

University Preparation of Kindergarten Teachers for English Teaching in the Czech Republic

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∞ An ever-increasing trend of early foreign language teaching requires adequate responses to the university training of future kindergarten teachers. However, research in this area, including policies, suggests that the situation is not entirely satisfactory. This paper aims to determine the level of preparation of future teachers for teaching English to pre-primary children at individual universities in the Czech Republic. It presents findings obtained through quantitative content analysis of the syllabi of eight universities that provide education in the field of teacher training for kindergartens and focus on the preparation of future teachers for English tuition. The results show that courses for English tuition in kindergarten are not implemented by every university. Universities differ in their emphasis on foreign language tuition in kindergarten, which is reflected in the number and content of provided courses.

Keywords: early foreign language teaching, English language, preschool teacher training

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Univerzitetna priprava vzgojiteljev predšolskih otrok za poučevanje angleščine na Češkem

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~~ Čedalje močnejši trend zgodnjega poučevanja tujih jezikov zahteva pri-
meren odziv visokošolskega usposabljanja bodočih vzgojiteljev predšol-
skih otrok. Raziskave s tega področja, vključno s politikami, kažejo na
to, da stanje ni povsem zadovoljivo. Ta prispevek skuša prikazati raven
priprav bodočih vzgojiteljev za poučevanje angleščine predšolskih otrok
na posameznih čeških univerzah. Predstavi ugotovitve, pridobljene s
kvalitativno vsebinsko analizo učnih načrtov osmilih univerz, ki ponu-
jajo izobraževalni program predšolske vzgoje in se usmerjajo na uspo-
sabljanje za poučevanje angleščine. Rezultati kažejo, da se poučevanje
angleščine predšolskih otrok ne izvaja na vsaki univerzi, pri čemer se
ustanove razlikujejo po poudarkih, ki ga dajejo poučevanju tujih jezi-
kov na vrtčevski ravni, kar se odraža tudi v številu in vsebini ponujenih
predmetov.

Ključne besede: zgodnje poučevanje tujega jezika, angleški jezik,
predšolska vzgoja

Introduction

Due to the increasing emphasis on the early start of foreign language teaching, there is a naturally increasing need for qualified teachers in this area (Pokrivčáková, 2012). According to recent findings (Cameron, 2003; Hyes, 2014; Maroušková, 2013; Murphy et al., 2016), the level of qualification is not fully adequate. In general, there are misconceptions regarding the required qualifications for foreign language teaching in preschool education.

The importance of a quality language model in early foreign language teaching was mentioned by Hanušová and Najvar (2006), who claim that the younger the child is, the more important the qualification of the teacher is. According to Edelenbos et al. (2006), an early start does not guarantee success in the language. In addition to a supportive environment and continuity, quality teaching is one of the key factors in successful English teaching.

According to the European Commission's Strategic Framework for Educational and Training (2011), the qualification profile of kindergarten teachers has long been considered a critical factor for teaching English. The need to start a discussion on the content of kindergarten teacher education and the possible requirement for their qualifications is also mentioned in the document *Strategy of the Educational Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2014). From 2005 to 2008, the *National Language Teaching Plan with an Action Plan* included requirements aimed at improving the qualification situation, specifically 'to include English in the program of training kindergarten teachers in pedagogical high schools and pedagogical faculties' and 'to include the propaedeutics of foreign language teaching to the Framework Educational Program for Preschool Education' (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2005, p. 1). However, many secondary schools and universities do not follow these requirements.

The low level of qualifications is also aided by the fact that the requirements for foreign language qualifications are not formally clearly defined (Černá, 2015). While, for example, in Malta, Slovakia, or Poland, these requirements are set by law (Ministry of Education and Employment of Malta, 2012; Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic, 2020; Ministry of National Education in Poland, 2017), no similar document is valid in the Czech Republic. The Czech School Inspectorate² (henceforward CSI) has long been drawing attention to this fact (CSI, 2012, 2013).

² The Czech School Inspectorate is an administrative office of the Czech Republic with nationwide competence in the field of education, where it performs independent inspection activities. The Czech School Inspectorate was established by Act No. 561/2004 Coll., for preschool, primary, secondary, higher vocational, and other educational programmes. It is an organisational component of the state.

