



The danger of shedding the content in grammar teaching: an example in Czech

El peligro de despojarse del contenido en la enseñanza de la gramática: un ejemplo en checo

Stanislav Štěpáník
Palacký University in Olomouc



Abstract

The role of grammar in L1 teaching has been a topic of a long-lasting debate. Czech language instruction is no exception. Based on an almost 200-year-old tradition, the prevailing model of teaching Czech is grammar- and knowledge-based. Innovations so far have focused mostly on general parameters of communication and interaction in class, instead of focusing on the content and its didactic transformation. The study demonstrates the necessity of the content-focused approach to modelling L1 education, and the danger of slipping to didactic formalism of shedding the content if the content-focused approach is disregarded.

Keywords: Czech; Grammar; Communication; Shedding the content; Teaching aims

Resumen

El papel de la gramática en la enseñanza de L1 ha sido un asunto largamente debatido. La instrucción del idioma checo no es una excepción. Fundamentado en casi doscientos años de tradición, el modelo prevalente de enseñanza del idioma checo tiene como base el conocimiento de la gramática del idioma. Hasta el momento las innovaciones se han basado mayormente en parámetros generales de comunicación e interacción en el aula, en lugar de centrarse en el contenido. El estudio pone en evidencia la necesidad de un enfoque que priorice el contenido a la hora de modelar la educación de la L1, y el riesgo de caer en el formalismo didáctico y el despojarse del contenido si el enfoque centrado en el contenido es ignorado.

Palabras clave: Checo; Gramática; Comunicación; Despojarse del contenido; Metas de enseñanza

INTRODUCTION¹

1.1

Innovations in education have a common denominator: all of them aspire to raise the quality of instruction – whatever their meaning and basis for or in themselves may be. Let us base our contemplation on the proposition that the main indicator of instructional quality is the manner of working with educational content (i.e., briefly, the subject matter of teaching and learning) and the changes in the way pupils cope with it (Janík et al., 2013). Education cannot function without content; high-quality instruction cannot be *content-empty* (Janík et al., 2013). In other words, all teaching must have content (Janík et al., 2019).

Educational content is the central notion of both didactics and curricular theory. Its main role is to develop various aspects of the student's personality: his/her cognitive abilities, skills, aesthetic values, moral qualities etc. It designates the character of teaching: it determines the creation of tasks and the manner pupils and teachers cooperate when dealing with the tasks; it also serves as the link between the pupils' activity in the lesson with the aims teaching is supposed to fulfil (Janík et al., 2013). As such, the selection and structuring of the content, in other words, the overall process of creating the learning and teaching environment, must be at the center of the teacher's attention: the teacher's role is arranging fruitful meeting between students and content (Klafki, 2000; Janík et al., 2019).

For L1 education, it is language itself and linguistics that provide the natural source of its content. To serve educational aims, the content derived from these mother fields must be didactically transformed (or better reconstructed – see Jelemenská et al., 2003; Komorek & Kattmann, 2008). It is necessary that this is done through the perspective of disciplinary didactics – using its methodology and with respect to its aims – not linguistics. This is because as far as L1 teaching aims are concerned, linguistics has a “blind spot” (Štěpáník, 2019). If this blind spot is not overcome by L1 didactics, it comes to disintegration of L1 education – for instance, typically through the separation of teaching grammar and developing pupils' communication skills (see 1.3). Consequently, in L1 education (as well as in other subjects), scientific conceptions and pupils' conceptions must be regarded as equal (see the model of didactic reconstruction – Jelemenská et al., 2003; Komorek & Kattmann, 2008).

¹ The paper is based on my contemplations in Štěpáník (2019, 2020).

1.2

It can be observed not only in Czech educational research that many of the current innovations in L1 instruction focus primarily on the general parameters of communication and interaction in class, i.e. the methods and forms of work used. What is mostly spoken about in the debate about education in the media, among general public but also a great number of teachers, is whether the lessons are “interesting”, “enjoyable” or “entertaining”. This, however, contrasts with the real demands on education: cognitively challenging, content-saturated, addressing the up-to-date contexts, etc.

