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The use of TBLT in contemporary language teaching in Czechia

Využití TBLT v současném jazykovém vzdělávání v Česku

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Abstract and keywords

The thesis deals with the use of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the background of contemporary curricular documents in Czechia. As policymakers seek to improve the education system in Czechia, it provides an opportunity to explore language teaching approaches that align more closely with current curricular documents. Since TBLT has been implemented at the government level in various countries, this thesis investigates the possibility of connecting TBLT and Strategie 2030+, a key binding curricular document for education in Czechia. The theoretical part of this thesis consists of a review of official curricular documents and their key concepts, as well as an overview of methods of teaching languages, spanning from traditional approaches to communicative language teaching, of which TBLT is a derivative. TBLT is scrutinised from both methodological as well as second language acquisition perspectives. The practical part demonstrates how TBLT is aligned with contemporary curricular documents by providing five worksheets that can be used in language classrooms. These worksheets were created based on a conducted checklist comprising of key TBLT principles along with general principles for producing learning materials. One of the worksheets was piloted at a grammar school and proved to be successful in terms of fulfilling the lesson aim, though more testing is certainly needed. However, in addition to common criticism found in literature, TBLT also has limitations regarding its integration into the curriculum, particularly with respect to state maturity exams and other official areas. Despite these challenges, the integration of TBLT into the Czech curriculum does appear feasible, and there are no official obstacles preventing teachers from implementing TBLT or TBLT tasks in their language classrooms.

Keywords: task, task-based language teaching, TBLT, curriculum, Czechia, language, contemporary, worksheets

Abstrakt a klíčová slova

Tato práce se zabývá výukou jazyka založenou na úkolech, známé jako Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), na pozadí současných kurikulárních dokumentů v Česku. Jelikož se v České republice stále usiluje o zlepšení vzdělávacího systému, se nabízí příležitost prozkoumat alternativní přístupy k výuce cizích jazyků, které jsou v souladu se současnými kurikulárními dokumenty ve větší míře. Vzhledem k tomu, že bylo TBLT v různých zemích implementováno na vládní úrovni, zkoumá tato práce možnost propojení TBLT a Strategie 2030+, klíčového a závazného kurikulárního dokumentu pro vzdělávání v Česku. Teoretickou část této práce tvoří přehled oficiálních kurikulárních dokumentů a jejich klíčových pojmů, následováno přehledem metod výuky jazyků zahrnující od tradičních přístupů až po komunikativní výuku jazyků, čehož je TBLT derivátem. TBLT je zkoumáno jak z metodického hlediska, tak z hlediska akvizice druhého jazyka. Praktická část demonstruje, jakým způsobem je TBLT v souladu se současnými kurikulárními dokumenty, a to prostřednictvím pěti pracovních listů, které lze využít v hodinách cizího jazyka. Tyto pracovní listy byly vytvořeny na základě vytvořeného kontrolního seznamu obsahujícího klíčové vlastnosti TBLT spolu s obecnými zásadami pro tvorbu výukových materiálů. Jeden z pracovních listů byl pilotován na gymnáziu a osvědčil se z hlediska naplnění cíle hodiny, byť je potřeba další testování a výzkum. Kromě běžné kritiky objevující se v odborné literatuře má TBLT také určitá úskalí na úrovni implementace do kurikula, zejména s ohledem na státní maturitní zkoušky a podobné oblasti oficiálního charakteru. Navzdory těmto výzvám se integrace TBLT do českého kontextu zdá být proveditelná a neexistují žádné oficiální překážky, které by učitelům bránily v zavádění TBLT nebo TBLT úkolů do výuky cizích jazyků.

Klíčová slova: úkol, výuka jazyka založená na úkolech, TBLT, kurikulum, Česko, jazyk, současné, pracovní listy

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List of abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALM	Audio-Lingual Method
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
GTM	Grammar-Translation Method
IH	Input Hypothesis
IW	Individual Work
L2	Second language
PW	Pairwork
RVP	Rámcové vzdělávací programy
S2030+	Strategie vzdělávací politiky ČR do roku 2030+
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
Ss	Students
ŠVP	Školní vzdělávací programy
T	Teacher
TBLA	Task-Based Language Assessment
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
TSLT	Task-Supported Language Teaching
T-Ss	Teacher-to-student interaction
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

1 Introduction

Despite the emergence of new methodologies and techniques for language teaching, the typical language classroom in the Czech Republic seems to have remained relatively unchanged in the last few decades. However, contemporary curricular documents, such as *Strategie 2030+*, offer a great deal of opportunity for enriching the classroom by employing modern, research-driven methods which aim to develop communicative language competency and 21st century language skills.

Before the emergence and development of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in the 1960s and 1970s, the standard approach to language teaching – not only in the Czech Republic – was arguably the traditional approach. This included, for example, the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, and other (see e.g. Richards & Rodgers, 2012). Some of the universal characteristics of these methods are the heavily teacher-focused and teacher-led lessons (that might be labelled as lectures) where the teacher is giving presentations that result in little-to-no focus on communication, and therefore in very limited student-to-student interaction. Despite this criticism of traditional methods, research suggests that they can be effective for language development (Saira et al., 2021). Nevertheless, other research has also indicated that modern methods from the communicative language teaching movement surpass the traditional branch in this regard (Ellis et al., 2019).

One methodology that has been steadily gaining recognition is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT differs from the mentioned traditional branch by focusing predominantly on communication, and, by extension, on student's communicative competency. Numerous studies (e.g. Ellis et al., 2019; Shintani, 2015) have indicated that TBLT results in a greater language competency progress as opposed to the traditional methods. Moreover, it is supported by second language acquisition (SLA) theories as well (Spada, 2022).

Although CLT has a reasonably long history amongst Czech teachers that seem to be adopting its techniques, its by-product, TBLT, does not seem to attract the same level of attention. It is for this reason then that this diploma thesis attempts to advocate the use of TBLT in language teaching in Czechia as one possible realisation of communicative language teaching due to its viable compatibility with curricular documents and goals of modern language teaching, i.e. sharpening communicative competency.

The primary aim of this thesis is to present a framework for designing TBLT worksheets for language classrooms. The first part of this thesis prepares a theoretical background for

TBLT. It begins with the distinction between the traditional method of language teaching and the communicative language teaching movement. It then continues by delving into TBLT; brief history, weak and strong TBLT, and the critique of this methodology. Moreover, it comments on second language acquisition and the current stance of SLA on TBLT. Finally, this part of the thesis also identifies the key curricular documents which are further used as a stepping stone for the implementation of TBLT in Czech language classrooms. In this section, it is highlighted how exactly the curricular documents invite for the use of new approaches to language teaching. The theoretical part is followed by stating the aims of this paper.

The practical part focuses on compiling the framework based on which worksheets can be designed. Specifically, it sets forth so-called checkboxes that are to be met in order to create a TBLT task that follows the key principles of TBLT literature and research. Furthermore, in this part, the criteria which are vital for a TBLT lesson, as well as the requirements from curricular documents, are translated into five different worksheets corresponding to A1-C1 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference, and one full lesson plan so that the readers can visualise how the worksheets might be used in a real lesson.

In the analysis part, the assembled worksheets are scrutinised and evaluated based on the aforementioned checkboxes, along with the requirements, so to speak, from curricular documents.

This diploma thesis strives to illustrate how Task-Based Language Teaching can be integrated into the context of Czech language classrooms and to demonstrate this seamless link by providing and clarifying a framework for creating materials for those classrooms. The practical product of this theoretical part is ready-to-use worksheets for potential Czech language teachers. All in all, this thesis aims to shed some light on TBLT as one possible communicative approach that might be adopted in the Czech context, with the hope of enhancing the average Czech language classroom and, consequently, improving students' communicative competency and fostering learner motivation.

2 Theoretical background

The teaching and learning of English has been a subject of constant debate in the field of applied linguistics, with different approaches and methods being proposed and implemented to address the diverse needs of a language learner. One of the modern approaches to teaching languages – English especially – is teaching it communicatively, which is arguably more desirable now than ever, given the fact that the role of English has changed dramatically in the contemporary connected world. The impetus for such a paradigm shift in teaching languages might be credited to English becoming the standard language for global discourse, a phenomenon called *lingua franca*.

2.1 English as Lingua Franca

Thanks to advancements in technology and global economic progress in the past few decades, English has emerged as the most widely used language in international discourse (Crystal, 2006). Unsurprisingly, a fruitful discussion naturally unfolded in academia about the role of English as lingua franca (ELF), a term defined by Seidlhofer (2011) as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option.”

ELF is not at all a novel concept. The roots of ELF can be traced back as far as the 16th century when the British started colonising Asia and Africa (Jenkins & Baker, 2020). Moreover, it can be argued that the establishment of ELF has been accelerated and consolidated during the past several decades due to post-WWII geopolitical shifts and the mentioned technological advancements.

These circumstances led to English being used by roughly 2 billion people (Crystal, 2011), an estimate that is deemed fairly reliable and “conservative” (Baker, 2015). Out of these two billion users of English, some 400 million are thought to be native speakers. This is an important piece of information; the fact that non-native speakers of English greatly outnumber native speakers begs the question of how educational systems should respond to this fact, so that they adequately reflect the demands of the contemporary dynamic world that are imposed on people, and whether there should be a standard of English that ought to be taught primarily.

2.1.1 Educational approaches to ELF

There has been a heated debate among scholars on the issue of ELF and what linguistic properties should be researched. Initially, it was lexicogrammar and phonology, but the current research spans a wider range of topics, such as pragmatics, morphosyntax, social context of

ELF, and other (Jenkins & Baker, 2020). Although these linguistic properties are somewhat clarified, there is no consensus on the implications for ELF pedagogy (Bayyurt & Akcan, 2015).

There have also been attempts to propose practical implementations of research findings in the field of ELF. For instance, Walker's (2010) handbook on pronunciation of ELF provides a practical guide to teaching pronunciation of ELF in an English language teaching (ELT) classroom. As an example, Walker makes the argument that ELF approaches do not replace the native-speaker models (i.e. native-like pronunciation); in fact, speakers do not need to possess native-like pronunciation to be intelligible, and ELF can serve as a means to attain this intelligible pronunciation. This is a neat educational shift and possibly even a neater reaction to English becoming a global language.

Other authors and educators also embraced the concept of ELF in teaching methodologies. One notable example is by Kiczkowiak & Lowe (2018), who provide a range of classroom activities which are designed to help learners operate effectively in ELF settings. These activities emphasise the importance of mutual understanding and communication effectiveness over native-like correctness. Other responses to the evolving role of English in the world were even broader in scale, consisting of more than pronunciation teaching or in-class activities – governmental curricular documents.

2.2 Czech curricular documents

The Czech educational system has been enjoying remarkable changes in structure and innovation in the past few years. According to the annual report on education development for 2022 published by the Ministry of Education (hereafter MŠMT), it is of vital importance that the educational system responds adequately to the dynamic world outside of school classrooms. One response to this challenge is the conduction and implementation of the so-called *Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030*, or Strategy 2030+ for short (hereafter S2030+).

2.2.1 Strategy 2030+

S2030+ is arguably one of the most important, government-approved, contemporary documents for the Czech education system due to its novelty approach to teaching. It strives to respond to current social changes by formulating two strategic objectives: (1) to focus education more on the acquisition of competencies needed for an active civic, professional, and personal life, and (2) to reduce inequalities in access to quality education and pave the way for the

maximum development of the potential of children, pupils, and students (MŠMT, 2020). S2030+ is permeated with a concept of utmost importance: competencies.

2.2.1.1 Competencies

Competencies seem to be the focal point for the reform of the Czech education system. A competency can be defined as a multifaceted blend of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow – those who have acquired them – to manage challenging situations which are often encountered in working, academic, and personal life (MŠMT, 2020). More elaborately, competencies were categorised into eight so-called ‘key competencies’ which were proposed by the European Council (2018). Those eight key competencies, that were further approved of and adopted by the European Council, are: literacy competency; multilingual competency; mathematical and competency in science, technology, and engineering; digital competency; personal, social, and learning to learn competency; citizenship competency; entrepreneurship competency; cultural awareness and expression competency (European Council, 2018). S2030+ adopts these competencies and seeks to convert them into practice in its first strategic objective.

Although competencies are hardly ever disconnected from each other and acquired in isolation, it is worth looking at one of them discretely in more detail – multilingual competency.

2.2.1.2 Multilingual competency and language development

Multilingual competency offers considerable advantages that extend beyond mere language proficiency; it encompasses the ability to effectively communicate, comprehend, and engage in multilingual contexts, promoting linguistic diversity and proficiency across various languages (European Council, 2018). By nurturing proficiency across languages, it becomes possible for learners to gain a nuanced understanding of various cultures, traditions, and perspectives. Such a competency is of paramount importance in navigating the contemporary dynamic world, where diverse interactions are the norm, be it academic, professional, or other contexts.

However, in the Czech educational context, the development of multilingual competency poses both benefits and challenges. S2030+ recognises that fostering multilingual competency not only enhances communication but also cultural understanding and collaboration on a global scale. By equipping learners with linguistic competency, S2030+ aims to instil a diverse skill set in learners which helps them transcend language barriers and enrich their overall cognitive abilities (MŠMT, 2020).

The integration of multilingual competency naturally faces challenges of various kinds. Some possible areas of conflict might range from curriculum design to teacher training, resources, and even politics. S2030+ does state explicitly that methodical and financial support will be provided for innovative approaches in teaching and their dissemination (MŠMT, 2020), which could potentially support schools – especially those schools in underdeveloped regions – in implementing novel approaches that embody multilingual competency. Nevertheless, it is up to schools to adopt specific, modern approaches that reflect the needs of a 21st-century language user.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach, involving the collaboration of teachers, educators, policymakers, and others, and acquiring those competencies likewise requires a broad-scale approach.