At the same time, English is a rising trend in kindergartens (CSI, 2015). It is very difficult to determine the exact number of kindergartens offering English, as schools can change and update their programmes. The situation is all the more difficult to map because English is offered by both state kindergartens and private ones. An inspection investigation carried out by the Czech School Inspectorate in 2015 found that out of 770 kindergartens investigated, 472 schools provide language education in the form of a club or as part of their school education program. Just as the number of kindergartens is increasing, of which there are currently 5,349 in the Czech Republic (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022), so is the offer of English in these facilities. The number of kindergartens where English is a direct part of the school education programme has been increasing, according to the CSI survey (2013). English can also be implemented in the form of an interest group within a kindergarten, where external lecturers most often teach, and these courses are charged, or in the form of groups that are free of charge and are led by kindergarten teachers. English is the priority foreign language offered by kindergartens, while parents show little interest in German, Polish, or other foreign languages (CSI, 2015).

In contrast, kindergartens that did not offer a foreign language stated that the main reason was that the teachers did not have an adequate level of English. In addition, there are also kindergarten teachers who, although they have an adequate language level, have not completed specialised training in the field of language propaedeutics. Thus, even if they knew a foreign language sufficiently, they did not always have to master the methods and procedures suitable for preschool education fully. Particularly alarming are the figures that over 44% of teachers have no knowledge of the English language at all, and 35% have only a passive knowledge of English (Andrys & Janotová, 2013).

It is also necessary to look at this issue of foreign language education in kindergarten through a bottom-up perspective, in which kindergarten teachers (former students of pedagogical faculties) evaluate foreign language training; retrospectively, this evaluation is perceived and reflected in syllabi. However, very little research has tended to focus on this type of perspective.

Nevertheless, Dagarin Fojkar and Skubic (2017) dealt with the concept of early foreign language teaching in kindergarten from the point of view of students of the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. They found out that students' awareness increased depending on their year of study. Third-year students were more aware of the importance of quality preparation for foreign language teaching in kindergarten than lower-grade students. At the same time, students found methodology to be the most important attribute of

university preparation. Kelly et al. (2004) consider the knowledge of methodology as a necessary basis in foreign language teaching while providing teachers with a basis for the creative and critical use of various teaching theories. Another finding is that primarily third-year students considered it important to be bilingual and therefore suggested that an English course at the faculty should be obligatory, not optional.

A possible solution in the form of the inclusion of preparation for early foreign language education is offered by Widlok et al. (2010), who formulated recommendations for increasing the foreign language competence of kindergarten teachers. Teachers for early language acquisition should be trained in specific fields of study focused on children's language teaching. This study should be focused on foreign language competencies and provide theoretical foundations, supplemented by competencies for the practical use of a foreign language. The foreign language should be used as often as possible during the study and should thus become 'working'.³ Teachers should have language levels B2 to C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages so that children have the most authentic language model possible. The study should be considered interculturally: both languages and cultures should be taken into account, which would be related to each other. To understand foreign language learning in a broader context, students should be given the opportunity to learn about relevant language developments depending on the age of the learner. This may include, for example, the study of psycholinguistics, because understanding language development and how it is learned is the basis for effective foreign language teaching. This information would be discussed in the context of one's professional situation. Preparation should also be devoted to the practical implementation of multilingualism didactics, which means taking into account and utilising all the languages that potentially exist in the learning group. Students should also learn to use any previous experience of children with language learning. Students would verify their acquired theoretical knowledge and skills during internships in kindergartens. This would test teaching principles and methods and reflect them critically. As part of their studies, students should become familiar with language resources for important children's topics and situations. A critical point is to enable a study stay abroad, ideally with a practice focused on teaching a foreign language to preschool children (Widlok et al., 2010). In comparison with other authors, qualification requirements for teachers of English in kindergarten can be

³ The concept of working or procedural language is mostly used in an organisation or group in which people who have different mother tongues come into contact. Communication in these groups becomes more efficient thanks to the working language. In this context, English as a working language is thought of as a way to make English learning more efficient, where students are encouraged to use English as much as possible and thus improve their level.

mentioned from the point of view of Vos (2008), who includes knowledge of the language, knowledge of analysing and interpreting language, knowledge of foreign language teaching principles, ability to create opportunities for all children, knowledge of appropriate methodologies for different age groups, understanding of linguistic diversity, skills to coordinate research and available resources, and the ability to plan pedagogical processes.

Requirements for further research into the issue of acquiring the necessary knowledge and competencies for teaching English in preschool facilities at universities were formulated. According to Pokrívčáková (2017), the current situation brings new tasks and challenges for teacher training universities and calls for innovations in existing initial teacher education programs. She asserts that these innovations should be based, among other things, on the perception and evaluation of higher education students.

These innovations in teacher programs are needed in the Czech Republic for several reasons. The primary reason is the long-term problem of the teachers' insufficient level of English, associated with no or little knowledge of propaedeutics, didactics, methodology, or psycholinguistics of teaching English to children of preschool age. The second reason is the social need, which is formulated in strategic documents. The third reason is the effort to fully utilise the learning potential of preschool children, which, however, requires the guidance of a professionally trained teacher in this area. The fourth reason is that knowledge of a foreign language is increasingly important; therefore, language knowledge and skills should be a clear part of the profile of a university graduate in a teaching programme.

