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**TEACHING ENGLISH TO VERY YOUNG LEARNERS IN THE  
CZECH REPUBLIC**

Diplomová práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Olomouci dne .....

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## INTRODUCTION

*“One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way”*

*(Frank Smith).*

The recent world is characteristic by mutual penetration of various cultures. We live in a globalized world, in which the knowledge of world languages is inevitable. We also live in a time in which the Internet has become one of the most used inventions as it provides unlimited amount of information. The society is surrounded by advertisements and mainstream music, which is mostly in English. Thus, English has become a certain duty and it is taught at every school from primary schools to universities as an obligatory subject among other languages. Even though English is the third widespread language as far as the number of native speakers is considered, it is still a language on the top position in the world. English is the leading language in business, diplomacy, tourism and media. Also almost 80% of the population uses English as the second language. The great popularity of English lies in its simplicity. Its grammar is relatively simple despite having a rich vocabulary stock. In addition, to be able to communicate, there is no need of linguistic expertise (Český rozhlas, 2014).

There is no doubt the interest in English courses has been growing in the Czech Republic in recent years. The question is when is the appropriate time to start learning English. Recently, it has become very popular to introduce English language during the preschool education. Is the preschool age the appropriate period for foreign language learning? What are the principles of teaching the very young learners that a teacher should be aware of? What are the most appropriate methods for teaching children of the preschool age? What could be problematic in the realization of English courses at the preschool institutions? Such issues are the reason why I have chosen this topic for the diploma thesis and I will try to find answers in literature.

The aim of this thesis is to describe the process and realization of ELT to the very young learners in the Czech Republic. Also it provides the readers with an overview of helpful expert information. The thesis consists of two parts – theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter describes the historical development of preschool education in the Czech Republic as it has undergone various changes in the course of time. It also deals with the incorporation of ELT in the preschool education as well as describes the advantages and disadvantages of the early language learning.

The second chapter focuses on the phenomena of the preschool education – the very young learner. It describes the characteristics typical for the child of the preschool age. Additionally, the development of the child is described in detail being based on the theories of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. According to the fact that the child of the preschool age goes through various changes, the chapter also provides a general look into the development of perception, imagination, thinking as well as speech.

The third chapter is devoted to the methods and activities that are suitable for teaching the very young learners in the preschool institutions. The great part of the chapter focuses on TPR (Total Physical Response). The following part of the chapter describes different listening activities and also the importance of games in the English lessons with the children of the preschool age.

The last chapter addresses the recent situation with ELT in the preschool institutions in the Czech Republic. Firstly, the focus is on the teacher of the very young learners as well as the foreign language teacher. The competences of the preschool and foreign language teachers are described with respect to the requirements of the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education (FEP PE). The rest of the chapter outlines the realization and organization of the English courses in the recent preschool institutions as well as the appropriate age of the learners to start learning the foreign language.

The practical part is interconnected with the theoretical part. It is subdivided into two parts – the observation and the questionnaire. The objective of the observational part is to find out whether the didactic principles of the foreign language learning of the very young learners are followed in practice or not. In order to find the answer, a set of sub-questions was created. The observation was carried out in three different preschool institutions – the kindergarten Komenského in Šternberk, the kindergarten of the Palacky University and the private language school English 1.5-15 in Olomouc. The sub-questions will be answered during the observations of the English lessons provided by the institutions. Eventually, the findings will be compared and evaluated according to the knowledge given in the theoretical part of this diploma thesis. The next part of the research is based on the anonymous questionnaire focusing on the parents of the children of the preschool age. The aim of the questionnaire is to find the motivation of the parents for choosing the English courses for the children as well as to find out the parents' interest in the lessons. The obtained data will be analyzed and interpreted. The practical part is then followed by the conclusion addressing both parts of the diploma thesis.

# **THEORETICAL PART**



## 1 PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

### 1.1. The concept of childhood in historical context

In Prehistoric times as well as in the Ancient Times and the Middle Ages, a child was never thought of having a huge value for the family or the society. According to many authors, an early childhood was termed a period of inferiority. The development of a child was completely submitted to the will of the father as women were for the long period of time considered to be inferior to men. However, the Modern Times brought a new view of a child. Children's development and upbringing became highly important, which required understanding of childhood as being a specific developmental phase rather than not a very significant part of human life (Studentka, 2007). The first Czech philosopher who helped to understand the child was John Amos Comenius. In his book *Informatorium of Maternal School* (written in first half of the seventeenth century), Comenius emphasises the love and respect to children in connection with care for their versatile development. The importance of this book lies in the fact that it was the first and only systematic treatise on the education of very young learners (Malenicka, 2008). Since then, the view of the child has been changing. Although the society kept suppressing the nature of children, many significant figures, such as John Locke or Jean Jack Rousseau, elaborated on the idea of children's education with respect to their freedom, nature and also with a sensitive attitude towards them. These ideas have been permanently mirrored in the modern pedagogical thinking. New pieces of knowledge from cognitive psychology and the theory of constructivism lead to profound understanding and penetration into the life of the child thus initiated various reformative movements in pedagogy. Since then, the personality of a child has been developed with respect to its individual needs (Studentka, 2007).

### 1.2. Brief overview of preschool education and its development in the Czech Republic

Education plays an important role in everybody's life and helps to develop their personality. We distinguish between different educational stages such as preschool, elementary, secondary education and others (Horská, 2009, p. 12). Since it was integrated to the Framework Education Programme, preschool education has become an inseparable part of the educational process. However, in the historical perspective this educational stage has undergone some changes.

The history of preschool education can be divided into two imaginary parts. The first part is the period of time before the nineteenth century, in which the education of preschoolers was

practiced mostly in families, poorhouses or orphanages (Dostál; Opravilová, 1988, p. 38). Otherwise, the education of very young children was not considered necessary.

The second part was initiated in the nineteenth century by the development of the preschool education (Doksanská, 2013). The change of social structure caused a need to establish preschool educational facilities to take care of children of families employed in public institutions. The first Czech public preschool institutions were established in 1830's in Prague. One of the most renowned was the Child's care institution na Hrádku, which became the mother of all kindergartens. The first preschool teacher was Jan Vlastimír Svoboda, who developed a methodology for teaching very young children in their mother tongue, which was a great step in preschool education (Burkovičová, 2011). However, the number of such institutions was still rather small while the number of population grew tremendously. These circumstances instigated the formation of new preschool institutions – kindergartens (Kovaříček, 1989). The difference between kindergartens and children's care institutions was in the aims, which were differentiated after the year 1872. Child's care institutions' aims were merely focused on care whereas kindergartens were educationally orientated. Children started to be taught their mother tongue as well as to develop their physical, sensual and mental health (Bělinová, 1980). Such attitude towards the child of the preschool age was new. The end of nineteenth century was significant for the development of the preschool education as the importance of preschool institutions was growing (Kovaříček, 1980). Gradual elaboration of various aims, methods and curriculum produced the constitution of a new pedagogical science at the end of the nineteenth century – the preschool pedagogy (Bělinová, 1980).

The progress continued in the twentieth century as well. The network of kindergartens was growing wider through the Czech Republic. Also, it was necessary to provide teachers with the academic education in order for them to be adequately prepared for this profession (Jarníková, 1927). The period of time between the World Wars meant a huge deterioration of the preschool education. The education was completely submitted to the moderation of poverty, which emerged during the wars. The situation got even worse with the German occupation in 1939. Almost all public kindergartens ceased to exist and were forbidden to be established as the funds for their functioning were used to build new German schools (Kovaříček, 1978). The end of the Second World War brought immense social changes. The network of kindergartens was again expanding rapidly. The new educational law signed in 1948 put all schools under state control and the preschool education finally became incorporated in the educational system as its integral part (Kovaříček, 1989). The socialist country paid more attention to education, especially to the preschool one. The aim of the socialist society was to form a builder of socialism. That is why a

new educational law was enforced, which significantly influenced the preschool education by emphasizing the importance of it. The demands on the preschool teachers also increased with the social changes. The whole educational process was under the control of the Soviet pedagogy. However, the curriculum that the teachers were supplied with caused much stress from a huge amount of schoolwork without respecting the individual needs of the children (Kovaříček, 1978). This led to the lack of joy and spontaneity in kindergartens.

After the year 1990 the Soviet programme lost its validity and the requirement to respect the preschooler as an individuality with specific needs came to the fore (Šmelová, 2008). In recent years the preschool education is on the high level of quality. Teachers are qualified and, what is more, preschoolers are finally in the centre of interest. Nowadays, the kindergarten is a place which the children enjoy, a place where they learn and are respected as individuals.

#### 1.2.1. Aims of preschool education

According to the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education (2004, p. 7), the preschool education represents the initial level of public education. The main aims are focused on children acquiring the basic key competences, thus creating preconditions for their lifelong education.

In connection with the historical development, the preschool education preserved its primary function. Additionally, it contributes to children's active development and learning while trying to facilitate further course of education. The preschool education also involves helping children to adopt various values and gain personal attitudes (Smolíková, 2004, p. 7).

The Framework Educational Programme for Preschool Education (henceforth FEP PE, 2004, p. 10) states a list of key competences which are in compliance with the recent curricular reform:

- competences to learn
- competences to solve problems
- civil and work competences
- social and personal competences
- communicative competences

The fulfilment of such competences is supposed to prepare and help the children to start the systematic learning process successfully. Good basics are essential for a good development of the child. The competences are interconnected.

### Examples from FEP PE:

Competences to learn – a child is observing, exploring, experimenting, asks questions and finds answers, learns to evaluate the personal progress

Communicative competences – a child speaks in full sentences, expresses the thoughts and emotions, extends vocabulary and uses it actively, knows that people speak various languages =  
> has elementary preconditions to learn foreign language

(FEP PE, 2004, p.12)

### 1.3. Foreign language teaching in preschool education

Foreign language teaching has also undergone the development in the Czech Republic. The trend of recent English language teaching (henceforth ELT) is putting the children in the centre of the interest. The parents desire the children to have an opportunity to encounter a foreign language as soon as possible. As English is one of three most widespread languages in the world and is used by the majority of the world's population, it is not surprising that the demand for the English lessons have increased even within the preschool education (Daubner, 2011). The discussion had started within the European Union (henceforth EU), the representatives of EU claimed that languages connect the whole Europe and are perceived as one of the basic assets of a human being. It was in the year 2002 in which a need to improve languages skills was debated at one of the meetings of the representatives. Finally, in 2004, the climax of the meetings was a plan that supported multilingualism and its development in the states of the European Union (Sladkovská, 2010). The Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic reacted by creating a document called the National plan of foreign language teaching (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2005) in order to provide favourable conditions for increasing the language skills of the Czech population. It was a plan for the years 2005–2008 including incorporation and elaboration of foreign language lessons also in the preschool education besides other educational stages. The part of this plan focusing on the language education of preschoolers describes why it is desirable to learn a language in the preschool age. It determines the ideal period for starting teaching a new language and also gives recommendations for appropriate realization of such lessons while creating methodical materials for efficient teaching (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2005). Since that time, the process of teaching English in the preschool institutions has slightly changed. Various preschool institutions introduced language lessons (mostly English, if not only) in a form of study circles in the afternoon hours, others tried to incorporate the language teaching to the educational programme to enable the preschoolers to be

in touch with the language on a daily basis. Also, many private English kindergartens were established in the Czech Republic.

We distinguish between different forms of the realization of ELT in preschool institutions. According to the report of the Czech School Inspectorate from 2010 (Česká školní inspekce, 2010) more than a half of the visited preschool institutions (more than 60 from the total number of 115 preschool facilities) in the Czech Republic provide the lessons of English. Approximately one fourth of the institutions have incorporated the English teaching to their educational programme. Most lessons were led by an external language teacher with no expert qualification of a kindergarten teacher. The rest of the lessons were managed by the kindergarten teachers with various levels of the language or without any language certificate declaring the achieved level (Česká školní inspekce, 2010). 70% of the preschool facilities teach English in return for payment. In 82% of the kindergartens, the weekly time allocation does not exceed 60 minutes. Only 8% of the preschool facilities implement daily entries of the English language. The situation of English teaching in preschool educations is in the process of being optimized (Česká školní inspekce, 2010).

As far as the private sphere is considered, a relatively big number of private English kindergartens have been established in recent years. Such institutions provide an adequate education in Czech as well as in English. An example of such private kindergarten is a preschool facility called the KinderGarten (KinderGarten, 2010), which has expanded through the whole Czech Republic. The aim is induction of foreign language environment as early as possible. Teaching is realized either in Czech – English or in English only. Prior language education is not required. It may seem ideal. However, such institutions do demand school fees and usually not every family could afford it. Nevertheless, it is a possible way of a language education (KinderGarten, 2010).

### 1.3.1. Advantages and disadvantages of an early language teaching

The opinions of experts differ. They state various advantages but also risks of an early language teaching:

The first advantage is the occasional absence of syllabuses. The absence gives the teacher a sense of freedom and chance to adapt the teaching process according to the children's needs or interests. It also decreases the pressure that is usually put on the teacher as well as the children in the learning process (Reilly, 1997, p. 7).

The next advantage of preschoolers is the way of perception of the foreign language. Těthalová (2013, p.12) claims that children of the preschool age are, unlike adults, able to understand the context of a text without the knowledge of every word. They are very sensitive to nonverbal communication which helps them to recognize the meaning. If the English teaching is based on comprehensible activities, they perceive the text as a unit, which is a big advantage over the other older learners. Preschoolers have a great potential to learn a foreign language. They learn a foreign language as the mother tongue – by imitating. By listening to the teacher, they memorize phrases as well as learn correct pronunciation without difficulties. According to Lojová (2005, p. 130-131) a 3 year old child has already adopted the basics of the mother tongue, which creates a great conditions for learning foreign languages. It is said that such period in life is the most effective one for learning a foreign language. Others claim that owing to the rapid development of brain capacity, the children are capable of learning any language, at least on the level of elementary understanding (Lojová, 2005, p. 130-131). Additionally, children of the preschool age do not have any inhibitions, yet. What is more, they are very curious and enthusiastic to learn new things. They are opened towards the new language.

On the other hand, the preschoolers have not developed their self-control mechanisms. Also, their ability to cooperate effectively is not developed and they could occasionally struggle to control their moods, which is very typical for a child of the preschool age (Reilly, 1997, p.8). Children react immediately on every situation by expressing openly their feelings, which could frequently cause troubles. The emotionality of the children could cause disciplinary problems in the class which leads to the loss of teacher's control over the children. The unprepared teacher then possibly chooses undesirable restrictive measures, which would suppress disorder, yet could contribute to the creation of poor children's attitudes towards learning. It is important to realize that a relaxed, positive atmosphere in the lesson with the preschoolers is the main condition for successful learning (Lojová, 2005, p. 144).

Patience is essential as well in the teaching process of the preschoolers, considering the fact that children of the preschool age are known for having a very short attention span. Teachers also might have a feeling that the children did not learn anything, which is frequently seen as a drawback. Nevertheless, what is really significant for the children is to be exposed to the foreign language (English). They adopt the language just by listening to it. The parents might as well have exaggerated demands on the children. It is not realistic to expect a child of the preschool age to be able to communicate in English or to translate from the mother tongue to the taught language and vice versa. Contrarily, the ability to read, write or speak in the foreign language

will arise later. More importantly, children are prepared for future foreign language learning at primary schools (Reilly, 1997, p. 8).

Not surprisingly, the foreign language teaching is a difficult process. However it is recently becoming apparent that the age is not as substantial as the quality of the pedagogical activity (Lojová, 2005, p. 146).

## 2 A VERY YOUNG LEARNER

### 2.1. Characteristics of the very young learner

The time boundary of the preschool age differs. However, the majority of them agree that it relates to children that are 3-6 years old. This life period is also called the period of development and games (Nohejl, 2011). The end of this differs depending on the physical age of the child but also on the maturity and readiness for the following educational stage (Lisá; Kňourková, 1986, p. 174). As Čáp and Mareš claim (2001) it is a period of time of noticeable progress in comparison with the toddler period. The psyche of a child is being created as the self-consciousness is being developed.

