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ABSTRACT

This diploma thesis deals with teaching English to very young learners in the Czech republic. The theoretical part commences contextualization of very early English teaching, followed by characterization of very young learners', their language acquisition and development. Next section discusses advantages and potential drawbacks of very early English teaching, based on foreign as well as Czech researches. Subsequently, the author formulates underlining theoretical input relevant for very early English teaching, focused on didactic principles. The practical part consists of an empirical research, which with the help of structural observation and semi-structured interview, aims on finding out how and to what extent are the chosen principles for teaching English language to very young learners followed in the practice in chosen nurseries and basic schools.

Keywords: very early English teaching, very young learners, critical period hypothesis language acquisition, didactic principles of very early English teaching, silent period.

ABSTRAKT

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá rannou výukou anglického jazyka v České republice. Teoretická část začíná zasazením rané výuky do širšího vzdělávacího kontextu, následuje charakteristika dětí v předškolním věku, jejich vývoj a osvojování jazyka. Dále autorka polemizuje nad výhodami a potenciálními riziky rané výuky angličtiny, které jsou založeny na světových i českých výzkumech. Následuje formulace příslušných teoretických východisek rané výuky a principů, které z nich vyplývají. Praktická část práce se skládá z empirického výzkumu, jehož cílem je prostřednictvím strukturovaného pozorování a polo-strukturovaného rozhovoru zjistit, jak a do jaké míry jsou základní didaktické principy pro velmi ranou výuku anglického jazyka respektovány ve výuce angličtiny ve vybraných mateřských a základních školách.

Klíčová slova: ranná výuka anglického jazyka, předškolní děti, hypotéza kritického období osvojování jazyka, didaktické principy velmi rané výuky, tiché období.

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List of acronyms

VYL	Very young learner
TPR	Total physical response
EFL	English as a foreign language

1. INTRODUCTION

“I wish I'd spent as much time learning languages as I spent on fencing, dancing, and bear-baiting.”

William Shakespeare

The more I travel, the smaller the world seems. Thanks to globalization, European Union and constant grow of communication through modern technologies the international barriers break down and it is very easy to meet foreign people, different cultures or vast variety of languages. However, together with the world, the language barriers also shrink. The knowledge of at least one foreign language became a necessity. The English language became a trend and hand in hand with this trend goes the world's education. As *The Framework Education Program for Basic Education* in the Czech Republic says: “Acquiring of foreign languages helps to reduce language barriers and contributes to increase mobility of individuals, in their personal life as well as in their further study and future career“ (MoEYS 2016, p. 12).

As the opening quote suggests, people used to view learning languages as something what is important, however, definitely not as something that is fun like dancing or fencing. It used to be an obligation and something one needed to put in a great deal of effort. However, the situation has changed and today's approaches to second language learning include a lot of various methods that motivate students and they very often learn the second language without actually knowing so.

As a result, the interest in teaching and learning foreign languages is constantly growing. English has become Lingua franca, and the center of attention not just of many researchers and scholars but also of teachers and parents. Many European countries, together with the Czech Republic, have lowered the age for foreign language education in an attempt to increase the effectiveness of the acquisition process. Hence, also pre-primary foreign language education has been introduced, although it raised many questions concerning its benefits. Nowadays, it is estimated that most children in the world learn foreign language during early childhood (Grosjean, 2007).

The theoretical part of this thesis commences output for first as well as second language acquisition. Subsequently, the author specifies young learners and focusses on their language acquisition and development, since very early second language education should be always introduced with regard to the individual development of a child. This part is followed by a discussion about the ideal age for starting with second language. The sooner the better idea is confronted by empirical evidence from all around the world, the Czech Republic inclusive. Afterwards, the author formulates the underlining theoretical outputs relevant for very early English teaching, focused on didactic principles.

The practical part is closely connected with the theoretical part and presents a small-scale research investigating how and to what extent are the chosen principles for teaching a second language to very young learners followed in the practice in chosen nursery and basic schools. The research deals only with three chosen principles from the theoretical part. Namely they are: silent period, variety of activities and routines in the classroom. Firstly, the aim and the related research questions together with research tools, methodology and procedures are introduced. Finally, the obtained data are analyzed and presented, followed by a relevant conclusion.

2. SPECIFYING A YOUNG LEARNER

The definition of a young learner varies from author to author. According to Sarah Phillips young learners are children from school age - five or six years old (in the Czech Republic it is six or seven years) to eleven or twelve years of age (1993, p. 3). This opinion is also shared by Scott and Yetreberg (1990, p. 1). It seems that most of the authors agreed on the final age; i.e. from ten to twelve years – for Czech environment it refers to children up to the fifth grade. Of course, even here are some exceptions to the rule. Few authors claim that the final age for defining a young learner should be up to fifteen. For instance, Zdeněk Helus (2004) defends his opinion by stating that it is not until this age when sexual maturity and physical development as such is at the final stage.

Nevertheless, since early foreign language teaching has been introduced in many European countries, the initial age significantly dropped and today we are facing a shift from school age to pre-school age and mostly referring to a young learner as Opal Dunn does. According to her, young learners are: “children from pre-school age up to as late as ten or eleven years old” (Dunn, 1983, p. 5). For the purpose of this paper, I will more or less follow the definition of Opal Dunn, and will refer to a very young learner, from now on VYL, as a child from pre-school age to the second grade of Basic school as *National plan* suggests the compulsory introduction of a second language in the third grade (MoEYS, 2006).

Nonetheless, to define a young learner just by age would not be exactly right. As Phillips highlights, some other factors are even more important than the age itself. The other factors that influence children’s development differ from culture, environment or sex to the influence of their peers and parents (Phillips, 1993, p. 3). Moreover, the development is very individual. Some children develop early, some later, some gradually, some in leaps. As Scott and Yetreberg (1990, p. 1) point out: “it is not possible to say that at the age of five all children can do x, at the age of seven they can all do y, or that at the age of ten they can all do z”. Teachers should take into account all stages of different development and individual language acquisition as discussed in following chapters.

2.1 VYLs and their language acquisition

“How children learn languages? Every time when I’m asked this question, my first inclination is to respond by simply saying that I wish I knew”

William O’Grady

Before I start to deliberate upon how children learn foreign, in the case of this thesis English language, it is unavoidable to elucidate also their mother tongue acquisition. Both processes by which people acquire the ability to speak have been researched many times by many schools of thought. As a result, many theories of language acquisition have emerged causing a lot of disagreement and, as the opening quote implies, there is no clear conclusion on how children acquire the languages.

2.1.1. First language acquisition

One of the earliest theories of first language acquisition is behavioristic one. Behaviorists, with the leading scholar in 1950s B.F. Skinner, proposed that the primary processes in language development are imitation and practice. (Lightbown 2006, p. 10) In plain English, since behaviorists believed that children are born as *Tabula rasa*, they proposed that children learn a language by imitating adults. However, O’Grady (2005, p. 165) pinpoints that there are major parts of language, e.g. sentences, which cannot be imitated. Sentences are created as the need arises. Actually, children are not very good at sentence imitation, especially if it contains unfamiliar vocabulary and structures. Perhaps, that is why children do not imitate sentences very often (*ibid.*), which implies that language acquisition cannot be perceived as a pure imitating.

A different nativist approach challenges Skinner’s explanation of language acquisition by promoting that children are born with a biological program for language and that language develops in the same way as other biological functions like, for example, walking (Lightbown 2006, p. 10). Noam Chomsky considerably contributed by promoting a “language acquisition device”, which is an imaginary “little black box” in child’s brain, enabling children to internalize the systems of a language (Brown 2000, p. 75). He came to the conclusion that children’s minds are not “blank slates to be filled by imitating language they hear in the environment.” As a substitute, he conjectured, that children are with an explicit innate ability able to discover the important rules of a particular language by themselves. And that is on the samples of a natural language they are exposed to (Lightbown 2006, p. 15).

Later, the concept of the language acquisition device was substituted by the term “universal grammar”, which could be implicit as inborn or pre-made grammar. It is believed to consist of the kinds of grammatical categories and principles that are typical for all languages (O’Grady 2005, p. 184).

These are two theoretical extremes from which other theories have been evolved. For instance, interactionistic approach emphasizes the interaction between children’s innate capacities and their linguistic environment. Contrariwise innatists, interactionists believe that that the language needs to be modified in order to achieve successful language acquisition. This specifically modified speech is called “motherese” or “caretaker talk”, which is characterized by O’Grady (2005, p. 176) as follows:

Pronunciation:

- Slower speech with longer pauses between utterances and after content words
- Higher overall pitch; greater pitch range
- Exaggerated intonation and stress
- Fewer words per minute

Vocabulary and meaning:

- More restricted vocabulary
- Three times as much paraphrasing
- More reference to the here and now

Sentences:

- Fewer broken or run-on sentences
- Shorter, less complex utterances (approx. 50percentaresinglewords or short statements)
- More well-formed and intelligible sentences
- More commands and questions (approx. 60 percent of total)
- More repetitions

From the name of this modified talk is apparent that it is typical for mothers, nevertheless, the research suggests, that even fathers and siblings do modify their speech, however, less than mothers. O’Grady (ibid., p. 178) later also stated one external condition that needs to be met: “Children need to hear sentences that they can understand without knowing a lot about the language they’re trying to learn”. In other words, the language has to be meaningful for the child. This is very easily feasible through events happening here and now, things that they can see or hear together with actions that has just happened or are about to happen (Černá 2009, p. 3). The comprehensible speech of parents or other caretakers can be achieved by context clues which help to decode their message. Of course, it does not mean that adults have to use

motherese all the time; however, some modifications are unavoidable to produce comprehensible speech for small children.

To sum up, first language acquisition was examined from varied perspectives; yet, it seems that this topic arises perhaps even more questions than answers. Certainly, many more views than have been mentioned, need to be examined. In the following section those issues related to the second language acquisition will be dealt with.

2.1.2. Second language acquisition

The previous chapter on the first language acquisition might raise more questions than answers and it is not very different with following chapter concerning second language acquisition as there is also a lot of disagreement and controversy. Similarly to the mother tongue acquisition, just as there are no definite answers, there are also many different views on second language acquisition. Actually, some answers of various schools of thought offer assumption that the processes of second language acquisition are to a certain extent similar to those of the primary language. Some scholars gave fundamental importance to learner's innate capacity for language acquisition, while others insinuated the role of the environment.

Before dealing with researches about second language acquisition, it is firstly necessary to explain the terms second language and foreign language. Experts agree that second language is a non-native language learned and used within the boundaries of one country, whereas a non-native language learned and used outside the borders is referred as a foreign language (Stern 1983, p. 10). However, some authors do not put the terms in contrast and use the general definition of second language, that is "any language other than the first language" (Ellis 1997, p. 3). Even though, the Czech students learning English are an example of EFL context, in which they have to search for exposure to the target language different than in the English classroom, which is held in the better case just a few times a week, there is a need for a neutral and superordinate term to cover both types of learning. For this reason and in alignment with the common usage, the term second and foreign language will be in this thesis used interchangeably.

Similarly, it is necessary to distinguish formal and informal acquisition (Frysztacka-Szkróbka 1997, p. 35). Informal second language acquisition takes place when a learner is exposed to the target language, which is a very natural and similar way to the first language acquisition, as children depend on their intuition and ability to generate rules. Informal learning is an

unconscious process; “language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication” (Krashen 1982, p. 10). According to Krashen, this process is called acquisition; however, we can come across to this phenomenon also under the terms “implicit” or “natural learning”, whereas in non-technical language, acquisition is “picking-up” a language (ibid.).

Contrary to informal second language acquisition, in formal second language acquisition there is no similarity with mother tongue acquisition whatsoever. It appears in an artificial setting – a classroom. Learners have to devote much more effort and it might be stressful for them (Frysztańska-Szkróbka 1997, p. 37). Informal second language acquisition is by Krashen introduced as learning, which is “a conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them” (Krashen 1982, p. 10). In non-technical terminology, learning is “knowing about” a language, generally known as “grammar”, or “rules”, whereas a formal equivalent would be “explicit learning” (ibid.).

Although there are many differences in second language learning and second language acquisition, some similarities can be found as well. The natural environment, in which the acquisition appears, can be favorably simulated by using real life activities taught in the target language. VYLs are certainly not those learners that complex grammatical rules would be presented to. The authenticity and using target language as much as possible can change the artificially created environment, as many schools are, into the natural and informal place that promotes the successful implicit learning. It is highly advisable to do so, since “it is only acquisition, which can result in communicative fluency” (Černá 2009, p. 5). Thus, also teachers in formal teaching of English should involve opportunities for acquisition to their lessons.

