MASTER THESIS

Grammar in Writing

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To my parents

Acknowledgements

To my diploma thesis supervisor Mgr. Marie Bojarová and the students of
Gymnázium Nad Alejí.

I declare that I have written the diploma master thesis myself using only the
referenced sources. I express my consent to the use of the thesis for the library
purposes.

April 1, 2008 in Prague   Světlana Ondroušková

Topic: **Grammar in Writing**

The aim of the diploma thesis Grammar in Writing is to explore the methodology of teaching grammar in writing and design and test an intermediate grammar-in-writing course that would improve students' writing skills.

The writing course should implement the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Thus it should also introduce the basic features of the framework and how it treats the writing skills.

It should also provide a detailed evaluation of students improvement to prove whether the course was successful.

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Anotace:

Diplomová práce s názvem Gramatika v psaném projevu je zaměřena na studium metod používaných ve výuce gramatiky v psaném projevu, jejich použití v praxi a následném vyhodnocení na základě reálného pokroku žáků.

První část tvoří teoretický základ, který vysvětluje pojem schopnost psaní, popisuje přístupy ve výuce schopnosti psaní a gramatiky. Popisuje také Společný evropský referenční rámec pro jazyky – jak popisuje klíčové dovednosti pro psaní a kritéria pro dosažení jednotlivých úrovní.

Druhá, praktická část popisuje realizaci kurzu Grammar in Writing a jednotlivé plány vyučovacích hodin a jako formu vyhodnocení kurzu navrhuje jazykové portfolio vypracované na základě Společného evropského referenčního rámce pro jazyky. Součástí druhé praktické části je i vyhodnocení kurzu a jeho úspěšnosti na základě prací žáků a jazykového portfolia.

Klíčová slova: gramatika, psaný projev, jazykové portfolio

Annotation:

The diploma thesis entitled Grammar in Writing focuses on the methods used in teaching grammar in writing, its application in practice and the consequent evaluation based on the progress of students.

The theoretical part tries to explain the notion of writing as a skill, the methodology of teaching writing skills and grammar. It also introduces the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – it explains the key competences for writing and the criteria for achieving particular levels.

The practical part descibes the realisation of the course Grammar in Writing and detailed lesson plans. As a form of evaluation of the course a language portfolio was designed implementing the requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The practical part also includes the evaluation of the course based on students' work and the language portfolio.

Key words: grammar, writing, language portfolio

1 Introduction

From the four basic language skills (i.e. reading, listening, writing, and speaking), writing is most frequently neglected. The answer comes at hand if we look closer at the characteristics of written tasks. They are complex and demanding, often extending over several lessons. They require continuous and time-consuming concentration and creativity to brainstorm and develop ideas. Moreover, the ideas have to be clearly expressed and logically structured so that they are accessible for those who will read them. Students must have a thorough knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

The aim of this diploma thesis is to outline a solution improving students' writing skills, test the suggested solution and analyse its relevancy. Writing will be viewed as a separate skill and will receive an individual approach.

An eight-lesson intermediate writing course will be elaborated leaning on the grammatical structures typically appearing in the written form. It will be set in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* in order to provide both a complex and holistic treatment of exercises. Overall, the course should bring students' writing skills to level B2.

Students will be asked to analyse different types of texts and its grammar to explore its particular functions. They will discuss how different grammatical structures can influence the meaning. The course will provide exercises inviting students to pass from reception to production – to develop their autonomous writing skills. After each lesson students will be asked to produce a short paper on a given topic which will serve as a trace of their improvement.

Finally, students will be asked to evaluate the course. The evaluation process will be based on the *Language Portfolio*, thus students will evaluate the course through their own improvement and achievement in practical language usage.

The course will be also evaluated from the point of view of the teacher (i.e. the author of the thesis) to analyse the progress of the course, students' improvements and achievements and the overall success of the suggested method.

2 Learning and teaching language

In this chapter we will consider the basic constituents of language learning and teaching. We will also establish the concept of communication and its characteristics and make the distinction between written and spoken output.

2.1 Language input and output

All language teaching classroom activities can be devided into two groups (Harmer, 2004):

- **Language input** realised through exposing students to language either in learning[1] or language acquisition[2]; input can vary from adapted, finely-tuned, to authentic, roughly-tuned, texts or situations.

- **Language output** which in terms of language learning means production or rehearsing; output can vary from accuracy controlled activities to strictly fluency-based communicative tasks.

Input and output activities should be balanced, otherwise students might consider the lesson monotonous and boring.

2.2 Language skills

Correspondingly, four basic skills can be defined whose mastery is the primary aim of the language teaching and learning process.

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking

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[1] **Language learning** is a conscious process involving the study of explicit rules of language and monitoring one's performance, as is often typical of classroom learning in a foreign language context.
(from *Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*, Longman, 2002)

[2] **Language acquisition** is a nonconscious process of rule internalization resulting from exposure to comprehensible input when the learner's attention is on meaning rather than on form. This term is usually used in context of learning one's first language.
(from *Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*, Longman, 2002)

The skills can be further classified into two categories based on whether they concern language input or output, into receptive and productive skills respectively.

- **Receptive skills:** reading and listening
- **Productive skills:** speaking and writing

Receptive and productive skills encounter in the mutual ***interaction*** (in CEFR) both in oral and written exchange. We use them separately neither in our mother tongue nor in the foreign language. Thus the writing process is always preceded by a large amount of reading (i.e. language input), even speaking or listening may take place to acquire all the information needed in order to be able to construct the written output.

A special, yet not a rare category, is ***mediation*** (also in CEFR) that enables communication to those who cannot participate directly. Mediating plays an important role in our everyday communication and therefore should be represented in language activities. In writing, mediation is crutial; for example, in the narrative we use the mediation of our past experience or in the letter of complaint we communicate throught madiation our bad experience.

Productive skills establish communication. To engage in communication we must be sure that there is a purpose which is also known as the ***information gap*** (Harmer, 2004) between what the speaker/writer knows and what the listener/reader wants to learn. The information gap is used to arouse interest in the listener/reader; i.e. either they are deliberately engage themselves in the communication or they were invited by the speaker/writer [see Figure 1]. Thus all classroom activities should be designed so that they contain an information gap to raise students' interest.
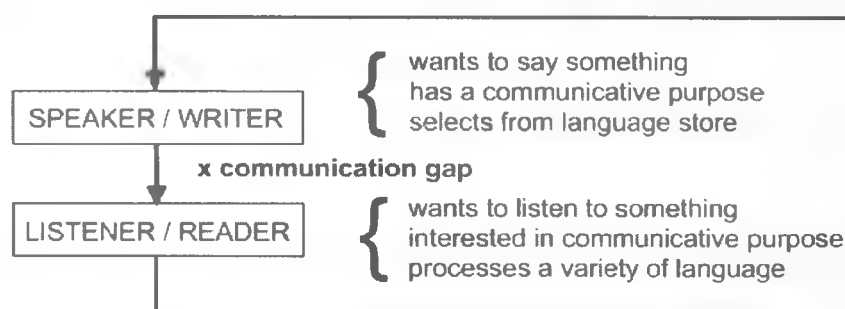
Figure 1: The nature of communication (Harmer , 2004)

3   Specific features of writing

In this chapter we will consider the specific features of writing – in particular based on the contrast between speech and writing. Furthermore, examples of students' writing will be discussed in order to show the early stage of students' dependence on the spoken form and their further development.

We will also look into the process of developing writing as an autonomous skill based on the work of a particular student and state the hypothesis.

3.1   Spoken versus written output

As mentioned above, both writing and speaking are productive skills. Many students are convinced that if they are fluent speakers, they are automatically proficient writers. Yet the first does not imply the second, as there is a remarkable difference between the two. Even in the mother tongue we have to learn to write. There are certain rules and conventions that cannot be easily acquired, thus must be learned.

To understand the difference between written and spoken output, we must first look into the position of the listener and speaker, reader and writer (Ur, 2000). In speech, even native speakers make mistakes; however, the listener has the advantage of direct communication. They can ask to clarify the possible misunderstandings; if there is a daubt the listener can be reassured by the speaker. This is not possible in writing.

While speaking is mostly realised on the phonetic level, writing is realised on the graphic level. This means that many nuances expressed in speech cannot be captured in writing with the same number of words. What is expressed with intonation and accompanying gestures in speech, writing must express with additional descriptions.
On the other hand, if a person decided to speak like a programmer's guide, it would definitely sound unnatural.

The further analysis of spoken and written output excludes creative writing, as it balances between the two registers and often borrows many features from speech.

Let us consider the following example (Ur, 2000):

SAMPLES OF WRITTEN AND SPOKEN TEXTS

Written text (refers to a diagram of a cassette recorder with different components numbered)
- For recording from the built-in microphone ensure that no equipment is connected to socket (1)
- For other recordings connect the separate microphone or the quipment from which you wish to record to socket (11)
- Insert a cassette
- Press record (2) and start key (4) at the same time
- To stop, press stop key (6)

The spoken text

Marion: Could you explain to me how to make a recording with this cassette recorder?

Ron: (er) Yes certainly. (um) First of all you (er) open the (er) place where the cassette goes, press down the button marked eject, then you put the cassette in and close the lid. (um) Then (um) to record you have to press down two buttons simultaneously (er) the one marked rec for record and the one marked start. So you press those two down like that⁻⁻

Marion: Uhuh

Ron: and it starts recording (er) automatically …

Marion: Ummm. And what if I want to record with a different microphone, not the built-in one here?

Ron: There's a, a place, a socket here⁻⁻

Marion: Oh yes

Ron: on the bottom left, and you can put an outside microphone into that and record from another source.

(from Ur, P. *A Course in Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press, 2000)

1. Vagueness or accuracy

Most of our speech is realised without any previous preparation. Thus it is characterised by *paralinguistic features*, i.e. a set of signs that are strictly context and situation dependent. The speaker pauses, makes gestures and grimaces, the speech may even overlap. Moreover, linguistic means used in the spoken output, e.g. demonstrative pronouns, filler words, or interjections, that point to the extralinguistic reality, would often sound vague in writing. Writing, on the other hand, should be accurate and specific, since the reader does not have the advantage of directly reassuring if a misunderstanding occurs.

2. Implied or explicit

Written texts should be *explicit*. It should clearly explain the basic ideas and invite the reader to spend as much time as they need to reread and get an insight into the topic covered. This implies that the writing itself should be preceded by an extensive pre-writing stage that is

used by the author to arrange their ideas, think about the purpose and the target audience and also about the language and its functions in the text.

3. Density

Written texts provide more information in less words. They are more economical and better arranged.

As shown in the example above, the written text uses numeric reference to a picture so that it renders the information brief and explicit. While in speech Ron makes pauses, uses a lot of redundant words and repetition to emphasise what he personally finds relevant with respect to the current situation.

4. Organization

In speech we tend to jump from ideas. This is not possible in writing because we would discourage the reader. Keeping to the formal rules of different genres is also important to achieve our aims. It enables good orientation in the text, facilitates the purpose and helps transmit the message.

5. Register

What is also quite obvious from the example above is the noticeable difference between the registers of written or spoken output. It also includes the formality scale and a specific choice of language.

3.2   Writing in language teaching and learning

Based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [see Chaper 4.1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages] writing gains its autonomy as a skill only at a later stage, i.e. on B1 level. The earlier stages (A1/A2 level) regard writing as a secondary skill that is used in accuracy-based tasks emphasising its means-to-an-end function.

It is only on B1/B2 level that students are required to contain abstract topics which implies developing the ability to write. Therefore this stage describes students as *independent*. However, to reach their independence, they must go through a painstaking accuracy-to-fluency stage which requires their cooperation and hard work. If they do not succeed, they fall in the group of incurable beginners constantly retaking the initial steps.

Here is an overview of the main characteristics of writing with respect to what should be considered by teachers in the language teaching/learning process.

1. Choice of language

   Although writing is considered to be briefer than speech, it does not imply that the number of linguistic items used to express a certain idea is smaller. On the other hand, to produce a briefer text, we need to have a deeper knowledge of language and to improve our productive competence. The learners should distinguish between the spoken and written output.

   Thus students should be taught the difference between formal and informal register, synonymical expressions, functions of language, etc.

2. Time to think

   In terms of time, writing is usually preceded with a time-consuming preparation, while speech performed 'on the spot'. The writer needs to arrange their thoughts and considers the most appropriate form and content. Grammar cannot be excluded; for example, it can be used as a tool to express different levels of politeness. If we want a person to respond to our demands, we have various possibilities to express the idea in words. We might write *"Pay it back to me!"* (imperative) or *"I would like to ask you for a reimbursement of all expenses connected with the journey."* (conditional *would*); yet the choice is crucial if we consider that it is part of a letter of complaint written in the formal style.

   Teachers should not neglect the pre-writing stage and plan it to be well balanced always aiming at one specific purpose that we want students to comprise. Yet we should be careful not to overwhelm students with too much information, which might result in a longish and off-putting labour with no clear results. [See Chapter 4.4 Examples from available coursebooks] where you can learn more on writing tasks designed in an discouraging way.

3. Recycling students' knowledge

   It is a well known rule that the way to achieve simple objectives is always difficult. Thus to be able to produce a brief and coherent text, students should 'recycle' their knowledge. The teacher should consider what the students already know, build upon this knowledge and broaden it further. Effective ways to recycle students' knowledge are further explored in [Chapter 4.2.1 Deductive and inductive approach].

3.3 Students' writing

In order to illustrate the process of developing students' authonomy in writing, I have chosen to analyse the work a students whose progress I have followed for more than three years (from B1 to B2+/C1 level).

The following analysis also serves as an underlying material for the main hypothesis of the thesis:

> **As students become more proficient writers the range of their mistakes alternates from those on the level of grammar (e.g. tenses, word order) to discourse (e.g. reference, speech acts).**

Out of a number of texts I have chosen two that should demonstrate the gradual development of the student's writing skills. They will be transcribed with mistakes. Errors relevant to the style (formal/informal) will be written **in bold**, while redundancy will be underlined. Other grammatical and vocabulary errors will be also discussed.

3.3.1 Text analysis

Both of the texts were written by the same student; however, there is a two-year gap between them to illustrate the gradual progress.

Here are the assignments for both of them.

1 *Formal letter* (B2 level, preparation for FCE, April 2005) in *Fast Track to FCE* by Stanton, A. And Stephens, M. (2001) Pearsons Education Limited

Figure 2: Writing assignement from Fast Track to FCE

2 *Leaflet* (C1 level, preparation for CAE, June 2007) in *CAE Result!* by Gude, K. and Stephens, M. (2006) Oxford University Press

> 7   Choose an animal you could base the exam task on. Make notes and use the information in this section to help you write your leaflet. Remember to:
>
> - include one paragraph about the animal
> - write a separate paragraph on how to observe it
> - keep your language fairly formal
> - vary your sentence structure.
>
> Figure 3: Writing assignment from CAE Result!

Text 1: *Formal letter*

Dear Mr. Kelly,

Thank you very much for your letter and brochure, I have received today. I would like to try an Adventure Break at your Highland Activity Centre.

I would like to choose the course which will start on 13th June. I will come on 12th June at 7 pm to Inverness station, is it possible that someone meets me at the station?

Could you tell me if you also offer accomodation in single rooms? **If yes, I prefer that**. How much is the extra pay for single room?

I wonder if you could also tell me what sort of clothes exactly should I bring with myself? **And the last question**: is the course divided on particularly levels, are there also course for beginners?

I would like to thank you in advance for **the info**.

Yours sincerely,
Katerina Burianova

Formal/informal style:

Line 10: The sentence "*If yes, I prefer that*" sounds definitely rather informal and one would expect it in conversation. On intermediate level, the knowledge of auxiliaries as "*If you do, I prefer that*" is expected; what is more "*I prefer that*" could be avoided as redundant and the whole could be replaced by the following: "*If you do, I also wonder*

whether extra money must be paid".

Line 13: The expression *"And the last question"* sounds informal because it starts with the preposition *"and"* which is rather unusual in the written output. It would be preferable to write *"My last question is: ...".*

Line 16: Clipping as a word formation process is still considered as an informal linguistic device.

Punctuation:

Line 2: There is no comma needed in *"...brochure, I have received today".*

Line 6/7: It would be preferable to divide this sentence into two: *"I will come on 12th June at 7 pm to Inverness station. Is it possible that someone meets me at the station?"*

Redundancy:

Line 12: *"I wonder if you could also tell me..."* sounds redundant, especially if the phrase *"Could you tell me if..."* is used in the preceeding paragraph. It can be omitted, e.g. *"I wonder what sort of clothes I should bring with myself".*

Other grammar mistakes:

Line 4: The student chose a modal expression in *"...the course which will start on 13th July".* However, for scheduled events, it is more appropriate to use the present simple form, i.e. *"... the course starts on 13th July".*

An indefinite article is missing in *"for single room"*(line 11) and a plural is needed in *"course for beginners"* (line 15).

