Longitudinal Studies of Typical Errors in EFL students' Written Assignments

Bel, Iris

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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer i njemačkog jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer

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Longitudinalno istraživanje tipičnih pogrešaka u pisanim zadacima studenata engleskog kao stranog jezika

Diplomski rad

Mentor: izv. prof. dr. sc. Tanja Gradečak – Erdeljić

Osijek, 2016.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 3
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 4
2.1. SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION 4
2.1.1. INTERLANGUAGE THEORY 5
2.2. THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING 7
2.2.1. HISTORY OF GRAMMAR TEACHING 8
2.2.2. SIGNIFICANCE OF GRAMMAR TEACHING 9
2.3. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE 10
2.3.1. GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE 12
3. APPROACHES TO TEACHING GRAMMAR 13
3.1. THE GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION METHOD 15
3.2. THE AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD 16
3.3. THE DIRECT METHOD 19
3.4. THE NATURAL APPROACH 21
3.5. THE SILENT WAY 22
3.6. SUGGESTOPEDIA 24
3.7. TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE (TPR) 25
4. LEARNING OF GRAMMAR 27
4.1. NOTICING 28
4.2. REASONING AND HYPOTHESIZING 28
4.3. STRUCTURING AND RESTRUCTURING 29
4.4. AUTOMATIZING 30
5. ERROR ANALYSIS 31
5.1. ERROR ANALYSIS – DEFINITION AND RECENT STUDIES 31
5.2. TYPES OF ERRORS 33
5.3. ROLE OF ERRORS AND THEIR CORRECTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM 36
5.4. ERROR TREATMENT IN THE CLASSROOM 36
6. ANALYSIS OF TYPICAL ERRORS IN EFL STUDENTS' WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS 38
6.1. AIMS 38
6.2. PARTICIPANTS 39
6.3. INSTRUMENT 39

6.4. PROCEDURE 40
6.5. RESULTS 41
6.6. DISCUSSION 55
7. CONCLUSION 588
8. REFERENCES 60

SUMMARY

Students of English strive to be not only fluent, but also pragmatically and linguistically (grammatically) competent in their usage of the target language. On the path of achieving a certain level of proficiency, they often make errors, which are viewed as an inevitable and positive part of the Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

This longitudinal research was carried out among the first-year students of English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek. They were supposed to solve the same grammar exercise with mixed tenses at the beginning of the academic year (when they enrolled the University in October 2015) and after having participated in obligatory grammar courses *English Language Practice (ELP) I and II* and *Morphosyntax and Semantics of the English Verb Phrase* (in April 2016). The aim of this research is to identify typical grammatical errors, analyse them according to the principles of Error Analysis, find their source and an explanation and track the students' progress over time. After having analysed students' answers, it is evident that they made far more errors at the beginning of their studies, but there are still some fossilized errors that need to be corrected.

Key words: grammatical competence, errors, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), longitudinal research, Error Analysis

SAŽETAK

Studenti engleskog kao stranog jezika nastoje biti ne samo tečni, već i pragmatički i jezično (gramatički) kompetentni u njihovom korištenju ciljnog jezika. Na putu postizanja određene razine stručnosti, oni često čine pogreške, na koje se gleda kao neizbježne i pozitivne korake usvajanja drugog ili stranog jezika.

Ovo longitudinalno istraživanje je provedeno među studentima prve godine Engleskog jezika i književnosti na Filozofskom fakultetu u Osijeku. Riješili su isti gramatički zadatak sa glagolskim vremenima na početku akademske godine (kada su upisali fakultet u listopadu 2015.) te nakon što su odslušali obvezne gramatičke kolegije – Jezične vježbe engleskog jezika I i II te Morfosintaksu i semantiku glagolskih izraza u engleskom jeziku (u travnju 2016.). Cilj ovog istraživanja je utvrditi tipične gramatičke pogreške, analizirati ih prema postulatima Analize pogrešaka, pronaći njihov izvor i objašnjenje te pratiti napredak studenata tijekom vremena. Nakon što je provedena analiza, postaje očigledno da su studenti napravili daleko više pogrešaka na početku studija, ali još uvijek postoje neke ukorijenjene pogreške koje treba ispraviti.

Ključne riječi: gramatička kompetencija, pogreške, Usvajanje drugog ili stranog jezika, longitudinalno istraživanje, Analiza pogrešaka

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the early beginnings of the research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, grammar has played an important, if not a central role in the methodology. Therefore, many researchers focused their attention on investigating issues in the learning and teaching of grammar. Although there are many different approaches to the teaching of it, since Krashen's theory (1982) that grammar can be acquired naturally without providing specific grammatical input, an established view on grammar as an essential part of learning a language has changed. As an inevitable part of acquiring different grammatical structures, errors and their correction, which are the topic of this research, are still a burning issue among the linguists and foreign language teachers.

The first part of this paper deals with the theory behind the practical part of the research. It gives a brief introduction into Second Language Acquisition, describes the role, history and significance of grammar teaching and focuses on grammatical (linguistic) competence as a part of a much broader term – communicative competence. Furthermore, it gives an insight into the different approaches to grammar teaching and describes four steps of acquiring grammar according to Tricia Hedge (2000), which are important for the practical part of the research.

The second part of this paper deals with the term Error Analysis; it gives a brief definition, explains the role of error correction and analysis in the classroom and names different types of errors.

The third part of this research is the experimental (practical) part in which aims, participants, instruments, procedure, and results of the research conducted at the "Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences" in Osijek are presented.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as a rather recent branch of applied linguistics (it became a formal study with Corder's publication "The significance of learners' errors" in 1967) is interesting and challenging not only for linguistics, but also for psychology, sociology and education in general. Ellis defines it as following: "the systematic study of how people acquire a second language (often referred to as an L2)" (Ellis, 1997: 3). It is not accidental that it appeared in the second part of the twentieth century. At the time world was becoming a "global village", which resulted in a greater number of people wanting and needing to learn a second language so that they could communicate easily with the rest of the world. Therefore, it was necessary to discover more about how second languages are acquired in order to be able to enhance not only the process of acquiring, but also of teaching a second language.

There is not one definition of Second Language Acquisition. For example, Grimm et al. define it as "developing implicit knowledge in a subconscious way as opposed to language learning, which refers to the explicit and conscious appropriation of language items and rules" (Grimm, Meyer, Volkmann, 2015: 41). On the other hand, Ellis describes it as "the study of the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom" (Ellis, 1997: 3). However, Second Language Acquisition is not only the study of how second languages are learned (from a psychological perspective), but it also deals with the questions of how learners create a new language system when they are not fully exposed to the second language, why and which structures they acquire faster than others (from a linguistic perspective) and why some students achieve higher level of proficiency than others (from a social perspective).

When trying to answer these questions, researchers came to a conclusion that there have to be some factors that influence the second language acquisition. They have been divided into two categories: learner-dependent and learner-independent factors[1]. Learner-dependent factors are non-language characteristics that have a great impact on learners' progress in language learning. They are also called individual learner differences. Although there were many more or less successful theories and attempts at determining learner-dependent factors (e.g. Altman, Larsen-Freeman and Long), the ones that occur the most are: gender, age, language aptitude,

[1] Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

motivation, intelligence, language learning strategies, beliefs and attitudes, personality, social and ethnic background, bilingualism or multilingualism, language learning style and type and anxiety. On the other hand, there are learner-independent factors that determine the process of acquisition and these are: learning materials (input), learning conditions, teacher and social milieu in which the process takes place (classroom or exposition to the target language in natural setting).

All these factors influence learners in a different way, which then results in various learner and teaching styles and strategies. However, when acquiring a second language, they all develop a unique linguistic system – interlanguage.

2.1.1. INTERLANGUAGE THEORY

The interlanguage theory was first introduced by the American linguist Larry Selinker in 1972. He described it as a separate linguistic system, independent of both first and second language.

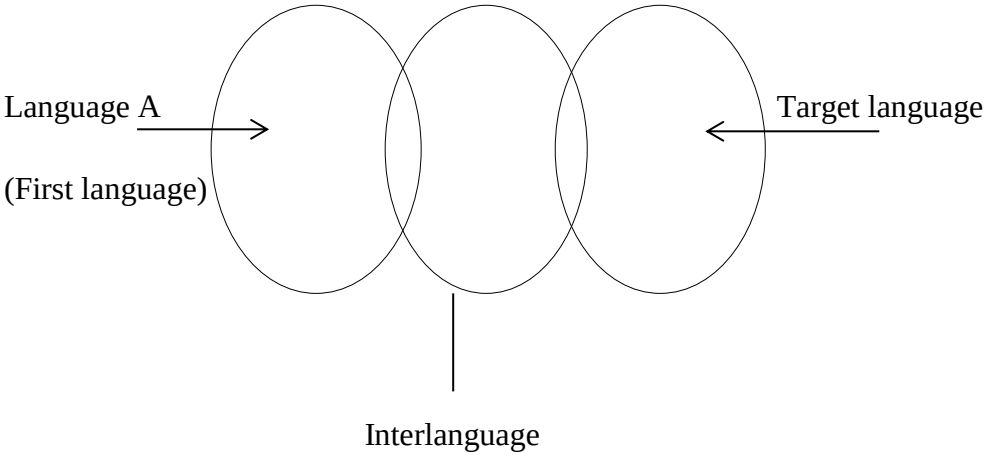


Diagram 1 - The notion of the Interlanguage (Corder, 1981: 17)

Since then, many researchers have been interested in this language phenomenon. Further analyses showed that second language learners make assumptions on three different levels: on the basis of their first language, on the basis of the new language system they have partially acquired and according to the simplified language they are exposed to in the classroom. After making assumptions, they either consciously or subconsciously formulate rules of the second language, which then become an independent linguistic system called interlanguage (Corder, 1981).

In the process of learning a second language, it is to be expected that learners produce ungrammatical or otherwise ill-formed utterances, when judged by the generally accepted rules of the language they are learning (Corder, 1981). Therefore, interlanguage may be considered as a chain of strategies which help learners to produce grammatical and other structures of the target language which are still not fully acquired, and it uses the processes of simplification, reduction, overgeneralization, transfer, formulaic language, omissions, substitutions and restructurings (Selinker, 1974).

Stage	Description	Example
1	Learners fail to mark the verb for past time.	"eat"
2	Learners begin to produce irregular past tense forms.	"ate"
3	Learners overgeneralize the regular past tense form.	"eated"
4	Sometimes learners produce hybrid forms.	"ated"
5	Learners produce correct irregular past tense forms.	"ate"

Table 1 – Stages in the acquisition of the past tense of the verb "eat" (Ellis, 1997: 23)

For that reason, Corder (1981) states that it is socially unacceptable to correct the errors a foreigner makes while speaking, unless specifically asked to do so by him or her. However, "it is one of the most important tasks of the teacher in the language classroom, and it is part of the skilled technique of the teacher to decide when correction is necessary and to do it in a way that helps the learner to acquire most expeditiously the correct forms of the target language" (Corder, 1981: 65).

To be able to decide which "ungrammatical or otherwise ill-formed utterances" need immediate and explicit correction, it is of great importance to discern between an error and a mistake. Ellis offers an explanation on how to distinguish two terms: "Errors reflect gaps in a learner's knowledge; they occur because the learner does not know what is correct. Mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance; they occur because, in a particular instance, the learner is unable to perform what he or she knows" (Ellis, 1997: 17). Corder (1967) claims that mistakes are 'non-systematic errors' or 'errors of performance' (similar to the Ellis' theory), while

Richards (1974) explains that if a learner makes a mistake, he or she is immediately aware of the faulty production and is able to correct him/herself.

To conclude, it is of utmost importance for the teacher to decide which errors need to be corrected immediately in order not to become fossilized.

2.2. THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Over the last few decades of Second Language Acquisition research, one of the most controversial issues has been grammar teaching. In order to understand the role of grammar in second language teaching and learning, it is necessary to define and specify it. Since it is quite a broad term, there are many different definitions of it. In the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF), grammar is defined as "the set of principles governing the assembly of elements into meaningful labelled and bracketed strings" (CEF, 2001: 112). Michael Swan (2008) defines it as following: "Grammar is essentially a limited set of devices for expressing a few kinds of necessary meaning that cannot be conveyed by referential vocabulary alone" (http://www.mikeswan.co.uk/elt-applied-linguistics/what-is-grammar.htm). Oxford Dictionary offers another definition: "The whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics" (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/grammar). A more extensive definition of grammar is brought by Routledge dictionary of language and linguistics:

> 1. Grammar as the knowledge and study of the morphological and syntactic regularities of a natural language. In this traditional sense, grammar caters to the formal aspects of language, excluding phonetics, phonology and semantics as specialized areas of linguistics.
>
> 2. Grammar as a system of structural rules (in the sense of de Saussure's langue (langue vs parole) fundamental to all processes of linguistic production and comprehension.
>
> 3. Grammar as language theory, and in transformational grammar as a model representing linguistic competence (competence vs performance)" (Bussmann, 1996: 482).

Despite many theories concerning not only learning, but also teaching grammar, it is still a challenge for a teacher to decide whether to teach grammar or not, which structures, how, why and when to teach it.

2.2.1. HISTORY OF GRAMMAR TEACHING

Since the early beginnings of the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, grammar has played an important role in the classroom curriculum. There are many different theories concerning teaching grammar that developed through many years of research, but “traditionally, grammar teaching is viewed as the presentation and practice of discrete grammatical structures” (Ellis, 2006: 84).