As aforementioned, Krashen (1982) introduced very controversial, yet one of the most significant theoretical perspective in second language acquisition in the last quarter of the 20th century. His theory is composed of five interrelated hypotheses. The first one, mentioned and explained above, is the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis. The other ones are:

- the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis,
- the Affective Filter Hypothesis,
- the monitor Hypothesis,
- the Natural Order Hypothesis.

Teachers have to provide a comprehensible input to be able to facilitate the successful acquisition. One of the necessary conditions for the input is that it has to be beyond comprehensible level of acquirer's competence (I + 1). This can be achieved with the help of context clues or extra-linguistic information (Krashen 1982, p. 21). It is essential to highlight that it is not advisable to teach production skills directly - they will emerge. Logically, the condition, that the acquirer is over his or her silent period, must be fulfilled. The same is implied for the input itself: "When communication is successful, when the input is understood and there is enough of it, I + 1 will be provided automatically" (ibid. p. 22).

Furthermore, the communication can only be successful, if the low affective filter is implied. Affective Filter Hypothesis deals with affective variables that influence second language acquisition. The variables include motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen (ibid.) asserts that acquirers with high motivation, self-confidence, and a low level of anxiety (low affective filter) tend to acquire the second language better, whereas on the contrary, teaching second language to acquirer with low motivation, self-esteem, and constant anxiety (high affective filter) can cause a mental block which prevents the successful acquisition.

Natural Order Hypothesis is connected to grammar structures acquisition – Krashen (ibid.) propounded that they proceed in a predictable order. Monitor Hypothesis is actually the result of the grammar that has been learned. According to Krashen, acquisition is the initiator of our utterances, responsible for fluency, while learning is a monitor or an editor in the form of self-correction.

Krashen's theory has been extensively criticized for various reasons, mostly due to the emphasis on input, more than on practice and production. In addition to this, Brown (2000, p. 258) misses the information what to do with the students "for whom speech does not

emerge and for whom the silent period might last forever”. Despite of the criticism, Krashen’s ideas were in his period very influential for flourishing of approaches and methods in second language teaching.

Another important approach to second language acquisition is social constructivism. To the concept of Lev Vygotsky (*see* p. 19-19), I would add Michael Long’s Interaction Hypothesis (Brown 2000, p. 264). He in a way took up where Krashen left off, and claimed that comprehensible input is the result of modified interaction. Research proved that in the same way, that mothers modify their language for their children as collaborated above, also native speakers alter their speech with non-native speakers and teachers with their students by checking comprehension, paraphrasing, requesting clarifications or simply speaking in a slower pace than they normally would. This specific speech is called teacher’s talk or foreigner talk (*ibid.*).

As alluded to before, to completely answer the question how are the languages learned, is nowadays still impossible. As Opal Dunn suggests (1983, p. 2):

The debate as how young children learn another language continues, and is likely to continue, as the number of young children learning English increases and more research becomes available.

Therefore, for teachers of foreign language, second language acquisition research should be viewed as an “insight provider”, that can be used as a base to build own explicit theory on.

2.2 Development of young learners

A rapid change in all areas of development can be registered mainly at children of pre-school age. By the end of this period, most of these children usually master the majority of motor skills and can use their physical skills to achieve a wide variety of goals. On cognitive level, they start to understand some problems and relationships and “absorb an enormous amount of information about their social and physical worlds” (Slavin 2006, p. 66). As for as mother tongue, by the time children reach the age of 6, most of them use almost utterly mature speech, not only to express their wants and needs, but also to share their ideas and experiences. Socially, children learn appropriate behavior and rules. Moreover, their interacting skills are also on a higher level.

In this thesis, in order to keep clarity and coherence of the text, the division of psychological development of VYLs will be into three main sections – cognitive development, social and

emotional development and psychomotor development. Nonetheless, in practice, teachers should keep in mind, that all the subsequently mentioned aspects of development are interrelated.

2.2.1 Cognitive development

Developmental psychology is connected with many influential names and one of them is undoubtedly Jean Piaget. In his world, a child is regarded as constantly interacting with the surrounded world and learning through solving problems. In other words, the knowledge comes from the action. This theory of cognitive development is based on a combination of two processes – assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation occurs when children understand new objects or situations with the help of already existing and familiar scheme. While accommodation is a process which happens when an old scheme needs to be changed or modified, in order to understand a new information or situation (Cameron 2001, pp. 2-3; Slavin 2006, pp. 31-33; Čáp, Mareš 2007, p. 392; Williams and Burden 1997, pp. 22-23).

Furthermore, Piaget also distinguishes four developmental stages such as:

- 1) sensomotoric stage – from the birth up to the age of two,
- 2) preoperational stage – from the age of 2 up to the age of 7,
- 3) concrete operational stage – from the age of 7 up to the age of 11,
- 4) formal operational stage – from 11 to the adulthood.

(Slavin 2006, p. 34; Williams and Burden 1997, p. 22).

For the purpose of this thesis, I will deal with preoperational and concrete operational stages. During the preoperational stage, children's language and other concepts develop very quickly. However, much of their thinking is still surprisingly primitive and irreversible (Slavin 2006, pp. 34-35). An example of primitive thinking could be deficient understanding of a principle of conservation¹. In plain English, their thinking and understanding is mainly based on what they can observe and manipulate with at the given time (Čáp, Mareš 2001, p. 393). Reversible type of thinking could be simply explained as “the ability to change direction in one's thinking so that one can return to a starting point” (Slavin 2006, p. 35). During the concrete operational period, dramatic change in young learner's thinking can be registered. Their thinking becomes more logical, they are able to form concepts, see relationships, and

¹ For example, when liquid from a tall, narrow glass is poured into a wide one, the child will believe that the tall glass contains more liquid.

solve problems but only if it involves objects or situations that are familiar (Slavin 2006, p. 38).

Another fundamental Piagetan principle is that learning strictly follows development. In other words, the stages of development are fixed and children cannot do certain tasks if they have not yet reached that stage. This is one of the areas that Piaget was criticized for (Cameron 2001, p. 3). Some researchers proved that children are often more competent than Piaget originally thought. For example, Gelman (1979 in Slavin 2006, p. 41) established some cases where children in preoperational stage were able to solve the conservational problem.

The next dimension that Piaget was criticized for was the social one; he totally neglected it. In his world children are on their own, as independent explorers, with not much of a social interaction with adults and their peers. It was Vygotsky who evolved the concept of sociocultural theory in cognitive development. In his theory, social surroundings (e.g. parents, teachers and peers) help and enable a child to progress to the next stage of knowledge or competence (Williams, Burden 1997, p. 40). As opposed to Piaget, Vygotsky also suggests that learning precedes development.

Furthermore, no stages in human development are set in Vygotsky's theory, which also makes it significantly different from Piaget's approach. The main aspects of the Vygotskian concept are private speech and the zone of proximal development (Cameron 2001, p. 6; Slavin 2006 pp. 44-45). Private speech could be specified as child's self-talk, which eventually internalized as silent inner speech. The zone of proximal development is a level of development immediately above a child present level and he or she is able to achieve the goal just with the help of adults or more competent peers (Slavin, *ibid.*).

A fundamental term in cognitive development, derived from Vygotsky's social learning, however, more connected with Bruner, is scaffolding (Cameron 2001, p. 8). It could be explained as a support for learning and problem solving; it might include clues, reminders and encouragement, breaking the problem down into steps, providing an example or anything else that allows the student to grow in independence as a learner. (Slavin 2006 p. 45)

It is not possible for teachers to teach effectively, unless they understand that the cognitive processes affect the students' behavior and learning. They should reflect this in language teaching methods, materials, and activities. Teachers, should take into consideration all the aspects of cognitive development and by scaffolding help learners to develop autonomously.

Moreover, as aforementioned, we have to pay attention to each child individually, as no learner develops at a same pace.

After examining these prodigiously influential views of children's cognitive development, other crucial cognitive features influencing the learning of second language in a very early age can be discussed. One of these characteristic aspects is short concentration span which is, in the case of VYLs, very limited; they can get easily bored. Harmer (2007, p. 82) states that they usually lose interest after ten minutes or so. Still, if the activities are extremely engaging they are able to stay on the task surprisingly longer. Zeliková (1997) explains that such activity has to be very attractive, meaningful, and relevant for a child.

Another determining cognitive feature of VYL's is their memory. Many authors (Vágnerová 2005, p. 191, Harmer, 2007, p. 82) state that it is predominantly unconscious. In other words, VYLs learn spontaneously and unintentionally, which is in pre-school age more effective than intentional learning, as VYLs are not able to use any strategies for effective information coding. Another author (Lojová, 2005, p. 175) describes emotive memory, which means that children remember the information that are associated with their positive emotions.

To this Šulová (2004, p. 68) adds that VYL's memory is primarily mechanical and very often it has a relatively high capacity, which enables VYLs to memorize very long rhymes or the whole encyclopedia including the Latin names (Šulová 2007, p. 55). She also states that VYLs' memory is concrete, thus VYLs remember particular life events better than abstract verbal description. Furthermore, she adds that their memory is also short term; they are apt to forget quickly, unless there is an opportunity for constant recycling of learned concepts (Šulová, 2004, p. 68).

Delight in imagination and fantasy are other benefits of VYLs that many authors emphasize (Halliwell, 1992, p. 7; Scott and Ytreberg, 1990). There is no dividing line in the VYLs own world to separate reality and fantasy. In fact, VYLs very often use fantasy and imagination teachers are encouraged to "compensate the lack of understanding of reality and introduce fantasy elements to make the outside world more comprehensible" (Vágnerová 2005, p. 182). Even though VYL's teaching should be connected with real life, Halliwell (1992, p. 7) reminds that imaginative act is actually an authentic part of being a child.

A considerable advantage for all teachers is the fact that VYLs are very curious and passionate to learn. Children at pre-school know very well that all in their surrounding world have some labels and adults very often hear the never ending “What is this?” and “Why?” questions. As Šulová (2004, p. 68) suggests, it is adults who play the crucial and irreplaceable role at this stage. They should have the knowledge and invest enough time and patience to sate the unflagging curiosity of the child.

Last but not least fundamental cognitive quality of VYLs is their playfulness; they unintentionally learn through games. Keskil and Cephe (2001, p. 61 in Harmer 2007, p. 82) note that young pupils like games, puzzles and songs the most. Hence, second language teaching needs to be interrelated with playful activities.

2.2.2 Social and emotional development

When VYLs improve their cognitive skills, they as well as develop self-concepts, knowledge how to interact with others, and attitudes toward the world. As Šulová (2004, p. 71) states, some of the most significant needs of pre-school children are emotional needs, identity, social contact, social recognition or sense of security, stability and certainty. Even though, as Opal Dunn (1983, p. 14) admits: “It is difficult to examine all aspects of a child’s emotional development”, it is crucial for teachers to understand personal and social development of their pupils, to be able not just to teach, but also motivate, and successfully interact with students of various ages. (Slavin 2006, p. 47). Říčan (2006, p. 153) mentions that children in the first class behave as a herd which follows the shepherd – teacher, and if there is none the herd falls apart. Hence, for a foreign language teacher it is vital to establish emotionally positive relationship with children, provide such an environment that learners feel safe in, and serve as an example for the pupils.

Like cognitive development, emotional, personal and social developments are often described in terms of stages. Similarly to cognitive development, also social development is connected with famous names – the most significant one is Eric Ericson. He divided our lifetime into eight psychosocial stages and in each he determined some crises or critical issues to be resolved (Slavin 2006, p. 48). For the purpose of this thesis, I will deal only with the third and fourth stage.

The third stage concerns children from 3 to 6 years. During this period, children tend to be aggressive and vigorous in the exploration of both their social and their physical environment.

“Being firmly convinced that he is a person on his own, the child must now find out what kind of person he may become” (Erikson, 1968, p. 115 in Slavin 2006, p. 49). Parents punishing children's attempts at initiative will make their children feel guilty about their natural urges. That is why this stage is called Initiative versus Guilt.

The fourth stage involves children from 6 to 12 years and their psychosocial crises deals with Industry versus Inferiority. Influence of teachers and peers increases while parents take on decreasing importance.

Children now want to make things. Success brings with it a sense of industry, a good feeling about oneself and one's abilities. Failure creates a negative self-image, a sense of inadequacy that may hinder future learning. And "failure" need not be real; it may be merely an inability to measure up to one's own standards or those of parents, teachers, or brothers and sisters.