2.2.1.3 Acquiring competencies

The first strategic objective of S2030+ admits what has been already stated – the world, in its complexity, is dynamically changing and adds that the Czech education system is still fairly outdated and does not reflect the demands of the contemporary world (MŠMT, 2020). This is unquestionably more accurate now than ever, given the surge in digital tools based on artificial intelligence. The original role of education is therefore likely to change.

S2030+ advocates the change from informationally dense curricula to supporting the ability to think critically and understand issues in broader contexts. The emphasis, therefore, should be on using knowledge creatively as well as on teamwork. According to S2030+, this is to be achieved through competencies.

Nonetheless, prior to the publication of S2030+, the attempts at implementing competency-based models in education were not successful due to the lack of clear definitions of key competencies and insufficient support for headteachers and teachers (MŠMT, 2020). It seems sensible then to take into account the EU Council's recommendation from 2018 regarding key competencies and lifelong learning and use it as a blueprint, so to speak, for new curricular design.

Overall, the overarching objective of S2030+ and its (upcoming) derivatives ought to prioritise fostering working with information rather than rote learning. One project that is currently being developed and that stems from S2030+ is the overhaul of framework curricula (*Rámcové vzdělávací programy*, hereafter RVP).

2.2.2 RVP

In the Czech education system, RVPs are binding documents that outline the educational goals, content, and expected outcomes for various levels of education, from preschool to secondary school. RVPs are designed by educational experts, drawing from pedagogical research, societal needs, and educational objectives, to provide a structured framework for schools so that it ensures a certain standard of quality education across the country. These framework curricula emphasise the development of key competencies, as well as developing critical thinking, digital literacy, problem-solving, and recognising the importance of holistic education beyond subject-specific knowledge.

These framework curricula are updated and revised periodically. RVPs are currently undergoing a major overhaul, initiated by S2030+. The objective of revising the RVPs is to develop a curriculum that aligns with contemporary societal trends, with robust support for schools and teachers (MŠMT, 2020).

2.2.2.1 RVP and the teaching of foreign languages

One area that has already been discussed and somewhat refined by experts is the teaching of foreign languages in primary education, i.e., in normal circumstances, pupils aged between 6 and 15 years. For this RVP, two strategic objectives were formulated by the authors: (1) to reduce inequalities in access to quality education and enable maximum development of the potential of children, pupils, and students, and (2) to focus education more on acquiring competencies needed for active civic, professional, and personal life.

More specifically, the section for foreign language teaching in RVP for primary education formulates nurturing and developing key competencies of pupils by guiding them to perceive and comprehend language as not just a historical and cultural phenomenon, but also as an essential tool for lifelong learning. It encourages a positive relationship with one's native language, emphasising its role in personal and cultural enrichment. Furthermore, RVP for primary education promotes appreciation for multilingualism and diverse cultures, cultivating communication skills within a given cultural context, acquiring information from various literary sources and handling the information appropriately, gaining self-confidence in public speaking, and fostering a positive relationship with literature and other forms of art based on artistic texts.

An expert publication on the revision of RVPs proposed several demands, so to speak, that ought to be incorporated into the revised RVPs. These demands overlap with the objectives

in the previous paragraph, as they consist of focusing on the student and their learning process, active learning, emphasising individualisation and personalisation, particularly concerning students with special needs; supporting learner autonomy; emphasising and facilitating interaction; strengthening language awareness; integrating language skills; focusing on content and authentic input; contextualising linguistic input (in other words, language is acquired for the purpose of expressing a specific message or achieving a specific goal); promoting the ability for self-reflection and self-assessment (Národní pedagogický institut, 2023).

Despite this strong advocacy of competencies – strengthened by the endorsement from institutions such as the European Council – some pedagogical research opposes their use (see Slavík et al., 2017). Regardless, it is advised that RVP for primary education abide by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) from 2018. This framework, a well-established standardized guideline for describing language proficiency, also strongly endorses competencies.

In conclusion, the fundamental goal of education should prioritize the holistic development of students and their ability to effectively apply language knowledge and skills across various life stages (Národní pedagogický institut, 2023). As we strive for comprehensive student development, it becomes essential to critically assess traditional teaching methods and their efficacy in achieving these educational objectives, while also considering potential modern alternative approaches.

2.3 Traditional Methods

Tradition often serves as a bedrock upon which innovations are built. The realm of language teaching is no exception. Before communicative language teaching was developed and researched, the conventional methods of language teaching were the mainstream. As an example, we might consider the Grammar-Translation Method, with its roots tracing back to the eighteenth century and serious dominance as a foreign language teaching standard during the 1840s to 1940s in Europe (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) might be no longer in use as a standalone methodology, but some principles of GTM can still be seen in practice (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011). Richards & Rodgers (2014) provide a list of the principal characteristics of GTM; for example, the sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice; accuracy is emphasized; grammar is taught deductively. Evidently, the GTM is heavily focused on accuracy.

As another example from the traditional branch, we might consider the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), which emerged around the 1950s. The Audio-Lingual Method is, likewise, profoundly teacher-led and teacher-oriented, as it relies on drilling accuracy through listen-and-repeat exercises and similar practices (J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2014). However, these methods clash with contemporary curricular requirements that emphasise communicative competency, critical thinking, and practical language use. The GTM and ALM, on the contrary, tend to prioritize grammatical accuracy over functional communication and lack activities that encourage student engagement, interaction, and real-world language application.

Gradually, these approaches had been abandoned as there was a need for closer study of the language itself, in context, with its respective meaning (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Thus came the communicative language teaching approach.

2.4 Communicative language teaching

The communicative language teaching (CLT) movement emerged not only as a reaction to the tediousness and rigidity of the traditional methods but also partly with respect to the educational changes and new necessities to teach adults the major languages of Europe in the 1960s and 1970s (J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As the name suggests, this approach stresses the communicative aspect of language learning. The goal of this approach is ‘communicative competence’, a term coined by Hymes (1972), encompasses the notion that utilising language effectively in communication necessitates not only the knowledge of linguistic structures but also the understanding of contextual rules governing its usage.

CLT is often divided into two streams: strong and weak. While ‘strong’ CLT posits that language is acquired through communication and by communicating speakers achieve language proficiency, ‘weak’ CLT sees value in both communication and a wider programme of language teaching (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

In essence, the rudimentary principles of CLT emphasise the meaningful and functional use of language, such as that the central focus of learning is on authentic and meaningful communication, fluency is not overlooked, and learning happens through using the language (J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Jacobs and Farrell (2003) proposed that the transition from traditional methods to CLT led to several major changes in language teaching. Specifically, the promotion of learner autonomy (giving learners more control over their own learning), recognition of the social nature of learning (emphasising the impact of interaction with others), curricular integration (the fact that English is not seen as a standalone subject and can be linked

to other subjects in the curriculum), focus on meaning, and the promotion of critical and creative thinking skills. One well-researched methodology that encompasses these educational shifts, and that has been steadily gaining recognition over the past few decades, is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

2.5 Task-Based Language Teaching

As the principles of CLT have been continually evolving and refined more precisely, TBLT – a derivative of CLT – has attracted considerable attention. TBLT offers a distinctive methodological approach to teaching languages.

2.5.1 A brief history of TBLT

TBLT is an approach that differs from traditional approaches by emphasising the importance of engaging learners' natural abilities for acquiring language incidentally through the performance of tasks that draw learners' attention to form (Ellis et al., 2019). In other words, TBLT prioritises meaning but does not disregard form.

It is then clear that TBLT is intrinsically connected to CLT. The emergence and development of TBLT can be attributed to multiple factors, each playing pivotal roles in shaping the theoretical background and practical applications for teaching. For instance, Hymes (1972) drew on emphasising communicative competence, as well as Halliday's (1973) view of language as functional in nature. These theories gradually led to a paradigm shift in language teaching, slowly replacing the focus on grammatical structure for language functions. A term that began to be discussed more frequently during these changes was 'task'. Tasks are the central and indispensable components of TBLT, yet defining 'task' is by no means unproblematic, and furthermore, the current definitions are not easily understood and conceived.

2.5.2 Defining 'task'

In the pursuit of a 'new' communicative methodology, TBLT began to shape into a more distinct form. The first challenge was defining and specifying what a task is. While the term 'task' emerged in early CLT and the so-called Natural Approach, the first task-based approaches, which put tasks as the focal point of language acquisition, began appearing in the late 1980s (Ellis, 2018).

There have been numerous attempts at trying to define 'task' in the context of TBLT. Nunan (1989) defined 'task' as a 'meaning-focused activity' which requires learners to focus on meaning rather than form, and which should stand alone as a communicative act in its own

right. Long (1985) opted for a more general definition: “[tasks are] the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between.” In this sense, tasks should mimic, so to speak, typical activities from everyday life. According to Ellis et al. (2019), the most encompassing definition is by Breen (1989), who defines ‘task’ as a “structured plan for the provision of opportunities for the refinement of knowledge and capabilities entailed in a new language and its use during communication.”

All in all, the definitions overlap in four crucial areas, articulated and refined by Ellis & Shintani (2014): (1) the primary focus is on meaning; (2) there is a gap; (3) learners rely mainly on their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources; (4) there is a clearly defined communicative outcome. More elaborately, (1) students should be primarily concerned with comprehension and production of language for a communicative purpose, (2) the task ought to be designed in a way that it includes an obstacle in the communication that needs to be overcome and successfully closed, and that essentially drives the communication, (3) students draw on their own linguistic repertoire as well as non-linguistic resources, and the task itself should not present the students with the target language, (4) the task has a communicative goal which is to be achieved, hence tasks should also be assessed in terms of goal completion, not target language use.

2.5.3 Classification of tasks

Moreover, tasks are typically further classified into 3 types, drawing on the idea of gap. Prabhu (1987) developed 3 types of task activities: information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap. This model was later adapted by other researchers (cf. East, 2021; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Willis, 1996).

Information gap activity involves a transfer of information, either between students, places, or from one form to another (Ellis et al., 2019). Reasoning gap activity is concerned with deducing, inferring, logical reasoning, and/or working with patterns. This activity therefore incorporates comprehending and conveying information, and it differs from information gap activity by transforming the information in question into a different form. The third activity, opinion gap, focuses on articulating and presenting one’s opinion, preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation (Prabhu, 1987).

2.5.4 Strong and weak TBLT

The terms ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ TBLT roughly correspond to the strong and weak theories of communicative language teaching, and it seems reasonable to distinguish between these two versions of TBLT as they are crucial for practising TBLT.

TBLT grew out of the strong CLT approach (Ellis et al., 2019). In strong TBLT, the syllabus, pedagogic procedures, and decisions made by the teacher revolve around tasks, and the core learning and teaching processes are directly derived from tasks (East, 2021). This makes tasks the cornerstones of lessons, and the processing of language rules implicit and unconscious. Assuming that the tasks are designed and executed appropriately, learning and acquisition should take place without direct intervention from the teacher (Bygate, 2016).

Weak TBLT (also called *Task-Supported* Language Teaching, or TSLT), on the other hand, uses tasks as a supplementary technique. Unlike in the strong version of TBLT, tasks alone in the weak version are not sufficient and are embedded in a more complex pedagogic context (Foster & Skehan, 1996). In other words, tasks may act as self-contained activities, used at any point in the lesson along with other techniques.

2.5.5 TBLT lesson stages

A typical TBLT lesson consists of three stages, described in Ellis (2003): pre-task, task, post-task. Ellis pointed out that out of these three stages, only the main task stage is required. Nonetheless, both pre-task and post-task have considerable effect on learning gains (Ellis et al., 2019).

The pre-task stage virtually prepares and motivates the learners to undertake and complete the upcoming task. The primary goal of this stage is to make sure that the learners understand the outcome of the task, and that they are equipped with adequate linguistic resources to complete the task. Linguistic resources here refer to lexical knowledge, not grammatical – a point of controversy and critique which will be addressed in the next chapter. The teacher here should provide the learners with necessary vocabulary items to encourage communication in the main stage, as well as sufficient time to prepare for the main task. Learners who are given time to pre-plan for the main task achieve greater language gains in comparison with learners who undergo no planning (Romanova, 2010).

After the pre-task stage comes the main task. In this phase, learners execute the given task and try to reach the goal by overcoming the gap. As explained, they use any means necessary to reach this goal, using both linguistic and non-linguistic resources.

The post-task stage is of crucial importance. The purpose of the post-task stage is to provide learners with opportunities to repeat a task, address linguistic forms, and engage in reflective activities (Ellis et al., 2019). It is in this stage when the teacher provides feedback on the task outcome, and perhaps more importantly, focuses on form. The teacher ought to draw attention to specific linguistic features the learners used, or should have used, that were relevant to the task at hand. Furthermore, the focus on accuracy could be consolidated by repeating the task with slight adjustments, such as changing the content or swapping partners.

2.5.6 Task-based language assessment

If Czech teachers are to implement TBLT into their lessons, they will quickly be met with a serious ‘obstacle’ – testing. The Czech educational system requires marks, and perhaps the most convenient way of obtaining marks for teachers is the traditional way of written tests, often with cloze and multiple-choice questions. This might resemble the way of assessing from the age of the Grammar-Translation Method, where the language proficiency of students was largely labelled right or wrong, and where there was no emphasis on assessing communicative proficiency (East, 2021).