It is of great importance to mention one of the most significant theories of the grammar teaching and learning and that is the concept of Universal Grammar by Noam Chomsky. Fromkin et al. define it as following: “There are rules of particular languages, such as English, Swahili, and Zulu, that form part of the individual grammar of these languages, and then there are rules that hold in all languages. Those rules representing the universal properties of all languages constitute a Universal Grammar” (Fromkin, Hyams, Rodman, 2007: 17).

The greatest impact on not only grammar teaching, but also on Second Language Acquisition in general had Stephen Krashen, American expert in lingusitics. He introduced several theories that had significant influence on teachers and learners. First of them is his Monitor Model, which explains that second language is best learned by monitoring the usage of the language. This means that “acquisition "initiates" our utterances in a second language and is responsible for our fluency”, whereas “learning has only one function, and that is as a Monitor, or editor” (Krashen, 1982: 15). After a learner produces a grammatical utterance, the Monitor (acquired language) checks if it is correct and makes changes if necessary. Furthermore, the Input Hypothesis claims that “the learner improves and progresses when he/she receives second language 'input' that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence” (http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html). This means that “if a learner is at a stage 'i', then acquisition takes place when he/she is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1'” (http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html). The next model is the Natural Order Hypothesis, which states that the acquisition of grammatical and other structures follows a predictable ‘natural order’, which is why some structures are acquired faster and easier than others. Last but not the least, the Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of ‘affective factors’ (motivation, self-confidence and anxiety) which play a decisive role when it comes to acquiring a second language. Namely, for a successful learning, learners should have a high level of motivation and self-confidence, while the level of anxiety should naturally be low.

Later on, the view on grammar as the most important part of second language learning has changed. Many researchers and teachers suggested that the most effective way to teach a second language grammar would be to work on the communicative skills of the learners. For that reason, grammatical approach has started to lose its importance. In addition to it, Canale and Swain (1980) designed the model of communicative competence. According to them, linguistic (grammatical) competence is only a part of a much broader and much more important term and that is communicative competence.

Despite different theories about grammar teaching throughout history, it is still up to a teacher to decide whether or not to teach grammar explicitly or implicitly by developing the communicative skills of the learners.

2.2.2. SIGNIFICANCE OF GRAMMAR TEACHING

The fact that grammar is the most important part of the English syllabuses all around the world proves that it still plays a substantial role in the second language learning. Fotos and Nassaji (2004) claim that grammar is essential for four different reasons:

1. "Learners should notice the target forms in input; otherwise input is processed for input only, not for specific forms, so they are not acquired by learners."

2. "Some morpheme studies prove that learners pass through developmental stages."

3. "Several studies show that teaching approaches that focus only on communication not on grammar are inadequate."

4. "Positive effects of grammar instruction in the second language classroom are so clear."

Thornbury (1999) also argues that the role of grammar is unquestionable and states the following reasons for it:

"Knowledge of grammar provides the learner with the means to generate a potentially enormous number of original sentences."

"The teaching of grammar serves as a corrective against ambiguity."

"Learners who receive no instruction fossilize sooner than those who receive instruction."

"Grammar lends itself to a view of teaching and learning known as transmission by offering a structural system that can be taught and tested in methodical steps."

In addition, without learning and teaching grammar, the communication between the two speakers of the same second language would be possible, but it would be full of misunderstanding and disagreement. If speakers cannot produce at least simple grammatical

structures and utterances, in other words, if they are unable to convey their thoughts, listeners will not be able to convey the message they want to get through.

Furthermore, grammar is of great importance when it comes to developing other skills of language such as reading and listening. Namely, without the knowledge of grammatical structures, learners would not be able to understand completely what they are reading or listening to, which may again lead to misunderstanding and confusion.

Last but not least, it is essential to think about how language competence is tested. When it comes to determining the level of proficiency of learners, they have to take tests, which consist of more parts testing different skills (reading, listening, writing, vocabulary, grammar). Therefore, not only grammatical part would be difficult for them, but also reading, listening and writing. Without having learned grammar, they would not be able to convey the message during reading and listening and would have difficulties with formulating and combining sentences into a meaningful unit while writing.

2.3. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Although grammar is still important (every student of English Language and Literature in Croatia has to take obligatory courses which deal with grammar), today it is seen as a part of a much broader term – a concept of communicative competence. Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics offers a following definition of communicative competence: "Communicative competence is the fundamental concept of a pragmalinguistic model of linguistic communication: it refers to the repertoire of know-how that individuals must develop if they are to be able to communicate with one another appropriately in the changing situations and conditions" (Bussmann, 1996: 208).

Since the communicative ability became the aim and communicative activities means to achieve it, many researchers and experts began to tackle with it.

The most influential model of communicative competence is that of Canale and Swain (1980). It consists of four different competences, which are explained briefly in the following table:

LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE	**SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE**
Knowledge of the language code - Vocabulary	Knowledge of sociocultural rules of language use

<table>
<tr><td>- Word formation
- Sentence formation
- Pronunciation and Spelling
- Semantics</td><td>- appropriateness in sociolinguistic contexts depending on status of participants, purposes of interaction, norms/conventions of interaction (e.g. politeness, formality, directness)
- awareness of culture-specific aspects of language (e.g. idioms, expressions, cultural references)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies
- to compensate for breakdowns in communication (e.g. through paraphrasing)
- to enhance the effectiveness of communication (e.g. through deliberate choices such as slow and soft speech for rhetorical effect)
STRATEGIC COMPETENCE</td><td>Mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres
- cohesion in form (e.g. through the use of cohesion devices such as pronouns, ellipses, synonyms, etc.)
- coherence in meaning (e.g. through repetition, progression, non-contradiction, relevance)
DISCOURSE COMPETENCE</td></tr>
</table>

Table 2 – Model of communicative competence based on Canale and Swain 1980 (Grimm, Meyer, Volkmann, 2015: 66)

There have been many researchers who tried to explain the model of communicative competence. Although they more or less agree on the competences that are part of it, there are slight differences between the models. For example, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF, 2001), there are only three competences in the communicative competence model (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic). Tricia Hedge (2000) bases her model on Bachman's (1990) and claims that there are five components of the communicative language ability and these are: linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, strategic competence and fluency.

The only competence that occurs in all three models is the linguistic or grammatical competence, which is going to be discussed in the following section.

2.3.1. GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE

Before offering a definition of grammatical competence, it is necessary to point out that some experts refer to it as linguistic competence. "Linguistic competence is concerned with knowledge of the language itself, its form and meaning" (Hedge, 2000: 46). It "involves a knowledge of spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, word formation, grammatical structure, sentence structure, and linguistic semantics" (Hedge, 2000: 47).

According to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF), the description of grammatical organisation involves the specification of:

- **elements,** e.g. morphs, morphemes-roots and affixes, words
- **categories,** e.g. number, case, gender; concrete/abstract, countable/uncountable; (in)transitive, active/passive voice; past/present/future tense; progressive, (im)perfect aspect
- **classes,** e.g. conjugations, declensions; open word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, closed word classes
- **structures,** e.g. compound and complex words; phrases (noun phrase, verb phrase, etc.), clauses (main, subordinate, co-ordinate), sentences (simple, complex, compound)
- **processes** (descriptive), e.g. nominalisation, affixation, suppletion, gradation, transposition, transformation
- **relations,** e.g. government, concord, valency (CEF, 2001: 113).

Common European Framework of Reference also offers a scale for evaluation and description of learners' abilities when it comes to grammatical competence, which is shown in the table below:

	GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY
C2	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).
C1	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare and difficult to spot.
B2	Good grammatical control; occasional 'slips' or non-systematic errors and minor flaws in sentence structure may still occur, but they are rare and can often be corrected in retrospect.
	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which

	lead to misunderstanding.
B1	Communicates with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts; generally good control though with noticeable mother tongue influence. Errors occur, but it is clear what he/she is trying to express.
	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used 'routines' and patterns associated with more predictable situations.
A2	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes – for example tends to mix up tenses and forget to mark agreement; nevertheless, it is usually clear what he/she is trying to say.
A1	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a learnt repertoire.

Table 3 – Scale for describing grammatical accuracy, i.e. what learners should be able to produce on a certain language level (CEF, 2001: 114).

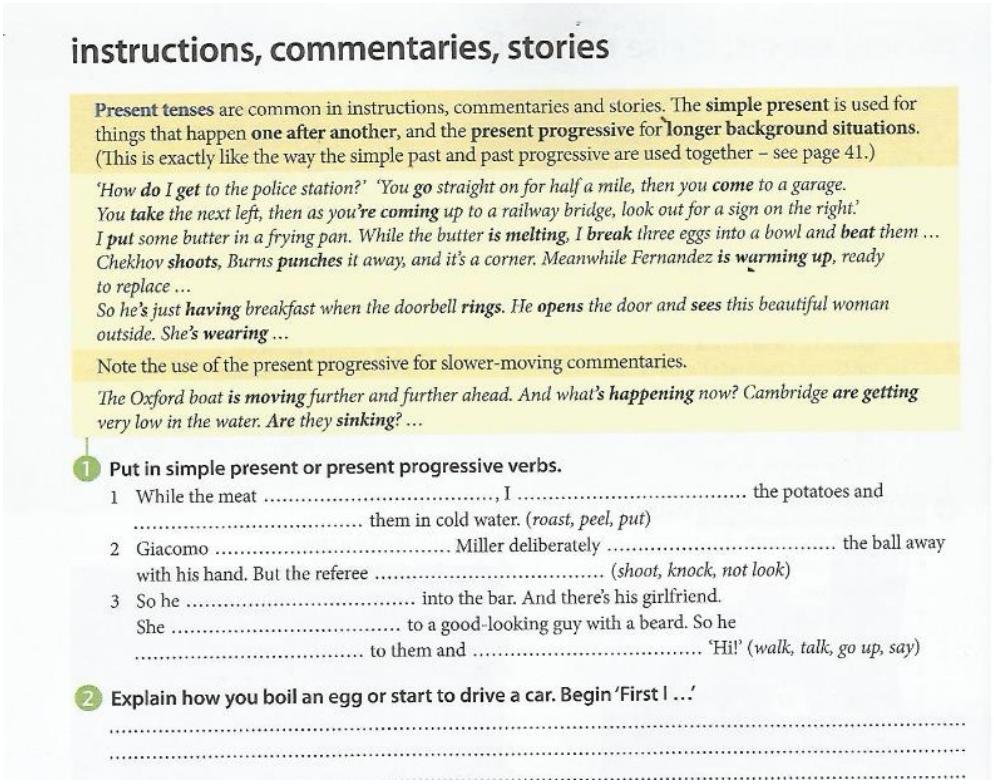
The most important thing for teachers to bear in mind is that linguistic (grammatical) competence is a significant part of communicative competence. Therefore, both competences should be equally given attention to because "it is impossible to conceive of a person being communicatively competent without being linguistically competent" (Faerch, Haastrup, Philipson, 1984: 168).

3. APPROACHES TO TEACHING GRAMMAR

The first step before analyzing grammatical errors (their source and reason) is to think about the methods and techniques of teaching grammar. Since there are many diverse methods that have a great impact on the acquisition of grammatical structures, it is essential to think about them first. "Grammar teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it" (Ellis, 2006: 84).

It is of great importance in which ways and how grammar is taught because it affects learners' comprehension, understanding, processing and learning of it. Although there are many different approaches and methods of teaching grammar, (which are result of a great interest in this field) this paper will present only a few.

To begin with, it is important to clarify the difference between deductive and inductive grammar teaching[2]. The deductive, also known as the rule-driven approach starts with the general and ends with the specific. In other words, the teacher presents the students with rules and principles, which are followed by examples and practice. The inductive approach, on the other hand, starts with the teacher giving examples to the students, from which the rule is to be inferred. Practice follows when students work out the rule on their own or with the help of their teacher. Below are two examples, one for the deductive and one for the inductive approach.



instructions, commentaries, stories

Present tenses are common in instructions, commentaries and stories. The **simple present** is used for things that happen **one after another**, and the **present progressive** for **longer background situations**. (This is exactly like the way the simple past and past progressive are used together – see page 41.)

*'How **do** I **get** to the police station?' 'You **go** straight on for half a mile, then you **come** to a garage. You **take** the next left, then as you **'re coming** up to a railway bridge, look out for a sign on the right.'*
*I **put** some butter in a frying pan. While the butter **is melting**, I **break** three eggs into a bowl and **beat** them …*
*Chekhov **shoots**, Burns **punches** it away, and it's a corner. Meanwhile Fernandez **is warming up**, ready to replace …*
*So he's just **having** breakfast when the doorbell **rings**. He **opens** the door and **sees** this beautiful woman outside. She's **wearing** …*

Note the use of the present progressive for slower-moving commentaries.

