THE INFLUENCE OF EFL TEACHER COGNITION ON GRAMMAR TEACHING IN SLOVAK LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

VPLYV PEDAGOGICKÉHO MYSLENIA UČITEĽA ANGLIČTINY NA VÝUČBU GRAMATIKY V NIŽŠOM SEKUNDÁRNOM VZDELÁVANÍ NA SLOVENSKU

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Abstract

This research study features interpretative research carried out among five EFL teachers in the context of grammar teaching in Slovak lower secondary education. The study is based on qualitative methodology (Grounded theory), utilising in-depth interviews and unstructured observation as the main research tools in accordance with the methodological triangulation. The findings revealed that teachers' classroom practices are significantly influenced by teachers' beliefs and attitudes about grammar teaching. These practices are congruent with teachers' cognitions (mainly beliefs and attitudes). The research subjects perceive grammar as an important part of foreign language proficiency. However, they realize it cannot take the crucial role in developing overall communicative competence.

Keywords: *language teacher cognition, English as a foreign language (EFL), English grammar teaching, Grounded theory, in-depth interview, a paradigm model.*

Abstrakt

Autorka vedeckej štúdie prezentuje výsledky výskumu realizovaného v skupine piatich kvalifikovaných učiteliek angličtiny ako cudzieho jazyka v kontexte výučby gramatiky v nižšom sekundárnom vzdelávaní na Slovensku. Vedecká štúdia je založená na uplatnení kvalitatívnej paradigmy skúmania prostredníctvom Zakotvenej teórie, pričom autorka využila ako výskumný nástroj hĺbkové interview, ktoré bolo vzhľadom k triangulácii doplnené neštruktúrovaným pozorovaním. Výsledky poukazujú na to, že vyučovacie činnosti výskumných subjektov sú vo výraznej miere ovplyvnené ich presvedčením a individuálnym postojom k výučbe gramatiky. Tieto činnosti sú kongruentné s ich pedagogickým myslením (predovšetkým presvedčením a postojom), pričom gramatiku vnímajú ako dôležitú súčasť ovládania cudzieho jazyka, avšak zároveň sú si vedomé, že gramatika nemôže zohrávať jedinú kľúčovú úlohu pri rozvíjaní celkovej komunikačnej kompetencie.

Kľúčové slová: *pedagogické myslenie učiteľa angličtiny, angličtina ako cudzí jazyk, výučba gramatiky angličtiny, zakotvená teória, hĺbkové interview, paradigmatický model.*

Introduction – English grammar teaching in lower secondary education in Slovakia

Generally, teaching and learning (English) grammar is an ongoing issue that has been dominating the field of language education for ages. Recent reviews of the professional literature have attempted to sort out the major approaches to teaching grammar in the language classroom (Batstone, 1994; Brown, 2001; Cullen, 2001; Ellis, 2006; Hlava, 2015; Johnson, 1996; Lojová, 2019, 2016, 2015; Newby, 2006; Scrivener, 2011; Thornbury, 1999). Different views of theorists and practitioners take into consideration a representation of different teaching methods and approaches viewing the status of grammar within each of them dealing with, for instance, inductive versus deductive approaches to grammar teaching, the functional-notional approach to grammar teaching, the application of the Presentation-Practice-Production Model (PPP) of grammar teaching, teaching grammar in situational contexts or following task-based language teaching (TBLT), not omitting the Johnson Model of teaching grammar as a skill. The Pendulum Metaphor (applied to the history of language teaching) can also be applied to grammar teaching.

We have seen a pendulum swing in grammar teaching setting off from a structural view of language, i.e. language is a linguistic system made up of structural rules and vocabulary (the well-established Grammar-Translation Method and its many variants, e.g. Audio-lingual Method) through the functional view of language where language is perceived as a linguistic system as well as a means for accomplishing goals, to an interactional view of language where language is considered a communicative tool to maintain social relations (e.g. Communicative language teaching, particularly the Deep-end Approach to CLT which is based on the belief that grammar is acquired unconsciously during performance in communicative situations, so it is considered useless to teach grammar explicitly). However, educational researchers, scholars, linguists as well as language teachers claim that the time of packaged solutions of methods for language teaching is over. Littlewood (2004, p. 325) notes that "the search for the right fixed method has largely given way to the search for a more flexible framework of principles and procedures." With regard to this, Ellis (2006, p. 103) claims he does not believe (and does not think the research demonstrates) "there is just one preferred approach to teaching grammar. The acquisition of the grammatical system of a L2 is a complex process and almost certainly can be assisted best by a variety of approaches." Therefore, language teachers need to experiment in their classrooms taking into consideration the linguistic and psychological aspects of ELT, learners' variables and individual differences as well as the socio-cultural conditions influencing language learning.