Task-based language assessment (TBLA) attempts to respond to this deeply rooted system of testing by offering a more communicative approach. Bachman and Damböck (2018) noted that “the primary purpose of language teaching and of language teaching/learning tasks is to improve students’ language learning.” The purpose of such testing is, therefore, to gather information about our students’ language ability, specifically what and how much they have learned. As Underhill (1982) noted, these tests could not possibly replicate (or measure) real-world language usage, and furthermore, students might achieve high scores in such tests but then lack the ability to use the language in real-world situations. It can be therefore surmised that the communicative use of language is context-bound, and that multiple skills are at work at the same time. Bachman (2000) contributed to this notion by highlighting that language assessment should “take into consideration the discoursal and sociolinguistic aspects of language use, as well as the context in which it takes place.” In addition, East (2016) provided his perspective by claiming it necessary to “view proficiency more holistically in terms of carrying out genuine communication in a range of contexts.”

One possible realisation is TBLA, which can be defined as “a framework for language testing/assessment that takes the task as the fundamental unit for assessment and testing” (Shehadeh, 2018). According to Shehadeh’s view, TBLA is based on the same principles as TBLT with the extension to the testing domain. It appears evident then that if tasks play a central

role in TBLT lessons, then they should also form the core of testing. East (2021) explains that TBLA is ideally happening all the time in classrooms while teachers are monitoring students' engagement and performance.

The tasks used for assessment may or may not be different in design from regular tasks, but their purpose naturally transforms them into diagnostic tools collecting evidence on students' language proficiency. TBLA tasks can be of course used also more traditionally, i.e. at the end of a grammar topic, semester, or perhaps course. The main evidence here is, quite obviously, whether students complete the task and reach the predetermined outcome. In this respect, the primary objective of TBLA, according to Norris and Long (2000), is not to assess the display of linguistic knowledge, or to categorise learners into broadly defined language ability levels, but to determine whether students can employ the L2 to complete specified tasks.

The obvious question might be how teachers determine that learning gains have taken place. Long (2016) elaborated on this issue and claimed that a successful completion of two tasks is fairly predictable with regard to real-world target tasks. In other words, if students successfully complete two tasks of the same principle and target language, they will likely be successful even outside of the classroom. This, however, does not inform teachers about the language proficiency.

Bachman and Palmer (2010) attempted to resolve this problem by defining language ability in precise terms to distinguish it from other aspects that can affect assessment performance (p. 43). East (2021) elaborated on this definition and labelled it 'construct.' Construct should underlie the task design itself so that the task can be used for assessment purposes. According to East, one definition of a construct might be "stating the facets that are key components of the specific task – for example, the ability of the interlocutor to apologise, negotiate or complain." Construct can be understood as a theoretical framework, roughly speaking, that might be nonetheless used to create a rubric for assessment. While construct outlines the specific language abilities, competencies, and skills that are deemed important for the task at hand, a rubric formulates these components into observable, measurable and assessable criteria.

An example of such an approach to TBLA might be the widely used Common European Framework of Reference, often referred to as CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020). CEFR provides a straightforward method for evaluating learners' relative accomplishments in various skills and categories on a six-point scale from A1 to C2. The CEFR assessment grids – 'rubrics' – might

be used for TBLA. Similarly, the Proficiency Guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages provide an alternative but comparable scale for language assessment (ACTFL, 2012).

On the other hand, East (2021) admits that established scales (such as CEFR) might not always be ideal, and teachers should feel free to develop their own scoring metrics, especially if the assessment takes place in contexts where there is no specific scale prescribed.

Regardless of the selection of the rubric or test, any evaluative situation carries its own merits and drawbacks. By assuming the existence of a single ‘optimal’ test, teachers are likely to create an assessment material that may not be suitable for all test takers (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). The piece of advice is, therefore, to draw on a plethora of assessment types, including even multiple-choice tests as they have some value and they are easy to administer and score (East, 2021).

2.5.7 The critique of TBLT

Assessment is only one of the TBLT areas of lively discussions. Despite the overall positive and strong effects of TBLT on learning outcomes (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019), there is a substantial amount of criticism of TBLT in general. A typical challenge teachers face is the difficulty in understanding the concept of ‘task’, as evidenced by, for instance, a study among Chinese teachers conducted by Hu (2016), where 17% of the interviewed teachers expressed a negative attitude towards TBLT and 33% expressed passive acceptance. Likewise, Lin & Wu (2012) found that striking 86% of the interviewed Taiwanese teachers falsely believed that tasks are equal to exercises.

Another challenge teachers often face is a time constraint. Several studies (cf. Hao, 2016; Liu & Ren, 2021; Pham & Nguyen, 2018; Plews & Zhao, 2010) report that teachers consciously mention that designing tasks is time-consuming, leading them to opt for other techniques. Even though this issue is partially related to the lack of understanding of tasks, it will be argued later that this time-as-a-constraint issue could be potentially resolved by using artificial intelligence tools which are currently available and becoming more widespread. Ellis et al. (2019) also pointed out that this is caused by the scarcity of task-based teaching materials and suggested that this problem can be addressed by creating a centralised task bank.

A huge area of criticism and controversy is grammar. Several papers (K. McDonough, 2015; K. McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007; Watson Todd, 2006) reported that teachers are sceptical about their students’ grammatical progress in TBLT lessons. Swan (2005) also

questions how task-based instruction can effectively provide and teach new language, including lexis, since it favours online learning through communicative tasks and interaction, and restricts deliberate attention to language forms. Ellis et al. (2019) however responded that this problem is rather imagined than real, given that there is evidence that TBLT does lead to grammatical development (Shintani, 2016). According to Ellis et al., the real problem is “the difficulty that teachers have in recognizing that grammar can be acquired incidentally, and that incidental acquisition can be more effective for the development of communicative abilities than the intentional language learning to which traditional language teaching caters.” It is further elaborated that unless teachers subscribe to this idea, they are likely to opt for weak TBLT, i.e. working with tasks as standalone items.

Bruton (2005) took a broader stance and claimed that as far as formal educational setting is concerned, TBLT has serious limitations. He argued that TBLT is not applicable to typical secondary foreign language classrooms because students in initial levels (i.e. language beginners) need to receive input and relevant feedback on a consistent and progressive basis. Another researcher who commented on the formal educational setting aspect was Swan (2005), who claimed that task-based instruction is particularly unsuitable for contexts where time is limited and out-of-class exposure to the language unavailable, i.e. most of the world’s language classrooms, he adds. This claim was later dismissed by Long (2016) as unjust, explaining that inadequate time for language classrooms and little-to-no exposure are issues for all language classrooms, not just TBLT.

Bruton (2005) also opposed the idea of the teacher being excluded from the communication during a task, claiming that the teacher should be a ‘co-communicator.’ A significant number of students prefer teacher-led activities (Burden, 1999), and some even like it when teachers talk about themselves (J. McDonough, 2002). Furthermore, Bruton also mentioned that “the most obvious limitation of TBLT is its virtually exclusive focus on oral expression.” While it is true that most of the research work on TBLT has focused on interaction, and therefore oral tasks, East (2021) does not accept the idea that TBLT tasks must be necessarily spoken.

In the background of these discussions, TBLT has been undergoing scrutiny from another vitally important field that would later support TBLT’s position as a standalone methodology – second language acquisition.

2.6 Second Language Acquisition and TBLT

The field of second language acquisition (SLA) research has been a subject of interest for researchers, linguists, and educators for several decades; not only for the pursuit of discovering effective learning processes in terms of language acquisition but also for cost-saving measures (Long, 2016).

TBLT, like many other theories, has been examined from the SLA perspective, and as evidenced by the theory discussed so far, TBLT has proved and established itself as a solid communicative approach. East (2021) presented three cognitivist models from SLA that underpin TBLT as an approach that favours communication and has a role in language acquisition. Those models are the input hypothesis, the output hypothesis, and the interaction hypothesis.

2.6.1 The Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis, proposed by Krashen (1985), posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language input that is – in terms of complexity, and therefore difficulty – slightly beyond their current language level. For Krashen, acquisition was “a natural and subconscious process, with no conscious attention to the grammatical rules” (East, 2021).

Krashen (1985) proposed a formula ‘ $i+1$ ’, where ‘ i ’ represents the learner’s current language ability and ‘ $+1$ ’ the slightly more advanced, typically unknown, language input. In other words, according to Krashen, language acquisition requires the language input to be not only comprehensible but also slightly more taxing, so that it forces the learner to make more cognitive efforts to understand the input in question. Krashen described this type of language as ‘comprehensible input’, where the language user may not be familiar with all the words used, but it would be overall understandable. Based on this premise, acquisition would occur simply by immersing the learners in the language.

In the context of TBLT, the Input Hypothesis by Krashen seems to be aligned with the fundamental principle of providing learners with meaningful and appropriately challenging language input. Proper TBLT tasks should be designed in a way that presents learners with a language input that is not only comprehensible but also slightly more linguistically challenging than their current language proficiency level. This deliberate inclusion of ‘ $i+1$ ’ in TBLT tasks encourages learners to stretch their language abilities, thus fostering incremental language development. The alignment between the Input Hypothesis and TBLT emphasises the

importance of providing learners with appropriately challenging yet comprehensible language input to facilitate language acquisition and proficiency.

While the existence of L2 input is essential, later research also proves that on its own it is not entirely sufficient and the process of language acquisition can be sped up and made more effective if the learners also take an active part in producing L2 output. One of the key theories in this respect is Swain's comprehensible output hypothesis.

2.6.2 The Comprehensible Output Hypothesis

Swain's (1985) findings from the Canadian French immersion context indicated that exposure to comprehensible input alone was not adequate for developing communicative competency. Swain emphasised that learners also need opportunities to produce language output that slightly challenges their current proficiency, pushing them to generate written and spoken language beyond their comfort level.

According to Swain (1985), acquisition occurs when learners face a certain limitation in their linguistic knowledge. Swain (1985) later described that when learners are to produce language, they might "notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognise what they do not know, or know only partially." Once this communicative gap is noticed, learners naturally seek ways of overcoming it, thus modifying their output.

The Comprehensible Output Hypothesis suggests that successful SLA occurs when learners are encouraged to generate written and spoken language with an emphasis on accuracy, pushing them beyond their comfort level. Swain (1985) contends that this 'pushed' output allows learners to concentrate on employing language in meaningful and contextually appropriate ways, enabling them to "test out hypotheses about the target language, and to move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it" (p. 252). Through this process, learners, when receiving feedback on their output, become aware of their gaps in knowledge, prompting them to bridge those gaps. Ultimately, this should facilitate the development of accuracy, fluency, and automaticity in language utilization.

A concept of considerable importance looms in the background of this theory – noticing. Noticing was proposed as an SLA hypothesis by Schmidt (1990). The Noticing Hypothesis argues that learners are unable to acquire grammatical features in an L2 unless they notice them first, as well as how they are used (Schmidt, 1990). According to Schmidt (1995, p. 20), "what

learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning,” making noticing the starting point for SLA to take place.

It would seem implausible to say that these two presented theories are sufficient to explain the SLA phenomenon. In reality, comprehensible and pushed output contribute to the plethora of theories that inform successful SLA (East, 2021). A sort of extension theory for the Input and Comprehensible Output hypotheses in relation to TBLT might be considered the Interaction Hypothesis (IH).

2.6.3 The Interaction Hypothesis

The Interaction Hypothesis (IH), proposed by Long (1981), emphasises the role of communication and interaction between learners in learning a new language. IH asserts that learners benefit from the negotiation of meaning during communication breakdowns, as it provides feedback and opportunities for language modification (Loewen & Sato, 2018). In other words, meaning negotiation is the process where one interlocutor seeks to make their meaning clearer and more comprehensible or tries to understand what the other interlocutor is trying to convey. This process of meaning negotiation is done by adjusting the language the interlocutors use, or by asking questions about the language used (East, 2021).

In his proposal of IH, Long (1981) argued that interaction facilitates SLA by providing learners with comprehensible input, modified output, and feedback. Long’s IH is essentially based on Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, as well as on the works of Hatch (1978) and others (see e.g. Pica, 1994; Gass, 1997), who argued that conversational interaction is a crucial component of SLA. It can be therefore inferred that the IH is founded on the idea that the development of language proficiency is primarily facilitated through face-to-face communication.

IH has been supported by various studies that have investigated the effects of interaction on different aspects of SLA development. For example, some factors that have been found to influence the effectiveness of interaction are peer interaction (interacting with the teacher or other students), participation structure (group work, whole class etc.), L2 proficiency, and individual differences of the interlocutors, as well as the task conditions and task complexity (Loewen & Sato, 2018). Another factor that has been found to be influential is the target language (Brown, 2016).

An inseparable part of the IH is the fact that human interaction is inherently social. Much of the attention paid to the social aspect of interaction in SLA is a result of the work of Vygotsky (1980). Vygotsky posited that cognitive development is a socially mediated process, where

children acquire cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society. In his book, Vygotsky (1980) claims that “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)” (p. 57). Vygotsky then labelled this abstract distance between interpsychological and intrapsychological as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In his words, ZPD symbolises “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86).

Lantolf & Poehner (2014) elaborated on this theory and broadened the scope of the ‘adult guidance’ to a more general term – stimuli. In their work, stimuli included not only adult guidance, but also the influence of peers, teachers, and even books and the Internet (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). It seems likely then that the social aspect of SLA, which encompasses collaborative language production, meaning negotiation during interaction, and feedback, leads to language acquisition. Vygotsky’s ZPD enables learners to progress from scenarios where they have support to scenarios where they act independently. Interaction, therefore, serves as a form of mediation, and the forms and functions of language are internalised (East, 2021).

2.6.4 The case for TBLT

Having established the theoretical groundwork encompassing TBLT and its SLA support, it seems apt to summarise the key points of alignment between TBLT and S2030+. Perhaps the most notable ambition of S2030+ is included in the first strategic objective: to focus education more on the acquisition of competencies for an active civic, professional, and personal life. S2030+ elaborates on this idea by insisting that education ought to focus less on memorising and more on understanding, interconnecting, developing, and increasing competencies (MŠMT, 2020). TBLT is poised to bridge this transition by offering authentic, meaningful tasks that emphasise fluency over accuracy and often promote integrated skills.

