

Atmosphere

Atmosphere in the classroom, in particular the mood and the amount of fun that learners experience in the lessons was perceived as influential by four participants. According to their opinions, if the activities are perceived as enjoyable, the atmosphere tends to be more relaxed, and their involvement and confidence rises.

“I think that it is influenced by the kind of relationship one develops with the subject. If it's an activity that one doesn't enjoy, where one's dabbling in it and can't find oneself and doesn't understand the assignment and doesn't enjoy it, it's harder for them to find a way to relate to

the subject and actively do something in that subject because they just don't enjoy it... ” (Student C¹)

Practicality of activities

Another often mentioned aspect regarding classroom activities in connection to building self-confidence in communicating was their practicality. Using various expressions, participants assessed different types of activities based on how useful they found them. In their words, impractical activities and insufficient practice leads to less involvement, understanding and therefore also lower confidence.

“I think some of the activities are a bit silly for grammar school level, for example dominoes, vocabulary puzzles, and so on...” (Student B²)

“...the way it is structured at least in our lessons, it is focused on working with books, workbooks, one fills in various exercises, assignments, reads texts and answers questions – and then activities where it is about communication between more people, conversations – these are not so frequent and when it comes to them, they tend to be very specific, or on the contrary not specified at all – I do not see a broader concept.” (Student I¹)

Time for communication

Even though this aspect often overlapped with the practicality of activities, time for communication was given a separate category. In this case the students emphasized the time dedicated to practicing communicative skills, which then built their confidence. Student G¹ described his point of view and observations from the classroom, mentioning the contrast between writing and speaking. Even though Student G¹ was a confident English communicator, he expressed the regret over not being able to use all that he knows in English and wished for a bigger emphasis on speaking. Student J² named a few possibilities for practising and expressed a wish to chat more with both other students and the teacher to train.

“We mainly learn grammar in order to write everything well and we are not even able to speak much. I'm speaking mostly for myself, but I can see it in my surroundings. People have trouble speaking and using the English they know. In writing, by writing all the time, I am able to use some vocabulary, but when I speak, I may not be able to use that advanced English. I think teachers should put more emphasis on speaking.” (Student G¹)

“...to chat with them (other students) in English, but also to chat with the teacher, ... set aside one lesson for communication in English and not doing any grammar exercises in the textbook ...” (Student J²)

Use of materials

A part of activities chosen by teachers for their classes are the materials used. Usage of either textbooks, workbooks or other supporting materials was mentioned by three participants. Working with a textbook was not really condemned, however was seen as less favourite and enjoyable by all the three participants.

“...my favourite thing is a paper with questions and topics to talk about ... I enjoy such activities more than learning from the textbook, I think that it is important in learning a language.” (Student B²)

Cooperation

Cooperation and different forms of groups, especially pairs, were mentioned by four participants in connection to classroom activities. There are various impacts of grouping and cooperating, all of them important in communication and building self-confidence.

Three participants mentioned changing partners and talking to more people than just the regular partner as helpful, including student J². Even though Student J² did not feel confident in communicating in English, she was willing to practice with other students to learn. She explained that talking to the same person repeatedly does not work well for practicing. Instead, she offered other possibilities for communicating in a group, including random speaking partners or talking to the teacher.

“I sit with a classmate whom I've known for years – and we know what we're thinking and all we have to do is say two or three words – so the pairs should rotate, pick a name randomly, sit down with the person and chat in English, but also chat with the teacher, ...” (Student J²)

Findings and comments

In the area of classroom activities and their role in building English communication confidence, more than half of the students talked about similar situations in the classrooms. One of the main issues appear to be a certain balance between acquiring theoretical knowledge and being able to use it in communicating. Some of the students expressed that lower confidence in English communication may be connected to insufficient training. On the other hand, it was observed

that learners were aware of the difficulties to include both theory and sufficient practice of communication in the lessons.

The differences between the opinions and explanations of Group 1 and Group 2 students were not significant. One of the characteristics which stood out among the less confident students was their commitment and awareness of their abilities. Even though during the interviews they expressed not feeling comfortable communicating in English, none of them spoke just about trying to avoid uncomfortable situations and disliking communicative activities. Instead, they were committed to facing their weaknesses and aware of the need to practice.

In comparison with the rest of the investigated factors, classroom activities were considered to be the highest influence for confident students, while being only the fourth most influential for the less confident students. On average, however, classroom activities were still in top three influences for students.

4.4.5 The influence of relationships in the classroom

In the middle of the interviews, the focus turned to the sociological aspect of English communication connected to the language learning classroom – the relationship among learners in the classroom. The participants were asked to give an opinion on the influence relationships among peers may have on learners’ self-confidence in English communication, which aimed to answer *RQ1-3: How do the learners perceive the influence of relationships in a language classroom on self-confidence in English communication?*

The opinions were marked on the VAS and further explained in the following part of the interview.

Individual values on VAS:

Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G	Student H	Student I	Student J
69	99	68	48	80	92	26	85	100	88

Average values on VAS:

Group 1	68,6
Group 2	82,4

The individual values reported on the Visual Analogue Scale ranged from 26 to 100 points on the 100 mm scale. Two out of ten participants saw relationships in the classroom as rather not influential and marked numbers 26 and 48 on the scale. Half of the participants, on the other hand, marked relationships among peers as significantly influential using the last 15 mm of the scale. Four of these participants were members of Group 2.

The significant difference between Group 1 and Group 2 is visible also in the average values of the groups with Group 1's 68,6 points and Group 2's 82,4 points. According to these numbers, less confident students perceive relationships in the classroom as more influential than the confident ones. These differences were attempted to be explained in the interview questions.

Student experience of the impact of relationships among peers on students' confidence

In the interview questions, the participants explained their opinions on the influence of relationships in the classroom and introduced their experiences in this area. These were sorted into five categories.

Categories	Students' responses
Trust and familiarity with the group	reluctance to talk in front of people I don't know well, group where we know each other, people I trust, classmates I don't know very well, feeling weird talking to someone I don't normally talk to, comfort zone, group with friends, support and help, groups I talk to more
Atmosphere	looseness and openness, good atmosphere, easy-going classroom, bad group atmosphere
Fear of being judged by others	fear of laughter, fear of comments, fear of mocking, fear of teasing
Choice of activities	awkward silence in pairs, commenting on personal matters when asked by the teacher, mixing pairs and groups

Differences

groups according to performance, comparison, differences between the classmates

Trust and familiarity with the group

By far the largest and most mentioned category were issues of trust in the learning group. Seven learners (three from Group 1 and four from Group 2) reported familiarity with the group and trusting the classmates to be influential in being confident in English communication. It seemed that feeling familiar and comfortable in a classroom is important for both confident and less confident students.

“... we were used to talking in pairs, that's great, and then when I have to talk to someone else, it's like "what do should I say to them", and it's an awkward silence ... -- After a while we got to know each other, and I feel comfortable in the group now.” (Student A¹)

“...there's a difference between being in a group where we know each other and it's cool and we like each other, or when the relationships and atmosphere in the group are bad – then you don't even feel like expressing yourself ... If I come to a group that I don't like, I don't feel like expressing myself...” (Student B²)

Atmosphere

A connection between feeling a positive or negative atmosphere and feeling confident to speak up was mentioned by three participants, two from Group 1 and one from Group 2. In this case, the students reported a general feeling, a certain mood in the whole class or group, which influenced their feelings of confidence.

“I think the atmosphere in the group is important for the student to feel relaxed and open to talk...” (Student E¹)

“When there is no good atmosphere, no sense of ease in the classroom, one is afraid to speak up...” (Student I¹)

Fear of being judged by others

This category was created from expressions of fear or concerns. In these cases, participants explicitly mentioned concerns and/or being afraid of some consequences related to them speaking up. It was mentioned by three participants, all of them belonging to Group 2.

