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ÚSTAV JAZYKŮ

# **THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHER TONGUE ON LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

VLIV MATEŘSKÉHO JAZYKA NA UČENÍ CIZÍCH JAZYKŮ

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis deals with the topic of the second language acquisition and relationship between the mother tongue and target language. It explains basic definitions regarding second language acquisition, contrastive analysis and language transfer. It stresses the importance of the first language acquisition and explains theories of SLA. It provides reader with examples of the most frequent errors in language learning. Furthermore, it discusses non-language factors and their influence on SLA.

## **KEYWORDS**

second language acquisition, interference, language transfer, contrastive analysis, Czenlish

## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato práce se zabývá tématem přivlastňování si cizího jazyka a vztahem mezi mateřským a cizím jazykem. Objasňuje základní pojmy, například přivlastňování si jazyka, kontrastní analýza a jazykový transfer. Zdůrazňuje význam přivlastňování si mateřského jazyka a vysvětluje teorie přivlastňování si jazyků. Poskytuje čtenáři příklady nejčastějších chyb, které se vyskytují při učení jazyků. Kromě toho také pojednává o nejrůznějších faktorech, mezi které patří věk nebo motivace a jejich vliv na učení jazyků.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

přivlastňování si cizího jazyka, interference, jazykový transfer, kontrastivní analýza, Czenglish

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V Brně dne .....

.....

(podpis autora)

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# INTRODUCTION

The author of this bachelor thesis studied Secondary School English Language Teacher Training for one year, so she is still highly interested in the topic of Language acquisition.

Research made by EEA showed that almost three fifths (58.5 %) of upper secondary education students in the EU-28 studied two or more foreign languages in 2015, up from 50.1 % in 2010.

From this reason, a detailed study on how to teach languages efficiently and how languages are acquired should be made. This paper tries to find answers to questions how learners learn, what is the influence of the native language on the second language learning.

Foreign languages are essential for European citizens who would like to move, work or study across the EU. Learning a foreign language is also considered as an important factor for participation in European society.

Following abbreviations will be used throughout this thesis: SLA (second language acquisition), L1 (first language, mother tongue), L2 (second language, target language)

First chapter gives basic definition of term used throughout the paper and introduces readers to the topic. The second chapter explains the role of the first language in the SLA. In the second chapter, the mentalist views on L1 acquisition and child's first language acquisition will be discussed. Third chapter discussed the contrastive analysis and language transfer. Fourth chapter reviews several SLA theories including Schumann's Acculturation Model discussing the impact of psychological factors on SLA and Krashen's Monitor Model giving distinction between acquisition and learning. Fifth chapter summarizes the most widely used teaching methods and their main features. Sixth chapter explains the origin of some types of learner's errors supported by examples. In the last chapter non-language factors influencing SLA will be discussed.

# 1 DEFINITION OF SLA

Second language acquisition (SLA) refers to all aspects of language that the language learners have to learn. The SLA is the general term which includes both naturalistic and classroom acquisition. It is important to mention, that the L2 learner is influenced by many factors. As a result, L2 learners learn the L2 in different situations and so forth in different ways (Ellis, 1990).

Gass, Behney and Plonsky, (2013) define the Second language acquisition as “*the study of how second languages are learned. It is the study of how learners create a new language system with only limited exposure to a second language*”. (p.1) The research of SLA has been focused on how the L2 learners gain grammatical sub-systems, and tend to ignore other language levels (Ellis, 1990).

In comparison with other authors (Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013; Ellis, 1990), Krashen (1987; Krashen, and Terrell, 1988) makes a clear distinction between language acquisition and language learning. The more detailed information on his distinction is given in Table 2 in Section 4.4.1 Acquisition-Learning distinction. However, in this thesis terms acquisition and learning will be used as synonyms.

## **2 FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

### **2.1 Mentalist views on L1 acquisition**

According to Chomsky (1959) the importance of imitation and reinforcement in first language acquisition is negligible. He stresses the active contribution of a child. He claims that child knowledge of mother tongue is simply derived from a *Universal Grammar*.

Mentalist views on L1 acquisition can be summarized as follows:

1. Language is used only by humans.
2. Language is a separate mechanism from the general cognitive mechanism responsible for intellectual development.
3. The key determinant in L1 acquisition is the child's L1 acquisition, which will be explained below.
4. The acquisition device declines with the age.
5. The process of acquisition consists of hypothesis-testing.

(Ellis, 1990)

### **2.2 Child's first language acquisition**

#### **2.2.1 Babbling**

The infants start babbling approximately at the age of six months. It consists of consonant-vowel sequences, which are often incorrectly understood to be words by their parents. However, the children are able to intentionally use the intonation to express the meaning. They can distinguish among questions, statements, and commands. Gradually, children decrease the babbling and increase the usage of words (Gass, Behney, Plonsky, 2013).

## 2.2.2 Words

Children's words fulfill a huge range of grammatical function, such as commands or social functions. Children often overextend the meanings of the words, which means that one word can refer to several different unrelated objects. And vice versa, they can underextend other words (Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013).

## 2.2.3 Syntax

Usually at around 2 years, children start to combine two words. This is called *telegraphic stage*. They use content words such as nouns and verbs and completely skip function words such as articles and prepositions (Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013).

## 2.2.4 Morphology

The research made by Brown (cited by Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013, p.115) showed that children learned morphemes in the same order, however at different pace. The research also showed that the children learn grammatical morphemes in the following order:

1. Present progressive
2. Prepositions
3. Plural marker -s
4. Past irregular
5. Possessive (-s)
6. Uncontractible copula (is, am, are)
7. Articles
8. Past regular
9. Third person regular
10. Third person irregular

(Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013, p. 115)

### 3 LANGUAGE TRANSFER, INTERFERENCE AND CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Up to the 1960s, researchers assumed that most of the difficulties L2 learners faced were caused by the process called *language transfer*. It was assumed that where L1 and L2 are similar, the L1 would be an active help in learning L2 learning. On the contrary, where there are differences between L1 and L2, the knowledge of the mother tongue would interfere with L2 (Ellis, 1990).