According to Phillips (1993) there are various factors influencing the maturity of preschoolers. For instance it depends on the sex of a child or the environment as well as the cultural background. The teacher should be aware of all such factors.

### 2.2. Very young learner's development

#### 2.2.1. Cognitive development

The theory of cognitive development has been elaborated through years by many psychologists. Cognitive processes are being developed. The following paragraphs will focus on the theories of psychologists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who was one of Piaget's main critics.

##### 2.2.1.1. Piaget's theory of cognitive development

The description of the cognitive development in the following chapter is based on the findings of the most significant representative of the developmental psychology of the twentieth century – Jean Piaget. Piaget claims (Pinter, 2006) that the development of cognitive skills is divided into four stages. Each of the stages brings a discovery of a new skill, which causes a reorganization of the child's thinking. However, the successful development is dependent on the active interactions of a child and surroundings. It means that knowledge does not appear spontaneously but is patterned on activities. Piaget was convinced that the stages have the following order:



- Sensory-motor stage
- Pre-operational stage
- Concrete operational stage
- Formal operational stage

None of the stages could be left out as every stage is closely connected and dependent on each other (Pinter, 2006).

In the following paragraph, every stage of Piaget’s Cognitive development theory will be briefly described.

Sensory-motor stage

| Age             | Characteristics  |
|-----------------|--|
| 0 – 2 years old | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the child distinguishes itself from other objects</li> <li>- important activities in such age are mainly experimenting and perception together with motor activities</li> </ul> |

**Tab. 1:** Sensory-motor stage (Piaget, 1969)

Pre-operational stage

| Age             | Characteristics  |
|-----------------|--|
| 2 – 7 years old | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the child learns to use a language</li> <li>- important processes are SPEECH, development of imagination and simple thinking</li> <li>- the child is egocentric in this developmental stage =&gt; every situation is dealt with according to the perception of a child (the child does not take into consideration the opinions of others)</li> <li>- rapid development of fantasy</li> </ul> |

**Tab. 2:** Pre-operational stage (Piaget, 1969)

### Concrete operational stage

| Age              | Characteristics  |
|------------------|--|
| 7 – 12 years old | - logical thinking is being developed as well as ability to operate with abstract concepts |

**Tab. 3:** Concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1969)

### Formal operation stage

| Age                    | Characteristics   |
|------------------------|---|
| 12 years old and older | - the period of abstract and logical operations<br>- the child looks for principles while experimenting |

**Tab. 4:** Formal operational stage (Piaget, 1969)

The pre-operational developmental stage is the stage that concerns children of the preschool age on the grounds of Piaget's assertions. From the Piaget's description it is obvious that children from the age of 2 to 7 are capable of learning a language as it is a period of time when they learn to speak thus to use and understand the language. He distinguishes between two stages of the pre-operational stage. The first one is called the symbolic stage in which children use symbol in order to imagine certain things. Also they imitate the behaviour of the surrounding subjects, which enables them to acquire behavioural patterns. The other stage is called the intuitive stage, which is closely connected with the acquisitions of speech (Kohoutek, 2010).

#### 2.2.1.2. The theory of Lev Vygotsky

Vygotsky was another well-known psychologist interested in the cognitive development of children. He was often put to opposition with Jean Piaget. In comparison with Piaget, his theory is based on three periods of child's development. A 1-3 years old child learns according to the own (inner) programme. After the sixth year of life, which means in the school age, the child learns exclusively according to the educational programme of the kindergarten. Thus the preschool age is considered to be a transition between the two types of learning. In other words,

the ideal form of the learning process in preschool education should be a combination of learning based on the outer programme which is identical to the inner programme of a child (Karlova Univerzita v Praze, 2010).

At the early age, children's thinking is based primarily on perception – it is called “natural thinking”. Vygotsky describes “memory based thinking”, which is being developed around the third year of life. The child is able to take out a certain subjects from the context and create a link between them (Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2010).

Another important finding that Vygotsky introduced is called the zone of proximal development (henceforth ZPD). Vygotsky believed that interaction between a child and a teacher (parent) leads to effective development of the skills. In general, there are pieces of knowledge that children are already familiar with and that are not known yet. This means that the child is on a certain developmental level and by solving different tasks approaches the higher developmental level. The “zone” represents the distance between the current developmental level and the potential one. The child could often be frustrated by being forced to fulfil certain tasks. The frustration could be prevented by the cooperation of the child and the teacher. Not only the help of another person makes the development of a child easier but also it speeds it up. Vygotsky also suggested that more skilful children in the class could help their peers, which would encourage the developmental process (Study, 2006).

The most important tool in ZPD is speech, which is according to Vygotsky the base of the cognitive development of the child. Children are able to communicate and learn through dialogs. According to Vygotsky, providing the appropriate assistance would give the children adequate boost to be able to achieve a certain task (Simply Psychology, 2012).

The theory of ZPD is closely connected to “scaffolding”. The term was firstly used by Jerome in 1960's and it is considered to be synonymous with ZPD. Scaffolding refers to a situation in which a teacher stands as a model and demonstrates how to solve a certain problem. After giving the instructions, the teacher lets the students work while providing help anytime they need. It is believed that students could be more successful in using the knowledge when they are given the support from the teacher while learning new things. The teacher should firstly start teaching in the way the students understand and then it is possible to build on it. This means that when students demonstrate certain knowledge, the teacher should step away and let them work on their own (Study, 2006).

As it has been already mentioned, Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories are often put to opposition. The theory of Jean Piaget is mainly focused on the internal processes of the children whereas Vygotsky emphasizes the outer impact on a human psyche. Nevertheless, in recent years

it has been claimed that both theories are not different. Thus they should be understood as a synthesis that asserts that every cognitive process is influenced by inner experiences together with the interaction with the milieu (Simply Psychology, 2012).

### 2.2.2. The development of perception and imagination

Preschool age is typical for the intensive development of cognitive processes. The ability to remember is growing. Perception is closely connected with emotional background. The more intensive the emotions are, the more permanent is the certain event fixed in child's mind. As being mentioned in previous paragraphs children are very curious, pay attention to details and likes to laugh. The auditory perception is improving as well as the visual one. The child recognizes almost every colour, in addition, various colour shades as well. As far as the perception of space is considered, the preschool child is not able to estimate the distance as well as not being able to realize the meaning of time. Days, weeks or months seem to be longer than in the perception of adults (Nohejl, 2011). The reality is often adjusted in order to be intelligible. The children's imagination is highly vivid and becomes evident mainly in games and drawings. Therefore games are considered to be one of the most important activities of the preschool education (Kohoutek, 2010).

### 2.2.3. The development of speech

The thinking process is still pre-logical, which means the child is not able to work with concepts or mental operations. Children desire to learn and understand. The preschool period is typical for the development of processes such as analysis, synthesis or comparison. Typical questions of the preschoolers are "Why?" or "How?" (Kuric, 1964, p. 41-45).

Thinking is closely related to the development of speech. Speech is the basic means of communication with people that makes it possible to get to know the surrounding world. The ability to speak is developed rapidly primarily during the preschool education (Lisá; Kňourková, 1986, p. 184).

The child enjoys talking. Speech is developed since the birth onwards. The whole language development process is divided into three levels: a period of silence, the intermediate stage and the breakthrough. Each level has different features (Dunn, 2003, p. 26).

The period of silence is full of non-verbal communication. It is a time when the child perceives the language, understands it but does not necessarily speak. Such period could not be

rushed. The child has to be given as much time as possible to create personal system of categories of the language on the basis of what is heard from the people. The child's needs or emotions are expressed by the body language and a cry, which is the first vocal display of the child. As soon as the child creates a certain language system, the first attempt to communicate is expressed by humming and babbling (Dunn, 2003, p. 28).

The intermediate developmental stage is the period when the child creates first sounds, which resemble words (usually around the first year of life). It is important for the child to see certain enthusiasm from the parents because it is highly motivational. The joy of the parents encourages the child to speak more. The language ability is developed. Firstly the child uses key words and shortens sentences. For instance the sentence "*Mommy is in the kitchen*" could be shortened into "*Mommy kitchen*" etc. (Dunn, 2003, p. 27). Also the endings of words are frequently omitted. Such language shortening is prevalent in this period. The parents easily understand what the child wants to say and often answer by saying it in the full form. The child thereafter repeats after the parents, which is beneficial for learning the language.

Lastly, the period of the breakthrough sets in around the third year of life. The children create their own language made of sentences of three or four words. The ability to speak develops predictably - the older the children are, the more extended the vocabulary is. A 3 – 4 year old child, who is a child of the preschool age, endeavours to communicate by asking questions about everything. In the course of time a child starts to speak in sentences, adopts simple grammar structures and the verbal memory starts to be developed (AKL, 2005). A 5 years old child knows almost 2000 words and understands simple sentences (Lisá; Kňourková, 1986, p. 184).

Children adopt the foreign language while being exposed to it similarly as learning to use cutlery for example. Rather than focusing on things they do not understand, they simply imitate what they see or hear. In addition, the children are endowed with a ceaseless desire to repeat every word they hear.

### 3 METHODS AND ACTIVITIES SUITABLE FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO VERY YOUNG LEARNERS

It is essential to be aware of the fact that the preschool age is only a certain “preparatory phase” with a very important aim – to create a positive attitude towards the foreign language (English). If influencing children inappropriately, it is possible to rather discourage them, which could have unwanted far-reaching consequences mainly when the child starts to learn the language as compulsory subject at school (Lojová, 2005, p. 140). That is why choosing an appropriate method of teaching is so important. The characteristics of the preschoolers should be taken into consideration. As it has been already mentioned, the memory of the children of the preschool age works receptively. The majority of the children of the preschool age are not able to read or write. That is why listening is the basic activity in such lessons. Also, the physical as well as mental development of the preschoolers is diametrically different from the development of the children of the school age. That is why the style of the education has to be adapted effectively (Jazyky, 2010).

The communication between the teacher and the children has to be real and meaningful. It means that the children should be involved in real life communication and perceive the language, which is essential for adopting successfully the language. The advantage it brings is that grammar is taught through meaningful communication. The main focus is on the development of the skills rather than the system of the language. On the other hand, the teacher should not expect conversation with the very young learners as their ability to communicate effectively has not been developed in their age yet. However, it is essential for the children to be exposed to the real language (Teaching English, 2006).

The following chapter will focus on different methods and activities used mainly for teaching the children of the preschool age.

#### 3.1. Total physical response

TPR is the term that first appeared in 1965 owing to Dr. James Asher. He claimed that children could learn the language by listening to it and fulfilling various instructions (One Stop English, 2013). This method is closely established on the basis of how children learn languages – firstly by physical response before using verbal expressions. Thus the child has time for internalising the language. It involves the both right- and left-brain learning, where the left side of the brain is responsible for logical and mathematical operations whereas the right side of the

brain is connected with creativity, art and the emotions (Jazyky, 2010). According to Krashen (2009, p. 140) the TPR method consists of the children fulfilling commands given by the teacher, which involves a physical response. The older the children are, the more complex and demanding the commands are. Another typical feature of the TPR method is that the children are not forced to speak and they speak when they feel ready. In other words, the children are allowed to be silent. The use of the TPR method should ensure the active participation of the children in the lessons considering the fact that the children of the preschool age enjoy the bodily movement.

The biggest advantage of this method is that almost every child has the ability to perform instructions in the early age.

The TPR method is applicable to people of every age group. However, it is appropriate particularly for the children of the preschool age for several reasons (Pearson English Language Teaching, 2008):

- ✓ Children's need to move.
- ✓ Children have a natural desire to mimic.
- ✓ Huge amount of energy that the children have.

What is also important is that children of the preschool age are endowed with mechanical memory rather than intentional remembering. Thus constant revision is important and the TPR method deals with such issue. The children do not mind doing various activities repeatedly (Jazyky, 2010). The TPR brings the language to life, involves all five senses in the learning process and also prefers the natural process of learning. What is more, the teacher can easily ascertain the comprehension of the children by their active participation in the activities (Janíková; Hanušová, 2010, p. 105). The method also helps to raise positive mood in the classroom and is greatly enjoyable for the children while teaching them vocabulary as well as simple instructions.

The teacher's role is crucial. It is similar to a parent role. The teacher should help the children, give prompts and have positive attitude towards them. Additionally, the teacher should be organized and well-prepared to be able to manage the very young learners. The role of the teacher is to lead the class by giving simple or more demanding instructions in connection with gestures and make the children respond to the instructions. Error correction is not considered to be appropriate in this period of life because it could discourage children from future participation in the activities (Pearson English Language Teaching, 2008).

To sum up, this method is the most suitable one for the beginner learners, thus efficiently applicable in the preschool ELT. “*The younger the children are, the more important TPR is*” (Reilly and Ward, p. 9). Nevertheless, the excess of everything could be undesirable. Therefore combination of TPR with other techniques and methods could overcome the repetitiveness of the activities in the lessons, thus avoid the learners from becoming bored.

### 3.2. Listening activities

The ability to listen to anything is the first one that is being developed from the birth of a human being. The development of the language is dependent on the listening ability. Listening activities are significant in the English lessons because they provide children with copious source of language data, which helps the children to imagine how the new language works. The teacher should enrich the listening activities with facial expressions as well as bodily movement to ensure that the children understand them (Lojová, 2005, p 141-142). The main source of the language is the teacher. The teacher uses different songs, rhymes or stories to present the language to the children. It is also possible to use authentic recordings to enable the children to hear the native speaker but it might be demanding on the children of such early age. It is easier for them to listen to their teacher because not only there is a possibility of instant repetition of the speech but also a chance to stop during the speech, go back and describe certain parts or change the pace of the speech without technical difficulties as in the case of the recordings (Pinter, 2006, p. 45-46). The teacher should use the target language as much as possible. If the children use their mother tongue during the lesson, which they definitely would, the teacher could translate their speech into the target language or answer their questions in the target language. The aim is to ensure that the children are given the opportunity to hear as much of the target language as possible.

The Stephen Krashen’s theory of the Comprehensible Input addresses how children learn the languages. He claims that the language is adopted only in case the children understand what they are being told by the teacher. The language is not adopted by learning *about* the language (learning grammatical rules etc.). The children adopt the language effectively if they understand the meaning of certain instructions and they often understand them even if the instructions include language structures or words that are one step beyond the children’s current stage of linguistic competence. Generally, the children learn the structure of the foreign language before starting to develop the ability to speak in the language. Krashen claims that it is the other way



round. At first the child understands the grammar and then adopts it. The grammar means the ability to use grammatical rules intuitively (Krashen, 2009, p. 20).

Children in such age learn receptively, thus they are able to catch sounds of the foreign language exactly or imitate the speech of adults. For this reason, the learning of vocabulary is rapid and happens under different circumstances (Slattery, 2004, p. 6-7). The listening activities are divided into activities calming down and activating the children. The teacher should be aware of such effects and choose activities properly according to the situation in the classroom.

Types of listening activities:

a) Listen and repeat

Such type of activity includes listening to rhymes and songs. Since the birth the majority of the children are used to songs or rhymes being told by their parents. As far as the foreign language learning is considered, it helps them tremendously to acquire the sound of the language as well as the rhythm and intonation (Scott; Ytreberg, 1990, p. 21). Such listening activities are based on instant repetition of what is being said by the teacher (or played on the recordings).

Rhymes are considered to be the language games, which have a natural rhythm. There are countless rhymes in English as in any other language: short, long, easy, challenging, modern or old and the choice depends on the teacher. However, rhymes should be chosen wisely according to the abilities of the children, which are not much developed in the preschool age. That is why the teacher should choose easier rhymes in order not to overload the children (Scott, Ytreberg, 1990, p. 22-26).