(Slavin 2006, p. 49)

As a fundamental aspect of emotional development Šulová (2004, p. 72) states the fact, that preschool children are very easily emotionally excited. However, the intensive emotional experiences are very often short-term and changeable (e.g. happiness can easily turn into anger or aggression).

Another crucial feature in emotional development is self-realization. VYLs demand to show their qualities and receive praise afterward and this from the people who play a significant role in VYLs life (e.g. parents, teachers or peers). The facts of being appreciated and successful lead to reinforce their self-esteem (Vágnerová 2006, p. 221). Thus, teachers should involve activities evoking a variety of positive emotions and give learners opportunities to show their abilities, hence receive praise from parents, teachers and their peers.

2.2.3 Psychomotor development

Šulová (2004, p. 112) states that development of motor skills at preschool age is fundamental for other psychological functions (like cognitive or emotional ones). Brotherson (2006, p. 2) presents two types of psychomotor development that are noticeable in this period: gross-motor and fine skill development. Gross-motor development refers to the use of large-muscles in the legs (running) or arms (throwing). The improvement of fine motor skills is connected, for example, with manipulating things or with gradually developing ability to draw.

However, the fine motor activity is not yet accurate, as the coordination between eyes and movements of hands is being formed. This can cause some problems in writing and reading in the first years of school (Říčan, 2004, p. 148; Dunn 1984, p. 13). Another important factor of psychomotor development is its great influence of speech communication. The communication ability involves different speech performances, such as clear pronunciation or voice intonation (Abuhewajj 2010, p. 51).

As for second language teaching, many authors (Dunn 1984; Šulová 2004; Slavin 2006) stress the involvement of movement-based activities in lessons. Nevertheless, teachers should remember that children get exhausted themselves very quickly; however, compared to adults, they can gain new power even faster than they lost it (Říčan 2004, p. 146-147). Moreover, language learning activities should be based on the development of fine motor skills. It can be achieved, for instance, by involving children in art and craft activities.

To conclude, the linguistic aim in preschool period seems by some means subordinate to a healthy overall development of a child and second language teaching should conjointly go with the contributions to VYLs' general personality development in all aforementioned domains.

3. THE OPTIMAL AGE FOR INTRODUCING THE SECOND LANGUAGE

The optimal age for starting with second language education has been discussed over and over again through the last decades. It has been observed for significant period of time that unlike adults, children acquire second languages without devoting considerable amount of effort. Therefore, it is generally perceived that the sooner one starts with a second language, the better. The following chapter will provide the arguments for and against this statement together with different views for Critical Period Hypothesis concluded with the determinants to be considered when the decisions about the age for second language introduction are made.

3.1. The critical period hypothesis

As aforementioned, it has been hypothesized for over a century that children learn a second language easier than adults. This phenomenon is called the Critical Period Hypothesis. This period relates to a lateralization process, which is: “The specialization of the dominant hemisphere of the brain for language functions” (Singleton 2004, p. 33). Therefore, children’s brain is able to use “the mechanism that assisted first language acquisition” (Cameron 2001, p. 13). According to Lenneberg (1967), who is generally recognized as the ‘father’ of the Critical Period Hypothesis, it lasts from the age of two till the beginning of puberty, when foreign languages must be taught and learnt through conscious and labored effort. However, Kinsbourne and Hiscock (1977 in Singleton, 2004, p. 138) questioned the end of the period by findings from a study which indicates that the process is completed in early childhood. Krashen (1973 in Stern 1991, p. 362) also inclines to Kinsbourne and Hiscock opinion by stating that lateralization reaches its climax around the age of five, together with a claim that its closure does not cause loss of any abilities.

Having summarized the research results that adolescents are superior to pre-puberty children and adults as for as rate of second language learning, Ellis (1985, p. 109) argues that adolescents can pick up a second language in the similar speed like a child and even faster. Moreover, they can also supplement this process by conscious study. He assigns this advantage of adults to greater cognitive maturity, together with the fact that adults usually experience more negotiation of meaning, and thus better language input.

A few of the specialists found a relation with Piagetian stages of cognitive development, discussed in the previous chapter. Brown (2000) believes that there is a connection between the end of the critical period and the transition between Piaget's concrete operational stage and formal operational stage, which is around 11 years of age. In any case, generally it is believed that acquiring a second language beyond critical period is more difficult, and the older a person is, the more demanding the task it becomes, especially in acquiring authentic accent. Lightbown and Spada (2006, p.17) provide the research evidence suggesting that children who had no access to language for a long time in infancy or early childhood will never fully acquire the language. The evidences are mainly based on the cases of abused children without any contact with language or on the cases of deaf children. Some possible causes of age-based factor can be summarized to: neuromuscular plasticity, cerebral development, sociobiological programs, and the environment of sociocultural influences (Brown, 2000).

3.1.1. Researcher's voices in the world

As alluded to above, there are many convincing arguments supporting the hypothesis, but also a significant number of researches with findings that defend the critical group of scholars. For example, Jane Hill (1970) in her study provided evidence that also adults can acquire a second languages perfectly. She highlighted that cultural roles and attitudes about language play the major role here. Nonetheless, Brown states that "such individuals are few and far between" (Brown 2000, p. 62.).

A significant number of similar studies, conducted by professionals, elaborated the age issue of second language acquisition. For instance, Brown (2000) suggests that early second language learning influences mostly affective domain, as language ego of children is flexible and their negative opinions towards the second language, or native speakers of that language, have not been formed. Therefore, younger children are not that much concerned about learning a new language because they are less aware of language forms or the possibility of making mistakes. Also Schumann (1975, p.229) supports the affective arguments by suggesting that "language learning difficulties after puberty may be related to the social and psychological changes an individual undergoes at that age", which may cause emotional and social introversion of some adults and adolescents.

As mentioned before, another benefit of early second language learning is potential achievement of native-like accent. A large number of studies, which were carried out in terms of authentic accent, support the notion of the Critical Period Hypothesis. To draw an example, let me present one quite famous research, conducted by Asher and García (1969), comparing two factors forming successful native-like acquisition of pronunciation. 71 Cuban immigrants to California at age from seven to 19 years together with a control group of 30 American-born children were judged by 19 native speakers. None of the Cubans were considered a native speaker, but many of them were judged to speak with near-native pronunciation. Most of them were children who had entered California between the ages of one and six years. All the subjects had lived in California around five years.

Similar findings prevailed in Thompson's (1991) investigation of 39 migrants born in Russia. They had arrived in The United States at ages ranging from four years to 44 years. Three samples of their spoken English were judged by two native speakers of American English in terms of foreign accent.

Thompson's finding was that the migrants' age on arrival in an English-speaking environment 'was the best indicator of the accuracy of their pronunciation in English. Interestingly, none of the Thompson's subjects was rated as being at native-speaker level in terms of accent. However, subjects who had arrived in the United States at age ten or younger were judged to have only slight foreign accents, with the best ratings of all being allocated to the two subjects who had arrived at age four.

(Singleton 2004, p. 68)

Upon presenting the studies on age and accent acquisition, as Asher and Garcia (1999), Thompson (1991) and many others have done, some persuasive evidences are concluded, supporting the benefits of the critical period for accent, however, for accent only. Brown emphasizes that the pronunciation of a language is not "by any means the sole criterion for acquisition, nor is it really the most important one" (Brown 2000, p. 64). There are many people who do not have perfect pronunciation, but their linguistic proficiency is even better than the proficiency of some native speakers.

Several tests were administered to compare general language proficiency of children who started with learning second language at very early age and the ones who started later. From many similar researches I chose the one by Ekstrand (1976) who investigated the proficiency of 2189 immigrant children of school age in Sweden.

Tests for pronunciation, transcription from dictation, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, free oral production and free written production were administered, and all test results, with the exception of those for free oral production, were found to correlate positively and significantly with age, but not with length of residence.

(Ekstrand 1976, p. 130)

Similar findings could be recorded in Butstall's survey from 1966 (in Brown 200, p. 65) who came to the conclusion that six years old children are learning a second language significantly faster than children of the age of ten. However, it is important to mention that external conditions also play a significant role here. Above mentioned researches were conducted in countries where the subjects were naturally exposed to the target language also out of the classroom, thus they learned either in informal way or in both – combination of formal and informal learning. In Czech context there is rarely an opportunity to be exposed to the target language out of the classroom unless actively searched for. Hence, in the researches in following chapter will deal mostly with formal learning.

3.1.2. Voices of Czech researchers

Since the interest in pre-primary English teaching grows in whole Europe, also Czech researchers published studies regarding this phenomenon. For example, Najvar (2010) compared two groups of learners in the 8th grade. One of the examined groups started learning EFL in pre-primary school and the other one in the 4th grade of primary school. The only positive finding supporting pre-primary English learning was that the learners who started studying English earlier had higher self-esteem, regarding their knowledge of the foreign language. Notwithstanding, this self-esteem was mostly not justified as these learners did not achieve better results than the ones who did not go through pre-primary English learning. Furthermore, Najvar (ibid.) adds that very early English learning is mostly vocabulary-oriented. Therefore, it did not affect respondents' test result. Moreover, he reports very poor continuity between individual stages of pre-primary and primary education.

With reference to an international research, Fenclová maintains a critical stance and states that “early start does not automatically ensure significant positive results and the benefits do not depend on the starting age, but on the quality of teaching and time devoted to learning” (Fenclová 2004, p. 254). To these criteria Ježková (2011, p. 155) also adds a need for a qualified teacher.

Another pre-primary education specialist, Košťálová, proposed that early foreign language learning can inauspiciously influence first language acquisition and further development of thinking (2002, in Ježková 2011, p. 155). On the contrary, Šulová (2007), who specializes in the early child's psychological development, advocates the idea of early foreign language learning. She proposed that children at a very early age are endowed with extraordinary rote memory and their desire to interact with peers, no matter what language they speak, very often and very quickly leads to acquiring the necessary language to successfully communicate with their peers in a second language. To these advantages of VYLs Marxtová (2010, p. 157) also adds lack of restraints, imitating skills and skill of auditory differentiation. Nonetheless, in the same time she emphasized that early foreign language education should be introduced with regard to the learners' developmental stage. Furthermore, she suggests that strong motivation or situational and specific tasks are the key preconditions for very early foreign language education.

Supposing, that the children are ready to start with the foreign language Marxtová (ibid, p. 156) does not see any reason why not to start with a second language in pre-school. According to her experience, the ideal age to start with a second language introduction is around five. She defends her opinion by stating that most of the children of this age master their mother tongue. However, she advises to parents (ibid., p. 157) that children who have insufficient vocabulary or logopedic problems in their first language should start with EFL learning later.

3.1.3. Conclusion

To conclude, it has long been regarded that the earlier children start learning a second language, the better results they will have in the acquisition process. However, the results of researches on the age issue are very contradictory, which may not be surprising, since the methodologies of researches were very different. Today, it seems there are more and more researches providing the public with some convincing findings that the age is not the only key variable for a successful acquisition. For example, motivation and confidence, usage of the second language in a meaningful environment, developmental stages, language aptitude or social context are the factors being implemented in nowadays studies and the age variable is not isolated anymore. As previously mentioned some authors also emphasize the external conditions like a qualified teacher, quality of input and a need for continuity from pre-primary to primary education, which is very often missing in Czech context, as Najvar (2010) alerts.

The only findings supporting the-sooner-the-better idea imply mostly just in affective domain and partly also in the psychomotor domain (later native-like accent). As Ježková (2011) suggests, it seems that these few positive voices are used for commercial purposes and influence the public. Perhaps, that is why these results are not reflected in parental and also political decisions and lots of nowadays' children start with the second language as soon as possible. As it was suggested above, very young second language learning can be beneficial in some aspects; however, it has to be done with respect to child's developmental stages. While deciding when to introduce a second language to a child, teachers and parents should keep in mind that motivation, situational and specific tasks or other variables mentioned above, together with the principles discussed in the following chapters play also an important role in the second language education.

4. AN ENGLISH LESSON FOR VYL

After deliberating upon the children's development, including their language acquisition and a discussion about the age issue concerning very early second language education, key factors that play important role in very early English teaching and principles that should be followed when teaching EFL to VYLs can be closely examined.

4.1. The aims of teaching English to VYLs

In general, concerning second language teaching to VYLs, many authors highlight the priority of affective aims (Moon 2005; Cameron 2001; Dunn 1983; Najvar 2010). Also *Framework Educational Program for Pre-primary Education*, the national documents of the Czech Republic, supports the affective domain aim by stating that VYLs should know "that people also communicate with other languages and that they can be learned" and the preschool should enable to create at least "elementary preconditions for learning a foreign language." (2016, p. 11)

Moreover, as alluded to before, the linguistic aim in preschool period is somehow subordinate to a healthy overall development of a child in general, and second language teaching should conjointly go with the contributions to the VYLs' general personality development in all domains (cognitive, affective and psychomotor).