It can be argued that the traditional methods of language teaching might not be feasible in pursuing the first strategic line of S2030+. It is, after all, stated explicitly in S2030+ that the Czech educational system does not reflect the needs and demands of the future, but rather the past. The shift therefore should be towards innovations and new methods in teaching. One of the advantages of the Czech education system is the degree of autonomy that individual schools enjoy (MŠMT, 2020), which opens the door, so to speak, to new methods.

In addition, along with emphasising the importance of shifting from rote learning and drilling a broad body of knowledge to fostering the ability to understand issues in a broader context, S2030+ emphasises the importance of striving for creative application of knowledge in combination with teamwork. More specifically, this might be achieved through interdisciplinary approaches, such as combining English with Information Technology, as well as the promotion of group projects where teamwork is crucial. While competency-driven education is the overarching approach (MŠMT, 2020), project-based learning, which is arguably often underestimated, provides a means for tailoring tasks to individual students' strengths. Theoretically speaking, if a task is a group project that requires the use of integrated skills, students have better opportunities to utilise what they excel at. This is obviously a fairly theoretical issue that is going to require a great deal of work, specifically in the employment of RVPs (MŠMT, 2020).

Another area that seems to be quite prominent in S2030+ is digital learning. It has been already mentioned that teachers have the option to combine two subjects in lessons, such as the mentioned combination of English and Information Technology, but perhaps combining subjects should be even encouraged – especially when it comes to digital learning and digital literacy. Although S2030+ predates the 'boom' of artificial intelligence (AI), AI-powered tools have underscored the necessity of digital literacy even further. According to S2030+, pupils and students should be able to search for, categorise, and critically evaluate information, all while also being able to recognise the perils that the digital world brings (p. 31), which appears to be even more crucial now that AI-generated content is emerging. Teachers' role in this sense should be that of a guide, which means that teachers themselves should be expected to display a certain degree of expertise in this area. The practical part of this thesis does attempt to address, in this sense, the use of AI through some worksheets for English lessons, as well as using AI for creating classroom materials.

Assessment is yet another area of paramount importance for the Czech educational system. Nowadays, the Czech school system is often perceived as test-driven due to the importance given to final exams, be it high school entry exams, matura exams, or university exams. Assessment or evaluation should, however, be a pedagogical process that takes place every day (MŠMT, 2020). Besides discussing how the formats of the standardised exams (mentioned above) should change, S2030+ highlights the underlying concept of testing for competencies. In other words, exams and tests should serve primarily to see whether students acquired the pre-set competencies. It might be of significant value to consider implementing

TBLA as a tool for assessment because, as evidenced in previous chapters, TBLA does stand as an alternative to the traditional methods of testing.

One more potential area of alignment between TBLT and modern curricular documents that one might consider is the area of individualisation. By individualisation, it is typically meant that the content of a lesson is tailored to students to a certain degree, making it more authentic and therefore hopefully more engaging and enjoyable. While S2030+ attempts to tackle this idea by proposing the revision of RVPs, there might be potential for individualisation even in TBLT. For example, in group tasks that require teamwork through adopting certain roles, students might be able to try out the roles that they feel most suited for, or, on the other hand, the roles that they feel least comfortable with to overcome their fears. S2030+ claims that pedagogical methods that allow for teaching diverse classrooms will be implemented (p. 45), though it is not yet clear how exactly.

In summary, there seems to be a certain alignment between TBLT and modern curricular documents in a number of areas. The aim of the following practical part of this thesis is to present a practical example of TBLT, in the form of worksheets for English classrooms, that fulfils the aims and needs described in modern Czech curricular documents.

3 Aims and methodology

With the theoretical groundwork laid out, the focus now shifts to the practical part. This thesis aims to demonstrate that TBLT is suited to S2030+ by providing five worksheets and one full lesson plan, all based on the principles of TBLT and aimed at fulfilling the competencies outlined in S2030+. The five worksheets correspond to the A1-C1 levels of language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference, respectively. Additionally, one full lesson plan, which incorporates one of the made worksheets, is conducted to illustrate where such worksheets belong in a typical lesson.

The rationale behind opting for five worksheets, corresponding to A1 to C1 levels of the CEFR, is to demonstrate the flexibility of TBLT for various language proficiency levels. In other words, each worksheet will present a slightly different approach so that it takes into account the typical needs and issues of each language level. The omission of the C2 level is based on the belief that C2 language users might find deliberate language focus (i.e. focus on accuracy) more beneficial and arguably also timesaving. That is not to say that TBLT would be fruitless for C2 language users, but simply that they might benefit more from a more conscious approach to language learning.

By demonstrating how TBLT can be exploited to match the needs of the mentioned language levels, potential readers (ideally teachers) will hopefully understand the necessary features of TBLT worksheets and will be able to incorporate these features into their materials. This is likely to ensure that any future TBLT materials the potential teachers produce can be deemed reasonably aligned with TBLT pedagogy.

Before delving into the creation of worksheets, a framework for designing and developing such worksheets is presented. This framework essentially serves as a checklist, guiding the design of materials that adhere to TBLT principles. This methodology for this checklist is based on the works of McGrath (2016) and Tomlinson (2014; 2010).

Finally, after the materials are conducted, this thesis presents their analysis and scrutinises them from pedagogical perspectives.

4 Practical part

Since there are virtually no true TBLT coursebooks (Ellis et al., 2019), teachers wishing to adopt TBLT into their classes and/or courses are forced to opt for alternatives. Apart from coursebooks, some of the most common materials for language classrooms are worksheets, which can be crafted and tailored to students' needs. The significance of high-quality materials in language teaching is hardly disputable; nevertheless, the process of creating worksheets for language classrooms is not a straightforward and clear-cut task.

4.1 Design requirements for classroom materials

It is not only worksheets, but any classroom material in general should fulfil certain requirements that make them impactful with respect to learning. The term 'material' is seriously broad and vague as it encompasses essentially any type of learning instrument, be it textual, visual, audio, or even physical. In Tomlinson's (2010) view, educational material is "anything which is deliberately used to increase the learner's knowledge and/or experience of the language" (p. 2). In this sense, learning material might be posters, emails, articles, YouTube videos, and many more. Tomlinson further lists five criteria that, if fulfilled, make the material more interesting and learners more engaged (2010, p. 8). These criteria are novelty, variety, attractive presentation, appealing content, and achievable challenge. The practical part of this thesis will make use of these criteria for the process of creating worksheets – a specific type of learning material.

According to Tomlinson, novelty in educational materials can be realised through the exploration of unconventional and intriguing topics, engaging illustrations, or activities. Variety signifies a departure from the routine and monotonous activities typically done in classrooms, promoting a dynamic and stimulating learning environment. Attractive presentation, a crucially important element of instructional materials, pertains to the visual appeal and graphic design of materials. Appealing content, as emphasised by Tomlinson, encompasses materials that spark interest and curiosity in learners, whether through authenticity or relatability to their experiences. Furthermore, Tomlinson advocates for achievable challenges, encouraging learners to venture outside of their linguistic comfort zone and explore unknown territory. This involves presenting tasks that pose a reasonable level of difficulty, challenging learners without causing demotivation. The integration of these criteria into educational materials is believed to contribute to a more vibrant, effective, and learner-centred language learning experience.

Tomlinson (2010) adds that the impact itself is a variable, meaning that the same material may or may not be impactful in different settings. To ensure that it is in fact impactful, teachers must know their learners and their interests – a great opportunity for needs analysis, which is a crucial part of a TBLT programme (Long, 2016). Likewise, McGrath (2016) also mentions the fact that teachers should know their students to be able to personalise the materials for them, hence making them more relatable and authentic. Nonetheless, McGrath also adds the obvious downside of creating ‘custom’ material: the time spent designing and creating these materials.

4.1.1 The workaround for designing

When adapting potentially useful supplementary materials would seem too time-consuming, and coursebooks and supplementary materials are not available nor sufficient, it is worth attempting to prepare one’s own materials. Some materials that typically fulfil this role are worksheets, due to their purpose of facilitating learning through an activity.

Tomlinson (2014, p. 316-317) proposed a recommended sequence for preparing materials, including worksheets, consisting of 14 steps. These steps are the following:

1. Determine the needs and preferences of the students and institution/corporation through questionnaires and/or interviews.
2. Decide what sort of language contexts the course will focus on (e.g., lectures, business meetings).
3. Decide on the categories for presenting the language in the course (e.g., grammar, function, lexis, situation, topic, communicative skill).
4. Decide what language skills and sub-skills the course will focus on (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, writing), taking into account learners’ and company’s objectives.
5. Design the syllabus; will it be cumulative, or will each unit/lesson be independent?
6. Decide the types of activities that will be used in the course (e.g., individual, pair, group, whole class).
7. Decide on the page layout of worksheets; prepare templates.
8. Prepare the materials.
9. Pilot the materials; collect and collate feedback through questionnaires and interviews.

10. Revise the materials.
11. Use the materials.
12. Get feedback from students, teachers and sponsors during and after the course through e.g., questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations by peer teachers and managers, videotaping of lessons, lesson comment sheets.
13. Revise the materials if necessary.
14. Periodically review the course.

Although the steps above seem to focus more on language courses rather than the average language classroom, this sequence for preparing materials can be easily adapted to the school context. The first step, for example, might resemble the suggestion to use needs analysis before the beginning of a language course, which is a stage in language courses that essentially allows for the appropriate selection of topics in the future. Typically, in Czech classrooms, teachers do not go around the class handing out needs analysis forms to fill but rather learn about the students' needs and interests gradually over time. This is the case because grammar schools in the Czech Republic are typically thought to be preparing students for university education, thus teachers are, or should be, mindful about the curricular requirements posed on themselves as well as the whole class. Similarly, as teachers ought to prepare students in an 'all-encompassing' manner that aligns with S2030+, the need for needs analysis might be perceived as secondary.

To be more specific, step number two from the list above is feasible only to a certain degree. What is usually preferred is some topic variation to make the content more appealing to students. The sequence by Tomlison should be therefore considered with caution.

If teachers find the sequence above too cumbersome to work with, Jolly & Bolitho (2010) offer a noticeably more compact alternative: a five-step workflow for producing materials, as seen below.

- ↓ IDENTIFICATION by teacher or learner(s) of a need to fulfil or a problem to solve by the creation of materials
- ↓ EXPLORATION of the area of need/problem in terms of what language, what meanings, what functions, what skills, etc.
- ↓ CONTEXTUAL REALISATION of the proposed new materials by the finding of suitable ideas, contexts or texts with which to work

- ↓ PEDAGOGICAL REALISATION of materials by the finding of appropriate exercises and activities AND the writing of appropriate instructions for use
- ↓ PHYSICAL PRODUCTION of materials, involving consideration of layout, type size, visuals, reproduction, tape length, etc.

Jolly & Bolitho (2010) claim that most material writers (i.e. producers) move in this direction and use some or all of the steps, though not necessarily in order. However, they admit that this sequence fails to illustrate the dynamicity of the process.

What they mean by dynamicity is the fact that there is essentially no end point for material development; teachers may produce a piece of learning material for a classroom and then simply keep reusing (or recycling) that material; alternatively, teachers may reflect on the success of the material in question and adjust it to make it more suitable for the learning experience. In other words, as Jolly & Bolitho put it, what is lacking is the stage of evaluation.

Jolly & Bolitho elaborate on their findings from case studies by providing a few explicit recommendations. First, they advocate – in their own words – ‘home-produced’ materials, i.e. materials that are produced specifically for learners in a given context. They believe that custom materials that are tailored to learners’ needs, objectives, styles of learning, and language difficulties are the most effective (p. 128). This, yet again, calls for the promoted use of needs analysis within the TBLT context, or at least an adaptation of a needs analysis.

Another interesting point Jolly & Bolitho make is that all teachers need a grounding in materials writing (p. 129). According to their belief, only teachers who have attempted to produce their materials are able to judge and evaluate the materials of others. Although this may seem far-fetched to some, it can be surmised that there is some truth to such a statement, as Jolly & Bolitho argue that producing learning materials entails language awareness, grading of language, knowledge of learning theories, and more.

Lastly, it is emphasised that trialling and evaluating are of paramount importance for material development. The authors argue that it is most often teachers’ feedback that is sought (p. 129), rather than the feedback of learners. Jolly & Bolitho advocate the use of feedback by learners as they are the users of the produced materials. It is logical that teachers (the producers of materials) should seek feedback from the students so that the materials can be further distilled and perfected. Yet, it is often undoubtedly the case that materials do not get updated whatsoever.

Taking all factors into consideration, the preparation sequences presented by both Tomlinson and Jolly & Bolitho offer a solid foundation for the development of worksheets. To

align it with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), it is essential to enhance these sequences by incorporating key elements that are inherent to TBLT.

4.1.2 Methodical checklist for creating TBLT worksheets

The central aspects of a TBLT task are, as already stated in Chapter 2.5.2, the focus on meaning, the presence of a gap, learners relying on their own immediate linguistic and non-linguistic resources, and ultimately a clearly defined communicative outcome. These are the aspects that must always be kept in mind while creating TBLT worksheets and appropriately reflected in the material.

Based on these necessary features, it might be convenient to have a certain checklist, so to speak, that could serve as guidance to check whether the created worksheets are designed in line with TBLT principles. One possible realisation of such a checklist, which follows both TBLT principles and criteria by Tomlinson (2010), might be as follows:

- How is the task focused on meaning as opposed to form?
- What specifically is the gap?
- How is the task in line with the target language?
- What is the outcome of the task?
- Is the task authentic?

