

# **Syntactic Structure of Czech Students' Spontaneous English Utterances**

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Bachelor's Thesis



**Tomas Bata University in Zlín**  
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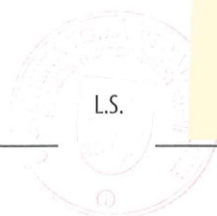
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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá spontánní mluvené projevy českých studentů v angličtině, a to z pohledu jejich syntaktické struktury.

V teoretické části jsou shrnuty a vysvětleny pojmy a termíny z oblasti syntaxe, stylistiky a pedagogiky, jako hovorový styl, větná skladba a experiment.

V praktické části je provedena diskurzívní analýza celkem 70 přepisů nahrávek namluvených studenty. Tito studenti byli rozděleni do dvou skupin A a B. U každé proběhl tzv. pretest a posttest, mezi nimiž účastníci skupiny B prošli psychologickým výcvikem.

Klíčová slova: spontánní mluvený projev, syntax, syntaktická struktura, hovorový styl, diskurzívní analýza, pedagogický experiment, čeští studenti

## **ABSTRACT**

This Bachelor's thesis examines spontaneous English utterances of Czech students from the point of view of their syntactic structure.

The theoretical part summarizes and explains concepts and terms from the field of syntax, stylistics and pedagogy, such as colloquial style, sentence structure and experiment.

In the practical part, a discourse analysis of 70 transcripts of students' recordings is performed. These students were divided into two groups, A and B. Each undertook a so-called pretest and posttest, between which the participants of group B underwent psychological training.

Keywords: spontaneous utterance, syntax, syntactic structure, colloquial language, discourse analysis, pedagogical experiment, Czech students

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis was written to examine the syntactic structure of Czech students' spontaneous utterances in English. In the theoretical part there are explanations of terms and phenomena from the fields of sentence structure, colloquial language, discourse analysis and pedagogical experiment, such as types of sentences, typical features of colloquial language and pretest and posttest in the experiment.

In the practical part this thesis analyses the prescriptions of the recordings, which were obtained during the utterances when students were talking spontaneously and unprepared. There are two groups of students, A and B. As a pretest, students from both groups were asked to share an experience or funny story from their lives. After approximately two months they were asked to do exactly the same as a posttest. The only difference - so called independent variable - was that in the meantime students from group B undertook special psychological training, target of which was to lower the stress and improve the speaking skills.

Hypothesis of the experiment states that spontaneous utterances of students who engaged in the psychological training ameliorated, especially in the area of fluency, structure of the sentences and lower usage of filler words, for example "err", "uhm", "uh", "ehm", "hmm", "like", "okay" and "right".

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Sentence is a basic unit of language expression, the definition of which varies according to the point of view applied in them. From the content point of view it is defined as a verbal expression of an idea, from the functional point of view as taking an opinion on a fact, from a grammatical point of view as a unit arranged according to certain rules specific to the language and from a phonetic point of view as a section of speech characterized by a complete, finished intonation line. (Dušková

Different definitions are based on different levels of sentence construction. At the level of the content sentence, it consists of naming units expressing the communicated content. However, the naming side of a sentence is not a grammatical matter, but a lexicological one, and does not in itself form a sentence. The sentence as such is constituted only when the mutual relations into which the individual names enter are expressed, which is a matter of grammatical construction. The phonetic definition is then a definition from a purely expressive level. (Dušková

Definitions that take into account the communicative side of a sentence characterize the sentence in the act of communication. A sentence as a communicative speech unit is often called a statement. A sentence as an abstract language unit (sentence type), a syntactic-semantic scheme on the basis of which a specific statement is created, must be distinguished from a sentence as a statement. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

The specificity of a sentence with respect to naming lies in the fact that the sentence contains a prediction. The prediction relationship, which can therefore be called sentence-forming, is most often expressed in Czech and English by the verb finite. (Dušková)

Sentences can be classified based on their syntactic properties. We distinguish declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamative sentences. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

### 1.1 Declarative Sentences

Declarative sentences are the most straightforward of the sentence types. They are syntactic configurations which usually display an unmarked/expected order of the functional categories: Subject, Predicator, Direct Object, etc. This implies that the Subject comes first in the sentence, followed by the Predicator, which is consecutively followed by an Indirect Object (if there is one) and a Direct Object (again, if present). Non-declarative sentences, by contrast, demonstrate marked (i.e. in some way out-of-the-ordinary) configurations. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

Here are two examples of declarative sentences:

(1) My aunt likes books. (2) You haven't closed the door.

These sentences would normally be understood to be making a statement. However, it is necessary to realise that declarative sentences are not always used to make statements. Notice that the context in which (1) and (2) might be uttered affects their interpretation. For example, if (1) was uttered with a rising intonation pattern it would become a question: My aunt likes books? Similarly, (2), while ostensibly a statement about the addressee not having closed the door, could, in a suitable context, be taken to be a directive (i.e. an order) to close the door. For example, if the speaker looks sternly from the addressee to the door, and then utters (2), the addressee is likely to interpret this as an order to close the door. Here too tone of voice makes all the difference. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

## 1.2 Interrogative Sentences

Interrogative sentences are normally used to ask questions:

(3) Can you see this? (4) Do you agree? (5) Will you dance with me?

(6) What did you eat? (7) Why did you leave? (8) How did you open the door?

(9) Do you want lasagna or spaghetti? (10) Is it red or is it blue? (11) Should I turn left or right?