Furthermore, under the pressures of the current “age of accountability” (Janík et al., 2019), which, among other things, includes expectations towards standardized tests and economic benefits of education, the new culture of learning in schools can be characterized by delivering teaching and learning in standardized ways, trying to reach objectives at expected levels and governing schools on the basis of student achievements (Janík et al., 2019).

As a result, the focus on the educational content decreases – Janík et al. (2019) call this phenomenon *shedding the content*. The term refers to loss of interest in the more complex questions of how content is developed and understood by students.

1.3

The central category of instructional quality is the *integrity of instruction* (Janík et al., 2019; thoroughly described in Janík et al., 2013, or Slavík et al., 2017): “The quality of instruction is seen as dependent on the integrity of instruction, i.e. on the quality of functional relationships between (1) teaching and learning content, (2) teaching and learning objectives and (3) the activities of the teacher and students. The better these three basic determinants of educational quality are integrated, the higher the quality of the TL situation is” (TL stands for teaching and learning – note S. Š.) (Janík et al., 2019). Disintegrated instruction cannot be of good quality.

The integrity of L1 instruction means that the development of communication skills is anchored in the knowledge of how the language system and the individual language phenomena function. In other words, teaching and learning grammar does not happen per se and developing in communication skills is not conducted through a non-grammatical approach, i.e. without explicit grammar teaching. This means that it is absolutely vital to integrate teaching grammar with developing communication skills as the main aim of language teaching is the

knowledge of how individual language phenomena work in communication. Language elements are essentially bound with communicative elements – pupils get to know the function of individual language elements in communication. As such, knowledge about language serves as a means of developing the pupils' communicative competency (Štěpáník, 2020).

CONTENT-ORIENTED APPROACH IN PRACTICE

2.1

There has been long-lasting criticism of the results of L1 teaching in the Czech school. Many sources show that the results both in language knowledge and communication skills of Czech pupils are not sufficient (in reading – ČŠI, 2019; writing – Štěpáník & Holanová, 2017/2018; in grammar – Adam, 2018, 2019; Adam et al., 2010/2011, and many others). The aim of this paper is to put the inefficiency of Czech teaching into the context of real instructional situations and through that to demonstrate the integrity of teaching L1, which is interrelated with the content, as the fundamental feature of increasing instructional quality. I want to demonstrate that the content-specific approach is the key to forming innovations in L1 instruction.

For this purpose, I use two TL situations from year 4 of primary school (children of 9–10 years of age). They demonstrate (1) the problems of current Czech language instruction and (2) the two basic types of formalisms² as they are defined in the content-specific approach (specifically in the 3A procedure: 1-annotating, 2-analysing, and 3-altering a particular teaching and learning situation) pursued by the team around Tomáš Janík and Jan Slavík, Czech top transdisciplinary didacticians (e.g. Janík et al., 2013; Slavík et al., 2016; 2017, etc.). This allows us to investigate how well the aims, content and concrete realizations of students' activities are integrated (Janík et al., 2019).

The selected TL situations represent prototypical instances of what Czech language instruction looks like. They have been selected from a corpus of 228 critical didactic incidents (in 83 lessons) that were collected through direct observations in primary (year 3 and 4) and lower-secondary (year 6 and 7) schools in Prague and its surroundings between 2017 and 2019 (for details see Štěpáník, 2020).

² A *didactic formalism* refers to the disintegration of the above-mentioned determinants of educational quality, i.e., (1) teaching and learning content, (2) teaching and learning objectives, and (3) teachers' and students' activities in the classroom. The opposite of didactic formalism is *didactic excellence* (Janík et al., 2019; see also Janík et al., 2013; Slavík et al., 2017, etc.).