The majority of the questions are deliberately open-ended, requiring more than a simple yes-or-no answer, to ensure that the potential teacher creating TBLT worksheets is crafting them in line with TBLT methodology. However, as teachers get more experienced, this list could be easily transformed into a true checklist, so that teachers can (mentally) tick the questions as they answer yes or no. To illustrate, the checklist might be as follows:

- Is the task focused on meaning as opposed to form?
- Is there a gap?
- Is the task in line with the target language?
- Is there a clear outcome?
- Is the task authentic?

The term ‘authentic’ in the last question, which has already been mentioned a number of times, traditionally refers to the notion in the field of language teaching that suggests that learners tend to be more motivated when the material is genuine or real, as opposed to non-authentic materials that are produced specifically for learning purposes (Peacock, 1997). In the

context of this thesis, the term ‘authentic’ rather refers to situational or contextual authenticity, i.e. how likely the learner is to encounter such a task in real life outside of classroom settings.

In order to comply with Tomlinson’s five criteria, the checklist above ought to include them. In that sense, the checklist can be extended to its final form:

- Is the task focused on meaning as opposed to form?
- Is there a manageable gap?
- Is the task in line with the target language?
- Is there a clear outcome?
- Is the task authentic?
- Is the task topic novel?
- Is it different from typical textbook activities?
- Is the content visually appealing?

Although some of the questions are rather subjective (such as the one regarding visual appearance), the checklist should, ideally, serve as an instrument for checking the methodology of conducting TBLT tasks, not for checking the likeability of the choices made. Some of the questions overlap with Tomlinson’s (2010) five criteria, such as the fifth question regarding authenticity, which entails an attractive presentation. The description of this criterion by Tomlinson is in line with the concept of authenticity to a noticeable degree, thus allowing for a merge into one question.

Having discussed the theory of material development, it is useful and rather necessary to address one more area of interest related to creating materials – artificial intelligence.

4.1.3 Using AI

Artificial intelligence and tools powered by this technology seem to be the current centre of discourse not only in the technological industry but also in the world of teaching. While teachers are trying to make use of AI to their best abilities, it might still seem quite challenging to grasp the general concept, and, more specifically, find the right use case.

The most popular AI tool – or at least the one that initiated the boom of AI tools – is arguably ChatGPT, which is developed by OpenAI. As of today, this seems to be the most common type of AI tool: a text-based chatbot with an enormous amount of knowledge that can answer seemingly any question precisely, albeit incorrectly at times. Since the release of ChatGPT, multiple ‘chatbots’ have been developed and released for the public, e.g. Microsoft’s Copilot or Google’s Gemini.

These chatbots work on the same principle. Similarly to a regular, non-AI chat service, AI chatbots offer you the opportunity to have a conversation with these chatbots. The majority of these chatbots in their free versions offer solely textual input and textual output, but the paid versions now typically include visual input and visual output as well. For example, one AI tool that outputs generated images is Midjourney.

This changes the way teachers can produce classroom materials. Teachers do not have to rely on coursebooks, supplementary materials, and online resources anymore; teachers now have the option to use free AI tools to generate learning materials for their lessons. Moreover, they can also tailor the material to the specific needs of the lesson, or even the learners. Customisation is a serious advantage, both textual and visual.

One of the most common uses of AI tools seems to be for lesson planning. It is understandable that teachers want to alleviate the burden of workload from their shoulders, and AI helps to do just that. While prompting the chatbots to produce quality lesson plans does need some fine-tuning at times, it is a severe advantage for teachers to have at their disposal. The following section presents five worksheets that are the focal point of the practical part, all of which were made with the help of AI tools.

These tools are undergoing constant development. As of now, the most convenient AI tool appears to be Microsoft's Copilot as it incorporates the now standard chatbot and also the option to generate pictures and images. This technology has been used to create visual aids in some of the worksheets in the following chapter.

4.2 Worksheets

As stated at the beginning of this work, the following sections present five worksheets which correspond to levels A1-C1 of language proficiency, according to the Common European Framework of Reference. The decision to exclude the C2 level has been based on the belief that very few Czech grammar school classrooms abound with C2 language learners, and if so, they hardly ever make the majority. On the other hand, one might object that in reality, C2s outnumber A1s in grammar schools, which undermines this reasoning. While this is difficult to argue, one of the main concerns of TBLT is often the unfeasibility for, or incompatibility with, beginner learners, i.e. A1s. Ellis et al. (2019) argue the opposite; TBLT leads to learning gains even for complete beginners who speak little-to-no English, especially if the task is input-driven and consists of formulaic expressions, single words, or is predominantly focused on listening (see, e.g., Shintani, 2016).

The methodology behind creating the worksheets below is described in the chapters above. The attempt was to blend TBLT principles with modern-day curricular documents while following the tips and suggestions by Tomlinson and Jolly & Bolitho. The topics for the worksheets were selected with the average learner in mind to make the topic relevant. The B2 worksheet was, however, crafted specially for a classroom at a grammar school in Prague, where an opportunity to pilot such material had arisen. More information about this classroom, as well as reflection on the whole lesson, can be found at the end of this chapter. Nonetheless, the rest of the topic choices were simply chosen randomly and might not find a real usage. The point is, however, not to necessarily find an immediate use case, but rather to convey the design in which individual teachers can develop worksheets for their learners.

On the following pages, individual worksheets are presented as if they were ready to be printed for lessons. Following each worksheet, readers will encounter accompanying teacher's notes offering guidance for the three stages of TBLT lessons: pre-task, task, and post-task. Additionally, suggestions for enhancing the worksheets are also included.

4.2.1 A1 worksheet

Describing a hotel room (Student A)

Instructions: You and your partner are planning a holiday and need to choose a hotel room. Your teacher will describe two different hotel rooms, room A and room B, and read out their amenities. Listen carefully and cross out the amenities that are missing for your room. After hearing the descriptions, tell your partner what amenities there are or aren't in your room, and let your partner tell you about their hotel room. Then work together and discuss which room you think is better for you.

Goal: Choose the better hotel and be ready to explain your decision.

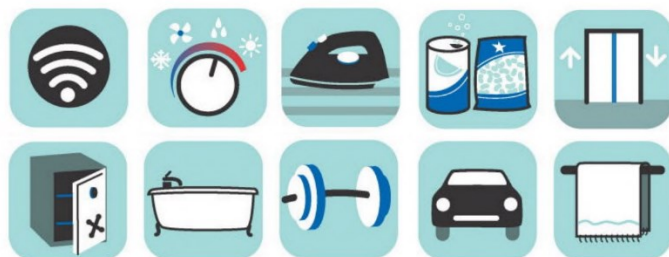


Describing a hotel room (Student B)

Instructions: You and your partner are planning a holiday and need to choose a hotel room. Your teacher will describe two different hotel rooms, room A and room B, and read out their amenities. Listen carefully and cross out the amenities that are missing for your room. After hearing the descriptions, tell your partner what amenities there are or aren't in your room, and let your partner tell you about their hotel room. Then work together and discuss which room you think is better for you.

Goal: Choose the better hotel and be ready to explain your decision.





4.2.1.1 Teacher's notes

To make the task lend itself to more negotiation and the target language (there is/there are), emphasise to students that the rooms are different in terms of amenities. Students should keep this in mind and base their decisions on what is important to them. The pictures used in these worksheets are from Pexel, a free photobank database. The icons used are from the Navigate Beginner (A1) coursebook, unit 6.2. Students should be familiar with the meanings of these icons, and the teacher should consider pre-teaching, or at least revising them before the task if they have been addressed before.

Pre-task

The target language is 'there is/there are'. Students should describe their hotel rooms using these constructions. Make sure students understand the more challenging vocabulary, such as *amenities*, *AC*, *refreshments*, and other representing the icons. As an alternative, the teacher might consider putting this vocabulary on the projector or screen for the whole class to see during the task.

Task

This task is partly focused on listening and speaking. Describe the two hotel rooms by using 'there is/isn't' and 'there are/aren't' constructions, exposing students to the target language. While doing so, students should be crossing out the amenities that are unavailable in the respective hotel room. After you (the teacher) describe both hotel rooms, students work in pairs and tell each other about their hotel rooms (not showing their handouts). They discuss which hotel room is better based on the amenities. In this stage, monitor the classroom work, and only facilitate when absolutely necessary. Monitor the language as well and note the use of the target language should there be any.

Post-task

Ask students to explain which of the two hotel rooms is better and why. Draw students' attention to the language used, emphasising the use of 'there is/there are' and illustrating on the two pictures from the task to explain and elicit the grammar. Practise pronunciation (linking and weak forms of articles). Students swap partners and re-run the task with the other set of pictures. Alternatively, you might consider letting students do the dictation part (reading what amenities are included) themselves. That way, students practice the target language to a larger extent, increasing the chances of using it in the following stage. Make sure to cross out some amenities before handing out the worksheet.

4.2.2 A2 worksheet

Recommending places to visit to my foreign friend

Instructions: Work in pairs. Your friend from abroad is coming to visit your hometown and wants to know about some places to visit, some restaurants to eat, and other things worth visiting. With your partner, decide on at least 5 places which you will recommend to your friend. The information about your friend, which will help you choose the places, is below.

Goal: Write a message to your foreign friend and describe each place in more detail.

Be ready to share your text message with the class.

Name: Alex

Nationality: Brazilian

What you know about Alex:

- Likes visiting old places and famous landmarks.
- Loves trying different foods, especially local ones.
- Enjoys being outside and seeing beautiful views.
- Likes going to museums and art places.
- Wants to see both popular places and secret spots.
- Doesn't eat meat, only likes vegetarian food.
- Enjoys listening to music, especially live music.
- Interested in local traditions and festivals.
- Wants to see where local people go.



Heyyyy! I hope you are well. I am visiting [hometown] in 2 weeks and wanted to ask you if know any good places to visit. Restaurants, sightseeing, anything.. We can meet and visit some of them together :)

Name: Airi

Nationality: Japanese

What you know about Airi:

- Enjoys exploring nature, like parks and gardens.
- Loves trying different desserts and sweets, especially local ones.
- Prefers calm and peaceful places to relax.
- Interested in art and creative activities.
- Likes a mix of well-known places and cosy corners.
- Is a pescatarian.
- Enjoys attending cultural events or workshops.



Hiiii! Long time no see. I will be travelling through Czechia and I'm thinking about visiting your town. Do you know any places I can visit? I would love to see you!

4.2.2.1 Teacher's notes

To make this task more authentic, it could be nicely visualised if there was a class group chat projected for the whole classroom. Students could immediately see the message from Alex and reply to it within the same app window via their phones or other devices.

Pre-task

The target language is definite and indefinite articles. Students can use their phones to look up necessary information about their hometowns (if their hometowns differ, they must agree to choose one of them). Tell students that they should provide some essential information about each place for their friend.

Task

Monitor and facilitate only when absolutely necessary. Monitor the language and note the use of articles. Consider monitoring and checking the messages during this stage as it would be too time-consuming to check them in the post-task stage.

Post-task

Check the messages from students as a whole class. Students may discuss what the best recommendations are. Follow up with error correction based on your notes, with emphasis on articles. Elicit and explain the rules, especially the difference between the indefinite and definite articles and elicit on examples from students' messages. Re-run the task with the other fictional friend (Airi).

4.2.3 B1 worksheet

Travel itinerary

Instructions: Work in pairs. You and your partner are planning a summer trip together. Choose a location and plan your trip; write a detailed itinerary for each day of your trip. Your budget is limited to 22000 CZK. Use any useful website, such as booking.com or websites for checking flight tickets. You can even use ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, or similar AI tools to help you plan your trip, but double-check the availability of suggested ideas, and keep track of your budget. Use the tables below to plan your trip.

Goal: Come to consensus on the decisions and write down your itinerary. Be ready to share it with the class.

DAY 1	TO DO
-------	-------

DAY ____ TO DO

DAY __	TO DO
--------	-------

DAY __ TO DO

DAY ____ TO DO

DAY __ TO DO

DAY __	TO DO
--------	-------

DAY __ TO DO



4.2.3.1 Teacher's notes

Pre-task

The target language of this task is modal verbs of suggestion (could, should, may, might). Make sure students understand the instructions (use IQs), and check key vocabulary, especially *itinerary*, where you may elicit the meaning by asking CQs. Students have to use their phones or other devices to find information online but make it explicit to only use their phones for the task at hand.

Task

Let students complete the tasks on their own and only facilitate when absolutely necessary, such as when technical issues occur. Monitor the language used and pay special attention to the language used for negotiating. Note down any use of modal verbs of suggestion.

Post-task

After the task is completed, ask the students to evaluate what they have achieved and ask them to share their itineraries; the class may even vote for the best itinerary if there is enough time. Go through error correction based on the notes from the previous phase. Emphasise the use of modal verbs of suggestion and explain their form and use. Visualise the target language on the board or screen, give examples to focus on accuracy, and practise pronunciation (especially weak forms). Consider having additional handouts to practise the form. Then have the students repeat the task with different partners and repeat the task cycle.

4.2.4 B2 worksheet

Whodunit?

Instructions: Work in pairs. You and your partner are trying to solve riddles. Below, you will find 2 riddles that contain several clues related to the situation.

Goal: Figure out who the perpetrator is in each riddle and note down your thought process. Be ready to share your conclusions with the class.



Riddle 1

Five people live together in the Woods' house. One Friday morning, Mrs Woods is found dead. She was killed while her husband was sleeping. The husband reports the crime to the police. While being questioned, Mr Woods tells the detectives that his mother was planting flowers, the daughter was studying for her exam and his father-in-law was reading a book in his study. After this short investigation, the detectives immediately know who murdered Mrs Woods. Who is guilty and why?