The interrogatives in (3)–(4) will be referred to as yes/no interrogatives because they elicit either 'yes' or 'no' as answers, and to the interrogatives in (6)–(7) as open interrogatives or Wh-interrogatives because they can potentially elicit an infinite range of answers. Thus, in answer to (3), (4) and (5), there could be said 'yes' or 'no' (but not, say, 'Christmas Day'), and in answer to (6) we could say 'bacon and eggs', 'corn flakes', 'toast and jam', etc. (but not 'yes' or 'no'). In answer to (7) there could give a variety of reasons given. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

why the person left the party ('because I was tired', 'because I can't stand Tristram', etc.), and in (8) various explanations could be given of how the person has opened the door. The yes/no interrogatives are syntactically different from the open interrogatives in that they display inversion of the Subject with an auxiliary verb (see Section 3.4). The open interrogatives are characterised by the initial question words starting with the letters wh. These are called Wh-words. Notice that how is also considered a Wh-word. In (9), (10) and (11) there are what are called alternative interrogatives: the possible answers to such interrogatives are given in the way the question is asked. So, the possible answers to (9) are 'lasagna' and 'spaghetti', to (10) they are 'red' and 'blue', and the answers can be 'left' or 'right' to (11). As with the declaratives, there is no watertight one-to-one relationship

between syntactic form and the use this form might be put to. Thus, although the interrogatives in (3)–(11) are difficult to interpret other than as questions, there are situations in which interrogative sentences are not used to ask questions at all. The sentence in (12) is an example of a rhetorical question:

(12) How many times do I have to tell you not to lick your plate!

A parent shouting this at a child would not expect to get the answer ‘sixteen times’ (and if the child does give that answer it had better cover its ears). Sentence (12) is clearly an enjoiner not to lick plates. Similarly, if someone utters (13), it is not received and taken as a question enquiring about one’s ability to be quiet.

(13) Can you be quiet?

Instead, the person would take (36) to be a request (or order) to be quiet. Syntactically, (12) and (13) are interrogative (by virtue of the Subject–auxiliary inversion), but they have the import of directives. (Notice that in (13) please can be added, which is common in requests.) (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

### 1.3 Imperative Sentences

Imperative sentences are sentences that are normally interpreted as directives, i.e. someone is telling someone else to (not) do something:

(14) Go home. (15) Mind your own business. (16) Shut up. (17) Don’t eat that sandwich.

Notice that what syntactically characterises imperative sentences is the fact that they do not normally contain Subjects (an example of an exception is Don’t you start whingeing as well!), and that their verb is in the base form. As with the declarative and interrogative sentence types, sometimes imperatives do not receive the default directive interpretation.

Consider the sentence below:

(18) Take care of yourself.

If someone says this, the receiver is hardly likely to interpret it as an order to look after yourself, but rather as a wish of some sort. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

### 1.4 Exclamative Sentences

Exclamative sentences are often formed with an initial Wh-word, similarly to the open interrogatives:

(19) What a load of nonsense he talks! (20) How absolutely disgraceful he looks!

It should not be forgotten, that “how” is standardly also regarded as a Wh-word. Difference between Exclamative sentences and the interrogative ones is that in the former the Wh-word

usually functions as a modifying element inside a phrase (NP and AP respectively in the sentences above), whereas in the latter the Wh-word is usually an NP, as, for example, (6) shows. There are cases where the Wh-element is a Modifier in interrogative sentences too, but this modifying element then occupies a slightly different syntactic position. Compare (20) and (21):

(20) What book did he buy? Interrogative (not \*What a book did he buy?) (21) What a book he bought! Exclamative (not \*What book he bought!)

In (20) there is only one modifying element (what), whereas in (21) there are two, namely what and the determiner a. Exclamative sentences are used almost exclusively as exclamations. They can, however, also be questions, as B's response in (22) shows:

(22) A What an extraordinary lecturer Kate is! B What an extraordinary lecturer who is?

Additionally, A's exclamation could be taken to be making a statement. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

### 1.5 The Pragmatics of the Sentence Types

It is important to realise that the terms declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamative are syntactic labels that refer to sentence types that have certain syntactic characteristics (e.g. Subject–auxiliary inversion in the case of interrogatives, no Subject in the case of imperatives, etc.). The notions statement, question, directive and exclamation, by contrast, are pragmatic notions. Pragmatics is the study of the meaning of linguistic expressions in context. In other words, pragmatics is concerned with language use. With regard to each of the sentence types discussed above it has been observed that they all have a typical use. Thus Declaratives are typically used to make statements Interrogatives are typically used to ask questions Imperatives are typically used to issue directives, Exclamatives are **typically** used to utter exclamations. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

The word 'typically' has been highlighted because there is no one-to-one relationship between the sentence types and the uses that are made of them. When a closer look at questions is taken, one should be aware of the fact that this notion is used in its technical linguistic sense here. Questions need not always be syntactically interrogative. As was seen above, if a rising intonation contour is added to a declarative sentence a question results, as has happened in (23), the question version of (2):

(23) You haven't closed the door?

This last example is referred to as a yes/no question. A yes/no question is an utterance that has the force of a question and elicits a 'yes' or 'no' response. Its syntactic form can, but

need not be, interrogative. (23), then, is an example of a declarative sentence with the force, not of a statement, but that of a question. One must be careful to distinguish yes/no questions from yes/no interrogatives. The former need not be syntactically interrogative; the latter, by definition, always are. There are also open questions. These are utterances that have the force of questions which elicit a potentially infinite variety of answers. An example is (24), which might be uttered in disbelief at someone else having just said (1). (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)

(24) My aunt likes WHAT?

Notice that (24) is syntactically declarative, but pragmatically an open question.

Finally, there are also alternative questions:

(25) You want beer or kir?

This sentence is syntactically declarative (compare the alternative interrogative Do you want beer or kir?). It could be used in a situation in which a person hasn't quite heard what another person has said. For example speaker A might utter (26)a to which speaker B might respond with (26)b.

(26)a I would like some kir. b Sorry, I didn't catch that. You want beer or kir?

Again, (26) is syntactically declarative, as has just been seen, although pragmatically it is a question. (Aarts 2001, 58 – 62)



## 2 COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

Colloquial language is a style which belongs to the most problematic, unstable and difficult to define concepts in stylistics. (CzechEncy, n.d.)