“I was really scared to talk – I knew the guys would laugh if I said the wrong thing or the girls would make fun of me... so I was really scared to talk.” (Student J²)

“Someone who mocks us will absolutely ruin any effort to express oneself ...” (Student F²)

Choice of activities

Some of the students, when talking about the influence of relationships in the class on their confidence, expressed a connection to learning activities. The relationships, according to three participants, may be influenced especially by choosing pairs, groups or topics to be discussed.

“When we play different games, I am usually with my best friend from kindergarten, but when the teacher wants us to mingle, I have trouble expressing myself and feel nervous.” (Student H²)

Differences

This category, mentioned in the reactions of two students, both confident English communicators, revealed that the students perceive each other's differences as influential in classroom relationships and their connection to self-confidence. Student A¹ was one of the students who experienced a change in the language groups, which according to her expressions influenced the relationships in the classroom.

“We were in different groups when we came to grammar school and after some time we split up because you could really see that we were half and half, half of the people really had no problems, half of them couldn't even do the basics... the only good thing was that I found someone who spoke better and we could talk more, but in the weaker group they didn't want to talk at all...” (Student A¹)

Findings and comments

According to the values reported on VAS, there was a significant difference in perceiving this factor as influential between the two groups of students. For the less confident students in Group 2, this aspect was quite important, while for Group 1, relationships in the group were not as important for their confidence in English communication. Looking at the categories, familiarity with the group and trust was the most important aspect for most of the students.

While explaining their opinions, the participants reported two things which stood out if we should compare the answers of Group 1 and Group 2. Firstly, the less confident group reported a certain level of fear included when they are faced with a communicative situation in English,

while for the confident students there was no fear or anxiety involved. Secondly, Group 1 talked more about the general mood in the classroom and a need for a positive atmosphere, while for Group 2 the opinions were apparently based on a particular experience and their feelings seemed stronger.

When comparing the investigated factors, relationships in the classroom were considered the most influential by the group of less confident students, while being the second least influential factor for the confident ones. Since the opinions about importance of this factor were so strong in Group 2, relationships in the classroom belong even on average among the most influential factors. Also, the difference between the two groups itself shows that this factor can make a significant difference.

4.4.6 The influence of comparison

The second sociological aspect investigated in the interviews, connected with relationships in a classroom, was the influence of comparison on learners’ English communication confidence. The participants were asked about the extent to which they think comparison between students influences their self-confidence in English communication, attempting to answer *RQ1-4: How do the learners perceive the influence of comparison in a language classroom on self-confidence in English communication?* In the following part of the interview, they explained their opinions in more detail and introduced their experience including comparison in English classes.

Individual values on VAS:

Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G	Student H	Student I	Student J
99	100	73	73	59	100	1	50	50	70

Average values on VAS:

Group 1	56,4
Group 2	78,6

The individual values reported on the VAS ranged across the whole scale, starting with 1 and ending with 100 points of the 100 mm scale. For two pairs of students who studied English in the same groups – Student A¹ and B² and Students C¹ and D², the values were almost the same, with only one point difference between Student A¹ and Student B². However, for the rest of the students, the difference between the confident and unconfident student was bigger, with Group 2 students reporting over 20 points more.

The difference is noticeable in the average values reported on VAS as well. Between the two groups, the gap equals 22.2 points, by which Group 2 identified comparison as more influential.

The values being on average significantly higher for Group 2 may indicate that comparison is an influential aspect of self-confidence in English communication. However, to fully understand the differences and ways that comparison really influences the learners, the following interview questions attempted to explain the participants' opinions, asking about their experience in this area.

Student experiences of the influence of comparison

In this part of the interview, the participants explained the ways they feel comparison can influence self-confidence in communicating in English. Their responses were sorted into five categories.

Categories	Students' responses
Performance differences	comparing the incomparable, difficult communication with someone who can't/won't communicate
Motivation and development	striving to improve, pushing myself further, motivation, I would also like to be able to do better, to be among the better students
Frustration	unattainability of better results, unachievable A's, depression that I am not that good, great effort compared to automatically good grades, compared to others I put a lot into it
Fear of judgement	fear of ridicule, laughter at the answer

Labelling

being labelled better or worse, interference with inner feelings, frequent praise of good students

Performance differences

Four of the participants expressed differences in performance in the classroom as an important aspect of comparison. These differences were usually observed by the students themselves, supported by the teacher or taken from school grades. Student C¹ explained the way she had benefited from comparing themselves to other students, while Student E¹ talked about other classmates, whose performance is worse and who are compared to significantly better students which influences her confidence in English communication.

“Sometimes I compare myself, but I know I'm better at English, and usually the teacher focuses on those who aren't so good at it.” (Student C¹)

“Some classmates, for example, never achieve an A because the teacher compares them to those who are further ahead in English, but it's unfair because compared to them it should be an A.” (Student E¹)

Motivation and development

The second category based on the reactions of the participants was based on a positive perception of comparison, helping them to develop further in English. Three participants, all of them feeling not confident about communicating in English, reported comparison as a mostly positive impulse which motivates them to move forward.

“...for me it's very important, if I have someone next to me who really can (communicate in English), I'll tell myself that I want to be as good as them – I think it's nice to have someone like that next to you. My sister is a linguist – she teaches Czech and English and she's very good – for me it's such a motivation, when I see that she can do it, I want to do it too ... I think it's cool and it pushes me forward.” (Student B²)

“...when I see someone doing better, I tell myself that they can correct me, help me, and I tell myself that I want to do better too” (Student D²)

Frustration

The other side of comparison, a strongly negative influence on learners' confidence due to feeling frustrated was mentioned by two participants. A vivid explanation was given by Student J², a low-confidence student, who expressed feelings of frustration and depression. These feelings, according to the participant, arose from comparing oneself with other classmates who did not put as much effort into performing well and improving as she did, while still receiving better grades.

"...it makes me feel depressed that I'm not as good, even though I put a lot into it, it's not as good as a classmate who perhaps learns, but only in the class. I mean – even if I invest in tutoring, studying for classes, doing homework, it's still not that good ... when I see that a classmate who doesn't study at all gets an A and I, who studies for three hours, get a C or a B, it's depressing." (Student J²)

Fear of judgement

Topic, that was discussed more thoroughly in the area of relationships, also permeated into this section. Fear of being judged in some way was mentioned by two students, both of them talking generally about the influence that comparison may have. This time, however, fears were not discussed extensively by the participants.

"In general, I feel that some people compare themselves a lot and are afraid to speak in front of others that they will be thrown off." (Student G¹)

Labelling

Labelling is one of the techniques of expressing comparison and was in some form mentioned by two participants. Student F² talked about significant influence that putting a label on someone may cause in a lesson. She saw this aspect as highly influential, and it was apparent that being labelled had caused the student to feel anxious about communicating in English.

"Comparison always tilts self-confidence in some extreme way - the moment we are labelled worse than someone, it goes extremely down, when we are labelled as better, it goes extremely up - I think there is nothing in between - it always hits our inner feeling." (Student F²)

Findings and comments

Even though comparison is usually a social phenomenon among members of a group, in this case a class or a language group, the participants mentioned a certain role of the teacher, who may support comparison among learners. This may be explicit, by labelling students as good or

bad, but also implicit in cases where the teacher just praises differently. This was explained in the response of Student F².

“...we know that someone speaks well because they are dedicated to it and are good at it and feel confident, so it's not good to constantly praise those people above everyone else – praise is fine, but only to a certain extent, not 6 times in a lesson "I love your accent, you have great English" and when someone else starts speaking, just "great" – it's not a direct comparison, but we know it's actually a way of comparing.”(Student F²)

According to both the VAS and the responses of the participants, comparison in the classroom had a lower impact on Group 1, i.e. those whose confidence is higher. This was explained in the response of Student I¹.