2.2

Classification of word classes is a content matter which is introduced already in Year 2 and developed thoroughly throughout the following years at both primary and lower-secondary school. It is reviewed also in upper-secondary school and appears in almost all standardized testing (both the entrance examinations in Year 9, i.e. at the end of lower-secondary school, and school-leaving examination, i.e. at the end of upper-secondary school – in Czech, *maturita*).

Situation 1 demonstrates the identification of word classes in the sentence *There hung paintings and photographs on the wall* (*Na stěně visely obrazy a fotografie.*) in Year 4. The teacher gives the pupils 3 minutes to work on the task individually, then she checks the pupils' answers, calling on individual pupils, in a whole-class discussion.

Situation 1. Identification of word classes in a sentence in Year 4

T: So, let's start with the other sentence. And write a small number above all the words in the sentences – which word class they are. Work individually for a little moment, then we'll check it together.

P: And which sentence?

T: *There hung paintings and photographs on the wall* (*Na stěně visely obrazy a fotografie.*). So a small number above each word – which word class it is.

(3 minutes)

T: So, on the fingers of your hand, show me which word class it is. *On?* What is *on*? Laura, which word class is it? (*Laura is showing 7 fingers.*)

T: Well, you're showing it correctly. And what is it?

L: (5 s) A preposition.

T: Well, it almost looks as if you've copied it from the rest of the class if you don't know what it is. It's important that you know the name of the word class, then think about the number. So it's a preposition. *Wall?* Which word class is that?

(*T is looking at the pupils' fingers.*)

T: Uhm, a noun. Gender?

PP: *The* (as *she* – note S. Š.) *wall* (*ta stěna*), feminine.

T: Uhm, number?

PP: Singular.

T: Case? Everybody show me the case with the fingers of your hand. *On the wall*? Mark, aloud, what's the case question?

M: *The wall (ta stěna)*.

T: Uhm, *the wall (ta stěna)*. And when you have *on the wall (na stěně)*, ask *on...*?

PP: What?

T: And more?

PP: Whom?

PP: Sixth case.

T: Sixth case, excellent. *Hung*. The word class is? John? Louder.

J: A verb.

T: So all of you have it underlined with a wavy line³. Next, *paintings*? George?

J: *Paintings* is a noun.

T: Gender?

J: Masculine.

T: What masculine? Paul?

P: Inanimate.

T: Uhm, which case? Everybody show me on the fingers of your hand which case it is. Second case, Sam?

S: First case.

T: First. When it's the first case, then it is what?

(silence)

T: It's the subject. *And*. Which word class is that? Mary?

M: A preposition.

T: A preposition?

PP: Conjunction.

T: Hm, what does it connect? Maggie?

M: *Paintings* and *photographs*.

³ In traditional sentence analysis of a Czech sentence, predicates are traditionally underlined with a wavy line, subjects with a straight line.

T: Perfect. *Photographs* are... Carrie? (*silence*) Coordinated subject. We've already said that *hung* is a predicate. Is there a comma anywhere?

PP: No.

T: No. Jacob, next sentence.

PP: Ms, and that's adjectives? What are we doing actually?

T: Now we've reviewed the word classes but only on one sentence, just to practice. And now find the verb in the sentence and have a look if there's a comma anywhere, and if so, why.

Situation 1 serves as an example of **stolen cognition** (*odcizené poznávání*) – one of the two types of didactic formalism as defined in Janík's and Slavík's work mentioned above. Stolen cognition “is caused by the disintegration of students' activity and learning content regarding the aim of understanding the content” (Janík et al., 2019). The content is remote from the pupils' cognitive and motivational states and the learning environment does not give them sufficient insight into the content (Janík et al., 2019). The content in the task does not functionally express the most important features and connections between them. The semantic-logic arrangement of content is inadequate for communication and understanding, and dealing with mistakes does not contribute to the development of understanding and to the skill of discussing the particular content. Last, the content representation in the task does not provide the pupils with opportunities to develop their communicative and cognitive skills (according to the characteristics of stolen cognition). It is not clear why the pupils should master the content in such a way, how it relates to the main teaching aims, i.e. developing the pupils' communication and cognition.