From the behaviorist perspective, the *positive language transfer* can be described as the situation in which the first language habits are helpful in acquiring second language habits (Littlewood, 1990). As an example, this includes the subject-verb-object word order in the declarative sentences.

Differences between two languages may cause difficulties and can lead to *negative transfer*, which is known as interference (Littlewood, 1990). The negative transfer will be further discussed in Chapter 6: Errors in learning

The degree of difference between languages varies, so according to the contrastive analysis the level of difficulty varies, too.

A procedure called *Contrastive analysis* was developed for the purpose of identifying possible difficulties in acquiring second language. According to Gass, Behney and Plonsky (2013), the contrastive analysis is:

*a way of comparing languages in order to determine potential errors for the ultimate purpose of isolating what needs to be learned and what does not need to be learned in a L2 learning situation (p.85).*

The main aim is to predict which areas will be easy or difficult to learn for the learners.

It is assumed that learners tend to transfer the habits of their native language structure to the foreign language, and that this similarity or difference is the main reason of difficulty or ease in the foreign language. The pedagogical materials that resulted from contrastive analyses were based on a number of assumptions:

1. Contrastive analysis is based on a theory of a language that claims that language is a habit and that language learning requires creating the new set of habits.

2. The major source of the error is the native language.

3. The teachers can predict the errors by considering differences between the L1 and the L2.

4. The number of mistakes made is directly proportional to the difference between the L1 and L2

5. L2 learners have to learn the differences between the L1 and L2. They can ignore the similarities, because new learning is not involved.

6. Difficulties and ease are determined by differences and similarities between two languages

(Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013).

## 4 THEORIES OF SLA

This chapter will review a number of theories of SLA by Schumann, Ellis, Gass, Behney, Plonsky and Krashen:

- Acculturation model (and closely connected Nativization Model)
- Accommodation Theory
- Discourse Theory
- The Monitor Model
- The Variable Competence Model
- The Universal Hypothesis

### 4.1 The Acculturation Model

The term *acculturation* is defined by Brown (1980) as „*the process of becoming adapted to a new culture*“ ( p. 129).

The main hypothesis of the Acculturation model is:

*... the second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language* (Schumann, 1990, cited by Ellis, p. 251).

This means that the acculturation, and hence SLA, is controlled by the degree of social and psychological distance between the learner and the target language culture. Schumann (cited by Ellis, 1990) provides list of many factors that determine social and psychological distance.

The social distance is determined if overall learning situation is considered to be propitious or not. A propitious situation represents an situation when the L1 and L2 are considered to be socially equal. The psychological factors include language shock, culture shock, motivation.



### 4.1.1 Nativization Model

The Acculturation model was extended by Andersen's Nativization Model presented by Ellis (1990, p. 253-255). His model, in addition to the Acculturation model, considers the learning processes, too. For Andersen, the SLA is a result of two processes: *nativization* and *denativization*. Nativization means that the learner simplifies the learning task according his actual knowledge. It is evident mainly in pidginization and the early stages of language acquisition (both L1 and L2). Denativization means that the learner uses the interfering strategies to use his/her interlanguage system according to an external norm.

Both of these models describe the naturalistic SLA, where the learner is in touch with L2 community.

## 4.2 Accommodation Theory

According to this theory, the motivation is the most important aspect of L2. The level of motivation reflects how learners define themselves in ethnic terms.

Key variables	A	B
	<b>High motivation, high level of proficiency</b>	<b>Low motivation, low level of proficiency</b>
Identification with ingroup	Weak identification	Strong identification
Inter-ethnic comparison	Makes favorable or no comparison (ingroup not seen as inferior)	Makes negative comparison (ingroup seen as inferior)
Perception of ethno-linguistic vitality	Low perception	High perception
Perception of ingroup boundaries	Soft and open	Hard and closed
Identification with other social categories	Strong identification (satisfactory ingroup status)	Weak identification (inadequate ingroup status)

Table 1: Determinants of successful and unsuccessful learning according to Accommodation theory

### 4.3 Discourse Theory

Discourse Theory describes face-to-face interaction between native and non-native speakers. One of the main principles of the Discourse Theory says that native speakers adjust their speech when speaking with non-native speakers in order to negotiate meaning. (Ellis, 1990)

According to the Discourse Hypothesis, learners distinguish between foregrounded and backgrounded material when telling a narrative. “*Foreground information is new information that moves time forward. Background information is supporting information*” (Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013, p.523).

### 4.4 The Monitor Model

The Monitor model is based on the five central hypotheses of Stephen Krashen (1987).

#### 4.4.1 The acquisition-learning distinction

Krashen makes a clear distinction between language acquisition and language learning. Differences between acquisition and learning are compared in the table below.

ACQUISITION	LEARNING
similar to first language acquisition	formal knowledge of language
'picking up' a language	'knowing about' a language
subconscious	conscious
implicit knowledge	explicit knowledge
formal teaching does not help	formal teaching helps

Table 2: Acquisition vs. learning (Adapted from Krashen & Terrell, 1988, p. 27)

#### 4.4.2 The natural order hypothesis

According to Natural order hypothesis, “*the acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order*” (Krashen, 1987, p.12). Several researches showed that learners acquire grammatical structures in the following order:

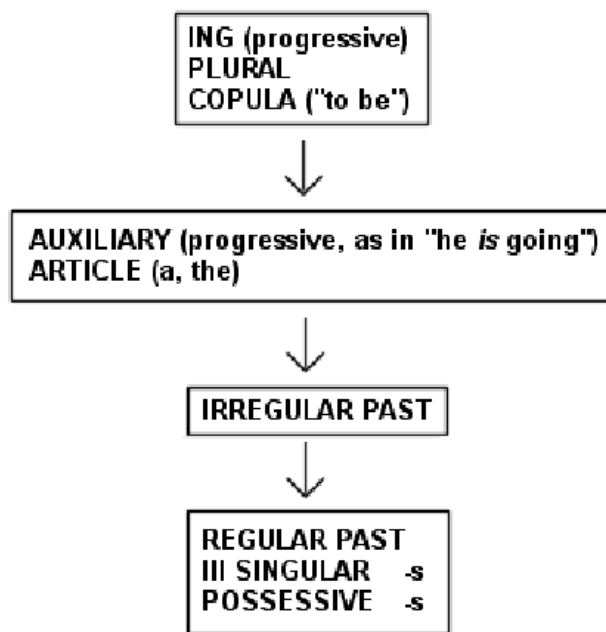


Figure 1: Average order of acquisition of morphemes for English as second language (Adapted from Krashen 1987, p. 13)

As it can be seen from the diagram, there is apparent relationship between the child first language acquisition and SLA.