“For me it doesn't have such a big influence, I would say I've kind of overcome it, I can feel the influence, but it's not so big on me anymore.

... I've gained confidence – once you have it, it's a different story – it's not so much pressure anymore – I've gotten used to the fact that it's okay to make mistakes.” (Student I¹)

Looking at the responses of Group 2, the less confident students, it was not a rule that comparison would be a negative thing, as may be expected. On the contrary, three out of five participants from Group 2 reported feeling motivated when facing comparison.

When compared to other investigated factors, comparison was perceived as the least influential by Group 1 students, while being considered the second most influential factor by Group 2. The big difference in the way this factor is perceived may indicate that comparison does significantly interfere with learners' confidence.

4.4.7 The influence of teacher's reactions to mistakes

Moving away from the influence of relationships and sociological aspects in a language class, the following part of the interviews investigated to what extent may reactions to mistakes in English communication influence learners' confidence. After the participants shared their beliefs using VAS, the interview focused on their experience in this area and justifying the stated opinions. This part of the interview aims to answer RQ1-5 – *How do the learners perceive the influence of handling errors on self-confidence in English communication?*

Individual values on VAS:

Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G	Student H	Student I	Student J
99	51	85	37	100	90	0	63	83	72

Average values on VAS:

Group 1	73,4
Group 2	62,6

The individual values reported on the VAS ranged across the whole scale of 100 mm, from 0 points to 100. There were significant differences among the opinions of the participants, even among members of one group. The largest deviation from the average and from most of the other values was found in Group 1, where four out of five participants marked reactions to mistakes as highly influential – 83 points and higher – and one participant did not perceive reactions to mistakes important at all, marking a value of 0 points on the scale. In spite of that, the average value of Group 1 remained higher by 10,8 points.

In four cases out of five, the value reported by the confident student was higher than the one of a low-confidence student. This may indicate that confident students are more sensitive towards reactions to mistakes.

Students' experiences of the impact of handling errors on students' self-confidence

Upon marking their opinions on visual scales, the participants were encouraged to explain their beliefs and support these by some particular experiences. Their responses were sorted into six categories.

Categories	Students' responses
Constructive approach	repetition and practice of the correct, detailed explanations, constructive responses as enrichment, putting into context, detailed calm explanations

Generalisations and exaggerations	generalizing everything we can't do, stupid mistakes as a big problem, emphasizing mistakes over content
Negative emotional reactions	the teacher storms out, swearing, silence, quick and abrupt reactions, lack of interest in the lesson
Timing of the corrections	jumping in, immediate correction, corrections after finishing, letting us talk and telling us the mistakes at the end
Support and encouragement	trying to be supportive, not feeling bad, encouraging, not blaming
Blaming from the teacher's side	humiliation, "remember this once and for all", feeling that the fault lies with us, I'm not good at English

Constructive approach

Approaching mistakes with the purpose of learning from them and moving forward was an important topic for five participants, three from Group 1 and two from Group 2. All of them appreciated and explained constructivism as the good way of correcting mistakes, supporting deeper understanding of the language.

“When a teacher responds to mistakes in a constructive and positive way, I think it's rewarding, and people listen more when they hear the explanation. I like the fact that our teacher stops at errors and explains the individual error in such detail that they basically review the whole learning matter – when someone makes a mistake in tenses, they draw a line and explain it with multiple tenses, and I think that's how it should be.” (Student E¹)

“The important thing is to explain it calmly, how the mistake happened and why, and why it shouldn't be done, how it would be right – then the whole understanding happens smoothly.” (Student F²)

Negative emotional reactions

During the interviews, it was apparent that negative emotional reactions, such as swearing, or humiliations deeply affect students' psyche. Some form of negative emotional reactions was

mentioned by three students. One of these situations was accurately recalled by Student A¹. Even though the shared experience did not come from English lessons, it was such a strong feeling that it came to her mind when mentioning reactions to mistakes. The student wanted to introduce this memory, as she knew she would feel the same if this happened in a language class. Apparently for those students, who experienced some negative emotional reaction, it left a very strong memory and a clear idea on what they find wrong about certain reactions to mistakes.

“When the teacher - and I've been humiliated a number of times – that the teacher takes a notebook and stands in front of the class and starts scolding how stupid I am, and I automatically get a block and I don't care about the material anymore, and for the rest of the class I just sit and watch ... Or when a teacher storms out when someone is interrupting, it silences that person for a week.” (Student A¹)

Blaming from the teacher's side

Connected to the negative emotional reactions is the category of blaming. This was explicitly expressed by two students, one of which experienced this during English lessons. It was apparent that this was one of the main reasons for them to feel anxious about communicating in English.

“Sometimes it happens to us in conversation - when someone who is not very talented makes a mistake, the teacher repeats it and tells us that the mistake is in us, that we are not good at English and that they have repeated it several times and we should concentrate more on it.” (Student F²)

Generalisations and exaggerations

Experiencing generalisations and exaggerating in connection to making mistakes in English seem to leave a strong mark on students' self-confidence. Some form of exaggerating mistakes or presenting them as bigger than they actually are, was mentioned in the responses of two participants from Group 1.

“If someone talks for a long time and the teacher just points out mistakes, it can make one feel that it is all just mistakes ... Not just saying "you used the wrong tenses", but explain what and why.” (Student E¹)

Timing of the corrections

The timing of corrections appeared in the responses of two students, who studied English in the same group. It was apparent that this was an important issue to both confident and low-confidence students. For both participants, it was the immediate correction after a mistake has been made, that they found uncomfortable. While Student J² talked about her fear and hesitation to speak as results of such corrections, Student I¹ provided an example of a suitable solution, which he found helpful.

“... (The teacher) when I speak, they jump right in and correct me... It's demotivating, I tell myself I'd better not speak so I don't say the wrong thing.” (Student J²)

“It's about letting the person finish and then maybe discussing the sentence ... the last time I tried a graduation topic, the teacher took notes like that, and we talked about it after I finished, which I think is a good approach.” (Student I¹)

Support and encouragement

On the positive side of dealing with mistakes, two students expressed the importance of feeling supported and encouraged. Student C¹ described a positive experience in English lessons, where she feels supported and comfortable with making mistakes.

“In English you can say absolute nonsense, but ... they always try to support us and find the problem, they never blame us for not knowing something or being stupid, but they try to help us and support us.” (Student C¹)

Findings and comments

Even though mistakes usually have a negative connotation, most of the students, even members of Group 2, expressed a positive attitude towards them. Several students even explicitly said that correcting mistakes is an important way of learning the language.

According to both the values in VAS and responses in the interview, self-confident learners perceived mistake corrections as more influential. There was only one exception among the members of Group 1 – Student G, who expressed feeling no influence of mistake correction. Further, he explained that he had never experienced a negative way of dealing with mistakes.

“I don't mind, I'm glad the teacher corrects me, and it doesn't break my confidence in English.” (Student G¹)

As for the members of Group 2, three of them expressed a very calm approach toward mistakes, knowing that they are inevitable and the corrections were not seen as threatening or uncomfortable, but rather as helpful and important.

“I’m glad when someone points out a mistake so I can move forward. It might throw some people off, but that’s not how I feel.” (Student H²)

It was common for the participants to mention words like individuality or sensitivity, as they talked about other students who may perceive some ways of correcting differently. On the other hand, awareness of harmful ways of correcting errors was conditioned by some negative experience. Those who had never experienced significantly uncomfortable correction, tended to not see the influence at all.

Comparing the standings of this factor with other investigated ones, handling errors was the third most influential factor for Group 1, the confident students, but the least influential factor for Group 2. On average, handling errors was perceived as one of the less important factors, depending however on the personality of the student.