Drawing on the long-lasting tradition of English grammar teaching in Slovak educational context, it has to be emphasized that Slovak teachers of English rely on focus-on-formS approach, which views language as being divided into isolated linguistic parts and taught in an ordered manner through explicit explanation of grammar rules and immediate error correction. Contrarily, focus-on-form approach is a type of grammar teaching in which an instructional activity is intended to make language learners pay attention to linguistic forms during meaningful communication with the emphasis placed on meaningful context. Anyway, the most frequently applied form of grammar teaching in Slovakia is based on explicit grammar instruction followed by intensive controlled grammar practice, so called accuracy-oriented activities. On the contrary, presenting grammar to language learners through the guided discovery technique enhances active participation of learners due to the fact that grammatical rules are presented to learners in an authentic language context and learners are supposed to notice the grammatical structure(s) themselves, analyse it taking into account the context and try to come up with rules themselves (Gower, Philips & Walters, 2006, pp. 135-136). According to Scrivener (2011, pp. 175-180), "the main aim of the "discovery technique" is to engage students in discovering a generalized grammar rule or pattern." It is believed that students can learn grammar better if they work out rules themselves rather than being given the rules. When applying discovery technique, it is suggested to follow some basic principles. Firstly, authentic texts including the target grammatical structure(s) should be accompanied with some guided questions and provided then to students who are supposed to answer them and then they should come up with the rules which should be summarized with the whole class in a form of feedback.

The issue of how to teach English grammar in Slovak educational context most effectively has been an ongoing debate for decades. According to Šipošová (2018, p. 197), "recent years have seen a growing trend of reappraising the role of grammar in English language teaching, which goes hand in hand with the denial of various alternative methods, and favours the search for alternatives to a method, emphasizing individual differences among particular groups of EFL learners." The differences among particular groups of learners are not the only differences which need to be taken into account. When teaching foreign languages, it is necessary to consider also the morphological type of the target language because it also influences the way how particular languages are taught and learned. Lančarič (2012, p. 36) explains that "according to the classification based on morphological structure, languages are divided into two main groups: analytic and synthetic … Analytic languages are isolating, i.e. their words usually do not have endings or affixes representing grammatical categories … Synthetic language are inflectional,

which means that various morphological categories are conveyed by suffixes. Word order is thus less important and more flexible." Therefore learning and teaching different types of languages may require different methods and techniques. For example, Slovak learners tend to have problems with word order in English as Slovak is a synthetic language, while English is an analytic language and therefore due to the interference from their mother tongue, they sometimes have problems with "the fixed word order" in the target language – English (Hankerová, 2019).

According to Lojová – Kostelníková (2014), Slovak learners of English struggle with the use of grammatical rules in real-life communication, which is also apparent in lower secondary education. Obviously, experts in the field have been looking for the reasons – simply asked: "Why is it so?" We claim that the dominance (and partially also preference) of so called traditional approaches based on the principles of behaviourism, grammar-translation method and rote learning has its deep roots in language teaching and learning in Slovakia. These approaches can be defined as teacher-centred with the lack of emphasis put on real-life meaningful communication and practical utilisation of the target language. Therefore EFL teachers in Slovak English lessons provide their learners with decontextualized and focused practice activities in which learners are supposed to mechanically use the already introduced grammatical structure(s), e.g. put the verbs in brackets into past simple. This results in relatively successful controlled grammar practice, but when a learner is asked to discuss (e.g. his/her own past experience) an issue in a spontaneous manner, the teacher finds out that the practice is far from being fruitful, neither fluent, nor accurate. As a result, language learners consider grammar boring and frustrating, they are demotivated to use grammar structures productively, realizing their inability of speaking in a target language. In contrast to teacher-centred approach there stands so called student-centred approach which shifts the focus from content (e.g. grammar rules) and the teacher as a controller to students as active participants in the teaching and learning process as well as their personalities, opinions, desires and needs, emotions, approaching students as capable human beings. Weimer (2002, p. 19) postulates student-centred teaching "engages students in learning, i.e. does not allow them to be passive; it motivates them by sharing some of the control over what happens in the classroom and what assignments they do; it encourages collaboration; it includes specific learning skills instruction and promotes student reflection on how and what they learn."