Specific second language aims differ according to the language program, its methodology and approaches. Apart from the affective aims like raising general language awareness it can be also comprehension of the spoken language, hand in hand with the training of ear or higher possibility of later acquisition of native-like accent. However, Moon (2005, p. 32) pinpoints that nor teachers neither parents cannot await miraculous results. Especially from children exposed to the language for 1-2 hours a week. Even though it might seem that children learn very quickly, it cannot be expected that they become bilingual or even make a huge linguistic progress over 3 years with only 2 hours a week.

Sometimes, the outcomes of very early language teaching are not even observable at the spot. Teachers and parents should bear in mind that small children are learning even when they are not actually saying anything (Reilly 1997, p. 7). This is also connected with one of the following chapters of this thesis: Silent period (*see* p. 24).

4.2. *Motivation*

“Motivation is a star player in the cast of characters assigned to second language learning scenarios around the world.”

H. D. Brown

Many scholars (Moon 2005; Šulová 2007; Dunn 1983) agree that the younger children are, the less likely they will have a reason or a need for learning a foreign language. It is very probable, that they may not even understand the meaning and reasons for learning a language. The motivation of VYLs is more bound with attractive learning activities and their positive relationship with the language teacher rather than with the subject as such.

The teacher certainly plays a crucial role in VYL's motivation (Harmer 2007, p. 111). It is up to the teacher to get students involved. It is up to the teacher to make the activity enjoyable, interesting or beneficial, and at the same time give it a reason. Then, VYLs do not just do something because the teacher says so, but they are also prepared for it, and they build up the enthusiasm for an activity which purpose they understand. Consequently, the teachers of VYLs need to invest the time to get to know individual students to understand how their students think and operate. The invested time will later pay off, as the teachers can build the motivation on their students' current interests and need (Harmer 2007, p. 83).

As aforementioned, children demand to show their qualities and receive some praise afterward. The teacher and the learner build a positive relationship under the condition that the teacher provides frequent praise, positive reinforcement, or encouragement and support. It will subsequently help VYLs to lower their anxiety and build their self-esteem, hence it will motivate them. (Moon 2005; Claire 1988, p. 2) Lojová (2005, p. 135) proposes that motivation of VYLs can be achieved through the exposure to novelties, positive learning environment, and by the use of attractive teaching aids, such as colorful pictures and flash cards, interesting toys, or games connected with the target language.

Not only the teacher, but also peers play fundamental role in motivation. In case of inclusion of children already speaking the target language, the desire of children, starting with that language, to interact with their peers very often and very quickly leads to acquiring the necessary language to successfully communicate with the peers in a second language. In this case we speak about social motivation (Marxtoová 2011, p. 158; Šulová 2007, p. 55). Krashen

(1982, p. 48) describes this phenomenon as acculturation and states that “it is the most effective way of lowering the affective filter”. However, teachers should be aware of the fact that pre-school children have not developed the sense for comparison with their peers (Šulová 2007, p. 55)

Last but not least factor in VYL’s motivation are parents. Dunn’s (1983, p. 16) research results clearly prove that home and parents represent „the strongest and most intensive influence on a child.” Hence, parents’ interest and support of children’s achievements in the language will seemingly have a great influence in motivating VYLs.

4.3. Number of learners in an English lesson

When deliberating upon a size of the group, teachers should bear in mind a strong need for individual attention that VYLs have (Reilly 2003, p. 6). It should be always considered if the number of the students in the group makes it feasible for the teacher to satisfy this need. As an optimal size of the group for VYL's lesson Marxtová (2011, p. 158) suggests five or six children. From her experience, around 10 is still is feasible, but not optimal. In this size VYLs are still able to fully devote their attention to the teacher and stay in continual interaction with her/him during the lesson.

In case the teacher still has to teach a larger group of VYLs, Reilly (2003, p. 6) recommends to use the opportunities when children are drawing or coloring and devote the individual attention at that time. It is also a chance for possible elicitation of the vocabulary or praising individuals. “It is often at this point that children will say if anything is worrying them”, she adds (ibid).

4.4. Principles of teaching English to VYLs

4.4.1. Here and now principle

As it has been advocated by cognitive psychologist, very early (language) learning is in a great extent limited to the “here and now” experience, as VYLs are mostly endowed with situational memory (Šulová 2005, p. 55). Clark (2011, p. 28) describes this phenomenon as a conversational co-presence when the speaker explicit a reference to the target object or event that is physically co-present at the locus of attention of VYLs.

In speech with physical co-presence “the speaker talks about objects or events perceptually available to both speaker and addressee. With conversational co-presence, the speaker refers directly to the object or event that provides the topic of the exchange” (ibid. p. 29). In practice it means that a teacher should talk about events that are currently happening, just happened or are about to happen, including the objects that are in use or in view for both adult and child. VYLs are not able to go beyond the limits given by here and now (Černá 2009, p. 11).

Clark (2011, p. 29) admits that the emphasis on the here and now unfortunately limits the number of possible topics to what is physically present. However, in teaching practice the present objects can be substituted by pictures or flash cards in order to enable the teacher to broaden the variety of topics. The teacher should include such activities representing the here and now context and avoid those dealing with past or distant future.

4.4.2. Silent period

The appearance of silent period may be palpable in first as well as second language acquisition, yet, is most noticeable in child’s second language acquisition (Krashen 1982, p. 26). Silent period refers to the phenomenon, when children remain silent, or say very little even after several months of exposure to the target language (ibid.). In other cases, some of the children may not speak directly in the class, but after coming home, they reveal to their parents what they have learned (Reilly 1997, p. 7). Troice (in Blight 2014, p. 2) describes this period as a “linguistic development that has gone underground”. If there is any output it frequently consists only of memorized phrases or sentences that are usually learned as a whole word and the child may not understand their meaning completely. (Krashen 1982, p. 26; Krashen 1985, p. 87)

Many authors agree on the fact that silent period is not anything pathological, but normal pre-production stage of language acquisition. (Krashen 1985; Tabors, 1997). The explanation of the silent period is not very perplexing. As Krashen explicates, second language learners are either unable or unwilling to produce their developing second language. The children are simply “building up competence in the second language via listening, by understanding the language around them”. The author (Krashen 1982, p. 27) later adds that after developing enough competence by listening and understanding, speaking ability emerges on its own.

The length of the silent period varies from author to author. Brown (2000, p. 77) argues that it should not take too long, therefore the teacher should step in and encourage the students to

speak in early stages of second language acquisition. As opposed, Krashen (1982; 1985) and Blight (2014) state that the teacher should leave the choice, when to start with production, up to the learner. Asher (1965) claims, that learners are generally ready to begin with the production after only ten hours of TPR. However, Krashen (1982; 1985) and Blight (2014) concur that silent period may last for significantly longer – sometimes just a few months, other times half a year, and occasionally even over a year. The length of silent period can be influenced by many factors, including the consequences of psychological withdrawal or an interruption in the child's expected language acquisition processes (Blight 2014, p. 2).

Nevertheless, from all the researches and experiences of some scholars is apparent that the length of silent period is determined very individually (Černá 2009, p. 10; Krashen 1985, 1982). Hence, children should not be forced to produce utterances in the target language before they internalize with it and develop the receptive vocabulary. Taking above mentioned findings in mind, it could be concluded that in very early second language learning, it is indispensable that comprehension precedes production, whose emanation might arise at different times and very individually, which is also one of the reasons why we should pay individual attention to each learner.

When talking about receptive vocabulary and comprehension, TPR should also be discussed. It is a teaching method based on the assumption that second language teaching should imitate the first language acquisition, developed by James Asher. It pursues to teach language through physical activity. Similar to Krashen, Asher also considers the silent period fundamental, claiming that there exist “a specific innate bio-program for language learning”, that determines the sequence in which comprehension precedes production (Richards, Rodgers 2001, pp. 73-74).

In teaching practice, this method is based on teacher's commands which children respond to by action before they start with oral production. Thus, the learners' roles are primarily the ones of listener and performer, whereas the teacher serves as a language model (Richards, Rodgers 2001, pp. 75-76). For various reasons, TPR is undoubtedly a legitimate method for teaching VYLs. Firstly, it respects the silent period. Secondly, it gives an excellent opportunity to provide learners with a comprehensible input, thus, it minimizes their stress. Thirdly, it employs here and now principle to communicate the meaning of commands with the help of physical actions. And most of all, it provides the teacher with a chance to employ also motor activities. Hence, TPR should become an integral part of lessons with VYLs,

however, as Asher himself stresses, in combination with other methods and techniques (Richards, Rodgers 2001, p. 79).

4.4.3. *Learning activities for VYLs*

As suggested many times before, VYLs better acquire the second language unconsciously and in an informal environment, rather than formally and deliberately. They do not learn by focusing on the language rules or structures, but with the help of incidental learning by experience (Moon 2005, p. 31). It is given by their instinct to explore; a research suggests that this exploration through activity provides the basis for cognitive development (ibid.). Cameron (2001, p. 20) states that “the broader and richer the language experience that is provided for young children is, the more they are likely to learn.” That is why it is essential to understand Piagetian view of young children (*see* pp. 10-11), which clearly indicates that VYLs will do as much as possible to determine meanings and purposes of given activities. Furthermore, this fact to be interconnected with Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, to know that the activity has to be beyond the comprehensible level of the learner, with pertinent challenge, if the learning is to happen.

Moreover, Cameron (2001, p. 27) also highlights the importance of the support in the task. The balanced level of support can be achieved by applying a “Goldilocks principle”, which is:

A task that is going to help the learner learn more language is one that is demanding but not too demanding, that provides support but not too much support. The difference between demands and support creates the space for growth and produces opportunity for learning (ibid).

Planning the activities for a group of VYLs can be definitely very challenging, keeping in mind, that the level of psychological development of each child can be very different. Besides, considering the affective aims, learners should be provided with the chance to feel successful from the very beginning, therefore the teacher should not assign too demanding task, otherwise the high affective filter would prevent the successful acquisition.

The next important factor that the teacher needs to consider when planning activities for VYLs is short concentration span. Apart from motivation, the learners’ psychological and physical state, it is also the type of the activity that determines the length of learners’ attention. Harmer (2007, p. 82) and Reilly (1997, p. 7) agree that the optimal length of an activity designed for VYLs should be ideally around five, not exceeding ten minutes. However, as Zelinková (1997) explains, some activities may be extremely engaging and

learners are able to stay on task surprisingly longer than that. The issue is that such activity has to be very attractive, meaningful, and relevant for a child. According to Hallivell (1992, p. 14), the meaningful activity is a realistic one, with an information gap. Reilly (1997, p. 7) recommends to make notes of such things that our students really enjoy, and consequently create a list of activities that are able to engage students for a longer period of time.

4.4.3.1. *Variety of activities*

There are many factors that a teacher should consider when planning the activities for VYLs. Just some of them were mentioned in the previous chapter and apart from many others, it is also a variety of activities that takes on its remarkable importance. Dunn (1983, p. 36) states that changing the activities gives the lesson energy and some kind of certainty that learners will stay involved for the whole lesson. The variety might range in many aspects from the focusing skill, level of challenge and support, through organizational forms or interaction, to usage of teaching aids.

Nevertheless, Hallivell (1992, p. 20) suggests that when dealing with VYLs, teachers should mainly distinguish between stirring and calming activities. To “stir” is here meant both positively as well as negatively. The activities like competitions wake the class up and stimulate learners or, on the other hand, they might become over-excited and too wild.

On the contrary, calming activities like e.g. drawing, coloring or, from my experience, all types of creative activities, seem to settle children down. Halliwell (ibid.) proposes that the negative side of these activities is the possibility to bore a child into inertia. However, in my opinion, creative activities are very engaging, and if they are not too long, most of the children will always enjoy it. Nonetheless, it is vital to balance these two types of activities when teaching VYLs.

Even though VYLs like familiar things (Reilly 1977, p. 7) variety can be also accomplished by presenting new activities and tasks; what is new one lesson will be familiar by the other one. However, Dunn (1983, p. 34) prompts that there should not be more than one new experience in each lesson, since the children might be confused. She (1984, p. 13) also underscores the importance of preparing children for new activities.