However, it is noticeable that uncontractible copula is acquired later in the L1 acquisition.

#### 4.4.3 The input hypothesis

Krashen (1987) states that the acquisition takes place if the learner understands input which is “a little beyond” his current level of competence (i.e. *the i+1 level*). Input is comprehensible to the learner if the input is on the right level. The reason, why he understands the utterance is that he uses more than his linguistic competence to understand the meaning. This includes use of the context, knowledge of the world or extra-linguistic information.

#### 4.4.4 The affective filter hypothesis

According to affective filter hypothesis, the filter controls how much input the learner comes into contact with, and how much input is converted into the intake. Ellis (1990) divides affective variables into three categories:

1. *Motivation* (Higher motivation means better results in SLA. Further discussed in chapter 10)
2. *Self-confidence* (Performers with good self-image perform better in SLA.)
3. *Anxiety* (Low anxiety is conducive in SLA.)

Krashen (1987) suggests that those whose attitudes are not optimal for SLA will seek less input and will also have high Affective filter. Those with more conducive attitudes will seek more input, and they will have a lower filter. Consequently, they will be more open to the input.

## 4.5 The Variable Competence Model

The Variable Competence Model is based on two distinctions. First of them refers to the *process* of language use and the second to the *product*.

The *Product* distinguishes between the discourse types from the entirely unplanned to the entirely planned. The unplanned discourse lacks any kind of preparation. It includes spontaneous everyday communication. Planned discourse is thought out prior to expression. This includes prepared lecture or written essay.

The *Process* of the language use distinguishes between linguistic knowledge and the ability to use this knowledge (Ellis, 1990).

## 4.6 The Universal Hypothesis

The Universal Hypothesis describes how the linguistic properties of the target language and the learner's first language may influence the course of development. According to Universal Hypothesis, there are linguistic universals which determine the course of SLA. Ellis (1990) determines these universals as follows:

1. Linguistic universals impose constraints on the form that interlanguage can take.
2. Learners find it easier to acquire patterns that conform to linguistic universals than those that do not. This linguistic markedness of L2 rules explains the developmental route.
3. Where the L1 manifests linguistic universals, it is likely to assist interlanguage development through transfer. (p. 212)

## 5 PRESENT-DAY TEACHING METHODS

In this chapter some of the most widely used teaching methods will be reviewed.

### 5.1 Grammar-translation

The grammar translation method consists of the following four activities:

- Explanation of the grammar rule, supported by an example
- Vocabulary provided in the form of bilingual list
- A reading section
- Exercises designed to provide practice on the grammar, they include translation in both directions

Instructions are usually given in the first language. The input provided by this method can not be considered comprehensible, as students have to read word by word and cannot focus on the meaning. Consequently, this may arise a level of Affective Filter and cause anxiety (Krashen, 1987).

### 5.2 Audio-lingualism

The lesson starts with a dialogue which is often practiced in groups. This dialogue contains structure and the vocabulary of the lesson. Students are expected to mimic the dialog and memorize it. Then, the dialog is drill of the patterns, which were used in the dialogue. The four basic drill methods used are *repetition*, *substitution*, *transformation* and *translation*. Lado (1946) mentions that due to these drill methods it may be unclear for students, what is a new structure they are supposed to learn. Furthermore, these classes may fail in providing dialogues which are natural and appropriate for the given age group. Students are expected to provide the output immediately and without any errors which may cause anxiety.

### **5.3 Cognitive-code**

Cognitive code helps learners in all four skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking. Cognitive code assumes that *“once the student has a proper degree of cognitive control over the structures of a language, facility will develop automatically with the use of language in meaningful situation”* (Carroll, 1966, p. 102).

### **5.4 The direct method**

Using the direct method, all discussions are in target language and the classroom language is also the target language. This method focuses on teaching grammar. Students are required to guess or determine grammatical rules of the target language. The teacher asks questions and then uses the students` response to provide an example of the structure. Consequently, the session may look as a conversational class. He/ she tries to ask questions, which are meaningful and interesting for the students. However, as the main aim of the session is teaching grammar, this limits a number of topics which can be discussed.

The method insists on accuracy of the output and all errors are corrected in the class. However, this error correction and insistence on grammatical accuracy at early stages may cause anxiety.

Using this method, students are able to ask questions about grammar in the target language. In the case of this method, SLA is a result of teacher speaking about grammatical structures (Krashen, 1987).

### **5.5 The natural approach**

The main goal of the classroom is to provide a comprehensible input. The teacher speaks only the target language, but the students may use both native and target language to respond. If they decide to use the target language their errors are not immediately corrected unless the communication is significantly impaired. The fact that the students are not expected to use the target language immediately and have an opportunity to use their native language significantly reduces the amount of anxiety. As the error correction is missing in the classroom, it is included in the homeworks (Krashen, 1987).

## **5.6 Total physical response**

The author of the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach builds upon the hypothesis that in L1 acquisition, the children firstly do lot of listening before they start to speak. In the first stages, the teacher uses the commands which result in the physical response. The TPR assumes that the grammar is learned inductively. The main advantage in using the TPR method is that the students are not required to speak in L2 until they decide they are ready. This limits an amount of anxiety they may experience (Krashen, 1987).

## 6 ERRORS IN LEARNING

The error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis which deals with analysis of the error learners make (Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013).

Gass, Behney and Plonsky (2013) state that errors are not to be viewed as a product of imperfect learning, as it has been found that L2 errors are not a reflection of a faulty imitation. When L2 learner makes a mistake, it just means that he is trying to impose regularity on the language he is exposed to.

