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INTRODUCTION

As a student of two Germanic languages, English and German, I keep comparing them. It seems that each of them helps learners to understand the other. Even though there are differences, there are also things that seem similar. In this thesis, I would like to focus on grammar structures of perfect tenses in English and compare them to German ones. Most of the tenses have very similar, or even the same structure. For example English Present Perfect and German Perfect are formed by the same auxiliary verb Have/Haben and Past Participle. My aim is to find out whether knowledge of the German language somehow influences the process of learning English. I focus on the language acquisition, especially the acquisition of temporality. I introduce individual tenses and explain when they are used. I use examples of these tenses from English newspapers and base the questionnaire for my research on them. The respondents are supposed to fill in the correct tense. My target respondents are Czech students who study English as their major at university.

English and German have a common language ancestor. Not only do they have very similar verb forms but also similar use of them. These are the reasons why I assume that knowledge of the tense system of one of these languages positively influences learners' acquisition of the tense system of the other.

The bachelor thesis is divided into a theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part consists of history of the English and German language, English and German verbs, explanation of tense usage and language acquisition. The practical part is based on my research which is realised through questionnaires. The structure, facts about respondents, exercises and results are described here.

1. THEORETICAL PART

1.1. English and German as West Germanic languages

There are currently six West Germanic languages. English, German, Dutch, Yiddish, Friesian, Afrikaans. Both English and German belong to the Indo-European family as well as to the Centum group.

1.2. History of the English language

According to Papsonová (4) Germanic tribes of Angles and Saxons came to Britain during the Migration period in 449. Their language was Anglo-Saxon or Old English, which together with Old Friesian and Old Low German and Old High German belong to the West Germanic language group.

Nist (4-7) divides the language evolution into the following periods:

Old English	Middle English	Early Modern English	Authoritarian English	Mature English
450 – 1150	1150-1500	1500-1650	1650-1800	1800-1920

1.2.1. Old English (450 – 1150)

In old English there are weak and strong verbs. Weak verbs are regular so the past forms are created by the infinitive stem of the verb and suffixes -ede, -ode, -de and the past participle -ed, -od, -d.

In the following tables there are inflectional endings of the Old English verb *dēman* (to judge) in the present and past tense:

Present simple

	Singular	Plural
dēm	-e	-að
	-(e)st	-að
	-(e)ð	-að

Past simple

	Singular	Plural
dēm+d	-e	-on
	-es(t)	-on
	-e	-on

the past participle is formed by adding ge- + verb stem + -ed. (e.g.: gedēmed)

(Nist 118-119)

The other group is a group of strong verbs (irregular verbs). Their forms are created by vowel change in their root syllable. According to the vowel change they are divided into 7 classes. There are some examples of strong verbs from Nist (82). The first form is the infinitive, the preterit sg. follows, then the preterit pl. and past participle.

flēogan, flēag, flugon, flogen (E. 'to fly', G. 'fliegen')

slāpan, slēp, slēpon, slāpen (E. 'to sleep', G. 'schlafen')

The preterit in Old English was used not only for the past definite as in current English but also for perfect forms: "þonne ic ne arās of þysum bedde. 'since I have not risen from this bed',..." (Bourcier 99) However, forms created through an auxiliary verb either *habban* or *bēon/wesan* and past participle were already also used. "*wē habbað nū gesæd* 'we have now related',..." (Bourcier 99).

1.2.2. Middle English (1150-1500) and Early Modern English (1500-1650)

Due to Middle English reduction of inflection the Old English prefix ge- had disappeared from the past participle. Many strong (irregular) verbs became weak

(regular). In contrast to the Old English, the Middle English uses fewer forms of strong verbs. It is evident in the examples from Nist (188). Two forms are identical in contrast to Old English, where all of them were different. These examples of verbs show the infinitive, preterit sg., preterit pl. and past participle forms.

helpen, halp (holp), holpen, holpen

drīven, drōf, driven (drōf), driven

tāken, tōk, tōken, tāken

The weak verbs have the following endings: examples taken from Nist (Nist 189)

Present

Preterit

	singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1.per.	-e	-e(n)	-ede, -de (te)	-ed(en), -de(n), -te(n)
2.per.	-est	-e(n)	-edest, -dest, (test)	-ed(en), -de(n), -te(n)
3.per.	-eþ(eth)	-e(n)	-ede, -de (te)	-ed(en), -de(n), -te(n)

Concerning the preterit and perfect forms, the use of these tenses started to differ from each other and perfect took over the role of perfect tense meaning, from the preterit (Bourcier 154).