Singing is another highly used activity with the very young learners or children in general. A variety of songs exist, from which the most known are songs such as “*Are you sleeping brother John, The Alphabet song, Row your boat, Twinkle little star*” (Early childhood education zone, 2015). Songs are usually connected with dancing, which is desirable since movement helps children to make the learning easier (see TPR). ELT is closely connected with rhythm and music while dealing with the very young learners. Songs could be used both for singing and performing activities. Songs could be used anytime in the lesson. They could be used at the beginning of the lesson to indicate the start of the lesson thus catching the attention of the children. They could be possibly used in the middle of the lesson as a form of a break from more demanding activities or as a learning tool, as well as at the end of the lesson to indicate finishing. It depends on the preferences of the teacher (Scott, Ytreberg, 1990, p.28).

b) Listen and perform

The younger the children are, the more they need to move. Listen and performs activities provide the children with movement. Such activities belong to the TPR method (see chapter 3.1.). The advantage of the activities is the immediate response of the children, which indicates their comprehension. The easiest “listen and perform activity” would be giving instructions such as: *stand up, sit down, turn around, jump* and so forth. The leading role of the teacher in the lessons could be delegated to the children, who could try to give instructions to the others. The activity called *Simon says* serves as an example, in which children are given simple instructions and perform them anytime they hear the phrase “*Simon says*”. Another possible activity could be the game called “*Put your hand up*”, which has simple rules. For example, the children are asked to raise their hand anytime they hear certain word such as a number while the teacher is counting and so forth. It could be used differently depending, once again, on the preferences of the teacher (Playtivities, 2017).

c) Listen and find the information

This type of exercise provides the teacher with a wide spectrum of possibilities of practising the foreign language. The teacher could lay a variety of pictures in front of the children and start to describe one of them, using simple language. The children should then decide which picture the teacher is talking about. Alternatively, drawing according to the listening exercise is also popular. The principle of such activity could be to give the children English instructions to colour certain picture and so on.

d) Listening to a story

Children love stories. If the focus is on children of the preschool age, they enjoy predicting what will happen in stories. The children’s fantasy is extremely vivid in such early age and could be used for the creation of children’s own stories. The teacher should make a use of it and involve the children in the learning process while using the mother tongue as well as the target language (Scott, Ytreberg, 1990, p.28).

The importance of stories is immense. Not only they are stimuli for learning the foreign language, but also they are entertaining, which helps the children to remember set phrases or vocabulary better. In addition, stories often give a moral lesson as the majority of them end with

a victory of the person who is good and kind. They also develop the awareness of the intonation of the foreign language, which could contribute to the future successful development of fluency in the foreign language. Lastly, stories are not financially demanding in comparison with the technical aids such as computers, data-projectors or televisions. The teacher could take a book and choose an appropriate story according to the level of the language of the children (Watts, 2006, p. 6).

The choice of relevant story is highly important in the lessons with the preschoolers. The best possible choice is a story with a lesser amount of text and big number of illustrations, which would clearly state the plot of the certain parts of the story. The teacher should make sure that every child in the class could see the pictures. Also the teacher should stop during the storytelling, if necessary, to give the children time to take a look at every picture of the story (Reilly, Ward, 1997, p. 21).

The most well-known story books used in the language lessons of the preschool children are books from Eric Carl: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar?* and from Eric Hill: *Where's Spot?* (The Book Bundle, 2010). Another possibility is to use a video story, which combines storytelling with animations. Children for instance could try to redraw the story from the video. The language should be simple and easy to understand and the length of stories should be around 5-8 minutes because of the children's short attention span (Reilly, Ward; 1997, p. 21).

### 3.3. Games and their relevance in the learning process

Game is one of the basic needs of the very young learners. Generally speaking, a game is everything that children enjoy doing. It is an activity practised in compliance with principles created in advance as many theorists claim (Stehlíková Babyrádová, 2014, p. 29-30). Games include listening activities or observation from the children's point of view. It is necessary to explain the rules of a new game in the mother tongue and later on, when the children are familiar with the rules of the particular game, use the target language (English) for reminding them of the rules. It is also practical to add a demonstration of what they are going to be doing because it is helpful for the learners (Langmeier; Krejčířová, 2006). The advantage is that the children do not realize the repetitive drills and learning during the game. Reilly and Ward (1999) explain that the game is an excellent instrument for natural language learning as well as being an irreplaceable part of children's growing-up. It is highly motivational for the children to be able to learn while doing something enjoyable, adventurous and entertaining. For instance, learning new vocabulary would work perfectly in connection with certain games rather than simply exposing the children

to the vocabulary. The learning process would become natural through the use of games (Hanšpachová; Řandová, 2005, p. 9).

## 4 ISSUES WITH TEACHING ENGLISH AT KINDERGARTENS

### 4.1. The teacher of the very young learners

People, sometimes even certain teachers believe that everybody with basic knowledge of English is able to teach the very young learners because the lessons of English are based predominantly on games. It is important to realize that the language teacher is the main, if not the only source of the foreign language (as Czech Republic has only one official language). However, the children need to adopt the language during meaningful interactions in the target language. That is why the teacher needs to have such level of English to be able to create the meaningful interaction and provide the children with the language (Metodický portal, 2006).

The definition of the preschool teacher is given by the education law number 563/2004, which is the law about teachers. The term *preschool teacher* is mentioned in the law. The teacher is one of the basic constituents of the educational process who plays a vital role in the children's development. The preschool teacher's responsibility is to introduce the children of the age from 3-6 into the world of organized schooling. The preschool teacher is a professionally qualified person responsible for preparation, classroom management as well as the result of the pedagogical process (Study, 2015). It is evident from the definition above that the emphasis is put mainly on the pedagogical qualification of the teacher, which includes the knowledge and abilities obtained during the teacher's preparatory education (Syslová, 2013, p. 19). According to FEP PE, there are different abilities and knowledge which are considered to be characteristic features of the preschool teacher's profession. The teacher has to be familiar with:

- ✓ The aims and content of preschool education (FEP PE).
- ✓ The context of curricular reform.
- ✓ Legitimate norms and documents.
- ✓ Conditions and strategies connected with the preschool education.
- ✓ Developmental changes of children as well as their needs.

The stated list covers the foundation of the preschool teacher's profession. In connection with the education of teachers, there is a question whether a secondary pedagogical education is sufficient for being a preschool teacher or not. According to FEP PE, the preschool teacher should have adequate knowledge of the mother tongue, be culturally aware and have basic mathematical and biological knowledge. Also the teacher should be able to apply appropriate pedagogical and

psychological approaches and knowledge acquired during the studies. Lastly but most importantly, the teacher should have a positive attitude towards children as well as be able to communicate (Syslová, 2013, p. 25). It is evident that the preschool teacher is required to display knowledge from various fields. However, the foreign language education is not necessary for being a preschool teacher. That is why the realization of English lessons in kindergartens might be difficult. It is not usual that employees (the teachers) in kindergartens have such level of English which would allow them to conduct the English lessons on their own. Most teachers have only basic knowledge of the language, which is not sufficient for teaching it. In practice it is important to have a perfect English pronunciation while teaching the language with respect to the way of the preschool children's learning. The incorrect pronunciation of the insufficiently teacher could be harmful to the children and poorly influence their future development in the language. Moreover, the teacher should be also able to simplify the language in order to help the children understand it. Thus the biggest problem with the realization of such English courses is a lack of qualified teachers. Such situation is usually solved by getting an external teacher, either a native speaker or a private teacher of English (Metodický portal, 2006). Getting an external teacher could be financially demanding for the school management, which is often the reason why the realization of English courses is rejected at various preschool institutions.

#### 4.2. The foreign language teacher

The successful mastering of the foreign language is influenced into a considerable extent by the language teacher. According to Hendrich (1988, p. 16-17), the foreign language teacher is a person who has appropriate pedagogical talent and education, reliable theoretical and practical knowledge of the certain foreign language. The teacher should also have general linguistic and psycholinguistic knowledge as well as pedagogical, psychological and organizational competences. Moral and volitional characteristics are also necessary to be a good teacher.

Not only should the language teacher have the required knowledge but also should be able to transfer effectively the knowledge to the children. It is also claimed that a good language teacher could teach another subject in the foreign language. Moreover, the teacher should be able to teach the children to compare the mother tongue with the foreign language, find similarities and differences (Borsuková, 2008, p. 38).

Many authors argue about the ideal language teacher. Andrášová worked out a list of ideal characteristics of the foreign language teacher (2000, p. 62-63):

- ✓ The language teacher should be an expert in the theoretical and practical aspect of the language. His knowledge should be on such level to allow him to carry out the whole lesson in the foreign language. The teacher's language skills should serve as a model with respect to phonetics, rhythm and intonation. He should be able to conduct the lessons by using such language tools, which would enhance the active involvement of the children in the class as well as their cooperation (facial expressions, music and dancing, gestures, etc.).
- ✓ The language teacher should be able to reflect linguistic and cultural knowledge.
- ✓ The language teacher should be able to analyze educational materials with respect to their practical application in the lessons.
- ✓ The language teacher should be able to find different texts and materials, which could be used in the lessons.
- ✓ The educational process of the language teachers should be closely connected with practice. The university graduates should be able to connect the obtained theory with the practice on the basis of their own teaching experiences. They should be able to reflect their pedagogical activity.
- ✓ The individual future education of the language teachers is expected.

The conditions for the language teachers have changed immensely since 1989. Nowadays the teachers are provided with wide range of foreign educational stays, which could help them to improve the language competences as well as provide them with the new methods for the foreign language teaching (Andrášová, 2000).

#### 4.3. The reality of ELT in preschool education

According to Nádvorníková (a council member of an Association of Preschool Education), the situation of ELT in Czech kindergartens is diverse. The lessons are realized in a form of the study circles. Such study circles are usually led by a lecturer, which means an external teacher from a certain private language school. In most cases it is a person without pedagogical education. This implies that such lecturer usually uses teaching methods suitable rather for older children because he does not know how to teach the children of the preschool age. Nádvorníková

also claims that such attitude is not appropriate. Not only would the children lose attention during the lessons but it could also influence negatively the future motivation of the children to learn English. That is why the school management should consider wisely the choice of the lecturer. What is really important is the methodology of introducing the foreign language to the very young learners. The possible way of implementing the foreign language in the life of every child would be throughout the whole day in little language entries rather than carrying out 45 minutes long study circles (Štefflová, 2006).

#### 4.4. The appropriate age for teaching the foreign language

One of the mostly discussed questions in recent years is whether to start teaching the foreign language to the children of the preschool age or not. Even though such question has been discussed for decades, there is no definite answer. The opinions are diverse. Some theorists claim that “*the earlier, the better*”, by which they promote the preschool age as being the most appropriate period to start teaching the foreign language. Others believe that it is sufficient to start teaching English in the school age and some people are convinced that the ability to adopt the foreign language is not dependent on the age but on other factors (Metodický portál, 2006).

The supporters of the statement “*the earlier, the better*” refer to the critical period hypothesis (Krashen, 1986). The theory of critical period hypothesis focuses on the ability to adopt the foreign language in connection with the age of the learner. According to the theory of Krashen, a certain time boundary exists. The brain is designed for the adoption of the language the best within such time boundary. When the time boundary ends (when the child reaches the age of five), the language learning process is more demanding and slower (Krashen, 2009, p. 43). The theory states various explanations of the *decrease in learning in adulthood*: the brain loses its plasticity while the person is growing up, the different social factors of the children in comparison with the adults or problems with natural learning in connection with the abstract thinking of the adults (Cook, 2001, p. 133). The plasticity of the brain is considered to enable the children to learn subconsciously, thus develop the congenital brain capacity (Lojová, 2006, p. 52).



The importance of the age has its opponents. For instance, Schleppegrell disproves the claim “*the earlier, the better*” by stating several points based on various studies that were carried out in the second half of the twentieth century:

- ✓ The ability to learn does not decrease with the increasing age.
- ✓ The learning environment has a greater influence on the adoption of the foreign language than the age of learners.

Benedetti and Freppon (2006, p. 32-34) have similar opinions. They claim that the importance of the age during the language learning process is only a myth. However, they admit that children are remarkably better in adopting the authentic pronunciation of the foreign language than adults. On the other hand, teenagers and adults have cognitive advantages. Their skills in the mother tongue are more developed and also they are able to think about the learning process (Benedetti; Freppon, p. 30). Another theorist, who confirms such statement, is Muñoz (2010). She claims that the older the children are, the faster and more effective is the foreign language learning process. Additionally, the older children have an advantage during the explicit educational processes thanks to the better cognitive development whereas the very young learners are better in the implicit learning. Implicit learning means that the foreign language is not taught to the children openly but it is incorporated in different activities. Various studies showed that in the beginning phase of learning the language adults display better and faster learning abilities. In comparison with the adults, the very young children reach usually higher final level of the language than the adults. However, it is important to mention that the stated results concerned the children who were exposed to the foreign language on a daily basis (Muñoz, 2010).

To sum up, the best age for learning the foreign language is not stated properly. However, the child’s learning abilities are greater than people would think (Metodický portal, 2006). It is not recommended to start teaching English to the children that have noticeable problems with speech – lispings, mispronunciation of the words or others. Otherwise it is desirable that the children become familiar with English as soon as possible. What is more, it has been proven that the children doing any extra type of activity (not only English) have in general better, healthy self-confidence (Štefflová, 2006).

#### 4.5. The organization of the English courses

As it has been already mentioned in the previous chapter, English lessons are usually led by external teachers in a form of study circles in the afternoon hours. These lessons are paid by parents. Such realization is used the most as it is not disturbing the course of an everyday education in the preschool institutions. The attendance in English courses is optional and that is why it is not possible to have the courses during morning hours because it would be unfair to the children whose parents did not choose the language education. Some of the preschool institutions have chosen other form of the realization of English courses. They have involved small language inputs during the whole day (the language inputs focus on the children whose parents paid for the English courses). However, such form of English teaching is not common in the Czech Republic (Štefflová, 2006).

Recently there have been certain changes that adjust the English courses in kindergartens. According to the last report of the Czech School Inspection (2016), the offer of paid English study circles cannot be included in the school educational programme. If it was, the preschool institutions would have to provide such courses for free. It is unequivocally recommended to carry out the English courses in the afternoon hours. If the courses are held in the morning lessons, they cannot interfere anyhow in the education according to the school educational programme and also cannot be held to the detriment of its extent and quality. Lastly, an adjustment concerning the English teachers has also been made. Due to the fact that the language course is an activity which is not part of the education according to the school law, it is not necessary that the course is conducted by a qualified language teacher. If such courses were conducted by an employee of the concrete preschool institution, he will not be paid for such activity and such activity cannot be carried out in the teacher's working hours (Česká Školní inspekce, 2016).

All adjustments considered, the statements of the Czech School Inspection are slightly discouraging for people who desire to improve the situation with English teaching at the preschool age. The other discouraging issue with the early English teaching is the lack of the continuity at primary schools. Many primary schools provide English lessons from the first grade as optional study circles but the previous English knowledge of the children is not taken into consideration, thus there is no continuity. Many children have a break from English lasting two years and the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is the period, in which they start learning English compulsorily (Wattsenglish, 2012). The lack of the continuity might discourage parents from choosing the early English teaching for their children.

# **PRACTICAL PART**

## 5 RESEARCH

### 5.1. Introduction

The research of this diploma thesis combines two quantitative methods: **observation** and **questionnaire survey**. According to Gavora (2000, p. 70), to obtain more detailed results of a research, it is often necessary to utilize more than one research method. Thus the research is divided into two parts.

The aim of the quantitative methods in general is to find a valid connection between theory and practice. It is an exogenous research, which means that the results are created by the researcher according to the collected data. The biggest advantage is that such research enables to find information about a huge number of people. On the other hand, quantitative research has often low validity because the researcher cannot ensure the truthfulness of the respondents' answers as far as the questionnaire survey is considered (Ligs University, 2015).