Corder (1967) distinguishes between errors and mistakes. Mistakes can be considered a slip of tongue. The speaker recognizes the mistake and is able to correct it, if necessary. On the other hand, errors are systematic, they appear repeatedly, as the learner does not recognize them.

Depending on the native language influence, we can distinguish two basic types of errors: interlingual and intralingual. The *interlingual* errors are the errors which are caused by the native language patterns. These errors involve cross-linguistic comparisons. The *intralingual* errors are independent of the native language, and are caused by the language being learned. Considering the fact that intralingual errors are independent of the native language, they occur from speakers of different native language (Gass, Behney and Plonsky, 2013).

### 6.1 Types of errors

#### 6.1.1 Overgeneralization

The overgeneralization is the kind of intralingual error. In this case overgeneralization of the rule is the source of the error (Littlewood, 1990). The great example is the English learner learning rules for *plural formation*. He knows that plurals are made by adding the -s suffix. However, this rule does not apply all cases. The exception applies to irregular words (*sg. mouse, pl. mice*) and words with Greek or Latin origin (*sg.*



*erratum*, *pl. errata*; *sg. alumnus*, *pl. alumni*; *sg. stimulus*, *pl. stimuli*). The second example of overgeneralization can be found in *formation of past tense*. The learner is aware of the fact that the past tense is formed by adding the *-ed* suffix to the end of the verb, so he is likely to produce the terms such *haved*, *goed* or *thinked*. Littlewood (1990) gives some more examples of overgeneralization:

Examples	Overgeneralized rule
We are not knowing the rules.	Progressive formation
This shows that how sensitive he is.	Use of that for introducing a noun clause
Who can Angela sees?	Third person ending
Who did write this book?	Inserting do into interrogatives

Examples of overgeneralization in English. ( based on Littlewood, 1990, p. 24)

### 6.1.2 Transfer

Similarly to overgeneralization, learner uses his/her previous knowledge about the language. However, in the case of transfer it is his previous knowledge of native language and not the target language. Transfer errors are more frequent with beginner learners, as they have less previous knowledge of the target language. The transfer errors include usage of incorrect word-order or incorrect preposition (Littlewood, 1990)

In many instances, it is not possible to decide if the error is caused by overgeneralization or the transfer. Typical example of negative language transfer is Czenglish. The term Czenglish describes the usage of Czech grammatical rules by Czech native speakers when producing utterances in English. Other examples of using macaronic form of the English language are:

- Espanglish
- Denglisch
- Chinglish

### **6.1.3 Simplification by omission**

The term “elaborative simplification” is often used to refer to this kind of error, as it contributes to development of underlying system of a learner.

However, there is also second type of simplification, redundancy reduction, which is less productive. This includes omission of inflections in the telegraphic speech of children. The omission of the verb inflection in *daddy want chair* does not prevent the utterance from being understood. Although redundancy reduction makes the production easier, it also can make the comprehension more difficult.

Examples:

Wash hand?

No understand.

Is man.

The survey will not include testing this kind of error, as the participants are expected to have at least upper-intermediate level of English and will not produce this kind of errors.

### **6.1.4 Fossilization**

We expect that the learners make gradually fewer errors, but some errors will probably never disappear. These errors are described as fossilized. Gass, Behney and Plonsky, (2013) define fossilization as “*permanent plateaus that learners reach resulting from no change in some of their interlanguage forms*” (p. 524). Some examples of fossilization are the pronunciation errors which create the foreign accent. Littlewood (1990) suggests that fossilization occurs when learner realizes that the error does not hinder him in satisfying his communicative needs. Fossilized errors include false cognates and may occur in utterances produces by advanced learners. From this reason, testing the occurrence of fossilized errors will be included in the survey.

## **7 NON-LANGUAGE INFLUENCES ON SLA**

### **7.1.1 Age**

One of the factors which affect language learning is the age of the learner.

Nowadays, it is strongly believed that children are generally “better” in second language learning than adults. Littlewood (1990) states that this may be caused by observing immigrant families, where children can learn new language on the native or nearly native level, whereas their parents often struggle to learn a new language.

In this case, the reason for this is that the brain of the child is in the “critical period”. During the critical period, the brain is more flexible, and the learning occurs naturally. However, these period ends in puberty, when adults can no longer use these learning capacities (Littlewood, 1990). This Critical period hypothesis states:

*that there is a limited developmental period during which it is possible to acquire a language be it L1 or L2, to normal, native-like levels. Once this window of opportunity is passed, however, the ability to learn languages declines (Birdsong, 1999, p.1)*

The memory span of a child increases gradually. Children are also better in imitating the sound they hear. However, adults have larger memories and a larger store of abstract concepts. They can use these concepts for learning and forming new concepts (Richards, 1990).

### **7.1.2 Aptitude**

According to Skehan (1990), the aptitude is at least as important as motivation, cognitive style, degree of acculturation, personality or attitude.

### **7.1.3 Motivation and Attitude**

Motivation may have several sources. One source is the learning itself and the stimulus is the interest in learning (the Intrinsic Hypothesis). According to the Resultative hypothesis, the motivation is the consequence rather than the cause of the success, as the learners expects some kind of reward for the results. Skehan (1990) also describes an

instrumental motivation on language learning. In this case, the motivation depends on the future advantages that may occur as a result of language learning, such as meeting and communicating with people from foreign culture, or ability to read or watch movies in the targeted language. Motivation can be described as a result effort, desire to achieve a goal and attitudes.

#### **7.1.4 Cognitive and affective influences**

The cognitive and affective influences include:

- Extroversion-introversion
- Risk-taking
- Intelligence
- Anxiety

(Skehan, 1990)

## **8 ANALYSIS OF LEARNERS' ERRORS**

In the second part of the bachelor thesis we will deal with the phenomenon of Czenglish. The term Czenglish describes usage of English language influenced by Czech. Czenglish is typical mainly for elementary and intermediate level, but it can occur in all levels. Poslušná in her book *Nejčastější chyby v angličtině: a jak se jich zbavit* (2009) categorizes errors into following categories:

1. Grammar mistakes
2. Vocabulary mistakes
3. Phrases mistakes
4. Spelling mistakes
5. Pronunciation mistakes

However, in this work will analyze only the most frequent errors Czech native speakers do in English and will be focused on vocabulary and phrases mistakes.