It is a subjective style used in personal and private oral language expressions. It is usually used when one speaks spontaneously, among friends, and family or close workers environment. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512) It can also be characterized as dialect elements overlapping in various forms of sentence structure alternatives and in various quantities into the standard language structure. (ŠTOLC, 1956)

Being in constant development, colloquial style is the oldest style in every natural language and in comparison with other styles, it has the least stable form. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

### 2.1 Different views on colloquial language

In different periods and with different authors, one may encounter a different understanding of it; Opinions differ as to whether colloquial language should be considered as one of the basic functional styles. It is usually counted as one of the styles of speech that are not based on aesthetic intention. (CzechEncy, n.d.)

#### 2.1.1 First view

Probably the most common concept connects colloquial style with the area of ordinary everyday communication, with everyday communication, with the “functionally stylistic area of common communication” (Formánková and Jedlička, 1970), i.e. with speeches dominated by the functions “communicative”, “simply communicative”, “simply informative”. In this concept, it is also referred to as a simply communicative style, simply communicative style, commonly spoken style or commonly communicated style; it is a style of speeches (secondarily written) mainly spontaneous, unprepared, private, dialogical, situation-related etc. (CzechEncy, n.d.)

#### 2.1.2 Second view

The first conception is close to the concept that colloquial style interprets the concept of "conversationalism" as opposed to literacy in relation to the widespread number; the general professional public, but also many philologists and students of philological disciplines, intuitively advocate a broad and vague concept of conversationalism, the means of conversation, which includes everything they do not consider written; what is connected for them with everyday life, mundaneness, sometimes even decline, stylistic lowness, ie also

means of general Czech, slang, etc .; what does not reach a high level of style (prepared written communications). For this concept, resp. for connections, the term colloquial style would probably suit. (CzechEncy, n.d.)

### **2.1.3 Third view**

For other authors, colloquial language is firmly connected with the stylistic layer of colloquial means and with the "unforced, colloquial (conversational) form of formal language" used by the holders of formal language in a normal call, for example with conversational Czech. In this sense, situational conditionality and the connection to a certain sphere of communication is again profiled: it is more of a style of spoken speech in semi-official, public or semi-public situations. Then with colloquial style we move on the edge of literary language, n. at most in the space between literary and non-literary. In that case, however, the term for the stylistic characteristics of ordinary everyday communication would be missing, in most areas it is probably mostly unwritten. (CzechEncy, n.d.)

### **2.1.4 Fourth view**

Based on the conflicting understanding of colloquial style a proposal was made to understand this style as a certain "central stylistic quality, suitable for ordinary speaking (simple communication), with no ambition to define oneself in style either towards refined refinement or towards unreflected rudeness" (Čmejrková 2013, 286–289); as a style of informal, but relatively cultivated expressions, which are not evaluated negatively, they do not use the lowest stylistic registers (e.g. vulgarisms), but are not limited to the means of standard (or "colloquial") Czech. (CzechEncy, n.d.)

### **2.1.5 Fifth view**

Some authors consider colloquial style a conversational style. Havránek (1932, 32–84), first used the term "functional colloquial language", later Havránek (1942, 409 - 416) switched to the term functional style and the term colloquial style (conversational). Jelínek (1966, 107 - 117) considers whether to consider the conversational and conversational style as synonyms, n. To reserve the conversational style for special situations of social conversation. This second, narrower conception of the conversational style is probably more appropriate: the conversational style is then tied to a specific sphere of communication, to conversation in the concept, it is a style of spoken (and written) speech in situations of self-serving, contact social "talk to talk". (CzechEncy, n.d.)

## **2.2 Features of colloquial language**

Colloquial language can be identified by any categories, of which the main ones are listed below as a little guide how to recognize it.

### **2.2.1 Conversational character**

The most important feature is spoken character of the language (“orality”), which is preserved even in the written form. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

### **2.2.2 Orality**

Amongst other typical features are those that correspond with the acoustic elements – intonation and/or context > word order. The hegemony of the intonation component in oral expression also has consequences in shifting the meaning of modal elements of an utterance (irony, opposite meaning). (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

### **2.2.3 Private character**

Colloquial language is very much influenced by the environment in which it is used – private or intimate environment. (it has an effect on it). This goes hand in hand with looseness and inattention in communicating, even extending into laxity, which can result in inaccurate and erroneous language. The inaccuracy can be observed in inappropriate and incorrect use of a non-suitable element of formal language or use of dialect or foreign words. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

The private character of colloquial language is also shown in the selection of elements and their arrangement in a sentence – in lexicon, grammar and context. This feature is usually personalized because it also influences pronunciation of smaller units like words. Usually, violation of the standard inventory of phonemes occur, causing mixing of those belonging to formal or literary language with colloquial ones. Amongst these violations non-compliance of rhythmic structure or omitting some letters can be found. Private character can also cause dialect or slang elements intrude into the language. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

### **2.2.4 Situational character**

The situational and private character of colloquial language are closely related. Every private conversation is anchored into a particular situation which is well-known to all the participant of the conversation. This also influences the stylization and wording of linguistic expression, which can to a large extent be combined with non-lingual elements. Consequently, an

impression can appear that some sentence elements had a few parts amputated. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

One of the indicators of situational character is selection of verb tenses. In other styles, simple or perfect tenses are preferred, dominant. In colloquial style of language, there is a timeline and principle in choosing of tenses, nevertheless, frequent tense changes are one of the basic features of situational character of colloquial language. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

Privacy and conversational character make speaker's expression certainty and confidence, which results in confident, spontaneous and naturally uncontrolled speech with potentially low language level. Univerbation, which is a gradual process of combining a fixed expression of several words into a new single word, can also be observed. Some English examples can be listed here, for example word "gonna", created from "going to", "wanna" from "want to" or "dunno" from "don't know". (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

### **2.2.5 Expressivity**

During each spoken expression, one's personal properties are shown, either intentionally or not. Usually there is way more effort made when one is trying to hide or suppress one's personal link to the utterance than otherwise. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