Line 13: The mistake in *"...should I bring with myself"* also proves, that the student does not have a proper knowledge of reported speech.

Line 14: the verb *"to divide"* collocates with the preposition *"into".*

Line 14: An adjective should be used to modify the noun *"levels".* This may seem rather an unimportant mistake; however, not on B2 level.

Text 2: *Leaflet*

The mole (Talpa Europea)

<u>General Information</u>

Moles are mammals found in many European and Asion countries including the Czech Republic. These extraordinary creatures have cylindrical body covered with block fur, big fore legs turned to sides and adapted for pawing the ground. They look like shovels and help him to make corridors under the ground. The corridors are ramified. He moves in the corridors very quickly and confidently. The mole's labyrinth contents one main corridor, which leads from the nook (which is properly hidden under the trees' roots) to the place where he stores food.

Moles are insectivores and spend most of their lives in the dark under the ground. This is the reason they are nearly blind and deaf. White and yellow moles rarely occured.

Moles are solitory creatures, the females bear approximately five sucklings twice a year.

<u>Observing moles</u>

Mole occurs in the Czech Republic until the elevation of 500m. The well-known mole-hills are to be found not only in greenfields, but also in gardens and leafy woods. To see them is quite a challenge, on the other hand, to see the mole-hills are quite easy. Also the corridors are easy to recognise because the gross above them is dry and brown. That is because of the roots, they are pulled by the mole during his pawing of the corridors. During the worm months, if you are very potient sitting by the mole-hill, you will be rewarded with a sight of these fascinating creatures.

If you are not successful in observing moles, you can watch the Story of the Little Mole on TV, which is an animated TV series for little children by Zdenek Muller, a well-known Czech artist.

Cohesion:

The use of the personal pronoun *"he"* and possessive pronoun "his" to refer to the mole thoughout the text is wrong. The writer probably used these with the animated character in mind. However, English does not distinguis genre with wild animals. They are referred to as *"it"* or *"they"*. The use of the masculine form sounds rather familiar and inappropriate.

Line 5 to 7: There is an unnecessary repetition of the word *"corridor"*. It should be replaced by a personal pronoun.

Line 17: It is not clear whether the personal pronoun*"them"* refers to moles or the mole-hills.

Punctuation:

Line 8: The use of an appostrophe seems to be problematic even for the native speakers. In this case, it should be replaced by an of-structure: *"the roots of trees"*.

Line 13/14: A stronger panctuation mark should be used in "Moles are solitary creatures,

the females..." as a semicolon or a full stop.

Line 20: It would be preferable to divide this sentence into two: *"That is because of the roots. They are pulled...".*

Grammar mistakes:

Line 3: An indefinite article is missing in front of *"cylindrical body".*

Line 11/12: The use of the past tense in *"White and yellow moles rarely occured"* is inappropriate, as it refers to a general description of a mole. The present should be employed.

Line 15: Again a determiner is missing with "mole occurs". To identify that a general statement will follow either a definite or an indefinite article may be used.

Line 18: There is a serious mistake in subject-verb concord. It may be confusing for the student because she has decided to use a non-finite infinitive clause as a subject. The verb must be singular form: *"to see the mole-hills is quite easy".*

Line 22: An indefinite reference should be used with *"mole-hill".*

3.3.2 Overall text analysis summary

Concerning *Text 1*, although the piece of writing complies with the assignment as for the content, the overall impression is not altogether convincing.

What is striking is the number of errors linked to the overuse of spoken constructions. Redundancy, for instance, is a typical feature of speech. Also some other constructions would be used only in colloquial speech (e.g. *If yes, I prefer that.*). Even the opening structure resembles too much the fixed informal-letter construction *"Dear Sue, thank you for your letter...".*

Another typical feature of beginner writers is lack of linking devices. The sentences are very simple as if the writer was afraid to lose her grip of the complexity. In fact, she achieves an adversary effect, as without the use of linking devices the text loses its logic and therefore the reader is confused at times.

The student neither shows a wide knowledge of vocabulary, nor grammatical structures. Her knowledge of spoken language interferes with her writing skills to a great extent and there is a remarkable room for improvement.

Text 2 shows that the student has obviously gone through a considerable progress as far as the

sense of formality is concerned. The choice of language is excellent. Compared with *Text 1* it is remarkably richer in vocabulary.

The writing complies with the form of a leaflet – it is well structured with headlines.

The number of mistakes in grammar and coherence that influence understanding of the text is significant; especially reference, which means the use of articles and pronouns. Yet the overall logic of the text is kept and the writer's work can be regarded as satisfactory.

What can be drawn as a conclusion from the examples of writing shown above is the fact that to gain autonomy in writing (i.e. to become an *independent user*), students must be aware of the difference between written and spoken register, they should broaden their knowledge of grammatical structures by getting insight into the use and basic functions, and last but not least they must enrich their vocabulary.

Becoming a *proficient writer* is more about 'brushing up' on nuances and improving students' grasp of the pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences (i.e. text coherence, specific functions).

4 Structure of exercises

This chapter will deal with the overall theoretical approach to constructing worksheets with exercises. It will explore the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* which was used as a groundwork for the exercise structure and explain the basic concepts. Furthermore, it will analyse teaching methods of grammar and writing with the focus on finding common grounds to establish a global approach.

4.1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages[3]

"*The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively."

4.1.1 Key competences

The CEFR is defined in terms of key competences. *Competences* are "the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions". They are further devided into (1) *general competences* which are not directly related to language; however, are important for performing various actions, including learning; and (2) *communicative language competences* which enable a person to use a language.

Ad. 2: The communicative language competences consist of three components:

- **Linguistic competences** comprise language as a system, i.e. grammar, phonological and lexical items. Besides the qualitative knowledge and skills, it includes also the cognitive organisation and accessibility. This effects the ability to retrieve various items of language when the learner needs them.

- **Sociolinguistic competences** comprise the learner's ability to distinguish various social contexts and to react accordingly. This category includes rules of politeness, norms governing relations between generations, sexes, classes and social groups, and linguistic codification of certain fundamental rituals in the functioning of a

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3   The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* is the only source for the whole of Chapter 4.1.Therefor all quotations are withdrawn from this material.

community.

- **Pragmatic competences** refer to the functional use of linguistic resources (production of language functions, speech acts, etc.). It also comprises discourse, cohesion and coherence.

Pragmatic competence is a domain where grammar and writing correlate.

The designed set of exercises will try to develop all of the competences simultaneously with a special focus on language functions. The aim is to establish context for the use of grammar as a linguistic competence.

4.1.2 Language domains

The CEFR establishes four basic domains round which can be grouped all types of communicative situations, and thus language activities.

- **Public domain** which covers ordinary social interaction (business and administrative bodies, cultural and leisure activities of public nature, relations with the media, etc.).

- **Personal domain** which consists of family relations and individual social practices.

- **Educational domain** is concerned with the learning/training process, i.e. giving instructions to students in order to acquire specific skills or knowledge.

- **Occupational domain** comprises everything connected with the exercise of one's occupation.

The set of exercises will further explore especially two domains – public and personal. The main focus will be to raise awareness in terms of language formality, as the public domain will use formal language and the personal domain will more likely use informal language.

What is also obvious is the fact that most of the situations comprised in the personal domain are realised in speech, while the proportion of written communication is more significant in the public and occupational domain.

4.1.3 Common reference levels of language proficiency

The common reference levels of language proficiency are defined in terms of illustrative descriptors also called "Can Do's".

The basic grid of common reference levels follows:

Table 1: *Grid of common reference levels*

User	Level	Description
Proficient user	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
Proficient user	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent user	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
Independent user	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic user	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
Basic user	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

This work will basically concentrate only on Level B2 for three reasons:

1. Writing is a specific skill that is usually mastered later than speaking. Thus it can be implied that students who learn a foreign language for communicative purposes (active knowledge and usage) will become independent speakers sooner than independent writers. Additionally, in the initial stage of learning, writing is only used as a means (i.e. for copying or doing exercises).

2. Second, because Level B2 requires "fluency" and "spontaneity", which also means the ability to distinguish between registers both spoken/written and formal/informal. As for the mastery of the sociolinguistic competence, the CEFR says: "From Level B2, users are then found able to express themselves adequately in language which is sociolinguistically appropriate to the situations and persons involved, and begin to acquire an ability to cope with variation of speech, plus a greater degree of control over register and idiom."
Moreover, it is a break-through stage at which students should begin to consider writing as a separate autonomous skill.

3. What is obvious from the content coherence analysis further is that Level B2 brings new aspects into the learning/teaching process. It is the students' language awareness, which comprises self-correction and self-reflection. These features are crutial for establishing the groundwork for writing as an autonomous skill.

In terms of the quality of productive skills, Level B2 is further defined as follows:

Table 2: *Level B2 of CEFR, detailed description*	
Criteria	**Assessment**
Overall	Can write clear, detailed official and semi-official texts on a variety of subjects related to his field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. Can make a distinction between formal and informal language with occasional less appropriate expressions.
Range	Has a sufficient range of languag to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, using some complex sentence forms to do so. Language lacks, however, expressivenes and idiomaticity and use of more complex forms is still stereotypic.
Coherence	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her sentences into clear, coherent text, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a longer text.
Accuracy	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors

Table 2: *Level B2 of CEFR, detailed description*	
	which cause misunderstandings.
Description	Can write clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned.
	Can write clear, detailed descriptions on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest.
	Can write a review of a film, book or play.
Argument	Can write an essay or report that develops argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.
	Can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.

4.1.4 Writing in CEFR

Illustrative scales are provided for:

- Overall written production

- Creative writing

- Reports and essays

Table 3: *Overall written production*	
C2	Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
C1	Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
B2	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.
B1	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.

Table 3: *Overall written production*	
A2	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'.
A1	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.

Table 4: *Creative writing*	
C2	Can write clear, smoothly flowing, and fully engrossing stories and descriptions of experience in a style appropriate to the genre adopted.
C1	Can write clear, detailed, well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in an assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind.
B2	Can write clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences, marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned.
	Can write clear, detailed descriptions on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest. Can write a review of a film, book or play.
B1	Can write straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest. Can write accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text. Can write a description of an event, a recent trip – real or imagined. Can narrate a story.
A2	Can write about everyday aspects of his/her environment, e.g. people, places, a job or study experience in linked sentences. Can write very short, basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences.
	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences about their family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job.
	Can write short, simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people.
A1	Can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do.

Table 5: *Reports and essays*	
C2	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles or essays which present a case, or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works. Can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
C1	Can write clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues. Can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.
B2	Can write an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate

		highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail.
		Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.
		Can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
		Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.
	B1	Can write short, simple essays on topics of interest.
		Can summarise, report and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within his/her field with some confidence.
		Can write very brief reports to a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.
	A2	No descriptor available
	A1	No descriptor available

Table 5: *Reports and essays*

The CEFR suggest the following process of written production:

Planning

- ***Rehearsing***

  Rehearsing, also a conscious preparation, is an important writing pre-stage. The writer will consider the style, formulations and language resources they will use to complete the task.

- ***Locating Resources***

  The writer must consider whether they are able to produce the written output themselves or whether they will need to locate other resources (e.g. oral consultations, specialist publications, encyclopaedias) to complete the task.

- ***Considering Audience***

  The writer should think about the audience, i.e. the reader of their letter. They will certainly need to adapt their style to the target audience. For example, they will use formal English in reports and informal English in a letter to their penfriend.

- ***Task adjustment***

  Adjusting a task is feedback to locating resources. If the writer is not able to mobilise adequate resources, they must readjust the task, e.g.

write a postcard instead of a letter.

- *Message adjustment*

  While the task adjustment operates on the level of stylistics and form, the message adjustment applies to linguistic means. Consulting a good dictionary may enable the writer to re-draft their message thus making it more ambitious.

The CEFR states: "Ways of scaling down ambitions to fit resources in order to ensure success in a more limited area have been described as *Avoidance strategies*; scaling up and finding ways to cope have been described as *Achievement strategies*."

Execution

- *Compensating*

  Many beginner or even intermediate language learners use compensating when they cannot retreive an expression in L2. They use an expression from L1 and simply adapt it to L2.
  This method can be sometimes useful, more often can lead to misunderstandings.

- *Building on previous knowledge*

  Each language learner has a set of phrases that they use both in speech and writing. They use them as a stepping stone to complete the task.

- *Trying out*

  If the previous knowledge fails, the learners tend to try out what they "feel like might work".

Evaluation

- *Monitoring success*

  Monitoring success is an important stage for both the learner and the teacher. The learner always expects some feedback. It can be realised through simple gestures, short comments in speech or writing. Correction of mistakes is also a type of feedback; however, teachers should be careful to add some positive comments to cheer up the learner and to encourage them in further work.

Repair

- *Self-correction*

  Self-correction is a very important part of the writing process. It is an effective tool of every autonomous writer. Thus the teacher should

gradually draw students' attention to self-correction.

The diploma thesis course uses a system of symbols to provide feedback to students [see Table 6].

Table 6: *Correction System*	
Grammar mistakes (morphology and syntax)	
Prep	Preposition
T	Wrong verb tense
WO	Mistake in word order
A	Article
Ag	Agreement
G	Other grammatical mistake
Lexical mistakes	
WW	Wrong word
WC	Wrong collocation
Stylistic mistakes	
F/I	Does not fit the register (formal/informal)
R	Redundant information
Other mistakes	
Sp	Spelling
P	Punctuation
( )	Not necessary
‖	Something is missing

Illustrative scales are provided for planning, compensating, monitoring and repair:

Table 7: *Level B2 – process of written production*	
Planning	Can plan what is to be said and the means to say it, considering the effect on the recipient/s.
Compensating	Can use circumlocution and paraphrase to cover gaps in vocabulary and structure.
Monitoring and repair	Can correct slips and errors if he/she becomes conscious of them or if they have led to misunderstandings. Can make a note of 'favourite mistakes' and consciously monitor speech for it/them.

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4.2 Approach to grammar

To provide groundwork for teaching grammar in writing, we need to establish grammar awareness in the initial phase of the learning process. Taking into consideration that the elaborated set of exercises aims at intermediate to advanced students, it can be taken for granted that they have already established wide knowledge of grammar rules. However, the plain knowledge does not assure the ability to understand and the appropriate usage, as most experienced teachers would attest.

Thus it can be concluded that most students' mistakes are not the consequence of their ignoration of grammar. More likely these are side-effects of the content-oriented writing process [see Chapter 4.4 Examples from available coursebooks]. The problems stem from the fact that most textbooks teach writing separately from grammar, although there is a mutual relationship and they cannot be used separately in reality.

It is therefore necessary to find efficient ways to 'make grammar rules work for students'. Functions of grammar should be discussed as it is clear that different structures are used in story-telling (e.g. past tenses) or in a proposal (e.g. suggestion and advice).

There are also various approaches in teaching grammar with varied relevance towards improving writing skills. All of them are discussed further.

Here is a list of perspectives from which teaching grammar can be viewed:

- *Deductive and inductive approach* where it is discussed whether grammar should be tought from rules or implied from examples and context.

- *Accuracy and fluency approach* where the balance between strict observance of grammar rules and fluent and coherent spoken and written expression is considered; i.e. whether grammar should be regarded as the main focus of language learning, or it should be backgrounded leaving room for communicative skills. [see also Chapter 4.3.2 Accuracy and fluency in writing]

- *Functional grammar approach* where grammar is regarded from its semantic perspective and as a tool to express different ideas.

4.2.1 Deductive and inductive approach

The definitions of the deductive and inductive approach (Thornbury, 1999) are as follows:

- *Deductive approach* starts with the presentation of a rule and is followed by examples in which the rule is applied.

- *Inductive approach* (or *discovery learning*) starts with some examples from which a rule is inferred.

Thornbury describes the advantages and disadvantages of both in his *How to teach grammar*[4]. Neither is the point of the thesis to argue with the author, nor to discuss the methodology of teaching grammar. Yet the aim is to elaborate on Thornbury's findings further from the perspective of writing skills. It will be regarded as a stepping stone for the way grammar in writing should be treated, i.e. explained and taught.

As writing is mostly individual work, it is important to encourage students to be independent and self-reliant. These are skills that discovery learning develops prior to others. Consequently, this approach will be preferred to explicit rule explanations. Discovery learning also enables to build upon knowledge which students already have. It is an excellent tool for recycling knowledge.