4.4.8 The influence of assessment

The last part of interviews which included a Visual Analogue Scale focused on the influence of assessment on learners’ confidence in English communication, aiming to answer *RQ1-6: How do the learners perceive the role of assessment in self-confidence in English communication?*

The participants talked about their opinions and experience with the influence of marks and other assessment tools. Firstly, their beliefs were marked on a VAS, and then explained as the participants shared their experiences.

Individual values on VAS:

Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G	Student H	Student I	Student J
70	100	61	73	93	51	62	54	62	72

Average values on VAS:

Group 1	69,6
Group 2	70

The individual values obtained from VAS ranged from 51 to 100 points, all in the second half of the scale. Both the absolute highest and lowest value was marked by low-confidence students and the rest of the values are evenly distributed between 50 and 100 mm on the scale. Looking at the values, there were no extreme opposites or differences in the opinions of the participants. Only two students perceived assessment as highly influential, marking their opinion in the last 15 mm of the scale. Even though the rest of the participants acknowledged a certain role of assessment for confidence, they did not see it as the most important aspect of English communication confidence.

The average values of the two groups on the scale are very close. Differing by only 0.4 mm, Group 1 and Group 2 seemed to share a similar view on the role of assessment in confident English communication. This shows the smallest difference between the opinions of the confident and less confident students noted during the interviews.

The impact of assessment methods on students' self-confidence

The responses and explanations of the students' attitudes towards the role of assessment in confidence were sorted into five categories. In this case, some of the categories overlap, as sometimes there are more meanings and experiences involved. The students talked about the impact of bad marks, their general views of assessment and how it made them feel.

Categories	Students' responses
Perceived importance	good grades as a necessity, own feeling more important than the grade, dependence on interest in the subject, declining importance of grades, grades have never been a problem and therefore don't matter so much, justification of results, justification of poor grades

Subjectivity of assessment	grading according to the teacher, (non-) recognition of mistakes, grade depends on the teacher, strictness, dependence on the situation
Frustration from failure	long effort and constant failure, lower effort when placed among weaker pupils, frustration from repeated unsatisfactory results
Unequal conditions	incomparability of groups, unfairness of results, fairness of evaluation
Feeling categorized according to marks	accepting lower grades, accepting normally varied grades, trying to keep good grades

Perceived importance

The most mentioned aspect of the influence of assessment on students' confidence in English communication is its perceived importance. This means that the learners have different ideas about how important marks and grading are, which directly affects their reactions to, for example, a bad mark. In the end, this is crucial for the extent to which assessment influences their confidence.

For Student B² the marks are important for her future applications, and for that reason she tends to work hard on achieving good grades. On the other hand, she is aware of her abilities and strengths, which makes her believe she can achieve the best grade in the end.

"It affects me a lot, I really go for the good grades... but with languages, I know it's not a problem for me to get an A, so it is not a big deal, that I would be going, "Oh my God, I can't get a B now." (Student B²)

The perceived abilities over grades were prioritized by Student I¹ and Student F² as well.

"For me, grades in English have never been a problem, so they never had a big impact on my self-confidence at all, I felt it more from being able to hold a conversation with someone, understand or translate something." (Student I¹)

"I don't look at grades much, more at my feeling about what I know and don't know, grades probably don't affect me much." (Student F²)

A low importance of grades was simply expressed by Student G who perceived assessment in school as secondary to the achievements outside of school, in particular passing the FCE exam.

“I figured if I do the FCE, I don't care about any grades.” (Student G¹)

Subjectivity of assessment

Another important aspect of assessment, often considered by the students, is its subjectivity. Five out of ten participants, both confident and less confident students, explained being aware of subjectivity of the assessment. Four students mentioned subjectivity in connection with the teacher, one thought about dependence on a situation. Student C¹ introduced several scenarios because of which the grading becomes less influential to her.

“I realize that grades are on the teacher's side – subjective – I felt like I knew the subject matter but got a bad grade because the test didn't cover what I expected, or the test was made up of things we didn't know about, or I know I would just need some more time to study.” (Student C¹)

Frustration from failure

Frustration and negative feelings in connection to assessment were mentioned by two students, including Student J². In this case, it was apparent that the matter of marks and grading in general was seen as a frustrating issue. Student J² wished to improve and see the results also in the assessment. However, she felt constantly confronted with others' achievements, which seemed undeserved to her. This opinion was reflected in her classmate's response as well.

“We have good classmates who are usually called out and always get A's and then there's me who says 5,6 things wrong in my opinion and I get B's/ C's ... In school it has a big effect on me, when I see that I got a C again and I studied really long, it always makes me sad.” (Student J²)

Unequal conditions

One of the aspects of assessment, mentioned three times in the interviews, was a sense of fairness. Two participants explained that when making an opinion about a mark or a certain result, they typically look at whether or not they perceive the assessment to be fair. Student A¹ described a situation occurring in her classes because of the performance-based division of students.

“We have the same assessments in those groups and different tests, a couple of kids in my group have a 2 in English and then in the weaker group they have a 2 in English and it's not comparable and some people are bothered by it, even the ones who have a 1 and feel like they should have I don't know, probably a zero.” (Student A¹)

From the expressions of Student A¹, it was apparent that she was not bothered by this comparison, but rather annoyed that this matters to certain students.

Feeling categorized according to marks

Three participants explained a certain connection between their approach towards assessment and being categorized. The categorization usually develops over time as the learners get used to a certain type of marks. For someone, who is used to getting good marks, a failure may bring negative feelings and lower the learner's confidence. Student E¹ explains her view of how the opinion and importance of marks can change with a certain category, that one believes to be in.

“In our class, people who get worse marks in English don't feel like studying English in their free time, and they think they'll focus on something else, that they'll get a C anyway... a mark says something, not everyone can get an A, but those who have worse marks usually stop trying, those who have better marks usually try to keep them.

... Actually, I've never gotten a bad mark, but if I did, I'd feel bad because I'm not used to it, it would probably lower my confidence - if I were used to more varied marks, I'd probably just shrug it off.” (Student E¹)

Findings and comments

Some of the students thought about this problem generally and considered also external influences on confidence in communicating in English. Among others, they suggested that there may be various reasons for a heightened influence of assessment on an individual. One of the mentioned reasons was strictness and expectations of parents or a need for a good grade average for future studies.

“I would say that for people who have stricter parents who keep an eye on it, the effect may be greater.” (Student I¹)

Most of the participants naturally considered marks and written assessments as the main concern of this interview. However, oral evaluation, if it was mentioned, was perceived as more

influential than a simple mark from a test. In this case also the amount of time and information included in the assessment was important to the participants.

“Verbal assessment definitely affects self-confidence – when a student is praised or something. ... The moment someone gets a thousand praises in front of us and we are brushed off by that person, it leaves us thinking I probably didn't do that well – it should be more balanced - better to take that time and explain maybe the mistakes – not just say in general terms that there were a few mistakes and watch out for the -s at the end and the -ing.” (Student F)

Most of the conversations revolved around bad grades and their consequences. Surprisingly most of the participants, from both Group 1 and Group 2, saw negative marks as motivation to move forward. Unless the marks were too frequent, and the situation became frustrating, also less confident students felt motivated and wanted to do better.

When compared to other investigated factors, the influence of assessment was perceived as rather low – both in the average of all students and students in groups. There was almost no difference between the way confident and unconfident students perceived assessment, therefore it can be assumed that this factor does not affect learner’s confidence in communicating in English in any significant way.

4.4.9 Motivation to improve English communication

One of the additional interview topics which was investigated was the participants’ motivation to improve in English communication. It was assumed by the author that this may show another angle of students approach towards communicating in English and its connection to self-confidence – whether being motivated can influence learner’s confidence. The participants were asked whether they feel motivated to improve their English communication skills and encouraged to explain what it is that motivates them. The results answer research question 1-7 – *What is the relationship between learners' self-confidence in English communication and their motivation?*

The responses were sorted into six categories.