Riddle 2

Mrs Smith went to the police, claiming that her vintage necklace was missing. The woman was upset when the police arrived. The police saw no signs of a break-in, no damaged locks, and no misplaced doors. Only one window was broken. There was a total mess inside the house and dirty footprints all over the floor. Surprisingly, the next day, Mrs Smith was arrested for fraud. Why? The picture of the crime scene is below.



4.2.4.1 Teacher's notes

Consider snipping the worksheet in half or printing the second riddle on the other side of the paper, resulting in the second riddle being separate, as the picture might be distracting for the completion of the first riddle.

Answers (from a [YouTube video](#), including the picture)

Riddle 1: It was the husband because he couldn't have possibly known what the others were doing if he had been sleeping.

Riddle 2: It was Mrs Smith because if somebody had broken the window from outside, there would have been glass inside, on the floor. There was none, as seen in the picture.

Extra riddle: It was the mailman. The fact that there were bottles of milk every day is what makes the milkman innocent, though it is argumentative.

Pre-task

The target language of this task is past modals (*should have, could have, must have* etc.). Pre-teach and check key vocabulary before doing the task, such as *riddle, clue, dwelling, perpetrator*. Emphasise that the students must cooperate to solve the riddles, as well as note down their reasoning. This task can be done both in pairs and groups but emphasise that everybody has to participate.

Task

Monitor the language for speculating and facilitate only when absolutely necessary. Make notes of the language used for speculating and making deductions, especially of the opportunities where past modals could or should have been used.

Post-task

Elicit ideas from students, have them explain their reasoning, and tell them the answers. Go through error correction based on your notes from the previous phase. Explain the use of past modals and emphasise the use. Visualise the target language on the board or screen, give examples to focus on accuracy, and practise pronunciation. Then have the students repeat the task (even with different partners) using the extra riddle below. The extra riddle is a bit more challenging as it is arguably not as conclusive as the previous riddles, thus providing more opportunities to speculate and practise the target language.

Extra riddle

A lonely old man lived in his house in the suburbs of the city. He led a quiet life, perhaps being a homebody, as he never left his dwelling for long. It was a midsummer Friday when the mailman walked by and called out for the man, but there was no answer from inside the house. The mailman looked into the window and saw the man in a pool of blood. When the policeman arrived, he found Tuesday's newspaper, two bottles of warm milk, and one bottle of cold milk. The next day, the killer was arrested. Who was it?

4.2.5 C1 worksheet

Female pioneers

Instructions: Work individually. The English edition of a local newspaper has launched a public competition to reprint the best article focusing on local pioneers in history. The newspaper wants an article about Františka Plamínková, a Czech politician and women's rights activist. Participate in this contest by writing an article about this woman and emphasise her accomplishments. See the listing below for more details.

Goal: Do research on Františka Plamínková and write a formal article highlighting her impact and accomplishments.

CALL FOR WRITERS!

We're looking for volunteer writers to contribute to our upcoming issue about celebrating local heroes. We are looking for someone who will write a piece about Františka Plamínková, a Czech politician and women's rights activist. We let the creativity do its part, but some article requirements are the following:

- Formal, neutral language
- Minimum limit of 200 words
- Mentions the connection to contemporary issues
- Highlights the impact and contributions of Františka Plamínková

The article is to be submitted by the end of the next month. The winning article will be featured in the upcoming issue, and the successful candidate will receive a coupon to the local bookshop. We're looking forward to reading your submissions. Good luck!

4.2.5.1 Teacher's notes

Pre-task

The target language of this task is inversion with negative adverbials. Ask students how they do basic research. Consider allowing students to use AI tools, but make sure they check important information. Pre-teach any necessary vocabulary. Emphasise that students should use multiple sources to verify information.

Task

Students work alone and write the article. Occasionally monitor and facilitate when necessary, but try not to help students with the language.

Post-task

Put students in pairs and let them revise each other's articles. Tell them to focus on the language as well as content and give their partners feedback. After that, introduce your students to inversion and elicit the rules with examples on the whiteboard. Ask students to revise and edit their text based on the feedback from their peers and tell them to also include one example of inversion where possible. As a re-run of the task, ask students to write one more article. This time, let students choose a pioneering figure from their birthplace, and write an article in the same way as the previous one. If there is not enough time for a re-run, students may get this assigned as optional homework.

4.3 Lesson plan

Having presented all worksheets, it now seems reasonable to present a lesson plan which incorporates one of the presented worksheets. The chosen worksheet for the following lesson plan is the B2 worksheet, which focuses on speculation by using past modal verbs.

The choice of this worksheet was based on my teaching practice at a grammar school, which provided a unique opportunity to test these TBLT worksheets on teenagers and young adults. As the school is required to adhere to its syllabus and certain topics need to be taught, it appeared reasonable to test the B2 worksheet because, coincidentally, one class at this grammar school had recently practised modal verbs in general.

The class in question consists of roughly 15 students of B1-B2 language proficiency, with unsurprising exceptions on both ends of the language proficiency scale. The design of the task, as well as the TBLT methodology itself, offers chances even for the less proficient students to be involved in the task, thus minimising the disparity between the more and less advanced students.

A short glossary of some key terms that appear in the lesson plan might be useful for readers unfamiliar with this terminology:

- Ss = students
- T = teacher
- IW = individual work
- PW = pair work
- T-Ss = teacher-to-students interaction

For readability purposes, the lesson plan has been spread on the following two separate pages.

Class		Materials	TBLT worksheet (Whodunnit?), slides	
Level and number of learners/class profile	B2 on average with B1 and C1 exceptions, 15 students			
Main aim	Ss will be able to speculate and deduce by using past modals (could have, might have, should have etc.)			
Competency aim	Drawing conclusions based on evidence and logic			
Anticipated problems	Ss may find the target language (past modals) too difficult and complex and turn to using present modals. Additionally, the crime-related vocabulary may pose challenges.			
Possible solutions	T should emphasise the use and purpose of the target language as well as consider pre-teaching the necessary crime-related vocabulary, specifically <i>alibi, suspect, clues, evidence, guilty, to question somebody, witness</i> .			
Timing (minutes)	Procedure	Stage aims	Aids and materials	Interaction pattern
2	Ask Ss: What does the term ‘Whodunnit’ mean? What does it sound like? T may draw attention to the weak forms in pronunciation of the full sentence (Who’s done it?)	Warm-up/lead-in for the Ss to get them intrigued	Whiteboard	T-Ss
5	T puts 7 sentences on the board with gaps to fill, containing key vocabulary (see Possible solutions)	Pre-teaching vocabulary relevant to the topic (culprit, suspect (n), evidence, guilty, witness, question (v), etc.)	Whiteboard, presentation	IW
2	T elicits and checks the answers, as well as its meaning and pronunciation	Pre-teaching vocabulary relevant to the topic, pronunciation check	Whiteboard, presentation	T-Ss
2	Ss watch a video (0:00-0:39 only) and try to guess who the perpetrator is	Lead-in to the upcoming task	Presentation, video	T-Ss
1	Ss watch the rest of the video	Ss find out why Lady Smythe is guilty and learn the importance of observation	Presentation, video	T-Ss

10-15	T distributes handouts to the class and gives instructions (included in the handout as well) T then monitors the class and takes notes on the language, especially on the instances where past modals should have been used	Ss try to solve two riddles in the handout and come to a conclusion	Handout	PW
5	T elicits some ideas and reveals answers, gives feedback on language and presents it on examples (ideally from monitoring notes)	Drawing attention to the language and introducing the target language, explaining (and emphasising) its use and rules, error correction	Whiteboard	T-Ss
5	T puts a few sentences on the screen with a verb in brackets; Ss try to complete the sentences with the right form of past modals	Deliberate focus on form	Whiteboard, presentation	IW
3	T elicits answers and drills pronunciation a bit (weak forms of modals)	Checking whether Ss understood the form	Whiteboard, presentation	T-Ss
~5	Ss re-run the task with the third riddle which T hands out on a separate paper T emphasises that Ss are now expected to use the target language; T monitors and checks the use of past modals.	Ss repeat the task and aim for the target language, T monitors and checks the use of the target language	Snippets with the third riddle	PW (can be different pairs)
~5 (depending on the initial task phase)	T elicits answers and reveals the solution, then gives feedback on the language and potentially pronunciation	Eliciting answers, error correction	Optional	T-Ss

4.3.1 Reflections on the lesson plan

Piloting the lesson plan at a grammar school showed that the sequence of steps is rather solid, though the timing seems to need certain changes. Specifically, the post-task phase could use more time.

The TBLT lesson plan was tested on a grammar school class of 12 students, with an average language level of B2. After consulting the grammar topic – past modals – with the class’s regular teacher, it was concluded that the topic was not too challenging for students to complete. The students seemed to like the criminal theme of the lesson, which was established thanks to the entertaining video in the beginning. Before the video, however, the pre-teaching part with 7 sentences could have been much shorter, perhaps done with a simple word cloud and eliciting the meanings of each word.

The purpose of the video is to get students interested in the topic as well as to be observant, which is an essential quality for the upcoming task. The issue of the video is the language; it is far too advanced in comparison with the target language. This is an issue that had been mentioned by other observing teachers present in the lesson, and rightfully so. Nevertheless, this issue might be overlooked for the sake of getting students interested in the topic, which seemed to be the case for this lesson.

The task phase went without issues and students seemed to like speculating and trying to solve the riddles. One point brought up by one of the observing teachers was that some students were noticeably faster in completing the task than others and suggested that this could be mitigated by including some subgoals or subquestions in the task. To illustrate, these subgoals may include questions such as ‘Who are the suspects?’, ‘What is the evidence?’, or even ‘Reconstruct a timeline of the events that led to the crime.’ This would arguably add a layer of work even for the faster, more advanced students and help them immerse themselves into the topic more.

What could have made use of more time was the post-task phase which appeared to be too quick. In the future, more time would be of great help as the students can focus on form more thoughtfully. This also means that there should be more examples of the target language, ideally with opportunities to practise the form. The fact that there was a lack of opportunities for practising led students to not using the language as much as was hoped for. This does not mean that students were not using the language in the re-run phase of the lesson, but rather they were using it in a limited manner.

Another point of interest might be the interaction pattern. While having the students work in pairs seemed to show no issues, perhaps groups of three students would have been better for the interaction and language produced. This requires further testing of this lesson plan.

4.3.1.1 Feedback from students

Lastly, the students themselves were asked to give feedback via a simple questionnaire in their Google Classroom. The questionnaire consisted of 3 questions:

- 1) Do you think you can use past modals actively after this lesson?
- 2) Is there something you would like to change about this session? Why?
- 3) How different was this lesson compared to your regular sessions? Explain.

10 students in total completed the questionnaire. As for the first question, 8 students responded that they believed they could in fact use past modals after the lesson. This would of course need to be tested, though it was a good sign that students felt confident about the target language. The 2 other students expressed the need to practise this language more before moving further. Moreover, interestingly, one of the two students added that she focused more on the task and solving the riddle itself rather than thinking about the target language. If we assume that she was commenting on the re-run of the task as the target language had not been revealed before this stage, this remark proves that the task is focused on meaning well enough to ensure that students do not think about the target language. On the other hand, it is unclear whether more practice after the task phase would have been sufficient for the student to find the balance between completing the task and deliberate thinking about the language.

It seems that students enjoyed the design of the task as all of them stated in responses to question number two that they would not have changed anything about the format of the lesson. Lastly, for the third question, 6 students appreciated the fact that the lesson had been more interactive than their typical lessons as well as the visual aspect of the materials used. The other 4 students were either not specific enough to draw conclusions or claimed that the lesson had not been, in reality, much different from their usual sessions. One student, in particular, expressed that he/she prefers lessons focusing on explaining grammar to a greater extent, specifically mentioning doing exercises that gradually build on the grammatical rules explained to them.

This feedback from students essentially proves a number of assertions. First, the gap of the task is designed well enough for students to focus on the task completion as opposed to the

language. Second, the post-task phase is equally – if not more – important than the task phase itself since it provides students with the rules and explanations. It might be beneficial to devote as much time to the post-task phase as it is to the task phase.

4.4 Analysing worksheets

It now seems sensible to analyse each worksheet with respect to the predefined checklist. The analysis consists of answering and elaborating on the questions from the methodical checklist, as well as offering rationale and reasoning for some of the decisions made.

4.4.1 A1 worksheet analysis

The first question from the checklist addresses the salient point of TBLT – the predominant focus on meaning as opposed to form. As the students concentrate on negotiating which hotel room is better, we can surmise that there is little room for language awareness.

The requirement for students to negotiate and make decisions compels them to engage in communication. Simply put, this is the gap. Although some may legitimately question the complexity of this task for the A1 level, it should be noted that students are equipped with the necessary vocabulary, specifically the names of amenities. Beyond this, the only demanded language, so to speak, is the target language, i.e. there is/there are. It can be reasonably assumed that students would be capable of producing a substantial amount of communication during both task as well as re-run of the task, regardless of the task complexity.

The target language, for its simplicity, appears to be in line with the task design and focus. The task yields a clear outcome in the form of a decision and compromise, and the topic – choosing a (better) hotel room – contributes to the task's authenticity.

As for the novelty of this task, its perception is somewhat relative. That is to say, it depends on students' prior experience. Theoretically speaking, if the students are only accustomed to working with a coursebook, this task may strike them as novel; conversely, those familiar with more communicative approaches may not find it novel at all. Nevertheless, this task can be regarded as distinct from typical or usual textbook activities, thus positively responding to the penultimate question on the checklist.

The last question regarding visual aesthetics might be fairly subjective. While people's tastes vary, it appears quite reasonable to say that the inclusion of visual aids – pictures of hotel rooms – makes the task more appealing. Furthermore, to avoid any copyright concerns, the pictures used in this worksheet are taken from a freely accessible photo bank under the Creative

Commons licence. Teachers employing this task may, however, consider using real photos from websites offering accommodation, thereby making the task even more authentic.