The numerous relevant disadvantages of inductive approach stated by Thornbury are reduced to a minimum by the following facts:

1. The suggested set of exercises aims at students who already have the basic knowledge of the grammar system. Thus their aim is not to discover the formal rules, but to inquire into the functions of grammar (i.e. semantic values of grammar and its particular use in context). They will only re-discover what they should already know; or broaden their knowledge.

2. Students will not be really frustrated because many textbooks now guide students to learn the basic terminology and explore the grammar rules in context. Although students tend to resist at first (since the cognitive depth of this approach requires more effort on their side), they will appreciate it in long term as they will experience progress in using their receptive and productive language skills.

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4 Thornbury, S. *How to teach grammar*, (2005) Pearsons Education Limited. pp. 30 and 54-55 .

3. Students should not imply a wrong rule as their work will be followed by an immediate feedback in form of a language summary. Neither should they imply that rules are the objective of language learning, since this process will be directly followed by their own written production and all of the exercises will encourage creativity.

4.2.2 Accuracy and fluency in grammar

Owing to the inductive approach adopted in presenting grammar in the designed set of exercises, students should be guided to *fluency* both in grammar and writing.

To become fluent, students must learn to autonomise their knowledge (Thornbury, 2005). This can be achieved through teaching chunks of language rather than dissecting it into pieces and focus primarily on meaning.

Basically, fluency-based tasks should bear the following features:

- To create an information gap
- To have a communicative purpose
- To offer opportunity of a reciprocal exchange

All of the above mentioned features comply with the characteristics of writing tasks.

As opposed to grammar rules as such, the CEFR defines the *grammatical competence* which is "the ability to understand and express meaning by producing and recognising well-formed phrases and sentences in accordance with these principles". The main focus of the exercises will be thus improve students' grammatical competence in the written production.

Still *accuracy* should not be neglected. In fact, students of Level B2 should be already quite accurate as a matter of fact, not taking too much effort thinking about the form. Grammatical accuracy for Level B2 is defined as follows:

Table 8: *Grammatical accuracy*	
Level B2	Good grammatical control; occasional 'slips' or non-systematic errors and minor flaws in sentence structure may still occur, but they are rare and can often be corrected in retrospect.
	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding.

4.2.3 Functional grammar

Functional grammar in language teaching is taught through **functional language teaching** (FLT).

To get an insight into the method, it is indespensable to define the following terms (Ur, 2000):

- **Topics** are general themes round which grammar and lexical items are grouped. Many elementary coursebooks are based on topics, because they are easy to grasp and concrete. Topics usually include *food, family, shopping, housing*, etc.

- **Situations** are communicative events delimited by the context. One topic can consist of an innumerable number of situations. The topic of travelling can include the following situations: *describing your ideal holiday, booking a room in a hotel, checking in at a reception desk*, etc.

- **Notions** are concepts or ideas; they are used to describe various lexical or grammatical itesm, e.g. *future time, habits, expressing movement, emotion*.

- **Functions** are communicative acts and in language teaching refer to uses of language, e.g. *asking for advice, making suggestions, diving directions, describing*. There are not a limited number of functions; nor does a sharp boundary exist between them. They usually serve to achieve a purpose, which establishes their often **binary character**; i.e. many functions have a complementary function and together they establish communication. Inviting, for example, is typically followed by accepting or rejecting; complaining may be followed by an apology or explanation.

These terms are used to define the *functional syllabus*. An example follows:

Table 9: *Example of functional syllabus*				
Situations	*Topics*	*Notions and functions*	*Grammar*	*Vocabulary*
Getting to know someone	Tastes, hobbies	Inquiring Informing Greeting	Interrogative forms Verb *like + ing*	Leisure activities
In a clothes shop	Clothes	Making requests	Modals *would, could, might*	Clothes, adjectives of colour, size, etc.

To sum up, language, and thus writing, reflects situations. In real life, most of our writing is transactional; i.e. we respond to an already existing letter or we expect an answer. During a particular transaction, we do not want to lose our face nor intend to harm the face of our interlocutor. Consequently we have to abide by certain rules which are closely bound to functions. These enable us to maintain the communication and achieve its purpose.

The FLT method teaches the functions through *chunks of language*. They combine both grammatical and lexical means. An inconvenience of this method is that beginner students often have to learn them by heart without understanding the structure. Thus they are furnished using easy-to-grasp topics such as family, travelling, food, etc.; while intermediate students master more abstract topics. For intermediate students, functional syllabus should provide an insight into grammar that they are already supposed to know; they should lay the groundwork for successful and appropriate usage.

FCE level students (B2 or B2+ of CEFR) are supposed to master the following list of functions; moreover, they should make distinctions in formality.

- Requesting information
- Giving information
- Describing
- Suggesting and giving advice
- Creating interest
- Expressing a complaint
- Focusing
- Linking ideas (adding information, contrasting information, etc.)
- Being impersonal

4.3 Approach towards writing

Writing has been long regarded as a mere instrument in language teaching. It served as a means to improve the knowledge of grammar. However, times have changed and writing is slowly becoming an important part of the syllabus. Some recent coursebooks even have special chapters covering and improving the writing skills [see Chapter 4.4 Examples from available coursebooks].

4.3.1 Cohesion and coherence

In order to be able to understand and follow the main ideas of a text it must be *cohesive* and *coherent*.

- **Cohesion** is represented by the linguistic means being at the disposal of each writer. They can use various lexical and grammatical devices to reach the desired effect.

- **Coherence** applies to the ideas and information and how they are treated and organised in the text. Through applying coherence to their texts, writers provide their line of reasoning and invite readers to follow their thoughts and understand the purpose of the text.

The CEFR provides the following illustrative scales.

Table 10: *Cohesion and coherence*	
Level B2	Can use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas.
	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a long contribution.

Writing is a context-dependent process. One cannot produce a coherent text if they do not follow the basic idea which is in fact the purpose of writing.

4.3.2 Accuracy and fluency in writing

Language learning and teaching activities can be placed on an accuracy-fluency scale. While accuracy foregrounds the form, fluency is concerned with the meaning.

There are no strictly fluency-based writing tasks. Writing is a specific skill that requires accuracy. The reader does not have the possibily to clarify misunderstandings directly; consequently, he or she relies on the writer's ability to create a cohesive piece of writing.

Moving from accuracy to fluency in writing should be more or less understood as moving from short phrases or words to extensive texts.

Scrivener (1994) suggests the following scheme:
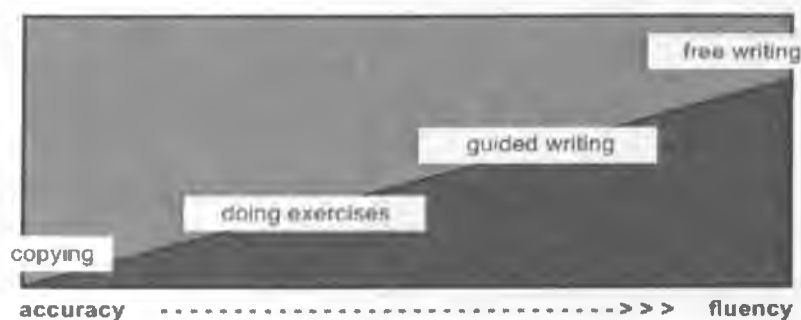
Figure 4: Accuracy-fluency distribution in writing

4.4 Examples from available coursebooks

The following chapter offers an insight into developing writing skills in the current coursebooks from the perspective described above.

Concerning General English coursebooks, they have not fully integrated developing writing skills. These coursebooks were not based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages,* which was established only in 2001. Although they contain writing assignments requiring written output, they do not put emphasis on the input. The instructions are very simple – in form of open questions; however, they do not include any explanations on style, content or grammar in writing.
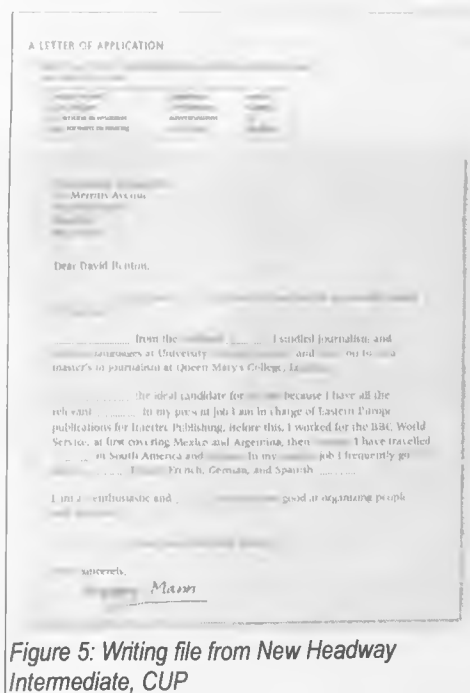
Figure 5: Writing file from New Headway Intermediate, CUP

Exam coursebooks have a different approach. The whole double-page is usually restricted to writing as part of each chapter and there is a special writing guide at the end of a coursebook. The writing guide concentrates on the form and content; in addition, it provides useful language for the particular style [see Figure 5].

Writing guides are usually well accessible and structured. Although they are necessary and important, they do not provide an insight into grammar.
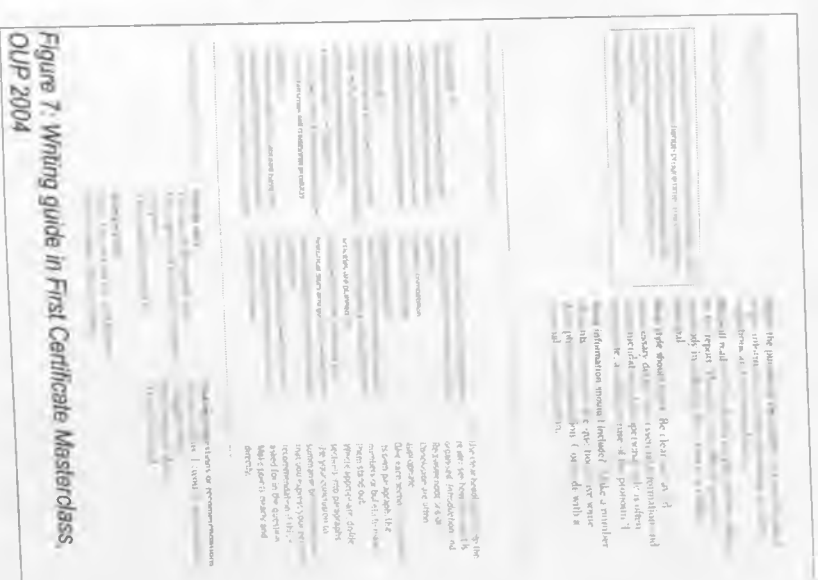
Figure 7: Writing guide in First Certificate Masterclass, OUP 2004

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Still there has been a noticeable improvement as in the new edition of New Headway series [see Figure 5]. They introduce a special writing section focusing on various styles based on the CEFR requirements. These writing files usually deal with the style, content and vocabulary; however, grammar is seldom integrated.

By far the most elaborate file integrating writing skills can be observed in the *face2face* series. This course introduces the *Reading and Writing Portfolio* that aims at integrating both receptive and productive skills and allowing an insight into how a text works. It deals with such pragmatic issues as reference [see Figure 4], giving emphasis, giving advice, giving examples, etc. providing the learner with quite a detailed language input and output.

Figure 6: *Reading and Writing Portfolio in face2face, Cambridge 2007*

- *First Certificate Masterclass, New Edition* (OUP, 2004).

While the former introduces grammar and a grammar file graphically and even thematically separated from the writing part, the latter uses grammar as a means to achieve certain pragmatic functions.

The *Fast Track* may offer useful and quality information. Yet the graphical form is distracting and the learner may become easily lost.
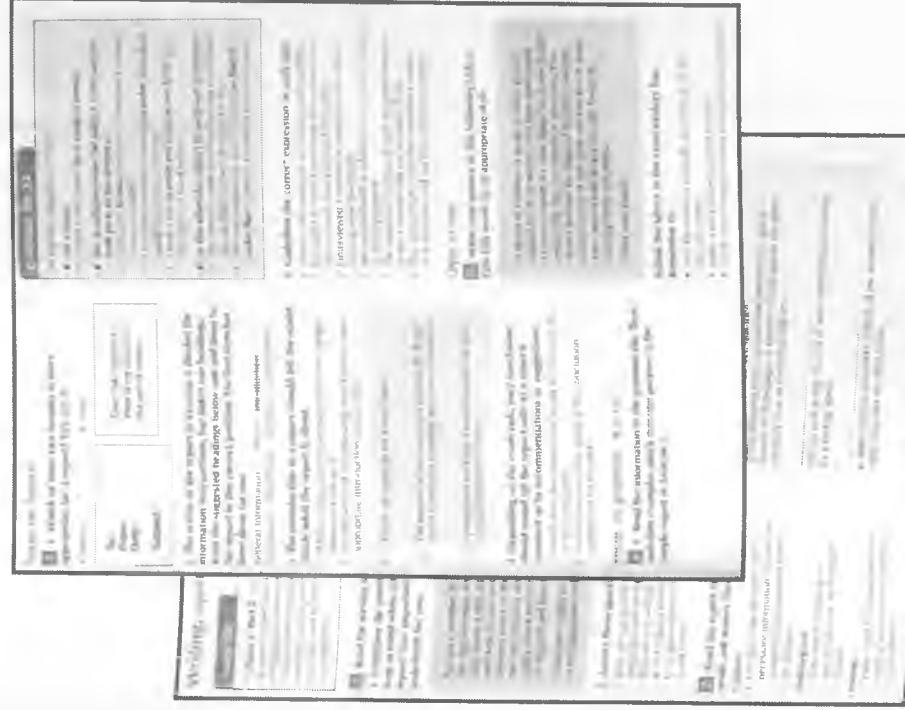
Figure 8: *Writing part from Fast Track to FCE, Longman ...*

The *New Certificate Masterclass* offers a much better organised and integrated method. Each topic introduces one language function (e.g. creating interest, contrasting language, dramatic effect, connecting ideas, asking for information, punctuation) and the grammar or vocabulary which are used to achieve the particular aim.

It also introduces a section called *Think, plan, write* that helps the writer organise their ideas, group them into paragraphs and subsequently the whole piece of writing.

Figure 9: Writing part from First Certificate Masterclass, OUP 2004

Practical Part:
Grammar-in-Writing Course

5 Grammar-in-Writing course

This chapter gives a description of the designed course on grammar in writing, its realisation and results analysis. It will provide excerpts from students' writing to illustrate their inicial knowledge, to describe development of their writing skills and analyse their improvement.

5.1 Course description

"Grammar in Writing" is an eight-lesson course in which the basic overview of grammar in writing will be dealt with. It was elaborated based on a previous study of grammar that appears in writing. A more complex outcome of this mini-research is published on the attached CD, [see Chapter 10 CD Content].

For the basic worksheets [see Appendix 1: Course worksheets]; the whole course with additional worksheets is published on the attached CD.

The objective of the course is to analyse the differences between written and spoken form, formal and informal language. Students will learn about the functions of language and their particular use in the text. The course will also treat the way grammar can influence meaning.

Students will be asked to produce a written paper at the end of each lesson of 120-180 words.

To facilitate the process, students will be provided several PowerPoint presentations that should instruct them in writing the following genres:

- Article
- Infomal letter
- Formal letter
- Report

The presentations can be viewed and are on the attached CD. For the content of the CD [see Chapter 10 CD Content]

5.2 Course syllabus

Lesson 1   *Introduction*

- Questionnaire
- Writing (differences between speech and writing, formal and informal style, politeness)
- Discussion: What does writing mean to you?

Lesson 2   *Today's news*

- Writing: article
- Grammar and functions: newspaper headlines and its grammar

Lesson 3   *Accept my advice*

- Writing: formal and informal letter
- Grammar and functions: making suggestions and giving advice, formal and informal style

Lesson 4   *Don't miss it!*

- Writing: review
- Grammar and functions: functions of present tense, linking devices, punctuation

Lesson 5   *It was raining then...*

- Writing: story, narrative
- Grammar and functions: functions of past tenses, modal verb *would*, linking devices

Lesson 6   *These are my recommendations*

- Writing: report
- Grammar and functions: impersonal and condensed style, passive voice, punctuation

Lesson 7   *In my opinion*

- Writing: discursive composition
- Grammar and functions: structuring information, reference

Lesson 8   *Evaluation of the course*

- Writing portfolio - Evaluation of the course

5.3 Lesson plans

The particular worksheets, which will be provided for each lesson, are part of the appendices [see Appendix 1: Course worksheets]. For the whole set of exercices with other additional activities [see CD Course/Lessons and Course Additional_activities].