Language teacher cognition

According to Borg (2003, pp. 81-86), **language teacher cognition** is an inclusive term that embraces the complexity of teachers' lives, it refers to the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching. He emphasizes that studies of language teacher cognition examine what second and foreign language teachers, at any stage of their careers, think, know, or believe in relation to various aspects of their work, and which, additionally but not necessarily, also entail the study of classroom practices (both preactive and interactive decision-making) and of the relationship between cognitions and theses practices. A key point in the emergence of teacher cognition research came in 1975, when the National Institute of Education (NIE) in the USA concluded in their report "it is obvious that what teachers do is directed in no small measure by what they think …the question of relationships between thought and action becomes crucial … Thus, an understanding of how teachers cognitively construct the reality of teaching and learning remains central to the achievement of NIE's overall goal of developing the means to improve the provision, maintenance, and utilization of high quality teaching personnel."

Although the study of teacher cognition is generally characterised by a multiplicity of labels, among which we can find such concepts and notions as personal pedagogical systems, pedagogic principles, theories for practice, routines, conceptions of practice, pedagogical knowledge, personal practical knowledge image, theoretical beliefs, images, practical knowledge, maxims, culture of teaching, pedagogical reasoning, personal theories, specific pedagogical knowledge, BAK (beliefs, attitudes, knowledge), it is obvious that identical terms have been defined in different ways and different terms have been used to describe similar concepts. This

English terminological ambiguity leads to even more ambiguity when translating the concepts into Slovak (or Czech) language, where we can find to some extent synonymous expressions like „pedagogické myslenie učiteľa", „učiteľovo chápanie výučby", „učitelovo pojetí výuky", „učiteľova individuálna koncepcia vyučovania", „subjektívne teórie učiteľa" (grounded in German language as "Subjektive Theorien").

There is an overlap among numerous labels (concepts) leading to a unifying framework for understanding language teacher cognition, which Borg (2006) depicts in Figure 1. The diagram outlines relationships suggested by mainstream educational research among language teacher learning (both through schooling and professional pre-service and in-service teacher education, so called professional coursework), and classroom practice, including practice teaching. With regard to this, Borg (2003, p. 81) claims that "there is ample evidence that teachers' experiences as learners can inform cognitions about teaching and learning which continue to exert an influence on teachers throughout their career; there is also evidence to suggest that although professional preparation does shape trainees' cognitions, programmes which ignore trainee teachers' prior beliefs may be less effective at influencing them; and research has also shown that teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions." Obviously, as can be seen from Figure 1, the core category "language teacher cognition" stands in relation to three categories which outline the basic three-level relationships among the core category, i.e. language teacher cognition and teacher prior language learning experience (schooling), language teacher cognition and both pre-service and in-service teacher education (professional coursework) and language teacher cognition and classroom practice (including practice teaching), which is strongly influenced and shaped by contextual factors (i.e. social and institutional contexts of classrooms). Moreover, a great deal of research attention has been paid to the issue of teacher cognition in relation to teaching different language skills (mainly reading and writing) and language means/systems (mainly grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation). Regarding the basic distinction between English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), research studies carried out in ESL contexts far outweighed those carried out in EFL contexts. However, the research in EFL contexts has boomed recently.