The specific competencies being developed with this worksheet mostly stem from the language-focused competencies described in S2030+. Although language of course underlies all the worksheets presented above, it is especially emphasised in the A1 worksheet due to the low language proficiency. Nonetheless, as teachers might adjust this task to include hotels from different cultures and present the students with different offers, it also builds multicultural competency to a certain extent.

4.4.2 A2 worksheet analysis

The focus on meaning is perhaps even more palpable in the A2 worksheet, as the presented scenario reflects the dynamics of the contemporary world. In practice, due to the status of English as lingua franca, people are fairly likely to recommend places to visit to other people using English as it is the dominant language (especially on the internet), be it a foreign friend, acquaintance, or stranger on the internet. This makes the task not only more inclined towards meaning but also reasonably authentic.

The gap here is partially realised by negotiating with a partner again, and partially by keeping in mind the interests of the friends, which introduces an additional layer of complexity that students must take into consideration while completing the task. Though the task would need to be tested in a classroom setting for validation of complexity and difficulty, it can be surmised that the gap, and therefore the task, appears to be manageable and offers a clear outcome, i.e. a list of places to visit.

Given the open-ended nature of the task, where students can recommend various types of places to visit, there is ample room for the production of both indefinite and definite articles, thus rendering the task in line with the target language. Doubts may, however, arise from the question regarding the novelty of the task. The approach to articles as a grammatical topic varies significantly across different coursebooks. It can be then argued that the thematic choice in the presented task – recommending places to a friend – may not be as novel as desired.

On the contrary, students might appreciate that the way this task is designed is quite different from usual coursebook exercises and activities. The visual aspect could be enhanced by utilising a group chat with the class, as suggested in the teacher's notes.

This worksheet aligns with S2030+'s multicultural competency. As the students are not only required to discuss and decide on places to visit but also to take into account the

background information about the fictional friend, they are naturally forced to consider the cultural background and adjust their choices of places. Moreover, students also work with their electronic devices, further developing their digital competencies, specifically those regarding distilling huge amounts of information and gleaning only the most relevant for the task.

4.4.3 B1 worksheet analysis

The B1 worksheet focuses on creating an itinerary. Given its immersive nature and the absence of language emphasis in instructions, students would not necessarily think about the language used, thus rendering the task oriented towards meaning rather than form. The communicative gap in this task is evident: students must negotiate to create an itinerary. This involves not only compromising but also making decisions based on the limited budget that is provided as an obstacle.

The question of alignment between the task and the target language does pose some challenges. While it is plausible that the target language – modal verbs of suggestion – can naturally arise within the context of planning a trip, a plethora of other language might appear just as much, if not more. To be specific, it was originally considered that perhaps the more suitable target language for this task might be the second conditional, exemplified by sentences such as *‘If we went to Paris, we could see the Eiffel Tower.’* However, this idea was discarded as modal verbs of suggestion seem far more likely to appear organically in such a setting. Regardless of the language students produce during the task phase, it is believed that there will be plenty of opportunities to use the target language, i.e. modal verbs of suggestion.

This B1 task has a clear, tangible outcome, which is the itinerary. The fact that itineraries are widely used for many kinds of trips makes this task authentic beyond doubt. The novelty, however, might depend on the materials and activities that students have been exposed to before this task. Despite this, it can be said that this task differs from typical textbook activities and exercises, and that an effort to make it visually appealing has been made.

Similarly to the A2 worksheet, S2030+’s digital competency is being developed to a high degree with this worksheet. Students must also utilise skills such as planning, organising, researching, and operating with a budget. These competencies are typically deemed crucial to a successful civic and professional life, another competency stated in S2030+.

4.4.4 B2 worksheet analysis

In the B2 worksheet, students engage in solving crime-related riddles. As this task has been piloted to grammar school students, this analysis partly draws on the feedback obtained

from them. Students have found this task quite playful due to its nature, which requires a slight portion of brainstorming. Students seemed to immerse themselves to a certain extent into the criminal theme, which arguably ensured the focus on meaning.

There is a total of three riddles, each graded in difficulty and complexity. The last riddle, devoted to the re-run of the task phase, is designed in a way that allows for a greater deal of speculation and deduction. In general, a potential issue might be regarding the authenticity of this task. While this task is essentially role-playing detectives or criminal investigators, it is questionable that students will eventually become real detectives or investigators, though this reasoning might seem a bit far-fetched. It is important to draw students' attention to the fact that the point of this task is speculating, hence it can be extended to various areas of life. The theme – crime-related riddles – is merely a vehicle for the language.

This brings the next question from the methodical checklist regarding the novelty. Even though the topic of crime is commonly included in some B1 or B2 coursebooks, it often lacks some communicative aspects teachers could make use of. Therefore, in this sense, it is arguably novel as well as different from typical textbook activities, which has been positively commented on by students participating in the task.

Riddles in this task can be enriched with visuals of any sort, including photos of crime scenes (such as in the second riddle), visual clues, or even testimonies. This does make designing and producing the task more time-consuming, but it might be worth considering using AI tools with the generation of these aids.

As the successful completion of the task depends heavily on communication and teamwork, the task lends itself to one of the most salient points in S2030+: the ability to analyse available pieces of information and critically assess them in order to adequately reflect their value. This is not only in line with the digital competency but also with the S2030+'s general notion of being able to navigate through the increasingly more demanding world and its information flow.

4.4.5 C1 worksheet analysis

The final worksheet centres on writing. Students are required to conduct their research on a Czech politician, Františka Plamínková, and compose a short text describing the impact of this politician. Although writing a text of this nature does require some deliberate attention to language, students have some general requirements they ought to focus on. These requirements essentially form the gap; more specifically, since it is required that students write about the

impact this politician had, students may find the impact to be in different areas and choose what they see fit.

The fact that students are required to write about the impact and contributions of this politician allows for the use of inversion. This task can be, therefore, deemed in line with the target language, as well as having a clear outcome, i.e. the final newspaper article.

The issue of authenticity of this task is similar to the B2 task. Arguably, not every student is going to have the opportunity to write for a newspaper, but eventually, students are going to be required to do research, distil information, and write a body of text, especially if the students are considering university education where honing such skills – research, drafting, editing etc. – is abundant.

Writing tasks are not a novel concept and can be undoubtedly found in all coursebooks to some extent. What makes this task novel, though, is the focus on Františka Plamínková as well as the fact that students have to do all research individually. This is arguably more difficult to find in contemporary coursebooks.

As the worksheet is not the most aesthetically pleasing material, teachers may feel free to adapt the material and make it more visually attractive. This includes the choice of the central figure, Františka Plamínková, which seems apt for this task as not many teenage students are familiar with this politician, hence demanding more deliberate and thoughtful research on her life. Again, using and utilising AI tools might be worth considering, even from students' perspective.

Lastly, the competencies developed with this task encompass roughly half of the explicitly mentioned competencies for lifelong learning in S2030+. These again include digital competency due to the nature of the task that requires (online) research and composing a body of text, communication in the native language and a foreign language, which is crucial to the research process, and arguably also cultural awareness and expression, which is facilitated by the fact that students are researching a political figure from Czech history.

5 Reflective evaluation

5.1 TBLT and modern curricular documents

Each worksheet presented in this thesis attempts to reflect a certain area of interest for teachers. Specifically, the worksheets have been designed to promote productive and receptive skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. One of the frequent points of critique of TBLT is the neglect of focus on form and grammar in general, along with the predominant focus on speaking which is considered not suitable for low-proficiency speakers (see, e.g., Swan, 2005). This belief has been dismissed several times, as discussed in chapter 2.5.7. Nonetheless, it seems appropriate to address so-called ‘listen-and-do’ tasks with regard to this commonly held belief.

Listen-and-do tasks require students to listen to the teacher’s instructions and respond by performing the appropriate action (Shintani, 2016). These tasks are therefore largely input-driven, with little-to-no output on the part of learners. Ellis (2020) draws on several studies to show that such input-based tasks are beneficial for young learners. In the studies presented by Ellis, learners were successful in acquiring simple grammatical features plural *-s* and the copula *be*. To relate these findings to this thesis, a similar approach concerning the task design was adopted for the A1 worksheet. Being the lowest proficiency level worksheet, A1 therefore seems appropriate for a more input-based approach. The key difference between the A1 worksheet design presented in this thesis and the study in the paper by Ellis is that the tasks were used with nearly complete beginners, while the A1 worksheet here is intended to be used with slightly more proficient students, albeit still within the boundaries of A1. This is an important point as the A1 task is not purely listen-and-do; it requires some output in the form of a negotiation between the students. As the created worksheets are intended to be used primarily for high schools, the need for purely listen-and-do tasks is rather questionable, because students entering high schools are, we might surmise, most typically capable of producing some language already. One exception might be the 8-year grammar school in Czechia where the first year is equivalent to a first year in a regular elementary school. The assumption of existing knowledge played a key role in the decision-making behind the A1 worksheet design.

Worksheets for A2, B1, and B2 levels share a common theme and a core concept for curricular documents: collaboration. As S2030+ calls for special emphasis on cooperation and teamwork, it seemed logical to incorporate this notion into some of the designed worksheets to

address this salient feature of the S2030+ philosophy. Moreover, and most importantly, the true value of TBLT lies in its integration of skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking). Since TBLT assumes a holistic view of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), multiple different skills are at work at the same time. This is reflected in these three worksheets as it non-directly responds to one of the strategic goals of S2030+: focusing education on acquiring competencies needed for an active civic, professional, and personal life (MŠMT, 2020). Students who work with the materials which have been designed according to the presented checklist are likely to employ multiple different skills to complete the task at hand.

To be more specific, A2 and B1 worksheets require written output as the task goal, though the motivation behind the writing differs. For A2, it can be argued that the focus is more on accuracy in the output, a message to a friend with suggestions and recommendations. This demands more elaboration as the final text ought to be a longer, cohesive piece of text. On the contrary, the B1 output is an itinerary, which is typically written in bullet points or any kind of indentation. This puts more focus on the negotiation part, even though the task goal is in the form of a written output as well. Negotiation is, therefore, a cornerstone for both of these worksheets, though it is significantly more important in the B1 worksheets as the students have to compromise and reach a consensus. In this sense, teamwork and collaboration is likewise the fundamental aspect of these two worksheets. In addition, it is also important to highlight the fact that reading as a skill is also employed in the research part, so to speak, although not in the traditional sense. In other words, although students have to perform authentic reading (i.e., reading authentic sources to obtain information for the task goal), reading is not treated as the main skill of interest, though it is an inseparable part of the task phase.

In comparison, the B2 worksheet is focused dramatically more on speaking, as the ultimate goal is solving a riddle. This task seems to promote speaking to a much larger degree than the previous two, as evidenced by one piloted lesson at a grammar school. The need for students to talk to each other was further facilitated by the playful manner of the task, which students later evaluated as enjoyable and said they appreciated the untypical format. In this sense, collaboration between students was reinforced to a significantly greater degree than in the previous two worksheets.

The C1 worksheet focuses on writing. This task completely differs from the other worksheets due to the lack of need for negotiation. As students try to fulfil the goal of this task, which is to write an article on a prominent political figure from Czech history, they ought to do extensive research to gather and glean important information. The design of the C1 worksheet

aims to simulate the process of writing, which students will likely encounter in the future, especially if they decide to pursue university education. This is not strictly limited to an academic setting because writing of this type is ubiquitous in numerous areas of life, both civic and professional.

The integration of skills is an apt response to the first goal in S2030+, as it could lead to acquiring competencies by means of completing more and more specific tasks. Furthermore, another issue and strategic goal that S2030+ addresses is the attempt to “reduce inequalities in access to quality education and pave the way for the maximum development of the potential of children, pupils and students” (MŠMT, 2020). Although this is not strictly a language teaching issue, it is extremely important to address it as it affects the entire education system, language teaching included. As TBLT tasks often require complex problem-solving skills, typically by incorporating the mentioned integrated skills, the learning process could be aided by TBLT so that students could take advantage of the skills that they feel most comfortable with (or least comfortable, depending on the point of view). This is often the advantage of TBLT that is rarely addressed, but it seems worth considering as the potential benefit could be of great value.

What is partly related to this issue of reducing inequalities is perhaps learner engagement. Keeping students engaged and interested in the work is often a challenging task for every teacher unrelated to the subject taught. However, there is some evidence suggesting that TBLT lessons might be more engaging as opposed to more traditional lessons, although it depends on several factors (see, e.g., García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2016). While piloting the B2 worksheet, focusing on the topic of Whodunnits, the grammar school students seemed fairly engaged and interested in completing the task. This is of course not conclusive evidence and more testing needs to be done, but using TBLT tasks to increase student engagement (and involvement) seems quite feasible.

5.2 TBLT and implementation

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the implementation of TBLT is far from simple. Perhaps the greatest challenge that TBLT faces in successful employment is teacher development. Research shows that an occurring issue is that teachers struggle to grasp the notion of ‘task’ (Ellis et al., 2019). For example, Erlam (2016) found that in-service teachers were not able to design tasks that would fulfil the crucial aspects of a TBLT task. It could be argued that this uncertainty about the concept of a TBLT task partly stems from the number of different definitions (cf. Van den Branden, 2006; Bygate et al., 2013; Ellis et al., 2019).