5.3.1 Lesson 1

Concepts	Difference between speech and writing
	Formal and informal style
	Politeness
Grammar	Making promises (modal verb *will*)
Presentation	No
Preparation	Print out worksheets, cut up the *I'll settle it* cards.

Lesson plan

Introduction 10 min	Welcome students in the course and explain the aims of the course.
	Students should learn and understand the basic differences between speech and writing. They should also be able to distinguist between formal and informal styles and apply their knowledge in various written genres.
	Allow time for students to ask questions.
Questionnaire 30 min	The questionnaire should explore students' knowledge of the difference between speech and writing, politeness principles and formal/informal language.
	The questionnaire also contains the first writing assignment: *What does writing mean to you?*
	After students have finished the questionnaire provide feedback; however, do not go into too much detail because the questionnaire is to show their passive knowledge only and their general dispositions to learning languages.

Text analysis 20 min	Students receive a worksheet with an example of a formal and informal text. Ask students to find features of formal and informal language and comment on them. You should explain the concept of modality, indirectness and hedging by giving examples and explaining its functions. For the worksheet [see CD Course/Lessons/Lesson_1.pdf]
Writing activity 30 min	*I'll settle it!* This activity provides the first opportunity for students to see how grammar works. Before you give each student a letter from Richard ask them if they have ever borrowed something from a friend and have lost or broken it. Ask them how they solved the situation. Let students share their experiences and give out the worksheets with Richard's letter. After students have read the letter, encourage them to find examples of "postponing a bad news" and "making promisses". Ellicit the correct answers (hedging devices and the modal verb *will*). Give each student a situation card, ask them to choose one situation and write their own letter. Ask them to share their letters with the class.

5.3.2 Lesson 2

Writing	Newspaper and magazine headlines
Grammar	Economy (omission, complex noun phrases) *be to* for future
Presentation	Article.ppt
Preparation	Cut up the Today's news cards

Lesson plan

Introduction	The introductory part of the lesson is dedicated to essay corrections, asking questions and introducing a topic based on mistakes in students' papers.

15 min	The list of addictional activities is provided as part of the course analysis [see Chapter 5.4 Additional activities].
Exercise 1 5 min	A discussion should introduce the topic and draw students' attention to the newspaper language. The whole class works together and share their ideas. The teacher ellicits those that are important and writes them on the board. Students should note especially that newspaper headlines are brief and they use a special language sometimes based on ambiguity or puns to capture the reader's attention.
Exercise 2 20 min	This activity serves to raise students' awareness of the newspaper headline language. They should especially learn about their informational value:

Instructions:

1. Students work in pairs (Student A and Student B).

2. Give Student A the Today's news card. Student B receives three cards that correspond to the headlines on the Today's news card of Student A.

3. Student A tries to guess the content of articles according to their headlines – explain that it is not necessary to guess the real meaning. As Student B has the correct answers, he/she can compare to what extent Student A has managed to approach the truth.

4. Student A and Student B exchange their roles.

Exercise 3 20 min	This exercise introduces the basic grammar that appears in newspaper headlines.

Let students read the task for themselves and provide them time to think. Check the answers together and be ready to answer students' additional questions. Discuss the additional tasks to each part (A-C).

If there is enough time, you can ask students to translate the headlines into L2, which will emphasise the uniqueness of the newspaper headline language.

Optional:

When students have finished this task, the teacher can optionally introduce

the principles of *alliteration*.

He/She writes an example headline on the board (e.g. *Bronze Bull's Bottom Blamed for Bombay Brokers' Blues*), underlines the inicial letters and explains its purpose.

Exercise 4 15 min	Students work individually and complete the task. They teacher may encourage students to use the grammar they have just learned (and optionally the alliteration). Students are allowed some time to think about the answers. Eventually, the class share the answers together.
Exercise 5 10 min	Exercise 5 is based on the writing assignment students will be asked to complete. The aim is to introduce the activity and provide students with some ideas thus facilitating their consequent work at home.
Exercise 6 5 min	Students complete this writing assignment as homework.

5.3.3 Lesson 3

Writing	Letters, proposals
Grammar	Suggesting, giving advice Formal and informal language in grammar structures
Presentation	Formal_letter.ppt, Informal_letter.ppt
Preparation	Cut up the suggestions cards

Lesson plan

Introduction 15 min	The introductory part of the lesson is dedicated to essay corrections, asking questions and introducing a topic based on mistakes in students' papers. The list of addictional activities is provided as part of the course analysis [see Chapter 5.4 Additional activities].
Exercise 1 15 min	This exercise serves as a lead-in. Encourages discussion – you may even ask students what sort of suggestions the particular professions make as

part of their daily routine.

<u>Optional activity:</u> *Definitions*

You might ask students to play a guessing game. Each student should think of a profession and describe it using suggestions which the particular professions usually make as part of their responsibilities. The class have to guess.

The optional activity might help you ellicit whether students properly understand the concept of suggesting and giving advice. They might overuse the imperative which is rather impolite in many situations.

Exercise 2

15 min

This exercise serves to introduce the grammar of the lesson. Students compare and contrast two pieces of writing one of which is informal, the other formal. The aim is to distinguish them on the level of lexical means and grammar.

Students work individually and finally compare their ideas with the whole class. Teacher should monitor the process and help students ellicit the correct answers.

Exercise 3

25 min

Students work in pairs. Their task is to group sentences according to two criteria:

- formality
- grammar they represent

The aim of this tast is to provide students with a variety of forms in suggesting and giving advice. If there is time to spare, students might provide a situation for each of the suggestions to set each of them into a logical context.

Exercise 4

15 min

Students work individually. The aim is to provide appropriate suggestions for both letters distinguishing between formal and informal language.

Exercise 5

5 min

Students complete this writing assignment as homework.

The teacher can ask students whether they have ever been asked to give advice or they have ever written a letter (even in L1) suggesting a solution to a problem.

5.3.4 Lesson 4

Writing	Review
Grammar	Present simple for narratives
	Linking devices (addition, contrast and time)
Presentation	No
Preparation	No

Lesson plan

Introduction	The introductory part of the lesson is dedicated to essay correction, asking
15 min	questions and introducing a topic based on mistakes in the students' papers.
	The list of addictional activities is provided as part of the course analysis [see Chapter 5.4 Additional activities].
Exercise 1	Encourage a whole class discussion.
5 min	When retelling a story students are typically taught to use past tenses for narratives. However, a rellatively high number of students may switch to the present simple tense, as it is a natural means to indulge the listener or reader in the story. You should points this fact out.
Exercise 2	Encourage a whole class discussion.
3 min	
Exercise 3	Allow students time to read the reveiw for themselves. As the article is partly authentic, Students will probably ask questions about the vocabulary.
10 min	The T may ask S whether they were right about their expectations. There might be some suprising parts in the text or especially interesting.
Exercise 4	The whole class works together. S discuss the use and functions of present tens for narrating.
10 min	Draw students' attention to linking devices and point out their importance in the logical structure of the text.
Exercise 5	Students often err in punctuation. Before doing this exercise, emphasise the

9 min	differences in punctuation between English and Czech.
	Put example sentences on the board (e.g. *She opened the box that was lying on the floor.* and *Paul bought a hamburger, coke, and a box of sweets.*) and ask students whether the punctuation is correct. Some of them might object – you should demonstrate and explain how punctuation in English and Czech differ from each other.
	Students work individually first and correct the punctuation in the short text, they check the solution with the whole class.
Exercise 6 12 min	Students work individually and use the correct punctuation and linking devices. They check the answers in pairs. Monitor and ellicit the correct answers.
Exercise 7 10 min	Students work individually and in about ten sentences write down the main plot of a novel or a film that appeals to them. Emphasise that they should not attempt for complex structures as this is the content of the next exercise.
Exercise 8 15 min	When students have completed drafting the plot, you might like to ask them to make a whole paragraph. They continue in the individual work and finally share the paragraph with their partner.
Exercise 9 1 min	Students complete this writing assignment as homework.

5.3.5 Lesson 5

Writing	Narratives
Grammar	Past tenses, linking devices, time expressions
Presentation	No
Preparation	Cut up the story cards

Lesson plan

Introduction 15 min	The introductory part of the lesson is dedicated to essay correction, asking questions and introducing a topic based on mistakes in the students' papers. The list of addictional activities is provided as part of the course analysis [see Chapter 5.4 Additional activities].
Exercise 1 10 min	Ask students to read the incomplete story and retell it in their own words. After they have finished draw their attention to the following example: *I was making coffee when Paul arrived. He was all soaked through because it was raining. He was wearing a red tie and fortunately he was in a good mood.* Without saying a word erase the continuous forms so that it reads: *When Paul arrived he was all soaked through and fortunately he was in a good mood.* Explain that the continous forms in past tense narrations are not so important for understanding the basic plot.
Exercise 2 20 min	In the next stage ask students to reread the text and fill in the gaps with their own ideas. The suggestions in Exercise 2 should help them complete the task. You might like to emphasise that students should concentrate on using the forms of the past continuous and past perfect tense.
Exercise 3 15 min	Let students read the whole original story. They should identify the tense of the phrases in italics, which should be now an easy task for them. Explain that the continuous forms (whether in the simple or perfect aspect) provide descriptions, circumstances or causes. Ask them to identify the function of each sentence in italics. (If you have enough time, you can also explain the use of the past perfect simple.)
Exercise 4 10 min	The aim of this exercise is to summarise the use of time expressions (linking words, prepositions or prepositional phrases, adverbials) and their use with particular tenses.
Exercise 5	Exercise 5 should summarise what was discussed throughout the lesson.

17 min	Students should create short paragraphs using the suggested order of phrases.
Exercise 6 3 min	Encourage students to write their own narratives. Explain that they can invent their own story or be ready with a set of cards that might help them piece together a plot.

5.3.6 Lesson 6

Writing	Report
Grammar	Passive voice (indirectness) Punctuation
Presentation	Report.ppt
Preparation	Print out the punctuation sheet

Lesson plan

Introduction 15 min	The introductory part of the lesson is dedicated to essay correction, asking questions and introducing a topic based on mistakes in the students' papers. The list of addictional activities is provided as part of the course analysis [see Chapter 5.4 Additional activities].
Exercise 1 5 min	Encourage discussion. The aim of this exercise is to draw students' attention to the topic.
Exercise 2 5 min	Students should recognise that reports are usually addressed to people who are responsible for running an institution or an event and are written in formal language. Emphasise that the choice of language and grammar structures is particularly important.
Exercise 3 15 min	Ask students to read the sample report. They should concentrate on the style and language. Exercise 3 also introduces a grammar issue – the passive voice. Students should realise the difference between the active and passive voice – its functional value in the text. After students have completed the tasks, make

	a summary. Highlight the importance of the passive voice in formal texts, explain that its function is to imply indirectness in communication.
Exercise 4 10 min	Exercise 4 concentrates on the structure. You will have an opportunity to explain the rules for forming the passive voice. Probably most students will correctly identify the only sentence that is not possible to transform (*The parcel arrived on Monday*). Ask students whether they can explain the rules for forming passives and why some verbs can be only active.
Punctuation worksheet 10 min	First ask students if they can name some punctuation signs. Then go through all of them using the box bellow and explain how they are used. In the second stage ask students to read the email, as if it was a dictation so that they had to read even the punctuation.
Exercise 5 10 min	Ask students to make corrections. Monitor their activity and be ready to make a summary of the use of commas after linking words.
Exercise 6 13 min	Ask students to make a bulleted list of their own suggestions on what might be included in their report. Ask them to produce several phrases in the passive voice. Provide feedback if needed.
Exercise 7 2 min	Homework assignment.

5.3.7 Lesson 7

Writing	Discursive composition
Grammar	Linking devices
Presentation	No
Preparation	Cut up the set of cards for a roundtable discussion

<u>Lesson plan</u>

Introduction 15 min	The introductory part of the lesson is dedicated to essay correction, asking questions and introducing a topic based on mistakes in the students' papers.

The list of addictional activities is provided as part of the course analysis [see Chapter 5.4 Additional activities].

Exercise 1 10 min	Let students discuss the questions in Exercise 1. As a result, they should learn that a discursive composition introduces both the arguments for and against the idea, and eventually makes a summary in the last paragraph.
Exercise 2 12 min	Ask students to read the sample discursive composition and fill in the gaps with linking words. Be ready to explain the meaning and use.
Exercise 3 5 min	You can regard this exercise as an extension to the grammar of the previous lesson. Third person personification is a useful device to replace the passive voice. Explain to students that passive constructions are generally avoided and active voice is preferred. You can provide more examples, e.g. *research suggest, article reads, book says*.
Exercise 4 10 min	Do more exercise on linking words. Invite students to ask question if they do not understand the particular use of certain connecting devices.
Round table discussion 35 min	Let students choose a card from the set of cards for a roundtable discussion. Explain that as part of Stage 1 they are going to defend the topic on their card. Go through Stages 2-4 elliciting the relevant information to write a discursive composition. Write down the important conclusions on the board. Ask students to write a paper summarising the topic.
Exercise 5 3 min	Homework assignment. Do not forget to emphasise that the discursive composition must contain both type of ideas – for and against – and students should show a deep knowledge of linking devices to enhance the logic structure of their written work.

5.3.8 Lesson 8

Writing	Language portfolio
Grammar	No
Presentation	No
Preparation	No

<u>Lesson plan</u>

Introduction 15 min	The introductory part of the lesson is dedicated to essay correction, asking questions and introducing a topic based on mistakes in the students' papers. The list of addictional activities is provided as part of the course analysis [see Chapter 5.4 Additional activities].
Writing Portfolio 40 min	Students fill in the writing portfolio. For more information on the structure of the writing portfolio, [see Chapter 5.5 Writing portfolio]. To see the form of the writing portfolio [see Appendix 2 Questionnaire and Writing Portfolio]
Discussion 20 min	The final discussion serves as feedback to the writing portfolio. Students can compare their ideas with the class and with the teacher .

5.4 Additional activities

In order to provide some feedback to students, a set of activities was designed throughout the course based on their most frequent mistakes. These activities do not have to be strictly followed and can differ depending on the particular needs of students. The activities introduced at the beginning of the lesson.

The topics are as follows:

Lesson 1   *No additional activity*

Lesson 2   **Dictionary**
- To introduce and explain how to use a dictionary
- To suggest alternatives if a dictionary fails

Lesson 3   **Determiners**
- To introduce and explain the category of determiners
- To suggest on how to treat articles as a subset of the category of determiners
- To suggest on how to treat quantifiers as a subset of the category of determiners

Lesson 4   **The use of articles**
- To introduce and explain the different uses of indefinite and definite articles

Lesson 5   **A tale about restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses**
- To introduce and explain the difference in meaning of restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses
- To explain how commas are used in relative clauses

Lesson 6   **A tale about word order**
- To introduce and explain the differences between word order in English and Czech
- To show grammatical structures specific for English
- To suggest alternatives to provide for the fixed word order in English

Lesson 7   **Abbreviations**
- To introduce abbreviations used in English
- To explain how abbreviations are used in English and in what styles they appear in writing

History of English

- To introduce a brief history of the English language
- To explain the character of English and provide grounds for better understanding of different layers of English
- To suggest on how students should treat their learning habits

For the particular content and instructions for each activity [see CD Course\Additional_activities].

5.5 Writing portfolio

The writing portfolio is based on templates of the *Language Portfolio* of the Council of Europe[5] and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [see Chapter 4.1 CEFR]. Its aim is to provide a source of reference and feedback to students.

The aim of the writing portfolio is to help students reflect on what they have learnt during the course, in what areas they have improved and in what areas they still commit errors. It should also provide feedback to the teacher because it contains the evaluation of the course.

The writing portfolio contains the following parts:

1. **Language**

   This part resembles a questionnaire as it asks students questions on the length of their studies of English and their learning habits.

2. **Writing**

   This part also resembles a questionnaire. It asks students about their relationship to writing, about their present and future reasons for using the skill.

3. **My writing skills evaluation**

   This section encourages students to reflect on their writing skills. It uses an excerpt from the CEFR for B2 level. Students should subjectively evaluate their writing skills based on the comparison with the prescribed level of skills.

4. **I have learned and now I understand**

   This section invites students to think about the differences between English and

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[5] The European Language Portfolio was developed and piloted by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, from 1998 until 2000. It was launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. (source: http://www.coe.int/portfolio)

Czech. They should not only show that they know the concepts, but they should be also able to explain why.

5. **Problems in writing**

In this section, students can reflect on their problems in writing. They are asked to make a summary of mistakes which they consider important because they make them repeatedly.

6. **Positive features of the course**

This part encourages students to comment on what they liked and appreciated about the course.

7. **Negative features of the course**

The last part encourages students to comment on what they did not like about the course and possibly also explain the reasons for their criticism.