Categories	Students’ responses
Travelling	trips abroad, travel
Job opportunities	labour market advantages, job opportunities
Studies	resources in English, language studies, university studies

Use in international context	worldwide use, communicating with anyone I meet, worldwide communication, English all around us, globally crucial
Certification	certificate (CAE), FCE exam
Personal growth	feeling better when communicating, foundation for the rest of life, speaking fluently, communicating without problems, applying in life, language as a broadening of horizons, networking

As the responses were mostly very similar, including usually more sources of motivation and reasons for improving in English communication, the categories will therefore not be discussed separately. There were no negative responses and all students reported being highly motivated to improve their communication skills.

Eight participants, according to their responses, perceived English as the key foreign language and were aware of its global importance. Most of them mentioned the need to communicate well during travelling anywhere abroad, or a necessity for further studies and for participation in the labour market. Another solely practical reason to improve was passing either the FCE or CAE. Some participants looked at English communication skills as something that can help them grow personally. Some of the goals were to simply feel good when communicating abroad, creating connections and broadening horizons in life.

“I really do care about it because it's amazing to be able to communicate with people and I feel like the language broadens my horizons in Czech or in any other sense of my life. If I can communicate in a foreign language, I can talk to people everywhere, especially with English.”
(Student E¹)

“I would definitely like to be fluent, I think the language is important, we encounter it everywhere, even for work opportunities – I think there is also some magic in the fact that in another language the personality changes, it seems to me that I am different in English than in Czech when I express myself and the more I understand it, the grammar and vocabulary, the better I will be able to express myself.” (Student B²)

There were no significant differences in the responses of Group 1 and Group 2, which indicates no direct link between learners' confidence in communicating and their motivation. The

participants of both groups expressed being motivated and explained similar reasons for that, usually connected to their individual goals and values.

4.4.10 Promoting confidence in English communication

As a complementing and wrapping topic of the whole interview, the author decided to ask the participants about their ideas on how to promote confidence in communicating in English. The students were encouraged to understand this as an opportunity to give teachers and educators advice on what could be changed – what they would personally appreciate on their way to feeling confident when communicating in English. It was also an opportunity to uncover further thoughts and ideas that the participants may have had about the topic.

The students' ideas were sorted into six categories according to their similarities.

Categories	Students' responses
Focus on conversation and speaking	only communicating in English, speaking activities, more speaking, fixed inclusion of communication activities in lessons, training and getting used to communication, more frequent calling out
Practical topics and materials	practical examples, authentic materials, avoidance of unnecessary activities, concrete communication tasks, work on comprehension and accent, usability of vocabulary, interesting materials outside the textbook, more general approach
Interactive teaching and activities	changes in groups and pairs, creative tasks, use of games, variety in communication activities
Support and positive feedback	praise, encouraging extra-curricular activities, individual approach to language level, support in expressing oneself
Prejudices and judgements	non-judgmental teaching, no prejudice and expectations, uniform approach to students
Constructive approach	mistakes as a means of learning, constructive approach

Focus on conversation and speaking

Seven out of ten participants upon being asked about ways to promote their confidence in communicating, wished to have more conversation practise included in their English lessons. For each student this meant something slightly different. Student A¹ expressed their gratitude for being constantly exposed to English and forced to speak it with their teacher, who only communicates with the class in English. Other students, like Student H² talked about the importance of targeted conversation practice regularly included in lessons. A clear and simple opinion with an example was given by Student G¹.

“We gain self-confidence by talking, I can't just read about push-ups, I have to do them. Include more speaking activities... but I understand it's hard and we have to go over some grammar.”
(Student G¹)

Practical topics and materials

Five students expressed the need for practical topics and/or materials in their English lessons. Regardless of them being confident or unconfident, the participants pointed to the impracticality of the topics and thus also the activities in the lessons, usually in connection with textbooks. Student C¹ stated that she would appreciate practical examples of usage of various grammatical constructions in daily communication. Student G¹ explained the issue of thematic focus for longer periods.

“I think that there are a lot of speaking activities on a particular topic that we are discussing, but in real life you must know the general, broader view. Not to have an activity always focused on that one topic.” (Student G¹)

Interactive teaching and activities

For four participants one of the most crucial aspects of a confidence-building environment was feeling engaged and active in the lesson. Three of these participants belonged to Group 2, which may indicate that less confident students often feel left out and therefore appreciate activities that fully engage all students. This was explained in the reaction of Student F², who enjoyed the active participation and privacy of one-on-one conversations.

“Distributing the communication tasks amongst classmates and not just having a task as a group... maybe working in pairs for 5 minutes with some topics that could be discussed. For

example, (we were) once in an auditorium where everyone had their own space and was away from everyone else, no one else could listen, and then we would switch and talk with someone else ... and develop ideas further - it wasn't just sitting in a desk in a group of 3-4 people and talking about a topic for 10 minutes.” (Student F²)

Support and positive feedback

Teacher’s support and positive feedback was mentioned by four participants, three confident and one unconfident student. In their pieces of advice for English lessons, they talked about the help and positivity needed from their English teacher, in order to feel confident in communicating. Among the thoughts expressed, Student A¹ mentioned praising as a helpful tool to build self-confidence. Student E¹ suggested that students should be supported and led to extracurricular activities, which can enhance both their knowledge in English and consequently their confidence. Another view was given by Student C¹, who saw the teacher as a support while trying to communicate.

“...correcting but letting us talk and express ourselves and (as a teacher) supplying the vocabulary to help us to be able to express ourselves.” (Student C¹)

Prejudices and judgements

Two participants talked about prejudices and judgements, as these may influence their and others’ confidence. Both participants belonged to Group 1, the confident English communicators. While Student C¹ only mentioned the importance of not judging students as they try to communicate, Student A¹ talked extensively about her experience with judgements in a class, including a specific example.

“Treating everyone the same - the teacher may already come and speak to specific students because they know they will know the answer...”

And not having prejudices – if I get a B and the teacher says "you're a dummy" and tells me I did something wrong – but I didn't do anything wrong ... So looking at everyone the same way - got a C, got a C – don't say anything to them – they know and will deal with it themselves. Certainly praise, yeah, but don't emphasize it, treat the students the same – whether they got a C or a B.” (Student A¹)

Constructive approach

The importance of teaching in a constructive way was mentioned by two participants, both Group 1 members. In this case, both students had a clear idea about the damage that perceiving mistakes as bad may do. The students highlighted that in their opinion seeing language learning as a process of construction with mistakes being the founding stones could change the students' approach to communicating in a foreign language and as a result significantly improve their communication confidence.

“Not looking too much at the mistakes, letting the students talk to each other, giving various presentations and making them realise that mistakes aren't bad, that mistakes are just a progression to get better and I don't see this so often in school and it's definitely something that English lacks so that students aren't afraid to speak up and that's when the confidence increases – mistakes aren't the problem, the problem is that we're afraid to speak up.” (Student I¹)

Findings and comments

The ideas for lesson improvements in the classroom were usually similar at the core. Members of both Group 1 and 2 considered practice, applicable topics and enough time for communication in the lessons as crucial. The less confident students were just as determined to practice as their confident peers and were willing to overcome their fears and nervousness.

A slight difference between the groups could be observed in the rest of advice that the participants gave. While confident students focused more on the role of the teacher and their behaviour towards students, Group 2 students emphasized active involvement in the lessons. The less confident students talked about feeling in a disadvantage during group work and feeling uncomfortable when speaking in front of the class. According to their explanations, activities which involved more space for them to speak privately allowed them to practice more efficiently and were also found more enjoyable.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 Significant results

One by one, the findings concerning different investigated factors were presented and the sub-research-questions answered. To provide a clear overview of which results may be significant and to answer the main research question – *How does learners' learning experience in the classroom influence the learners' English communication self-confidence?* – the author decided to summarize the most relevant findings.