A Qualitative Study
Research design – research subjects
This qualitative study was designed within the framework of qualitative research methodology, applying the Grounded Theory. The data for it were obtained through in-depth interviews. Boyce & Neale (2006) identify in-depth interviewing as a qualitative research technique that involves intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme, or situation. The research subjects were selected based on purposive sampling. Smith et al. (2009) recommend purposive sampling for participants who are selected because they share particular characteristics and experiences. Thus, the common features characterising our research subjects were as follows: all of them were qualified EFL teachers with more than 10 years teaching practice, all of them were teaching English at lower secondary schools. The research study was carried out from November 2018 to February 2019. The group of research subjects consisted of 5 subjects (females) between thirty-eight and sixty-one years of age. The in-depth interviews were held in a friendly atmosphere in the staff room. The 30 to 45-minute interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded.
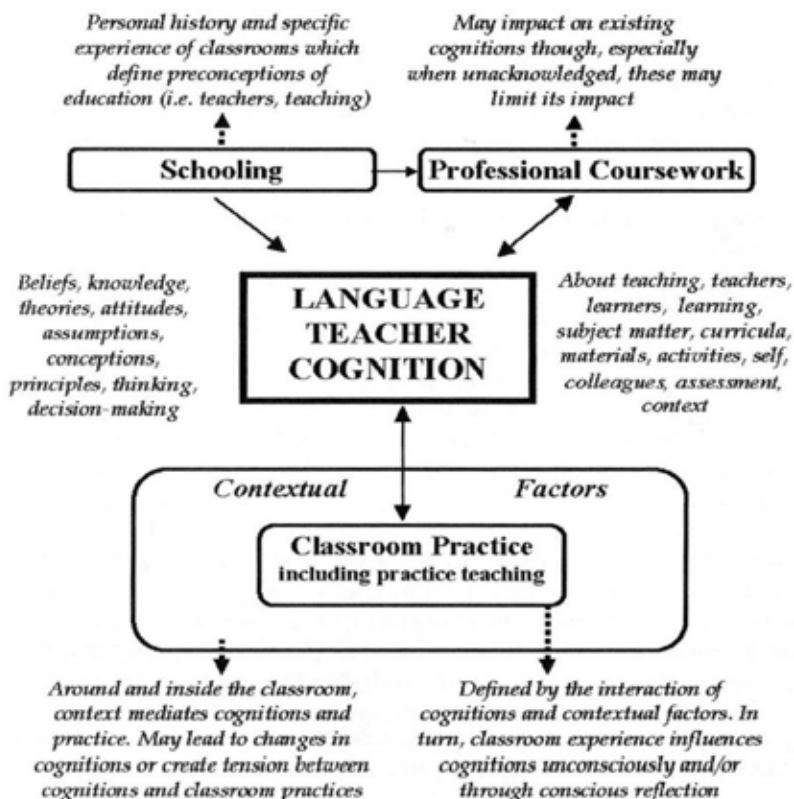
Figure 1. Language Teacher Cognition (Borg, S., 2006, p. 283)

Methodology and data collection tools

For the purpose of this study, we chose qualitative methodology, particularly, the application of the Grounded theory. According to Kostrub & Šipošová (2015, p. 202), there is a significant need to apply qualitative research in the educational context, especially when analysing learner performance in the teaching and learning process. Stake (2010) stresses the fact that qualitative research has moved social research away from cause-and-effect explanations and toward personal interpretation. It relies heavily on interpretive perceptions through the planning, data gathering, analysis and conclusion of the study. Following our decision to explore this issue through qualitative analysis, we created a theory that would express, enlighten and interpret the reasons, motives and connections of the learners' barriers and problems in the English language learning process. To achieve this goal, we applied the grounded theory, which according to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 12), is "derived from the data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process."

Grounded theory has a systematic procedure and is defined by identifying important words with the goal of providing many theoretical codes (often called labelling); coding of the material leading to the creation of basic categories – variables for the theory; and finally, theory construction as a set of statements between categories – variables. These acts often coincide and are mutually created as one influences the other. They are also often referred to as the open, axial and selective coding process. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), initial coding is often said to fracture the data, whereas axial coding reconnects the data in ways that are conceptually more abstract. Selective coding, as the last part of the work with the data, focuses on actualizing the