Private environment of a conversation generally does not obstruct any manifestations of one's personal traits, which results in expressivity being one of the primary aspects of colloquial language. The expressivity is also a consequence of laxity and brevity of the interpretation – instead of longer and more cautious circumlocution used in public impersonal conversations, colloquial language uses words and terms that are more austere, straightforward and pertinent, yet more expressive too. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

Among other instruments in the colloquial style's inventory there are diminutives, augmentatives, hypocorisms, abusive language, nicknames, vulgarisms and laudations. Interjections also belong into this inventory. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

In terms of sentence structure, expressivity manifests itself through variety of sentence modal types. While in educational, journalistic and administrative style interrogative, optative or exclamatory sentences are rather rare, in colloquial language their ratio to declarative sentences rises significantly. Inverted word order is also considered an expressive element of colloquial language, for example moving of the rheme to the beginning of a sentence, therefore replacing theme. The closer to the beginning of the sentence the rheme is, the higher the expressivity of the sentence is. (Mistrík 1997, 499 - 512)

### **3 PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIMENT**

Experiment is a research method which must have several basic elements. It must contain at least two similar groups of people operating under different conditions. These conditions are strictly controlled by the experimenter and at the end of the experiment their effect in both groups is evaluated. The term "experiment" is used as an abbreviated term instead of the full term "experimental method". An experiment is a research method and its power lies in the possibility of manipulating variables. The experimenter systematically intervenes the variables, which allows him to reveal deeper causal connections than descriptive methods, such as questionnaire, scaling, testing, content analysis, etc. The second feature of the experiment is that the experimental procedure uses a variety of data collection methods. (already mentioned questionnaire, scaling, tests, etc.). The experiment is therefore a research method that synthetically uses the possibilities of other research methods. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

#### **3.1 Basic terminology**

The people who participate in the experiment are called subjects. The selection of subjects is always made according to certain characteristics. A trait is a defined property. Traits can be age, gender, school success, etc. Random selection is a way of selecting subjects in which each member of a given population (say 4th graders) has the same probability of being selected. Randomness is understood here in the mathematical sense of the word. An experimental plan is a way of setting up an experiment. An experimental group is a group of subjects in which an experimental operation is performed. The control group is a group of subjects in which no experimental action is performed. Pretest is an entrance test given to subjects before experimental operation. Posttest is a final test given to subjects after experimental work. A variable is an element of an experiment that can change, take on different values or properties. An independent variable is a variable that the researcher manipulates in the experimental group and, conversely, leaves untouched in the control group. It is the cause that results in a consequence called a dependent variable. The dependent variable is considered to be the result of the influence of the independent variable. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

#### **3.2 Experiment model**

The principle of the experiment is shown in the following scheme:

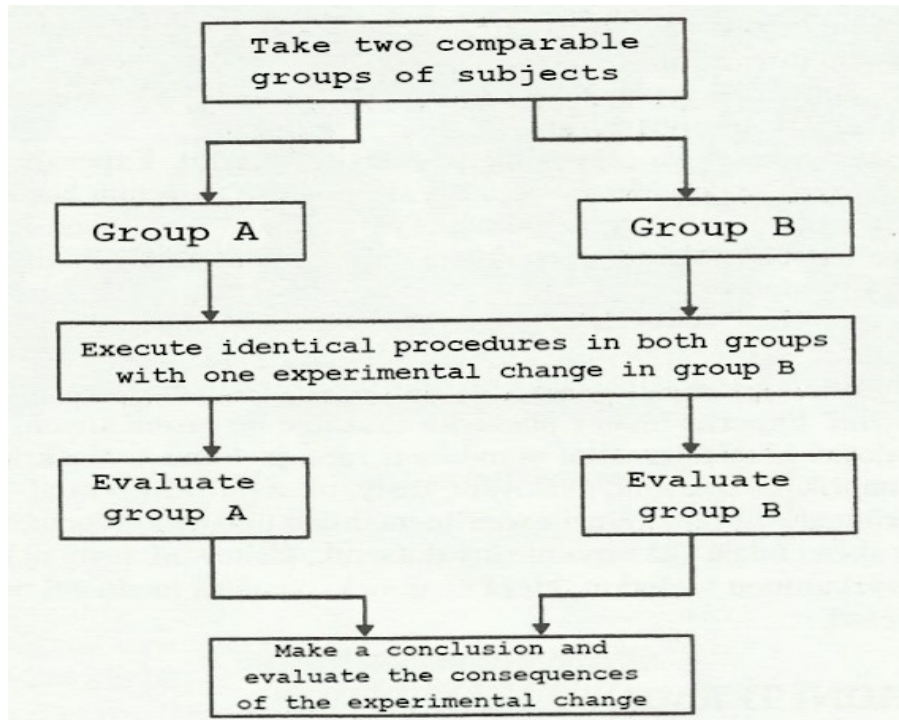


Figure 1

(Gavora 2000, 126)

Take two comparable groups of subjects

Group A Group B

Execute identical procedures in both groups with one experimental change in group B

Evaluate group A Evaluate group B

Make a conclusion and evaluate the consequences of the experimental change

The experimental method uses a special term to indicate an experimental change - it is called an independent variable. In the previous example, the team variable was an independent variable. Furthermore, the experimental method uses the designation of the consequence of an independent variable (for example what was caused by the independent variable). This is a dependent variable. In the previous example, the dependent variable was determined in two indicators - the level of knowledge and the level of skills of students. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

### 3.3 Subjects of the experiment

The experiment is organized so that the groups at the beginning of the experiment are as equal as possible. This means that they would have similar properties that significantly affect the dependent variable. If these groups were not equivalent, the differences between the groups in the dependent variable would probably be caused not only by the influence of the

independent variable, but also by the differences between the properties of the two groups. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

The experiment would yield skewed results. The features (properties) that should the control and experimental groups be equal in are, for example, age, gender, achievement, level of motivation, performance in a didactic test, IQ, etc. The researcher selects such groups that have close values in these traits. If whole classes with similar data are not available, it groups pupils into new classes so that their level is similar. "Similar data" means that it is the same distribution of levels of the selected trait (e.g. approximately the same number of high IQs, approximately the same number of average IQs and approximately the same number of low IQs, approximately the same number of boys and girls, etc.) Selection of traits that the researcher must control is sometimes quite complicated and several errors appear in research practice. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