- The most influential factors for the confident learners were classroom activities, teacher's approach, and handling errors.
- The most influential factors for the unconfident learners were relationship in the classroom, comparison and teacher's approach.
- The biggest differences were found between the way the confident and unconfident learners perceived the influence of relationships in the classroom and comparison between learners.
- The confident learners believed that the main sources of their communicative competence included activities outside of educational institutions.
- Teacher's role was seen as more influential by female participants and those learners who had a previous significantly positive or negative experience with a teacher's approach.
- An experience of a negative reaction upon making an error increases the students' sensitivity towards error corrections.
- Real-life related practice of communication in the lessons was seen as one of the priorities and wishes by both confident and unconfident students.
- In the case of grammar school students, their motivation to get better in communicating in English was high, regardless of their level of confidence.
- There was no apparent connection between learners' confidence in communicating and their perceived importance of assessment.

Firstly, the results obtained from Visual Analogue Scales of the two student groups can be compared. These should reflect the relevance of each of the factors for students and whether do the chosen factors make a difference in learners' confidence.

	TEACHER'S ROLE	ACTIVITIES	RELATIONSHIPS	COMPARISON	HANDLING ERRORS	ASSESSMENT
Group 1	74,4	76	68,6	56,4	73,4	69,6
Group 2	76,4	70,4	82,4	78,6	62,6	70

Group 1 students assessed classroom activities, teacher's role, and handling errors as the most influential. For Group 2 students, the ranking of the factors included relationships in the classroom, comparison, and teacher's role in the first three places.

The biggest differences in the records of the participants were found in the way confident and unconfident students perceived the influence of relationships and comparison in the classroom. This may suggest that even though teacher's role is perceived as important in building confidence, it is the classroom atmosphere, relationships and comparison that make some students feel unconfident.

There was a clear distinction between the groups in what sources they drew on to gain their communication competence. While the unconfident participants described lessons in school as the main source, in the opinions of their confident colleagues school was usually not more than a source of a certain base of knowledge. Group 1 unanimously agreed on the benefits that encountering English outside of institutional education and surrounding oneself with the language have. Group 2, on the contrary, relied mostly on school English lessons and tutoring lessons. This was one of the most significant differences between the confident and unconfident learners – their experience outside of institutional education and the approach to the role it has. Based on the data it seems that actively seeking opportunities to practice leads to a higher level of confidence, as with practice, the students gain experience, and their confidence does not rely solely on school experience.

While investigating the thoughts of the students on teacher's role, it seemed that the perceived importance of this factor depended largely on previous experiences of the participants. Those who had the possibility to compare very different approaches and/or had gone through a significantly negative experience, reported the influence of teacher's approach on their confidence as substantial. Even though the aspect of gender was technically omitted in the study to ensure anonymity, there was a considerable difference in the way that male and female students assessed teacher's role. It was apparent that female participants tend to talk more about teachers' personalities, expressions, and emotions, while male participants focused on the overall approach to teaching and its practical implementations.

Regarding comparison and relationships in the classroom, the interviews confirmed the differences between the two groups, which were obtained from VAS, and mentioned at the beginning of this subchapter. Group 2, the less confident students, perceived relationships in the classroom and comparison as more influential than Group 1 participants did. This suggests

that the higher the confidence of the students is, the lower impact these social aspects of learning have. One of the interesting findings is that comparison was, even amongst some unconfident learners, also perceived positively, as some form of motivation. It seemed that as long as comparison is not forced upon the unconfident learners, they may benefit from being around good and confident English speakers. This can, however, be highly individual, depending on the student's personality and their background.

Based on the study, another way that confidence in communicating in English can be harmed, is an insensitive way of handling errors. A negative experience in the way an error had been treated can trigger sensitivity towards handling errors in general and may as a result influence learner's confidence. This influence is enhanced when negative emotions on the side of the teacher or peers are involved. Unless the student had experienced a significantly negative attitude towards mistakes, error corrections as such were seen as important and helpful. The way that errors are handled seemed more influential for the confident group of students. This may suggest that the higher the confidence, the bigger the sensitivity towards handling errors. Generally, to contribute to building a healthy confidence, mistakes should be perceived as natural means of a learning process.

One of the main issues of gaining confidence in communicating in English appear to be scarce practice. In several interviews, a need for a certain balance between acquiring theoretical knowledge and being able to use that knowledge in communicating was discussed. Even though the participants would highly appreciate more communication practice, they seemed to acknowledge and understand the difficulties of combining theory and practice both sufficiently in the lessons. Practicing communication as a priority was reflected also in the suggestions that the students made for their teachers to help improve self-confidence in communicating in English. Furthermore, the students wished for activities related to real-life situations – for practicing communication that they may easily encounter and use in daily life. These thoughts about practicing were expressed throughout all the interviews, including the ones with unconfident learners, who seemed committed to facing their weaknesses and aware of their need to practice.

However, for less confident learners, not all attempts to practice in the lessons may be successful. While a confident English communicator can use every opportunity to practice, lack of confidence in communication can create a significant barrier in some activities. Among these activities, the participants mentioned speaking in front of the whole class or in groups of more than two, and low guidance and support in these communicative activities. Instead, the

participants suggested to use communicative activities in pairs, including supportive points and switching partners often. To eliminate disadvantages for unconfident students, the activities should always provide support and enough privacy and allow the students to feel engaged and active.

There was no apparent connection found between motivation and confidence in English communication. Regardless of their level of confidence, the participants all reported being motivated towards getting better at communicating in English. This may, however, be caused by the fact that all participants were students at grammar school, which is usually attended by motivated students intending to go to universities. Their willingness to study further and knowing that they will most likely need English in their future even for their professional career played an important role here.

Assessment was not seen as the main influencing factor by either of the groups. The influence of assessment on students' confidence seemed to be quite individual, depending on the values, plans and background of the students. For example, a student who knew their average grades will be considered upon accepting to universities, or a student whose family sees school grades as important would see marks as highly important. What on the other hand appeared to be a shared opinion was that verbal assessment is more influential. The students agreed on the fact that a verbal comment, either spoken or written, can go a long way. When discussing bad marks, most of the students expressed that a bad mark is mostly a motivation for them to improve, unless it becomes frequent and therefore frustrating. This suggests that regarding motivation, students usually benefit from receiving a spectrum of marks. However, they should always be given opportunities to improve and succeed.

4.5.2 Limitations of the study

In this part of the thesis, the author would like to approach the limitations of the study – the things that may have caused distortion and/or need to be considered during interpretation of the findings.

First of the significant limitations of this thesis is the number of participants and consequently the problematics of generalising its findings. Self-confidence in communicating in a foreign language is a broad and complex matter, therefore the author decided to prefer qualitative data over their quantity. For this reason, only ten participants were interviewed. This choice allowed the author to look deeply into the personal experience of the students, but naturally prevents the findings from being generalised.

Another obstacle in being able to generalise the findings for the whole given age-group of students is that all participants were students of one grammar school. The sheer type of school that the students attended is in some ways specific and so this needs to be considered when interpreting the data. As was presented earlier, grammar schools in the Czech Republic serve mostly as a preparation for future university students, therefore their approach towards foreign languages and their confidence in speaking English may differ from other schools' students. The students' high motivation and willingness to overcome their insecurities and fears in English communication was proven also during the study.

As for the course of the interviews, there were several matters which require attention. Even though the basic questions and instructions were clearly stated in all interviews, some of the participants answered the questions from a more general perspective than others. These students were aware of the differences between learners, and thus they based their answers on both their own and believed general opinions, while others followed their intuition and did not attempt to reflect other opinions.