This research attempts to answer how foreign language training is implemented in university syllabi and how this training is viewed by teachers who have completed it. This aim is fulfilled by a qualitative content analysis of the syllabi of universities with programmes of teaching for kindergartens in the Czech Republic. These theoretical findings are complemented by statements of teachers from kindergarten, which served to fulfil another research aim: to determine the opinions of teachers on university preparation for introducing children to English. The research focused only on students at Tomas Bata University in Zlín and thus allowed following the preparation of university students through multiple perspectives.

The following objectives guided the research:

- To determine the level of preparation of future teachers for acquainting children with English at individual universities in the Czech Republic.
- To compare the future teachers' preparation for acquainting children with English in kindergarten.

Method

For the analysis, the syllabi of courses for kindergarten and preschool pedagogy from eight public universities in the Czech Republic that offer bachelor's or master's courses were used. In total, 31 subjects in the bachelor's study and 4 subjects in the master's study were analysed. The lower number of subjects in the master's study is because most universities offer follow-up master's studies in preschool education, but this study does not include subjects aimed at improving students' language competence or acquiring knowledge and skills in foreign language didactics for preschool children. All syllabi are freely available on the websites of individual universities (jcu.cz, muni.cz, osu.cz, uhk.cz, ujep.cz, upol.cz, utb.cz, zcu.cz). The universities that were used for research are listed below.

- Jan Evangelista Purkyně University
- Masaryk University
- Palacký University in Olomouc
- South Bohemian University
- Tomas Bata University in Zlín
- University of Hradec Králové
- University of Ostrava
- University of West Bohemia in Pilsen

The research used quantitative content analysis. According to Linderová et al. (2016), this type of analysis is characterised by the fact that it monitors the content of the document itself, which can be processed using statistical methods. According to Gavora (2015), the qualitative side of a text, such as words, sentences or topics, is quantified, thus expressing their frequency, order, or degree. The analysis of syllabi led to the creation of specified analytical categories, which were related to the subjects devoted to teaching English to preschool children, the frequency of objectives of these subjects, the requirements for the students and teaching and evaluation methods of the subjects. Subsequently, the analytical categories were quantified, the frequency was determined, and the frequencies were graphically displayed for better clarity. Between the categories, relationships were found, which were interpreted and supplemented by statements from interviews with English teachers of preschool children in kindergartens.

Results

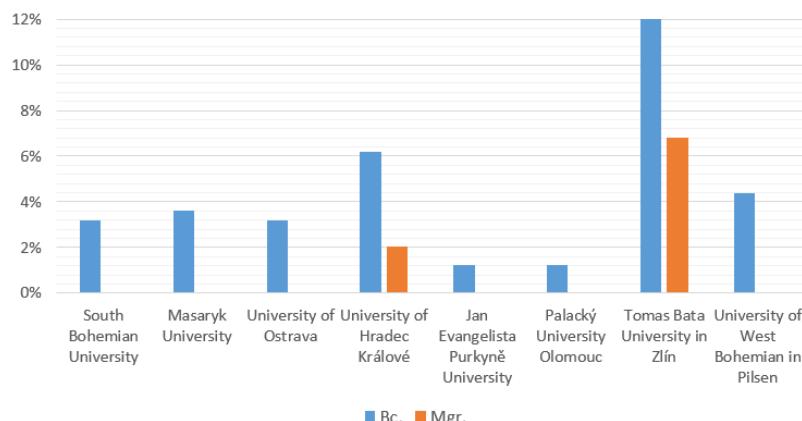
A quantitative content analysis revealed that subjects of preparation for teaching English in kindergarten are not implemented at every university in the Czech Republic that offers courses in preschool education. Of the eight analysed universities, only six were profiled for teaching English in kindergarten. These courses were in different amounts (number of courses) and, in some cases, in a different focus (different content of courses).

Each of the studied universities places a different emphasis on foreign language education, both in terms of acquiring knowledge and skills at the general level of language and in the context of preschool education as a preparation for foreign language activities in kindergarten.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of these subjects in the curriculum of individual universities for bachelor and master courses in the Czech Republic. As can be seen, the largest proportion of English subjects was found at Tomas Bata University in Zlín, accounting for almost 12% of the total number of subjects in the bachelor's degree programme. The lowest values, in contrast, were found at the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem and Palacký University Olomouc. The analysis of the master's programs has shown that only two universities teach English in follow-up studies. Again, the university offering the most English subjects is Tomas Bata University in Zlín (over 6.5%) and the University of Hradec Králové (over 2%) of the total number of master's courses.