Curricular changes in Asia from the early 2000s and later showed that even official measures are not enough to anchor TBLT as a viable and easily accessible methodology. For example, Hong Kong pioneered task-based curricular reform in Asia beginning in 1999, though not with a huge success (García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2016). Carless (2003, 2004) documented the implementation of TBLT in Asia and found certain teacher resistance to TBLT, as well as contextual constraints that, according to the interviewed teachers, hindered them in adopting task-based innovations. Similarly, Deng & Carless (2009) found that Chinese teachers showed little uptake of task-based approaches, despite curricular changes designed to encourage innovation in this area. Although the Asian context differs significantly from the Czech context, it can be surmised that, if comparable measures were to be pushed by the Czech Ministry of Education, similar development seems plausible.

A logical response to the not-so-effective systemic approaches might be some specialised crash courses that exhaustively focus on the issue in a short amount of time. Such educative options were also found to be fairly dubious and ineffective, and long-term development programs are favoured instead (García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2016, pp. 234-236). Moreover, cooperation between teachers and support from colleagues is also crucial and should be encouraged (Van den Branden, 2006).

Language goals form the bedrock of every language course, and school curricula are no exception. Unfortunately, it is an issue in the Czech educational context as there seems to be no systematic approach with regard to language goals. While S2030+ promotes and advocates competencies and reducing inequalities, it does not offer any tangible solutions or methods. Likewise, RVPs and their current revision does not state any clear goals for language learning. In reality, it is schools who set goals in their ŠVPs (*Školní vzdělávací programy*), which are based on RVPs. This means that schools might (and indeed do) differ in their approach to teaching. This lack of a unified approach can be deemed detrimental in searching for language teaching methodologies; it is challenging to look for apt methodologies that could be adopted systematically when there is no official systematic approach. Therefore, it might be more valuable and beneficial for teachers – and thus students – if they start experimenting with alternative teaching methodologies out of their own volition.

6 Conclusion

In this diploma thesis, I attempted to develop a methodical checklist that would serve as a guide to developing TBLT materials within the Czech context. To do so, contemporary binding curricular documents had to be taken into consideration and linked with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) methodology.

The justification for the choice of TBLT stems from its unfamiliarity in the Czech Republic. Studies suggest that TBLT leads to noticeable progress in language acquisition (see, e.g., a meta-analysis by Bryfonski & McKay, 2019), and in some parts of Asia, TBLT has even been adopted as an official methodology for language teaching in education. It has therefore appeared worth exploring the option of adopting TBLT in the Czech education system so as to enrich the standard teaching techniques and teachers' repertoires, potentially leading to greater learning gains.

To achieve this goal of integrating TBLT into the Czech context, contemporary curricular documents had to be examined. These documents pose certain requirements that were then gleaned and reasonably distilled. This stage proved to be problematic due to the fairly general nature the documents are written in. For example, the arguably most important document as of today, S2030+, is written in a rather vague language, with its goals and aims not specific enough if one tried to reach the goals. It might be expected, nonetheless, that the stated goals ought to be specified by the undergoing and also upcoming revision of RVPs. Some theoretical outputs are already available on a website dedicated to publishing up-to-date information about the revision of RVPs (<https://revize-ict-g.rvp.cz/prehled-zmen-v-rvp-g>). Needless to say, even these documents do not give any practical and applicable solutions.

As vague as the discussed curricular documents may be, this vagueness offers room for innovation and experimentation. One of the points in S2030+ is that innovation in teaching will be supported and even funded. If that is the case, there are essentially no administrative obstacles in terms of testing and considering TBLT as a valid approach in language teaching. In my opinion, TBLT does align significantly with S2030+. Competencies, as S2030+ defines them, are of paramount importance in the S2030+'s philosophy. In fact, they form the first of the two strategic objectives of the document: focus education more on the acquisition of competencies, not mere memorisation. TBLT seems to align with the second strategic objective as well, which is to reduce inequalities in access to education and pave the way for the maximum development of the potential of children, pupils, and students. Since TBLT differs

significantly from the traditional methods of teaching and rote learning in general, this teaching methodology can be deemed viable for language classes specifically for its possibility to utilise more than just knowledge from memory but to also apply it meaningfully and authentically. This could potentially help reduce inequalities in classrooms as pupils and students would be given chances to use the skills they are comfortable with.

Similarly to the discussed curricular document, one issue with TBLT is that it is likewise often perceived as vague, with varied definitions of ‘task’ and misconceptions about its approach to accuracy. Furthermore, some even claim that communicative approaches such as TBLT are not apt for areas such as vocabulary where teaching requires explicit focus on learning lexical items (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020, pp. 161-164). However, although the explicit focus on language would go against the principles of TBLT, the target language itself could be solely vocabulary-focused, with the typical focus on form in the post-task phase.

Worksheets were chosen as the practical output of this thesis for several simple reasons. First, it would have been extremely time-consuming and beyond the scope of this thesis to conduct a larger body of learning materials, such as a full coursebook. Second, as worksheets are one of the most common learning materials, it seemed appropriate to choose them for the practical part. Moreover, worksheets are flexible with respect to size. In simple terms, a worksheet can be made of a fraction of a paper sheet, but also several pages. In this sense, worksheets align neatly with the nature of tasks, which can be of varied complexity.

The methodology for developing materials was gleaned and distilled from Tomlinson (2010) and Jolly & Bolitho (2010), who provided solid and universal sequencing for creating any learning materials, not only worksheets. This workflow for material development was further enriched with key TBLT concepts, which emerged as a straightforward task.

The actual creation of five worksheets was considerably less straightforward. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the process of conducting the worksheet appeared to be choosing the theme and target language, and then making sure that they were aligned. In other words, the theme should serve as a vehicle for the language, which is often not a simple task to accomplish, though one may take inspiration from contemporary coursebooks or even consult AI chatbots, which proved to help generate themes for the worksheets. It can be surmised that AI-powered tools are going to become even more widespread and implemented in more areas than just the development of materials, so teachers should learn how to work and use this technology to not

only enhance the learning experience for students but also lessen the workload on their shoulders.

TBLT is a promising methodology for language teaching in Czechia. It must be noted, however, that it might be challenging to grasp the idea of TBLT in the initial stages of implementation. For this reason, teachers should consider opting for Task-*Supported* Language Teaching (TSLT), for simplification of the process. This is typically not recommended in literature (see, e.g., East, 2021), though I believe there might be great value in testing tasks first with TSLT by simply aiding regular lessons with tasks as opposed to trying to implement a true TBLT methodology. Moreover, since there are still constraints that make it difficult to implement TBLT, such as preparing students for matura exams whose format is prescribed to a large degree by the government, it might deter teachers from experimenting with TBLT. TSLT could be the solution to this problem by simply enriching regular lessons. To illustrate, teachers may prepare students for written parts of the matura exam by having them write letters and other genres that are included in matura. It can be argued that teachers already do this kind of preparation, and I would agree, but it is arguable whether it is done as a deliberate and mindful preparation for the exam, or in a more authentic and context-bound manner, which could potentially lead to greater learning gains.

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Resumé

Vzdělávací politika se zdá být v České republice věčným tématem. Reformy jako například Strategie vzdělávací politiky ČR do roku 2030+ (zkráceně S2030+) je proto nyní středobodem diskuze, ze které vznikají další dokumenty polemizující nad výukou konkrétních předmětů. Samotný dokument S2030+ vznikl v reakci na společenské změny zasahující do všech oblastí lidského života, na které by vzdělávací systém měl připravovat. Určitým úskalím tohoto závazného dokumentu je fakt, že nenabízí žádná konkrétní řešení na zmíněné a velmi reálné problémy, které vzdělávací systém, tj. především žáky, studenty a učitele zatěžují. To však nabízí příležitost prozkoumat alternativní, dosud pro český kontext neznámé způsoby výuky, které by mohly naplnit cíle stanovené v S2030+.

Významnou oblastí ve vzdělávání je výuka cizího jazyka. *Task-Based Language Teaching* (TBLT), neboli výuka jazyka založená na úkolech, je velmi dobře prozkoumaným přístupem, který má ve světě značné zastoupení, a to především v asijských oblastech, kde se místy oficiálně zavedl jako povinný styl výuky. Tato diplomová práce prozkoumává možnost využití TBLT ve výuce cizího jazyka v českém prostředí. První část práce uvádí čtenáře do problematiky angličtiny jakožto světového jazyka, což výrazně ovlivňuje styl výuky angličtiny ve světě, a zmiňuje některé přístupy. Teoretická část dále představuje kurikulární dokumenty z českého kontextu – S2030+ a rámcové vzdělávací plány – a vysvětluje stanovené cíle v těchto dokumentech. Polemizování o vhodných přístupech při naplňování těchto cílů vyžaduje ohlédnutí se za tím, co již výuka cizích jazyků zná z minulosti, tj. takzvané tradiční metody, které jsou následovány kapitolou o modernějších přístupech známých jako *communicative language teaching* (CLT), v češtině komunikativní výuka jazyka nebo také komunikativní metoda. Teoretickou část práce uzavírá představení samotné TBLT, což je svým způsobem větev CLT, a prezentuje klíčové vlastnosti tohoto přístupu, včetně kritiky z odborných publikací. V závěru teoretické části jsou prezentovány výzkumy a teorie z oblasti akvizice druhého jazyka, které jsou relevantní pro TBLT, přičemž na TBLT nahlízejí převážně kladně z hlediska úspěšné jazykové akvizice.

Cílem této práce je vytvoření pěti pracovních listů na základě předvytvořeného kontrolního seznamu. Tyto pracovní listy v úrovních A1 až C1 dle Společného evropského referenčního rámce jsou tvořeny tak, aby odpovídaly cílům stanoveným v S2030+, konkrétně kompetencím, a zároveň aby byly v souladu s klíčovými principy TBLT. Zmíněný kontrolní seznam, který je tvořen jednoduchými otázkami slouží k tomu, aby potenciálnímu učiteli pomohl při rozhodování v procesu tvoření daných pracovních listů.

Praktická část tedy nejprve zmiňuje obecné požadavky na tvoření výukových materiálů, které je vhodné vzít v úvahu a následně je propojuje s TBLT principy. Zmíněna je také možnost použití AI, která může v budoucnu velmi zjednodušit a především zrychlit celý proces tvoření TBLT pracovních listů. Následně jsou představeny vytvořené pracovní listy od úrovně A1 po C1, přičemž se každý zaměřuje na jinou oblast zájmu pro učitele. A1 list se zaměřuje na poslech, což je na této úrovni klíčová dovednost a zároveň rozvíjí nejen jazykovou kompetenci, ale i kompetenci v oblasti kulturního povědomí. A2 list se soustředí především na mluvený projev studentů, kde využijí kompetence nejen z oblasti kultury, ale také kompetence digitální, neb tento pracovní list vyžaduje určitou práci s digitálním zařízením. B1 list byl vytvořen v podobném duchu, přičemž je však ztížen o schopnosti spolupráce, plánování a také konkrétněji práci s rozpočtem, což je součástí kompetencí důležitých pro osobní a profesní život zmíněných v S2030+. B2 list je primárně zaměřen na mluvený projev a zároveň na neustálou spolupráci mezi studenty. Tento list byl odpilotován na hodině angličtiny na gymnáziu a dokázal, že klade velký důraz na mluvený projev studentů, spolupráci, ale převážně také na práci s informacemi, což je opět avizováno jako jedna z klíčových kompetencí v S2030+. Cíl hodiny byl naplněn a studenti se po dotázání vyjádřili, že hodinu hodnotí kladně s ohledem na pochopení cílené látky a také stylu, jakým byla hodina vedena. List úrovně C1 se liší v zaměření, konkrétně na projev psaný. Jelikož úloha pro studenty cílí na psaní souvislého textu, jsou zde využívány schopnosti a kompetence z oblasti nejen jazykových, ale i digitálních technologií a v neposlední řadě také z oblasti kulturního povědomí.

Tyto pracovní listy byly dále zhodnoceny a analyzovány, a zároveň byl B2 list představen v kompletním plánu jedné vyučovací hodiny, aby si čtenář dovedl lépe představit, jaké konkrétně má podobný TBLT úkol, tj. daný pracovní list, využití a místo v běžné hodině. Závěrem práce byla diskutována různá omezení a překážky, které by mohly stát v cestě zavedení TBLT do výuky.

Největší problémy v úspěšném zavedení TBLT jsou dvojího charakteru. První skupinou jsou úskalí spojená se samotným TBLT. Jak je zmíněno v teoretické části, významné procento učitelů dotázaných na definici „úkolů“ nedokázalo precizně vymezit vlastnosti, které by odpovídaly principům TBLT. Jinými slovy se nedalo mluvit o „TBLT úkolu“ v pravém slova smyslu. Okolo TBLT stále panuje poměrně značná nejasnost ohledně těch vlastností, které jsou bohužel pro TBLT klíčové. Druhou skupinou úskalí jsou problémy spojené se zavedením TBLT do kurikula, tzn. problémy na „oficiálnější bázi“. Co se týče například hodnocení a testování studentů, konkrétně třeba státní maturitní zkoušky, bylo by nutné pozměnit podobu maturitních

zkoušek tak, aby byla v souladu s výukou založenou na úkolech. Zásah takových rozměrů se však zdá být poměrně neuskutečnitelný. Určité limity mohou učitelé pocítit i v průběžném testování žáků a studentů, neboť se tradiční formáty testů příliš neshodují s vedením výuky TBLT metodikou. Testování pomocí úkolů, tzv. *Task-Based Language Assessment (TBLA)*, existuje a je poměrně prozkoumanou oblastí, prerekvizitou je však úspěšné uchopení TBLT problematiky.

Ačkoliv jsou zmíněné překážky reálné a učitelé se s nimi při implementaci TBLT budou setkávat, využití TBLT (nebo pouze TBLT úkolů) takřka nic zásadního nebrání a učitelé mohou s touto výzkumem podloženou metodou výuky jazyka své hodiny obohatit. Potenciál využití TBLT se zdá být v českém kontextu nesporný.