Stolen cognition results “from the disintegration of individual aspects of the learning environment design (i.e. disintegration of relationships between the content, objectives and activity/communication in teaching and learning)” (Janík et al., 2019).

The problem with the teaching strategy is that “mechanical categorisation of words into word classes does not support the cognitive operation of categorisation; word-class exercises are purposeless grouping of words into groups and teaching morphology becomes formal” (Liptáková et al., 2011, p. 355). The same regards such identification of other grammatical categories (such as case, gender or number), which is pointless for pupils-native speakers. We observe a phenomenon that can be labelled as “training in small linguistics”. Language teaching is reduced

into mastering metalanguage, which might be useful in foreign language lessons, but without any communicative overreach represents exercise in linguistics only.

Formalism in the presented TL situation is fortified by the fact that word classes are reduced to certain symbols (here numbers – from the sequence of the word classes which pupils traditionally learn). Not only in this case it is common that the precondition to succeed in a language task, it is necessary for the pupils to master a set of symbols and labels – which are not anyhow connected to the language content taught (Štěpáník, 2020). In this respect, language content is subject to reduction and, as a consequence, *shedding*. In general, pupils learn something, but the aims of this are completely mistaken. Just to be clear – the problem here is not necessarily the subject matter (i.e. word classes) taught but the way it is offered to the pupils and the aims it is following.

Semantics or any functional aspects are disregarded altogether. As the task is highly formal, work in the lesson becomes cognitively simple – the main focus is on memorisation (see Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The teacher's questions are of lowest cognitive difficulty, closed, offering only one way of reply.⁴ From the formal guessing between preposition and conjunction (from which it can be deduced that the pupil does not have a clear concept of the two word classes) and from the end of the dialogue, it is apparent that at least some of the pupils do not know what they are doing and what for. The only functional moment appears with the question about the presence of a comma in the sentence. However, this moment remains unelaborated.

Apparent misconceptions shown by the pupils are not addressed. Moreover, there are some misconceptions that the teacher is building (I believe unintentionally – because with the “good” intention of simplification): (1) it remains unclear why she is mixing morphology and syntax (if the pupil is asked to underline a word with a wavy line, it means she is looking for the predicate, a syntactic feature – however, the task was to label word classes); as a result, pupils cannot understand what is the relation between the verb and the predicate, i.e. the relation between morphology and syntax; (2) she presents a noun in the first case as if it always was the subject of a sentence (“When it's the first case, then it is what? ... It's the subject.”), which is false. As such, traditional grammar teaching might lead to such simplification of the subject matter that it builds misconceptions instead of

⁴ As my focus is content-based, I leave behind the typical problems in the teacher's manner of leading pedagogical communication: the strong dominance of teacher-talking time, the very low space for the pupils' replies, formal or no feedback, etc. (see Šed'ová et al., 2012; Kesselová, 2019, etc.).

adequate understanding of how language works. As a result, language teaching falls into formalism and does not serve any useful purpose.

The operation of categorisation of various phenomena has an important role in the pupils' cognitive development. However, in traditional grammar teaching, this fundamental cognitive operation (classification of word classes, sentence elements or grammatical categories, etc.) becomes a drill in memorisation. The need for sorting certain language elements becomes formal labelling that does not require (and/or develop) any of the intended cognitive operations. We can clearly see that the metalanguage serves its own purposes, that it is mastered per se. In fact, from this point of view, L1 teaching becomes useless, at least from the pupils' point of view and from the perspective of their communicative and cognitive needs.

2.3

Situation 2 comes from the same class. It demonstrates the “review of the subject and the predicate” (in the teacher's words). The teacher gives the pupils parts of sentences (always containing the predicate together with another clause element), and their task is to complete these with a suitable subject. The whole class is working together.

Situation 2. Review of the subject and the predicate in Year 4

T: And so we're on page 18. Let's review the subject and the predicate.