Figure 1

Representation of English subjects at individual universities and degrees

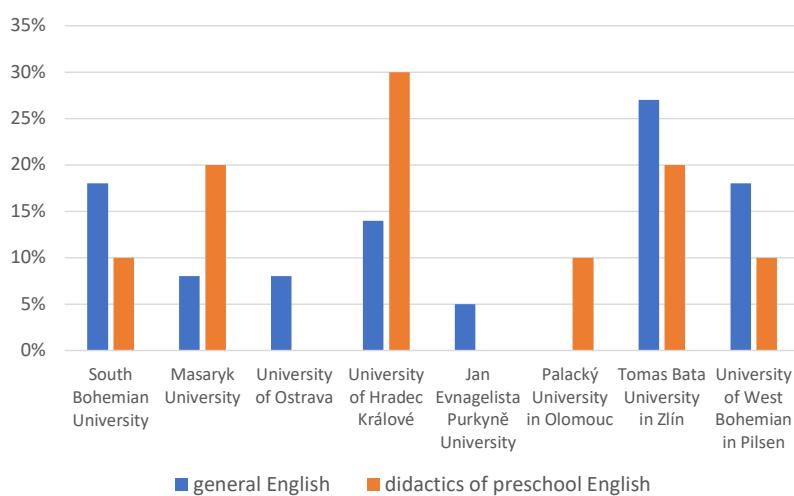


As mentioned above, universities offer students two types of English language courses in preschool education. The first type is general English, which aims to increase the language level of students; the second is the subject primarily aimed at didactics of introducing children to English.

The percentage of didactic subjects for bachelor and master courses at individual universities is presented in Figure 2. As can be seen, most of the subjects focused on preparing future teachers for implementing English in kindergarten were found at the University of Hradec Králové: a total of 30%. The South Bohemian University, Palacký University in Olomouc, and the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen had only one subject. The University of Hradec Králové supported the preparation by another aspect, which was also monitored by content analysis, namely the status of the obligation to complete these subjects.

Figure 2

Representation of subjects focused on teaching English in kindergarten (bachelor and master programmes combined)

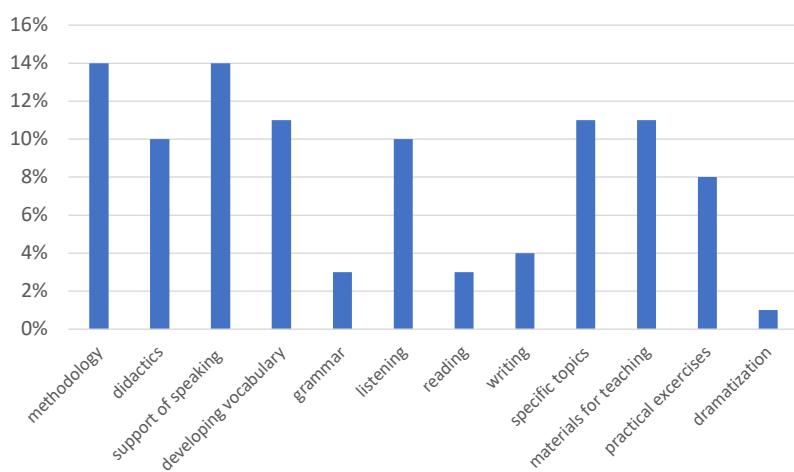


English subjects that focus on didactics of teaching in kindergarten set various goals that students should achieve in completing the course. Most of the subjects were focused on the methodology and didactics of teaching, support of language skills, problems of specific topics, provision of material for teaching English in kindergarten, as well as practical exercises or dramatisation as a means of teaching.

The areas of the most common objectives focusing on acquainting children with English in all universities offering these subjects are presented in Figure 3. Among the most frequent objectives are the support of speaking and acquainting students with various methods of teaching English. Speaking also includes the practice of correct pronunciation and demonstration of its modelling for preschool children. Introduction to the methodology of teaching English, which is the second most frequent objective, most often includes methods such as TPR (Total Physical Response), CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and picture dictation. Dramatic techniques of teaching English, practising grammar, and practising and promoting partial language skills (reading, writing) were the least represented.

