

The main purpose of the thesis was to investigate the role of the age factor in discourse and to observe some significant aspects of the growing LI communicative competence in children. The analysis was based on a corpus consisting of audio recordings of adult-child interactions in the primary school environment. The interactions involved pupils of different ages and their teachers. The children formed three age groups according to their grade. They were pupils of the first, third and fifth grade; that is to say they were mostly seven, nine and eleven years old.

The recording took place in Barnes Elementary School in Beaverton, Oregon, USA, during two weeks in May, 2006. Although the school staff was very helpful and open to the project, there were factors that made it rather complicated (see also 1.3). Firstly, the time period of two weeks was a short time to obtain enough material for a large-scale research project. Moreover, the school schedule included many activities such as field trips or theatre performances, which even further reduced the time aimed for recording. Secondly, the school was a noisy place, which caused certain passages of the recordings to be unintelligible. Thirdly, young children from the first grade were sometimes shy and reluctant to talk, so their speech was inaudible and thus could not be used for the analysis. Therefore, the material available is limited and the results are only preliminary and need to be verified if more material is obtained.