### **3.4 The Hawthorne effect**

The experimental method is exceedingly difficult to organize. The experimenter must face several pitfalls that could adversely affect the results. One of these negative factors is the Hawthorne effect. It is named after the electrical equipment factory in Hawthorne, near Chicago. Research was done at this factory to find out the effect of improving workshop lighting on workers' performance. The workers worked in two groups, which were equivalent, and which worked under otherwise identical working conditions. The only difference was the intensity of the lighting. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

In the control group, the illumination intensity was maintained as before, while in the experimental group the illumination was more intense. For some time, the results were consistent with the hypothesis that better lighting leads to better work performance. Later, however, surprising findings began to multiply. Contrary to expectations, the performance of the control group also increased. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

On the other hand, when the experimental group reduced the lighting intensity, its performance remained unchanged. This was followed by a period when experimenters increased and decreased the lighting intensity of the workshops at random. It turned out that the performance did not depend on the intensity of lighting. It increased whenever experimenters made a change in the experimental or control group (change in lighting or change in group composition). The workers were not so much affected by the experimental work as by the fact that they took part in the experiment at all. This increased their interest and work motivation. According to this event, the name originated the Hawthorn effect. It is

an effect caused by subjects knowing that they are being watched and behaving differently than researchers expect. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

Research in Hawthorn lasted from 1924 to 1934 and is one of the most extensive and in-depth experimental studies. The researchers gradually examined all the important influences on the performance of the workers, using not only the experiment but also other research methods. The findings they gained helped explain many mechanisms influencing subject behaviour. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

The Hawthorne effect is also strong in education research. The presence of researchers at school always arouses the curiosity of students and teachers, and they then intentionally, but also unintentionally, change their behaviour and activities in an effort to prove themselves better. This often leads to an increase in performance in an unexpected group. In medical research, the side effects of a control group are eliminated by giving subjects a product that does not contain an effective drug - placebo. The effect caused by a patient's belief that he is being treated is called a placebo reaction. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)

### **3.5 Overall evaluation of the experimental method**

The experimental method is one of the most demanding research methods. We see its difficulty when we compare it with the method of observation. The experimental method uses in fact the observation method and other methods, but in addition it introduces an experimental change (independent variable), the action of which must be controlled by the researcher. The key issue in the experimental method is the selection (compilation) of research groups and the control of the dependent variable. On the other hand, the experimental method makes it possible to go far beyond the possibilities of observation or other descriptive methods. While observation makes it possible to describe phenomena, the experimental method makes it possible to find out why the phenomena behave in the detected way. The strength of the experimental method is in revealing causal connections. (Gavora 2000, 125 - 133)



## 4 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis deals with the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used. It commenced from work in different disciplines in the 1960s and early 1970s, including linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. Discourse analysts study language in use: written texts of all kinds, and spoken data, from conversation to highly institutionalised forms of talk. Its intention is to understand how language is operated in real life situations. (McCarthy 1991, 5)

When one wants to carry a discourse analysis, focus could be taken on those areas:

- The purposes and effects of different types of language
- Customs and conventions in communication of a culture
- Way of communication of principles, beliefs and assumptions
- Language relations to its social, political and historical context

Discourse analysis is a frequent qualitative research method in bountiful humanities and social science disciplines, including linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology and cultural studies. (Scribbr 2019)

### 4.1 Use of discourse analysis

Providing a discourse analysis means examining how language operates and how meaning can be constituted in various social contexts. This can be implemented to any instance of written or spoken language, as well as non-verbal aspects of communication, for example tone and gestures. (Scribbr 2019)

Various materials can be analysed for discourse analysis. Among most suitable sources are:

- Books, newspapers and periodicals
- Marketing material, such as brochures and advertisements
- Business and government documents
- Websites, forums, social media posts and comments
- Interviews and conversations

Analysing those types of discourse help researchers to gain an understanding of various social groups and their ways of communication. (Scribbr 2019)

## 4.2 Differences between discourse analysis and other methods

Discourse analysis gives priority to the contextual meaning of language, unlike the linguistic approaches and techniques, which concentrate solely on the rules of the use of language. (Scribbr 2019)

Discourse analysis focuses on the social aspects of communication and the means used by people to accomplish different effects (e.g. to build trust, to create doubt, to evoke emotions, or to manage conflict). (Scribbr 2019)

Instead of targeting smaller units of language, such as sounds, words or phrases, discourse analysis's aim is to study larger portions of language, for example entire conversations, texts, or collections of texts. The selected sources can be analysed on multiple levels. (Scribbr 2019)

## 4.3 Detailed examples of discourse analysis

### Discourse analysis

Level of communication	Analysed units
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Words and phrases can be analysed for ideological associations, formality, and euphemistic and metaphorical content.
<b>Grammar</b>	The way that sentences are constructed (e.g. verb tenses, active or passive construction, and the use of imperatives and questions) can reveal aspects of intended meaning.
<b>Structure</b>	The structure of a text can be analysed for how it creates emphasis or builds a narrative.
<b>Genre</b>	Texts can be analysed in relation to the conventions and communicative aims of their genre (e.g. political speeches or tabloid newspaper articles).
<b>Non-verbal communication</b>	Non-verbal aspects of speech, such as tone of voice, pauses, gestures, and sounds like “um”, can reveal aspects of a speaker's intentions, attitudes, and emotions.
<b>Conversational codes</b>	The interaction between people in a conversation, such as turn-taking, interruptions and listener response, can reveal aspects of cultural conventions and social roles.