In contrast to present-day English, the Middle English language system was lacking the progressive aspect, as Nist (234) claims. In the period of Early Modern English the verb inflection disappeared except -s (-eth) endings in the third person which remains up to the present day.

1.2.3. Authoritarian English (1650-1800) and Mature Modern English (1800-1920)

The progressive forms were developed in the authoritarian period. But according to Bourcier (152) the continuous forms had already been appearing in Middle English. Regarding the verbs in the Mature Modern English period, there were no more changes in the form. The most important aspect was to enrich vocabulary because of the need of more accurate expressions. Adding a preposition to already existing verbs created new ones. E.g. break up, talk up. (Nist, 1966)

1.3. Brief Overview of the History of German

History of the German language is divided into the following periods: Old High German (beginning-1050), Middle High German (1050-1350), Early Modern German (1350-1650), Modern German (1650-up today) (Papsonová 11). In the common Teutonic language, there were only preterit and present tenses. In Old High German, the same as in Old English, new synthetic verb forms began to appear (Stedje 76), so perfect and some future forms were found already in this period and they evolved further in the Middle High German period. (Stedje 76, 89) In contrast to English, in German the inflectional endings remained as well as the preposition *ge-* for the past participle.

In the following example, we can compare the Old High German form of the verb *geben* (to give) with the current form. The Old High German 'i' remains in 2. and 3. person sg. until today (Stedje 77). The Old High German endings are taken from Papsonová.

Old High German		
Gib	-u	-ames
	-is	-at
	-it	-ant

Past participle: gigeban

Current German	
Geb – e	Geb – en
Gib – st	Geb – t
Gib – t	Geb – en

Past participle: gegeben

Just for comparison, let us take a look at the similarity of the old English and Old High German verb forms:

O.E.: *helpan, healp, hulpon, hulpen*; (Nist 82) O.H.G.: *helfan, half, hulfum, giholfan*
(Wikipedia) (E. 'to help', G. 'helfen')

1.4. Verbs

1.4.1. English

English verbs are divided into weak and strong verbs; regular and irregular verbs. The past form of regular verbs is created by adding –ed, e.g. play – played – played. And irregular verbs are for example: keep - kept – kept, hit – hit – hit. (Berkov 22) Verb forms created from infinitives are Preterit (past indefinite) and Past Participle, e.g. said – said. Speaking about verb forms, the participles should not be forgotten; they are created by adding –ing and used in continuous forms. In contrast to other Germanic languages, English, as the only language, also has a continuous form and it is typical for it.

1.4.2. German

German verbs are divided into the following groups: weak, strong and irregular verbs. The preterit of weak (regular) verbs is created by adding –te, -test, -te, -ten, -tet, -ten to the verb stem. The past participle consists of prefix ge + verb

stem + suffix -(e)t. The past participle is needed for the second past German tense, the German perfect. Strong verbs have special forms depending on the vowel of the verb stem. E.g.: sprechen - sprach – gesprochen, verbieten – verbot – verboten, bleiben – blieb – geblieben. Irregular verbs are auxiliary verbs, modal verbs and the verb wissen (to know). However, according to Duden (114) Jacob Grimm divided the verbs into strong and weak, which was not sufficient, so other classes, as for example mixed verbs, were needed. To simplify the division of verbs, Duden and Helbig, Buscha use the terms “regular” and “irregular verbs”.

1.5.Tenses

1.5.1. English and German tenses

English has a broad range of tenses to choose from. Not only the present simple, present perfect, past simple, past perfect, future simple, future perfect but also their continuous forms can be used. In contrast to English, German has no continuous forms, but still there are more tenses to choose from than in the Czech language. German tenses are: Präsens, Präteritum, Perfekt, Plusquamperfekt, Futur I and Futur II.

The following table shows English and German tenses with examples. According to the table, it is obvious that the forms are very similar, formed by the same principle. All perfect tenses use the auxiliary verb have/haben + past participle. The preterit is built by adding a suffix and the future simple uses will/werden + bare infinitive. In the table the German perfect is written in the same column as the English present perfect because both have the same structure. Nevertheless, the German perfect is highlighted in blue colour because it is commonly used as past tense.