Figure 3

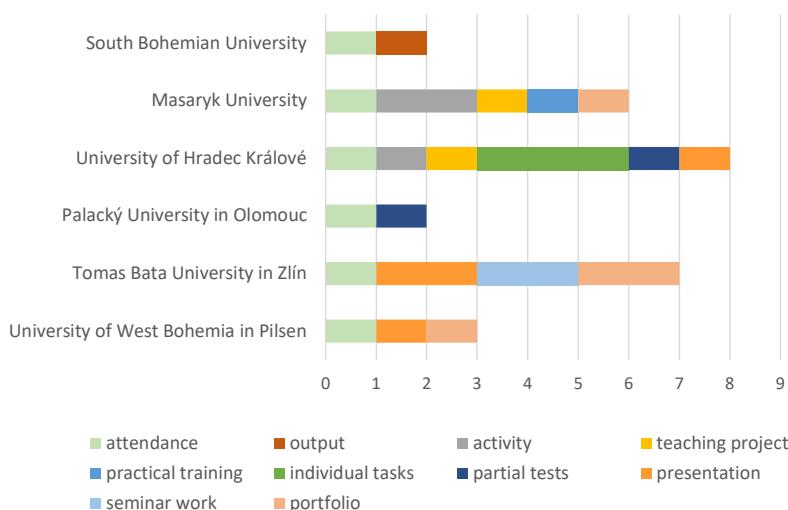
Frequency of objectives of all subjects focused on teaching English in kindergarten at all universities



Successful completion of the course requirements was mandatory. These requirements included, in addition to attendance, fulfilling individual tasks, passing partial tests, giving presentations, writing seminar papers, creating a portfolio, and practically demonstrating gaming activities. Figure 4 shows the individual requirements for specific universities. As can be seen, the University of Hradec Králové and Tomas Bata University in Zlín have the most requirements for successful completion of the course. The common requirements across all universities were portfolio and presentation delivery, accounting for approximately 18% of the total requirements. Another frequently encountered

requirement was fulfilling individual tasks and demonstrating gaming activities with students. In contrast, the least frequent requirement was practical training realised in kindergarten. This requirement occurred only occasionally, with a minimum percentage (approximately 5%). As the interview with teachers (graduates of Tomas Bata University from Zlín) showed, it is a most demanding practice from the students' point of view. 'I would definitely like practical training on this subject. For students who enrol for this subject and are really interested in it, it was simply not enough.' Another teacher also agrees with this statement: 'If someone says that college is about theory and not about practice, what do students who have not attended secondary pedagogy school have to do? Practice is non-negotiable.'

Figure 4
Requirements at individual universities



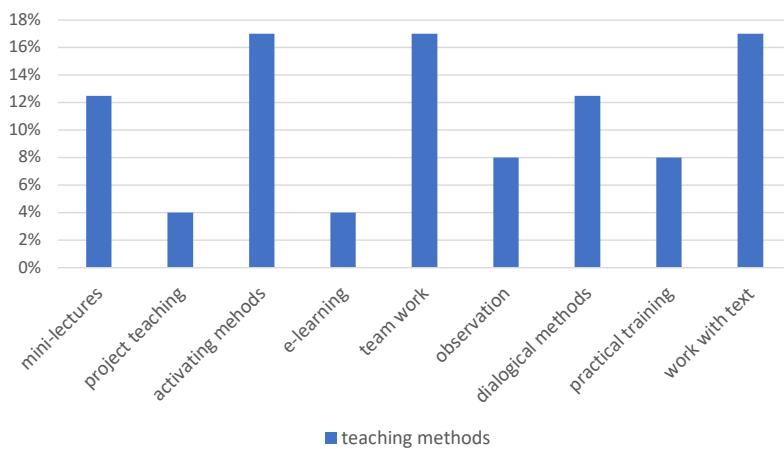
Together with the content, the selected teaching method is the backbone of the whole subject. The methods used by the university teachers according to the syllabi, included working with texts, practical exercises, mini-lectures, observation, teamwork, dialogical methods, activating methods, project teaching and e-learning.

The frequency of teaching methods at all universities is shown in Figure 5. The most represented were methods of working with text (book or textbook), activating methods (simulation, games, dramatisation) and teamwork. All

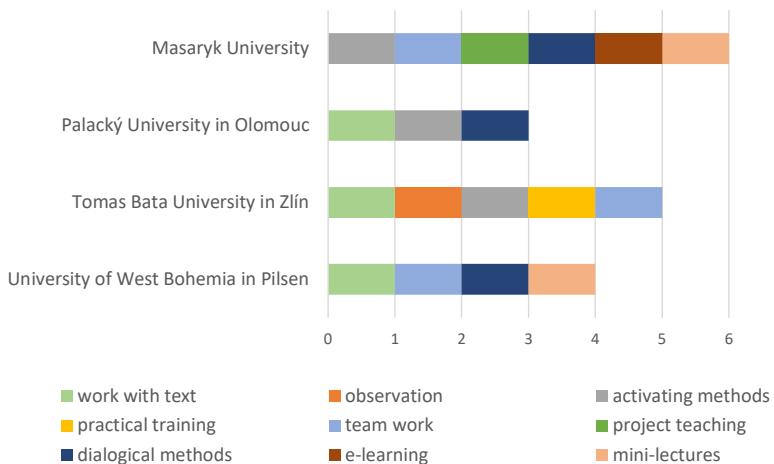
these methods represented the same percentage: 17% of the total number. The second most frequently used were dialogical methods (discussion, interview, brainstorming) and mini-lectures, both represented at 13%. The least used were e-learning and project teaching (only 4%).