(Scribbr 2019)

## 4.4 How to conduct discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is a qualitative and interpretive method of analysing texts (in contrast to more systematic methods like content analysis). Interpretations that are made are based on both the details of the material itself and on contextual knowledge. (McCarthy)

There are various approaches and techniques that can be used to operate discourse analysis. Nevertheless, the processes below summarize the basic steps needed to follow. (Scribbr 2019)

### 4.4.1 Defining the research question and selecting the content of analysis

When doing discourse analysis, a good beginning is to come with a clearly defined research question. Once this question is made known, a range of material needs to be chosen that is appropriate to answer it. (Scribbr 2019)

Discourse analysis is a procedure that can be implemented both to large volumes of material and to smaller samples, depending on the intentions and timescale of your research.

**Example:** The student wants to study the process of a particular regime transforming from dictatorship to democracy and its impact on the public relations rhetoric of businesses in the country. The student decides to inspect the mission statements and marketing material of the 10 largest companies within five years of the regime change. (Scribbr 2019)

### 4.4.2 Gathering information and theory on the context

Second step is to establish the social and historical context in which the material was produced and designated to be received. Gathering factual details of when and where the content was conceived, who the author is, who published it, and whom it was disseminated to is another necessary advance. (Scribbr 2019)

As well as understanding the real-life context of the discourse, a literary review on the topic can also be conducted and a theoretical framework could be constructed to guide the analysis. (Scribbr 2019)

The student researches factual information on the politics and history of the country and on the businesses he/she is studying. Also research theory on democratic transitions and the relationship between government and business is studied. (Scribbr 2019)

### 4.4.3 Analysing the content for themes and patterns

This step requires accurate examination of several elements of the material – words, sentences, paragraphs, and overall structure – and associating them to attributes, themes, and patterns relevant to the research question. (Scribbr 2019)

The student analyses the picked material for wording and statements that indicate or relate to authoritarian and democratic political ideologies, including attitudes toward authority, liberal values, and popular opinion. (Scribbr 2019)

#### **4.4.4 Reviewing the results and deducing conclusions**

Once the particular attributes have been determined to elements of the material, results are reflected on to examine the function and meaning of the language used. Considering the analysis in relation to the broader context that was established earlier is needed so conclusions can be deduced, that answer the research question. (Scribbr 2019)

The analysis shows that the material published before the change of the regime used language that accentuates the quality and necessity of its services and products, while the material published after the shift to a democratic regime emphasized the needs and values of the consumer. The student compares the results with his/her research on the ideology and rhetoric of the political regimes and ascertains that the shifting political context shaped the communication strategies of national businesses. (Scribbr 2019)

## **II. ANALYSIS**

## 5 SUBJECTS

There were two groups of (mostly) Czech-born students participating in this experiment. All those students were asked to tell a story from their life, an experience or an unusual adventure. There were eighteen students in the group A and 17 students in the group B. Other proceedings went according to the experiment scheme described by E. Vokell (can be seen on page 21 of this bachelor thesis) – students from both groups were asked to share a story again after approximately two months. Conditions for group A were identical, whilst group B undertook psychological training to improve

B undertook special psychological training, target of which was to lower the stress and improve the speaking skills.

Hypothesis of the experiment states that spontaneous utterances of students who engaged in the psychological training ameliorated, especially in the area of fluency, structure of the sentences and lower usage of filler words

### 5.1 Pretest, group A

There are few extracts from the group, which did not undertake the psychological training.

#### 5.1.1 Student 02a pretest

Basically, when I was like 6 years old I went to the nearest forest we have in our village with my father to do „hmm“ ... mushroom hunt. Yeah, so we were there for like 3 hours already and I kinda got lost and „hmm“ I've got hit by many many bees. So, my whole body was covered in red and „uhm“ it was really itchy, I felt sick and I, I cried, „uhmm“ yea I was six. ... Then my dad found me and „uhm“ he took me home, he bought me all the candies, he covered me in blanket and these kind of stuff and „uhm“ and he already knew that I, I „uhm“ i would like to, I would like to...taste the, I would like try to taste the coffee for the first time when I was like six but I already liked the coffee because I once took one sip from my older sister and „uhm“ yeah so..so he prepared me a cup of coffee and „uhm“ i stopped crying and I felt really better like 2 days after.

#### 5.1.2 Student 04a pretest

So I have a story that happened to me almost, more than a year ago. I have ...err... an internet friend and we've been writing for a long time. We had same interests and so we always find the topic we can talk about and once ...err... she texted me she drives around my place so we decided we would meet in the town. And ...err... we firstly strolled down the town ...err... we didn't know what to do, we just talked about everything and ...err... then we decided we

would go to the music shop. Err... we both played the guitar at the... at the time so we just went there ...err... we were looking at the instruments but we were amazed by the bass guitar. And so we asked if we can try it and we jammed a little, we played and we didn't notice there was a man. Err... that man told us we were quite good and ...err... he introduced himself as a bass guitar ...err... teacher. And he asked us if we don't want to go to his lessons. But she was from the other side of the republic but I was really impressed by the man, also by the instrument. And so I decided I would get a bass guitar and ...err... I started to attending the lessons as well. And now I'm there for almost a year, I'm still attending them and I already played a few concerts as well.

## **5.2 Posttest, group A**

### **5.2.1 Student 02a posttest**

Well, it was a second day of a school and we as a group of friends decided to go out, hang out and have a beer or two. (ehm) Situation was great, we had a lot of fun and drinks just wouldn't (wouldn't) stop coming. Weather was not ideal but (ehm) someone pointed out that (pause) we should take our shoes off so we did on a walk home. As we were walking through a Lenin's park in Banská Bystrica, we met this homeless couple of woman and man and we started (ehr) a quick conversation with them. One of us, his name is Erik, he had approximately 10 minutes straight conversation with homeless woman and (ehm) as we were leaving the park he accidentally, i don't know how, gave this woman a farewell kiss, so we would make fun of him for atleast like (pause, because i was thinking of an exact period of time) one year and we wouldn't stop reminding him of this situation and (ehm) so he would buy us a lot of beer and say that we are not supposed to make fun of him because of that he was drunk but we never stopped.