### **Aim of the research**

The aim of the research is to examine if advanced learners use Czenglish expressions. As stated above, all errors Czech do can be divided into several categories. But this questionnaire focuses mostly on vocabulary and common phrases. This questionnaire will test only commonly used expressions and avoid expressions that are hardly ever used.

### **Creating the questionnaire**

The test has a form of online questionnaire using Google sheet and was distributed among students via e-mail. The research has a form of a questionnaire attached in Appendix 1.

The questionnaire consists of three parts. First part asks for statistical data (number of years learning English, living abroad, sex). These answers should help to monitor possible influences on their answers. Although the questionnaire is anonymous, participants can enter e-mail if they are interested in results.

In the second part participants are asked to translate several short phrases or sentences from Czech to English. In the last part, participants are asked to find mistakes in English sentences and correct them.

## **Participants**

The questionnaire is aimed for university students with upper-intermediate or higher level of English (B1/B2-C1).

## **Source of errors used in questionnaire**

The topic of Czenglish has been examined by J. Hladky, D. Sparling and L. Pošlusná. Hladky's dictionary provides comparison of English words and their false friends without further explanations. D. Sparling's book Czenglish or English contains comprehensible list of all errors given in alphabetical order. In comparison to Hladky, Sparling also provides examples and explanations to all errors. Pošlusná focuses more on categorization of errors and divides them into several categories. Although she provides examples and explanations, her work is not so comprehensible as Sparling's. All definitions have been taken from the Oxford advanced learner's dictionary *of current English* by Hornby and are written in italics.

## **8.1 Analysis of errors**

### **Konkurence**

Konkurence is sometimes incorrectly translated as concurrence. However, concurrence is a noun which describes *an agreement or an example of two or more things happening at the same time*.

Correct translation is competition, *a situation in which people or organizations compete with each other for something that not everyone can have*.

### **Aktualní událost**

Aktualní is often translated as actual. However, this adjective has a different meaning. It is used to describe something that *is real or exists in fact or it is used to describe the most important part of something*.

Correct translations are recent, current or topical.

## **Sympatický šéf**

In this phrase both words might be troublesome. *Sympatický* is incorrectly translated as: *sympathic, sympathetic*. The reason for this might be that there is no English equivalent. Words *sympathic* and *sympatic* do not exist. The word *sympathetic* is an adjective which means:

- *kind to somebody who is hurt or sad, showing that you understand and care about their problems*
- *showing that you approve of something/somebody or that you share their views and are willing to support them*

The dictionary provides also following definition:

- *(of a person) easy to like. This meaning is not very common and you should use likable or pleasant instead.*

Sometimes *šéf* is translated as *chef* which describes *a professional cook, especially the most senior cook in the restaurant, hotel, etc.*

Correct translations are *boss* or *director*. A noun *boss* describes *a person who is in charge of other people at work and tells them what to do. A director is one of a group of senior managers who run a company.*

Acceptable correct answers are:

- *likable boss/director*
- *pleasant boss/director*
- *nice boss/director*

## **Citlivý kuchař**

As in previous phrase, both noun and adjective might be confusing.

*Citlivý* might be incorrectly translated as *sensible* which describes *ability to make a good judgments based on reason and experience rather than emotion; practical*

The correct translation is *sensitive* which means *aware of and able to understand other*

*people and their feelings.*

Kuchař is sometimes translated as *cooker*, which is *a large piece of equipment for cooking food, containing an oven and and gas or electric rings on top*. The reason of this translation might be the fact that professions in English are often created by adding the “-er” suffix eg. baker, butcher, gardener, farmer. Depending on the context *kuchař* should be translated as a cook or a chef. Cook is a noun describing *a person who cooks food or whose job is cooking*. Chef is a *professional cook, especially the most senior cook in the restaurant, hotel, etc.*

### **Předpis na antikoncepci**

Antikoncepce is often incorrectly translated as *anticonception*. However, this word does not exist in English. The reason might be that people think that the word originates from English. Correct translations are *contraception, contraceptive*

- *the practice of preventing a women becoming pregnant*

The second troublesome word is *předpis* which is frequently translated as *recipe*. This noun describes:

- *a set of instructions that tells you how to cook something and the ingredients for it*

Correct translation is *prescription* which describes *an official piece of paper on which a doctor writes the type of medicine you should have, and which enables you to get it from a chemist's shop or drugstore.*

### **Rád trávím čas v přírodě.**

One of the most frequent examples of Czenglish is the translation of *příroda* as *nature*. However, this translation is incorrect as *nature* has following meaning:

- *all the plants, animals and things that exist in the universe that are not made by people*
- *(often Nature or Mother Nature) the way the things happen in the physical world when it is not controlled by people*

From this explanation, we can see that we cannot use the word *nature* in this sentence.



Appropriate replacements are: the *countryside*, the *scenery* or *wildlife*.

## **Národní kuchyně**

Czechs often struggle with correct vocabulary when speaking about food and eating, and often confuse words such as dish, meal, food etc. This phrase might be incorrectly translated as national kitchen, national food, national meal or national dish.

*The noun kitchen describes a room in which meals are cooked and prepared.*

*Food describes a thing that people or animal eat.*

*Meal is a noun describing an occasion when people sit down to eat food, especially breakfast, lunch or dinner or food that is eaten at the meal.*

Dish is a noun with following meanings:

- *a flat shallow container for cooking food in or serving it from*
- *(the dishes) the plates, bowls, cups, etc. that have been used for a meal and need to be washed*
- *food prepared in a particular way as a part of a meal*

Correct noun is *cuisine*, which describes a *style of cooking*.

As a result, the correct translation of *národní kuchyne* is *national cuisine*.

## **Viděl si poslední film od Stevena Spielberga?**

The adjective *poslední* has two different meanings. The first meaning is the same as in English and it means the last. Secondly, it means “the newest” . The adjective *last* means that there is nothing coming afterwards. *Latest* denotes that there is or might be something more to come in the future. As an example we can say “the last Shakespeare’s play” but it is incorrect to say “last Spielberg’s movie” as he is still alive and might produce new movie.