*The Oxford boat **is moving** further and further ahead. And what's **happening** now? Cambridge **are getting** very low in the water. **Are** they **sinking**? …*

1 **Put in simple present or present progressive verbs.**

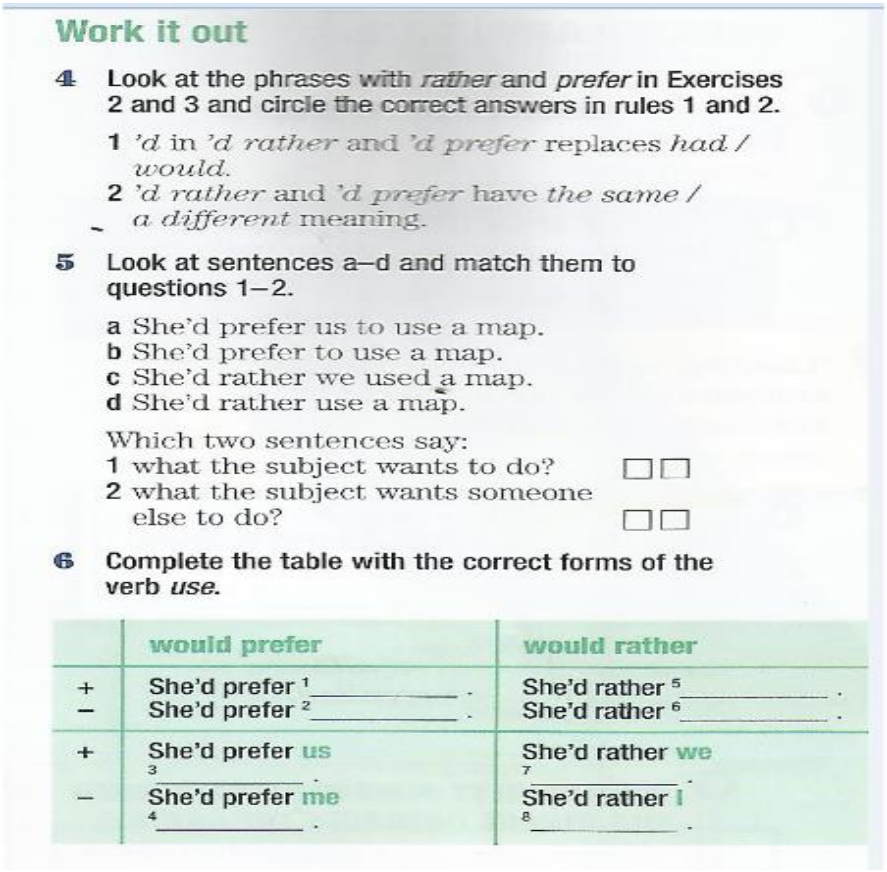
1 While the meat ……, I …… the potatoes and …… them in cold water. (*roast, peel, put*)
2 Giacomo …… Miller deliberately …… the ball away with his hand. But the referee …… (*shoot, knock, not look*)
3 So he …… into the bar. And there's his girlfriend. She …… to a good-looking guy with a beard. So he …… to them and …… 'Hi!' (*walk, talk, go up, say*)

2 **Explain how you boil an egg or start to drive a car. Begin 'First I …'**

……
……

Picture 1 – Example of a deductive approach (Swan, Walter, 2011: 24)

[2] https://www.academia.edu/2344319/Deductive_and_Inductive_Grammar_Teaching, 30th July 2016



Work it out

4 Look at the phrases with *rather* and *prefer* in Exercises 2 and 3 and circle the correct answers in rules 1 and 2.

1 *'d* in *'d rather* and *'d prefer* replaces *had / would.*
2 *'d rather* and *'d prefer* have *the same / a different* meaning.

5 Look at sentences a–d and match them to questions 1–2.

a She'd prefer us to use a map.
b She'd prefer to use a map.
c She'd rather we used a map.
d She'd rather use a map.

Which two sentences say:
1 what the subject wants to do? ☐☐
2 what the subject wants someone else to do? ☐☐

6 Complete the table with the correct forms of the verb *use*.

	would prefer	would rather
+	She'd prefer [1]_____ .	She'd rather [5]_____ .
–	She'd prefer [2]_____ .	She'd rather [6]_____ .
+	She'd prefer us [3]_____ .	She'd rather we [7]_____ .
–	She'd prefer me [4]_____ .	She'd rather I [8]_____ .

Picture 2 – Example of an inductive approach (Carr et al., 2012: 20)

Furthermore, when it comes to grammar instruction, it can be of two types: focus on **form** and focus on forms. The first one refers to drawing "students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991: 45). So, grammatical structures are taught implicitly, i.e. only when they occur in the communicative practice. Focus on forms however refers to teaching grammar in a way that the goal of the lesson is grammatical competence – grammar is thus taught explicitly, in separate lessons, not only as it occurs.

Although the deductive and inductive and the focus on form(S) approaches have both advantages and disadvantages, teachers should be able to decide which approach suits best the needs of the lesson as well as of the learners. Some methods and models of teaching grammar are discussed in the following subsections.

3.1. THE GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION METHOD

The best example of the deductive or rule-driven approach is the Grammar-translation method. Since it was primarily used in the teaching of Latin and Greek, it is often also called the

Classical method. Its origins date back to the 1700s, but the method had the most significant impact on teaching not only English, but all foreign languages in the period from 1840s to 1940s. According to this method, the purpose of learning a second language is to have the ability to read in the target language. Therefore, grammatical structures along with the vocabulary are taught deductively or explicitly. Teacher gives the instructions and explains the rules in the first language (L1), while students listen and try to memorize them. Afterwards, they are asked to apply them to examples. According to Stephen Krashen, the Grammar-translation method usually consists of the following steps:

1. Explanation of a grammar rule, with example sentences.
2. Vocabulary, presented in the form of a bilingual list.
3. A reading selection, emphasizing the rule presented in (1) above and the vocabulary presented in (2).
4. Exercises designed to provide practice on the grammar and vocabulary of the lesson. These exercises emphasize the conscious control of structure ("focus on", in the sense of Krashen and Seliger, 1975) and include translation in both directions, from L1 to L2 and L2 to L1 (Krashen, 1982: 127).

When it comes to developing language skills, reading and writing are considered primary skills, grammar and vocabulary are emphasized, while speaking, listening and pronunciation are given little or no attention to. In addition, the Grammar-translation method does not tolerate errors. If students make them or do not know an answer to a question, teacher immediately supplies them with correct answers. Anderson and Larsen-Freeman name some activities that are typical for this method: **translation of literary passage** (translation from target into native language), **deductive application of rules** (once students understand a rule, they are asked to apply it to different examples), **fill-in-the-blanks exercise** (students fill in the blanks with new vocabulary items or with different grammatical structures), **memorization** (students are given lists of vocabulary or grammatical items such as verb conjugations, which they need to memorize).

Last but not the least, Krashen concludes that the Grammar-translation method results in “very low amounts of acquired competence; what comprehensible input is available faces a high affective filter, and learning is vastly overemphasized” (Krashen, 1982: 129).

3.2. THE AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD

A further method to consider is the Audio-lingual method, also called Audiolingualism. The term is derived from Latin words: ‘audire’, which means to hear and ‘lingua’, which means

tongue, language. It developed in the United States of America during the World War II. Since there was a growing demand for soldiers to quickly and effectively learn a second language (German, French, Italian, Japanese, etc.), researchers and experts had to come up with a program for military personnel.

This method is an oral-based approach, which "drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns" (Anderson, Larsen-Freeman, 2011: 59). It is considered to be derived from the principles of both structural linguistics and psychology. To be more precise, it has a strong base in Skinner's behaviorist theory (1957), which claims that people can adopt many forms of behavior, including learning a second language through training ('drilling) or conditioning. Anderson and Larsen-Freeman explain it in the following way: "It was thought that the way to acquire the sentence patterns of the target language was through conditioning – helping learners to respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement, so that the learners could overcome the habits of their native language and form the new habits required to be target language speakers" (Andersen, Larsen-Freeman, 2011: 59).

In the Audiolingualism, teacher is an imitation model who dictates and controls the process of learning a second language and students are imitators. Since the mail goal of the method is communicative competence, oral skills, listening and practicing grammatical patterns are in the focus of teaching. Everyday language is given the most attention to, so the teacher is the one who initiates any communication in the classroom. Native language is to be avoided in order not to interfere with the target language, while errors are to be corrected if they occur.

Some examples of the activities that are typical for this method are, according to Anderson and Larsen-Freeman: **dialogue memorization** (students learn the text in the dialogue by heart), **repetition drills** (students repeat teacher's utterances as accurately and quickly as possible), **transformation drills** (students are asked to transform affirmative sentences into negative, questions into statements, active sentences into passive and vice versa) and **question-and-answer drill** (student is supposed to answer teacher's question as quickly as possible) (Anderson, Larsen-Freeman, 2011: 73-74). As it can be noticed, activities used in the Audiolingualism mostly consist of repetitive drills and pattern practice. Brooks (1964) differentiates the following:

TYPE OF DRILL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Repetition	the student repeats an utterance aloud as he has heard it without looking at the printed text	This is the seventh month. – This is the seventh month.
Inflection	one word in an utterance appears in another form when repeated	I bought the *ticket*. – I bought the *ticket**s***.
Replacement	one word in an utterance is replaced by another	He bought *this house* cheap. – He bought *it* cheap.
Restatement	the student rephrases an utterance and addresses it to someone else, according to instructions	Tell him to wait for you. – Wait for me.
Completion	the student hears an utterance that is complete except for one word, then repeats the utterance in completed form	I'll go my way and you go… - I'll go my way and you go *yours*.
Transposition	a change in word order is necessary when a word is added	*I'm* hungry. (so) – So *am* I.
Expansion	when a word is added it takes a certain place in the sequence	I know him. (hardly) – I *hardly* know him.
Contraction	a single word stands for a phrase or clause	Put your hand *on the table*. – Put your hand *there*.
Transformation	a sentence is transformed by being made negative or interrogative or through changes in tense, mood, voice, aspect, or modality	He knows my address. He doesn't know my address. Does he know my address? He knew my address. He used to know my address.
Integration	two separate utterances are integrated into one	They must be honest. This is important. – It is important that they be honest.
Rejoinder	the student makes an appropriate rejoinder to a given utterance; he is told in advance to respond to it in a certain way	BE POLITE. EXAMPLES. Thank you. – *You're welcome*. May I take one? – *Certainly*.
Restoration	the student is given a sequence of words that	students/waiting/bus – The

	have been culled from a sentence but still bear its basic meaning; he uses these words with a minimum of changes and additions to restore the sentence to its original form	students are waiting for the bus.

Table 4 – Examples of drill exercises (adapted from Richards and Rogers, 1986: 54-56).

To conclude, according to the Audiolingualism, language can be learned and adopted as any other human behavior. The aim is communicative competence, which is achieved through repetitive drills. However, it was criticized by the practitioners which led to its decline in the 1960s. As Richards and Rogers explain: "Students were often found to be unable to transfer skills acquired through Audiolingualism to real communication outside the classroom, and many found the experience of studying through audio-lingual procedures to be boring and unsatisfying" (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 59).

3.3. THE DIRECT METHOD

The Direct method is according to the Routledge dictionary of language and linguistics "language-teaching method developed as an outgrowth of the natural method attributed to L. Sauveau (1826–1907) in the 1860s" (Bussmann, 1996: 348), which is why it is also known as the natural method.

The leading principle of this method is that no translation is allowed, what is completely opposite to the Grammar-translation method. To elaborate, "the Direct method receives its name from the fact that meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids, with no recourse to the students' native language" (Anderson, Larsen-Freeman, 2011: 46). This means that teachers were supposed to bring additional materials to the class (e.g. visual aids like flash cards, word cards, realia etc.), which is why it is nicknamed 'the backpack-method'.

The practice of the direct method consists of the eight following principles and procedures:

1. Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
2. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
3. Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.

4. Grammar was taught inductively.
5. New teaching points were introduced orally.
6. Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.
7. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.
8. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 9-10).

These principles are seen in the following guidelines for teaching oral language (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 10, in Titone, 1968: 100-1):

Never translate: demonstrate

Never explain: act

Never make a speech: ask questions

Never imitate mistakes: correct

Never speak with single words: use sentences

Never speak too much: make students speak much

Never use the book: use your lesson plan

Never jump around: follow your plan

Never go too fast: keep the pace of the student

Never speak too slowly: speak normally

Never speak too quickly: speak naturally

Never speak too loudly: speak naturally

Never be impatient: take it easy.

The main aim of the Direct method is to teach students how to communicate effectively in the target language. In order to do so, they need to learn how to think in the target language (Anderson, Larsen-Freeman, 2011: 52). Grammar is taught inductively; this means that the students may never be exposed to the explicit rules. They rather look at the example sentences or grammatical structures and work out the rule on their own. When it comes to error correction, as an opposition to the first two methods, here is self-correction encouraged.

Some examples of the activities that are typical for this method are, according to Anderson and Larsen-Freeman: **reading aloud** (while reading, teachers use realia, gestures or flash cards to demonstrate the meaning or specific grammatical structures), **question and answer exercise** (it is conducted in the target language; students are asked questions which they

answer in full sentences in order to practice new vocabulary and grammatical structures), **conversation practice** (students are asked individual questions about themselves; they contain a particular grammar structure, which they are able to use in their own questions after a certain number of repetition), **fill-in-the-blanks exercise** (the same as in the Grammar-translation method).

To sum up, the Direct method has many upsides for the language learners and that is why it was popular in Europe. It is challenging because the learners have to come up with the rule on their own, interesting because it involves a lot of additional materials (e.g. realia, flash cards, pictures etc.) and dynamic because of occasional usage of gestures to clarify the meaning. However, it completely ignored textbooks, was teacher-oriented and no grammatical rule was ever provided for the learners, which may have led to confusion or fossilization of the faulty-learned structure.

3.4. THE NATURAL APPROACH

The next method to discuss is the Natural approach. Before embarking on with the definition, it is essential to understand the difference between the Natural approach and Natural method. The Natural method is what at the turn of the century became the Direct method, whereas the Natural approach is developed by Stephen D. Krashen and Tracy D. Terrell. In their book "The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom" (1995), they claim that their approach is an example of a communicative approach, since its main goal is communicative competence.

The method can be described by the following principles:

1. Classtime is devoted primarily to providing input for acquisition.
2. The teacher speaks only the target language in the classroom. Students may use either the first or second language. If they choose to respond in the second language, their errors are not corrected unless communication is seriously impaired.
3. Homework may include formal grammar work. Error correction is employed in correcting homework.
4. The goals of the course are "semantic"; activities may involve the use of a certain structure, but the goals are to enable students to talk about ideas, perform tasks, and solve problems (Krashen, 1982: 138).