If new activities are presented before sufficient consolidation of previous activities has taken place, a gradual accumulation of things not properly understood begins to grow. This often leads to a feeling of ‘not being good’ at English.

Although the word variety can evoke a change, it is not advisable to be the topic that changes. Halliwell (1992, p. 27) prompts not to jump from topic to topic, as it needs to sink effectively in and be used in a meaningful way. Moreover, the only thing that we achieve by changing the topic is confusion, which will certainly not help children to develop the capacity to concentrate. Hence, it is desirable to connect various activities and tasks by one topic, ensure a smooth transition between them, and adjust it to the actual mood of children and their concentration span.

4.4.3.2 *Game-based activities*

As alluded to many times before, language learning is not the key motivational factor in teaching to VYLs. Games are definitely one of those stimuli to motivate, experiment and consequently discover or interact with others. Playing is a natural way to explore the world and teachers should also incorporate it to the lessons to provide a natural way for second language acquisition. Games are not only fun, but they may also provide an outstanding opportunity to practice all language skills and subskills in a relaxed and enjoyable way.

As for VYLs, Lewis (1999, p. 14) counsels to proceed systematically; start with simple games and built on them before more complex games are introduced. The instructions at this phase are very important – they should be simple, clear and divided into logical steps. If possible, they should be given in the target language, however, in the case of complex games, using a few words in mother tongue may be helpful (Lewis 1999, p. 14; Reilly 1997, p. 5). Couple of words in mother tongue may compensate for long and complex explanation and save a lot of time. Nonetheless, regarding VYLs, it should be emphasized that instructions should be accompanied by a demonstration (Harmer 2007, p. 97). To enable the students to try the activity out will very often convey the meaning of instructions and, in some cases, it can fully substitute them.

Playing games is a vital and natural way of learning. If chosen and used well, games add some variation to a lesson, increase motivation and provide a plausible opportunity to use the target language. However, Brewster and Ellis apprise that the potential of real learning can be easily destroyed if the games are not well-selected, if the encouraged language is very limited, or not monitored. Thus, teachers should plan the games wisely and take into account all possible aspects.

4.4.3.3 *Lesson routines*

To help children to feel secure and certain, an English lesson should incorporate some routines or rituals. Thus, learners will know what to expect and will be able to predict meaning and intention of the given activity (Cameron 2001, p. 10). The unknown and not predictable situations may lead to frustration and negatively influence the low affective filter of VYLs (Scott, Ytreberg, 1991). Thus, it is advisable to use routines and rituals² or predictable procedures³ or any other repeated actions to enable children to know the rules and be accustomed to the upcoming situations.

However, using routines in the classroom should not be mistaken with not incorporating the new things. On the contrary, routines which happen regularly in the classroom may provide chance for language development, introducing more complex language, where routines can serve as a support and provide the opportunity for language grow (Cameron 2001, p. 10). Moreover, it also creates an opportunity to present novelty, add variations, and develop various language skills (ibid. p. 11).

Furthermore, Harmer (2007, p. 125) proposes, that routines can make the teacher's job much easier. It can be used when giving various instructions or dividing learners into pairs or groups; everything will be done way quicker and more efficiently if it is part of a routine. The routines should be established at the beginning of the course, which may, as Harmer (ibid.) admits, take some time, but definitely will pay off and save time later on.

In my opinion, one of the most used routines, are aforementioned opening/closing songs or rhymes. However, songs and rhymes can be used in many other ways to provide the routine (e.g. to create smooth transition between activities) or to introduce, practice or revise the language. Songs and rhymes can also aim at raising phonological awareness of the language. Actually, songs and rhymes have a wide range of benefits. Brewster and Ellis (2002, pp. 162-163) divided the benefits into linguistic, psychological/affective, cultural, cognitive and social domains. It might be useful for a language teacher to be aware of all the various benefits and types of rhymes and songs to take advantage of their potential and use them for different purposes, in various stages of the lesson.

² e.g. songs or rhymes at the beginning and end of the lesson

³ e.g. sitting in a circle for story time

5. RESEARCH

The practical part of this thesis is closely connected with the theoretical one, as it serves as a theoretical input for the present, small scale research. It is clear from the theoretical part that it is not just in the Czech sociolinguistic background where, unless actively searched for, there are not many opportunities for a natural input of English. Starting a language at a low age does not assure the successful acquisition; the success is also dependent on other conditions, as highlighted in the theoretical part. If a foreign language is to be successfully acquired in formal settings, then certain conditions and principles should be followed. For the purpose of this thesis, only principles that can be empirically observed within the limits of this small-scale research were chosen. Namely, they are: respecting silent period, together with providing a variety of activities and routines. This research examines how, and to what extent, are the chosen principles for teaching a second language to VYLs followed in the practice in chosen nurseries and basic schools. The research results may help foreign language teachers of VYLs to raise awareness of key factors for very early second language teaching.

As alluded to earlier, the research question was decided as follows: *How and to what extent are the chosen principles for teaching a second language to VYLs followed in the practice in chosen nurseries and basic schools?* This principal question is further subdivided into sub-questions underlining the chosen principles of teaching a foreign language to VYLs; all of them are based on the theoretical part of this thesis:

Silent Period:

- *Does the teacher respect the possible silent period of learners?*
- *Does comprehension precede production?*

Variety of activities:

- *Does the teacher respect VYLs' short concentration span by providing a wide range of short activities?*
- *Does the teacher provide a variety of activities in every lesson?*
- *Does the teacher incorporate novelties in the lessons?*
- *What is the balance of stirring and calming activities?*

Routines:

- *Does the teacher integrate routines or ritual activities into the lessons and what is their function?*

2.1 Research methodology and tools for data collection

Many authors (Hendl 2006, p.; Švaříček, Šedová 2007, p.22) state that there is no bad, good or universal research methodology; it is rather considered by suitability to a particular research problem. This specific research applies multiple research methodology - a combining of two research tools, namely structural classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. The observations are to be analyzed with the help of a structured observation sheet that focuses on the chosen principles, their presence, frequency, and nature of existence.

As Chrátka (2016, p. 148) alerts, one of the considerable drawbacks of observations can be a large degree of subjectivity. Thus, the observations are to be supplemented by semi-structured interviews that aim to analyze the teacher's subjective views and interpretations of their own teaching, restricted to the chosen principles. This should help the researcher to interpret the observed data and look at the phenomena in a more objective manner; hence eliminating the observer's subjective point of view. Moreover, it should also bring some insight into how the teacher's opinions or beliefs of their own teaching are reflected in their practice. Švaříček (2007, p. 158) recommends to connect these two tools to get a complex picture about the investigated situation. Using multiple research methodology should facilitate the investigation of given principles externally (by the structured, non-participant observation) and internally (from the point of view of the participated teacher).

5.1.1. Structured observations

As mentioned above, the observations are to be analyzed with the help of a structured observation sheet, which is created in correspondence with the individual research questions. Both [the content of the observation sheet and the research questions] correlate with the theoretical part and were specifically created for the purpose of this thesis. All three principles that the researcher investigates are amassed in one observation sheet. The sheet is divided into six parts. The introductory part of the sheet consists of the basic information about the lesson, for instance the number of students, the time or the topics of the lesson. The introductory part is followed by a chart. The first part of the chart is a description of an activity. The second part deals with a variety of activities, records their time, and investigates whether the activity is calming, stirring, known, or new. The aim of this part is to find out if the teacher provides students with some novelties, a variety of activities, and what is the balance of calming and stirring activities. Subsequently, the silent period is taken into account, aiming to record the

student's involvement in the target language. The goal is to find out whether reception precedes production, as well as to determine the type of spoken production in the target language. The fourth part of the observation sheet focuses on routine activities. The objective is to find out if the teacher helps the children to feel secure and certain by introduction of routine activities, and furthermore, to record the functions of these activities.

Nunan (1992, p. 110) accentuates, that the "disadvantage of observational instruments is that they act as mental 'blinkers' on the user. They also encapsulate the author's ideological beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning." Hence, to reduce the subjectivity of the observer, the structured observations are supplemented with semi-structured interviews.

5.1.2. Semi-structured interviews

There seem to be no consensus in scientific texts on a clear definition of a semi-structured interview. According to Nunan (1992, p. 149) the present interview would not probably be semi-structured, as his definition supposes that the interviewer does not enter the interview with a list of predetermined questions. It is the topics, rather than questions, that determine the course of the interview. The interviewer will always have a "general idea of where he or she wants the interview to go, and what should come out of it" (ibid.).

As opposed to that, Švaříček (2007, p. 160) states that a semi-structured interview is based on topics and questions prepared beforehand. Chráska (2007, p.183) and Gavora (2000, p.111) agree that in a semi-structured interview, an interviewee is offered an answer from several options but is subsequently asked to explain his/her choice. Gavora (ibid.) offers an alternate resolution by stating that a semi-structured interview can vary according to different situation; sometimes it can be closer to a structured interview and, occasionally, it can draw nearer to an unstructured form. Nevertheless, all the mentioned authors concede that a semi-structured interview allows the researcher a high degree of flexibility and a deeper insight into the investigated problematic.

In this research, most of the questions in the interview are open-ended, or the teachers are asked to explain their choice from the options. Moreover, the questions are created in such a way to avoid suggestion, which may lead an interviewee to particular answers. This gave the teachers enough space for expressing their opinions, so the researcher was able to individualize the scope of the questions and at the same time control whether the teachers stuck to the original questions and respected their primary aims. Furthermore, when

interviewing, the researcher took advantage of the possibility to modify, explain or extend the questions if needed, respecting the individuality of the investigated teachers. A structured interview or even a questionnaire would not provide such authenticity as this method does, nor the width and depth of the collected data.

As mentioned many times before, the semi-structured interviews were held to eliminate the subjective point of view of the participating observer. The interviews were conducted after every lesson; however, the first interview was more extensive than the others, as, after the initial one, there was no need to ask as many questions after each lesson, however some remained necessary. The interview content closely correlates with the observation sheet and the research questions described above. The general aim of these interviews was to determine the teachers' subjective beliefs and interpretations about their own teaching, as far as the investigated principles. Nevertheless, the main interview is divided into four parts and their aims significantly differ.

The first part of the interview aims at eliciting the teachers' education, as it is a very significant factor in the research. The following part focuses on the impact of the observer's presence, as it could influence the representativeness of the lesson. The third part deals with the routines, novelties, variety of activities, their time aspect and types. This part also helps the researcher to analyze the obtained data. For example, according to students' behavior some of the activities may seem new, or, on the contrary, already known to the pupils, however the reality can be very different; these answers should emerge from this part of the interview. The last part of the interview examines the silent period, and then there is also a pace for additional questions. The aims of the last two sections are mostly to obtain the teachers' subjective beliefs and interpretations about their own teaching, as far as the investigated principles, and, after comparing it with the observation sheet, to find out whether it correlates with their teaching practice.

As stated previously, interviews were conducted after every lesson and the first interview was more extensive as there was no need to ask as many questions after each lesson, however some remained necessary. Thus, a second, shortened version of the first interview was created leaving only the questions concerning the authenticity of the observed lesson, the presence of new activities and routines, and, in case of a new group of children, also silent period.

5.2. Research subjects involved and arrangement of observations

5.2.1. Selection of research subjects

From the outset, the researcher considered establishing criteria⁴ for sampling the teachers that would be observed, but doing this would make the sampling even more arduous than it was. Supposing, the lack of education could also be one of the outcomes of this research, no criteria were set. For sampling, the researcher used so called “convenient sample” (Gavora 2000, p. 64), when choosing schools that are easily accessible. It saves time traveling, expenses, and a considerable amount of effort. Nevertheless, the researcher is aware that this type of sampling brings a lot of disadvantages. First of all, it considerably decreases the external validity of the given research; however, this small-scale research is not conducted for use by the general population. The results are to be contextually bound to certain teachers and should not be interpreted to a general scale.

It should be highlighted that the process of sampling was extremely difficult. The researcher contacted around ten randomly chosen nursery schools in the nearby surrounding areas that promoted teaching English on their web pages. The schools were contacted by email and only one replied - with a negative answer. Consequently, the researcher decided to also include first and second grades of basic school into the research, in order to broaden the field. Later the researcher, with the help of social network, colleagues, teachers and friends received eight contacts for teachers of English. Four rejected the presence of an observer in their English lessons with very young learners for various reasons. Most of the time the rejection came from the teachers; occasionally refusal was from the headmaster of the chosen schools.