PP: We've already done that.

T: What is a verb? What somebody does. Subject or predicate? Predicate. What is a subject? How do we ask for a subject? Who does it. OK? So we'll try to find who could be the subject in exercise 5 on page 18. Who could be sweet?

P: *A strawberry.*

T: Who else?

P: *Ice cream.*

P: *A sweet thing. (sladkost)*

T: Do you like the sentence *A sweet thing was sweet?* (*Sladkost byla sladká*)

PP: Nooo.

T: Why not?

P: Because a sweet thing is logically sweet.

P: Because it can be heard in the word.

T: Yes. So what was your subject, Theresa?

T: *Revenge was sweet.*

D: *Apples were sweet.*

T: What did David say differently?

PP: He put it in plural.

T: Yes, great. *Flew a kite.*

P: *On the field.*

T: *On the field (he) flew a kite.* Did you complete the sentence with the correct subject?

P: No. *On the field* is not a subject. On what?

T: Who or what flew a kite? So be careful with that, OK?

PP: *John. / He. / Cat.*

T: *Cat flew a kite? (Kočička pouštěl⁵ draka?)*

P: *Girl.*

T: *Girl flew a kite? (Holčička pouštěl draka?)*

PP: (laughter) *Girl flew a kite! (Holčička pouštěla⁶ draka!)*

T: Oh. But we have only *flew (pouštěl)*. Tom?

P: *A boy flew a kite. (Chlapeček pouštěl draka)*

T: Yes. And who else?

P: *A kite.*

T: *A kite flew a kite? Brother flew a kite.* Who else? Katy?

K: *Paul flew a kite.*

T: *Was bitter.*

P: *Chocolate.*

T: Yes. Or?

P: *A peach.*

T: I think also revenge can be bitter, but for you. *Could make beautiful haircuts.*

⁵ The problem here is that the form of the verb does not reflect the subject-verb concord.

⁶ This form of the verb reflects the subject-verb concord.

PP: *The hair dresser (kadeřnice). / Anny. / Girl. / Mother.*

T: Oliver, I can't forget your presentation on mushrooms. So you can think of some nice subject. *Had a full basket of mushrooms. (měl plný košík hub)*

PP: *He. / Lucas.*

T: Jack?

PP: *Grandpa. / Florist. / Excavator.*

T: A meaningful sentence please.

P: *Person. (Osoba)*

P: Ms, but *flower pot (květináč⁷)* also doesn't make sense. *Tom's flower pot had a full basket of mushrooms.*

T: *Florist (květinářř).*

P: Oh.

T: *A person had a full basket of mushrooms. Is it correct? (Osoba měl⁸ plný košík hub.)*

P: Nooo.

T: Why not?

P: And *dustman?*

T: A dustman can have a basket full of mushrooms. But a person?

P: *The person. (Ta osoba)*

T: Yes. So the person is...

P: Feminine.

T: Uhm.

P: *Carl had a full basket of mushrooms.*

T: Wonderful. *Carl had a full basket of mushrooms. Yes.*

Situation 2 serves as an example of **concealed cognition** (*utajené poznávání*; Janík et al., 2013; Slavík et al., 2017): The way in which content is represented in the task provides the pupils with no opportunities for discovering the key concepts of the problem: The content selection in the task does not functionally express the most important aspects and connections which characterize this particular area of

⁷ Instead of *květinář* (florist), the pupil heard *květináč* (flower pot).

⁸ Again, the form of the verb does not reflect the subject-verb concord.

the subject matter, the semantic-logical arrangement of content of the task is inadequate for communication and understanding, and dealing with mistakes does not contribute to the development of understanding and to the skill of discussing the particular content (Janík et al., 2019).

We observe quite high involvement of the pupils in the learning activities, the task is based on production. This would be valuable if the task was not profoundly under the actual level of the pupils' cognitive development and communicative skills.