core category in a highly abstract conceptual manner. Hence, they provide a fundamental analytical technique which breaks data into fragments which are later clustered into relevant concepts. These concepts are categorized according to a common criterion. Categories stemming from coding are the crucial parts of the consequent theory. The naming of particular levels of coding is sometimes ambiguous. The aforementioned concepts or labels are sometimes referred to as properties. By common criterion, we mean sub-categories, which belong to subsidiary categories of the core category, which is the central phenomenon of the research. Strauss and Corbin (1990) stress the importance of locating the core category. They see this procedure as the key to success, in this case, the key to a consistent theory. The central category provides a base for other categories as well as a base for a new theory. It could be any core category from the paradigm model, depending on the relations between categories for each particular research. The entire theory is usually explained on the basis of this category. The final theory is usually consistently presented in two ways, verbally and complementarily displayed in the form of schema (a paradigm model), diagrams or concept maps. The grounded theory methodology allows to elaborate a story line, which is based on the paradigm model. Thus, the story is simply a descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of study and the story line is the conceptualisation of this story (abstracting). When analysed, the story line becomes the core category while subsidiary categories are related to the core category according to the paradigm model, the basic purpose of which is to enable the researcher to think systematically about the data and relate them in complex ways.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommend **a paradigm model**, which comprises all of these categories and can be identified according to Causal Conditions → Phenomenon → Context → Intervening Conditions → Action/ Interaction Strategies → Consequences.

The explanation of the model: Casual Conditions are events that lead to the development of a phenomenon. The phenomenon is defined as the core category (i.e., the central idea, event or happening). Context refers to the particular set of conditions and intervening conditions, the broader set of conditions, in which the phenomenon is couched. Strategies of Action/Interaction Strategies refer to the actions and responses that occur as a result of the phenomenon and finally, the outcomes, of these actions and responses are referred to as Consequences.

Since qualitative researchers have special concerns regarding validity as well as reliability of the research results, it was important to utilise more research tools. The process of triangulation, which refers to the application and combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon, adds depth to the data that are collected. Fusch et al. (2018, p.22) distinguish four types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory and methodological triangulation. According to the authors, methodological triangulation can be within method or between method (also known as across method), although the generally understood type is within method, such as multiple sources of data found within one design, e.g. triangulating the data from multiple data collection methods (interviews, focus groups, observations, etc.). Thus, by combining in-depth interview and unstructured observation, we hoped to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases in order to increase the credibility and validity of the research results. We accomplished the observation of two lessons taught by each of the research subjects. We focused on teachers' classroom practices, teaching style, behavioural patterns, interaction and the overall classroom dynamics.

Aim of the study

The aim of this research study was to examine the influence of EFL teachers' cognition on grammar teaching in lower secondary education. Thanks to our deep professional understanding of the teaching profession, we focused on examining and interpreting English teachers' beliefs, attitudes, opinions and grammar classroom practices which are interrelated and therefore influencing each other.

Research questions:
RQ1: What are English language teachers' beliefs and attitudes about grammar teaching in lower secondary education?
RQ2: What classroom practices do English teachers use while teaching grammar in lower secondary education?
RQ3: What changes related to teaching grammar have English language teachers made since they started teaching?
         In order to capture the essence of the research subjects' views on this issue we deliberately decided to ask several in-depth question which allowed for a variety of answers. However, during the interviews (30-45 min. long) we flexibly asked a vast range of "ad hoc" questions in order to clarify the issues which emerged.

In-depth interview question:
  1. *Why did you become an English language teacher?*
  2. *How do you teach grammar? Could you tell me about the methods/approaches you use?*
  3. *What is your personal opinion on the importance of grammar in lower secondary education?*
  4. *What is your attitude towards grammar teaching in lower secondary education?*
  5. *What kinds of materials do you use when teaching grammar in lower secondary education?*
  6. *What was your own experience as a learner of English at school?*