## **Rád chodím na turistiku.**

*Turistika* is sometimes translated as *touristic*, *tourism* or *touring*. However the word *touristic* does not exist in English. *Tourism* is a noun describing *the business activity connected with providing accommodation, services and entertainment for the people*

*who are visiting a place for pleasure.* Touring is a synonym for making a tour. The correct translation of turistika is hiking.

## **Rodinný dom**

Rodinný dom is often translated as a family house. However, in English house describes abode where a family lives together. From this reason is the adjective family redundant and the correct translation is house. To describe stand-alone house we can use the term detached house (BrE). Other commonly used expressions are semidetached house (BrE, dvojdomek), terraced house (BrE, řadový dům).

## **Futbalový dres**

Frequently used Czenglish translations of Futbalový dres are football dres or football dress. However the word dres does not exist in English and dress describes *a piece of women's clothing.* There are several possible translations that can be used: football jersey, strip (BrE) or uniform (AmE). Football jersey describes *a shirt worn by somebody playing a sports game.* Strip (BrE)/ uniform (AmE) describes *the uniform that is worn by the members of a sports team when they are playing.*

## **Pánske šaty**

Common Czenglish expression is men's dress. The reason of this might be that people often do not realize that dress and clothes are not synonyms as šaty and oblečení in Czech. Dress is a noun which describes *a piece of women's clothing that is made in one piece and covers the body down to legs.* However the term dress is also used to describe the clothes worn in particular style or for particular occasion, eg. casual dress. Clothes is the noun that describes *the things that people wear, such as trousers/pants, dresses and jackets.* The correct translations are: men's clothes/clothing garments/wear.

## **Gymnázium**

Typical false friend used when translating gymnázium is a gymnasium.

Gymnasium is a formal expression for *gym, a room or hall with equipment for doing physical exercise.*

Despite the fact that there is no direct equivalent for gymnázium in English, we can

choose from several collocations depending on the context: grammar school, secondary school, high school.

## **Mixér**

Mixér is often translated as mixer. The reason for this might be that people suppose that Czech word *mixér* is derived from English. However, mixer is a noun which describes:

- *a machine or device used for mixing things*
- *cement mixer, concrete mixer*

Correct translation would be a blender which describes an electric machine for mixing soft food or liquid. Other appropriate translations are food processor, hand-held blender, electric whisk or liquidizer.

## **Pravidelná kontrola**

Kontrola is often incorrectly translated as control:

- *power to make decisions about how a country, an area, an organization etc. is run*
- *the switches and buttons used to operate machine or a vehicle*

Depending on the context, kontrola might be translated as inspection, examination or check. Inspection is a noun with following meanings:

- *an official visit to a schools, factories, etc. to check that rules are being obeyed and that standards are acceptable*
- *the act of looking closely at something or somebody, specially to check that everything is as it should be*

## **I married with my husband before 20 years.**

Firstly, In Czech, the preposition indicating the time is usually before the date.

Before means earlier than something. It is used in connection with some event, eg.: before we met, before lunch, He arrived before me.

Ago is used in expressions of time with the simple past tense to show how far in the past something happened. The second error in the sentence is the redundant preposition “with”.

The correct sentence is: I married my husband 20 years **ago**.

### **I have the possibility to work in London.**

Compared with the Czech “možnost”, possibility is not used with infinitive. Furthermore, the phrase to have a possibility is very rare in English and should be replaced with chance or opportunity.

The correct sentence is: “I have the **opportunity** to work in London.”

### **Waiter, could I get a glass of wine, please?**

In Czech, people often say “Můžu dostat...” when asking for something in restaurant. Although the sentence is grammatically correct, learners should avoid using this phrase as it is very casual and informal in American English. In British English, it is even considered to be disrespectful and rude. The correct and acceptable phrase is: “Waiter, could I **have** a glass of wine, please?”.

### **He is late, as usually.**

The phrase “as usually” is the literal translation of Czech “jako obvykle”.

The correct sentence is: “He is late, **as usual**.”

### **Do you mind if I open the window? Yes, of course.**

The reason why people respond incorrectly is that they do not understand the question.

People incorrectly understand this question as “Můžu otevřít okno?”

In fact, the sentence should be translated as “Vadilo by Vám kdyby....”

Consequently, the speaker expects negative response eg.:

- Do you mind if I open the window? **No, I don't.**
- Do you mind if I open the window? **No, go ahead.**
- Do you mind if I open the window? **No, no problem.**

### **He is lazy but on the other side he has good ideas.**

There is no literal translation of “na druhé straně”. The correct translation of this idiom is: on the other hand.

He is lazy but **on the other hand** he has good ideas.

### **Your hairs are beautiful! What shampoo do you use?**

Learners sometimes tend to transfer countability and uncountability of nouns from their native language to English. As a result, they often use sentences as mentioned above. Other typical examples are:

- They offered me the job because I had lot of experiences.
- Doors are open. (when speaking about a door)

The second mistake in this sentence is the spelling of the adjective beautiful. When the word is created by compounding, learners tend to keep original spelling for each word. As a result, they use words such as allways (always), playwright (playwright) or pronounciation (pronunciation).

The correct sentence is: Your hair **is beautiful!** What shampoo do you use?

### **According to me, he should leave.**

In Czech, the phrase “podle mne” is frequently used and correct. Consequently, learners tend to transfer it to English. However, the phrase *According to* can be used only when the information comes from external source, eg. According to her, he should leave.

The correct sentences are:

- **In my opinion**, he should leave.
- **I think** he should leave.