### 5.2. The aims of the research

The first aim of this research is to study the practical application of ELT in the selected preschool institutions. For this part of the research I have chosen observation with following analysis of the collected data and the comparison with the theory covered in the theoretical part of the thesis. It will focus on the fact whether the didactic principles of the learning process of the children of the preschool age are followed in practice or not. The findings of the research might help to raise awareness of the current situation in the preschool institutions, thus help to enhance the quality of future English teaching, not only in the particular kindergartens but in any other.

The second aim is to find out the motivation of parents who had enrolled their children in the English courses. This aim will be accomplished by a questionnaire survey. The questionnaires focus on the attitude of the parents towards an early English teaching and it studies the parents' involvement in the education.

## 5.3. OBSERVATION

### 5.3.1. Theoretical background

Observations are in general the base of all research methods. It is a systematic and planned method and the results cover not only the description of the reality but also its explanation (Lorenc, 2013).

This method of the diploma thesis is closely connected with the theoretical part, which serves as the background knowledge. The second and third chapters deal with the specifics of the very young learners (*see p.16*). The chapters cover the mental and cognitive development of preschoolers as well as the description of various methods and activities suitable for teaching children of the preschool age. It is obvious that there are various principles in the process of the early foreign language education that should be followed.

This part of the research focuses on the reality of English courses. It tries to find out whether or not the key principles of the very young learners' learning process are followed in practice. Three different institutions offering English courses for children of the preschool age were chosen for the purposes of this research. The first observation was carried out in the public kindergarten **Komenského** in Šternberk, the second one in the **kindergarten of the Palacky University** in Olomouc and the last one in the private language school **English 1.5 – 15** in Olomouc. One English lesson was observed in all selected institutions.

As mentioned above, the main question of this part of the research is:

*Are the didactic principles of the foreign language learning of the very young learners followed in practice?*

In order to answer the research question, helping questions have been worked out:

#### Questions:

1. What language is used the most in the lesson?
2. What does the teacher do to make the instructions in the lesson comprehensible?
3. Does the lesson have any frame?
4. What methods are used in the lesson?
5. Is the teacher correcting the mistakes during the lesson?

6. How does the teacher deal with the children's short attention span?
7. What types of activities are the most commonly used?
8. Does the teacher use any teaching aids during the lesson?
9. Does the teacher use any type of listening activities? What is their function in the lesson?  
(Indicating the start/end of the lessons, making the children active, calming the children down)

All of the questions have been worked out according to the theoretical part of this diploma thesis. The following chapter will focus on the evaluation of the findings.

### 5.3.2. Evaluation of the data

#### 5.3.2.1. Kindergarten Komenského (Šternberk)

##### Description of the institution

Kindergarten Komenského is the biggest public preschool institution in Šternberk, whose founder is the town of Šternberk. It is an institution that offers regular all-day operation. In comparison with the private preschool institutions the school fee is significantly lower. It is an institution that educates and takes care of 3-6 years old children and any child could be enrolled. The capacity of the kindergarten is approximately 164 children. The children are divided into six classes (maximum 28 children in one class). Recently the school has started to offer English courses in connection with the growing interest of parents (Školka Komenského, 2012).

##### Organization of the English lessons

The preschool institution provides the English courses with a native speaker (Irish), who is an external teacher that leads a language school in Šternberk. The English lessons are optional and conditioned by paying a fee every month. It is up to the parents whether they want their children to attend the courses or not. The course takes place once a week – every Wednesday. The kindergarten closes every day at 4 pm and after the closing time the course starts. This ensures that the activities of the children, who do not attend the English courses, are not disturbed. One lesson lasts 45 minutes. The teacher does not use any course book but he works with home-prepared materials and often uses Internet sources.

**Teacher:** native speaker (Irish) without pedagogical education

**Number of children:** 12 children (5 girls, 7 boys)

**Number of observed lessons:** 1

**Topic of the lesson:.** prepositions, colours, parts of the human body

Analysis of the questions:

**What language is used the most in the lesson?**

The teacher is a native speaker who cannot speak Czech, which means that the only language used in the lesson was English. The children had a perfect English speaking model.

**What does the teacher do to make the instructions in the lesson comprehensible?**

Making the language input comprehensible in the lesson was problematic for the teacher as the mother tongue could not be used. The children struggled because there was no chance of translating the instructions in the mother tongue. However, the teacher spoke very slowly and used a very simple language. When the children seemed not to comprehend, the teacher used one of the children to demonstrate what he wanted them to do.

**Does the lesson have any frame?**

Yes, there was a frame. The lesson began with an introductory song – a welcome song. It indicated the beginning of the lesson and it caught the children's attention as well. Also the end of the lesson was indicated by a goodbye song.

**What methods are used in the lesson?**

The teacher used Total physical response. The children enjoyed performing tasks according to the teacher's instructions. The teacher was demonstrating everything throughout the lesson and it seemed to work in this group because the children did what they were told to do.

**Is the teacher correcting the mistakes during the lesson?**

Yes. However, when a mistake occurred, the teacher did not say it was wrong but he repeated the word correctly and made the children repeat it again until they said it correctly too. Sometimes it was time demanding because the children took time in realizing what the teacher wants them to do. It might be more efficient with respect to the limited time of the lesson if the teacher repeated the word only once himself and continued in the lesson.

### **How does the teacher deal with the children's short attention span?**

It seemed to be a problem. The teacher tried to change the activities but sometimes one activity took 10-15 minutes or even 20 minutes because the teacher had to explain the instructions in English, which was difficult for the children to understand. This led to the loss of children's attention and they started to misbehave.

### **What types of activities are used?**

The teacher used various songs. Basically, the main activity of the lesson was the songs. The songs were used during the lesson. The teacher used the songs to teach the children new vocabulary. Even though it might seem repetitive I would not say it was not effective. The children loved the songs and were active during every activity. An example TPR activity used in the lesson was called "Inside the circle". Children were given simple commands such as "put your hand in the circle" or "put your leg out of the circle" in order to learn body parts as well as the prepositions. The children also learnt colors in a game called "What color is it?". For example, the teacher showed the children pictures of body part of different colors and asked the children "What is it?". The children answered "A leg". Then the teacher asked the children again "What color is the leg?" and the children answered "A blue leg".

### **Does the teacher use any teaching aids during the lesson?**

The teacher used various teaching aids. Being the owner of a language school, he made his own course books and teaching materials. He used a computer and CDs during the whole lesson. He also used karaoke music videos. Even though the children could not read yet, I consider it a good thing because the children could at least see the written English text. Another highly used aid was a puppet with a name that the teacher used to communicate with the children, which worked well and destroyed the barrier between the children and the teacher (the teacher was an external teacher, so the children were shy at the beginning because they were not used to him). The puppet made it easier for the teacher to make the children more active. The teacher also used various flash cards and pictures in the lesson.

### **Does the teacher use any type of listening activities? What is their function in the lesson?**

The highly used listening activities in the lesson were the songs, which had three functions. One song indicated the beginning of the lesson, another the end of the lesson and the rest of the songs were incorporated in the TPR activities to make the children move and be active in the lesson. Instructions as well as the TPR games are also considered as listening activities.



### 5.3.2.2. Kindergarten of the Palacky University (Olomouc)

#### Description of the institution

This private preschool institution offers the preschool education primarily for the children of the employees of the Palacky University. The target age group are children 3-6 years old. The employees of the kindergarten are highly qualified preschool teachers who are in a close connection with other specialists from the Palacky University. The kindergarten is divided into two classes with the capacity of 50 children. The difference between the public kindergartens and this concrete institution is that it is a preschool institution that requires a fee being paid every month by the parents of the children. However, the school is endowed with various free of charge above-standard activities, which are offered within the school fee. The institution offers the English courses besides other things (Mateřská škola Univerzity Palackého, 2012).

#### Organization of the English lessons

As it was already mentioned, the English courses are provided for free and it is up to the parents whether or not they want to enrol their children into the language course. The lessons take place twice a week – every Tuesday and Thursday and the time unit for each lesson is 30 minutes. Such duration of the lessons was established because the school management believe that 30 minutes are the ideal timing for maintaining the preschool children's attention. The lessons are led by the Czech students of the Palacky University who are studying the primary and pre-primary teaching. They take turns in teaching according to their availability. Every lesson has its carefully prepared lesson plan, which is based on the syllabus of the course book *Cookie and Friends*. However, the lectors often prepare their own materials in order to make the lessons more enjoyable for the children. The English lessons are in a separate classroom in order not to disturb the activities of the children who do not attend the courses, as in the case of Komenského kindergarten.

**Teacher:** Czech students with the English knowledge

**Number of children:** 6 (1 girl, 5 boys)

**Number of observed lessons:** 1

**Topic of the lesson:** fruits and vegetables, shopping, numbers

### Analysis of the questions:

#### **What language is used the most in the lesson?**

Mostly Czech was used during the lessons. The target language (English) was used during the activities. However Czech was used to ensure the children's comprehension. The instructions were also presented in Czech, which saved time because the children immediately understood what they were asked to do. The teacher also complimented the children in the mother tongue.

#### **What does the teacher do to make the instructions in the lesson comprehensible?**

The teacher used the mother tongue to make the language input more understandable. She also demonstrated the instructions while using pictures and flashcards to help the children. Every activity or movement was firstly demonstrated and then the children were asked to do it – they were imitating the teacher, which worked well.

#### **Does the lesson have any frame?**

Yes, there was a frame. The lesson started with a welcome song as well as ended with a goodbye song. At the beginning the teacher also checked the attendance of the children. Taking into consideration that the lesson had only 30 minutes, the activities were distributed effectively.

#### **What methods are used in the lesson?**

The teacher used the TPR method. The teacher was doing every activity with the children during the TPR activities, which motivated the children.

#### **Is the teacher correcting the mistakes during the lesson?**

The teacher focused on the proper English pronunciation. When a mistake occurred, the teacher said the word again and made the children repeat after her. If the mistake occurred repeatedly, the teacher usually moved on. This attitude might not be very effective. I would recommend correcting rather mistakes that occur repeatedly.

#### **How does the teacher deal with the children's short attention span?**

The whole lesson was made perfectly – the length of the lesson was adjusted so it was easier for the teacher to maintain the children's attention. The lesson was 30 minutes long. Also the activities during the lesson were short (5-8 minutes per one activity: 3 activities in total) so the children did not have a chance to be bored. Moreover, there was a huge amount of movement during the lesson, which the children really enjoyed.

**What types of activities are used?**

Songs were used at the beginning and end of the lesson. Besides the songs, the whole lesson was based on TPR games connected with the use of various pictures and flash cards. An example activity in the lesson could be a game called “What’s in the box?”. The teachers gave commands such as “*put one apple in the box*” or “*take three carrots out of the box*” in order to learn number as well as fruits and vegetables. The other activity was similar except the fruits and vegetables were spread on the floor of the classroom and the children’s aim was to run, grab the correct fruits or vegetables and put it in the box.

**Does the teacher use any teaching aids during the lesson?**

The lesson plan was created on the basis of the course book called Cookie and his friends, so the main teaching aid was the course book itself. The teacher also used home prepared materials (pictures, flash cards). Also a puppet was used to make the communication with the children easier. The computer and Internet sources were used to play the songs at the beginning and end of the lesson. The activities were based on learning fruits and vegetables so the teacher used plastics toys (fruits and vegetables) and a paper box.

**Does the teacher use any type of listening activities? What is their function in the lesson?**

The main listening activity used during the lesson was the songs played from the Internet. It was easier for the teacher because she did not have to sing the songs on her own and I would say it was enjoyable for the children because they could see the video and the people dancing and singing in the video, which motivated them. The use of the songs from the Internet was a good idea because the children could hear the real language. Also the teacher served as a source of the spoken language.

### 5.3.2.3. English 1.5 – 15 (Olomouc)

#### Description of the institution

English 1.5-15 is a private language school offering the English courses to the children from 1.5 to 15 years old. The children are divided into groups according to their age. There are three groups: children (1.5-5 years old), pupils (6-11 years old) and teens (12-15 years old). The youngest group “children” is the one that focuses on the children of the preschool age. The aim is to introduce the children to the language through the use of the language in combination arts, music and movement. The institution emphasizes the importance of the good English speaking model. The teachers are mostly the university graduates of English which were chosen carefully (Anglicky hrou, 2015).

#### Organization of the English lessons

The English courses are led by the Czech teachers, either young graduates of the Palacky University or teachers with longer teaching practice. The study group “children” is divided into two small groups of children according to their educational needs. The small number of the children in each group ensures individual approach of the teacher towards every child. Each group has a lesson once a week – one group on Tuesday, the other group on Thursday. As being the private language school, the parents have to pay a fee if they want the children to attend such courses. The schedule of the lessons differs depending on the teachers. Sometimes they start in the morning hours, another time in the afternoon hours. The management of the language school contacts the parents via e-mail or mobile phones if any changes in the schedule occur. The time duration of the English lesson is 45 minutes.

**Teacher:** Czech teachers qualified in Teaching English

**Number of children:** 4 children (1 girl, 3 boys)

**Number of observed lessons:** 1

**Topic of the lesson:** numbers, colours, clothes

### Analysis of the questions:

#### **1. What language is used the most in the lesson?**

The teacher used mostly English. During the lesson the children asked the teacher various questions – she responded only in English. Czech was used for organizational purposes (while checking the attendance of the children. It was also used for complimenting the children if they did the activities well. Lastly, it was used if the children seemed not to comprehend what the teacher wanted them to do. Otherwise, only English was used.

#### **2. What does the teacher do to make the instructions in the lesson comprehensible?**

Firstly, she adjusted her voice – she spoke in a very calm, slow manner. However, she spoke loudly enough so that everybody could hear her. She demonstrated the activities and performed them together with the children. The teacher also used lot of pictures to make the language input understandable.

#### **3. Does the lesson have any frame?**

The lesson was structured into three parts. The introductory part lasted 5 minutes. The children's presence check was very creative. Every child had a paper figure placed on one of the walls in the classroom. When the lesson started, every child placed a sticker on the figure. The teacher then wrote a date above the sticker. After the attendance check the lesson continued with a welcome song. The second part of the lesson included different activities and games. The last part focused on the development of the crafting skills. The lesson was ended by a goodbye song.

#### **4. What methods are used in the lessons?**

The lesson was made of different TPR games and activities. The teacher incorporated various songs into every TPR activity. The teacher was dancing and singing during the lesson while giving the children instructions and the children's aim was to imitate the movement of the teacher.

#### **5. Is the teacher correcting the mistakes during the lesson?**

No, she is not. The children were trying to repeat after the teacher while being encouraged by the teacher. However, they were not forced to do that if they did not want to. The teacher ignored the mistakes and rather focused on the active attitude of the children in the lesson.

## **6. How does the teacher deal with the children's short attention span?**

The teacher knew everybody by their name – she used the children's names to catch their attention. The whole lesson was brisk. The activities changed rapidly (1 activity = 5-7 minutes) so the children did not have time to be bored. Also the teacher sang a lot and made various noises, which the children loved.

## **7. What types of activities are used?**

The lesson plan was based on the songs. The teacher used songs to give the children commands. A big advantage was that the teacher was skilled in singing. For example, the teacher used the activity called "The clothes". Various pictures of coloured clothes were placed on various placed in the classroom. The teacher gave the children commands such as "find the blue trousers" or "find the red T-shirt" and the children had to run and find all pictures with the certain clothes. A story was also incorporated in the lesson – the teacher used the story to practise vocabulary (numbers, animals, colours). It was a story about Mother Duck and her ducklings. The teacher firstly told the story about the Mother Duck who loses and eventually finds her ducklings. After it, the children were given roles and performed the story together.

## **8. Does the teacher use any teaching aids during the lessons?**

The teacher did not use any technical aids – no computers or CD players. She managed to sing the songs on her own. On the other hand, she used many self-made materials such as flash cards and pictures. To encourage the children to participate in the songs the teacher gave the children small wooden musical instruments. The crafting activity at the end of the lesson required many aids (seeds of grass, soil, water,..).