### **5.2.2 Student 04a posttest**

... So this story happened to me... the last summer... There was concert in the village where my grandparents live and we decided we would go there with my friends... So we met at my grandparent's and then we went to the village... We stopped in a bar and have some beers before and then we went to the concert which was on the football stadium. And as it started it was really nice and we were all excited... we sang the songs and it was really nice... After the concert we even met the musicians, we talked to them and had some photos and we remember the day until today and we had some fun so it was nice.

### 5.3 Pretest, group B

Examples of utterances of the students from the second group, which undertook the psychological training.

#### 5.3.1 Student 07b pretest

Eergh, so my story happened this summer. Eergh, we were on holiday with my mother, my godmother and cousin, so four women in Greece. Eergh, the day we were supposed to go back home, eergh, the airport in Rhodos had some technical issues, so the ... eergh, ergh, issues with terminals, so they were filling, ehm, tickets by hands. Eergh, the, ehm, the flights were delayed, ergh, maybe for hours and in that I could say, ehm ... ehm, big, ergh, airport, there was, ergh, a crowd of people of different, ergh, cultures, religions, and you know, ergh, there are, ergh, news full of ... full of attacks and, ehm, it was very disturbing and we were kind of nerv ... nervous, 'cause, ergh, the people were very angry, so, yeah, it was disturbing. But fortunately, ergh, nothing happened, but our flight was ... was delayed for five hours, so it was kind of uncon ... uncomfortable I would say and it was at night, so ... it was another ...

#### 5.3.2 Student 10b pretest

Ok. Can I start start? Ok so „ehm“ I would like to tell you „ehm“ something about my experience when I was on brigade at swimming pool this summer. „ehm“ It was my first brigade so I was so excited that „ehm“ what it be like and „ehm“ what people will I meet and „ehm“ a place, I don't know. „ehm“ So as a first day it was so fantastic I was so surprised that it's „ehm“ really really good but „ehm“ than „ehm“ a couple days later I realised that how things going on here and so on but „ehm“ that's not what I want to „ehm“ speak about. I would like to „ehm“ tell you something about the people that I met here and „ehm“ I have to tell that some days it was so so fun there. „ehm“ We have a man that everyday comes and „ehm“ buy a cooked corn, so everytime I saw him I knew „ehm“ what it will be. „ehm“ He was so nice and „ehm“ he everytime „ehm“ came with a new joke. „ehm“ Than „ehm“ than „ehm“ comes comes an old couple and the old man „ehm“ asked me if he can get a cucumber on fried dough. I was so surprised that if he is kidding or some something like that but he wasn't he was so serious and I just say ok why not and than it started. „ehm“ I realised that people have so different tastes and „ehm“ they have different and interesting „ehm“ excap. excaptions. „ehm“ Than we also has a women who who asked me if I can mix her a beer with rapsberry „ehm“ juice. It was too ex. ehm too „ehm“ surprising and, but she likes



it so, but also I „ehm“ I meet people from different countries so it was a great experience, because „ehm“ I met people from Britain, Spain „ehm“ I think Sweden and „ehm“ it was interesting to talk to him to them in English or so... I don't know. It can be the end.

### **5.3.3 Student 18b pretest**

So my speaking is about my American vacation. I have to admit it was big adventure for me. Because our flight lasted 10 hours and we had a lot of unexpected turbulences and we were landing. We hired the car and we go to San Diego. I didn't know what expected from San Diego. Because most of american film made in New York, Brooklyn, LA but I am very polite because San Diego was beautiful and there is a lot of beach with for example seals and I have never seen seals before than and "...“ America have a lot of beautiful landscapes for example Grand Canyon, Sequoia park, Yosemite park and etc. And we decided to camp and I am not keen on camping. So I gave a chance but immediately first night I heard very strange sounds and we found out this was coyotes so I decided to all times sleep in car. And next stop was San Francisco I expected I think what much more from this city because in film is look likes very romantic and beautiful city but it was horrible. The weather was cold and damp and there was a lot of homelesses and the fares was very expensive. So that's "...“ and last "...“ NO! The next stop was Las Vegas. This is the artificially created in desert so I think it was about just casino and alcohol, drugs and this things. So when you are not 21 years. You don't do nothing for example like me. And the last stop was LA it was a beautiful and very interested city. We tried for example bicycle in Santa Monica, Venice Beach and we just soak up the sun and I think that's all.

## **5.4 Posttest, group B**

There are examples of the experimental group which undertook the psychological training.

### **5.4.1 Student 07b posttest**

Ehm ... So, when I was in third grade of the secondary school and two things, ehm, I need to say, eh, at first. First one is I'm not really a skirt girl, I don't wear them usually. But that day I had skirt. And second thing, it was a boy school and the boys ... boy class, so, eh, we were just three girls in the class, eh, later only two and the rest of the class were boys. And at that moment, ehm, we were only, eh, four of us in the s ... in the class, because it happened during, eh, lunch break, so you know everyone was smoking behind the school or in front of the school and I was sitting and, ehm, two boys were sitting behind me and one boy was, eh, right across the class like Martin now and I was turned so my legs were in his direction, you

know. And I was talking to my, ehm, classmates behind me and swinging on the chair. Bad idea. I think you know what happened next. I lost balance and I fell even with the chair. And normally when you fall, ehm, with ... in a skirt you are trying to keep legs together, but I spread them widely and ... and the boy, ehm, across the class were looking like ... like this and boys behind me were laughing, of course. But even worse thing, that, ehm, I was like stucked on the ... that floor, because, I don't know if you can imagine it, but, I ... with one hand I was pulling the skirt, ehm, down to my legs and with the second one I was pressing the chair, eh, you know, to my legs to hide that part of my body and, eh, I couldn't move without showing something even more, eh, so I was lying there, laughing at myself and thinking about how should I, eh, stand up. And do you think the boys, behind me, helped me? Of course not. Instead, one of them, ehm, started to yell, like this: „Take a picture. Quickly, Laci take a picture before she stands up. Take a picture.“ And I said to myself: „Hell no.“ So I, ehm, so with all the dignity I have left I quickly stood up, unfortunately I, eh, showed everything but only for a moment. And, ehm, well, they don't have my photo, but teda, photo of me lying on the floor, but it was a hot topic, they were reminding me this, eh, till the end of the school and actually the boy sitting across the class were telling to everyone that I had no underwear and that, eh, I wasn't shaved down there, but I swear it's not ... it's not true.