		PAST		PRESENT		FUTURE	
tense	ENGLISH	Past Perfect	Past simple	Present Perfect	Present simple	Future	Future Perfect
	GERMAN	Plusquamperfekt	Präteritum	Perfekt	Präsens	Futur I	Futur II
example	ENGLISH	Had said	Said	Have said	Say	Will say	Will have said
	GERMAN	Hatte gesagt	Sagte	Habe gesagt	sage	Werde sagen	Werde gesagt haben

1.5.2. Present Perfect

It is created by the auxiliary verb HAVE + Past participle, e.g. I have said. The action that is described by the present perfect started in the past but the exact point of time is not specified. It directly refers to the present and the result is more important than the action itself. For example: sentence: I have eaten -> result: I am not hungry now. There are also typical adverbials used with the present perfect such as: recently, lately, ever, never, just, yet, not yet, since, today, this year, this month. Another use of the present perfect is in news reports, according to Hewings (6), and it is followed by the past simple. For example: "A teacher from Oslo has become the first woman to cross the Arctic alone. It took her 42 days to make the crossing with her dog team." (Hewings 6) explains that recent news is introduced by the present perfect and the past simple is used to give a more detailed description.

In contrast to the present perfect, the past simple (Preterit) is used when describing action that happened in the past and is somehow divided from present. If there are adverbials of time indicating a specific time, like yesterday, last night, last week, last month, in January, on Sunday, at five o'clock, in 2011, the past tense is used.

1.5.3. German Perfect

The German preterit and perfect are both used to express the past and they are partly interchangeable. The preterit is mainly used in narration, also in English. The Perfect is commonly used more often. Use of the Preterit and Perfect mostly depends on regions. While the preterit is more common in northern and middle Germany, south Germany prefers the perfect. Even though both of these forms can be substituted by the other, Helbig, Buscha (135) explains that if the action has some effect, which is important for the time of the speech, the perfect is used.

In the following example the past action has a present result, it refers to the present: *Peter ist (vor einigen Stunden) eingeschlafen. (>er schläft jetzt.)*

(Helbig/Buscha 135) *Peter has fallen asleep (few hours ago).* Another example is: *Sind sie schon mal in Prag gewesen? (Have you ever been to Prague?)* (Štícha 548)

Both examples clearly correspond to the English present perfect. But in contrast to English, adverbials indicating the past such as *gestern (yesterday)* can be used in the German perfect. E.g.: *Der Besuch ist (gestern) angekommen. (>Der Besuch ist jetzt da.)* (Helbig/Buscha, Deutsche Grammatik 135) The visit has come (yesterday). (>the visit is here now)

1.5.4. English Past Perfect and German Plusquamperfekt

“We use this tense when we want to make it clear that action A took place before and separate from of the time when action B took place.” (Allsop 161) There are adverbials used with the past perfect and they are the very same ones for present perfect. This only shows the analogy of the past perfect and the present perfect.

German Plusquamperfekt (pluperfect) is created by the auxiliary verbs *haben* or *sein* in the preterit form + past participle. E.g. *Ich hatte gesagt.* The speaker should be careful because in time clauses, the use of pluperfect changes the

meaning. E.g.: *„Nachdem wir die Arbeit beendet haben, fahren wir nach Hause.“* X *„Nachdem wir die Arbeit beendet hatten, fuhren wir nach Hause“* (Helbig/Buscha, Kurze Deutsche Grammatik für Ausländer 59) *As soon as we finish the work, we will go home. X When we had finished the work, we went home.* This example clearly shows that the German perfect can also have a meaning of future.

1.5.5. English Future Perfect and German Futur II

The future perfect is created by adding will + past infinitive. “We can use the future perfect to say that something will have been completed by a certain time in the future” (Swan/Walter 139). German Futur II is created in a very similar way: verb werden + past infinitive. E.g.: “Morgen wird er die Arbeit beendet haben.” (Helbig/Buscha, Deutsche Grammatik 141) He will have finished the work by tomorrow. This tense fully corresponds to the English Future Perfect.