## **9. Does the teacher use any type of listening activities? What is their function in the lessons? (start of the lesson, making the children active, calming children down, indicating the end of the lesson)**

The teacher used only one listening activity except for the songs. The function of the songs during the lesson was to make the children active. The listening activity intended to calm down the children and make them focus on the language was a story about the Mother Duck and her ducklings which was told by the teacher.

### 5.3.3. Comparison of the lessons

The observed lessons in the selected preschool institutions will be compared to find out the similarities and differences of the English lessons. The findings will be commented on.

- What language is used the most in the lesson?

| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK) | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC) | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC)          |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Only English              | English in combination with<br>Czech                   | English in combination with<br>Czech |

**Tab. 5:** Language used in the classroom

The amount of the foreign language used in the lessons in all selected institutions is sufficient for the children to be able to get used to the sound of the foreign language. In all cases the children had a good English speaking model, which highly contributes to the development of listening and speaking skills of the children and will help the children in future English learning. The use of the mother tongue is important as well because it makes the learning process of the preschoolers more effective as the children sometimes need the instructions to be translated in Czech. The fact is that the lessons of the native speaker in the kindergarten Komenského would not be so demanding for the teacher if there was the possibility of translation to the mother tongue. I would recommend getting a Czech teacher who would occasionally join the lessons and translate if the children seem not to comprehend the instructions of the native speaker. All in all, the children were exposed to the foreign language sufficiently.

- What does the teacher do to make the instructions in lessons comprehensible?

| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK)  | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC)   | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC)  |
|--|--|--|
| Use of pictures and flash cards<br>Use of nonverbal communication<br>Use of children for demonstrating the activities<br>Use of a simple language<br>Slow speech | Use of the mother tongue<br>Use of pictures and flash cards<br>Use of nonverbal communication<br>Slow speech<br>Use of a simple language | Use of the mother tongue<br>Use of pictures and flash cards<br>Use of nonverbal communication<br>Calm, sufficiently loud voice<br>Use of a simple language |

**Tab. 6:** Making the instructions comprehensible

In general, the teachers used similar techniques to make the language input comprehensible for the children. The teachers used pictures and various flash cards to show the children what is being talked about, which helped the children. The visual perception of children is stronger than any other in the preschool age. Also, the lessons were often based on nonverbal communication. The teachers moved or pointed on things while making facial expressions. The children found it easier to understand the whole message of the teacher's speech. Unlike the native speaker, the teachers in the kindergarten of the Palacky University as well in the private language school had the advantage of being able to speak Czech. They used the mother tongue if necessary. Most importantly, all teachers used a very simple language and often changed the pitch of the voice during the lesson. It was good for the children because they always noticed the change in the teacher's voice and paid attention.



➤ Does the lesson have any frame?

| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK)                         | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC) | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC)                       |
|---|--|---|
| YES<br>(clear beginning and end of<br>the lesson) | YES<br>(clear beginning and end of<br>the lesson)      | YES<br>(clear beginning and end of<br>the lesson) |

**Tab. 7:** Frame of the lesson

From the results it is obvious that all teachers are aware of the fact that the order of the lessons is important. It helps the children to be more focused and it also makes the teacher's work easier.

➤ What methods are used in the lesson?

| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK) | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC) | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC) |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| TPR                       | TPR  | TPR                         |

**Tab. 8:** Methods used in the lesson

The results indicate that the most commonly used method was Total physical response. The choice of such method is great because it respects the children's need to move. It is easier for the children when the teacher demonstrates the activities or performs them together with the children. Most children of the preschool age are energetic and TPR method effectively uses the energy of the children among other methods.

➤ Is the teacher correcting the mistakes during the lesson?

|                           |  |                             |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK) | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC) | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC) |
| YES                       | YES  | NO                          |

**Tab. 9:** Correction of the mistakes

The teacher from the private language school English 1.5-15 has great attitude towards the language errors of the children. She respected the errors of the children and did not correct them during the lesson. In comparison with the teacher of the private language school, the teachers from the kindergartens of the Palacky University and Komenského corrected the mistake during the lessons. However, the children were corrected politely. The teachers did not emphasize the mistake but they repeated the word correctly and the children then repeated after them until they pronounced the word correctly. However, the correction was often time demanding and I would say that sometimes discouraging for the children.

- How does the teacher deal with the children's short attention span?

| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK)           | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC)                    | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC)         |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Rapid changing of the<br>activities | Rapid changing of the<br>activities<br>Length adjustment of the<br>lesson | Rapid changing of the<br>activities |

**Tab. 10:** Dealing with short attention span

All teachers seemed to be aware of the fact that children of the preschool age have a short attention span. The lessons were full of short activities that took approximately 5 minutes. Thus the children did not have time to be bored. Also, the length of the English lesson in the kindergarten of the Palacky University was shorter, which seemed to work because the lesson was quick and the children were very active.

- What types of activities are the most commonly used?

| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK)                               | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC) | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC)                   |
|---|--|---|
| Songs<br>Games<br>TPR activities<br>Crafting activities | Songs<br>Games<br>TPR activities                       | Songs<br>Crafting activities<br>Story-telling |

**Tab. 11:** Activities used in the lesson

The teachers used various types of activities during the lessons. The most frequently used activities were the songs and games, which respects the importance of the use of games in the preschool age. Children love to play and they also love to sing songs. Two teachers used the Internet sources for playing the songs and one teacher managed to sing the songs on her own. Different TPR activities were used in the lessons as well, which respects the children's need to move. Two teachers focused also on the development of the crafting skills at the end of the lesson, which was entertaining for the children. In general, the teachers based their lesson on songs and TPR games.

➤ Does the teacher use any teaching aids during the lesson?

| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK)  | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC)                 | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC)  |
|--|--|--|
| Notebook<br>CD player<br>CD<br>Internet sources<br>Flash cards<br>Pictures<br>Worksheets<br>Plastic toys | Flash cards<br>Notebook<br>Internet sources<br>Pictures<br>Course book | Wooden musical instruments<br>Pictures<br>Rope<br>Magnetic board<br>Crafting (grass seeds, water,<br>soil..) |

**Tab. 12:** Teaching aids

The teachers used a variety of the teaching aids. The majority of the aids used during the lessons were home-prepared. The teachers used mainly pictures and flash cards which help the children to comprehend in the lessons. Two teachers used notebook and Internet sources for playing the songs. In general, every activity included the use of certain teaching aids. Thus, it could be deducted that the preparation for a lesson with the preschoolers could be time demanding for the teachers. However, the children enjoy the lessons and it makes the learning process more effective.

- Does the teacher use any type of listening activities? What is their function in the lesson?

| KOMENSKÉHO<br>(ŠTERNBERK)          | KINDERGARTEN OF THE<br>PALACKY UNIVERSITY<br>(OLOMOUC) | ENGLISH 1.5-15<br>(OLOMOUC)                                |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Songs<br>TPR games<br>Instructions | Songs<br>TPR games<br>Instructions                     | Listening to a story<br>Songs<br>TPR games<br>Instructions |

**Tab. 13:** Listening activities and their function in the lesson

All teachers used primarily songs in the lessons, which had different functions. The songs were used to indicate the beginning as well as the end of the lessons. The songs were also used during the lessons after more demanding activities to make the children active. The teacher of the private language school used also an activity in which the children listened to the story about the Mother Duck and her ducklings. This listening activity's function was to calm the children down and made the children focus on the language.

#### 5.3.4. The results of the research – comparison with the theory

This chapter will focus on the evaluation of the observations. The aim was to find sufficient data for answering the predetermined research question.

The research question:

*Are the didactic principles of the foreign language learning of the very young learners followed in practice?*

The selected institutions offering the English courses for children of the preschool age connect theory with practice well. The language teachers provide the children with meaningful learning in context. The children are learning the language through real life situations. The number of the children in the courses is usually low, which is good because it ensures the individual approach of the teacher toward every child.

The teachers are good in managing the class and also able to adapt the content of the lessons according to the educational needs of the children. The teachers' English is on a good level in all cases, which provides the children with a good model of the spoken language. The children are not necessarily forced to speak. They speak when they want to speak. The teachers' roles in the lessons are parent-like. One of the teachers is a guide to the children during the lessons. All of the teachers motivate the children as well as help them whenever the children need.

The activities in the lesson are distributed wisely. The lessons are made of a variety of short activities respecting the short attention span of the children of the preschool age. The activities such as games, songs or other listening activities are used frequently in the lessons. The teachers also use various teaching aids to support the learning process of the children. The children's need to move was respected in every lesson by including various TPR activities, which involved movement.

To sum up, the results indicate that the English lessons in the selected preschool institution follow the principles of:

- ✓ Children's short attention span (*see page 14*).
- ✓ Children having a good model of the spoken language (*see page 14*).
- ✓ Use of the nonverbal communication in the lesson (*see page 14*).
- ✓ The period of silence (*see page 20*).
- ✓ The importance of the listening activities and games (*see page 22*).
- ✓ Learning in context (*see page 22*).

- ✓ Meaningful learning: real life situations (*see page 22*).
- ✓ Children being exposed to the foreign language (*see page 22*).
- ✓ The teacher's role in the lesson (*see page 23*).
- ✓ Children's need to move (*see page 23*).
- ✓ None error correction (*see page 23*).

The list stated above gave sufficient data for answering the research question. The didactic principles of the foreign language learning of the very young learners **are followed** in practice. The preschool institutions and the language teachers are aware of the didactic principles of the preschoolers and the English lessons are created in accordance with the theory.



## 5.4. QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

### 5.4.1. Introduction

At the beginning of my questionnaire research, I asked some of the parents to fill in a short questionnaire (see Appendix 2) with the help of the management of the selected institutions (Kindergarten Komenského, English 1.5-15 and Kindergarten of the Palacky University). The questionnaire was created for the parents whose children attend the English courses in the selected institutions. The total number of the released questionnaires was sixty, from which fifty questionnaires were distributed in person and ten remaining questionnaires were sent via e-mail to some of the parents whose children were absent in the lessons while conducting the research. Forty filled-in questionnaires were returned. Thus, the returnability was 67%.

The introduction of the questionnaire provided the parents with the basic information about the research such as the aim and the use of the obtained data. The questionnaires were anonymous for ensuring more truthful data. It was written in Czech as not all parents would be able to understand English. Thus, all answers that will be quoted in the following chapters are translations from Czech. The final version of the questionnaire contained ten questions. Types of the questions used in the questionnaire were as follows:

- ✓ Three open-ended questions.
- ✓ Two close-ended questions.
- ✓ Four dichotomous questions.
- ✓ One contingency question.

In three of the dichotomous questions the respondents were asked to supply their explanation for choosing the certain answer.

Firstly, all of the returned questionnaires were checked if they were filled-in properly and then they were incorporated in the research. The analysis of the data was made in MS Excel, in which the graphs were created. Also the tables including the answers and the percentage of the answers were created in MS Excel.

#### 5.4.2. Aims of the questionnaire

The following part of the research focuses on the parents who have enrolled their children in the English courses in the selected institutions.

The main aims of this part of the research are:

- ✓ To find out the motivation of parents who have assigned their children to the English courses.
- ✓ To find out the attitude of the parents towards the early English teaching.
- ✓ To find out if the parents are interested in the course of the English lessons.

According to the aims of the questionnaire, three hypotheses have been created:

**Hypothesis 1: The parents think that the lower age of the children is appropriate for English teaching.**

**Hypothesis 2: The parents believe that the English courses in the preschool institutions would be beneficial for the children in the future.**

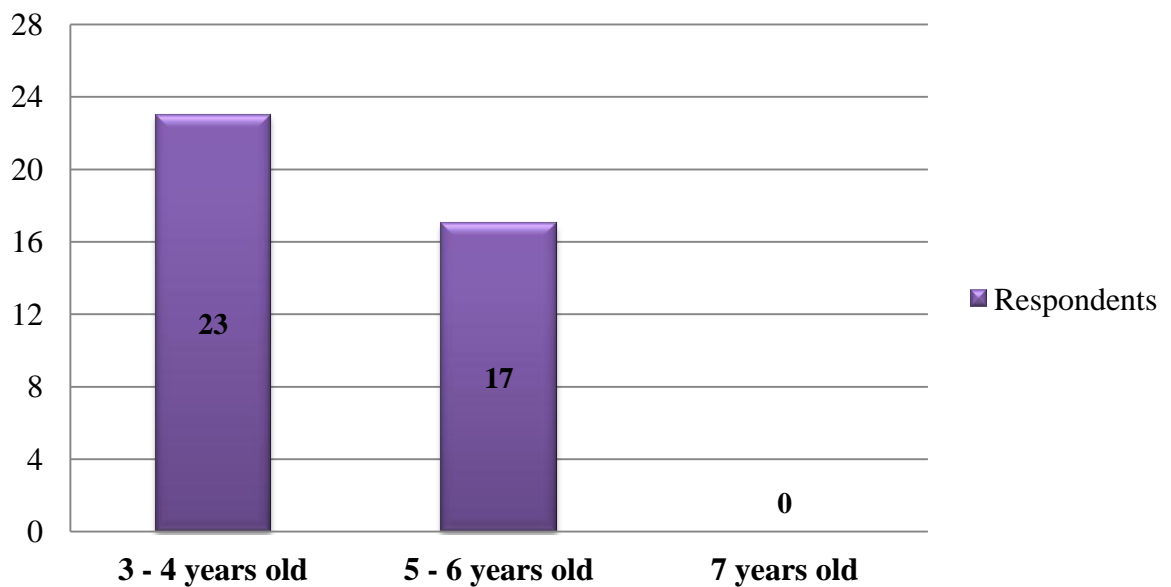
**Hypothesis 3: The parents are interested in the course of the English lessons.**

The following chapter will focus on the analysis of the data collected through the questionnaires. The analysed data will be then used to confirm or disprove the stated hypotheses.

### 5.4.3. Evaluation of the collected data

#### **Question 1: What age of the children is the best age for starting to learn English in your opinion?**

*Possible answers: 3-4 years old – 5-6 years old – 7 years old*



**Graph 1:** Appropriate age for starting to learn English

#### Answers and comments:

The respondents were provided with three possible answers and had to choose one of them. The answers of the respondents indicated that the majority of them (57.5%) believe that it is appropriate to start introducing the foreign language to the children in the lower preschool age (3-4 years). Seventeen respondents (42.5%) think that the children should start learning English at the age of five-six and none of the respondents chose the age of seven for starting the language education.

## **Question 2: Why do you want your child to learn English in the preschool institution?**

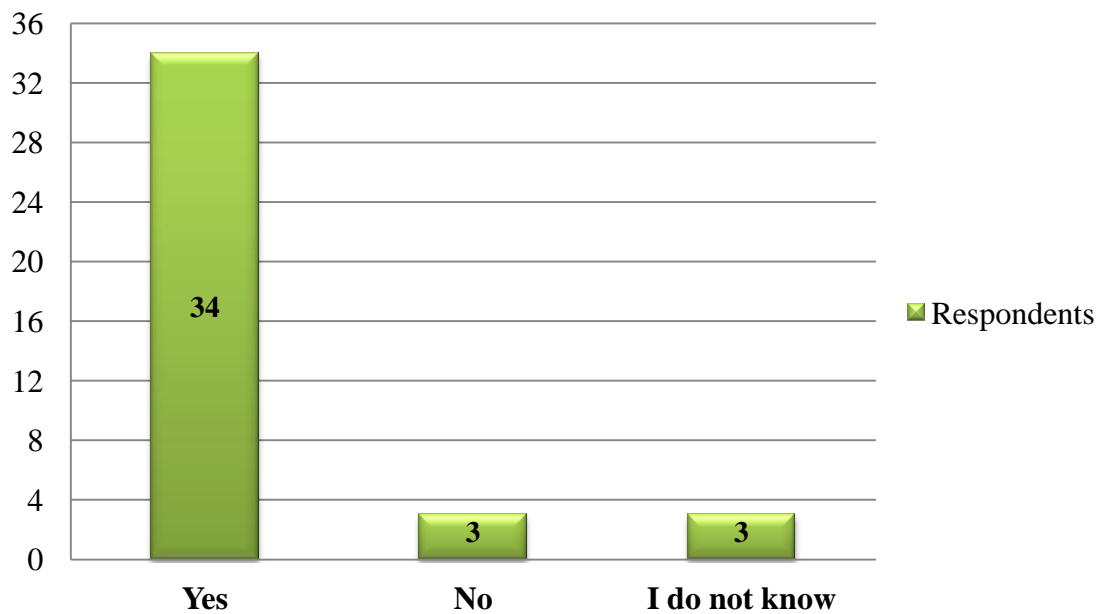
### Answers and comments:

The respondents were supposed to provide their own answers. The answers were similar. The most common answers were that “the child would understand English better at primary school”, “the child will find it easier to communicate with the foreigners in the future” and that “the earlier the child adopts English, the better”. Three of the respondents also mentioned that “they did not have the opportunity to learn English and that is why they want their children to have such opportunity” and two respondents mentioned their “own disability to speak English”.