The role of the teachers in this method is significant. They have to provide students with comprehensible input, come up with different and interesting activities and use a lot of additional materials like realia, flash cards, pictures, brochures, advertisements, etc. Students on the other hand get to decide "when to speak, what to speak about, and what linguistic expressions to use in

speaking" (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 137). Their role is changing, depending on the language level they are at. However, the most important issue to discuss is the role of grammar. When it comes to teaching grammar according to the principles of the Natural approach, it has a limited role. Krashen and Terrell claim that their "goal is to produce optimal Monitor-users, performers who can use grammar as a supplement to acquisition in situations where grammar use is appropriate", which is why "only certain rules need be taught even for optimal Monitor use: for most learners only the late-acquired simpler rules" (Krashen and Terrell, 1995: 57).

In summary, principles of the Natural method provide sufficient conditions only for second or foreign language acquisition in the classroom. However, the greatest problem lies in the fact that it rejects explicit teaching of grammatical structures, which is necessary for intermediate and upper-intermediate students of a language.

3.5. THE SILENT WAY

By observing the way babies and young children acquire a language, Caleb Gattegno devised the Silent way method in the early 1970s. As the name itself implies, teachers in the classroom should be as quiet as possible, while the learners should be encouraged to produce as much language as possible. There are three basic hypotheses about this method:

1. Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned.
2. Learning is facilitated by accompanying physical objects.
3. Learning is facilitated by problem solving involving the material to be learned (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 99).

According to Gattegno, students should be able to "correctly and easily answer questions about themselves, their education, their family, travel, and daily events; speak with a good accent; give either a written or oral description of a picture, answer general questions about the culture and the literature of the native speakers of the target language; perform adequately in the following areas: spelling, grammar (production rather than explanation), reading comprehension, and writing" (Gattegno, as cited in Richards and Rogers, 1986: 104).

The lessons are planned around grammatical items and related vocabulary. Despite that, details on the precise selection and arrangement of lexical and grammatical items are not provided. However, language items are introduced not only according to the grammatical

complexity, but also their relationship to what has been taught previously is considered, as well as the ease with which items can be presented visually (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 104).

The following table shows a part of the structural syllabus for the Silent way. It was used to teach American Peace Corps volunteers being trained to teach in Thailand. It is important to mention that at least fifteen minutes of every lesson would be spent on pronunciation. Furthermore, the words in italics (in the table below) can be replaced by any other word having the same function.

Lesson	Vocabulary
1. Wood color *red.*	wood, red, green, yellow, brown, pink, white, orange, black, color
2. Using the numbers 1 – 10.	one, two, … ten
3. Wood color *red* two pieces.	
4. Take (pick up) wood color *red* two pieces.	take (pick up)
5. Take wood color *red* two pieces give *him.*	give, object pronouns
6. Wood *red* where? Wood *red on* table.	where, on, under, near, far, over, next to, here, there
7. Wood color red on the table, *is it*? Yes, on. Not on.	question-forming rules Yes/no
8. Wood color *red long*. Wood color *green longer*. Wood color *orange longest.*	adjectives of comparison
9. Wood color *green taller.* Wood color *red* is it?	
10. Review. Students use structures taught in new situations, such as comparing the heights of students in the class.	

Table 5 – A part of the structural syllabus for the Silent way method (adapted from Richards and Rogers, 1986: 105).

To conclude, the Silent way should not be referred to as a method of teaching (according to Caleb Gattegno), since its implications and 'laws' influence not only language learning and education in general, but also the individual's perception of life.

3.6. SUGGESTOPEDIA

The term Suggestopedia is a blend of two words: 'suggestion' and 'pedagogy'. This method is also known as Desuggestopedia and was developed by the Bulgarian psychiatrist and educator, Georgi Lozanov. Although the two terms can be used as synonyms, the term Desuggestopedia was introduced to "reflect the importance placed on desuggesting limitations on learning, the name was changed" (Anderson, Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 73). According to Lozanov's beliefs, language learning occurs or can occur at a much faster rate than it is generally thought (usually three to five times faster).

In his theory of language and learning, he suggests a new view where vocabulary or lexis plays a central role, together with lexical translation (target language item or structure and its first language equivalent) instead of contextualization (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 143). "Lozanov holds that a relaxed but focused state is the optimum state for learning. In order to create this relaxed state in the learner and to promote positive suggestion, suggestopedia makes use of music, a comfortable and relaxing environment, and a relationship between the teacher and the student that is akin to the parent-child relationship"[3]. Richards and Rogers also describe six principles of the Suggestopedia (following Bancroft, 1972) and these are:

1. **Authority** – Lozanov believed that people remember best and are most influenced when information comes from an authoritative source. He introduces 'ritual placebo system that is authoritatively appealing to most students. It consists of scientific-sounding language, highly positive experimental data, and true-believer teachers.
2. **Infantilization** – Teacher-student relation is like that of a parent to a child. Learners' roles are taking parts in games, exercises, playing and songs.
3. **Double-Planedness** – Not only direct instruction, but also the environment plays an important role in teaching and learning: the bright décor of the classroom, the musical background, and the personality of the teacher.
4. **Intonation, rhythm, and concert pseudo-passiveness** – Intonation and rhythm (which need to vary in order to avoid boredom in the classroom) should be

[3] http://www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-what-is-suggestopedia/146499.article

coordinated with musical background to induce a relaxed attitude, which is referred to as concert pseudo-passiveness (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 145-6).

In this method, vocabulary and speaking communicatively are emphasized. When it comes to grammar, it is dealt with explicitly but minimally. It is believed that students should learn most efficiently if their conscious attention is focused on using the language rather than language forms (Anderson, Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 111).

3.7. TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE (TPR)

Total physical response (TPR) is a method developed by James Asher, a professor of psychology at San Jose State University in California. Its tradition draws on principles of developmental psychology, learning theory and humanistic pedagogy (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 87).

This method attempts "to teach language through physical (motor) activity" (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 87). To elaborate, Asher compares successful adult second language learning to child first language acquisition. Namely, speech directed to young children consists mostly of commands, which children first respond to physically before producing verbal utterances (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 87).

Total physical response emphasizes a grammar-based view of language. Asher claims that "most of the grammatical structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skillful use of the imperative by the instructor" (Asher, 1977: 4). According to his beliefs, the verb (particularly the verb in the imperative) is "the central linguistic motif around which language use and learning are organized" (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 88). Students are given 'commands' in form of imperatives (e.g. 'Open the window', 'Close the door', 'Raise your right hand' etc.) they first respond to physically, i.e. by fulfilling the 'order' and then (after more than 120 hours of instruction) conversational dialogues are introduced. Therefore, the major classroom activity in Total physical response is imperative drill(s). Other activities include role plays (dealing with everyday situations like at the restaurant, buying a ticket, asking for direction etc.) and slide presentations.

Asher (in Richards and Rogers, 1986: 95-6) provides a step-by-step lesson plan for a course for adult immigrants, which consisted of 159 hours of classroom instruction. The following instruction is for the sixth class course and it proceeds in the following way:

1. **Review** – a warm-up activity in which students move with commands such as ‘Maria, scream’, ‘Pablo, close the window’, ‘Rita, open your bag and take it to the blackboard’
2. **New commands** – some new verbs and other lexical items are introduced:
   wash – your hands, your hair, your face
   look for – a towel, the soap, a comb
   hold – the book, the cup, the soap
   comb **–** your hair, Maria’s hair, Shirou’s hair
   brush – your teeth, your pants, the table
3. **Other items are introduced**
   rectangle – Draw a rectangle on the chalkboard.
   triangle – Pick up the triangle from the table and give it to me.
   quickly/slowly – Walk quickly/slowly to the window and jump.
   toothpaste/toothbrush – Take out your toothpaste/toothbrush.
   teeth – Show your teeth to Dolores.
   soap – Look for the soap.
   towel – Put the towel on Juan’s arm.
4. **Teacher asks simple questions** – students answer with a gesture (e.g. by pointing to something)
   e.g. Where is the towel? (Eduardo, point to the towel!)
   Where is Dolores? (students point to Dolores)
5. **Role reversal** – students volunteer to give commands instead of the teacher
6. **Reading and writing** – students are allowed to copy the sentences or new vocabulary items from the blackboard while the teacher reads them out loud (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 95-6).

To conclude, although Total physical response (TPR) enjoyed popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, experts claim that it should be used mostly with younger learners and in combination with other methods and teaching techniques.

Before embarking on the process of learning grammar, it can be concluded that “Grammar teaching still tends to favor form over meaning and neglects teaching English as it is spoken in actual use. It treats grammatical structures in isolation, usually follows the way grammar is presented in the textbook, and exposes students to inauthentic language material,

which is tailor-made to teach a single grammatical structure" (Grimm, Meyer, and Volkmann, 2015: 97).

4. LEARNING OF GRAMMAR

Further issue to consider is students' process of learning grammar. Since there are different methods of teaching, students acquire or learn grammatical structures in different ways, depending on the method. However, the ideas and theories about learning grammar were and are influenced by the Input and Intake theory. Although the two terms are often ambiguous and used as synonyms, they have completely different meaning. According to Trosborg, language input is "whatever utterances the second language (L2) learners are exposed to, and it may include a great deal of language that is of no help in the acquisition process" (Trosborg, 1995: 68). In other words, input is everything around us we may perceive with our senses, but it does not need to be taken in and remembered. In his book "Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisiton" Stephen Krashen introduces the Input hypothesis. He explains that "language is picked up, or acquired, when learners receive input from 'messages' which contain language a little above their existing understanding and from which they can infer meaning" (Krashen, in Hedge, 2000: 10). However, learners mostly do not process all the input available to them. The reason for that lies in the fact that learners give more attention to some parts of input because they seem more important to them than others. This is called intake and was first introduced by Corder in 1967. It refers "to the ways in which learners process input and assimilate language to their interlanguage system" (Hedge, 2000: 12). Krashen lists following characteristics of intake:

1. intake is understood by the learner by means of the acquirer's linguistic and extralinguistic competence (use of context)
2. intake is at or slightly in advance of the acquirer's current stage of grammatical development
3. intake is sequenced, and it gets progressively more complex
4. intake is natural communication (Krashen in Trosborg, 1995: 68).

Therefore, it is important for the teachers to bear in mind that not all input is intake and that learners process it in different ways and at a different pace. However, it is generally accepted that learning of grammar follows the four steps, which Tricia Hedge briefly describes in her book "Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom" (2000) and these are noticing, reasoning and hypothesizing, structuring and restructuring and automatizing.

4.1. NOTICING

At the beginning of the process of learning grammar there is noticing. Firstly, "learners pick out specific features of the language and pay attention to them, that is, they *notice* items of language" (Hedge, 2000: 146). Hedge gives an example with the word 'don't' or 'do not'. She claims that the language feature (in this case the verb *don't*) has to be noticeable to the learners in order for them to start thinking about it. After a while, they will notice that in English, this regularly occurs to express negative meaning. After that, learners start working on the relationship between meaning and form, which leads them to finally make sense of the rule: the negation ('don't') is placed before the main verb in the sentence (Hedge, 2000: 146).

It is still discussed what makes a language item noticeable to the learners. Although there are several criteria introduced (language item has to occur frequently, it has to relate to the learner's common sense about basic functions of language, and its functions are those to which a learner would be likely to pay attention), the process of noticing depends on the learners, their knowledge level and personality (Hedge, 2000: 146). Once language items have been noticed by the learners and relationship between form and meaning has been established, these language items become part of intake (Hedge, 2000: 146). "Learners then analyze the forms in order to reason out how they fit into their existing knowledge of the language" (Hedge, 2000: 146). In other words, they assimilate the noticed language items to their interlanguage system.

4.2. REASONING AND HYPOTHESIZING

This step is more appropriate for adult learners of the second language since younger learners tend to simplify the target language and are not analytical. Adult learners are "able to see the patterns in the language, create hypotheses about the rules these patterns might demonstrate, and gradually revise their hypotheses according to new information" (Hedge, 2000: 146). In order to be able to analyze the language and reason about it, they use certain strategies and these (according to Oxford 1990, as in Hedge, 2000) are: 'reasoning deductively', 'analyzing contrastively', 'translating', and 'transferring'.

Reasoning deductively

In order to work out the meaning of what they hear or to formulate what they want to say, learners apply rules they already know. As a consequence, they often make errors. Hedge (2000) provides an example:

‘Can you tell me where *is the station*?’

‘She doesn’t know where *are they*.’ (Hedge, 2000: 147).

The inappropriate application of inverted interrogative word order is common error among learners. By applying the rules for questions, they make errors because the structure they want to use is familiar to them. According to the researches, adults prefer explicit way of grammar teaching with rules they can deal with deductively. It is debatable if this approach is successful among adult learners or not. However, it is believed that one of the things they aim to ‘discover’ about the syntax of the target language is “its basic thought system”, because they believe that without it “they shall never be able to handle the language efficiently” (Pickett, as in Hedge, 2000: 147).

Analyzing contrastively

As the name itself speaks, learners tend to compare the two languages (usually the first and second language, but comparison can be between the new language and previously learned second language) and work out their differences and similarities (Hedge, 2000: 147).

Translating

Many learners use translation to understand a second language structure better, which is why it proved as a useful strategy.

Transferring

“Transferring is what learners do when they apply knowledge of one language to the understanding or production of another” (Hedge, 2000: 147). For example, a Spanish student who learns English is likely to choose ‘no’ rather than ‘not’ at the early stage of learning because that is the way in which negation is formed in Spanish (Hedge, 2000: 148).