At the beginning, the teacher says that the task is to complete sentences with a subject. However, the subject in a Czech sentence can be (intentionally) omitted (subject ellipsis is a very common cohesive device in Czech) or there are completely subjectless sentences. Native speakers acquire the subject-verb concord naturally and do not make mistakes in conjugating the verb. Clearly, it is not necessary to teach the forms to native speakers of Czech. The mistakes in the verb forms that pupils make can be ascribed to the complete decontextualization of the task and its unclear aim. As such, it is not certain what is being taught – why things that pupils as native speakers master naturally are being complicated and what is the purpose of the exercise. The real didactic potential of such a task (the role of a subject in a Czech sentence, the problem of the subject-verb concord or the function of ellipsis as a cohesive device in a text) remains unfulfilled.

Not only from the ignorance of the subject-verb concord in some of the solutions can we observe that the pupils approach the task formally, mechanically. They give random suggestions without real thought, some of the suggestions are just meant to test the teacher or show off (*excavator* or *dustman*), some of them just to be involved. That is obvious also from the solution *A sweet thing was sweet* or *A kite flew a kite*, where semantics is completely ignored. This is, however, not connected to the pupil having a misconception about the language phenomenon concerned, but with the form of the task and the teacher pushing the pupils from meaning to form (which is a long-lasting problem in teaching Czech – see e.g. Hájková, 2013; Höflerová, 2019, or Štěpáník, 2020).

The grammatical-normative approach (Nocoň, 2018, 2019), which we have already seen in Situation 1, is obvious from the beginning of the dialogue where the teacher reviews linguistic terminology without any communicative or cognitive overreach. That this approach is not working well can be deduced from the misconception of the subject shown by one of the pupils giving the example *on the field*. Also other improper solutions remain unnoticed or are not addressed anyhow

(e.g. the teacher's question about the example *A person had a full basket of mushrooms. (Osoba měl plný košík hub)*, where the subject-verb concord is wrong). As a result, real understanding of the problem is not reached: it is not clear what the pupils are learning and why, despite the fact that they are actively involved in the lesson. The task does not quite provide opportunity for the students to develop deeper understanding of the subject matter taught (Janík et al., 2019), which meets the characteristics of concealed cognition. The pupils "are keen on "playing" with the content, but they fail to understand it" (Janík et al., 2019, p. 194).

DISCUSSION

What we observe in both situations is a prototypical example of the processes that are regularly used in Czech lessons. Even though both fields (modern didactics of Czech language and the curriculum *Framework Education Programmes*) stress the communicative aim as the fundamental one (see e.g. Čechová & Styblík, 1998), in school practice the prevailing approach is the grammatical-normative one (see Nocoň, 2010, 2018, 2019). Such a model has roots in traditional linguistics. Due to the history of the subject and the close bond between Czech linguistics and didactics (see Šmejkalová, 2010) the learning and teaching environment is created through scientific (in our case linguistic) methodology. The main aim of such teaching is the transfer of linguistic knowledge – linguistic concepts, definitions and terminology; application of such knowledge is reduced to analysis of isolated (decontextualized) language structures (Nocoň, 2010).

Both situations also prove the traditional gap between educational research and teaching practice. The field of Czech didactics, of course, reflects the development in modern linguistics – in both of them, the communicative direction of their interests is clear. The obliviousness of the teaching practice in L1 to the development in science is a long-lasting problem not only in the Czech Republic, and represents a major problem for the implementation of innovations into L1 education and, as such, for fulfilling the tasks of school education for life in the 21st century. The grammatical-normative approach to L1 teaching opposes not only scientific evidence, but also the fundamental documents of education policy in the Czech Republic – e.g. the curriculum or the *Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic 2030+*.