Figure 5

Frequency of teaching methods in subjects at all universities

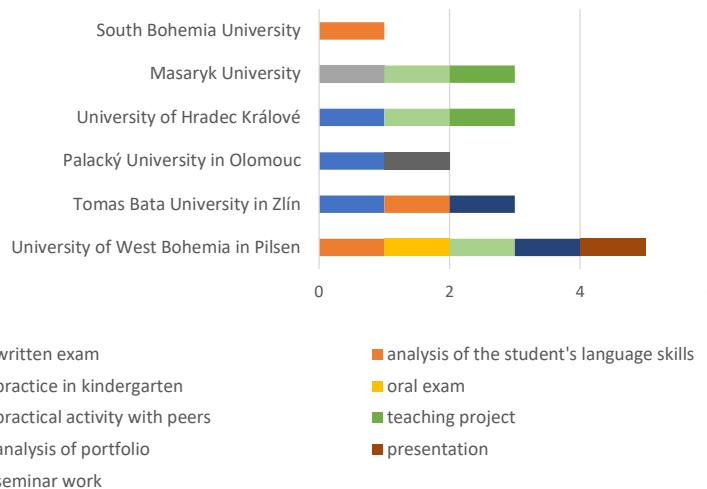


The greatest varieties of teaching methods were used at Masaryk University and Tomas Bata University in Zlín, while the lowest number was recorded at Palacký University in Olomouc. Tomas Bata University in Zlín is the only one among the analysed universities to use the methods of practical training, which students evaluate as very beneficial, and which contribute to the overall quality of teaching. 'I was very satisfied with the preparation; during the seminar, we were supposed to prepare activities that we realised with other students in the role of children', stated one student. The absence of the University of South Bohemia and the University of Hradec Králové is due to the fact that in their syllabi, they did not mention the teaching methods used in the subject.

Figure 6*Teaching methods of subjects at individual universities*

Requirements for completing the course are also related to the requirements for students to complete the course successfully. At the studied universities, they were written exams, analysis of the student's language skills, practical training in kindergarten, oral exams, practical activities with peers, elaboration of the project for teaching English, analysis of student's portfolio, individual presentation, and seminar work.

Figure 7 presents an overview of the most frequent evaluation methods. As can be seen, most of the methods were included at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, which required most assessment methods among all universities. Other universities that set more requirements for completion of the course were Masaryk University, the University of Hradec Králové, and Tomas Bata University in Zlín. Masaryk University was the only one that required practical training in kindergarten. Except for the practice in kindergarten, the University of Hradec Králové set similar requirements. The practice in kindergarten was replaced by a theoretical verification of the acquired knowledge by a written test. Tomas Bata University in Zlín and the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen have established, among other assessment methods, an analysis of the student's portfolio to complete the course. The portfolio was also mentioned in the statements of kindergarten teachers, for example, '*As part of the course, I created my portfolio, which includes activities with children and some recordings. I got great feedback and lots of inspiration.*'

Figure 7*Assessment methods in English subjects at individual universities*

The chosen methods and their diversity are directly reflected in the efficiency of the acquisition of knowledge of the subject. According to statements of the kindergarten teachers (former students of Tomas Bata University in Zlín) obtained from the interview, the level of teaching methods in the course has improved (comparison from 2012 and 2019). The teaching methods in 2012 were only lectures and presentations. Another improvement occurred primarily in the content of the subject when former students from 2012 stated that 'I took a subject called "English for Preschool Children", but the subject was not devoted to it at all, the subject was also attended by students from the Social Pedagogy study programme, and so topics such as pensioners, etc. were discussed. Although the subject was called that, its content was far from being only about English in kindergarten.'

Another undisputed improvement compared to 2012 was the requirements for completing the subject. For 2012, a former student testified, 'We were tasked with choosing from about twenty topics and creating a presentation on it, so we practised our English, but the topics were not just related to kindergarten at all. There were topics such as abortion, pensioners, education in Africa, women's circumcision etc.'