6 Analysis of students' works

This chapter provides a thorough analysis of students works and mistakes. It will analyse them based on the CEFR criteria for the execution, i.e. the stage of writing when students concentrate on the production itself.

It will try to summarise the frequency of particular errors grouped according to their position in the grammar system. Furthermore, it will attempt to provide an insight into the particular genres and development of writing skills of individual students and, eventually, imply the general conclusions.

6.1 Questionnaire

The initial questionnaire brought rather surprising results – it was not worth great research because most of the students marked their answers correctly. However, it implies that the students' initial passive knowledge of the treated topics was very good.

They were able to identify the sentences and their features correctly. For example, they were able to say that the statement *I regret to inform you that your luggage has been lost* is rather formal and the statement *What the hell are you doing in my bedroom?* is informal; however, as part of the feedback stage when students have completed the questionnaires and could ask questions, they prove that they were not able to identify correctly the lexical and grammatical devices that make a sentence polite or impolite.

For the complete form of the questionnaire [see Appendix 2 Questionnaire and Writing Portfolio].

6.2 Compensating

Compensating is an interesting phenomenon that experience more or less all intermediate writers. If the topic exceeds the student's knowledge of grammar or vocabulary, he/she tends to borrow from Czech.

PUNCTUATION

The most typical example of compensating are mistakes in **panctuation**. Czech is richer in punctuation in clauses; however, English disposes of a number of linking words (conjuncts) that require the use of commas (e.g. *moreover, however*) where students would not explect them to be.

Students frequently overuse commas in front of *that*, but also *when, who, which, after, because, what*, etc.

Observe the following examples:

*The thing is, that people often forget, how important writing is.
(*student 6, text 1*)

*I wanted to be one of those, who can make such a special emotion in you, when you read a good book. (*student 7, text 1*)

On the other hand, they do not use commas with *however, moreover*, etc. because they obviously do not know the correct pattern.

Observe the following examples:

*The performances naturally had to take place outdoor, **however** there wasn't enough for the audience and people had to sit on the earth.
(*student 7, text 3*)

*On the other hand || there are lot of guides that tell you in every language you can imagine everything about the arystocracy that was executed there.
(student 11, text 2)

WORD ORDER

Also important are mistakes in word order. Czech, unlike English, has a flexible word order. Students are often absorbed in finding ways to express what they want to say, scanning their memories for vocabulary and appropriate expressions, that they forget about grammar. As a result, they use the correct words; however, the resulting text does not make sense.

Observe the following example:

*Writing means to me many things, at one side is writing for school some essays, homework and other, on the other side is writing of stories which I had assigned myself. (*student 12, text 1*)

Compare:

Psaní pro mě znamená mnoho věcí. Na jednu stranu je to psaní do školy různých slohovek, domácích úkolů a další, na druhou stranu je to psaní příběhů, které jsem si uložil sám.

Correct suggestions:

Writing means many things to me. On the one hand, it means writing

some essays and homework for school; on the other hand, it is writing
stories, which is my leisure time activity.

It is quite obvious from the example above that the student translates literally word by word which makes the paragraph sound clumsy and unnatural.

DETERMINERS

The category of determiners does not exist in Czech, thus it is logic that students compensate for it. Most typically, they lean on the Czech category of demonstrative pronouns (*this, that, these, those*) and the numeral *one*; however, English replaces these with articles.

Demonstrative pronouns are bound to the extralinguistic reality, thus they must be used in the situational context (e.g. when you can point to an object). The numeral *one* in English is reserved to counting and is not used for indefinite reference as many students use it.

Observe the following examples:

*Luckily the crew was calming us down and they offered all the people
free snacks but you can imagine **that** mess... (*student 14, text 5*)

*One day a glorious knight came to the country and people asked him
to kill **that** witch. (*student 15, text 5*)

Correct suggestions:

Luckily the crew was calming us down and they offered all the people
free snacks but you can imagine the mess...

One day a glorious knight came to the country and people asked him
to kill the witch.

THERE IS/ARE

The structure *there is/are* does not exist in Czech similarly to determiners. However, students learn it in a very early stage of their studies, so they are familiar with it. Still they can occasionally err and not use it when it should be used. They simply use the Czech structure and translate it word by word.

Observe the example:

*In a locality where we will travel is a very dangerous insect.
(*student 12, text 3*)

Correct suggestion:

There is a very dangerous insect in the locality where we will travel.

WAY HOW

The overuse of the incorrect combination of words ...*way how*... (in Czech: ...*způsob, jak*...) is another interesting phenomenon. In English, both words are possible; however, they must be used separately and require different grammatical structures:

- way + *to* infinitive
- how + clause or how + *to* infinitive

    Observe the following example:

    *Writing means for me one of various **ways how** to explain your feelings, opinions and so on. (*student 12, text 1*)

    Correct suggestions:

    - For me, writing is one of various ways to explain your feelings, opinions and so on.
    - For me, writing is how you can explain your feelings, opinions and so on.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Students often do not know that language reflects culture. Each language captures and describes the reality in its own, unique way. Thus there are many idiomatic expressions that cannot be translated literally, so the writer should seek a phrase equivalent in meaning, however different in form.

If the writer does not do so, they face misunderstandings worse than those caused by errors in grammatical structures.

    Observe the example:

    *There is also a saying that what is writing is valid. (*student 1, text 1*)

    Correct suggestion:

    There is also a saying that "what is written is given".

6.3 Analysis based on frequency of mistakes

The following table is based on the genre of text and frequency of occurances of particular errors grouped into several categories according to their position in the language system (e.g. vocabulary, morphology, syntax).

Each symbol (■) represents one occurance. If we consider a particular phenomenon, the symbol (■) represents one occurance of the phenomenon and the symbol (□) represents occurances of mistakes in general so that we can highlight ratio of the particular phenomenon.

The analysis is based on the work of **twelve** student. For their complete work [see CD Course\Students].

For an overview of the frequency of all types of errors in all genres [see Appendix 3 Overview of errors]. For a summary of errors grouped by genres or by their place in the language system [see CD Thesis\Overview_of_errors.pdf] For a summary of errors grouped by student see the particular students' folder on the CD.

6.3.1 Errors across genres

Errors across genres

The overall summary of mistakes in different genres shows that the students made some progress throughout the course.

The greatest number of errors was in the first paper because students made a lot of mistakes in spelling, punctuation, word order and formal/informal style. At the end of the course, the improvement was especially visible in spelling and punctuation.

The smallest number of mistakes can be observed in narration. Interestingly enough, students seem to be really skilled in this genre, also because they often write stories at school.

6.3.2 Word order

Errors in word order

Short reflection	■■■■■■■■
Article	■
Formal/informal letter	■■■■■■■■
Review	■■■■
Narration	- - -
Report	■■■■
Discursive composition	■■■■
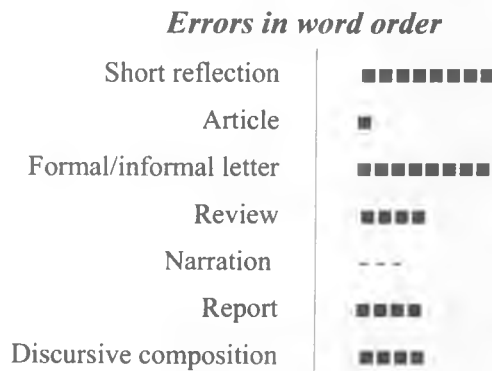
Mistakes in word order are not confined to a specific group of learners. Although the overall number of mistakes shows a decreasing tendency, it seems that they will not dissapear in short term.

Mistakes in word order are connected with what is called compensating; i.e. borrowing from the Czech grammar system. Students err especially in sentences where they should use the structure *there is/are* and in indirect statements.

It also appears in more complex structures if students use appositions and inserted explanatory sentences:

> *In the 21st century, the era of the Internet, **is everything** nearer and
> easier, even for talented teenagers. (*Student 23, text 7*)

All in all, if we choose a student (for example Student 13) who had a lot of mistakes in word order in the first writing and then read the last writing, we will find it more intelligible.

For more information on mistakes in word order [see Chapter 6.2 Compensating].

6.3.3 Tenses

Errors in tenses

Short reflection	■
Article	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Formal/informal letter	■■■■
Review	■■■■■
Narration	■■■■■
Report	■■■■
Discursive composition	■

The analysis of errors in tenses brought rather surprising results. The number of mistakes in genres such as a review or narration is not so high; however, there is a surprising number of mistakes in the article.

The possible explanation is that unlike the review and narration (where students were expected to make mistakes in tenses), there were no presentations or exercices on tenses in the article. However, the article is probably more complex in the use of tenses than it seems.

Observe the types of mistakes students made:

Errors in tenses in the article

Backshift	■
Will after time expressions	■■
Will in *If*-clauses	■■■
Confusing real time and tense	■■■■■■
Aspect	■
Overuse of past perfect	■■

Interestingly enough, students erred especially in those parts of the text where there was a change in the real time of their narration. Or more specifically – where students switched from narration to general consequences of their actions.

Observe the following example:

*After that my body started to get into the physical effort . I was not so exhausted and I started to like it. You may not agree with me, but I think that after a few lessons people cannot imagine one week and

somebody one day without the training.

Now. I visited the fitness centrum with my friend every week. My fig
rapidly grew up and I fell healthier. So, if you will survive a few first
lessons it can be great hobby and style of live. But if you will survive.
(*Student 12, text 2*)

Although Student 12 described his/her experience with a fitness centre in the past tense. In the next paragraph he/she talks about the present consequences; however, he/she still uses the past tense.

6.3.4 Articles

Errors in articles

Short reflection	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Article	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Formal/informal letter	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Review	■■ ■■■■■
Narration	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Report	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Discursive composition	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■

Articles seem to be a constant problem. What is more, if we regard them as part of determiners, the frequency of errors shows an increasing tendency with the growing proficiency of writers. The reason might be that students usually regard articles only as a minor issue in English that complicates the writing process.

Look at what Student 10 wrote in his/her writing portfolio:

They (= *the English speakers or writers*) almost never use commas
making their sentences as much confused as possible. On the other
hand they have articles. They don't make sentences more
understandable, but at least they make them more difficult to create.

Articles are tied to what is called sense of language and the intermediate course only revealed the issue to students; however, it will still take a lot of effort to reduce the problem. To help students deal with the issue, articles were treated as part of several additional activities [see CD Course\Additional_activities\Additional_activity_2.pdf and Additional_activity_3.pdf].

The fact is even more obvious if we observe the number of mistakes in articles in the review that is particularly striking. Many students concetrate on how to express and describe the complexity of the plot and therefore their awareness of articles is decreased.

> Observe how Student 5 quite successfully describes the plot;
> however, fails to provide articles. The missing articles are
> replaced by the following symbol (||):

> *Young Evey Hammond gets saved by a mysterious man wearing ||
> black and Guy Fawkes' mask and in return agrees to visit his concert.
> What is more, not a normal concert considering that it includes ||
> explosion of || important building. It's not a mere coincidence that the
> symbol of || dictator's power is on the 5th of November.

6.3.5 Determiners

Errors in determiners

Short reflection	■■■■
Article	- - -
Formal/informal letter	- - -
Review	■■■■■■
Narration	■■■■
Report	■
Discursive composition	■■■■■■■■■■

Determiners are a specific category. The occurance of erros is rather unstable, which is caused by their character. Determiners are directly linked to reference – a chapter from text analysis or Pragmatics in Linguistics.

Determiners were dealt with in the third lesson [see CD Course\Additional_activities\... ...\Additional_activity_2.pdf]. The category as such was introduced to students. It was clearly obvious from their reactions that none of them had heard of the category before. Thus it seems that although important, determiners are not taught at secondary grammar schools.

Concerning determiners, here are the most frequent types of mistakes:

1. Articles vs. possessive pronouns
2. Articles vs. quantifiers

3. Referential devices and sexism in English
4. Combining determiners
5. The overuse of demonstrative pronouns and the numeral *one*

   [see Chapter 6.2 Compensating - Determiners]

Ad. 1

Possessive pronouns are much more often used in English, while in Czech they are considered stylistically unacceptable. The following is an example of how students might overuse a rule if they learn it:

> *The film then shows us Elizabeth's affairs on **her** throne and in **her**
> bed, it focuses especially on her feelings and decisions, which are very
> radical. (*Student 10, text 4*)

Ad. 2

Students' knowledge of the use of articles and quantifiers (*some, any*) is often incomplete. To put the pieces of their knowledge together, a special activity was designed based on inductive principles in teaching grammar [see CD Course\Additional_activities\Additional_activity_2.pdf].

There were several occurances of the rather ungrammatical structure *some kind of* which is frequently used in speech, still cannot be used in writing.

Example:

> *Although I am not **some kind of** a writer, I would also say that writing is a way of
> letting my imagination run free and a way to make people laugh, smile, cry or
> think... (student 14, text 1)

Correct suggestion:

> Although I am not a writer, I would also say that writing is a way of letting my
> imagination run free and a way to make people laugh, smile, cry or think...

Another frequent mistake was lack of knowledge of how to correctly use quantifiers *a few/a little* and *few/little*. Probably students do not realise that the use of an article brings a change in the meaning.

Observe the following example:

> *...but most important-my friend lives **few** houses from me so why
> should I care about those places. (*Student 7, text 2*)

Ad. 3

Sexism is an important issue in English. The Czech considers the third person singular masculine (*he, his, him, himself*) an appropriate way to talk in general about people's behaviour and habits, while this is unaccaptable in English. The native speakers could even consider this form offensive. It is advisable to use the third person plural or *he/she* to avoid the reference to sexes.

> *On the other hand, some parents want their child to do what **he**
> **himself** want and support **him** in way **he** wants to lead through **his** life,
> including supporting in use of **his** talent. (*student 13, text 7*)

Correct suggestion:

> On the other hand, some parents want their child to do what they, the
> children, want themselves and support them in the way they want to
> go through their lives, including the parents' support of their child's
> talent.

Ad. 4

The category of determiners is rather complex and students often do not know how to deal with the word class, especially if they have to combine:

> *Eventually this very thing happens due to **the Mary's** sudden death.
> (*Student 10, text 4*)

> *Although the company already has great desks in most offices, many
> employees said it would be a good idea to have the long spacious
> desks under the window in **the each** office. (*Student 12, text 6*)

6.3.6 Agreement

Errors in agreement

Short reflection	■
Article	■
Formal/informal letter	- - -
Review	- - -
Narration	- - -
Report	■
Discursive composition	■■■■

Agreement may seem to be a minor issue for intermediate students. Neither does it appear to be an error that all students frequently make. However, it reappears in the later stage of language learning where more complicated and abstract context is applied.

The discursive composition is a genre in which students are required to provide arguments. To remain objective, they must use general statements – and this is where problems usually arise.

Agreement can have different forms in English.

> The following is a subject-verb agreement error; however, observe how the general context may make it more difficult for a student to use the correct form:
>
> *There is also a group of teenagers who **excels** in knowledge.
> (*Student 23*)

Although it is not a major mistake, it certainly sounds more appropriate to use the plural form in a similar general statement, especially if the writer opts for the relative pronoun *who*. Moreover, the plural form highlights the teenagers' individuality as human beings.

> Observe another example:
>
> *However, it generally depends on will of parents, if they want to develop **their children's talent**, not only on the state system.
> (*Student 13*)

Student 13 used the singular form of the word *talent*; however, in this particular case it would be more appropriate to use the plural form, as children usually have different talents.

6.3.7 Other mistakes in grammar

Other mistakes in grammar

Short reflection	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Article	■■■■■■■■■■■■
Formal/informal letter	■■■■■■■
Review	■■■■■■■■
Narration	■■■■■■
Report	■■■■■■■■■■
Discursive composition	■■■■

The number of mistakes in grammar has considerably decreased throughout the course. It means that students were able to learn from their mistakes and their awareness of what they write has become increased.

Most typically students erred in the structure way how. For more information [see Chapter 6.2 Compensating – Way how]

There were also occasional mistakes in modal verbs:

> *In this example you see that people can collect everything you can
> imagine and they **might not to be foolish** and weird.
> (*Student 15, text 2*)

Or in the passive forms:

> *...learn from books which **were writing** by people who liked writing
> and wanted to teach something new other people. (*Student 12, text 1*)

6.3.8 Prepositions

Errors in prepositions

Short reflection	■■■■■■■■
Article	■■■■■■
Formal/informal letter	■■■
Review	■■■■■■■■■■
Narration	■■■■
Report	■■■■■
Discursive composition	■■■

Whether a student commits errors in prepositions or not is a matter of their experience with language. This problem will certainly improve as students do more writing and reading.

An interesting phenomenon is the wrong use of the preposition *of* in participal clauses or gerunds where *of* is used in a similar structure with a noun.