The answers indicated that the parents are aware of the importance of English and they also believe that the children of the preschool age are able to adopt the foreign language without difficulties. Additionally, it could be deducted that the parents want their children to have the opportunity of the language education in the preschool institution because they consider English to be an important part of life.

**Question 3: Do you think that the English courses in the preschool institution would give your child advantages in comparison with the other children at primary school?**

*Possible answers: Yes – No – I do not know*



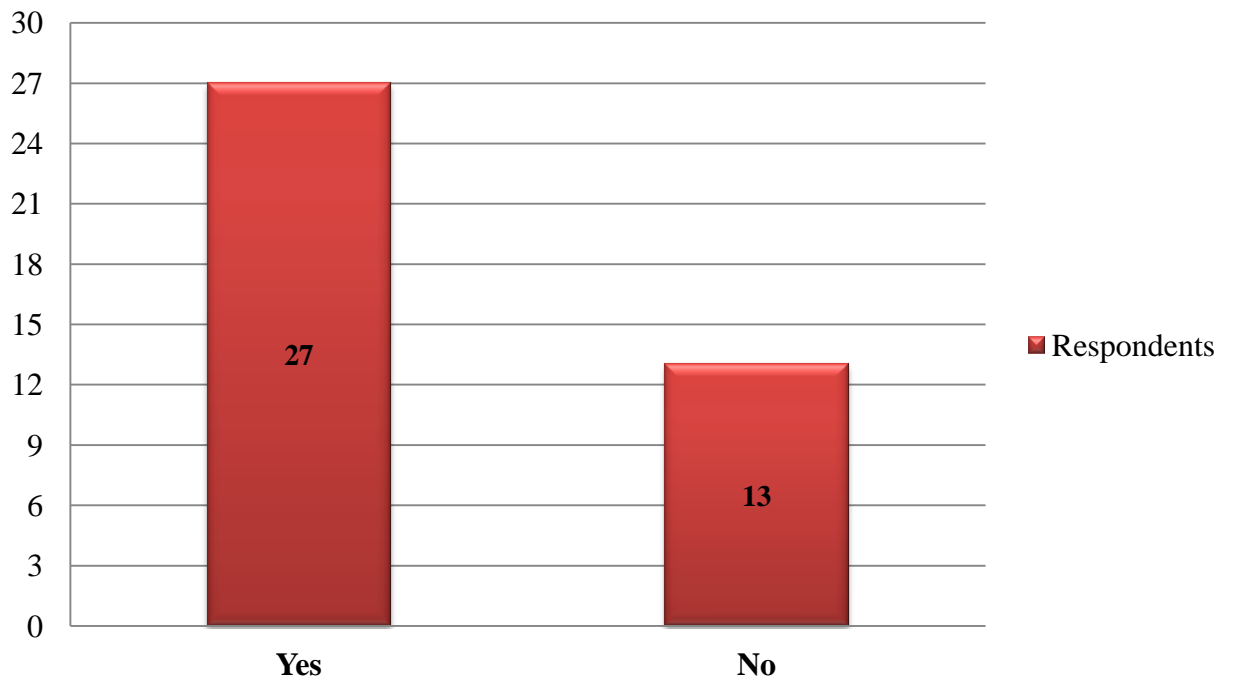
**Graph 2:** The advantages of the preschool English courses at primary schools

Answers and comments:

The respondents were provided with three possible answers and the most appropriate one had to be chosen. The majority of the respondents (85%) chose the answer “Yes” and only three respondents (7.5%) chose the answer “No”. The results show that the parents think that the early English teaching is beneficial for their children. It could be deduced that the parents believe that English at primary schools would be easier for the children if they start adopting the language since the preschool age. The three remaining respondents (7.5%) did not state any opinion by choosing the answer “I do not know”.

**Question 4: Did the offer of English courses influence your choice of a preschool institution?**

*Possible answers: Yes – No*



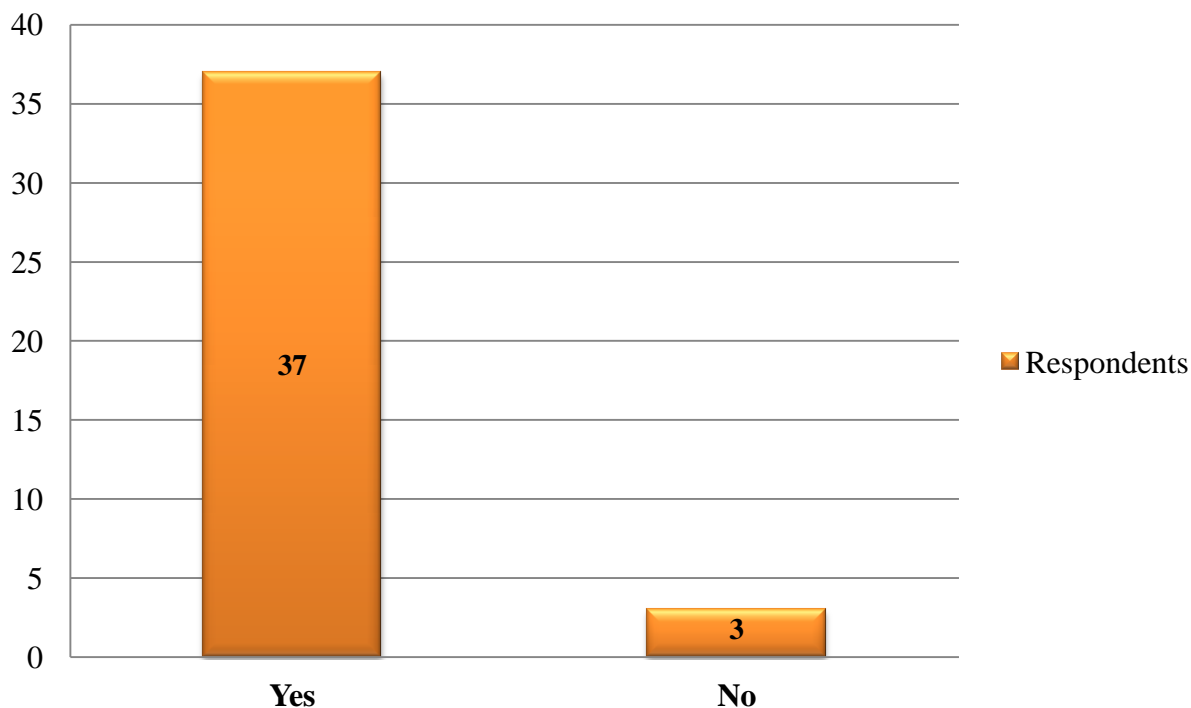
**Graph 3:** The offer of the English courses influencing the choice of the preschool institution

Answers and comments:

The respondents were supposed to choose one of the given answers. From the results it is obvious that most of the parents (67.5%) were influenced by the offer of the English courses while choosing the preschool institution in which they would enrol their children. It also indicated that parents are interested in the English teaching to the children. It seems that the preschool institutions offering English courses might be preferred by the majority of parents. 32.5% of the respondents chose the answer “No”.

**Question 5: Do you see any progress in English in your child? If yes, please, state what progress.**

*Possible answers: Yes – No*



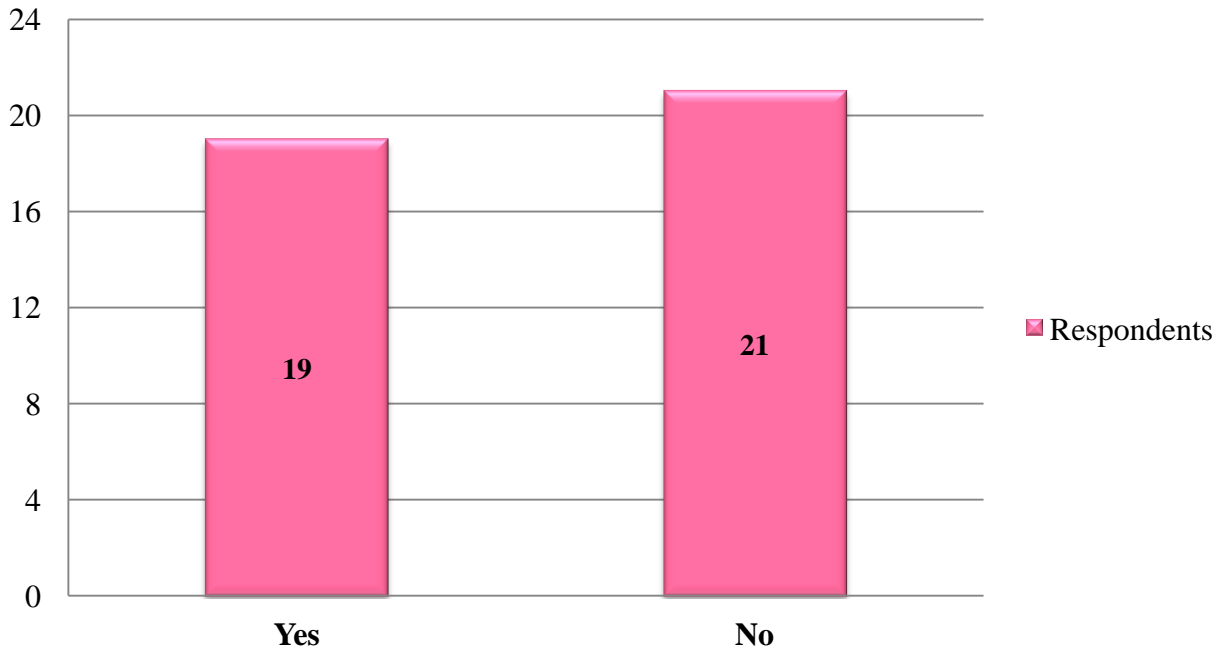
**Graph 4:** The children’s progress in English

Answers and comments:

In this question the respondents had to choose one answer. If the answer was “Yes”, the parents were asked to provide additional information. Three respondents (7.5%) chose the answer “No” so they did not provide any information. However, twenty-seven respondents (92.5%) selected the answer “Yes” and the parents then gave different additional answers. The most frequently stated answers were that “the children spontaneously repeat English words at home” or “the children sing English songs from the lessons at home”. Some of the parents stated that “the children greet or say goodbye to the family members or friends in English”. One of the respondents also stated that “the child is good at remembering colours and wants me to teach him more at home”. The results proved that the English teaching to the preschoolers has remarkable results. It is important for the parents to see progress because they are the ones who decide whether the children would continue in the language education or not.

**Question 6: Would you like your child to be taught by the native speaker? Why?**

*Possible answers: Yes – No*



**Graph 5:** The native speaker as the teacher of English

Answers and comments:

The respondents were supposed to choose one answer based on their preferences. In both cases they were also asked to justify their choice of the answer. The ratio of the “Yes” answers to the “No” answers was almost equal. Nineteen respondents (47.5%) selected the answer “Yes” whereas twenty-one respondents (52.5%) the answer “No”. Those who chose the answer “Yes” explained that “the native speaker would teach the children better pronunciation”, “the original is better than its copy” or “the children will not be surprised in the future while meeting a foreigner”. One of the respondents also stated that “the native speaker communicates with the children naturally, whereas the Czech teachers only pass to the children what they have learnt”. The respondents who selected the answer “No” gave reasons such as “the Czech teacher with good level of English is sufficient for teaching the children” or that “they do not care”. The results were surprising, in my opinion. It is obvious that the native speaker is not that important for the parents. The parents would appreciate a Czech teacher in case that the English of the teacher was on a good level.



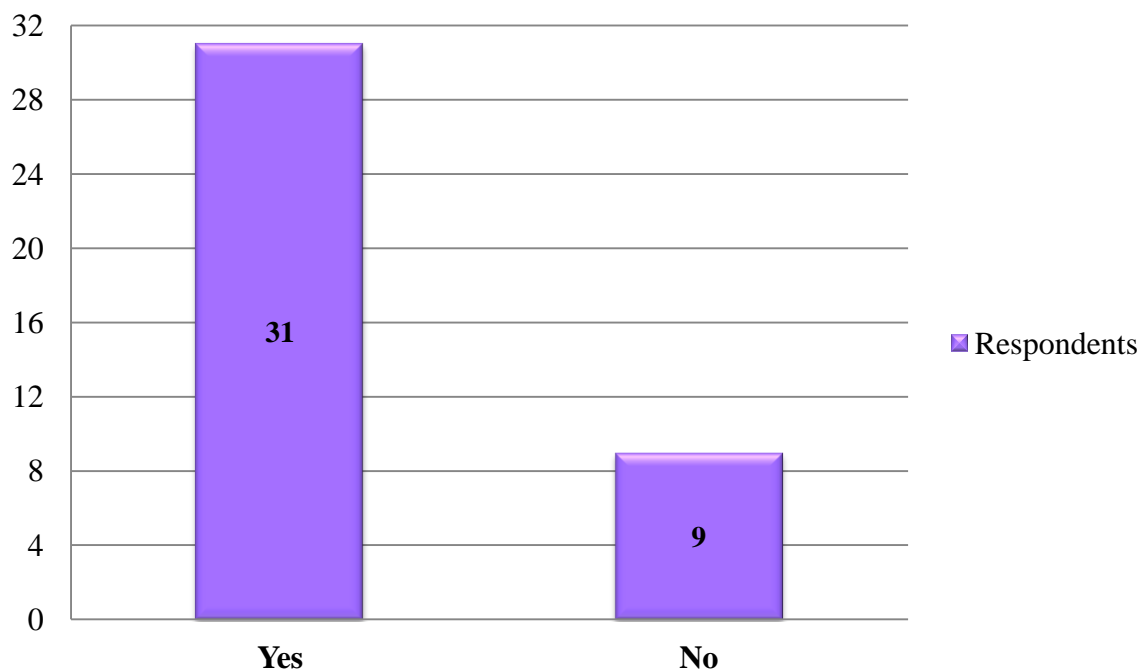
**Question 7: What is the most important characteristic of the English preschool teacher in your opinion?**

Answers and comments:

This question was open-ended. The respondents were supposed to provide their own answers. The most frequent answer was that “the teacher should have positive attitude towards children and be able to motivate them”. Also, many respondents stated that “the teacher should be patient with the children”. On the other hand, there were also answers such as “the teacher should have perfect knowledge of English” or “the teacher should have appropriate language education”. However, the number of the responses indicated that the parents are more focused on effective work of the teacher with the children rather than the teacher’s expertise in the language.