As can be seen from another statement by a former student, what is now a clear goal of English-oriented subjects in kindergarten was not a matter of

course in 2012. 'They didn't introduce us to, for example, the materials that would be suitable for the teaching... or the methodology, the didactics... nothing like that. The subject didn't even give me any experience; in practice, I had to come up with everything myself. Here in the kindergarten, where I now teach, I received the materials, but I had to figure out the teaching system and other things related to it myself; it takes years of practice. These courses could save me a few years if these things were discussed there.' It is clear from students' statements from 2012 and 2019 that the subject is now dedicated to the issue of teaching English in kindergarten in a more comprehensive and in-depth manner. Thus, students have a better chance to acquire knowledge and master the skills for successful English teaching in kindergarten.

Discussion

In this article, we have focused on the preparation of future teachers in the vision to determine how the preparation of students (future teachers) for English tuition in kindergarten at individual universities in the Czech Republic is ensured.

Regarding the first research objective (To determine the level of preparation of future teachers for acquainting children with English at individual universities in the Czech Republic), the presented study demonstrates that the surveyed universities focus on English mainly in bachelor's programmes than in master's programmes. The subjects of these programs focused on methodology, supporting speaking, developing vocabulary, specific topics, and providing or creating materials for teaching English to preschool children. However, the practical preparation for teaching English in kindergarten was less represented. The objectives of the subjects were followed by requirements for students. The most frequented requirements were the elaboration of presentations, portfolios, and work on individual tasks. Practical output in kindergarten appeared the least. In the case of teaching methods, the most used were activating methods, teamwork, and work with text. Project teaching, e-learning, observations, and practical training were the least represented.

In general, it can be stated that the level of preparation of future teachers for acquainting children with English at universities in the Czech Republic focuses on the theoretical level of preparation rather than the practical one. This means that there is a lack of entrances to kindergarten where students would try out the acquired theoretical knowledge.

The emphasis on mastering the methodology is in line with the recommendations of Kelly et al. (2004), Widlok et al. (2010), or Vos (2008), who

identify knowledge of methodology as a necessary basis for teaching English in kindergarten. The same opinion is obtained from students who identify methodology as the most important attribute of preparation for teaching English (Dagarin Fojkar & Skubic, 2017). Good knowledge of the methodology enables teachers to create learning opportunities appropriate to the age of the children and also to choose appropriate pedagogical strategies to achieve the set learning objectives. Therefore, it is good news that these recommendations and findings are reflected in university practice. However, according to our research, the knowledge gained in this manner was not sufficiently verified in preschool practice. According to Widlok et al. (2010), practice should be ideally implemented abroad. The benefits of a stay abroad were confirmed by Tanaka and Ellis (2003), who revealed that students completing a stay abroad have significantly increased expertise and also have greater self-efficacy and self-confidence. Natural language exposure also contributes to fluency and vocabulary growth (Coleman, 1997; Freed, 1998), which brings the language of a non-native English teacher closer to the native. In the case of the Czech Republic, where the level of English among preschool teachers ranges from A1 to B2 (Černá, 2015), the possibility of staying abroad resonates even more.

With reference to the second research objective (to compare the future teachers' preparation for acquainting children with English in kindergarten), the following was found.

The most subjects focusing on the preparation of future teachers for English tuition in kindergarten were at the University of Hradec Králové, numbering three. The least was at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Palacký University in Olomouc and the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, where there was only one such subject. Masaryk University, together with Tomas Bata University in Zlín realised its preparation in two subjects. The University of Hradec Králové supported its preparation with another aspect, specifically the status of the obligation to complete these subjects. This preparation was most often in the second year of study across all the analysed universities.

On average, most requirements for a student within the course were required by the University of Hradec Králové and Tomas Bata University in Zlín. The most frequent requirements included the elaboration of a portfolio, presentations, and fulfilment of assigned individual tasks. Practical training was the least represented, which, as the interview with former students later showed, was the most frequently mentioned conceptual shortcoming. In addition to the set content of the course, the nature of teaching was also indicated by the chosen teaching methods, which most often included activating methods, methods

of working with text, and teamwork. Former students especially appreciated these methods thanks to the opportunity to try out the activities together and obtain feedback not only from the teacher but also from other students or, in the case of practical teaching, from kindergarten class teachers. The evaluation of the semester work was through various assessment methods. Most assessment methods were used by the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, which verifies the competence of students with up to five assessment methods: an oral exam and analysis of speaking, implementation of practical activities with students, analysis of the student's portfolio and his/her individual presentation. In contrast, the fewest evaluation methods were chosen by the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, which used only one method for evaluation, namely speech analysis.