The organization of the observations was not a smooth process either. It was very time consuming to negotiate all the approvals and the first observation took place just seven weeks before the deadline of the paper. The times of the lessons were often parallel, which unfortunately prolonged the observation period. Moreover, a flu and small pox epidemic and period of spring holidays further complicated the situation. Considering these factors, the researcher decided on 20 observations in total due to some of the teachers teaching only one lesson a week, and the observations taking much longer than expected.

⁴ For example teaching practice or education of the teachers

5.2.2. *Characterization of research subjects and arrangement of observations*

Taking into account the above mentioned reasons, the researcher decided to go with an uneven allocation of the observations between the four teachers that agreed ~~with~~ to the presence of an uninvolved person in their lessons. The number of the observed lessons was highly depended on the schedule. Some teachers had just one lesson a week, whereas others had six. Two of the teachers taught one plan twice, which the researcher took advantage of but did not limit the observations just to these lessons with identical content. However, it gave the researcher a favorable insight into the teaching strategy, together with the chance to judge whether the teachers work differently with varying students and if it is the pupils who they teach, not the content.

The first teacher, henceforth T1, taught four lessons a week in the first and second grade⁵ of a basic school in a city with approximately 90 000 inhabitants. These 45 minutes long lessons, with around 10 students, were taught once a week within the curriculum of the school. The observed groups included children with special educational needs; one with mental retardation, one with ADHD, one hearing-impaired and a few with other special educational needs. Hence, some of the lessons required the presence of an assistant. The teacher had a university education focused on English teaching at basic school, finished with a master's degree. Thanks to the considerable amount of lessons that T1 taught within the criteria of this research [only the first and second graders] the researcher decided on 6 observations, 2 of which were more or less the same content.

The second teacher, from now on T2, worked as an external teacher at a nursery school in a small town, with about 3700 inhabitants, where she teaches two lessons a week, both with more or less the same content. The second lesson was unfortunately parallel with one of the fourth teacher's, so the researcher did not get a chance to compare lessons with the same content but different pupils. The 45 minute lessons with 10 children on average were established as a children's club beyond the curriculum of the school, as the *Framework Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education* does not allow these services within the

⁵ Each class has 1 lesson a week but is divided into two groups

program (MoEYS 2016, p. 42). T2 had the same level and field of education as T1. Within the bounds of time possibilities, the researcher observed 4 lessons of T2.

Another external teacher participating in this research, henceforth T3, was the only teacher who did not have any pedagogical education. She was just finishing a gymnasium, though she had applied for several education programs specialized in teaching preschool children. She also taught English at a nursery school in a small village with around 250 inhabitants. As in the case of T2, the 45 minutes long lessons were organized once a week as children's clubs beyond the school curriculum, usually with 10 children of various ages, however, in most cases of the observations, there were 5 children maximum, due to flu and small pox epidemic. Furthermore, during the observation period four lessons were cancelled due to spring holidays. Unfortunately, the result was that the researcher could observe only 3 of T3's lessons, within the bounds of the time constraints.

The last teacher, referred to as T4 from now on, trained as a teacher for basic school with English specification, worked in a basic school that specialized in languages, in a city of 93 000 inhabitants. The teacher was additionally a class teacher of the observed first graders, thus she had a possibility to integrate English to the other subjects. The whole class was divided into two groups and the lessons, which were held three times a week, were held in 20 minute blocks, with around 10 children on average. The lessons were within the curriculum of the school. Thanks to the considerable amount of lessons that T1 taught within the scope of this research, the researcher had a possibility to observe 6 lessons, 4 of which were more or less of the same content.

5.3. Research procedure

5.3.1. Piloting stage

After the selection of the research subjects and the creation of the research tools, all of the research instruments were piloted to increase their validity. Only minimal changes were required on the observation sheet, which was piloted on a YouTube video of an English lesson from a French pre-school. As the nature of an English lesson for VYLs is very brisk, some symbols were introduced to facilitate easier and quicker recording of the obtained data, especially concerning measuring the time of the activities. As there were many things to focus on, the observer did not manage to measure the time exactly, together with recording all the other aspects. The time was rounded and divided into several stages and with the help of

symbols and numbers was marked accordingly in five minute intervals: less than five minutes; more than five minutes but shorter than ten; and more than ten minutes but no longer than fifteen and so on. However, after the first observed lesson the need to shorten these symbols emerged, thus, they were substituted with numbers representing the symbols and given number of minutes. Moreover, a column for various types of repetition was added, together with symbols representing calling out students who raised their hands, those who did not, or cases where students are asked for the production one by one. This means that, if different cases emerged, they could be noted in an additional column for comments. ⁶

With regards to the interview, more significant changes were required. Many of multiple choice questions were altered to the open-ended ones, whereas some had to be shortened or divided into two. However, most importantly, a few questions proved to be too suggestive, thus they were modified.⁷ Moreover, after the second lesson was observed, it became apparent that the interview needed to be shortened. Thus, a shortened version of the first interview was created, leaving only the questions concerning the authenticity of the observed lesson, the presence of new and routine activities, and, in case of a new group of children, the silent period.⁸

5.3.2. Conducting the research

As previously mentioned, the researcher intended 20 lessons of four teachers. Due to the time restrictions, the arrangement of the lessons was uneven: twelve lessons were meant to be divided among the two teachers from the basic school (T1 and T4) and eight lessons among the two teachers from the nursery schools (T2 and T3). However, as pinpointed above, there were many disruptions during the observation period resulting in the cancellation of some lessons for various reasons, so the observer was forced to decrease the original number of 20 lessons to 19, with just 3 observed lessons of the T3. The observer is aware of the fact that the uneven arrangement of observations might lead to minor differences in obtained data.

After each first observed lesson the interview number one was conducted. After each second observed lesson and onward, the shorter and simplified interview number two was carried

⁶ For the final version of the observation sheet *see appendix A*

⁷ For the final version of the interview 1 *see appendix B*

⁸ For the final version of the interview 2 *see appendix C*

out.⁹ Before every interview the researcher aimed to establish a positive atmosphere as Gavora (2000, p. 112) suggests, to contribute to an effective interview. The author (ibid.) stresses that a positive rapport with the interviewee is fundamental in order to get authentic and valuable results. Hence, each interview begun with a focus on the positive parts of the lessons and expressing interest in the interviewee. It very often led to a discussion and an exchange of experiences. The interview questions usually arose naturally from this discussion, so the question order had to be tailored to each individual interview. The data was recorded continuously, as Gavora (ibid.) recommends for this type of interview. He further suggests the usage of symbols for recording just the most important points. For the majority of the time this method did not require the discussion to be paused, thus preventing a loss of momentum and patience. Of course, all the interviews were concluded with the interviewer's expression of thanks and, after the experience from the selection of the teachers, the sincere gratitude for allowing the observations to take place.

5.4. Analyses of the obtained data

Before the data from the introductory part of the interviews will be analyzed, followed by a comparison of the obtained data from the observation sheets and the interviews dealing with didactic principles, the observer should comment on some general factors of the lessons.

All the teachers opted for a limit number of learners, which was around ten children per group. According to Marxtová (2011, p. 158), this is not an optimal number but still feasible (*see* p. 25). In this size of a group, teachers can satisfy the strong need for individual attention that VYLs have relatively easily. Moreover, VYLs are able to fully devote their attention to the teacher and remain in continual interaction with her/him for the duration of the lesson.

The teachers were rarely able to decide the length and frequency of English lessons themselves, nevertheless, most of the time lessons occurred typically for 45 minutes once a week. T4's lessons, however, were exceptions: as her class was divided into two groups of 20 minute blocks, three times a week. However, in the interview the teacher stated that the organization of changing the groups is very hectic, but she still preferred it before two 45 minute lessons a week, asking the director of the school to have three 45 minute lessons in a

⁹ Apart from one exception, interviews were hold immediately after the lesson. Only one interview was organized the following week owing to the teacher's busy schedule.

week, which she labeled as an optimal amount. It should be highlighted that this was not an ordinary basic school, but it focused particularly on teaching languages.

As suggested in the theoretical part (*see* p. 36), it is better to connect various activities and tasks by one topic, rather than jumping from one topic to another, as this allows it to effectively sink in and be used in a meaningful way. Apart from T3, this method was utilized by every teacher. Some of the lessons did occasionally incorporate more than one topic; however, when this occurred they were well connected. In the case of T3, one lesson consisted of around 4 or more topics that were not connected at all. Surprisingly, the researcher did not observe any confusion from the students when the topics mixed. Changing various topics during the lesson may be due to the fact that T3 was the only one who did not follow any supportive material e.g. a textbook. However, the researcher assumes that the reason could be a lack of pedagogical training and simply not knowing about this principle. T3 defended her teaching method with a strong argument that including all known topics is due to the need for constant recycling, however, to cover five topics in one lesson is not recommended by any specialist dealing with VYLs.

A lack of education could also be responsible for T3's usage of native language in her lessons. Even though the language of the lesson was not the subject of the research, the researcher could not help but notice the fact that T3 constantly mixed the native and the target language. It was quite interesting to observe the impact of such discourse on the children. Not having a consistent language model meant that the children frequently did not differentiate between the languages and of course, mixed them together. Then the observer witnessed similar situations like: "Čáp ztratil čepičku, měla barvu, barvičku blue." Very interestingly, the researcher did not observe any confusion from the students, as they perceived mixing languages as completely normal and natural.

The English language in the lessons of T2 and T4 could be considered as the core language of the lessons, as Czech was used very rarely. In the case of T1, English was also the main language, however, Czech was used more than in the cases of T2 and T4, mainly for giving instructions, even the basic ones like opening a book, which the observer would assume the learners could manage in English. However, it should be highlighted again that these results are not based on the structured observation but only on researcher's subjective opinion.

5.4.1. Interview data

The results from the first part of the interviews, which deals with achieved education of the teachers, was described in the *chapter 5.2.2*, thus we can proceed to the following part, namely the authenticity of the lesson.

5.4.1.1. Impact of the observer's presence

The answers to the first question of the part dealing with authenticity in both interviews were almost identical. It was only the lessons of T3 that were slightly different than usual as there were only half the students present, due to the epidemics mentioned above. However, the teacher stated that the content of the lessons was typical, but she made a point to minimize the amount of new vocabulary and mostly just revise the known ones. All the other teachers labeled every lesson as a typical one. The same can be said about the influence of the present observer on the teacher's behavior: All the teachers identified their behavior as unaffected. The question dealing with the influence of the observer's presence on the participated students also got similar results. Apart from two exceptions, most of the teachers stated that the pupils were unaffected. One exception was a lesson by T1, where there was present a pupil diagnosed with ADHD and other learning differences. After the lesson the teacher and the assistant for this student concluded that the behavior of this boy was influenced by the presence of the observer. Even the observer herself, though observing this group of students for the first time, could tell that the behavior of this particular student was not usual. Fortunately, the rest of the students in this group were not influenced by his behavior, nor by the presence of the observer. Hence, for the sake of the diagnosed student, it was negotiated that for the following observation he would be moved to the second, unobserved group. The second exception was noted by T2 when, according to her, the first observed group was singing a bit less than usual due to shyness. Those impacts were only minor, thereby it can be concluded that the observed lessons were authentic and representative to a high degree.

5.4.2. Didactic principles in the observed lessons

5.4.2.1. Lesson routines

Once the obtained data from the observation sheets and the interviews were put together, quite various results emerged. There was only one routine activity that most of the observed lessons shared – the initial one, though, it had many different representations as it varied from one teacher to another. In the majority of the cases the lessons started in a circle, singing a hello

song or greeting and reacting to basic questions, this was sometimes followed by a certain game. In the case of T3, there were two introductory songs that changed from lesson to lesson. In one of the observed lessons this song appeared as a third activity, or in other lesson was repeated in the middle of the lecture because children required it. Only in the case of T4 the lesson always started with revision of the previous topic. Considering, that T4 taught children the whole day, five days a week, some kind of hello song or similar activity would not really be suitable. As mentioned before, this teacher had the opportunity to incorporate the English language into other lessons. For that she employed a special routine activity to avoid mixing the languages or switching between them without any warning: she “puts the children asleep” and when they “wake up”, it is into English.

Some of the teachers (T1 and T2) also integrated organizational routines like working with workbooks, distributing textbooks or putting the worksheets into folders. Both teachers pinpointed the aspect of saving time, as they wouldn't have to repeat the instructions again and again, but children would know what to do, as the activity was a part of the routine.