## Interesting is that no one complained.

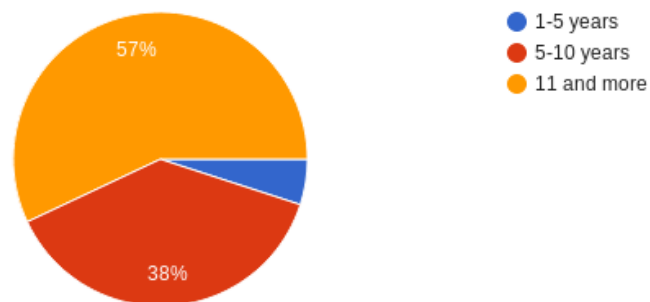
In Czech, the subject of the sentence can be omitted. Consequently, Czech apply same rule in English. As a result people use sentences as: “Is raining.” or “Interesting is ...”  
The corrected sentence is: It is interesting that no one complained.

## 8.2 Results

The questionnaire was filled by 100 university students. The 95% of students declared that they had been studying English for more than 5 years and 57% of them for more than 10 years.

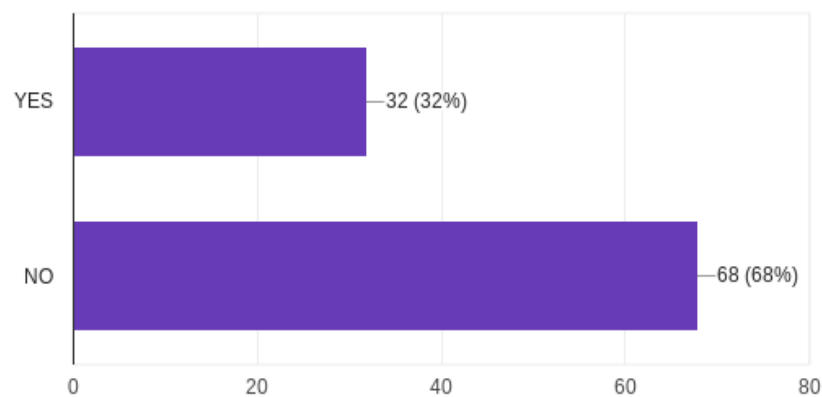
### How many years have you been learning English?