Answering research questions
RQ 1: What are English language teachers' beliefs and attitudes about grammar teaching in lower secondary education?
         As the deliberate analysis of the research showed, teachers' beliefs about grammar and grammar teaching largely influence teachers' cognition. Although beliefs cannot be observed, we have decided to firstly observe a couple of the teachers' lessons and consequently ask them about their beliefs in relation to their classroom practices, which helped us to extrapolate the following information. English teachers believe that grammar should not be regarded as the crucial part of the language. Moreover, they do not think that grammar should be seen as strictly as it often is. With regard to this, teachers rather emphasize the development of language skills and overall communicative competence than solely grammar teaching. Contrastively, one of the teachers (research subject No. 5) believes that in some cases grammar is more significant than other language skills. She also claims that grammar is equal to vocabulary being the most important as far as its position within the language is concerned, because, as she asserts, without vocabulary and grammar, students are not able to communicate at all. Furthermore, she also believes that grammar has to be taught regularly because without the regular and systematic grammar practice, students forget everything very quickly. Within the framework of our research, it has also been revealed that teachers' attitudes about grammar teaching play a significant role in shaping and influencing their cognition. The interviewed teachers expressed their positive attitudes towards grammar, as well as to its teaching. They also claimed that they did not consider grammar difficult as it seemed pretty logical to them. In certain cases they find English grammar even easier than Slovak grammar. Their positive attitudes were also reflected in their classroom practices. From observations, as well as conducted interviews, it was apparent that those teachers expressing a positive attitude towards grammar attempted to teach it in more activating ways using the student-centred approach, personalization and inductive approach. On the contrary, one of our research subjects (research subject No. 5) openly admitted her negative attitude towards grammar. Surprisingly, her negative attitude towards grammar results in the following paradox. Even though this teacher does not like grammar and she finds it rather difficult, she regards it to be one of the most important parts of English language to teach. Therefore she incorporates grammar in

every single lesson of English. She explained her preference in terms of the requirements of the Slovak curriculum which she strictly follows.

RQ 2: What classroom practices do English teachers use while teaching grammar in lower secondary education?

After thorough consideration and detailed analysis based on in-depth interviews and unstructured observation, the research findings indicate that research subjects – English teachers use various classroom practices congruent with their beliefs and attitudes. Correspondingly, classroom practices of the interviewed teachers are to a great extend determined by the requirements of the Slovak curriculum, which stipulates that learners at A2 proficiency language level according to CEFR should be able to use variety of tenses (e.g. Present Continuous, Past Simple/Continuous, Present Perfect Simple, going to), modal verbs (can, could, should, have), zero and first conditional, etc. Moreover, the utilised classroom practises reflected students' needs. Consequently, the observed teachers' approach to their learners can be characterized as student-centred approach, with the most dominant aspects of personalization and individualisation being considered as highly effective for teaching English grammar among the interviewed teachers. Furthermore, the research revealed that the interviewed teachers also preferred using the inductive approach to teaching grammar, in particular, teaching grammar in context with the emphasis put on the functional use of grammar in meaningful activities. Nevertheless, in order to reflects particular students' needs, the deductive approach or using translations from the mother tongue to the target language and vice versa were also used. Since the researched teachers' classroom practices were consistent with their beliefs and attitudes about grammar teaching, it has to be pointed out that one of the research subjects (research subject No. 5) openly expressed her preference of using the deductive approach, which is viewed as the traditional approach to teaching grammar.

RQ 3: What changes related to teaching grammar have English teachers made since they started teaching?

Although the changes in English language teachers' ways of teaching grammar, which have been made since they started teaching, were not saturated enough in order to create a separate category, several aspects have been identified within the process of data analysis. In brief, teachers view these changes as beneficial. The changes result from acquiring more teaching experience leading to the gradual improvement of teachers' own teaching styles. This development includes shifts from using a rather mechanical explanation and limited range of strictly timed controlled grammar practice activities to incorporating more communicative activities focused on functional grammar usage in the EFL classroom. Despite the fact that the interviewed teachers were educated in a traditional way, i.e. they were exposed to descriptive and prescriptive ELT methodology in their English lessons, it can be noticed that they strive to overcome so called "structural heritage" as well as the proclivity to assume that if their learners memorize the grammar rules properly, they will be able to use them in authentic and meaningful tasks. Another change is concerned with the era development and, in particular, with the change of the status of English in recent years, as well as with students' more demanding requirements, which force teachers to improve and modify their teaching styles. Thus, teaching English grammar more effectively and in interesting and motivating ways reflects students' needs, since English grammar is not subject matter aimed at rote learning, but the living mechanism reflecting the authentic usage of English.