In the Czech context, a very common argument for grammar teaching is its cognitive dimension – its role in the pupils' cognitive development. However, traditional grammar teaching – especially due to the manner of conveying the matter

to pupils – does not serve such purposes (Adam, 2018, 2019; Adam et al., 2010/2011; Kesselová, 2019; Myhill, 2016, 2018; Štěpáník & Chvál, 2016); perhaps quite the opposite (Hájková, 2013, 2019). The examples I have used to demonstrate the gap between didactic theory and practice are even more alerting that they show how content is grasped in primary school, i.e. the period which is crucial from the ontogenetic point of view.

As the results of longitudinal research show (Štěpáník, 2020), the operation with metalanguage represents one of the greatest challenges in Czech lessons. On the one hand, the adherence to linguistic terminology bears evidence of the Czech teachers' effort to comply with linguistics as the mother field of Czech language instruction (even though this might be only illusive as I have detected more or less serious gaps in content knowledge of the teachers I researched). On the other hand, it steers teaching Czech to formal grammar in the form of traditional grammar teaching. As a result, scientific aims prevail over educational aims.

In this respect, it can be said that teaching “small linguistics”, i.e. traditional grammar teaching, is one of the symptoms of formalism in L1 teaching. The cause of this problem is the **disintegration** of L1 instruction, specifically embodied in the fact that teaching language (grammar / knowledge about language) is separated from teaching communication – in other words, from developing communication skills. This is apparent not only in school timetables, where language lessons (*mluvnice* – grammar) are separated from communication lessons (*sloh* – composition), but also in textbooks, which also hold this division. As such, language teaching primarily serves linguistic aims and its result is “pupil = defective linguist” or “pupil = linguist amateur” (Štěpáník, 2020). However, “there is no logical, cognitive or educational reason why the ability to name and identify grammatical structures might be expected to improve writing”⁹ (Myhill, 2018, p. 3).

CONCLUSION

What I tried to demonstrate on concrete examples is the problem of shedding the content in traditional grammar teaching. It is connected with the problem of disintegration of L1 teaching in the sense of separating language from its functions in

⁹ Writing is one of the most complex activities pupils undertake at school as it involves a wide range of cognitive processes, and also social and language skills and knowledge (Myhill et al., 2005, 2016, 2018; Klimovič, 2016). Kellogg (1999) compares the level of cognitive difficulty of writing to activities requiring the highest level of concentration (e.g. a professional game of chess). This is highly relevant for teaching grammar as it can be applied to the development of other communication skills (i.e., speaking, listening and reading) as well because grammar (or knowledge about language) is required in all of them.

communication. The model of traditional grammar teaching is indefensible because it remains with form and completely ignores the relation between form and meaning, i.e. that “linguistic choices can affect how meaning is shaped through form” (Myhill, 2005, p. 87; see also Szymańska, 2018). On the basis of empirical evidence, Myhill (2016, p. 42) puts it plainly: “There is no positive benefit of explicit and de-contextualised grammatical instruction on learners’ competence as language users, with or without the use of grammatical metalanguage.”

The examples reveal that the question of the position of grammar in teaching L1 and of the way grammar (or linguistic knowledge in general) is didactically transformed for instruction in L1 is still very much alive (see Green & Erixon, 2020). In that context, the metaphor “grammar war”, which Locke (2010) used as the title of the collective monograph he edited, is not exaggerated even more than ten years after its publication.

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STANISLAV ŠTĚPÁNÍK

I work as an Associate Professor at the Department of Czech Language and Literature at the Faculty of Education of Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. I specialize in L1 didactics and comparative L1 didactics. I am the author of the latest monograph on the current state of teaching Czech (*Výuka češtiny mezi tradicí a inovací – Teaching Czech between Tradition and Innovation*) and the leading author of the first complex didactic conception of teaching Czech that integrates teaching language and communication (*Školní výpravy do krajiny češtiny: didaktika českého jazyka pro základní školy – School Journeys into the Landscape of Czech: Czech Language Didactics for Primary and Lower-secondary Schools*; with Eva Hájková, Klára Eliášková, Ludmila Liptáková and Marta Szymańska).

stanislav.stepanik@upol.cz
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0600-0760>



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