4.3. STRUCTURING AND RESTRUCTURING

After noticing, reasoning and hypothesizing, the next thing that happens in the learners’ minds is the process of structuring and restructuring language items. Hedge explains it in the following way: “As learners work out new rules, these have to be integrated into the representation of English grammar they hold in their minds, and this information has to be restructured as the learner moves on to another stage of development” (Hedge, 2000: 148). While these processes occur, it is inevitable for the learners to make errors, which are systematic

signs of “an internally developing system of grammar which moves through stages of interlanguage until it approximates the grammar used by proficient speakers of English” (Hedge, 2000: 148).

Lightbown and Spada (in Hedge, 2000) briefly explain the four stages of acquisition for English negation. Although they may differ slightly according to the first language, they generally follow this pattern:

Stage 1 – the negative element (usually ‘no’ or ‘not’) is typically placed before the verb or the element being negated: e.g. No bicycle. No have any sand. I not like it.

Stage 2 – ‘no’ and ‘not’ are alternated with ‘don’t’; however, ‘don’t’ is not marked for person, number, or tense and it may even be used with modals: e.g. He don’t like it. I don’t can sing.

Stage 3 – learners begin to place the negative element after auxiliary verbs like ‘are’, ‘is’, and ‘can’; however, the ‘don’t’ form is still not fully analyzed: e.g. You can’t go there. He can’t eat nothing. She don’t like rice.

Stage 4 – ‘do’ performs its full function as a marker of tense and person: e.g. It doesn’t work. We didn’t have supper.; however, learners may still continue to mark tense on both the auxiliary and the main verb: e.g. I didn’t went there. She doesn’t wants to go. (Lightbown and Spada, as in Hedge, 2000: 148-9).

4.4. AUTOMATIZING

“Once a learner can achieve regular and consistent responses in conversation to a certain type of input, then it can be said that the language involved has been automatized” (Hedge, 2000: 149). When it comes to producing language in everyday situations outside the classroom, learners usually plan and choose what and how to say it by paying attention to whether the form communicates a meaning successfully. Through repeated practice and usage of the successful form (that fits the communication purposes most), its use will become automatic, which is a process similar to the children’s acquisition of the first language (Hedge, 2000: 149).

On the other hand, students can also automatize errors or faulty utterances, which then lead to fossilization. It is the teachers’ duty to decide which errors and when and how to correct them, but it is generally acknowledged that at the early stages errors are encouraged since they point to the development of interlanguage.

To sum up, “all of these issues make the teaching of grammar a complex and uncertain enterprise” (Hedge, 2000: 152).

5. ERROR ANALYSIS

As a systematic and inevitable part of the process of learning or acquiring a second language, errors were and still are a burning issue among researchers, experts, and teachers. It is essential for the teachers to think about and decide which errors need explicit correction and analysis, which strategies to choose for correction, how to get a balance between error correction and encouragement and how to treat errors during different classroom activities. Therefore, as a part of Second Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics, Error Analysis (which will be discussed in the following subsections) was introduced to help to resolve the issues.

5.1. ERROR ANALYSIS – DEFINITION AND RECENT STUDIES

The term Error Analysis was first introduced by S.P.Corder and his colleagues in 1967. In his book "The significance of learners' errors", Corder claims that errrors "are not just to be seen as something to be eradicated, but rather can be important in and of themselves" (Gass, Selinker, 2008: 102). For that reason, he developed the concept of Error Analysis, which is in the Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics defined in the following way:

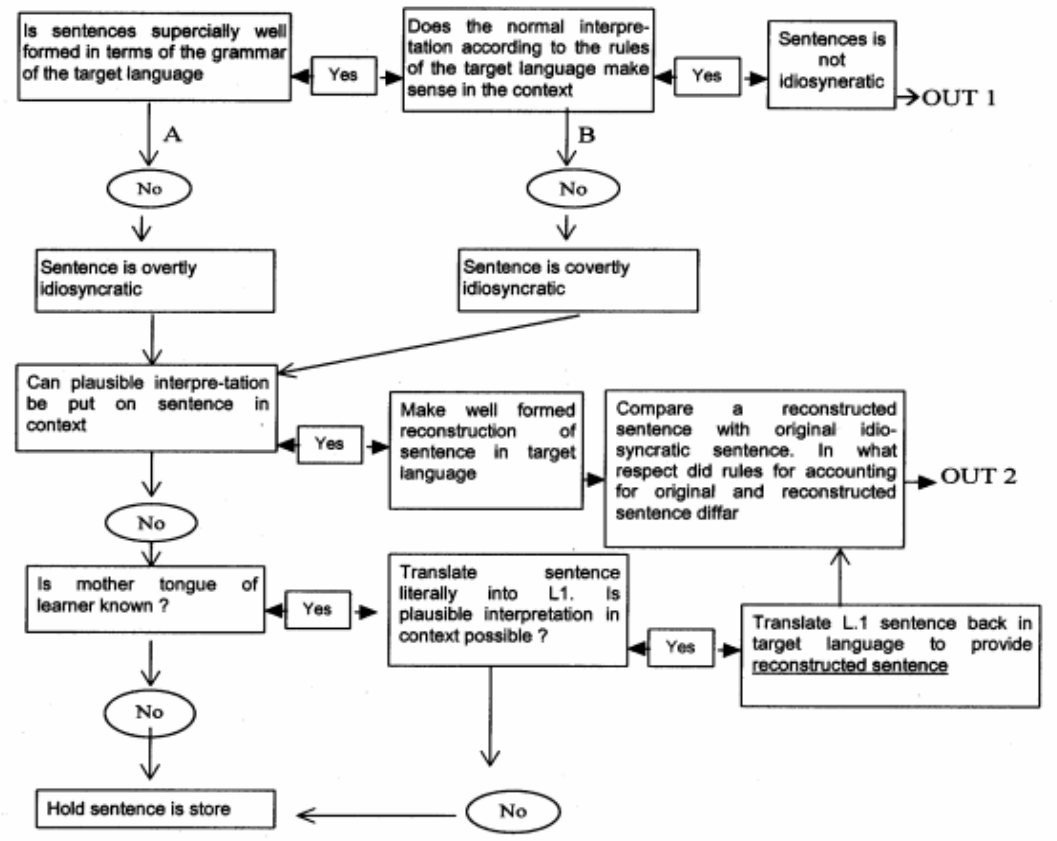
> "In second language acquisition, error analysis studies the types and causes of linguistic errors. This sometimes includes the evaluation and correction of errors. Errors may be classified according to (a) modality (i.e. level of proficiency in speaking, listening comprehension, writing, and reading); (b) levels of linguistic description (e.g. phonetics/phonology, orthography, graphemics, morphology, syntax, lexicon, phraseology, or stylistics); (c) form (omission, insertion, substitution, contamination, etc.); (d) type (systematic errors vs. occasional errors or errors in competence vs. errors in performance); and (e) cause(e.g. interference, development-related errors, interlanguage). In the evaluation of errors, the level of error (norm error vs. system error), the degree of communication breakdown, and the tendency towards fossilization play an equally important role" (Bussmann, 2006: 378).

To start with, Error Analysis has had a long and controversial history, which existed even before the term was introduced by Corder. By the 1950s, it was generally believed that errors were the result only of the native language (first language) interference. As researchers began to tackle more with this issue, they eventually managed to come up with certain procedures for identifying, describing, explaining (finding the source) and evaluating errors. Consequently, some important findings were made. The first one is that "learners seem to go beyond the available input, producing errors that show they actively construct rules, which although not-target-like, guide their performance in the L2 (second language)" (Ellis, 1997: 30). Furthermore, it became evident that more and more researchers and teachers wanted not only to correct students' errors, but also to find their source, explanation and reason, which led to the development of Error Analysis. In their book (Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory

Course), Gass and Selinker (2008) propose certain steps which need to be followed when conducting an Error Analysis and these are:

1. **Collect data** – although it is typically done with written data, oral data can also serve as a base
2. **Identify errors** – what is the error (e.g. incorrect sequence of tenses, wrong verb form, singular verb form with plural subject)
3. **Classify errors** – specify the type of error (e.g. error of agreement, an error in irregular verbs)
4. **Quantify errors** – determine how many errors occur
5. **Analyze source**
6. **Remediate** – pedagogical intervention is carried out, depending on the kind and frequency of an error type.

However, it was still a problem to identify errors and decide which need explicit correction and analysis and which do not. Corder (in Brown, 1988) provides a good model for identifying errors in a second language:



Picture 3 – Model for identifying errors (Corder in Brown, 2000: 221).

In addition, since current researches showed that learners' second language (L2) system is constantly changing and 'growing', errors should not be seen as a 'failure', but rather as a positive and essential feature of the process of learning or acquiring a second language.

Last but not least, after dealing with the process of Error Correction and Analysis, it became clear to the teachers and experts that there are more types of errors (not only the ones caused by the interference of the native language), which will be discussed in the following subsection.

5.2. TYPES OF ERRORS

James explains that learners' errors need to be seen as something positive and unique because "error is likewise unique to humans, who are not only *sapiens* and *loquens,* but also *homo errans*" (James, 1998: 1). Furthermore, he explains that errors are important for one simple reason and that is that they "are a register of their current perspective on the TL" (James, 1998: 7). In this sentence, *their* refers to the students' or learners' and TL stands for target language.

In order to be able to determine the types of errors, one has to find their source. According to Brown (2000), the four most common sources are: **interlingual transfer** (errors which occur because of the mother tongue (native language) interference), **intralingual transfer** (errors which occur because of the insufficient knowledge of the target language), **context of learning** and **communication strategies**. James (1998) also similarly defines the sources: **interlingual errors**, **intralingual errors**, **communication-strategy based errors** (which occur because learners use different strategies while communicating) and **induced errors** (which occur because of different reasons, e.g. the way of teaching, ambiguous materials etc.). The only difference between the two approaches is that instead of Brown's context of learning, James introduces the term induced errors.

Interlingual errors

As it was already mentioned, the first language interference is a significant source of errors for second language learners. This is particularly seen at the early stages of learning. The reason for that lies in the fact that "before the system of the second language is familiar, the native language is the only previous linguistic system upon which the learner can draw" (Brown, 2000: 224). We can talk about the positive and negative interlingual transfer. When the transferred item corresponds with the target language item well, it is called positive, and when it does not correspond, it is called negative interlingual transfer.

Intralingual transfer

Although Brown (2000) claims that overgeneralization and negative intralingual transfer are synonyms, James (1998) on the other hand states that overgeneralization is only one of seven reasons for negative intralingual transfer. According to James (1998), there are seven different sources of intralingual errors and these are:

1. **False analogy** – occurs when learners think that a new language item (that is similar to the one that is already known to them) behaves in the same way: boy/boys – child/child**s**; dog/dogs – sheep/sheep**s**
2. **Misanalysis** – occurs when learners form hypothesis about second language (L2) item, which is not based on first language (L1) knowledge and put it into practice: *its can be used as a pluralized form of it
3. **Incomplete rule application** – which is opposite of overgeneralization → undergeneralization; occurs when learners do not apply all the necessary rules for a particular grammatical structure: *Nobody knew where *was Barbie* – incomplete application of the interrogative formation rule
4. **Exploiting redundancy** – occurs when learners try to avoid items that seem unnecessary or redundant (e.g. unnecessary morphology or double signaling); the opposite of exploiting redundancy is overlaboration (with more advanced learners)
5. **Overlooking co-ocurrence restrictions** – occurs when learners still do not know that certain words need certain complements, prepositions, etc.: learners fail to realize or ignore the fact that the verb *enjoy* is followed by gerund (-ing form), not by bare infinitive
6. **Hypercorrection** – also known as monitor overuse; occurs when learners choose the wrong target language item because they believe it is wrong or a false friend
7. **Overgeneralization** – occurs when learners use only certain target language items, while others remain unused (the others are the ones that actually should be used) → overuse of one form and underuse of the others: other/another; any/some – learners choose only one instead of using both in appropriate situations; another example is: *Does she can dance*? where learners overgeneralize the use of auxiliary verb in the questions

According to the researchers and experts, intralingual transfer is the most common source of errors by the second language learners.

Context of learning

Context of learning refers not only to a place where the second language is learned (a classroom or a social situation), but also to the materials used by the teacher in the second or foreign language classroom. According to James (1998), these errors that are caused by the various external sources are called induced errors. Brown (2000) explains it in the following way: "Students often make errors because of a misleading explanation from the teacher, faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook, or even because of a pattern that was rotely memorized in a drill but improperly contextualized" (Brown, 2000: 226). Additionally, James

(1998) divides induced errors into the following categories: **materials-induced errors**, **teacher-talk induced errors**, **exercise-based induced errors**, **errors induced by pedagogical priorities**, and **look-up errors**.

Communication strategies

Last but not least, communication strategies also play an important role when it comes to making errors. Brown offers a brief explanation: "Learners obviously use production strategies in order to enhance getting their message across, but at times these techniques can themselves become a source of error" (Brown, 2000: 227). In other words, when it comes to communicating, learners do not pay that much attention to structures they are using, but rather to getting their message through.

The following picture provides information about communication strategies.

Avoidance Strategies

1. Message abandonment: Leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties.
2. Topic avoidance: Avoiding topic areas or concepts that pose language difficulties.