The Paradigm Model Interpretation

With regard to the grounded theory methodology, we elaborated a story line based on the paradigm model (English teachers' cognition in grammar teaching in lower secondary education). A story is simply a descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of study and the story line

is the conceptualisation of this story (abstracting). When analysed, the story line becomes the core category while subsidiary categories are related to the core category according to the paradigm model, the basic purpose of which is to enable the researcher to think systematically about the data and relate them in complex ways. Explanation of the model: **Casual Conditions** are events that lead to the development of a phenomenon. The **phenomenon** is defined as the core category (i.e., the central idea, event or happening). **Context** refers to the particular set of conditions and **intervening conditions**, the broader set of conditions, in which the phenomenon is couched. **Action/Interaction Strategies** refer to the actions and responses that occur as a result of the phenomenon and finally, the outcomes, of these actions and responses are referred to as

Consequences

As it can be seen from Figure 2, the paradigm model represents visual interpretation of the research findings. As it has been stated, it consists of six pivotal categories. In order to distinguish particular relationships among given categories, one-way or two-way arrows are used, depending on whether the relationship is reciprocal, or not. One-way grey full-line arrows depict the direction of the model – from the broadest category of context to those more specific ones. They depict the strongest relationships (two red arrows leading from the phenomenon, two-way arrows depicting a reciprocal relation). Small black dashed arrows depict weaker relationships depending on the frequency of occurrence of corresponding codes and long black curved arrows leading from categories of causal and intervening conditions display relationships and influence among categories.

To start with context, the set of conditions in which the phenomenon is couched, it has been identified as GLOBAL STATUS OF ENGLISH. This category represents conditions in which our research subjects teach. The interviewed teachers consider era development to be significant as they realise nowadays we cannot apply the same methods and techniques for teaching English that were used in the past. The status of English has changed throughout the years as well as the importance of practical utilisation of grammar in students' lives. The context is also determined by the requirements of the Slovak curriculum designed for lower secondary education (A2 proficiency level according to CEFR). As there is no clear connection among the saturated labels, their influence is weaker, they are linked by dashes.

Causal conditions are presented in the paradigm model in two main categories, namely TEACHERS' PREVIOUS EDUCATION and TEACHERS' SELF-PERCEPTION OF GRAMMAR. Causal conditions directly influence the intervening strategies and they also subsequently influence the development of the core category – phenomenon. As it is generally acknowledged, schooling and pre-service education influence teachers' cognition to a large extent, either positively or negatively. The category of self-perception of grammar was saturated with codes conditioning teachers' classroom practices and their attitudes towards grammar, as well.

Intervening conditions are a broader set of conditions the phenomenon is couched. These are presented as FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHERS' ACTIONS. These factors directly influence the subsequent category of action/interaction strategies, as well as the development of the core category to a large extent. According to the most frequently occurred labels, the interviewed teachers claimed that they did their best in order to encourage their students to become autonomous English-language users. The teachers employ various strategies, such as improving students' ability to perform decision-making effectively, or to assess themselves objectively, etc. This is supported by the fact that teachers can choose the methods and teaching techniques as well as the materials to be used. Teachers do not feel being strictly restricted by school authorities. The only constraint they have to face is the syllabus and school curriculum agreed on with other teachers to be followed during the school year.

Action/interaction strategies, which refer to the actions and responses that occur as a result of the phenomenon, are identified as TEACHING STRATEGIES REFLECTING STUDENTS'

NEEDS. This category is directly influenced by the previously mentioned intervening conditions which influence teachers' choice of strategies, but at the same time they are in a reciprocal relationship with the phenomenon. Regarding this, teachers attempt to support autonomous learning, which together with no institutional restrictions and teachers' own positive experience with particular strategies, they are led to use personalisation, individualisation and extra materials (e.g. authentic contextualised and meaningful usage of grammar).

As for the core category of the paradigm model in our research, the phenomenon has been identified as TEACHERS' COGNITION IN TEACHING GRAMMAR. This category was saturated by labels regarding teachers' beliefs and attitudes about grammar and grammar teaching. These are depicted in the model by red-line arrows displaying a very strong relationship. From the provided paradigm model, it is apparent that there are also other terms related to English language teachers' cognition, such as: principles, theories, knowledge and others. Although, these terms emerged in the process of analysing the verbatim transcripts of the recorded interviews and observations, they were not saturated in order to form a common category. They are displayed in the paradigm model by dash-lined arrows since they also pertain to teachers' cognition.