Furthermore, in the case of studying communication confidence, extreme sampling may cause some students to find the research tools less fitting and therefore they may share only partial or distorted information. Since the study deals with confidence in communication, Group 2 – the unconfident students – may find themselves at a disadvantage. This was largely dependent on whether the person is naturally shy and has barriers in communication, or their low confidence is only connected to communicating in English. For shy students, who may have difficulties explaining themselves, it may be of help to provide time to prepare their answers or using written answers instead of a face-to-face interview. Also, some students may feel uncomfortable to share thoughts on such a personal topic.

While recording their opinions on Visual Analogue Scales, it was observed by the author that confident and unconfident students also had a different approach to using this tool. While confident students followed their intuition and usually recorded their first thought, no matter where on the scale that was, the unconfident participants tend to hesitate. Confident students may naturally be also more confident in expressing their opinions. On the other hand, less confident students can be hesitant about giving a really high or really low value on the scale. For considerate students, it could be helpful to know all the factors they will be assessing beforehand.

The aim of this thesis was to provide an overview and create a pilot study for those who may be interested in this area. As the topic of confidence in communicating in English is very broad and complex, there are many aspects that may, and are encouraged to, be investigated to be able to receive a fuller picture.

Conclusion

This diploma thesis focused on the topic of self-confidence in communicating in English and the ways it may be influenced. Firstly, the theoretical background to the topic was presented, including existing findings regarding communication, the self and factors which were associated with it. The aim of the study, which was introduced in the second part of the thesis, was to investigate learners' self-confidence and their perceptions of factors which may influence it. To achieve deeper understanding, the author chose to create a qualitative study and use semi-structured interviews, complemented with Visual Analogue Scales. The data obtained from the interviews were then presented and analysed.

At the beginning, altogether eight research questions were formulated – one main question and seven sub-questions – focusing on the ways learning experience may influence learners' self-confidence in communicating in English. All the research questions were successfully answered, revealing some interesting findings.

From the data obtained during the study it appeared that members of the confident group of learners had a different approach towards the role of educational institutions in their knowledge and abilities in English communication. While the unconfident participants spoke about school being the main source of knowledge, abilities and experience in English, the confident students shared their experiences with using English in various other environments. This suggests that the more experience outside of school, the higher learners' confidence in communicating in English.

The students' motivation to learn how to communicate in English was high regardless of their confidence. One of the main topics discussed extensively during the interviews was their willingness to practice communicating in English more often and the ways it is most helpful to do so. Since for the less confident learners speaking up in front of their classmates can be threatening, the students suggested speaking more privately, preferably in pairs, and switching partners often. This way students may receive more opportunities to practice and gradually build their confidence without being exposed to comparison and judgement. Furthermore, fulfilling communicative tasks in pairs may help build relationships in the classroom, and thus also decrease the negative influence that relationships may have on learners' confidence.

According to the findings, the influence of the teacher does not end with picking the right activities, even though that is what some confident learners highlighted. The general approach, including non-judgemental feedback, support, encouragement, and accepting mistakes as

means of learning were also crucial aspects of enhancing students' confidence in communicating in English.

The research showed that even though self-confidence is undoubtedly an individual aspect of language learning, there are certain guidelines that can be followed in order to support learners in building a positive and confident approach to communicating in English.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview structure

1. Oblasti získání komunikační kompetence v angličtině
 - Kdyby se tě někdo zeptal, kde ses naučil komunikovat anglicky, co bys mu řekl/a?
2. Zdroje subjektivních postojů k vlastnímu sebevědomí
 - Cítíš se v komunikaci v angličtině sebevědomě? Proč si myslíš, že tomu tak je?
3. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem učitele na sebevědomí studentů
 - Do jaké míry podle tebe přístup učitele ovlivňuje sebevědomí v komunikaci v angličtině? Jakým způsobem?
 - Máš s tím nějakou osobní zkušenost?
4. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem druhu aktivit na sebevědomí studentů
 - Do jaké míry podle tebe druh aktivit ve výuce angličtiny ovlivňuje sebevědomí v komunikaci v angličtině? Jakým způsobem?
 - Máš s tím nějakou osobní zkušenost?
5. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem vztahů mezi spolužáky na sebevědomí studentů
 - Do jaké míry podle tebe vztahy mezi spolužáky ovlivňují sebevědomí v komunikaci v angličtině? Jakým způsobem?
 - Máš s tím nějakou osobní zkušenost?
6. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem porovnávání na sebevědomí studentů
 - Do jaké míry podle tebe vzájemné porovnávání se spolužáky ovlivňuje sebevědomí v komunikaci v angličtině? Jakým způsobem?
 - Máš s tím nějakou osobní zkušenost?
7. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem reakcí na chyby na sebevědomí studentů
 - Do jaké míry podle tebe způsobem reakce učitele na chyby ovlivňují sebevědomí v komunikaci v angličtině? Jakým způsobem?
 - Máš s tím nějakou osobní zkušenost?

8. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem způsobu hodnocení učitele na sebevědomí studentů
 - Do jaké míry podle tebe způsob hodnocení ovlivňuje sebevědomí v komunikaci v angličtině? Jakým způsobem?
 - Máš s tím nějakou osobní zkušenost?

9. Zdroje motivace ke zlepšování se v komunikaci v angličtině
 - Záleží ti na tom, aby ses ty sám/sama v komunikování v angličtině zlepšil/a? Proč?

10. Oblasti představ studentů o podpoře sebevědomí v komunikaci v hodinách angličtiny
 - Co by podle tebe v hodinách AJ mohlo být jinak, abys získal při komunikování v angličtině větší sebevědomí?

Appendix B: Open coding and categorization

1. Oblasti získání komunikační kompetence v angličtině

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Vzdělávací instituce	škola, základka, gympl
Receptivní vnímání jazyka	filmy, Netflix, seriály, Youtube, okolí a rodina, televize
Kurzy a doučování	konverzace, vlastní studium, doučování, kurz
Online aktivity	hry, internet

2. Zdroje subjektivních postojů k vlastnímu sebevědomí

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Komunikační bariéry	problémy s vyjadřováním, pocit diskomfortu, pocit přehledu v komunikačních situacích, schopnost „okecat“, schopnost vyjádřit se, stydlivost, celkově tišší, introvert
Strach	strach z chyb, strach z mluvení, strach z výsměchu
Častý kontakt	časté čtení knih, článků a sledování videí, filmy, psaní s kamarády z ciziny, kurzy
Úspěch, pozitivní zkušenost	zvládnutá FCE zkouška, bezproblémové porozumění, zkušenost mimo třídu
Interakce s učitelem	zpětná vazba od učitelů, schopnost komunikovat s učitelem, povídání s učitelem
Nejistota	nejistota v použití časů, občasné výpadky

3. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem učitele na sebevědomí studentů

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Podpora a pomoc	snaha pomoci, povzbuzování, říkala, že to zvládnou; povzbudivé kývání, trpělivé vysvětlování, dobrý vztah
Styl komunikace	úsměv; otázky; zájem; iniciativa, neformální otázky; podněty; zajímavá témata,

	uvolněnost, iniciativa učitele; nevyjádření se k tomu, co student říká
Zpětná vazba, kritika, pochvaly	vypíchnutí toho, co bylo správně; nepochválení, ocenění, zdůrazňování chyb, pohodové přijetí chyb, pouze negativní zpětná vazba, nevysvětlení pěkně
Negativní emoce	naštvanost, opakované výzvy, vynucování, okřikování, strach, strach ze špatné známky, nechut' mluvit po ponížení
Přístup k výuce	procvičování, velké množství gramatiky, zamýšlení hodiny, neucelenost, bez systému, přeskakování, podpora mluvení, podpora komunikace, klidný přístup, prostor pro mluvení
Osobnost učitele	rázný, drsný, „leklá ryba“, komunikativní, energický, pasivní

4. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem druhu aktivit na sebevědomí studentů