1.6. Language Acquisition

First language acquisition is acquisition of native language. In the case of bilingual families, there can, of course, be two first languages. Second language acquisition is acquiring an additional language. Every newborn, healthy child is capable of acquiring any language. This means that they have no genetic predisposition for acquiring one specific language. For that reason, there clearly must be some inborn structure which is common for all languages; Chomsky calls this Universal Grammar (Lightbown 1993).

Thanks to acquiring a language, a child also learns social rules to become a member of society - the language is the means of socialization. (Klein 5) The child is exposed to the language everyday and learns its phonology, vocabulary, morphology, syntax. The process of language acquisition is completed in puberty (Klein 10, 24), which means it is a long term matter demanding a lot of time.

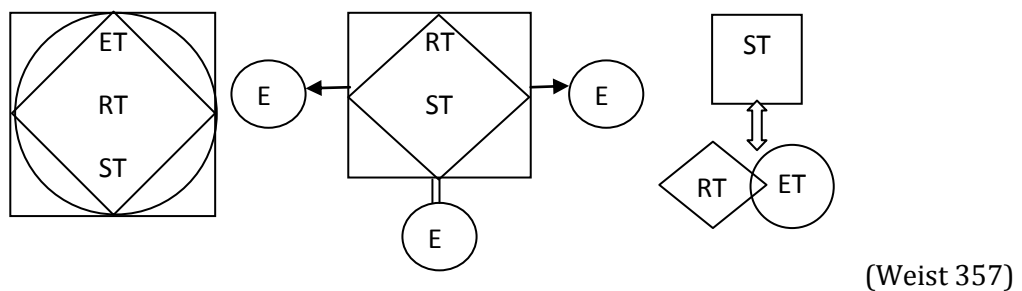
Learning a second language is easier in the sense that a person does not have to start from scratch. But he or she can transfer already acquired structures from their mother tongue into the second language. However, there are many new structures they have to learn. Theoretically, second language acquisition is the same process as first language acquisition but in reality, each of them has different conditions. A child plays with his mother and is exposed to the language every day, while students sit at school learning a foreign language three times a week. The amount of time is not the only difference. For example, children acquire perfect pronunciation of their native language while adult learners usually have an accent. (Klein 24)

1.6.1. First language acquisition – acquisition of temporality

To be able to describe the complex tense system, three time concepts must be introduced: the speech time, event time and reference time concept (Mani 149). The speech time (ST) is the time of the speaker's talk. The event time (ET) is the time of an event which is related to the speech time and the reference time (RT) identifies a time context. The relationships of these concepts vary according to the sequence in which they follow each other. The concepts can happen either previously (\leftarrow), subsequently (\rightarrow) or simultaneously ($=$) to each other (Mani 149). While developing the complex tense system, children come through a sequence of four temporal systems (Weist 356). The first one is called the speech time system, the here-and-now system (Lightbown 14). Children in this period have not yet developed the concept of ET and RT (Bittner 210). The language of children in this period, who are 1 - 1,6 years old (Weist 358), enables them to express statements and requests. When children want someone to do something, they use the imperative. If they wish to express a statement they use the infinitive or indicative. The second time system is called the event time system. At this

stage children are able to comment on situations which happened in the past and situations which are about to happen. They can also distinguish between what is real and unreal, continuous and non-continuous and complete and incomplete. Children at the age of 3 - 4 start to use temporal adverbs and temporal adverbial clauses but they do not use 'before' and 'after', yet (Weist 366). This stage is called the restricted RT system. (Weist 367) In the last stage the RT is now free so this stage is called the Free RT system (Weist 369). This means that children have already developed the ability to distinguish ST, ET and RT as three different points of time. They already use the preposition 'before' and 'after' which shows that children can express the relationships between ST, ET and RT. Even though, a child already at the age of four is capable of producing a grammatically correct sentence, many children at an early school age are still getting 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow' confused (Klein 4).

The following three pictures correspond to the stages of acquisition of temporality. :



The first picture shows the speech time system, where ET, RT and ST are not yet distinct, the child is limited by its perception of here-and-now. In the second one ET is already distinct but RT and ST still remain the same. In the last picture all the concepts are already free.