100 responses

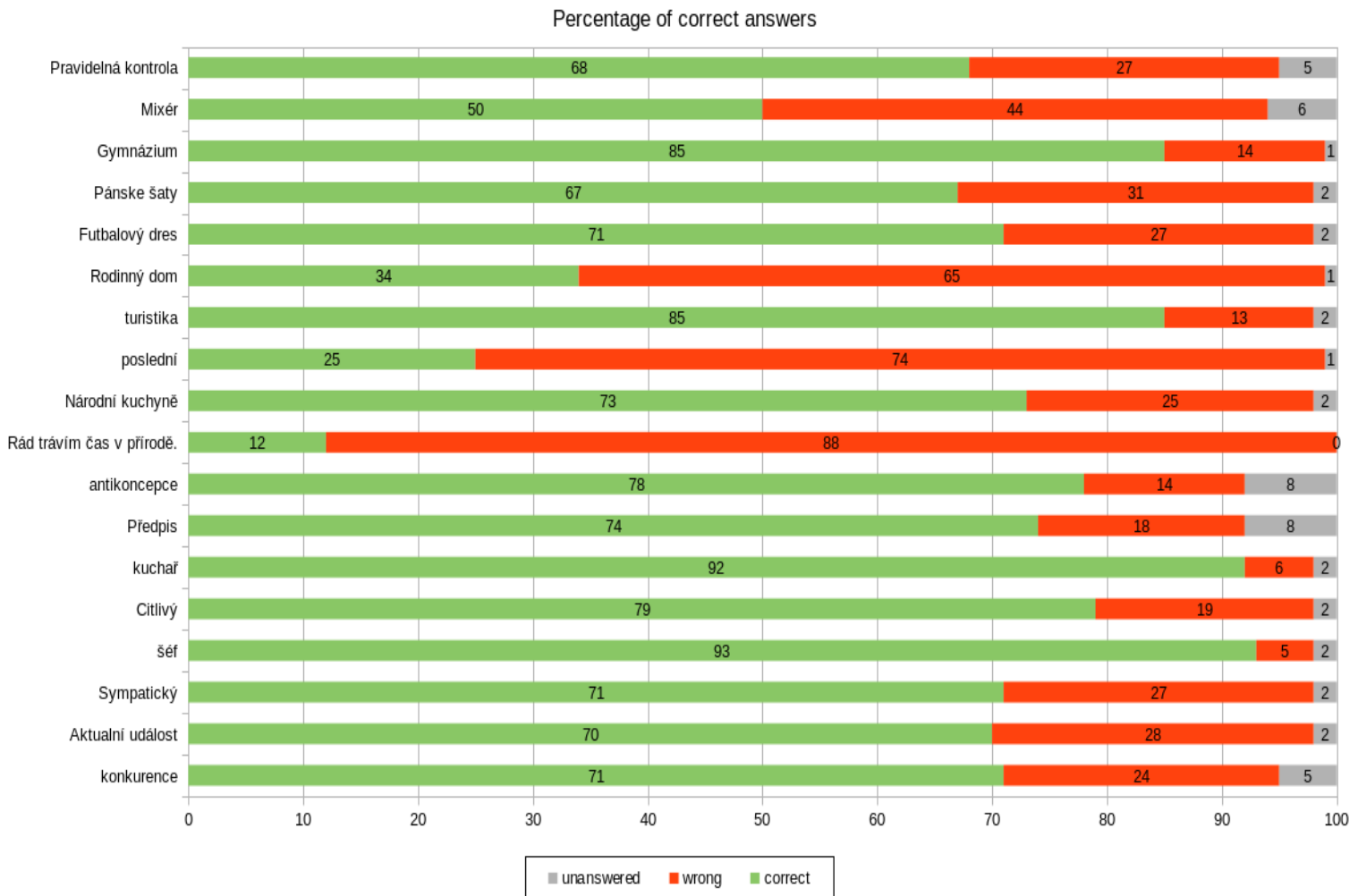


### Have you ever lived in English speaking country for more than one month?

100 responses

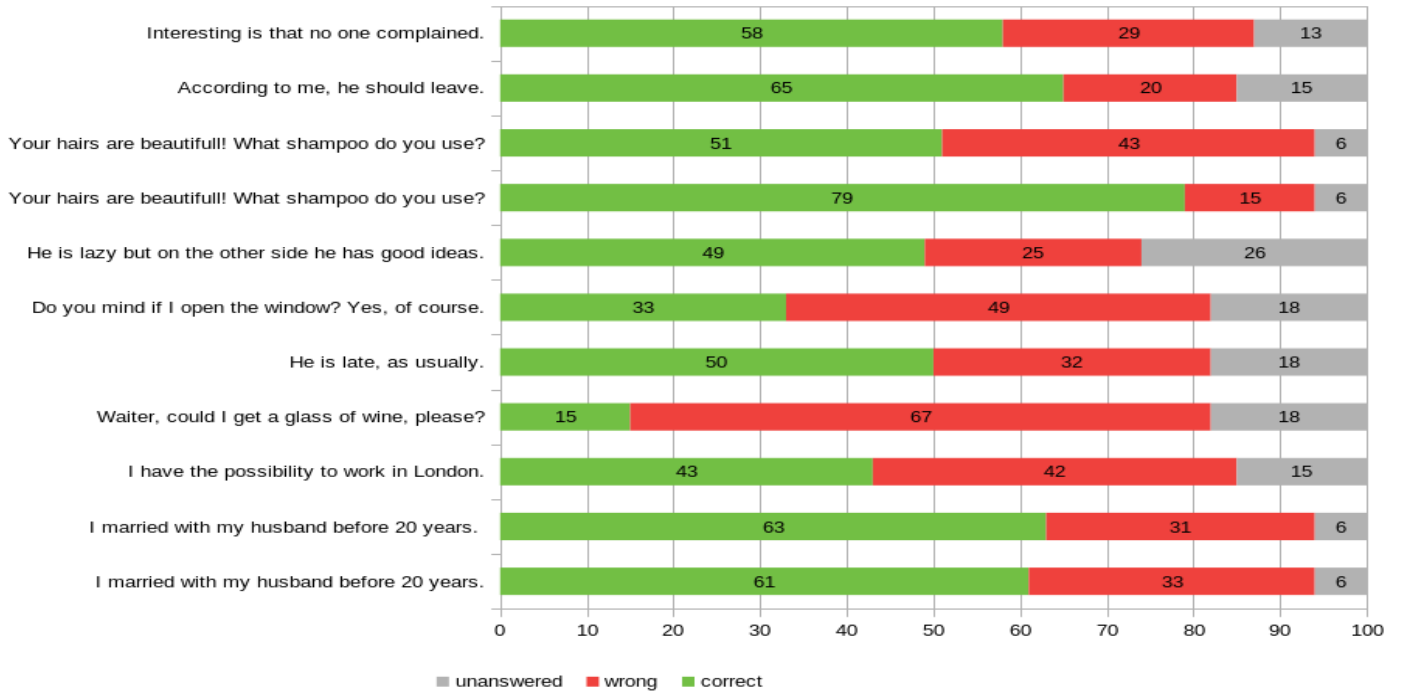


The 32% of respondents lived in English speaking country for more than one month. However, the survey did not show any significant difference in amount of correct answers between learners who lived and who did not lived in English speaking country. This might be caused by non-language influences or error fossilization.



The chart shows amount of correct answers for the first exercise. The phrases with the highest error rates were příroda, poslední and rodinný dům. The most serious problem was the translation of příroda as nature, where only 12% of respondents answered correctly. On the other hand, the words with highest correct answer rate were kuchař and šéf. These were translated in 92% and 93% correctly.

Percentage of correct answers



The second chart shows amount of correct answers for the second exercise. Respondents had a opportunity to skip the answer in both exercises. The phrases with lower answer rates might indicate that errors in these sentences were more difficult for learners to find. Most errors were made in the “Waiter, could I get a glass of wine, please?” sentence, where only 15 respondents answered correctly. On the other hand, 79% of respondents found and corrected the error “hairs are”.



## 9 CONCLUSION

Initially, the thesis introduced the theoretical background regarding language acquisition in general, then it supplied observations regarding the influence of first language acquisition on SLA. In the second chapter it was investigated that all children acquire their first language in the same order. In the third chapter it has been investigated that language transfer can have both positive and negative impact on SLA. Fourth chapter reviewed several SLA theories including Schumann's Acculturation Model discussing the impact of psychological factors on SLA, and Krashen's Monitor Model giving distinction between acquisition and learning. After comparing the child's first language acquisition and Krashen's Natural order hypothesis, we can conclude that there is apparent relationship between child's first language acquisition and SLA.

Furthermore, this thesis demonstrated the importance of learner's errors, stating that errors are not to be viewed as a product of imperfect learning, as it has been found that L2 errors are not a reflection of a faulty imitation. Instead of that, when L2 learner makes a mistake, it means that he/she is trying to impose regularity on the language he is exposed to. The next chapter examined non-language factors such as age, attitude and socio-psychological aspects, which undoubtedly have a direct influence on SLA.

The survey focused on false cognates and phrases showed that even learners with advanced level of English use Czenglish when producing utterances in English.

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# APPENDIX 1.

**Please state the year of your studies.**

- 1<sup>st</sup>
- 2<sup>nd</sup>
- 3<sup>rd</sup>
- 4<sup>th</sup>
- 5<sup>th</sup>

**How many years have you been learning English?**

- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11 and more

**Have you ever lived in English speaking country for more than one month?**

- YES
- NO

**Translate to English:**

Konkurence

Aktualní událost

Sympatický šéf

Citlivý kuchař

Předpis na antikoncepci

Rád trávím čas v přírodě.

Národní kuchyně

Viděl si poslední film od Stevena Spielberga?

Rád chodím na turistiku.

Rodinný dom

Futbalový dres

Pánske šaty

Gymnázium

Mixér

Pravidelná kontrola

**Find mistakes and correct them:**

I married with my husband before 20 years.

I have the possibility to work in London.

Waiter, could I get a glass of wine, please?

He is late, as usually.

Do you mind if I open the window? Yes, of course.

He is lazy but on the other side he has good ideas.

Your hairs are beautifull! What shampoo do you use?

According to me, he should leave.

Interesting is that no one complained.