Only in one case (T2) there was also a closing routine activity – a goodbye song. In the interview T1 also mentioned using a goodbye routine as well, however, in this case the researcher did not consider saying goodbye as a routine, since it was not done with any special arrangement; most of the students simply greeted the teacher individually, before they left the classroom. As mentioned above, the need of VYLs to feel safe and secure can be satisfied in many ways, and incorporating some routine or ritual activities can be one of them. All the teachers in their interviews pinpointed that it is much better for students if they know what is going to happen, and that they are used to these routine activities. Moreover, T2 added that students enjoy the activities, so they require them. It could be concluded, that all the observed teachers helped the students to feel secure and certain by including some routine activities. Yet, the researcher considers the T3's choice to switch between two opening songs a bit imprudent, as it might lead to confusion; nevertheless, the researcher did not notice any confusion among the students during the observed lessons. Again, this inappropriate choice might be caused by the lack of a pedagogical training.

5.4.2.2. *Variety of activities*

In this section the researcher worked mostly with quantitative data and the lessons were analyzed from three perspectives. Firstly, an average number of activities during one lesson was calculated. The researcher then further worked with this average and recorded the ratio

between stirring and calming activities as a percentage and an amount of known new activities. Followingly, the researcher calculated the average time of activities in correspondence with the observation sheet, which was also expressed as a percentage ratio. The results of the obtained data are shown in the chart below:

Chart 1: Variety of activities

Teacher	Lesson time	Ø number of activities/lesson	Type of activities ¹⁰		Time of activities [%]			
			C:S [%]	K:N	>5 min	<5>10 min	<10>15 min	<15>20 min
T1	45	11	73:27	2N in 2/6L	67	31	2	0
T2	45	11	64:36	2N in 2/4L	73	23	4	0
T3	45	8	25:75	3N in 3/6L	55	41	0	4
T4	20	7	57:43	1N in 1/6L	92	8	0	0

From the gained results above it emerges that, apart from T3, all the teachers used relatively high number of activities, in relation to the duration of their lessons. Most of the numbers that the average was calculated from were very similar. There was only one exception - a lesson by T2, that occurred after a spring holiday, where the teacher began the lesson by establishing a positive atmosphere, discussing the holidays in the student's native language. The discussion turned into quite an extensive debate, so the number of learning activities in English dropped to seven and slightly lowered the average. Apart from this, the numbers were similarly high; hence, all the lessons can be considered as activity-based.

Occasionally it was quite troublesome to record the data for stirring and calming activities. Stirring activities were mostly considered as incorporating some movement, however, a minor amount of movement was sometimes added and it did not seem to stir the learners very much. This issue appeared especially during some songs, mainly if they were a part of a routine. The

¹⁰ In correspondence with the observation sheet the meaning of the abbreviations is as follows:

C = calming; S = stirring; K = known; N = new; L = lesson

major indicator was not just the movement but also the following level of learners' excitement. Therefore, interestingly, some songs were considered stirring and others calming. As it emerges from the theoretical part, generally, these activities should be more or less balanced. This presumption was accomplished only by T4 and also partly by T2. Again, her last observed, calm and revision lesson after the spring holidays lowered the average, whereas, the figures that T1's average was calculated from, were very similar. The lower percentage of stirring activities was slightly compensated by the fact that students were moving fairly often from desks to the carpet, where they often sat in a circle and practiced different types of activities. Nevertheless, the figures of T3 quite vary from the others. It should be highlighted that from the three observed lessons, only one had a balanced number of calming and stirring activities. The other lessons involved mostly stirring activities incorporating a lot of movement. The first lesson did not contain any calming activity whatsoever and the learners required a break after every second activity. In the interview, T3 defended her choice with a statement that the children seem to be "hyperactive" so they require a lot of physical activities. The other teachers also highlighted the need of VYLs for physical activities as a reason for an effort to incorporate a considerable amount of stirring activities in lessons. It can be concluded that the lessons of all the teachers, apart from T3, regularly alternated between stirring and calming activities. Concerning T3, the imbalanced ratio between these types of activities in her lessons might be caused by the uneven arrangement of observations, however, the researcher assumed that it is more likely incurred by the lack of a pedagogical training.

With regards to the length of activities, under-five-minute activities were apparently implemented the most and undoubtedly represent the core of almost every observed lesson. The activities lasting from five to ten minutes were frequently observed as well. Activities longer than ten minutes can be deemed as rather rare and limited to no more than one occurrence in a lesson. The averages of T3 fractionally differ from others, but it still could be concluded that all the teachers respected the short concentration span of VYLs and provided a wide range of short length activities. The same results emerged from the interviews, where all the teachers stated that very short activities prevail in order to keep the learners attentive. T3 added that the length of activities also depends on the day of the week. She respects the current mood of her students and includes more shorter activities on Friday, whereas on Monday they can be a little longer.

Regarding the presence of novel activities, the researcher did not provide an average percentage, as opposed to the rest of the data, due to the amount of novelties being too low. Moreover, considering the uneven arrangement of the observed lessons, the result would not be representative of the actual amount and may even be misleading. Therefore, the researcher decided the ratio as recorded in Chart 1. It is apparent that no teacher introduced a new activity every lesson, however all of them did introduce a few over the duration of the observation period. The new experience was always limited to one per a lesson as Dunn (1983, p. 34) recommends. It can be concluded that the teachers regularly introduce new activities in the lessons, however, all of them agreed in the interviews that an English lesson for VYLs should be based on known activities. Additionally, some of the teachers stated that children have their favorite activities and games that they repeatedly ask to play; thus, it would be unwise to base the lessons on new activities. Apart from T1, who stated that the level of the students prevents the introduction of many new activities, all of them declared that they occasionally try to involve them; for T2 and T3 it was every second lesson and for T4 with every new topic.

5.4.2.3. Silent period

Since the observation period took place at the beginning of the second semester, it was quite complicated to observe occurrence of students in silent period. Thus, the researcher mostly did not focus on individual students but rather investigated if the lesson arrangement and nature respects the potential silent period of some students. Nevertheless, during the interviews, apart from T2, who stated that the students were always very eager to communicate, all the other teachers admitted a presence of some students who did not very talk much or at all at the beginning of the semester. They mostly declared that the reasons for this behavior were diagnosed learning differences, lower age than other students or certain character qualities. Some of these students started speaking after some time, whereas others still remain quieter, but these were mostly the cases of the mentioned diagnoses. All the teachers pinpointed that they rarely require production from these students and if they do, they never force them to talk. Motivation, support and a lot of positive reinforcement were highlighted as the key factors to providing the feeling of security and safety. The same was proved in the observations; a production required from these students was very often repetition, when getting full support and positive reinforcement from the teachers.

Concerning the research question, whether comprehension precedes production, it can be concluded that apart from T3, all the teachers always provided certain amount of comprehension before they required any production. This was done mainly with help of flashcards or other pictures, gestures, or songs and rhymes. Interestingly, TPR – a method that is very convenient for this purpose was often incorporated after students had produced the target vocabulary or phrases. If the teachers requested some production, it was usually spontaneously, either as a “group answer” or they called out students who raised their hands. Occasionally, as a method of testing the teacher would call out the students who did not raise their hands, after the topic and vocabulary had been sufficiently recycled. Concerning T3, one activity occurred where no comprehension preceded production; without introducing new vocabulary, students were asked to repeat them directly after the teacher, together with pointing to the corresponding part of the body, which was the topic of the activity. Followingly the learners were asked to incorporate them into a song. Surprisingly, the students did not have any trouble with this at the beginning, however when the song got faster and faster they struggled. Here, TPR followed the production but unfortunately, most of the students did not remember the vocabulary so at the beginning they failed and required a lot of teacher’s help.

As for required repetition, most of the time it occurred in the form of group repetition with the purpose of training pronunciation, but in no lessons did it become a part of a ritual, students were only given a chance for practicing the language, not forcing them to speak. If individual repetition occurred, it was mostly as a form of correction. Interestingly, many students spontaneously repeated the vocabulary even when it was not actually required, e.g. during TPR.

To conclude, all of the observed teachers provided such a nature of lessons that enabled potential students in silent period to remain silent. None of them forced students to speak or repeat target vocabulary, they simply provided the opportunity for learners to produce the language and left it up to the students to use this chance or not. However, the position of the TPR activity should be reconsidered by all the teachers, in order to utilize the aims of these kinds of activities. The fact that in T3’s lessons comprehension did not always precede production could, again, be caused by the lack of pedagogical training.

6. CONCLUSION

The theoretical part of this thesis commences output for first, as well as second, language acquisition. Subsequently, the author specifies young learners and focusses on their language acquisition and development, concluding that very early second language education should be always introduced with regard to the individual development of a child. The following part debates the ideal age for starting a second language. The-sooner-the-better idea is confronted by empirical evidence from all around the world, the Czech Republic inclusive. The subsequent section, which is an underlining outcome of the previous chapter, formulates the theoretical outputs relevant for very early English teaching and focusses on didactic principles.

The empirical part is closely connected with the theoretical part and presents small-scale research that investigates how and to what extent are the chosen principles for teaching a second language to VYs followed in the practice in chosen nurseries and basic schools. The research deals only with three chosen principles from the theoretical part, feasible for this research. Namely, they are: silent period, variety of activities, and routines in the classroom. The research results, relevant only to this research sample, can be concluded as follows: all the observed teachers seem to create such lessons in order to provide the children with conditions that enable a positive attitude to the English language to be built, as well as supporting their overall personality development, which are the general aims of very early English teaching. All the researched teachers respected specifics of VYs' concentration span by incorporating lots of short activities, including simple routines and rituals. These helped to satisfy VYs' need to feel safe and secure by giving them the knowledge of what will happen during the lesson. All the teachers followed most of the principles for respecting potential silent period of some learners. The only condition that was not followed by T3, was that comprehension not always preceded production. Apart from this teacher, all of them provided balanced alternation between calming and stirring activities. T3 was also the only teacher who did not provide learners with sufficient language input, thus it is very unlikely that the children's potential for foreign language learning would emerge in this course. The drawbacks of T3's lessons could be blamed on the lack of pedagogical training, perhaps also on an uneven amount of observed lessons.

To sum up, after refocusing the attention from the optimal age to the optimal conditions and having researched adherence of the chosen didactic principles for very early English language teaching on chosen nurseries and basic schools, it may be concluded that all the teachers with appropriate pedagogical qualifications more or less followed the mentioned principles when teaching their lessons. The only teacher who did not undergo any special pedagogical nor linguistic training was also the only one who did not follow most of the principles. Thus, apart from many other aspects, the need for a qualified teacher highlighted by Ježková (2011, p. 155) resulted in being a fundamental factor in very early English language teaching.

Resume

Předložená diplomová práce pojednává o velmi aktuálním tématu, a to rané výuce anglického jazyka. Práce je rozdělena do dvou základních částí – teoretické (1. – 4. kapitola) a empirické (5. kapitola). Autor uvádí práci zasazením tématu do širšího vzdělávacího kontextu a poukazuje na několik faktorů ovlivňujících nárůst zájmu o anglický jazyk, tudíž i jeho výuku, která se snaží najít cesty k zefektivnění tohoto poměrně zdlouhavého a náročného procesu, kterým učení se cizího jazyka bezpochyby je. Výsledkem této snahy, se kromě jiného, zdá být i neustále snižování věkové hranice pro výuku cizího jazyka, a to se záměrem využít předpokladu až nevídané jednoduchosti a rychlosti, se kterými se malé děti učí věcem, jenž je v každodenním životě obklopují, zejména tak osvojování jazyků, a to zcela přirozeně a velice efektivně.

První kapitola se věnuje specifikaci dětí předškolního věku, kde autorka po srovnání několika definic vytváří svou vlastní definici rané výuky, a to výhradně pro specifické potřeby této diplomové práce. Následně jsou představeny různé teorie o osvojování mateřského jazyka včetně behavioristické, zastoupené B.F Skinnerem, americkým psychologem, který tvrdil, že děti se učí především nápodobou a imitováním. Tomuto názoru oponuje Noam Chomsky, který prohlašoval, že vývoj řeči je vymezen geneticky. Přispěl tak teorií universální gramatiky, jenž tvrdí, že se každý rodí s určitou gramatickou šablonou, do které jednoduše zapadne jakýkoliv světový jazyk. Tyto teorie jsou v následující části rozšířeny o teorii Krashenovu, skládající se z několika hypotéz osvojování cizího jazyka.