Overall, the occurrence of spoken language and speech analysis is less common. Emphasis is placed on skills and activities aimed at practice in kindergarten. However, just like these activities, it is important to focus on improving the language itself. The emphasis on spoken language is mentioned, for example, by Goh (2019): kindergarten teachers described the spoken domain as the most important qualification for teaching English. Little experience and an insufficient level of the spoken language on the part of the teacher lead to insufficient self-confidence and fear of using the language (Bell & Bogan, 2013). As Erarslan's (2018) findings show, insufficient assessment of spoken skills and the predominance of written examinations may be one of the reasons for the low level of spoken language among students/future teachers. However, this problem has even wider implications. A direct relationship between teachers' and children's verbal skills has been reported (Asiah, 2013; Cirino et al., 2007). Only a teacher who has a certain level of language skills can set a good role model for children. From a psycholinguistic point of view, the importance of the teacher as a language model increases with the younger age of the children. Therefore, the university training of future kindergarten teachers should pay more attention to the productive use of the language.

Conclusion

Early teaching of English cannot automatically guarantee positive results. The quality of the achieved results depends more on the quality of teachers, teaching materials, and methods (Fenclová, 2004). A trained teacher is thus one of the conditions for successful early foreign language teaching (Commission of the European Communities, 2003). Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2011) specified the needs of young learners' teachers, one of which is that the

teacher must be qualified and specifically trained in language teaching. Nevertheless, our research findings suggest that university training in the Czech Republic does not always provide the conditions for obtaining an adequate qualification. At universities where students can acquire a qualification, students have asked for more methodology for early foreign language teaching. Greater emphasis should be placed on teaching methodology in university courses, also because the professional community (Hyes, 2014; Kelly et al., 2004; Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011) agrees that knowledge of foreign language teaching methodology is important for creating a supportive learning environment and choosing effective methods of foreign language teaching. Costa and Pladevall-Ballester (2020) share the view that teacher education and the use of teaching strategies should be tackled both in research and in pedagogical practices. Literature, research, and policies already deal with the relevant qualification of the teacher, but according to the research, practice lags. Students have a clear vision of consolidating theoretical knowledge about teaching strategies of early foreign language teaching – it is the inclusion of practical training in the university course.

Research in the field of foreign language education among kindergarten teachers is insufficient and non-complex (Zein & Garton, 2017). Therefore, further research is needed to help look into reality and identify the difficulties that teachers face in practice. Based on the findings of this research, recommendations for universities should subsequently be formulated; doing so would contribute to solutions to the shortage of qualified teachers of early foreign language teaching.

The limit of our research, which concerns the research sample, is the insufficient elaboration of the syllabi of some universities; therefore, it was not possible to make a comparison of some aspects of teaching the course. These inconsistent or insufficient (in some cases completely missing) syllabi can also be confusing for students who want to become acquainted with the course content before enrolling.

One idea for further research is to obtain an interview with students from other analysed universities (not only Tomas Bata University in Zlín) who have completed courses for English tuition in kindergarten. Their statements could provide a practical view of the findings from the contents analysis of syllabi and simultaneously contribute to the comparison of preparations realised at individual universities.

Inspired by foreign university education systems for English tuition, another idea for further research emerges: the comparison of university training in those countries where English teaching is compulsory at preschool age, such

as Poland, Cyprus, and Malta. The result would be not only a comparison of preparation and discovering their approaches to it but also the inspiration for formulating a model of preparation for English tuition to preschool children in the Czech Republic.

At this point, based on research findings, recommendations are formulated not only for kindergartens but also for universities. A surprising finding, from which a subsequent recommendation will be formulated, was the existence of universities that do not provide courses for English tuition in kindergarten. These universities do not even give students the opportunity to prepare for what they may encounter in practice. This can create a feeling of insecurity and demotivation for students, even the rejection of teaching English. The view of the education of future kindergarten teachers should not be one-way and rigid (i.e., from theory to practice= but also reflect the current needs of practice (the ever-increasing trend of foreign language early teaching), which should permeate back to theoretical training.

These universities could be also inspired by the requirements of the students, by elaborating a portfolio that former students find beneficial. Appropriate teaching methods for this subject could contribute to the effectiveness of content mediation, such as activating methods and practical training. Practical training would be implemented not only in the course with other students but especially with children in kindergarten. In the case of kindergarten, it would certainly be beneficial to provide a model worth following: a properly methodically modelled output. This output should represent a variety of activities that should be effective for the set educational aim and thus clearly represent the need for training in this area, which can be usable in practice. Related to this is a greater appeal for acquaintance with the methodology of English, which, according to the syllabi, is implemented at universities, but in practice, its level varies. The acquired theoretical knowledge would thus influence practice and vice versa. This could be ensured by subsequent reflection from kindergarten teachers as well as university teachers. The quality of English tuition in kindergarten would be influenced by the interaction of knowledge, skills, practical experience, and self-study of the student.

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