Observe the example:

*The negotiations were only wasting **of** time and mainly **of** human
lives. It was the only option. (*Student 16, text 5*)

The correct use of the verb *waste* is *to waste sth* and the structure should be kept even in the participal clauses and gerund. Thus the student should write:

The negotiations were only wasting time and mainly human lives. or
The negotiations were only a waste of time and mainly of human lives.

6.3.9 Wrong use of words

Wrong use of words

Short reflection	■■■■■■■■■■■■
Article	■■■■■■■■
Formal/informal letter	■■■■■■■■■
Review	■■■■■■■
Narration	■■■■■■■
Report	■■■■■■
Discursive composition	■■■■■■■■■■■

The wrong use of words shows only a slightly decreasing tendency. This issue is connected with compensating and will not be easily improved.

To raise students awareness of the issue, they were provided an explanation on how to use unilingual and bilingual dictionaries and how to use the Internet. It is not a simple task for a teacher to motivate students to consult a reference for vocabulary and correct usage of words.

Observe how students struggle with lack of vocabulary:

(1) *...of course you don't have to agree with me, if the **magistrate** is at
least slightly able to improve lives of citizens of its town...
(*Student 13, text 2*)

(2) *He **stood from** his cave, hidden in swamps, and tried to get to the nearest **battle station**. (*Student 16, text 5*)

The first (1) is an example of false friends, thus compensating; a *magistrate* in English is *úředník se soudní pravomocí*, while the Czech *magistrát* should be translated as *the municipal government* or, in more general terms, *the authorities*.

The second (2) is a typical example of lack of vocabulary and possibly also laziness to use a dictionary. Instead of *stood from*, the author should use *stepped out of* and instead of a *battle station* he/she should use a *battle field*.

6.3.10 Formal/Informal register

Errors in register (formal/informal)

Short reflection	▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪
Article	- - -
Formal/informal letter	▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪
Review	- - -
Narration	- - -
Report	▪▪▪▪▪
Discursive composition	▪▪▪
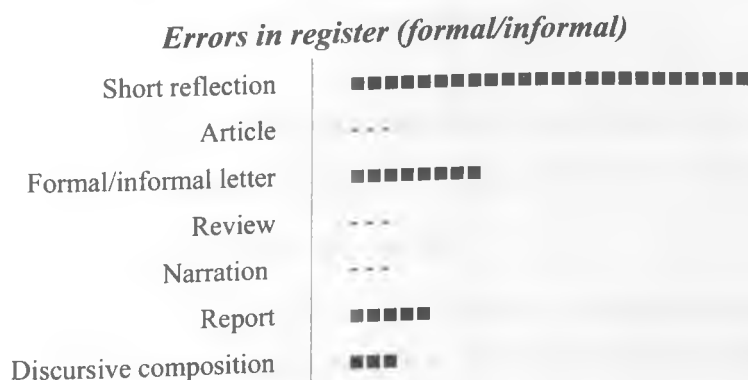
The mistakes in the formal/informal register account especially for the wrong use of short forms. Although the short forms could be accepted at the intermediate level in a short reflection, it was an ideal opportunity to explain students the difference between formal and informal style. Thus all the short forms were strictly marked as mistakes. Overall, the frequency of short forms in formal registers decreased in the later stage of the course.

As part of the third assignment, students were asked to choose from two different registers – a formal or informal letter. Their choice clearly shows the general tendency to opt for the informal style, as students might feel more confident. However, the table bellow does not show remarkable differences in the frequency of errors.

Informal letter	Number of mistakes
Student 5	■■■
Student 6	■■■■■
Student 11	■■
Student 12	■■■■■■■■■■
Student 13	■■■■■■■■■■
Student 14	■■■■■
Student 16	■■■■■■■■
Student 19	■■■
Formal letter	
Student 7	■■■■■■■■■■■■
Student 10	■■■■
Student 23	■■■■■■■■■

Another important issue concerning the formal/informal register is the overuse of the word *get* in formal writings whether it is in collocations, phrasal verbs or pseudo-passive forms.

Observe an example from a report:

*Those that sit close to the windows suggest buying new jalousies, because the sun can **get through** the old ones and it can **get really hot** in there. (*Student 7, text 6*)

6.3.11 Punctuation

Errors in punctuation

Short reflection	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Article	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Formal/informal letter	■■■■■■■■■■■■
Review	■■■■■■■■
Narration	■■■■■■■
Report	■■■■
Discursive composition	■■■■■■■■■■

The frequency of errors in puctuation is striking especially in the first two writing assignments (short reflection and article). However, in general it seems that the knowledge of punctuation can be easily improved irrespective of written registers, especially if students are provided some feedback.

A significant increase in the number of mistakes in punctuation can be observed in the

discursive composition. On the other hand, the frequency of errors is not surprising because the discursive composition is a genre that invites students to use argumentation - comparing and contrasting ideas. Thus they have to use a variety of linking words and phrases with difficult punctuation rules.

To demonstrate the conclusion, observe the following table that concentrates on the improvement in applying punctuation rules of Student 7, whose previous knowledge of punctuation was rather poor.

Student 7: Errors in punctuation

Short reflection	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
Article	■■□□□□□□□□□
Formal/informal letter	■■□□□□□□□□□□
Review	■□□□□
Narration	■■□
Report	■■□□□□□□□
Discursive composition	■■■■■■□□

6.3.12 Spelling

Errors in spelling

Short reflection	■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Article	■■■■■■■■
Formal/informal letter	■■■■■■■■■
Review	■■■■
Narration	■■
Report	■■■■■■■
Discursive composition	■■■

A significant achievement can be seen in spelling. Misspellings are caused by lack of experience or attention.

Examples:

*On the other hand, I often use writing to express myself **emocionally.** When I feel **psychicly** exhausted or something strange happened to me, I take a paper and pen and I try to express my feelings.

While *emocionally* can be influenced by compensating (Czech: *emoce*), it is more difficult to explain the wrong spelling of the word *psychicly*. Although we say in Czech *psychický*, it is not clear whether the author of this paper was influenced by Czech. He might have simply consulted a dictionary, find the adjective *psychic* and according to the rules for forming adverbs derive the word *psychicly*.

All in all, the progress in writing commas is a positive sign of improvement in students' attitude towards writing. Whether they are more attentive and concentrated while writing or they became accustomed to using dictionary more frequently, they will definitely appreciate this newly acquired habit in long term.

7 Course analysis

The following chapter will provide an analysis of the course based on the students' portfolios compared and contrasted with the ideas of the teacher.

The analysis is based on **fourteen** samples of writing portfolios.

7.1 Writing portfolios analysis

7.1.1 Students' attitudes towards writing

The students, who participated in the course, have been studying English for 6 to 12 years. Most students (four) have been studying English for nine years.They were the intermediate or upper-intermediate level (B1 or B2 in the CEFR).

All of the students study English at school – a greater half of them prepare for the lessons at home. Four of the students improve their knowledge in a specialised language course or at a language camp and one student admitted reading books in the public transport.

Rather surprisingly, the students write frequently. Most of them write more than once a week, some of them even every day. They write because they have to do their homework for school classes (14 students) or because they have an English speaking penfriend (7 students). Other answers included using the Internet, keeping a diary, preparing for the FCE exam and writing just for fun.

All of the students are very pragmatic about why they should improve and enhance their writing skills – the most frequent reason for grabbing a pen is that they expect to use English in their future job. One students even mentioned better financial terms. On the other hand, nearly a half of the students stated that writing is a good way to spend their leisure time, so clearly there are a number of students who write just for fun – not because they have to.

English indeed seems to be part of the students' future prospects. Repeatedly, they highlighted the need for English in their future career. Two students even want to become journalists or writers, one student expects to write scientific articles because he/she would like to be a mathematician.

The students also expect to need English for their studies whether they will study in the Czech Republic or abroad. They also highlighted the use of language for communication.

For precise figurest on the students' attitudes towards writing, [see their writing portfolios on the CD Course/Students/... or CD Course/Thesis/Writing_portfolio_analysis.pdf].

7.1.2 Writing skills evaluation

The writing skills evaluation is based on the students' subjective judgement. They were asked to argue about the description of B2 level for writing in the CEFR.

I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.

Look at how students agreed or disagreed with the statement:

Opinion	Number of students
Agrees	■■■■■
Agrees partly	■■■■■
Agrees, however, makes occasional mistakes in grammar	■■■■
Agrees, however, makes occasional mistakes in vocabulary	■■■
Disagrees	

On the whole, students seem to be satisfied with what they have learned throughout the course and they agree with the descriptor of B2 level. A number of them have noticed improvement in their writing skills. One of the students even admitted a change in his/her attitudes towards writing:

I have also realised that writing is a serious thing. At the beginning of the course, I thought writing being less important and easy. Now I know that it has certain rules, but I feel that I know them and I am glad for that. (*Student 7*)

Many students still have problems with grammar and vocabulary, distinguisting between formal and informal styles. Some of them still cannot apply their newly acquired knowledge – possibly because they might need even more practice.

I think I became better in this (= *writing clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects*) but still I need some progress. (*Student 15*)

Concerning vocabulary, the students complained about lack of ability to express themselves, to find synonymical expressions not to repeat themselves several times.

7.1.3 Problematic areas

As part of the writing portfolio, students were asked to talk about the areas of written language they still have problems with. As this was an open question, they were not influenced by any pre-processed answers.

The overall analysis brought rather disappointing results, as a number of students still state problems with such categories as punctuation, articles, tenses or prepositions which the course was supposed to elliminate.

Look at in what areas students think themselves to err:

Problematic area	Number of students
Tenses	■■■■
Articles	■■■■■
Punctuation	■■■■■■
Vocabulary	■■■■■■
Prepositions	■■■
Compensating	■■
Connectors	■
Meaningful text	■■
Spelling	■■
Word formation	■
Ideas	■
Word order	■
Repetition of lexical items	■
Repetition of mistakes	■
Expressing myself properly	■■
Formal/informal style	■
Politeness	■

However, a thourough analysis based on the proficiency of students showed a certain positive development. The students were divided into three groups according to the overall number of mistakes they committed in their writings:

- **Group 1:** up to 35 mistakes altogether
- **Group 2:** 36 to 70 mistakes altogether
- **Group 3:** 71 and more mistakes altogether

Oberve how students erred based on their proficiency:

Problematic area	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Tenses		■■	■
Articles	■	■■■	■
Punctuation	■	■	■■■■
Vocabulary	■■	■	■■
Prepositions	■	■	■
Compensating			■
Connectors	■		
Meaningful text	■	■	
Spelling		■	■
Word formation		■	
Ideas	■		
Word order	■		
Repetition of lexical items	■		
Repetition of mistakes	■		
Expressing myself properly	■		
Formal/informal style	■		

It is quite obvious that the spectre of problematic areas alternates with the student's growing proficiency in writing skills. While a less skillful writer will talk about morphological and syntactical categories (e.g. articles, punctuation, prepositions, tenses), a more advanced writer will talk about categories from Pragmatics or discourse (e.g. linking ideas, repetition of lexical items, writing a meaningful text).

The table above clearly shows that the more proficient students have a more complex understanding of the problematics and they have started thinking of the text as a whole.

7.1.4 What have students learned

In order to evaluate what students have learned in the course, they were asked to provide description on the differences in grammar and style of written forms between English and Czech.

This criterion has been preferred above all because it provides an insight into the depth of students' knowledge, as it encourages them to use their cognitive skills to a more complex extent. Not only are they asked to name or group their knowledge into various categories, but they should also compare and contrast what they have learned. Thus they will create interlinks between the isolated pieces of their knowledge, which facilitates the later retrieval and usage.

The following table shows what areas in the English written form students consider different from Czech:

Area	Number of students
Commas	■■■■■■■■■■
Word order	■■■
Tenses	■■
Politeness and formality	■■■■
Articles	■■■■
Sentence structure	■
Writing style	■■
Inversion	■■
Synonymy	■

Students most frequently mentioned the differences in writing commas – especially the fact that you should not use a comma in front of *that*. They have also noticed that, on the other hand, there can be a comma in front of *and* in lists.

However, some of them went even further and tried to imply about the consequences for the sentence structure. Observe how one of the students made an interlink between punctuation and word oder.

> English uses much less commas, orientation would be hard without word order. (*Student 5*)

Many students talked about different concepts of formality and politeness – as in English politeness is a burning issue and the Czechs often err as they are too straightforward.

> English people are very pedantic about their effort to be polite. (*Student 10*)

One of the students noticed that English is a language of synonyms. This is a good remark because the issue is also related to formality, e.g. phrasal verbs versus full verbs.

> Each word in English has several synonyms and it is hard which one to

use. (*Student 23*)

Interestingly enough, some students noticed some more advanced issues like inversion that can be used in *"extremely formal English"*, as Student 16 noted.

Other interesting observations include:

> The longer sentence I write in English, the better influence it has on
> the reader. (*Student 11*)
>
> Article headlines in English are even more confusing than in Czech.
> (*Student 19*)
>
> Using or not using articles. (*Student 16*)

7.1.5 Positives of the course

The students' ideas about the positive features of the course have been divided into two tables. The first one shows their general comments, the second one provides a further explanation of what is meant by the content of the course.

Positives	Number of students
Number of people	■
Atmosphere	■■
Individual treatment	■■
Content	■■■■■■■■■■
Value for money	■■■■
Teacher's skills	■■
Style of learning	■■■■■■
Worksheets and materials	■■■

Nearly all of the students expressed their satisfaction with the content of the course. They also appreciated the worksheets and supporting materials. Many students mentioned the teacher's skills (experienced, friendly) and the learning style. They especially wellcomed the number of examples and thorough explanation:

> I liked that we always had many examples so I could see it in use and I
> had no problem understanding it and I usually remembered a lot from
> the lesson already. (*Student 7*)

Moreover, many students also mentioned the fact that the information was not dissected into isolated islands and was treated as a whole.

It summarised all the grammar together and that's good because I
have everything in one notebook and I can check it every time I want
to. (*Student 11*)

Summarising of English knowledge – not dividing it into parts.
(*Student 16*)

Other important observations include:

I appreciate the individuality. I can ask whatever I need to know.
(*Student 5*)

It taught me many interesting things of which we never really talked
about at school. (*Student 10*)

The table bellow explores the category of content. It shows what students considered relevant and beneficial. What is important to mention is the fact that the largest number of students opted for the choice of issues from grammar in writing on which the course was focused.

Content items	Number of students
Differences between genres in writing	■■■■
Choice of issues from grammar in writing	■■■■■■■■
Powerpoint presentations	■■
Differences between formal/informal style	■■
Examples	■
Learning new and interesting information	■■■■■

7.1.6 Negatives of the course

Not all of the students filled in this part of the writing portfolio. Those who did complained about the following:

Negative features	Number of students
Too short	■■■■■■
Other students' learning style	■
Missed some lessons	■■■
Lack of writing during the lessons	■
Content of the course	■

The students mostly complained about the length of the course and the fact that they missed some lessons because of the spring holidays, as the lessons could not be postponed having a very strict timing.

One of the students complained about the content of the course – namely he/she expected to learn more advanced grammar. However, the course content was designed to suit the needs of intermediate students rather than those who are advanced.

> Student 7 wrote:
>
> How deeply I think about it, I can't find anything wrong, I only feel we
> might have missed some topics, but as far as I don't know all the
> important issues in writing, I don't know what that would be... It just
> seems to me that eight lessons must be a short period for going
> throught all of writing. I guess that sometimes we might have done
> more during one lesson, that sometimes there might be more
> examples than necessary, on the other hand, that was what made it
> comfortable and not too quick, so I am not sure. This was just
> supposed to make my writing better and I am sure it did.

7.2 Teacher's evaluation

This chapter will attempt to make a brief summary of the major positives and negatives seen by the eyes of the teacher and compare it with the students' ideas.

7.2.1 Positives

Most importantly, I would like to emphasise that the course brought a lot of interesting and valuable conclusions for my future profession of a teacher. It provided an insight into how students' skills gradually develop and how the areas in which they err in writing vary based on the writer's proficiency.

It was also an opportunity to try and test a variety of activities that cannot be done in general English courses, which the students also liked.

I especially appreciated the Powerpoint presentations as it allowed me more time in the lesson to concentrate on a variety of extra activities not having to focus on the writing genres as such.

Unlike student 7, I would see the number of examples as a positive of the course (which he/she also eventually did). The whole course was in majority based on inductive methods of teaching grammar – which students usually percieve as trivial and with lost of examples

because of summaries provided at the end of each inductive activity. However, it

7.2.2 Negatives

Basically, the greatest negative of the course was that everything was realised under time pressure and it was not possible to postpone the lessons in the period of holidays. Thus many students missed at least one lesson which, taking into consideration that the course had only eight lessons, is a lot.