For acquisition of the present perfect in children's language, the development of RT is necessary. That is why the present perfect appears in the children's language during the last stage. "For the present perfect, RT is simultaneous with ST and ET is prior to RT." (Weist 368) However, according to Weist (368), the RT concept is independent of ST. ET takes place earlier but refers to RT. This can be written as follows: $ET < ST = RT$ (Mani 149). In contrast to acquisition of English perfect forms, which takes place later in the last stage, the German perfect is used by children even earlier than the preterit (Weist, 531). This is logical, because the German perfect is more common than the preterit, so it is easier for children to learn it.

1.6.2. Second language acquisition – acquisition of temporality

For successful communication the speaker and the hearer use their experience from real life which is called knowledge of the world (Lightbown 19). Also situational context is important. Two people can also have some shared information which likewise simplifies their communication. Next they need some time specifying instruments, specifying intervals (e.g. minutes, moments) and a relation between the time points. This is realised through adverbials and adverbial clauses (e.g. yesterday, after, last week). The sequence in which the events occur is denoted by several factors. One of them is the principle of natural order. (Krashen 12) This means that people when talking, spontaneously line up the events in the order they follow each other in real life. E.g.: "Hans got tired and fell asleep." (Klein 127) not "Hans fell asleep and got tired" (Klein 127) The knowledge of the world tells us that people first get tired and then fall asleep, not the other way around. However, this principle cannot be used every time. It also depends on the grammatical structure of the utterance. For example: "Hans fell asleep. Maria got tired." (Klein 127) In this case we are not sure which event

happened first. The events can be grouped into a temporal frame event. (Klein 127) For example, explaining what the speaker did at work, all the activities, which happened in that period, belong to the temporal frame event of 'work'.

2. PRACTICAL PART – Research

2.1. The aim of the research

The aim of the research is to find out what the relationship between knowledge of German and learning English is like. The expectation is that familiarity with the German language helps in learning English. The research is realised through a questionnaire. It focuses on perfect tenses in English. While in German the tenses have a similar form and use as in English, in the Czech language, which is the mother tongue of the respondents, there are no similar forms. For that reason the Czech learners find it difficult to acquire the temporal structure of English. A Czech person is able to divide the stream of time into three time periods: past, present, future. In English the perfect tense, let us say connects two periods of time. For example the present perfect connects the past with the present. Of course that it is possible to express this aspect in the Czech language too, but through different means, for example prefixes. The Czech learners struggle with this difference between the temporal structures of both languages

2.2. The respondents

The respondents are students of English at a university level, which is approximately the C1 level. This advanced level was chosen because these students already have huge amount of experience with the English language and it is expected that they have developed a feel for the English temporal structure and do not only have the usage of tenses memorized. All the respondents are Czech students of the faculty of education at Charles University and all of them have English as their major. The respondents are between the age of 21 and 26 with the average age being 22,5. 72% of the respondents are female. The total amount of respondents is 50 and 31 of them can speak German. Twenty-two

respondents can speak another language beside English and German, and 10 respondents can speak English only.

2.3. The structure of the questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of sentences from the newspapers Guardian and The Independent and some examples are taken from grammar books. It is divided into three parts (see the Questionnaire in Appendices). The first one focuses on the present perfect. Respondents are supposed to chose between the present perfect and the past simple. The second part is aimed at expressing the future. In this exercise there are three possible forms: the present simple, the future simple and the future perfect. The last exercise is aimed at expressing the past. Either the past simple or the past perfect can be filled in. According to the average points per person in each part, the past tenses exercise was the easiest one, the present perfect exercise was in the middle and the exercise on expressing the future scored the least points.

When analysing the questionnaire there was no difference made between the simple and continuous forms because it was not the aim of the research, but differences were made between the perfect and imperfect forms.

1.1. Present perfect versus past simple

The respondents scored 36, 21 points in average in this exercise. Respondents had the biggest trouble with the very first sentence of the questionnaire: "*The gathered trouser hem _____ (appear) on the fashion-forward end of the high street for a while.*" the correct tense is present perfect continuous *has been appearing* since it indicates that it is appearing already for some period of time and it has not finished by now and will probably be appearing in the future, too. Even

though the prepositional phrase *for a while* could help them recognise the correct tense, not even a single respondent realised it. Some of them filled in present perfect simple *has appeared* which was analysed as a correct answer from the reason explained above. However, only 26% of respondents chose perfect tense.