**Question 8: Will you enrol your child in the optional English courses in the first and second grade at primary school? Why / why not?**

*Possible answers: Yes – No*



**Graph 6:** The choice of optional English courses in the first and second grade at primary school

Answers and comments:

The respondents were asked to choose one answer and also to give the reason for choosing the certain answer. The majority of the respondents (77.5%) chose the answer “Yes” and gave reasons such as “I want my child to be in constant contact with English” or “I want my child to have a positive attitude towards English”. Some of the respondents explained that “the obligatory English lessons starts in the third grade of the primary school and that they do not want their children to have a break from English lasting two years”. Other respondents claimed that “it will help the children in the future language learning” and “there is never enough English”. I would like to quote the answer from one respondent which supports the previous statements: “English is necessary for everybody, it is a natural part of our lives and I want my child to be good at it. I also want my child to internalize the language, which means that it is important to ensure as many English lessons as possible”. The answer “No” was selected by nine respondents (22.5%), who in general stated reasons such as “I do not want my child to be encumbered with extra activities”. One of the respondents pointed out that “children start the obligatory English lessons

in the third grade of the primary school and the previous knowledge of the children is not taken into consideration”. The obtained data showed that the majority of the parents want their children to continue in the English courses and will choose the optional English courses at primary schools.

### **Question 9: What do you think children should learn in English courses?**

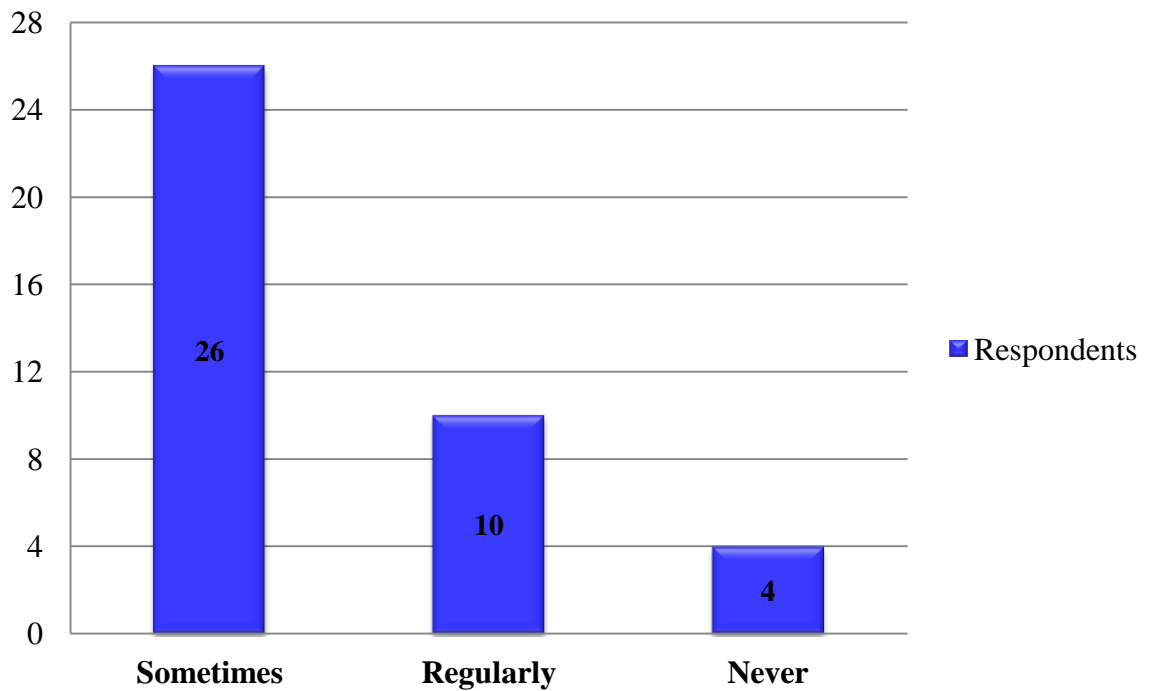
#### Answers and comments:

This was another open-ended question. The respondents were supposed to provide the answers on their own according to their opinions. The obtained data indicated that the parents have similar opinions of what the children should learn in English lessons. The most frequent answer was that “the children should learn the basic vocabulary (colours, animals, numbers, family members...)”. Many respondents also stated that “children should learn the basic phrases applicable in life – Hello, how are you? What is your name? How old are you?”. The majority of the respondents mentioned that “most importantly, the children should listen to the foreign language to become accustomed to its rhythm and pronunciation”. Some of the respondents suggested learning songs and rhymes because children in the preschool age love them and they will enjoy the lessons. One respondent stated that “the use of pictures while learning vocabulary would help the children to remember better”.

None of the respondents stated answers such as “I do not know” or “I do not care”. Thus, it is obvious that parents have a clear idea of what the preschoolers should learn. Sometimes the parents could have exaggerated demands on their children (e.g. communicating in the language). However, the respondents of this questionnaire seem to be aware of the fact that children of the preschool age are not able to communicate in the foreign language. The lessons are adjusted to the educational needs of the preschoolers and the parents respect it.

**Question 10: Do you practise English with your child at home?**

*Possible answers: Sometimes – Regularly – Never*



**Graph 7:** The parents practising English at home with the children

Answers and comments:

The respondents were provided with three possible answers and had to choose the most appropriate answer according to them. Ten respondents (25%) chose the answer “Regularly”. Only four respondents (10%) chose “Never” and the majority of the respondents (65%) chose “Sometimes”. Even though the parents do not regularly practice the language with their children at home, at least they do it from time to time. Thus it could be assumed that the parents are interested in what the children have learnt in the lessons and want them to remember it.

#### 5.4.4 The results of the questionnaire survey

This chapter focuses on evaluation of the questionnaire survey in connection with the predetermined hypotheses. The aims were to find out the motivation of the parents for enrolling the children in the English courses in the institutions as well as to find out the parents' interest in the course of the English lessons. The collected data were sufficient for confirming or proving the hypotheses wrong.

***Hypothesis 1: The parents think that the lower age of the children is appropriate for English teaching.***

This statement is connected with the first question of the questionnaire. The results indicated that most parents prefer the lower age for English teaching. For that reason, the hypothesis was confirmed.

The majority of the parents believe that the optimal age of the children for starting to learn English is around their third to fourth year of life. The increasing number of the children attending English courses in the preschool institutions could be supporting evidence as well. The teaching of English to very young learners is realized through the use of games and songs, which might be the reason why the parents prefer the lower age. The preschool institutions which were selected for the research offer the English courses for the children from the age of three to the age of six (except the private language school). Thus, it depends on the parents at what age they decide to enrol their children in the English courses.

***Hypothesis 2: The parents believe that the English courses in the preschool institutions would be beneficial for the children in the future.***

The hypothesis is closely connected with the questions two and three of the questionnaire. The parents were asked to provide reasons for enrolling the children in the English courses as well as if they think that the preschool English courses would give the children advantage in comparison with the other children at primary schools. The majority of the respondents believe that the children would be ahead of the other children at primary schools and stated several reasons for enrolling the children in the courses. One of the most frequent answers was that “the English courses in the preschool age would help my child at primary school” or “it would help my child in future (job, communication with foreigners)”. According to the answers, the hypothesis was confirmed.

***Hypothesis 3: The parents are interested in the course of the English lessons.***

The last hypothesis focused on the parents' attitudes towards the English courses. The aim was to find out whether the parents are interested in the course of the English lessons or not. The hypothesis relates to questions number five, six, seven, nine and ten of the questionnaire. The parents were supposed to provide answers to various questions about the teacher of English as well as the content of the lessons. The responses of the parents showed that most of the parents want to know what happens in the lessons and who teaches the children. The majority of the parents also try to practice English at home with the children occasionally, which supports the idea that most of the parents want their children to progress in the language. Therefore, the hypothesis was confirmed.

## 5.5. Overall evaluation of the research

To sum up, three institutions offering the English courses for children of the preschool age were selected in order to conduct the research. The research was divided into two parts. The first part (the observation) studied the course of the English lessons in the selected institutions in order to answer the predetermined research question.

The aim of the observation was to find out whether the didactic principles of the foreign language learning of children of the preschool age are followed in the English courses or not. The results proved that the principles of the children's learning are mostly followed in the selected institutions.

The second part of the research (questionnaire) focused on the parents of the children attending the English courses. The aim was to find out their motivation for enrolling the children in the English courses as well as their attitude towards early language education and their interest in the course of the English lessons. The questionnaire was supposed to collect data in order to answer three predetermined hypotheses. All three hypotheses were confirmed.

The collected data from the observations as well as the questionnaires are in accordance with the theoretical part of this diploma thesis. However, the results should not be generalized.



## CONCLUSION

English language has become an inseparable part of our lives and the interest of the society in the English courses increases. It has become a trend in recent years that parents want their children to start learning English in the preschool age. This diploma thesis deals with the issues of the early foreign language education of the children of the preschool age.

The thesis was divided into two parts – the theoretical and practical part. The first chapter of the theoretical part covered the historical development of the preschool education in the Czech Republic. It also dealt with the incorporation of the language teaching in the preschool education as well as pointed out various advantages and disadvantages of English teaching to children of the preschool age. The second chapter described the term “*very young learner*” and dealt with the children’s development in connection with various theories such as Piaget’s or Vygotsky’s developmental theories. The third chapter addressed various methods and activities appropriate for teaching the very young learners. Finally, the last chapter mentioned potential problems of English lessons with the children of the preschool. It dealt with the reality of ELT in preschool educations and its organization as well as the teachers of English and the appropriate age for learning English.

The aims of the theoretical part were to describe the process and realization of ELT to very young learners in the Czech Republic as well as the issues that might occur during the realization. The aims were accomplished by the study of various magazine articles and books focusing on English teaching in the preschool age. I have found out that the number of the sources was immense, which points to the fact that the people in general are greatly interested in this topic.

The research in the practical part of the thesis made use of two research methods: the observation and the questionnaire. The observations focused on three preschool institutions offering English courses for the children of the preschool age – the kindergarten Komenského from Šternberk, the kindergarten of the Palacky University from Olomouc and the private language kindergarten English 1.5-15 from Olomouc. The questionnaire focused on the parents who had enrolled the children in the English courses in the mentioned preschool institutions.

The main aims of the practical part were to find out if the didactic principles of the foreign language learning of the preschoolers are followed in the English courses or not and also to find out the attitudes of the parents towards the early foreign language education of the children and their motivation for enrolling the children in the English courses.

The results of the research were rather satisfying. The observations proved that the English lessons in the selected preschool institutions are in accordance with the theoretical part of the thesis. Also, the parents seem to be highly interested in the course of the English lessons and it is obvious that they take into consideration the advantages of the early foreign language education. I believe that the research also motivated the parents and made them think more about their children. This thesis may also raise the awareness of the current situation of the English teaching thus help to enhance the quality of future English teaching in the preschool institutions.

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(photo: author)

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(photo: author)

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(photo: author)

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(photo: author)

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(photo: author)

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: THE OBSERVATION NOTES

#### 1 PRESCHOOL INSTITUTION KOMENSKÉHO (ŠTERNBERK)

|   |
|---|
| What language is used the most in the lessons?  |
| <p>- the teacher is a native speaker (Irish) → the only language used in the lessons is English<br/>(Czech is not used because the teacher does not speak the language)</p> <p>- <u>no mother tongue</u> !!</p>   |
| What does the teacher do to make the instructions in lessons comprehensible?  |
| <p>- he speaks very slowly = uses <u>very simple language</u></p> <p>- he demonstrates everything he wants the kids to do</p> <p>- when the kids seem not to comprehend - he focuses on a kid which seems to understand the most and he uses him to</p>             |
| Do the lessons have any frame?  |
| <p>- it does!</p> <p>= the beginning of the lesson: the welcome songs (2)</p> <p>- the ending = Goodbye song (1)</p> <p>it indicates the beginning and the ending which is good because the children are focused</p>  |
| What methods are used in the lessons?   |
| <p>- mostly <u>TPR activities</u> or audio-<del>lingual</del> <sup>lingual</sup> method</p> <p>↓</p> <p>- the children enjoy performing tasks according to the teacher's instructions, also, it's good that the teacher is a model and demonstrates everything!</p> |

Is the teacher correcting the mistakes during the lesson?

- yes he is  
→ however, he is not saying that it's wrong but he repeats the phrase (word) again and makes the children to repeat after him so that they say it properly

How does the teacher deal with the children's short attention span?

- it seems to be a problem  
- the teacher tries to change the activities quite often however the children do not always understand which leads to the loss of kids' attention quite often

What types of activities are the most commonly used?

= the teacher uses lot of songs (3-4 in one lesson)  
- lot of games = the lessons are made of games and songs  
- craft activities during the lesson

Is there any ratio of the activities in the lessons?

listening/speaking (beginning + the lesson) : craft  
→ 35 mins → 10 mins

2:1

the biggest focus is on the audio-oral method!  
(→ listening + repeating)

|   |
|---|
| Does the teacher use any teaching aids during the lessons?  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he uses a lot teaching aid</li> <li>- computer + CD (he plays songs + karaoke videos)</li> <li>- a puppet, pictures, flashcards, soft foam, rope</li> <li>- plastic toys (fruit, vegetable) + worksheets (for craft activities) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ home-prepared materials (that the teacher has worked out during his teaching practice)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Does the teacher use any type of listening activities? What is their function in the lessons? (start of the lesson, making the children active, calming children down, indicating the end of the lesson)  |
| <p>he uses the songs and karaoke videos</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) indicating the start / end of the lesson</li> <li>2) to make the kids move (TPE = giving commands) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓</li> <li>activating the children</li> </ul> </li> </ol>   |

- Description of the kindergarten:** state kindergarten optional English courses (paid)
- 1 group of children in the whole kindergarten
  - the Education is not incorporated in the school education programme!

Organization of the class (udělat fotky!!): in the afternoon lesson (after closing hours of the kindergarten in order not to disturb the activity of other children during the day)

Teacher: native speaker (Irish)

Children: 12 kids (5 girls, 7 boys)

Classroom: the spaces in the kindergarten (one of the classes)

Duration of the lesson: 45 mins / once a week



## 2 KINDERGARTEN OF THE PALACKY UNIVERSITY (OLOMOUC)

|  |
|--|
| What language is used the most in the lessons?   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- mostly Czech</li><li>- English is used during the activities (but Czech is used more often → to ensure the children's comprehension)</li></ul> <p>Czech used for organizational purposes also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- English = very simple language (mostly single words)</li></ul> |
| What does the teacher do to make the instructions in lessons comprehensible?   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- she uses the <u>mother tongue</u></li><li>- she demonstrates the instructions with the help <u>of pictures</u></li><li>- she shows every activity to the kids</li></ul>  |
| Do the lessons have any frame?   |
| <p><u>beginning</u> = welcome song</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- checking the presence of the children</li></ul> <p>- the lesson: 3-4 activities (1 activity = max 10 minutes)</p> <p>- <u>ending</u>: goodbye song</p>  |
| What methods are used in the lessons?  |
| <p>Audio-lingual + TPR</p> <p>↓</p> <p>children repeat expressions and vocabulary after the teacher</p> <p>→ the teacher does the activities together with children</p> <p>↓</p> <p>they can see what they're supposed to do</p>   |

Is the teacher correcting the mistakes during the lesson?

- ;
- she really focuses on proper pronunciation
  - if there's a mistake → she does not tell the children that it's wrong, however → she tells the certain word once again and make the children to repeat it again

How does the teacher deal with the children's short attention span?

- the length of the lessons is adjusted (30 mins = it's easier for the teachers to keep the children's attention)
- the activities do not take a lot of time (max 10 mins for 1 activity) !!
- there's a lot of movement, which the children really enjoy

What types of activities are the most commonly used?

- games with pictures  
→ TPR activities through the whole lesson
- lot of songs during the lesson

Is there any ratio of the activities in the lessons?