Although the course covered the main writing topics (based on the FCE exam), it might be longer than eight lessons. In fact, it should be at least one term or two terms' (ideally) long to be able to observe a more significant improvement in students' writing skills.

On the other hand, the eight-lesson course was successful in raising the students' awareness and introducing the main topics in writing and showed students the direciton they might take if they want to continue developing their writing skills in future.

8 Conclusion

To sum up, I think the diploma thesis has achieved its main aims whether it is the theoretical part of the Grammar-in-Writing course and its consequent evaluation based on the work of students.

Despite lack of literature on grammar in writing, the thesis has managed to treat the basic criteria for teaching grammar and writing. An interlink has been created using the general descriptors and descriptors for writing skills for B2 level in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

A language portfolio has been designed based on the *European Language Portfolio*. It has been proven more successful than a questionnaire, since it has shown not only the knowledge of students, but also how deep their insight into the problematics is and how much they have learned and improved. It has confirmed the original hypothesis [see Chapter 3.3 Students' writing] that as students become more proficient in writing, they turn their attention from grammar to discourse (which can be also paraphrased as "grammar in writing"). Thus they have improved especially their sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences.

I especially appreciate the Grammar-in-Writing course and the period of its realisation. Rather surprisingly, I have learned that most students have positive attitudes towards writing; however, there seem to be little motivated to write. I have learned that writing skills are generally neglected at schools; teachers usually underestimate their value and thus students have little understanding of how complex a chapter writing is.

The course has achieved to provoke motivation and change students stereotypic attitudes towards writing. As a teacher, it has allowed me to be part of the process. I could apply a range of methods in teaching grammar in context from inductive learning methods to text analysis. I have definitely gained new skills and experience. What is more, measured by students' satisfaction expressed in their writing portfolios, the course can be regarded as highly successful.

Although has brought a lot of valuable conclusions, there is still room for further research. Especially as the thesis focuses merely on intermediate students writing skills, it would be worth inquiring further into the process of students' development from beginner to proficient writers – i.e. throughout all stages.

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Lesson 5. *Disaster!* based on ex.3/p.22 in [16]. Story cads in [15], p. 101.

Lesson 6. Exercise 4 in [16] ex.2 /p.115.

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10 CD Content

- **\Course\Additional_activities:** Contains seven additional activities that were treated at the beginning of the course based on the students' problems.

- **\Course\Lessons:** Contains the full overview of lesson content.

- **\Course\Presentations:** Contains four PowerPoint presentations focusing on writing four different genres – formal and informal letter, article and report.

- **\Course\Students:** Contains students' work, questionnaires and writing portfolios.

- **\Grammar in Writing:** Contains the overview of grammar in writing upon which the content of the course was based.

- **\Thesis:** Contains the body of the thesis, analysis of errors and writing portfolios.

Appendix

Contents

Appendix 1
Grammar-in-Writing Course Worksheets

1 Today's news

1 How often do you read newspapers? Have you ever thought of what is so particular about newspaper headlines? What are the main features?

2 Your teacher will give you and your partner a set of cards. Your task is to make out the message of the newspaper headlines on your „Today's news" card. Your partner has the correct answers. Were you right with your guess? When you have finished exchange the roles.

3 Observe the following examples of newspaper headlines. Match the groups (1-3) with the grammar they represent (a-c) and answer the subsequent tasks. More answers are possible.

1
Journalist murder case charges

New UK foot-and-mouth case

Europe's last witch hunt

A ellipsis
Ellipsis is an omission of certain grammatical words. In newspaper headlines it serves to economy. However, it can be only realised when the overall meaning is not changed.
- *What words were omitted? What is the grammar they represent?*

2
Africa devastated by floods

Dollar steady after hitting lows

Ten 'most polluted places' named

B future reference
The modal construction *be to* is used to refer to future plans or intentions in formal styles. In newspaper headlines *be* is often omitted and only the infinitive construction is preserved.
- *Look at the headlines in the other boxes. What is their time reference?*

3
US to push for Palestinian state

Powers to discuss Iran sanctions

Diana jury to visit Paris crash site

C complex noun phrases
English often uses nouns in place of adjectives, to modify nouns. This can be observed especially in highly formal styles. It is economic but can lead to ambiguity.
- *Try to untangle the messages of the healines. The use of of-phrases will help you do the task.*

4 Read the following information and rewrite it into newspaper or magazine headlines so that you maintain the overall meaning.

a Scientists have announced that there might be water on Mars.

b An exhibition of orchids opens on June 11 in London.

c Many people are becoming discouraged from recycling while big corporations are exhausting dirt and the planet is constantly warming.

d As the time of the election is approaching, the parties' campaigns are becoming more aggressive.

e Manchester United has secured a 3-0 victory over their title rivals, Chelsea.

f Teachers doubt the real value of wearing uniforms as a way to establish equality among students.

5 Read the following writing assignments. Think of a headline for each of the articles.

You have agreed to write an article describing your town and the people who live there for an international student magazine. Say what you like and don't like about the town.

You have seen this advertisement in an international magazine.

HOLIDAY COMPETITION

Write an article about the worst holiday you have ever had, explaining to our readers why the holiday was so special.

The best article will win a weekend for two in London.

You have seen this advertisement in an international magazine.

FITNESS COMPETITION

Write an article about your experience with keeping fit and healthy.

The best article will be awarded by a one week's fitness holiday in Spain.

You have read an article in an international magazine entitled *Strange passions*. It was about collecting unusual things. The readers were encouraged to write about their own experience with collecting unusual items.

6 Write your own article. Use one of the assignments in exercise 5. Write 120-180 words.

2 Accept my advice

1 In what situations are people usually asked to give advice? Are there any professions which are especially concerned with solving problems and giving advice?

2 Juana is a foreign exchange student from Spain. On her arrival, she has encountered some problems. She writes to her friend Tom and to Ms Burns from the Foreign Students Department to help her solve them. Read the two letters and do the following tasks.

  a What is the purpose of each letter?

  b What is the reader-writer relationship in each letter?

  c In letter 1 underline phrases expressing advice or suggestions. Do the same in letter 2.

  d Find the corresponding phrases from letter 1 and 2. What grammar was used to express advice and suggestions in both of the letters? Choose from the list bellow.

  - questions
  - modal verbs or expressions
  - imperatives
  - conditional clauses
  - reporting verbs
  - imperatives
  - adjectives

3 Your teacher will give you a set of cards with phrases expressing advice and suggestions. Group them according to the following criteria:

  - grammar they represent (use the grammar list above to help you)
  - style (formal, informal, or neutral)

4 Work with the same set of cards. Read the advice or suggestion. Say in what context you might read or hear it.

---

❶

Dear Juana,

I'm glad to hear that you are satisfied with your stay in Kent in spite of these minor drawbacks that I hope will be quickly solved.

As for your trouble with the tap, you'd better not repair it yourself. Why not go to the reception and ask if they can get a plumber.

You've also mentioned problems with missing subjects in your timetable. You should consult the Study and Students' Affairs Division where they are able to make the particular changes. The office hours are on the internet. You'd rather hurry up because the deadline for changing your timetable is on Monday.

Your last complaint was about the canteen. I've learnt that there's a vegetarian canteen about ten minutes' walk from the university building. So why don't we have lunch there together on Friday?

Hope everything else is OK.

See you
Tom

---

❷

Dear Miss Martinez,

I am writing in response to your letter of complaint posted to our department. I have examined your complaints and propose the following solutions.

First, regarding the malfunction of students hall equipment, it is inadvisable to repair it by yourself. You ought to consult the reception where they should be able to advice on further steps.

Second, if you have found missing subjects in your timetable, ask the responsible staff at the Study and Students' Affairs Division to make the necessary corrections. The office hours are published on the department's site. You should not delay as timetable adjustments are due on Monday, October 12, 2007.

Last, as part of our Healthy Alimentation Programme we have opened new alimentation facilities. You might like to visit our vegetarian canteen which is in Baker Street.

Yours sincerely,

Elen Burns
Foreign Students Department

4 Read the writing assignments bellow and answer the following questions.
- Who is the target reader?
- Will the style of each letter be formal or informal?
- What would you suggest or advise in each situation?

Letter 1

You plan to go for an adventure trip to Thailand. Your friend Lucas has accepted your invitation to join; however, his only experience is a package holiday to European destinations. He has asked you for advice.
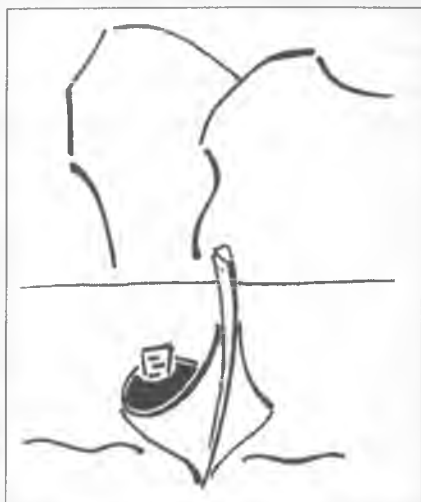
Dear Joe,

I've decided to join your adventure trip to Thailand. However, I have no previous experience with this sort of holiday...

Could you tell me what I should arrange in advance before we set off?

- valid passport and visa; authorities sometimes make problems
- dangerous insects and deseases
- sending a list of clothes - read it!!!
- if questions, we can meet

Letter 2

You participated in organising an international festival of arts as a member of the planning committee. Mr. Willson, the main festival organiser, has asked you to write a letter suggesting what might be changed in order to improve the choice of performances and facilities for the following year. You have made a list of drawbacks.

- outdoor performances - not enough places for the audience
- concerts - bad choice of music - people were bored, many left
- refreshments: run out of beer at 9 p.m., people were hungry - nothing to eat

5 Choose one of the writing assignments from exercise 4 and compose the whole letter. Be careful about the style. Write 120-180 words.

3 Don't miss it!

1 Do you like stories? Answer the following questions:

  a Which book or film is your favourite?
  b Can you tell the story?
  c What tense did you use to describe the main plot?

2 Read the title of the review of The Simpsons Movie. What do you expect the article to be about?

3 Now read the whole review and compare your original ideas.

4 Answer the following questions about the review:

  a Is the style formal or informal?

  b What tenses does the author use to describe the plot? What aim does he want to achieve?

  c Underline the devices used to link different ideas.

  d Which of the linking devices express:

  • similar or extra information
  • contrasting information
  • time

  Group them in the table bellow. Can you add more examples to each group?

▼▼▼

Don't pay for what you can have for free

Homer Simpson, a lazy American dad of a dysfunctional family, becomes a hero in his big-screen debut.

Yet will the film succeed? This is a question that tormented even The Simpsons team. They show their nerve by making Homer wonder out loud why anyone would pay to buy a cinema ticket to watch what they could see on TV free — the underlying question of the whole big-screen adaptation. In Homer's view, anyone who pays for cinema tickets to watch a TV show is a sucker. It becomes even more obvious when he declares: "Particularly you!"

What you get for your money is the Simpsons on an epic scale.

At the beginning of The Simpsons Movie Homer's dreams are limited to spoiling his new pet pig which he renames "Spiderpig". However, by the end of the film, Homer outshines even Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has been elected president and ordered great harm done to Homer's home town.

The Simpsons Movie follows the television series in its sharp criticism of contemporary society and culture. It is a postmodern parable about an environmental scare.

Moreover, it deals with human relationships. Lisa falls in love and Burt quits his father's ideals.

The circumstances of the disaster allow The Simpsons' left-leaning creator, Matt Groening, to indulge his politics with warnings of environmental doom.

Lisa, Homer and Marge's intelligent daughter, has become an eager environmentalist who makes an Al Gore-style presentation entitled "An Irritating Truth" to the citizens of Springfield.

In the same spirit, this film could have been subtitled: "An Inconvenient Cartoon".

similar or extra information	contrasting information	time
and		

5 Provide punctuation.

mr darcy is deeply in love however he refuses to accept the fact he hides the affection in unsociable behaviour indifference and ignorance yet he cannot struggle forever and reveals his feelings to elizabeth at first she refuses but changes her mind when she discovers the truth about his former friend wickham finally elizabeth and darcy get married

6 For each of a-f form one sentence using linking words to connect the information. There may be more than one possible answer and you may need to change the order of the information.

a The powerful Queen Caroline is pretty nasty to Henrietta. She keeps her services for fear that the King might find a less manageable lover to replace her.

b Ghosts roam the Warwickshire countryside and blood is everywhere. There are women and their terrible, wonderful secrets.

c We learn that Imogen is blind. She was adopted out of the family, aged three.

d His publisher agreed that this was very fine. He urged him to try a scandalous satire instead, perhaps featuring people from high society.

e She spies her older sister Cecilia in an argument with Robbie. She fatally misinterprets their relationship.

f He is directed to room 1408 of the Dolphin Hotel in New York. No fewer that 56 deaths occurred there since the hotel opened.

7 Remember an interesting book that you have read recently. It may be a film. Describe its plot in ten brief sentences.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____
7 _____
8 _____
9 _____
10 _____
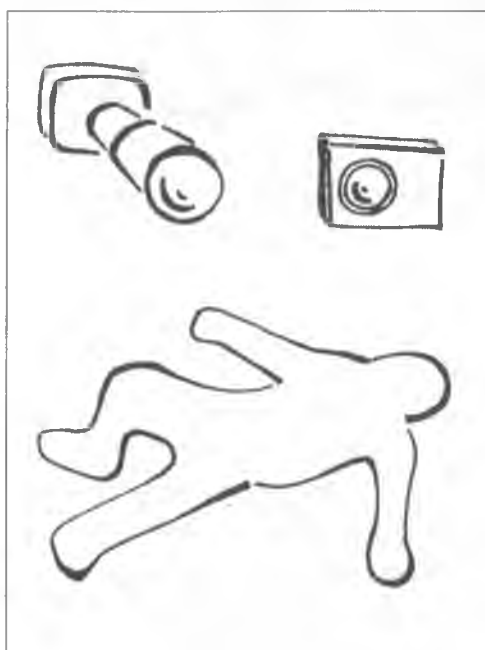
8 Use the sentences from exercise 6 to compose a whole paragraph. Linking devices will help you.

_____
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9 Write your own review. You may use the paragraph from exercise 8 and expand it. (150 - 180 words)

4 It was raining then...

DISASTER?!

This story happened about 10 years ago. [.❶.] On <u>the ship</u> was a scientist, Thomas Hawkins, who had worked on <u>the island</u> for many years; [❷.]. Hawkins had been away for a long holiday [.❸.].

At about midnight, I felt very tired [.❹.]. I went down to my cabine. Outside there was a strong wind [.❺.]. [.❻.] when I suddenly heard a great crash. I dashed up on deck and although it was dark I could see that the ship had run into an iceberg. We were immediately ordered to jump into lifeboats [.❼.]; and this is how I got to know Hawkins and became a passionate scientist.

[.❽.], we did not mind, as we had the most varied and exciting topics to discuss.

1 Read the story. Although some information is missing, are you able to retell the plot?

2 Reconstruct the story using the points (1-8) bellow associated with the gaps in the story.

　1 How do we learn about the ship and the island? Provide more descriptions of the journey.
　2 What sort of research?
　3 Why had he worked on the island for many years?
　4 Why did the author feel tired?
　5 Give a more detailed description of the weather conditions.
　6 What were the circumstances?
　7 Give a more detailed description of the lifeboats.
　8 Why did the author and Mr. Hawkins not mind the inconvenience caused by the accident?

3 Read the whole story called
Disaster?! and answer the following
questions.

  a Observe the phrases in italics
     (1-8). What tenses are they in?

  b What do these phrases express?
     Choose from the categories
     bellow and add your own
     observations.

     ▪ Descriptions
     ▪ Providing circumstances
     ▪ Cause

4 Underline all the time expressions
(prepositional phrases and linking
devices). What do we use with:

     ▪ Past simple
     ▪ Past continuous
     ▪ Past perfect simple
     ▪ Past perfect continuous

DISASTER?!

This story happened about 10 years ago. (1) *I was sailing on a Dutch ship near the North Pole; it was heading for Blackhead Island.* On the ship was a scientist, Thomas Hawkins, who had worked on the island for many years; (2) *he had been conducting research into the life of the local inhabitants, who were Eskimos (Inuits).* Hawkins had been away for a long holiday (3) *and now he was coming back to the island to continue his work.*

At about midnight, I felt very tired (4) *as I had been writing my journal all day.* I went down to my cabine. Outside there was a strong wind (5) *and the waves were crashing onto the side of the ship.* (6) *I was getting ready to go to bed* when I suddenly heard a great crash. I dashed up on deck and although it was dark I could see that the ship had run into an iceberg. We were immediately ordered to jump into lifeboats (7) *that were hanging over the darkness ready to be embarked on the sea;* and this is how I got to know Hawkins and became a passionate scientist.