Compensatory Strategies

3. Circumlocution: Describing or exemplifying the target object of action (e.g., *the thing you open bottles with* for *corkscrew*).
4. Approximation: Using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible (e.g., *ship* for *sailboat*).
5. Use of all-purpose words: Extending a general, empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (e.g., the overuse of *thing, stuff, what-do-you-call -it, thingie*).
6. Word coinage: Creating a nonexisting L2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g., *vegetarianist* for *vegetarian*).
7. Prefabricated patterns: Using memorized stock phrases, usually for "survival" purposes (e.g., *Where is the* ___or *Comment allez -vous?*, where the morphological components are not known to the learner).
8. Nonlinguistic signals: Mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation.
9. Literal translation: Translating literally a lexical item, idiom, compound word, or structure from L1 to L2.
10. Foreignizing: Using a L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonology (i.e., with a L2 pronunciation) and/or morphology (e.g., adding to it a L2 suffix).
11. Code-switching: Using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2.
12. Appeal for help: Asking for aid from the interlocutor either directly (e.g., *What do you call . . . ?*) or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact, puzzled expression).
13. Stalling or time-gaining strategies: Using fillers or hesitation devices to fill pauses and to gain time to think (e.g., *well, now let's see, uh, as a matter of fact*).

Picture 4 – Communication strategies (Dörnyei, 1955, in Brown, 2000: 128).

To sum up, since there are various types of learners' errors, it is essential to find its source in order to be able to determine its type.

5.3. ROLE OF ERRORS AND THEIR CORRECTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Errors are an inevitable and positive part of learning a foreign language. In the past, errors were plainly divided into categories to see which ones were common and which were not, but, nowadays, errors and error analysis have become one of the most important teaching and learning processes. However, there are still many conflicting views on the error correction and analysis in the classroom. It is often argued about if, when, in what way, why and how errors should be corrected and analyzed.

Although many teachers still have a negative attitude towards errors: "There was almost total agreement that errors should be avoided" (Ellis, 1997: 14), and tend to correct them as soon as possible to avoid fossilization, with the development of language teaching and linguistics in general, it became clear that errors are significant not only for learners, but also for teachers and researchers. Corder explains: "Errors (not mistakes) made in both second language learning and child language acquisition provide evidence that a learner uses a definite system of language at every point in his development" (Corder, 1967: 161). To him, errors are significant in three different ways. First to the teacher (they tell him how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and what still remains for him to learn), then to the researcher because they provide him with the evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures are used by learners in order to learn some new language phenomena and last but not the least, to the learner himself (who should use his own errors as a device for further learning).

The main goal of not only error analysis, but also language teaching and learning in general should be identification of errors and their sources in order to incorporate them into the process of learning and adjusting learning strategies, methods and techniques to the language learners.

5.4. ERROR TREATMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

One of major issues in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is error treatment. Krashen states that "in acquiring a first language, a young child takes little notice of parental correction and that, since adults follow a similar process in acquiring a second or foreign language, correction by the teacher is of dubious value" (Krashen, as in Hedge, 2000: 288). However, according to the researches, adults claim that error correction and analysis is of great value when learning a second or foreign language. Therefore, it is expected from the

teacher to correct and analyze errors in the classroom situation, where there is little or hardly any exposure to English language and real-life situations.

When it comes to correcting errors, teachers need to be very careful and have to bear in mind that consistent and equal error correction is the only way. Here is the example of a simulated classroom talk. In this case, teacher corrects only one student despite the fact that both of them made a mistake:

Teacher: When's your birthday, Alvaro?

Alvaro: Twelfth November

Teacher: Okay. Now, Santos, when's *your* birthday?

Santos: Fourteenth of September

Teacher: No, listen: *the* fourteenth. Again… (Allwright, 1988 as in Hedge, 2000: 288).

Although Alvaro made two mistakes, teacher fails or does not want to correct him, while on the other hand, he/she corrects Santos who made only one mistake. There are a number of questions arising from teacher's treatment: "Do the other students appreciate that Alvaro is careless and that the teacher has decided not to bother correcting him? Do they realize that the teacher is more positive towards Santos and will give useful feedback? Do they realize that 'Okay' did not indicate approval?" (Allwright, as in Hedge, 2000: 289). Consequently, learners begin to notice that teacher corrects inconsistently und unequally, which leads to confusion concerning not only the language structures, but also why some learners are being corrected and others not. It is necessary for the teacher to be aware of the fact that when a learner is being corrected, it affects not only him/her, but also the whole class or group. Also, teachers need to make decisions about "how to indicate that an error has been made; how to indicate where the error is in what the student has said; whether to give the correct form of prompt self-correction in some way; and whether to involve the rest of the class or not" (Hedge, 2000: 291).

Further point to discuss is how to correct errors during different activities. The first step is to decide what is the goal of the activity (whether the goal is accuracy or fluency). If the activity encourages speaking and communication in general, teachers should note errors that occur during the activity, but correct them only after in order not to break the communication and discourage the learners. Furthermore, teacher could write sentences or faulty utterances on the blackboard and ask the learners what is wrong with the sentences and encourage them to peer-correction in order for the learners to feel involved in the process of correcting errors. In

this way, they should stop experiencing errors as something bad and stressful both for them and other learners.

To sum up, although there are many books, articles, handbooks, and theories on error correction, it is completely different in practice. However, there are some things that teachers need to think about when correcting. They need to find a balance between error correction and encouragement in order not to discourage the learners and cause anxiety in the classroom. Furthermore, they should ask students how, when, and in which ways they want to be corrected so that they feel comfortable and involved in the process. Also, peer- and self-correction should be encouraged. Last but not least, teachers should correct all students equally because of the fact that unequal and inconsistent correction causes confusion (concerning language structures) among learners and misunderstanding.

6. ANALYSIS OF TYPICAL ERRORS IN EFL STUDENTS' WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

The final section of this paper presents an analysis of typical errors in students' written assignments in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) study programme. It is important to mention that students took the same test at the beginning of their studies (when they first enrolled Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, i.e. English Language and Literature in Osijek) in October 2015 and after having participated in obligatory courses, which dealt with grammar (*Morphosyntax and Semantics of the English Verb Phrase* and *English Language Practice I* and *II*) in April 2016. It is essential to acknowledge that some students learned English longer than others and have been to (or even lived in) the English speaking countries. They also come from different primary and high schools (e.g. different grammar or vocational schools across Croatia, different primary schools, etc.), different towns and cities in Croatia and therefore have different ground or previous knowledge of the English language.

6.1. AIMS

The main aim of this research was to identify which and how many grammatical errors first-year students of English make, what is their source and if and how they get better after studying grammar at the Faculty. The research questions to be answered are:

1. What is the language level of the students enrolling the English Language and Literature?

2. Are all students (before studying) at the same language level or are there significant differences in their knowledge?

3. Do different schools and therefore different methods of teaching have influence on students' knowledge of the English language before they begin with their study?

4. Do students progress with time, i.e. after being exposed to explicit grammar teaching at the Faculty?

5. Are all students at the same level after being exposed to the same grammatical instructions by the same teachers and according to the same materials? If not, are there fewer differences in the language level of the students than at the beginning of the studies or more?

6. Which aspects of grammar of the English language are the most problematic for the students?

It is to be expected that students enrolling English Language and Literature BA study programme do not have the same knowledge of the language because of various reasons: not only because of different schools, teachers, materials and methods, but also because of the fact that not all students learned English for the same period of time (some of them have been learning English for eight or even more years, some for only four, etc.). What is more, some of the students have been to an English speaking country or even lived there for a certain amount of time, while others did not, which should contribute to the difference in their language level. It is also hypothesized that after being exposed to the explicit grammar teaching, all students of the language progress and that differences between their knowledge become lesser. However, it is to be expected that there are still some aspects of grammar students (will) struggle with.

6.2. PARTICIPANTS

This research was conducted at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, Department of English Language and Literature. Its participants were seventy five (in the second round eighty) students of English Language and Literature. As it has already been mentioned, students come from different schools in Croatia and have different previous knowledge of the language, but they have one thing in common: they want to study English Language and Literature and are therefore highly motivated.

6.3. INSTRUMENT

The students were given a test that consisted of ten exercises they needed to solve. It tested not only grammatical competence, but also their general knowledge of the English language. However, for the purposes of this study, only one exercise was analyzed and that is the third exercise with mixed tenses. The exercise looked like this:

Task 3. Put the verbs in brackets into suitable form.

Sue: What _____ (you/do) tonight, Kevin?

Kevin: I _____ (go) to that new exhibition at the gallery and then to the pub. Do you want to come?

Sue: I _____ (already/see) the exhibition, but I _____ (join) you at the pub.

Kevin: What _____ (you/think) of the exhibition?

Sue: I would have enjoyed it more if my little sister _____ (not be) with me. While I _____ (look) the paintings, she _____(disappear). She _____ (find) in the curator's office a half an hour later. School _____ (start) in September, I'm really looking forward to it.

Figure 1 – Exercise that the students had to solve and that was later analyzed.

Next figure shows the correct answers.

1. **are you doing**

2. **am going**

3. **have already seen**

4. **will join**

5. **do you think**

6. **had not been**

7. **was looking**

8. **disappeared**

9. **was found**

10. **starts**

Figure 2 – Correct answers.

The test was composed by the professors at the department of English Language at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek and was (in the previous years) given as an entrance exam for the students.

6.4. PROCEDURE

Seventy five students (in the second test eighty) were given tests they needed to solve. The first one was given at the beginning of the academic year and their studies (in October 2015)

and the second one after obligatory grammar courses (in April 2016). Students had ninety minutes to solve the whole test. However, for this analysis, only the third exercise (with mixed tenses) is essential, where students had to put the verbs in brackets into suitable form. Exercise and correct answers are provided above (Figure 1 and 2). It is also important to mention that after the first test, the professor analyzed the test with the students and provided the correct answers. After the tests were solved, students' errors in the exercise were corrected and analyzed. The results are to be discussed in the following subsection.

6.5. RESULTS

The results will be presented in two parts. The first part deals with errors made in the first and the second part with errors made in the second test.

FIRST PART

Before going into a detailed analysis of errors, here are the results of how students solved the exercise for the first time (when they enrolled University):

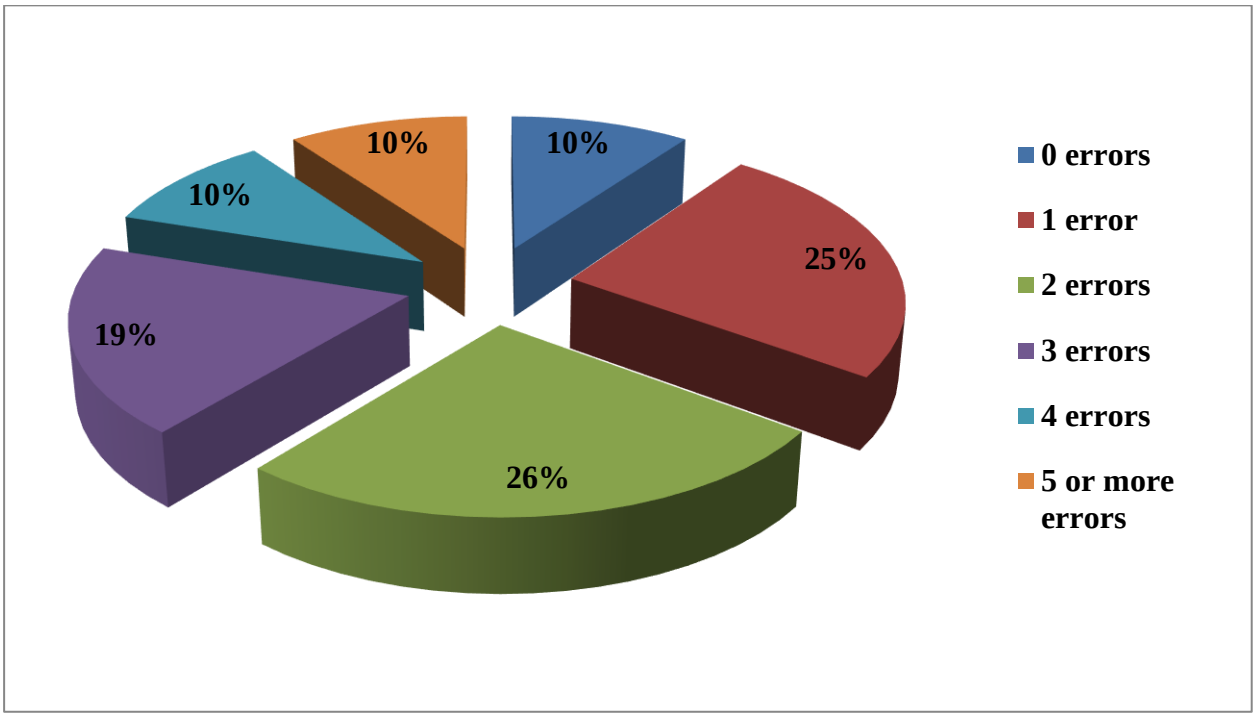


Diagram 1 – Percentage of students who made 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more errors in the first test

Out of eighty students who took the exam, eight of them or 10% solved the exercise without making an error, twenty students or 25% made only one error, twenty one of them or 26% made two errors, fifteen students or 19% made three errors, eight of them or 10% made four

errors and also eight students or 10% made five or more errors. Although the percentage of the students who solved this task without making or with only one error is surprisingly high (35%), there are students who solved more than 50% of the task wrong, and that is the reason for further research (sentence by sentence) in order to find the sources of the errors.

Here is the detailed analysis of the sentences:

1. What **are you doing** tonight, Kevin?

correct: 65

incorrect: 15

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

What will you do… - 7

What are you going to do… - 4

What did you do… - 2

What have you done… - 1

What will you be doing… - 1

The rule for this sentence is: we use the present progressive when we talk about plans, mostly when the time and/or place are fixed (in this case *tonight* is the 'marker'). Having failed to recognize this, 19% of the students made error and wrote: "will you do", "are you going to do", "will you be doing", "did you do" and "have you done". The first three faulty solutions are the result of insufficient rule knowledge (about future tenses), while the other two answers "did you do" and "have you done" stem from the fact that students misinterpreted the sentence (since they probably have not read the whole exercise to get a general idea about the text) and put the wrong tense, which led them to making error in the second sentence (which is actually the answer to the first one) also.