#### **5.4.2 Student 10b posttest**

I love travelling. „ehm“ I have already visited „ehm“ France, Germany, Italy, Lichtenstein, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria and at least Norway so as a story I choose a trip to this beautiful country of fjords. „ehm“ I was so excited, because it was always my dream to visit „ehm“ one of the northern countries and „ehm“ during the holiday after the winter semester, we decided to visit Norway. „ehm“ We travelled as a group of six members by plane from Vienna to Bergen, that is the second largest city here and we lived in the oldest part called Bryggen. „ehm“ When I saw the enormous mountains just from the plane I was amazed of that beauty and after the plane landed „ehm“ we moved to our accommodation by bus and the owner was already visite „ehm“ was already waiting for us. His name was John and „ehm“ it was a beautiful house on the top of the hill and Joe John was very nice. He also recommended us „ehm“ some of the attractions and also some bars and restaurants and a few markets, where to go shopping for lower prices, because Norway was a bit expensive. So during our trip we visited the two highest mountains „ehm“ Ulriken and Floyen „ehm“ Ulriken is the highest and „ehm“ we could have a wonderful view to the

snowy mountains and from Floyen we could see the whole city. It was so beautiful. „ehm“ Then John also recommended us the Bergen Aquarium, where we saw a seal show and there was also a seal that could separate plastic waste, that was amazing. We also saw some penguins, otters, crocodiles, snakes and many species of fishes. So it was a very beautiful experience, but what I liked the most were the people, because there was no rushing for anything, everybody was so nice and helpful and „ehm“ they start a conversation even though they didn't know us. And „ehm“ also when we got lost they were willing to go with us even though it was on the other side of the city so it was incredible for me, because here in Slovakia we have just a few, who would help you if you got lost and a real example happened after we came back to Slovakia and „ehm“ we got lost in the old city of Bratislava, so of course we asked „ehm“ for a help where to go and „ehm“ we stopped a man on the street who just walked away and he just said that he can't help us, so I realised that I'm at home. But „ehm“ it was a fantastic trip and I would like to go back and see more from this beautiful country and I recommend that if you have a chance to travel somewhere just take it and enjoy it, because it's amazing to visit the other parts of the world.

#### **5.4.3 Student 18b posttest**

This story is about my bus accident. It (It) happened last week near to old Tesco in Nitra. Ehm two people were injured. Yes ! Because my or our bus driver wasn't going too fast but I think he didn't count (calculate) his distance and he didn't catch to brake the bus. So he was very nervous and angry because two people was (were) injured and the bonnet was destroyed and we didn't have spare transport. So later policemen (police) and ambulance came and bus driver got fee (fine) from policeman and these two people was (were) or had care (treatment) from some nurse (nurses). And I think we had a big luck because ehm everything fare (fared) well and nobody had some serious injury (injuries). And maybe one good thing was the bus driver got (a) refund from fare tickets. So... I think that's all.

## 6 HYPOTHESIS

The assumption of this hypothesis is that a student undergoing a special psychological training to ameliorate his or her speaking skills and lower his or her nervousness when speaking foreign language, it will positively affect the sentence structure and fluency of the speech, reduce the use of filler words and using unfinished sentences.

Students in the group A had the same conditions both times they were speaking. Both times they were asked to tell a story or experience from the top of their head, without any preparation. Students of the other group (group B) had the independent variable applied on them – they undertook special psychological course described above. The hypothesis presumes that this course lowers student's stress. This will lead to his or her calmer interpretation in generally calmer inner atmosphere which presumably resolves into composed and cohesive expression and talking.

The sentences of students from group B would contain much less filler words in the posttest, while sentences of students from group A would presumably remain on similar count of those words. According to the hypothesis, there should be no major differences between group A's pretest and posttest composition, sentence length, sentence structure and their filler words count.

On the other hand, a significant amelioration in all the factors mentioned above is expected in posttest of students from group B.

## **7 EXAMINED PARAMETERS**

### **7.1 Length of sentences**

When talking spontaneously, students in both groups either generate short and simple sentences, or longer ones with slightly ruffled structure – this is visible in the sentence “So, my whole body was covered in red and „uhm“ it was really itchy, I felt sick and I, I cried, „uhmm“ yea I was six.” by student 02a’s pretest and in this sentence “And ...err... we firstly strolled down the town ...err... we didn't know what to do, we just talked about everything and ...err... then we decided we would go to the music shop” by student 04a, also in the pretest.

### **7.2 Completeness of sentences**

The sentences in spontaneous utterances are often not clearly finished. As students try to recall all the events and occurrences that happened, they sometimes let the previous sentence unfinished or not clearly finished. The narration then often ends up as series of notes, not clearly cohesive and linked together. This is clearly visible at the utterance of student 04 from group A.

### **7.3 Sentence structure**

When spontaneously speaking, one does usually not think much about the sentence structure, which can be visible in all the utterances.

There is also an overuse of filler words like “err”, “uhm”, “uh”, “ehm”, “hmm” and “like” in both groups in pretest and posttest alike.

## CONCLUSION

The hypothesis of this analysis was that when being psychologically trained, students achieve better results, while those who did not undertake the training remained on the level they showed in the pretest.

There can be progress observed in almost all the students' posttest utterances. Some students' performances got better, but others might even seem to worsen a bit.

Therefore, it can be stated, that psychological training needs to be more thorough and profound to leave thorough impression. Otherwise the posttest results are very individual and it depend more on the student's abilities.

This might have been result of students' stress and the Hawthorne effect could have also influenced their performance too. That would mean that these students' utterances were affected by simply knowing that you are being watched, listened to and examined.

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1