Listening / speaking skills are making the whole lesson  
↓  
the whole lesson is based on such activities which develop listening and speaking skills

|   |
|---|
| Does the teacher use any teaching aids during the lessons?  |
| <p><u>Cookie</u> = course book (syllabus) →</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- home prepared materials (cards with pictures, faces) + <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">flashcards</span></li> <li>- puppet (talking with the kids)</li> <li>- computer</li> <li>- paper + pens</li> </ul> |
| Does the teacher use any type of listening activities? What is their function in the lessons? (start of the lesson, making the children active, calming children down, indicating the end of the lesson)  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- songs from <u>Youtube</u> → <u>welcome song</u> (Hello, How are you?)</li> <li>↓</li> <li>during the lesson = <u>to revise</u> already learnt vocabulary</li> <li>- <u>goodbye song</u></li> </ul> <p>* the songs from Youtube = children can hear the real language</p>       |

**Description of the kindergarten:** private kindergarten, the teachers are students from UP (primary teachers) = 2 girls (they take turns) → one teaches on Tuesday / another on Thursday

- there are lesson plans on every class (they're sending it to each other)
- they're paid by the university in a form of a scholarship

Organization of the class (udělat fotky!!): the lessons take place in different room so it's not disturbing the activities of children who do not attend English courses

Teacher: Czech teachers (2 girls)

Children: 12 (4 girls, 8 boys)

Classroom: playful, colorful environment (in the kindergarten)

Duration of the lesson: 30 min (twice a week) - Tuesdays, Thursdays

the courses: children of employees of the UP Olomouc

email

courses: summer / winter semester



3 ENGLISH 1.5-15

|   |       |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
|---|-------|--------|--|--|-------|--|--|-------|--|---|--|---|----------------------|--|--------|
| <p>What language is used the most in the lessons? (✓)</p>   |       |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| <p><u>Mostly English</u><br/>         → the children ask the teacher in Czech → she responds in English<br/>         → children + teacher say HELLO / GOODBYE in English<br/>         - for organizational purpose (presence - dates) - <u>Czech is used</u><br/>         - Czech is used to compliment the children<br/>         - Czech is also used to describe the activity if the children seem not to understand</p>  |       |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| <p>What does the teacher do to make the instructions in lessons comprehensible? (✓)</p>   |       |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- she speaks in very calm, slow way</li> <li>- she is loud enough so everybody could hear her</li> <li>- she demonstrates <u>the activities</u> and performs them together with children</li> <li>- she's repeating herself quite often</li> <li>- showing <u>pictures</u></li> <li>- she's very good in <u>motivating</u> the children</li> </ul>   |       |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| <p>Do the lessons have any frame? (✓)</p>   |       |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| <p><u>beginning</u> - putting a stamp on a card (it indicates the presence of children in the lessons)<br/> <u>Hello song</u> - <u>2mins</u> (with Giraffe puppet)<br/>         → the lesson (games, activities) - <u>20mins</u><br/>         → crafting time (10mins of crafts) - <u>10mins</u> - <u>20mins</u><br/>         → the ending: Goodbye Song (with Giraffe puppet)</p>  |       |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| <p>What methods are used in the lessons? Ratio? (✓)</p>   |       |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| <p>Singing a song = speaking / listening skills<br/>         (lot of them)<br/>         My garden = craft skills</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">ratio</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>45min</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>2 : 1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">↓</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">↓</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">listening<br/>singing</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">crafts</td> </tr> </table> </div> |       | ratio  |  |  | 45min |  |  | 2 : 1 |  | ↓ |  | ↓ | listening<br>singing |  | crafts |
|   | ratio |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
|   | 45min |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
|   | 2 : 1 |        |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| ↓   |       | ↓      |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |
| listening<br>singing  |       | crafts |  |  |       |  |  |       |  |   |  |   |                      |  |        |

Is the teacher correcting the mistakes during the lesson? (✓)

No, she's not

→ the children are trying to repeat what they hear and she's encouraging them to do so but they're not forced to do that

How does the teacher deal with the children's short attention span? (✓)

- she manages pretty well → the children follow her instructions
- she knows everybody's name = she uses their names to catch their attention
- the lesson is very swift  
→ the activities change quite often (1 activity = 5 mins)
- she sings a lot, which the children love + also she makes animal noises and changes her emotions during the lesson

What types of activities are the most commonly used? (✓)

Jessie the giraffe → welcome song

- learning through songs and music (sounds of various musical instruments)
- pictures of clothes (spread in the room = children need to find them and bring to the teacher) → practicing colors / counting
- [SONGS] are incorporated through the whole lesson  
(the teacher is very skilled in singing = big advantage !!)

Is there any ratio of the activities in the lessons? Methods (✓)

[TPR] = singing a song = giving children instructions (by singing it and also demonstrating the activities)

|  |
|--|
| Does the teacher use any teaching aids during the lessons? (✓)   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- home prepared materials (pictures spreaded <del>around</del> in the classroom, cards)</li> <li>- using a puppet to talk with children</li> <li>- musical instruments (small wooden = used in a song)</li> <li>- rope, books</li> <li>- matrace, sitting bed</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">→ no technical aids??</p> <p>- crafting = seeds of grass, soil dust, water, paper</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto;">→ a lot of the teaching aids</div> |
| Does the teacher use any type of listening activities? What is their function in the lessons? (start of the lesson, making the children active, calming children down, indicating the end of the lesson) (✓)   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>= listening to a story (Mother duck and her ducklings)</li> <li>= calming the children after dancing</li> </ul> <p>- the teacher does not use any tapescript otherwise</p> <p style="text-align: center;">the only English the children are exposed to is the English of the teacher, which is on a very <u>good level</u> (she's an excellent model)</p>   |

**Description of the kindergarten:** private language school (3 groups: children, pupils, teens)

- very friendly environment, the lessons take place in the morning and afternoon hours
- individual approach

Organization of the class (udělat fotky!!): 45 minutes (1x a week)

Teacher: Czech speaking teacher (with English education-qualification)

Children: boys: 3      girls: 1      (4 children)

Classroom: colorful, playful environment, lots of toys

Duration of the lesson: 45 minutes (once a week)

email:

## APPENDIX 2: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Vážení rodiče,

jsem studentkou pedagogické fakulty Univerzity Palackého v oboru Anglický jazyk a Informační výchova. Dovolte mi, abych Vás požádala o vyplnění tohoto krátkého dotazníku, který je součástí mé diplomové práce na téma „Výuka anglického jazyka u dětí předškolního věku v České republice“. Dotazník je anonymní a Vaše odpovědi budou použity pouze pro účely diplomové práce.

Děkuji za Váš čas a ochotu při vyplňování dotazníku.

S pozdravem,

Bc. Michaela Grohmanová.

---

### **Výuka anglického jazyka u dětí předškolního věku v České republice**

*Pozn.: AJ = anglický jazyk, ZŠ = základní škola*

1. Od kolika let je podle Vás vhodné začít s výukou AJ?
  - a. 3 – 4 roky
  - b. 5 – 6 let
  - c. 7 let
  
2. Proč chcete, aby se Vaše dítě učilo AJ v mateřské škole?

Prosím, uveďte:

---

3. Myslíte si, že výuka AJ v mateřské škole přinese Vašemu dítěti náskok před ostatními dětmi na ZŠ?
  - a. Ano
  - b. Ne
  - c. Nevím

4. Ovlivnila Vás při volbě mateřské školy nabídka kroužků AJ?  
a. Ano  
b. Ne
5. Pozorujete u Vašeho dítěte pokrok ve znalosti AJ?  
a. Ano  
b. Ne

*V případě, že je odpověď ANO,*

Prosím uveďte jaký: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Chtěli byste, aby Vaše dítě učil rodilý mluvčí?  
a. Ano  
b. Ne

Prosím, uveďte **PROČ**: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Co je pro Vás u učitele AJ v mateřské škole nejdůležitější?

Prosím, uveďte: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Budete volit nepovinné kroužky AJ i v 1. – 2. ročníku ZŠ?  
a. Ano  
b. Ne

Prosím, uveďte **PROČ**: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Co by se podle Vás měly děti v anglickém kroužku učit?

Prosím, uveďte: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Procvičujete doma s dětmi učivo, které se v hodině angličtiny naučily?  
a. Občas  
b. Pravidelně  
c. Nikdy



## APENDIX 3: PHOTOS OF THE CHILDREN

### Kindergarten Komenského (Šternberk)



**Figure 1:** Learning to greet (photo: author)



**Figure 2:** TPR activity (photo: author)



**Figure 3:** Crafting time (photo: author)

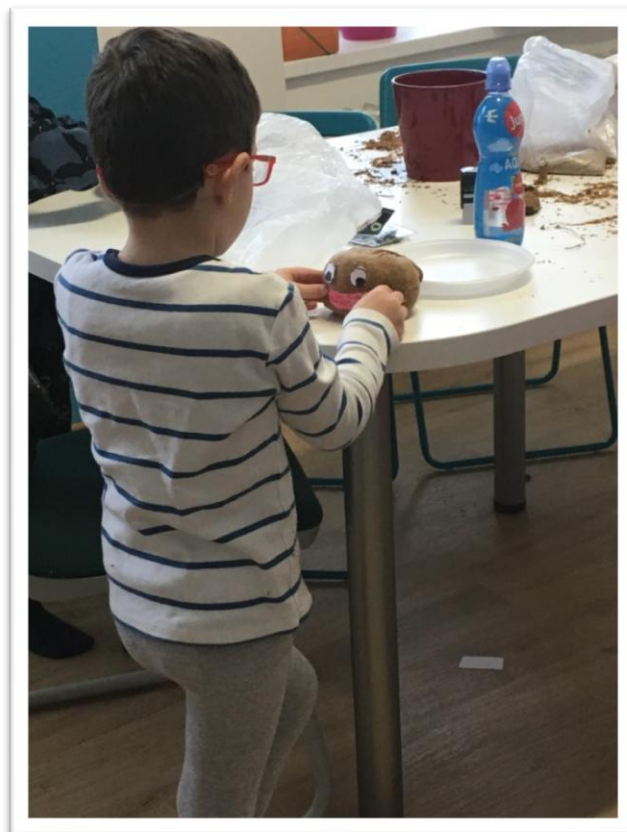
Language School English 1.5-15 (Olomouc)



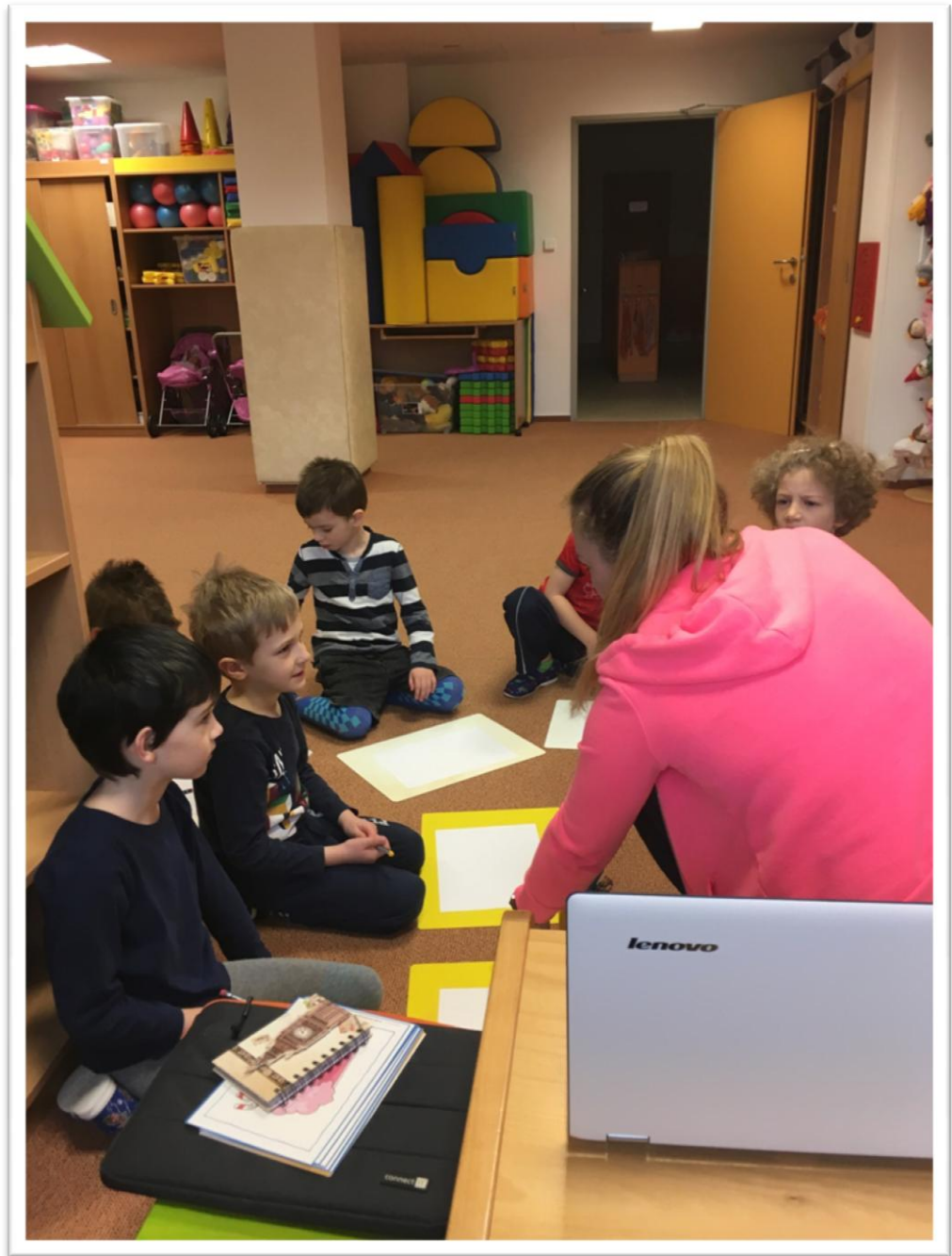
**Figure 4:** Listening to a story (photo: author)



**Figure 5:** TPR game (photo: author)



**Figure 6:** Making the Garden-guy (photo: author)



**Figure 7:** Learning vocabulary through pictures (photo: author)



## ANNOTATION

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>   | Bc. Michaela Grohmanová    |
| <b>Katedra nebo ústav:</b> | Katedra anglického jazyka  |
| <b>Vedoucí práce:</b>      | Mgr. Jana Kořínková, Ph.D. |
| <b>Rok obhajoby:</b>       | 2017                       |

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Název práce:</b>          | Výuka anglického jazyka u dětí předškolního věku v České republice   |
| <b>Název v angličtině:</b>   | Teaching English to very young learners in the Czech Republic  |
| <b>Anotace práce:</b>        | Práce se zabývá procesem a realizací výuky anglického jazyka u dětí předškolního věku. Teoretická část popisuje vývoj předškolního vzdělávání a výuky cizích jazyků v České republice. Dále popisuje děti předškolního věku a jejich specifika včetně metod a aktivit vhodných pro výuku anglického jazyka u dětí předškolního věku. Práce také pojednává o problematice realizace anglické výuky v dnešních předškolních zařízeních. Praktická část diplomové práce analyzuje současnou situaci výuky anglického jazyka ve vybraných předškolních zařízeních. Hlavním cílem je sledování propojenosti teorie a praxe. Také se zabývá motivací a zájmem rodičů o výuku anglického jazyka u dětí, kteří navštěvují anglické kurzy ve vybraných předškolních zařízeních. |
| <b>Klíčová slova:</b>        | Předškolní vzdělávání, RVP PV, dítě předškolního věku, vývoj dítěte, výuka anglického jazyka v předškolním věku, metody, aktivity, TPR   |
| <b>Anotace v angličtině:</b> | The diploma thesis deals with the process and realization of English language teaching to very young learners. The theoretical part covers the development of the preschool education and the foreign language teaching in the Czech Republic. It also describes the specifics of the very young learners as well as the appropriate methods and activities used for teaching the very young learners. In addition, it points out possible issues connected with the realization of the English courses in the Czech preschool institutions. The practical part analyzes the current situation in the selected preschool institutions offering the English courses. It focuses on the interconnection of the theory  |

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|                                    | with practice. Additionally, the practical part focuses on the motivation and the interest of the parents of the children attending the English courses in the selected preschool institutions. |
| <b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b> | Preschool education, FEP PE, The child of the preschool age, development of the child, teaching English in the preschool age, methods, activities, TPR  |
| <b>Rozsah práce:</b>               | 101 stran   |
| <b>Jazyk práce:</b>                | Anglický jazyk  |