(8) *Although we were waiting in the lifeboats for hours before being rescued,* we did not mind, as we had the most varied and exciting topics to discuss.

5 Make a brief paragraph of each story (1-2). Keep the
suggested order of phrases. Use a variety of tenses (present
simple, present continuous, and past perfect) and linking
devices. (*Example* ↓)

Story 1
  1 I decided to take a day off.
  2 I went on a trip to the countryside.
  3 I went for a walk in the forest.
  4 I met a abandoned dog.
  5 I adopted the dog and named him Sam.

Order: *5 - 2 - 1 - 4 - 3*

Story 2
  1 There was a lot of rain in the morning.
  2 The roads were slippery.
  3 I set off on my way to work.
  4 A rabbit cossed the road.
  5 I spent three days in a comma.
  6 I woke up in the hospital.

Order: *2 - 1 - 3 - 4 - 6 - 5*

Example:
  1 I read the whole book overnight.
  2 I had swollen and red eyes.
  3 I arrived at work the next morning.
  4 "She must have split up with her
     boyfriend", her colleagues
     thought.
  5 My colleagues bought me a box of
     chocolate.

Order: 3 - 2 - 1 - 4 - 5

You would not believe this. When I arrived at work yesterday I had my eyes all swollen and red because I had been reading the whole night. But my colleagues actually thought that I had split up with my boyfriend, so they bought me a box of chocolate.

6 Write your own story or narration of about 120 - 180 words.

5 These are my recommendations

1 Have you ever been asked to write a report? What are the most usual reasons for
writing a report? What are the subjects you report on?

2 Read the writing assignment and answer these questions:
   a Who will read the report?
   b What style should the report be in?

> The director of the language school you attend is considering making improvements to the
> general appearance of the school. He / She has asked you to write a report making your
> recommendations on how this might be achieved. Write your report in 120-180 words.

3 Read the report. Is the style and language appropriate? Concentrate on the phrases
in italics. Could you replace them with the phrases on the bulleted list?
Would it always be appropriate? Why? Why not?

- As complaints were mentioned by students that ...
- ... the reception should be redecorated in warmer colours.
- ... a full time receptionist should be employed for the afternoons ...
- ... where their complaints and recommendations could be entered.
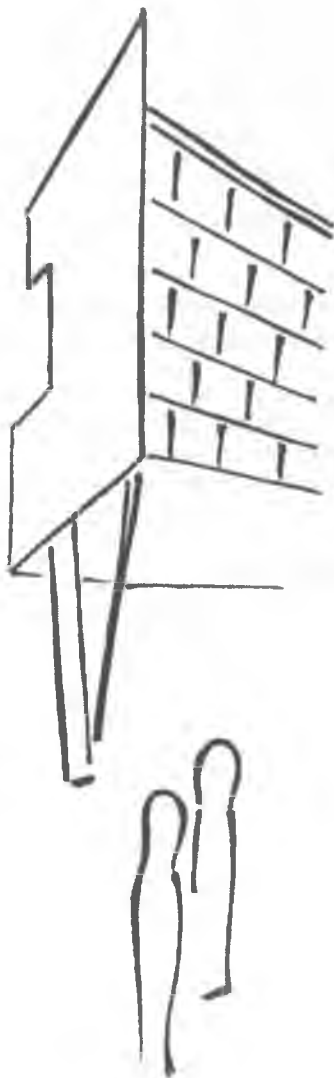
Introduction

The aim of this report is to suggest ways in
which the language school might improve its
appearance, and thus provide a better service
to its students.

Reception

I have made a minor survey among our class and
most of the students think that *house painters
should redecorate the reception hall in warmer
colours*. Moreover, *somebody should employ a
full time receptionist for the afternoons*
when most courses take place. *As students
complained that* they were unable to find their
classroom when they first arrived and there was
no one to provide advice.

Classrooms

The overall atmosphere in classrooms is
receptive; however, there are sometimes
problems with the electric appliances.
Therefore I recommend a thorough check of all
the appliances and those that do not function
should be replaced.

Conclusion

All these improvements would be popular among
the students of your language school. Most
importantly, they would welcome a form on
your website *where they could enter their
complaints and recommendations*.

4 If possible, transform the sentences to the passive voice.

   a We do not add any additives to our products.

   b The Government is now building a lot of new schools in the provinces.

   c The police have just arrested him on suspicion of murder.

   d The parcel arrived on Monday.

   e Will they publish her new book next month?

   f They will have completed the new motorway by Christmas.

   g We haven't cleaned the house for weeks.

   h They are going to open the new supermarket next week.

5 There is a punctuation mistake in each of these sentences. Correct
it and say what kind of mistake it is. The first one has been done as an
example.

   a Your hostesses are very polite. However they are not able to answer the basic questions about
      your products.

   b You should redecorate the walls in the directors office.

   c I strongly recommend that these changes are realised by Christmas, as even more visitors will
      arrive who might find the current conditions inconvenient.

   d I suggest, that you distribute information leaflets.

   e You could also translate your website into english so that it is accessible to foreign visitors.

   f These recommendations are highly popular among all employees. And they would wecome
      them as soon as possible.

   g You could provide a wider choice of meals in the school canteen, moreover you might consider
      introducing a vegetarian dish.

   h I suggest that you plant more trees decorative plants and herbs in the garden.

6 Read the writing assignment and make a list of points stating in what
areas might be made improvements.

> Your director is considering making improvements to the general appearance of the company's interiors. He / She has asked you to write a report making your recommendations on how this might be achieved. Write your report in 120-180 words.

7 Write your own report of 120-180 words.
Use the assignment above.
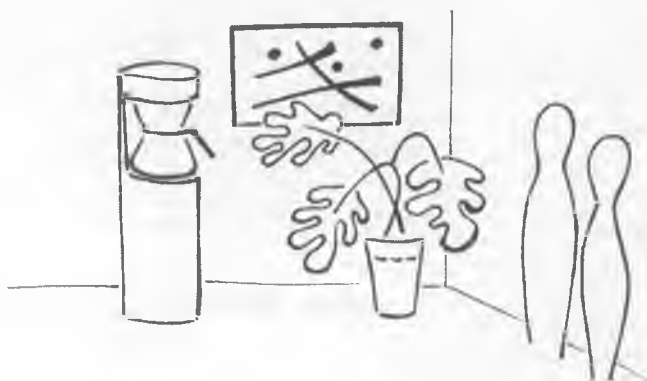
6 In my opinion

1 Read the writing assignment. What can you say about the topic? Discuss some of the suggested questions.

> Your teacher has asked you to write a composition discussing the following statement:
> **There should be a complete ban on the advertising of dangerous products like cigarettes and alcohol.**
> Write your composition in 120-180 words.

- Do you agree that cigarettes and alcohol are 'dangerous products'?
- What do you think about cigarette and alcohol adverts?
- Are there countries with a complete ban on these products?
- In which countries is smoking or drinking alcohol restricted? What are the rules?
- Why do some people want a complete ban? Would it discourage people from smoking or drinking?

2 Read the text and fill in the gaps in the text with linking words.

what is more   *to summarise*   *although*   *whereas*
not only   *however*   *on the other hand*

Some people say that there should be a complete ban on cigarettes and alcohol. _____ , those who indulge in these products are strongly opposed. I will consider these different points of view.

_____ cigarettes and alcohol are accepted by most societies, their effects can be devastating. _____ can they cause health problems such as cancer, but they also have influence on people's relationships. For instance, alcohol addicts are often excluded from the society. _____ , alcohol and cigarettes are often consumed at occasions that encourage forming new relationships between people.

_____ it is rather unlikely that a complete ban will ever be imposed on these products, there are already *countries that have restricted smoking in public places such as restaurants*, offices, airports and bus stops. _____ , duscussions have been raised on the harmful effects of alcohol and cigarette ads on teenagers. The positive news is that even many smokers and alcohol drinkers are against.

_____ , I believe that people will be more informed about these dangerous products and special programmes will be adopted to protect children and teenagers from the exposure to alcohol and cigarettes.

3 Observe the phrase in italics. Is it really possible that countries restrict? Why does the author use this type of metaphor?

4 Match each phrase in the list below with its purpose (a-c).

 a to introduce additional information
 b to introduce information which contrasts with what has gone before
 c to summarise or conclude an argument

apart from that	*as well as (that)*	*besides (this)*	*in conclusion*	*moreover*
by contrast	*furthermore*	*in short*	*nevertheless*	*on the contrary*
on the whole	*to conclude*	*to summarise*	*to sum up*	*what is more*

ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION

Stage 2
Work in pairs. Prepare a list of questions you will ask to the others participants of discussion.

Stage 4
In pairs, make a layout of your composition and share it with the class.

Stage 1
With the class, agree on a topic.

Stage 3
Discuss the questions together with the whole class and make notes.

Stage 5
In pairs, white your composition in 120-180 words using a range of linking devices.

?   ?   ?

Title:
_____
_____

5 Write your own composition.

Your teacher has asked you to write a composition discussing the following statement:
Teenagers nowadays have more opportunities to use their talents than 100 years ago.
Write your composition in 120-180 words.

Appendix 2
Questionnaire and Writing Portfolio

Questionnaire I

1 Speech and writing

Read the following phrases. Could you find them in writing, in speech or in both?

...... Well actually I got sacked because I was purposely trying to disrupt the business cos I hate smoking so much.

...... All types of locks and security devices fitted, and estimates given.

...... The literature of Latina writers, like other ethnic literatures, examines in very commanding and provocative ways the construction of identity in the American context.

...... I'll catch up with you in a minute.

...... It seems to me that they need a lesson in politeness.

...... For that time of year you need a polo-shirt or something, light, cool, you know short sleeves, cotton.

...... Thought it's all relative I suppose.

...... It snowed last night.

...... This paper discusses some asymptotic uniform linearity results of randomly weighted empirical processes based on long-range dependent random variables.

2 Formal and informal style

Observe the phrases in part 1. What are the typical features of formal and informal style? Write *F* for formal, *I* for informal and *B* for both.

...... complex structures

...... short forms

...... filler words

...... brief and condensed style

...... phrasal verbs

......

3 Politeness

Which of these phrases are polite?

...... Pass me the phone book, please.

...... This is a complete nonsense. You're a liar.

...... I regret to inform you that your luggage has been lost.

...... I wandered if you'd help me out in the garden, perhaps, like, if it's still nice when you come home from school?

...... I was hoping I could speak to Roger.

...... What the hell are you doing in my bedroom?

...... if you have not yet used all your tax allowance for the year, let us know and we can recommend further investment opportunities.

4 Write a paragraph on the following topic: What does writing mean to you?

Language

I have been learning English for:	_____ years
I have been learning English:	☐ at home ☐ at school ☐ _____

Writing

I write in English:	☐ every day ☐ once a week ☐ _____
I write in English because:	☐ I do my homework for English lessons at school ☐ I exchange letters in English with a penfriend ☐ _____
I think that writing is	☐ a good way to spend my leasure time ☐ important for my future job ☐ boring and useless ☐ _____
In future I expect that I will need writing because:	_____ _____ _____

My writing skills evaluation

I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.

Do you agree? Write a short paragraph.

I have learned and now I understand the following differences between English and Czech in the written form.

difference	explanation

In writing, I still have problems with:

What I especially appreciate about the course is:

What I did not like about the course was:

THE END

Appendix 3
Examples of Students' Work
Overview of Errors

Errors: *Overall frequency analysis*

	1 *Short reflection*	2 *Article*	3 *Formal or informal letter*	4 *Review*	5 *Narration*	6 *Report*	7 *Discursive Composition*
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Student 10, Text 2

Feeling fit for free

Have you ever felt unhealthy? Have you ever looked into the mirror and were

disgusted by what you were seeing? If so, if getting into your pants is the issue of
                                    T note_1
the day, I think you may use my guidance.

First of all – forget about your useless diets. If you follow the ensuing procedure,

you will need all the junk food in the world to keep you alive.

The important thing is stress. Yes, you may not believe it, but being in stress is the

easiest way to lose one's weight. When you are stressed you sweat, shiver and you

act hastily – this all helps! Achieving this state is not at all difficult either: just be

always late.

I hope this information had some kind of value for you. Just remember, whenever
                                    G/too informal
you will spend all the way to work dashing, whenever you will choose quick
T/note_2   T/note_2
running up the stairs to ‖ elevator or you will be obliged to climb over a cloakroom's
                       A   A   G/note_3
doors because it was closed, remember(,) that you are doing this for your health.
                                    P

Overall impression:
Thank you for a nice and witty article. Your style is very good, however, you made some grammar mistakes – although productive from my point of view.

Notes:

Note_1: Be careful. There is a group of verbs in English called state verbs – easily, these verbs describe states, senses, processes of your mind. (remember, know, see, hear, believe, understand, etc.) Generally speaking, these verbs cannot be used in continous form. Or – they can, but change their meaning significantly – do dynamic verbs.
        Eg. I'm seeing my sister tomorrow. = We're having an appointment.
            I saw my sister yesterday. (sense, perception)
If you want to emphasise the "contiuousness", you don't use the continuous tense with these verbs, but the modal verb can.
Eg. I can see my sister. She's standing by the shop over there.

Note_2: You can't use modal verbs will and would after linking devices expressing time. You must use the present simple or past simple ideally.
Whenever you spend all the way to work dashing…

Note_3: The possessive case 's in English can be attributed only to people, animals, or time expressions (when, whenever, as soon as, etc.).
Peter's house
the cat's bowl
today's dinner

It is sometimes used with inanimate objects; however, only exceptionally. For example names of countries, possibly some instituti-ons. It occurs even with cloakroom, but is rather scarce. (You can type it in into Google – only about 560 results, while America's has got 34 800 000 result. What a difference!) You can use an of phrase instead: the doors of your/the cloakroom

Student 7, Text 2

BEATEN BY BABIES

When I had first heard about my holiday, I would never thought, what was going to happen. I
                                                          P   P
am sure, that you have already heard about these camps for children. But have you ever seen
              P
such a thing? Lucky you. if you haven´t.
                                 P

Last summer, my friend found an advertisement. It was saying: „We are looking for

young girls, who like children and aren´t afraid of adventure." We thought, that it was going
                       P   P
to be fun! The only thing we would need to do. would be looking after ‖ few children. What a
                                                          P   A
fools we were!

There was around twenty children, aged between seven and ten. They were nice, they
                                            P
obeyed the rules, they were simply amazing! The problem occured two days later. when the
                                                                 P
children didn´t want to play the ordinary games anymore.

I don´t know. whether you can imagine twenty bored children. It was {the} horrific. These
              P   A
bored kids weren´t just sitting around and being bored. They found a way to entertain. and
                                                                          P
that was bothering us. Their favourite game was jump on them and try to make them as many

bruises as possible. After a week, I felt as if I´m never going to walk again.
                                                     use the past form

When we arrived back home. we slept for nearly twenty hours continually. From that
                                                 P
time, I have never wanted to hear about anything like ‖ camp, never!
                                                 A

Overall impression:
Great! I like your article very much – it's witty. The only problem is that you use lots of punctuation marks (comas especially) that are not at all necessary. In fact nearly none of them is necessary – this is English…

Introduction

The aim of this report is to suggest a few things to improve a comfort
                                                          A
for a staff while working. The report is a summary of a recent survey
    A
that was made among a staff and the list below should be helpful for

the management of the company.

The Walls

We've discussed the chosen colours of rooms with a colour specialist

and also with the staff and decided that the colours of a cafeteria,
                                                    A
corridors and rest rooms should be painted in warm colours.

Furniture

In the past clerks and secretaries who sit all the day at the desk

complained about uncomfortable chairs and shaking desks. For this

reason, buying a new pieces of furniture for clerks could be
              A
considered.

Air-conditioning (plants)

Since the last medical inspection visited the company, working

conditions in the building were improved, but a few details are still
                                        T
remaining. The quality of the air was apparently worsened. For this
                                                        T
reason, the air-condition set should be cleaned (out) and also some

plants could be placed around each room.

Conclusion

All these points of improvement would be advisable for all the staff of

this company and most importantly, they would contribute to smooth

run and progressing of the company.
G/ing   G/ no ing sounds better

Overall impression:
Very good. You've achieved great improvement so far. But still, have a look at the mistakes in tenses. Remember that you imply about the present working conditions in the company. So the tense should reflect this.

Suggestion:
You might start thinking about the vocabulary – formal and informal registers. For example, the staff is rather informal. What is the formal synonym? In a report, it is deffinitely more appropriate.