2. I **am going** to that new exhibition at the gallery and then to the pub. Do you want to come?

correct: 61

incorrect: 19

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

I will go… - 12

I am going to go… - 2

I will be going… - 1

I went… - 2

I was going to go… - 1

I have gone… - 1

The rule is: as the arrangement already exists at the moment of speaking (now), we use the present progressive. Mitigating circumstance (which proved otherwise) for the learners was the fact that the second sentence was an answer to the first one and since the tense in the question and answer should be the same, they could easily 'guess' the right answer. However, since they made an error in the first one, even more students (24%) made an error in this one and wrote: "I will go", "I am going to go", "I will be going", "I went", "I was going to go" and "I have gone". The first three are again the result of insufficient rule knowledge, while the other three answers follow the principle that the answer should contain the same tense as the question, which led them to making an error.

3. I **have already seen** the exhibition,…

correct: 62

incorrect: 18

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

I already saw… – 13

I already have seen… - 1

I had already seen… - 3

I already seen… - 1

The rule for this sentence is: already refers to an action that has happened at an unspecified time before now, which suggests that there is no need for repetition and therefore it is used with Present Perfect. Eighteen or 23% of the students failed to realize this. Instead they wrote "I already saw", which is the best example to show the influence of American English. With the adverbs *recently, just, until now, never, ever, already, yet* it is normal to use the Past Simple form of the verb, whereas the British English (which is the preferred version at the Department) requires the Present Perfect. Therefore, this error is to be considered as the result of ignorance of rule restriction or insufficient rule knowledge. Furthermore, "I already have seen" occurs where a student knew what tense he/she had to use, but failed to provide the correct word order, then "I had already seen", where students used the wrong tense because of insufficient rule knowledge and "I already seen", error which is the result of the omission of the auxiliary verb ('have').

4. …, but I **will join** you at the pub.

correct: 73

incorrect: 7

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

I would join… - 2

I can join… - 1

I would like to join… - 2

I could join… - 1

I might join… - 1

The rule is: when we make decisions as we speak, i.e. to announce decisions as we make them, we use *will*. Only seven or 9% of the students made an error in this one, but they provided even five faulty answers and these are: "I would join", "I can join", "I would like to join", "I could join" and "I might join", which are the result of misinterpretation of the meaning of the sentence.

Students failed to realize that the speaker made a decision at the moment of speaking and therefore made an error. However, if the context were different, four 'incorrect' answers could be possible: "I can join", "I would like to join", "I could join" and "I might join".

5. What **do you think** of the exhibition?

correct: 46

incorrect: 34

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

What did you think… - 32

What are you thinking… - 2

This sentence was the most ambiguous one, which is proved by the number of students who made an error: thirty four or 42%. Although the only 'correct' answer was "do you think", it is clear why many of the students used "did you think". The rule is: when we talk about mental and emotional states, we use Present Simple. However, students who used "did you think" had in mind that the speaker asked what the other speaker thought about the exhibition when he/she saw it at a certain time in the past. Therefore, both answers could be possible in this sentence. There are also two students who put "are you thinking", which is of course an error (whose cause is ignorance of rule restriction) since "think" is a state verb and does not have the –ing form (present participle).

6. I would have enjoyed it more if my little sister **had not been** with me.

correct: 30

incorrect: 49

unsolved: 1

Incorrect answers:

has not been… - 5

was not… - 40

had not have been… - 1

were not… - 3

This sentence caused more than 50% of the learners to make an error. Although the rule and the 'markers' are the simplest and most obvious, fourty nine students failed to apply the rule, which states that we use the Third Conditional ("would have" + "past participle" in the main clause and "past perfect" in the dependent clause) to talk about 'impossible' conditions in the past. Since there is *would have enjoyed*, students only needed to put "had not been" without too much thinking. However, as the result of insufficient rule knowledge, students put "has not been", "was not" while "had not have been" is a consequence of exploiting redundancy (student uses both auxiliary verbs unnecessary to signal the past) and "were not" as the result of incomplete rule application, since he/she failed to access the correct person form. One student did not provide an answer. Therefore it can be concluded that students either did not learn the Third Conditional or they failed to recognize it in the sentence.

7. While I **was looking** the paintings, …

correct: 78

incorrect: 1

unsolved: 1

Incorrect answers:

While I had looked… - 1

As opposed to the previous sentence, this one was easy for almost all students. Only two of them or 3% solved it incorrectly or did not write anything at all. The rule is: for longer action or situation in the past we use Past progressive. *While* is a marker that helped students to realize this, and therefore it was quite simple. However, one student wrote "I had looked", which is the result of ignorance of rule restriction. The other one has not provided an answer.

8. …, she **disappeared**.

correct: 75

incorrect: 5

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

she has disappeared - 1

she had disappeared - 3

she would disappear – 1

In the second part of the sentence students had to use the Past simple form because of the fact that this short, complete action happened while the longer action was happening (her sister disappeared while she was looking the paintings (looking the paintings lasted for longer time and while it was happening, she disappeared). Once again, almost all students knew the answer. Only five of them or 6% got it wrong. Instead of the plain "disappeared", they wrote "she has disappeared", "she had disappeared" and "she would disappear". The first two are the result of ignorance of rule restriction, while the third one is again misinterpretation of the meaning of the sentence and the structure "would disappear" itself.

9. She **was found** in the curator's office a half an hour later.

correct: 78

incorrect: 2

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

she has found… - 1

she found… - 1

This sentence is a plain passive sentence. The only 'catch' was to put the verb in the right tense. Since it happened at the exhibition in the past and has not repeated again, students had to put the Past Simple passive. Only two of them or 3% have made an error. Instead of "was found", they wrote "she has found" and "she found". The two answers are the result of misinterpretation of the meaning and the sentence itself. Students failed to recognize the sentence as the passive one, so they put the verbs in active form. But then again, after reading the sentence with these faulty productions, they just do not make sense ("She has found/found in the curator's office a half an

hour later"). The sentence written in this way needs an object: "What has she found/did she find in the curator's office?".

10. School **starts** in September, I'm really looking forward to it.

correct: 49

incorrect: 31

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

is starting… - 26

will start… - 4

is going to start… - 1

This sentence again caused a lot of trouble among the students. The rule is: when talking about future timetables, routines or schedules, Present Simple is used. The most common error was "is starting", then "will start" and last but not the least "is going to start". All three errors are caused by the faulty rule knowledge.

To sum up, the most common sources of students' errors in the first test were faulty or insufficient rule knowledge or incomplete rule application, which are intralingual sources. Consequently, it can be concluded that learners have sufficient knowledge of the target or second language because there is no interference of native language (no interlingual errors). However, they also failed to recognize a situation where interlingual transfer could be positive. That is the case with the last sentence. They could easily just translate it from Croatian (Škola ***počinje*** u rujnu.) into English (School ***starts*** in September) since the tense that should have been used is the same in both languages.

SECOND PART

At first, here is the analysis of how students solved the same exercise for the second time:

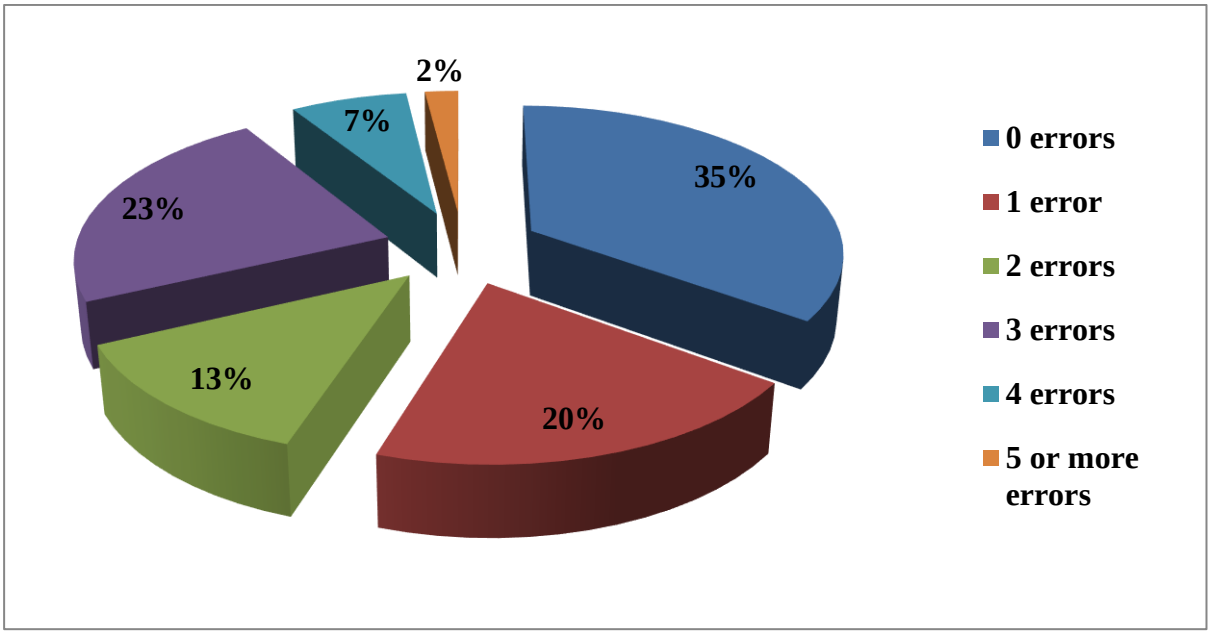


Diagram 2 – Percentage of students who made 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more errors in the second test

The first thing to notice is the fact that greater number of students solved the exercise without making an error (twenty six students or 35%) and that there are fewer students who made five or more errors (only two students or 2%). Additionally, fifteen students or 20% made only one error, ten of them or 13% made two errors, seventeen students or 23% made three errors and five of them or 7% made four errors. Interestingly enough, in both 'attempts', students did not manage to solve at least one sentence without making an error. Although there is obvious improvement in students' knowledge, there are still some errors that need to be corrected and analyzed.

1. What **are you doing** tonight, Kevin?

correct: 72

incorrect: 3

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

What will you do… - 2

What will you be doing… - 1

This first sentence already shows how the students progressed when it comes to grammar. The fact that only three students (in the first 'attempt' fifteen students) made an error and provided only two faulty answers (in the first 'attempt' there were five different faulty structures) proves that grammar courses at the Faculty improve students' knowledge. These two structures "what will you do" and "what will you be doing" are the result of insufficient rule knowledge and need explicit correction in order not to become fossilized.

2. I **am going** to that new exhibition at the gallery and then to the pub. Do you want to come?

correct: 64

incorrect: 11

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

I will go… - 4

I am going to go… - 2

I will be going… - 2

I went… - 1

I going… - 1

I was going to go… - 1

This sentence however proves that there are still errors that need explicit correction. Although the number of students who made an error in this sentence is lesser (in this 'attempt' eleven students made an error, whereas the first time they were taking the test nineteen students made it), there are still six different faulty constructions provided by the students. They are identical to the error made during the first 'attempt', which means that their source is insufficient rule knowledge. It is also interesting that since the first two sentences are connected (question and answer) and there are only three students who made an error in the question, the number of students who made an error in the answer is surprisingly high.

3. I **have already seen** the exhibition,…

correct: 63

incorrect: 12

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

I already saw… - 5

I have already… -1

I had already seen… - 6

In this sentence, twelve students made an error (first time there were eighteen students). Their faulty productions were: “I already saw” and “I had already seen”, which are the result of the ignorance of rule restriction (already is used with the Present Perfect), while the last one “I have already” is caused by the omission of the main verb (although the tense is/would be correct). What is interesting is the fact that in the first test, one student also made an error due to an omission, but in his/her case, it was the omission of the auxiliary verb.

4. …, but I **will join** you at the pub.

correct: 69

incorrect: 6

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

I am going to join… - 1

I will be joining… - 1

I could join… - 3

I might join… - 1

Almost the same number of students made an error in the fourth sentence (in the first test seven, in the second six students). Two of the faulty productions (“I am going to join” and “I will be joining”) are the result of insufficient rule knowledge, whereas other two ‘solutions’ (“I could

join" and "I might join") stem from the fact that the students misinterpreted the meaning of the sentence.

5. What **do you think** of the exhibition?

correct: 44

incorrect: 31

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

What did you think… - 28

What are you thinking… - 1

What you think… - 1

What were you thinking… - 1

Once again, this sentence was ambiguous for the students. They again put "What did you think", which is explained in the first part of the analysis. They also put "What are you thinking" and "What were you thinking", which is the result of ignorance of rule restriction (since think is a state verb and is usually not used in the gerund form). One student also omitted the auxiliary verb (do), so we cannot be sure if he/she would have put the right tense.

6. I would have enjoyed it more if my little sister **had not been** with me.

correct: 46

incorrect: 29

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

has not been… - 2

have not been… - 2

was not… - 22

has not had been… - 1

were not… - 2

Although there are fewer students who made an error in this sentence, the number of those who made it is still high. As the result of insufficient rule knowledge, students put “has not been” and “was not” while “has not had been” is a consequence of exploiting redundancy (student uses both auxiliary verbs unnecessary to signal the past). “Have not have been” and “were not” are the result of incomplete rule application, since students failed to access the correct person form. Although the students dealt with the Third Conditional (and Conditionals in general) in their English Language Practice (ELP) classes, they once again failed to recognize it in the sentence, which leads to a conclusion that conditionals should be given more attention to because it takes longer time for them to ‘sink in’.