The phenomenon causes the scale of consequences referred to as TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PRACTICES. This category has been identified based on the frequently occurring labels: student-centred teaching, inductive vs. deductive approach to teaching grammar, and functional usage of grammar in context related to the overall classroom practices of our research subjects. The relationship between the phenomenon and resulting consequences is reciprocal (a two-way arrow). Therefore, the consequences result from the phenomenon, and the phenomenon is also influenced by particular consequences.
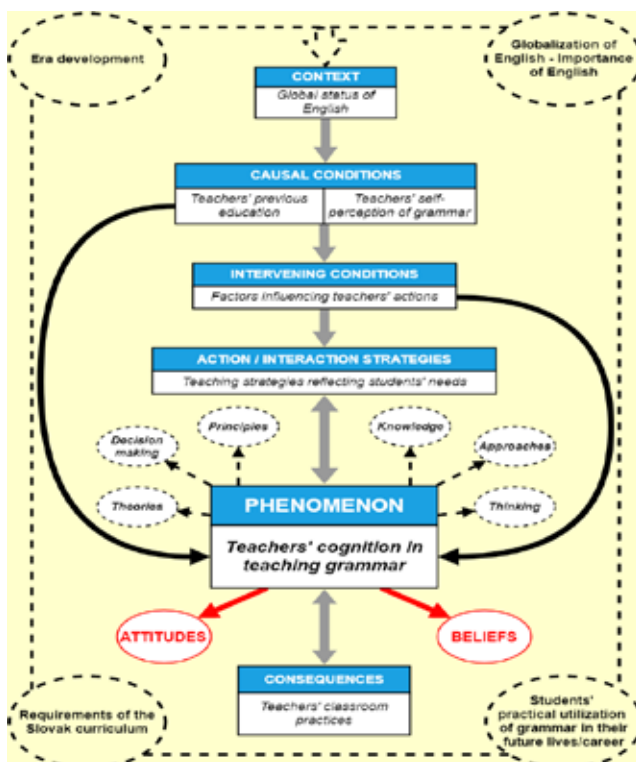

Figure 2 A paradigm model – English teachers' cognition in grammar teaching in lower secondary education

Conclusion

To sum up, no other language issue has so preoccupied language-teaching scholars, educators, educational researchers, linguists as well as language teachers as grammar. To put it another way, Harmer (1991, p. 153) said "If language structures (grammar) make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh." We would like to add " …but the vital organs as well as the flesh need to be hung the skeleton." In essence, our research findings shed light on the issue of teacher cognition in grammar teaching. The presented research showed that there are many significant aspects playing crucial roles in the process of developing English language teachers' cognition. Since generalization is not accepted by many researchers as the purpose of qualitative, interpretative research, our research concern with the impact of language teacher cognition on grammar teaching in lower secondary education leads us to the following conclusion, notwithstanding it cannot be generalized to overall lower secondary English language teachers' population. Based on the data, the research revealed that the interviewed teachers' cognition in grammar teaching resides in teachers' beliefs and attitudes which are congruent with their classroom practices. Both teachers' positive and negative attitudes about grammar teaching are reflected in their classroom practices, in particular, teachers with a positive attitude try to incorporate more activating approaches to teaching grammar reflected in the utilisation of the student-centred approach with the elements of personalization and individualisation respecting students' needs, interest, opinions, etc. Concerning teachers' beliefs, which also play a fundamental role in the process of shaping English teachers' cognition, it has to be pointed out that our research subjects believe in the importance of grammar taught in the context emphasizing its functional uses. This stems from their beliefs that grammar, although being the integral part of English, should not take a crucial role in developing overall communicative competence. However, teachers rather see the goal of grammar teaching in utilising communicative and contextualised grammar tasks reflecting authentic real-life situations. They take into consideration students' individual differences, e.g. students requiring translation or grammar explanation as opposed to the methodologically proclaimed communicative language teaching, since they guide their learners to become fluent and accurate users of English in their future lives and careers.

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