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Aktivní zapojení	výměna rolí, aktivní zapojení, interaktivita, povídací cvičení, střídání mezi sebou, rozhovory, vymýšlení otázek
Atmosféra	nuda, uvolněná nálada, zábava, hry, pouze nudná gramatika, vztah k předmětu
Praktičnost aktivit	hloupé aktivity, procvičování, používání AJ, nepraktické aktivity, praktická témata (cestování), zvyknutí si na mluvení, příliš specifické aktivity, aktivity bez koncepce, připravený přednes
Čas pro komunikaci	vymezení celé hodiny na mluvení, málo mluvení, šance mluvit
Využití materiálů	otázky a témata, učení z učebnice, popis obrázků, práce s knihou

Spolupráce	práce ve dvojicích, hledání dvojice, mluvení s více lidmi, spojená hodina, obměňování dvojic
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5. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem vztahů mezi spolužáky na sebevědomí studentů

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Důvěra a známost skupiny	nechuť mluvit před těmi, které dobře neznám, skupina, kde se známe, lidi, kterým věřím, spolužáci, které moc neznám, divný pocit při komunikaci s někým, s kým se normálně nebavím, komfortní zóna, skupina s kamarády, podpora a pomoc, skupinky, se kterými se více bavím
Atmosféra	uvolněnost a otevřenost, dobrá atmosféra, uvolněnost ve třídě, špatný kolektiv
Strach z hodnocení druhými	strach ze smíchu, strach z poznámek, posmívání, strach z pošklebování
Výběr aktivit	trapné ticho ve dvojicích, vyjadřování se k osobním věcem na výzvu učitele, promíchání dvojic a skupin
Odlišný výkon	skupiny podle výkonnosti, porovnávání

6. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem porovnávání na sebevědomí studentů

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Rozdíly ve výkonnosti	porovnávání neporovnatelného, obtížná komunikace s někým, kdo komunikovat neumí/nechce
Motivace a rozvoj	snaha se zlepšit, posouvání dál, motivace, chtěl bych také lépe umět, být mezi lepšími studenty
Frustrace	nedosažitelnost lepších výsledků, nedosažitelná jednička, zdeprimování, že nejsem tak dobrá, velká snaha oproti

	automaticky dobrým známám, oproti jiným do toho dávám hodně
Strach z hodnocení	strach z výsměchu, smích při odpovědi
Nálepkování	označení za lepšího, označení za horšího, zásah do vnitřního pocitu, časté vyzdvihování dobrých studentů

7. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem reakcí na chyby na sebevědomí studentů

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Konstruktivní přístup	opakování a procvičování správného, podrobné vysvětlování, konstruktivní reakce jako obohacení, zasazování do kontextu, podrobné vysvětlení v klidu
Zobecňování a zveličování	zobecňování, co vše nám nejde, hloupá chyba jako velký problém, zdůrazňování chyb oproti obsahu
Negativní emocionální reakce	učitel vyjede, nadávky, zamlknutí, rychlé a prudké reakce, nezáměr o učivo
Načasování opravy	skákání do řeči, okamžitá oprava, opravy až po dokončení, nechá nás mluvit a chyby si řekneme na konci
Podpora a povzbuzení	snaha podpořit, nemusíme mít špatný pocit, povzbuzení, nevyčítání
Obviňování ze strany učitele	ponížení, „pamatuj si to konečně“, pocit, že chyba je v nás, angličtina mi nejde

8. Oblasti zkušeností studentů s vlivem způsobu hodnocení učitele na sebevědomí studentů

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Vnímaná důležitost	dobré známky jako nutnost, vlastní pocit důležitější než známka, závislost na zájmu o předmět, klesající význam známek, známky nikdy nebyly problém, a proto na nich tolik

	nezáležít, zdůvodnění výsledků, zdůvodnění špatné známky
Subjektivita hodnocení	známkování podle učitele, (ne)uznávání chyb, známka záleží na učiteli, přísnost, závislost na situaci
Frustrace z neúspěchu	dlouhé snažení a stálý neúspěch, nižší snaha při zařazení mezi slabší žáky, frustrace z opakovaných neuspokojivých výsledků
Nerovné podmínky	nesrovnatelnost skupin, nespravedlnost výsledků, férovost hodnocení
Kategorizace podle známek	smíření s horšími známkami, mávnutí rukou při běžně pestrých známkách, snaha udržet si dobré známky

9. Zdroje motivace ke zlepšování se v komunikaci v angličtině

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Cestování	výjezdy do zahraničí, cestování
Pracovní příležitosti	výhody na pracovním trhu, pracovní příležitosti
Studium	zdroje v angličtině, studium jazyků, studium na VŠ
Využití v mezinárodním kontextu	celosvětové využití, dorozumět se s kýmkoli se potkám, komunikace po celém světě, angličtina všude kolem nás, celosvětově klíčová,
Certifikace	certifikát (CAE), zkouška FCE
Osobní rozvoj	lepší pocit při komunikaci, základ pro celý další život, plynně mluvit, komunikace bez problémů, aplikace v životě, jazyk jako rozšíření obzorů, navazování kontaktů

10. Oblasti představ studentů o podpoře sebevědomí v komunikaci v hodinách angličtiny

Kategorie	Odpovědi studentů (kódy)
Zaměření na konverzaci	v hodinách pouze komunikace v AJ, mluvicí aktivity, více mluvení, práce na porozumění a přízvuku, pevné zařazení komunikačních aktivit do hodin, trénink a zvykání si na komunikaci, častější vyvolávání
Praktická témata a materiály	praktické ukázky, autentické materiály, vynechání zbytečných aktivit, konkrétní komunikační úkoly, využitelnost slovní zásoby, zajímavé materiály mimo učebnice, obecnější přístup
Interaktivní výuka	změny ve skupinách a dvojicích, kreativní úkoly, využití her, rozmanitost v komunikačních aktivitách,
Podpora a pozitivní zpětná vazba	pochvaly, vedení k mimoškolní aktivitě, individuální přístup k úrovni jazyka, podpora při vyjadřování
Předsudky a posuzování	nesoudit při výuce, bez předsudků a očekávání, jednotný přístup ke studentům
Konstruktivní přístup	chyby jako prostředek k učení, konstruktivní přístup

Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Bc. Kamila Krejčí
Katedra:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Jana Kořínková, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2023

Název práce:	Faktory formující úroveň sebevědomí při komunikaci českých studentů v anglickém jazyce
Název v angličtině:	Factors contributing to the level of self-confidence of Czech students in English communication
Anotace práce:	Tato práce se zabývá sebevědomím v komunikaci studentů v anglickém jazyce a faktory, které jej mohou ovlivňovat. V teoretické části jsou představeny koncepty komunikace, sebevědomí, vnímání sebe samého a pojmy, které s nimi souvisejí. Praktická část popisuje studii, ve které autorka práce provedla rozhovory se studenty gymnázia a zkoumala souvislosti mezi zkušenostmi studentů s výukou angličtiny a jejich sebevědomím. Zaměřila se přitom na sedm konkrétních faktorů a na porovnávání sebevědomých studentů s jejich méně sebevědomými spolužáky.
Klíčová slova:	komunikace v cizím jazyce, psychologie výuky jazyků, sebevědomí, úzkost při studiu jazyků, faktory ovlivňující sebevědomí
Anotace v angličtině:	This thesis deals with the topic of self-confidence in communicating in English and factors which may influence it. The theoretical part introduces communication, self-confidence, perceptions of the self and concepts related to them. The practical part presents a study in which the author of the thesis conducted interviews with grammar school students and investigated the connections between students' experiences with learning English and their self-confidence. In doing so, the author focused on seven specific factors and

	on comparing confident students with their less confident classmates.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	foreign language communication, language learning psychology, self-confidence, language learning anxiety, factors influencing self-confidence
Přílohy vázané v práci:	Struktura otázek rozhovorů, otevřené kódování a kategorie
Rozsah práce:	116 stran
Jazyk práce:	anglický