7. While I **was looking** the paintings, …

correct: 71

incorrect: 4

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

While I was looking at… - 2

While I was loaking at… - 1

While I looked at… - 1

Although the number of the students who made an error in the first part of the sentence is not high, it is interesting that more students made error in the second ‘attempt’ (after grammar courses and analysis of the test). The first thing to notice is that all five students added the preposition “at”, which did not occur in the first test and is not in the exercise at all (it is not in the bracket next to the verb). Since the instruction clearly states “Put the verbs in brackets into suitable form”, one reason for these errors is failing to follow the task instructions. Further source is false analogy since the students learned that some verbs are followed by a certain preposition (in this case, to look is followed by at). One student put the right tense, but because of the preposition, it was considered an error. Furthermore, one student put the wrong tense

(“While I looked at”), which is the result of the faulty rule knowledge. Last but not least, although the student put the right tense, he/she made a spelling error (“loaking”).

8. …, she **disappeared**.

correct: 70

incorrect: 5

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

she has disappeared - 1

she had disappeared - 3

she disspeared - 1

In the second part of the sentence students had to use the Past simple form because of the fact that this short, complete action happened while the longer action was happening (her sister disappeared while she was looking the paintings (looking the paintings lasted for longer time and while it was happening, she disappeared). The same number of students made an error in the first and the second attempt. Four students (instead of “disappeared”) made an error as the result of the ignorance of rule restriction and wrote “she has disappeared” and “she had disappeared”, while one student (although the tense was correct) made a spelling error.

9. She **was found** in the curator’s office a half an hour later.

correct: 73

incorrect: 2

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

she had been found… - 1

she found… - 1

As well as in the first ‘attempt’, only two students made an error in the ninth sentence. Instead of “was found”, they wrote “she had been found” and “she found”. The first answer is the result of ignorance of rule restriction since the student put the wrong tense of the verb in passive (“she had been found”). In the second case, a student failed to recognize the sentence as the passive one, so he/she put the verb in the active form (“she found”). But then again, after reading the sentence with these faulty productions, they just do not make sense (“She found in the curator’s office a half an hour later”). The sentence written in this way needs an object: “What did she find in the curator’s office?”.

10. School **starts** in September, I’m really looking forward to it.

correct: 62

incorrect: 13

unsolved: 0

Incorrect answers:

is starting… - 11

will start… - 1

start… - 1

The progress of the students can be especially seen in this example. In the first ‘attempt’, thirty one students made an error, while in the second test, only thirteen. As in the first semester, the most common errors were “is starting” and “will start”, which are the result of the faulty rule knowledge. One student also put “start”, whose source is the ignorance of rule restriction (false usage of the Present Simple) because the –s (since it is the third person singular; school=it) is missing. However, it is obvious that grammatical structures were explicitly dealt with, which led to better results.

6.6. DISCUSSION

This research attempted to examine typical students’ errors in EFL written assignments. The overall results show that different schools in Croatia, different teachers, materials and teaching methods, have a significant influence on students’ knowledge of the language when they first come to the University. On one hand, there are students (10% out of eighty students)

who were able to solve the exercise with mixed tenses without making a single error even before they started studying the language (which leads us to a conclusion that their knowledge of the English language was already at a high level, B2/C1). On the other hand, there are many students who made four or more errors in the same exercise, which showed to the professors at the Department that they had to work on grammar really hard in order to lessen or minimize the errors. The following diagrams show the percentage of correct answers sentence by sentence:

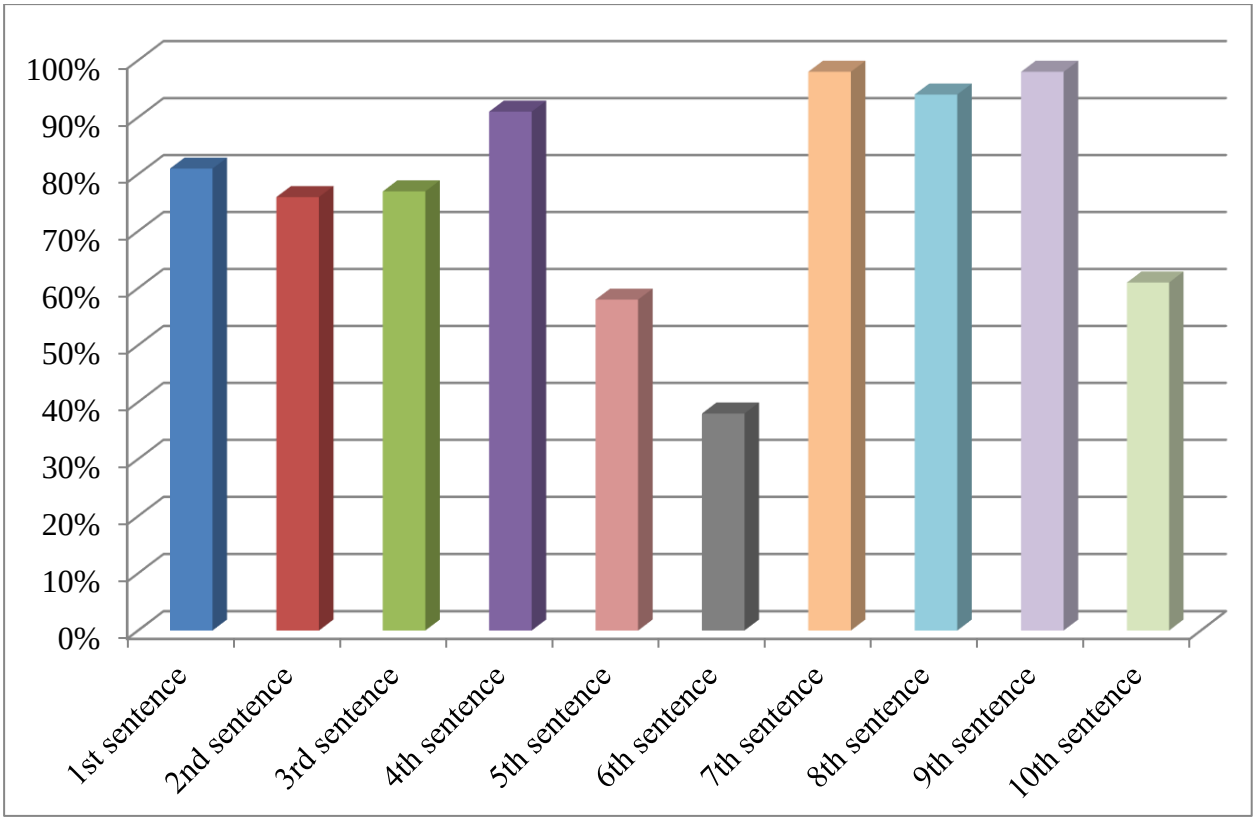


Diagram 3 – Percentage of correct answers (sentence by sentence) during the first 'attempt'

It is important to mention that eighty students wrote the first test, whereas the second was written by seventy five students, which is the reason why the results could not be shown in the same diagram and compared. 81% of the students solved the first sentence correctly, 76% did not make an error in the second one, 77% solved the third one flawlessly, 91% made no error in the fourth sentence, 58% wrote the right answer in the sentence number five, only 38% of the students did not make an error in the sixth sentence, almost all (98%) students solved the seventh sentence without making an error, 94% solved the eighth sentence correctly, 98% of the students made no error in the ninth sentence and 61% did not make an error in the last sentence.

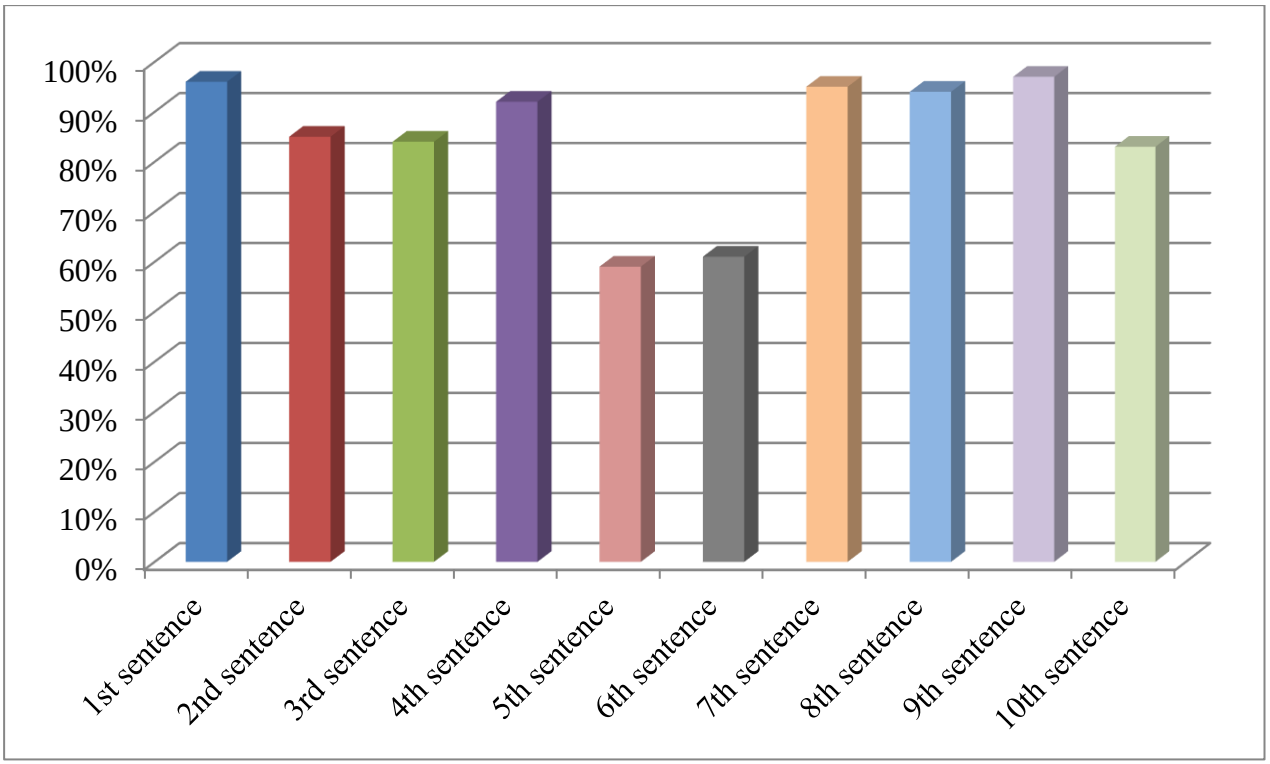


Diagram 4 - Percentage of correct answers (sentence by sentence) during the second 'attempt'

96% of the students solved the first sentence without making an error, 85% solved the second sentence correctly, 84% did not make an error in the third sentence, 92% of the students solved the fourth sentence without making an error, 59% did not make an error in the fifth sentence, only two percent more (61%) solved the sixth sentence correctly, 95% of the students solved the seventh sentence without making an error, 94% did not make an error in the eighth sentence, 97% solved the ninth sentence correctly and 83% of the students solved the last sentence without making an error.

Although the progress is visible and obvious, the real situation cannot be presented because a different number of students wrote the first and the second test.

7. CONCLUSION

This research set out to identify which and how many grammatical errors first-year students of English make, what is their source and if and how they get better after studying grammar at the Faculty. After analyzing the errors and their sources, it can be concluded that the most common sources of students' errors are faulty (insufficient) rule knowledge or incomplete application of the rule and ignorance of rule restriction. This is the result of the fact that either teachers (in students' high and primary schools) used wrong methods for some grammatical structures or students did not process the information in their language system.

After analyzing the number of errors at the beginning of their studies, it became evident that students enrolling English Language and Literature are approximately at the language level B1/B2. It is also important to mention that there are significant differences in their knowledge. Although the number of the students who solved the exercise without making an error and with making five or more errors is the same (eight or 10%), it is of great concern that 10% of the students enrolling English solved more than 50% of the exercise with mixed tenses incorrectly. The reason for this lies in the fact that students went to different high schools, had different teacher, materials and were exposed to different methods of teaching grammar, which then resulted in their knowledge of the language. There are also some internal factors that have certain influence on language learning (language aptitude, motivation, gender, etc.) and that need to be considered. Furthermore, number of years of learning English language also has a great impact on the results.

After analyzing the test together with the professor at the Faculty and studying obligatory grammar courses (*Morphosyntax and Semantics of the verbs in English* and *ELP I* and *II*), students solved it one more time. Although they were familiar with the whole test and got all the right answers, they still made errors in their second attempt. Although the number of students who made five or more errors is only two and number of students who solved the exercise without making an error is twenty six (25% more than in the first test), there are errors that should not have been made by the 1st year undergraduate students of English Language and Literature. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that students showed significant progress and improvement, they are still not at the same language level. In order to lessen this difference, a lot of revising of the rules and practical tasks still have to be done. However, the fact that the students showed progress in such a short time span, the teachers at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences can conclude that they are doing the right job in training the students. There are

still some problematic structures that need more focus and practice. In this case, the Third Conditional proved to be the most difficult to solve since the greatest number of students made an error in the sentence where it was supposed to be provided. The results of this research and analysis confirmed the assumptions proposed in the "AIMS" part of the thesis.

Last but not least, the conclusions drawn upon this research may not be completely reliable since the study was conducted on only one generation of the students. Furthermore, as the study involved a relatively small number of students, the results cannot be generalized. However, this research may serve as a possible guideline for all the students and teachers of the English as a Foreign Language in Croatia whose aim is to implement the findings of this study into the teaching and learning processes.

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