Další, velice důležitá část této práce, se soustředí na specifikaci předškolního dítěte, ovšem tentokrát z pohledu vývojové psychologie. Tato sekce je dále členěna do třech základních oblastí: kognitivní vývoj, sociální a emoční vývoj a motorický vývoj. Část kognitivního vývoje autorka započíná konceptem Jeana Piageta a jeho konstruktivistického pojetí a etapy vývoje. Autorka dále rozebírá vývojové etapy úzce související s věkovou hranicí dětí, kterým se tato diplomová práce věnuje. Piagetova teorie je později doplněna o koncepci zóny nejbližšího vývoje propagovanou Levem Vygotským, který zdůrazňoval roli sociální interakce. Do kognitivní psychologie jsou také zahrnuta specifika paměti, pozornosti, fantazie a představ.

V podkapitole pojednávající o sociálním a emocionálním vývoji jsou krátce zmíněny vývojové fáze Erika Ericsona, dále je zdůrazněna potřeba bezpečí, seberealizace či sociální

interakce. Diskutována je zde také emocionálnost a význam pozitivního zpevnování nejen ve výuce cizího jazyka. Oblast motorického vývoje je spojena s jemnou motorikou a celkovým zkvalitněním svalové koordinace, či koordinace mezi okem a rukou. Je zde také zdůrazněna potřeba motorické aktivity i ve výuce cizího jazyka.

Třetí kapitola diskutuje dlouho pokládanou otázku optimálního věku pro představení cizího jazyka. Nejprve je představena hypotéza kritického období, která tvrdí, že existuje určité období, kdy je jednodušší si jazyk osvojit, a po uplynutí této biologicky dané doby je zmíněné osvojování velice obtížné. Následují dvě podkapitoly s empirickými výzkumy založené právě na této hypotéze. Autorka zde odkazuje na několik zahraničních i českých výzkumů týkajících se této problematiky, čímž na toto téma nabízí hned několik pohledů. Na konci této kapitoly dochází tak tvůrce této práce k závěru, že věk není jedinou proměnnou mající vliv na velmi rannou výuku jazyka a přichází tak s výčtem ostatních důležitých faktorů včetně dodržování určitých didaktických principů specifických pro tuto výuku, nastíněných v následující kapitole.

Jak již zmíněno, čtvrtá kapitola vychází z předcházejících částí této práce a stává se tak klíčovou sekcí pro empirický výzkum. Jsou zde zmíněny klíčové faktory ovlivňující rannou cizojazyčnou výuku společně s vybranými didaktickými principy, ze kterých by měla tato výuka vycházet. Autorka nejdříve vymezuje hlavní cíle tohoto vzdělávání se zdůrazněním cílů afektivních, při čemž cíle jazykové zůstávají spíše podřazené těmto cílům afektivním. Dále jsou polemizovány ostatní faktory ovlivňující předškolní vzdělávání, jako je např. motivace či počet studentů ve skupině. Následně se autor věnuje didaktickým principům jako je princip „tady a teď“, respektování tichého období a specifické vzdělávací aktivity, které jsou dále rozpracovány do podkapitol pojednávajících o různorodosti těchto aktivit, rutinních situací ve výuce, či aktivity založené na hře.

Empirická část práce je úzce propojena s částí teoretickou, ze které výzkum vychází. V úvodu je představen cíl a formulovány výzkumné otázky. Hlavním výzkumným cílem bylo zjistit jak a do jaké míry jsou respektovány zvolené principy ranné výuky ve vybraných mateřských a základních školách. Hlavní výzkumná otázka je dále rozdělena do několika podotázek, které se zaměřují na jednotlivé principy. Po seznámení čtenářů s výzkumnými otázkami, autorka představuje metodologii výzkumu společně s výzkumnými nástroji. Ke sběru dat tak využívá smíšené metodologie. Jedním z nástrojů je strukturované pozorování, které je zaznamenáváno do předem připraveného strukturovaného observačního archu. Tento výzkumný nástroj je dále

doplňen o polostrukturovaný rozhovor, jehož otázky jsou vytvořeny v korespondenci s observačním archem. Cílem rozhovoru je především eliminace subjektivního pohledu pozorovatele vnesením určitého vhledu zúčastněných učitelů. Dále autor popisuje výběr zúčastněných subjektů s jejich následnou charakteristikou a rozložení původních 20 observací mezi tyto subjekty. Následuje popis celého výzkumného procesu včetně pilotování výzkumných nástrojů i nastínění všech problémů, se kterými se výzkumnice setkala. V této části autorka zdůvodňuje snížení původních 20 observací na 19 a uvádí, že si je vědoma dopadů na výsledky výzkumu.

V druhé polovině empirické části jsou analyzována získaná data a interpretovány patřičné výsledky. Nejdříve autorka komentuje obecné faktory pozorovaných hodin s následnou interpretací výsledků v oblasti zvolených principů, tedy rutinní aspekt i různorodost aktivit a vytvořením podmínek pro dodržování potenciálního tichého období zúčastněných studentů. Z výsledků výzkumného šetření je patrné, že všichni pedagogicky vzdělaní učitelé více méně zvolené principy dodržují a vytvářejí tak optimální podmínky pro dosažení afektivních cílů ranné výuky cizích jazyků. Učitelé respektují krátkou dobu soustředění i potřebu fyzické aktivity dětí vhodným rozložením různých typů krátkých aktivit do hodin. Zařazují také menší počet rutinních aktivit čímž napomáhají uspokojit potřebu pocitu bezpečí. Všichni adekvátně vzdělaní učitelé také respektují potenciální tiché období žáků a vytváří takové aktivity, kde porozumění vždy předchází produkci. Učitelé ale velice často nevhodně zařazují „TPR“ aktivitu celkové fyzické reakce, která je zcela optimální pro tento účel. Tyto druhy aktivit velice často následovaly až za produkcí. Ovšem obecně učitelé s adekvátním vzděláním vybrané principy dodržovali. Bohužel, toto se nedá říci u lektorky, která jako jediná neprošla žádným pedagogickým, ani vyšším jazykovým vzděláním. Počet jejích aktivit byl výrazně nižší než u ostatních učitelů, může být ale stále konstatováno, že její hodiny jsou víceméně různorodé, ovšem střídají se zde různé rutinní formy aktivit pro jeden účel. Lektorka sice respektuje potenciální tiché období žáků a k produkci je nenutí, ovšem byly pozorovány i aktivity, kde porozumění nepředcházelo produkci. Učitelka také neposkytuje kvalitní jazykový input, jelikož její hodiny jako jediné probíhají z významně velké části v rodném jazyce studentů. Jako důvod těchto pozorovaných nedostatků autorka uvádí především nedostatečné pedagogické vzdělávání a částečně také nevyvážený počet pozorovaných hodin ve srovnání s ostatními učiteli. Z výsledků, které jsou validní pouze pro tento výzkum, tak vyplývá, že mimo jiných aspektů ovlivňujících kvalitu osvojování cizího jazyka, je kvalifikace učitele jedna z velice důležitých proměnných a neměla by být opomíjena.

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List of appendixes

Appendix A: Observation sheet

Appendix B: Interview 1

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Appendix A: Observation sheet

Teacher: 4 Topics: typical day session
 Lesson: 1 similar content to ① plunges in the bathroom in the house (classroom)
Observation sheet

Number of students: 12
 Time: 20 min

Activity	Type				Reception	Involvement				Routines			Time	Comments
	C	S	K	N		SP	Production		Opening	Others	Closing			
						COI	Repetition	Group				COI		
1) Close your eyes (its break just what have you got on the table)	✓		✓		✓		✓						1	
2) Pick up the telephone	✓		✓		✓		✓						1	
3) Song		✓			✓								1	TDR
4) <u>Restando - can you see...</u> <u>Setback for T</u>	✓			✓	✓				X				1	sting in the circle 1 doesn't want just because they 7 provides support if they don't know
5) <u>Write picture description</u>	✓		✓		✓								1	
6) <u>WB - the</u>	✓		✓		✓								1	

Type: C = calming
 S = stirring
 K = known
 N = new

Production: SP = spontaneous
 COI = calling out individuals
 V - raising hands
 x - calling without raising hands
 O - one by one (e.g. in a circle)

Time: 1 = > 5 min
 2 = < 5 > 10 min
 3 = < 10 > 15 min
 4 = < 15 > 20 min

Appendix B: Interview 1

Teacher: 4

1,2. hodina
stejného obsahu

Interview 1

Vzdělání učitele:

- 1) Jaké vzdělání máte?
VS - zahrnutí na AS + hodina

Vliv přítomnosti pozorovatele v hodině

- 2) Byla observovaná lekce typickou hodinou? Pokud ne, jakým způsobem byla odlišná?
 a) Ano
b) Ne – vysvětlete:
- 3) Myslíte, že přítomnost pozorovatele ovlivnila chování dětí? Pokud ano, jakým způsobem?
 a) Ne
b) Ano – vysvětlete:
- 4) Ovlivnila přítomnost pozorovatele Vaše chování? Pokud ano, jakým způsobem?
 a) Ne
b) Ano – vysvětlete:

Různorodost, časový a rutinní aspekt aktivit

- 5) Kolik v průměru plánujete aktivit v jedné lekci?
mám spoustu aktivit do zálohy, nemůžu říct, vím cíle chci dosáhnout
u druhé ik. očekávám přizpůsobit
- 6) Jak dlouhé jednotlivé aktivity obvykle jsou?
max 5, většinou kratší
na konci týdne trochu méně aktivit a delší

- 7) Jaké typy aktivit obvykle zařazujete a proč?
polyjazyčné hodiny a ústní - potřebují to
prostor kreslení
flashcards

- 8) Používáte ve svých hodinách různé rutinní aktivity? Proč? A které z nich jste použil/a dnes?

1 aktivita vždy opakovaně předchozí lekce
- jsou zvyklé
když přecházíme z ES - „usplň je“ a probudíme se do AS

9) Jak hodně zařazujete do hodin nové aktivity a proč?

s každou novou lekcí, vždy 1 hodina - teď flashcards
jindy např. video Pepa the pig

10) Byla nějaká dnešní aktivita pro děti nová, pokud ano jaká?

2 skupina flashcards

Tiché, předproduktivní období (Silent period)

11) Je/byl v pozorované skupině nějaký žák, který vůbec nemluví/nemluvil, pokud ano, který?

Jaký myslíte, že to má důvod?

se začíná učit i v rodilém jazyce
elžka + z psychologických porad na produkci se nemá klást, otázkou má dělat kdykoliv
Matjaž - doučívá se více krát ve škole

12) Pokud ano - jak s tímto žákem pracujete?

- chválit, nevyvolávat když se nekládá, když se kládá využívat slova a chválu
- aby se nebál, pracovat bezpečně

13) Používáte hodně strategii „opakování po učiteli“ a proč?

- spíše používám na začátku lekce - pro rodilých mluvčích
především pro představení lekcí - pro lepší výslovnost, training

14) Pokud je cílem aktivity produkce žáků, jakým způsobem produkci požadujete? A proč?

cílem vyvolávat

memorovat třeba „dávové otázky“ pak není kdo mluvit - Yes/No. výjimky

15) prostor pro dodatečné otázky:

rozdělení skupinek - silnější x slabší - jiná páprava? stejný ale, ale jiná podoba vedliny, otázka
jak vám vyhovují do min bloky? je to málo, lepší než 45 x 5 min, ale je to dělení hektické
zpracovávají AS i do jiných hodin? - do matematiky, do přestávky, instrukce
dívá u desky - do AS přestávky (pouze v AS)

Appendix C: Interview 2

Učitel: 1

hodina: 4

Interview 2

Vliv přítomnosti pozorovatele v hodině

- 1) Byla observovaná lekce typickou hodinou? Pokud ne, jakým způsobem byla odlišná?
 - a) Ano
 - b) Ne – vysvětlete:

- 2) Myslíte, že přítomnost pozorovatele ovlivnila chování dětí? Pokud ano, jakým způsobem?
 - a) Ne
 - b) Ano – vysvětlete:

- 3) Ovlivnila přítomnost pozorovatele Vaše chování? Pokud ano, jakým způsobem?
 - a) Ne
 - b) Ano – vysvětlete:

Různorodost, časový a rutinní aspekt aktivit

- 4) použil/a jste dnes nějaké rutinní aktivity? Pokud ano, jaké?
hello, bye

- 5) Byla nějaká dnešní aktivita pro děti nová, pokud ano jaká?
swimming

Tiché, předproduktivní období (Silent period) – v případě nové skupiny

- 6) Je/byl v pozorované skupině nějaký žák, který vůbec nemluví/nemluvil, pokud ano, který? Jaký myslíte, že to má důvod?

- 7) Pokud ano – jak s tímto žákem pracujete?

- 8) Prostor pro dodatečné otázky:
jaké je rozložení A1 a A2? - proč? - instrukce potřebují si být jisti že rozumí