Present perfect appeared also in the following sentence: "*They were styled with a hefty-soled shoe-boot in red. Note: red _____ (establish) itself as the accent colour of next season, appearing at collections including Ann Demeulemeester and Louis Vuitton.*" The past tense in the first sentence might have confused some of the respondents but the majority of them (72%) used present perfect simple correctly since there is no specific time indication relating to the past.

On contrary the next sentence is an example of past simple: *Paul Smith _____ (open) his show with a silver Puffa-style coat that screamed astronaut.* Past simple *opened* is used in this case because it was one action in the past which started another action and does not have any present result. The most of the students (96%) recognized the correct answer. However, the past tense in the relative clause most probably ensured them about the choice.

The sentence "*The Mekong Delta _____ (change) dramatically since tourism _____ (make) a mark there in the mid to late 90s.*" is another case that did not cause much trouble to respondents, since 94% scored the right answer. It is a typical textbook example with the conjunction *since* indicating present perfect. The action started in the past, which is indicated by *in the mid to late 90s*, and has a present result. The ST is time, when the speaker produces the sentence. *The Mekong Delta* is ET and *in the mid to late 90s* is RT. ST>ET>RT In contrast to present perfect where 94% were right, in the subordinate clause with

the past tense *made* 20% of students choose present perfect, even though there is clearly stated indication of time *in the mid to late 90s*, which expresses the past tense.

No troubles were met in the following sentence: "I _____ (not be) to Laos for a while... If anyone _____ (be) recently, I'd welcome your suggestions on travelling here." This is a typical present perfect sentence. It is the same type of sentence like: "*I have never been to Spain*", "*Have you ever been to Prague?*" These are taught at school as example sentences. Students probably automatically chose present perfect because of the prepositional phrase *to Laos*, not because of the adverbial of time *for a while*. Otherwise they would use the present perfect in the very first sentence, too. Even though both sentences are very similar in meaning, the first one scored 92% but the other only 82%.

Another example of present perfect can be found in the following sentence: "*Air Canada's £833 return from London to Goose Bay is a little pricey, but I _____ (get, yet) to the bottom of whether there's an overland option for this leg of the trip.*" Also this one was easy to identify for 78% of respondents as present perfect because of the adverbial *yet*.

In contrast to the previous sentences, in which the present perfect could be identified through typical adverbial, in the following one there was none and it confused half of the respondents (44% were wrong) who preferred past tense. "*The announcement of the departure of Carol Browner, the senior White House energy and climate change adviser, ahead of the State of the Union address _____ (deepen) concerns among environmentalists that Obama is prepared to modify his green agenda to win support from Republicans in Congress and the business community.*" To make the utterance shorter let us say:

'the announcement has deepened the concerns'. The present perfect is used because the departure was announced in the past and has current result, which is: deepened concerns.

"The president _____ (talk) since the beginning of the administration about how important it is to move us to a clean energy economy. He'll talk about it tonight,' she _____ (tell) reporters ahead of the speech." Present perfect in the direct speech is indicated by adverbial *since*. The action started in the past at *the beginning of the administration* and it has present result, which is that we are interested in his ideas and probably his next speech. 78% of respondents were right with the first clause. Past tense in the next sentence is used because the action happened in specific period of time, which is *ahead of the speech*. But it has no present result so present perfect cannot be used in this sentence. Only 6% of students made mistake here.

Most of the respondents found sentences from the article about Prince Harry's bachelor party to be difficult. "Harry, 26, _____ (plan, then) for his 28-year-old brother and their friends to end the day with a barbeque and a trip up a nearby estuary to visit a number of pubs and restaurants only accessible by boat... The couple _____ (make, also) it known they don't want lavish trips abroad while the country is in recovery from recession. " The present perfect is used in both sentences. These sentences do not give any specific periods of time and have present result – the bachelor party is planned and people know that they do not want to waste money during recession. Only 26% in the first sentence and 32% in the second used correct present perfect.

The following sentence was a bit tricky: "The USA space shuttle _____ (return) safely to earth. It _____ (land) in Florida this morning..." Most

of the students used past tense in both cases, but they were right only in the second sentence. In the first one, present perfect should be used because there is no specific period of time, whereas in the other sentence there is an adverbial of time *this morning*. According to Hewings, recent news are introduced by present perfect and followed by more details described in the past tense. The scores for these sentences are 44% and 88%.

Let us have a look at the following sentence: *"Nearly 600 laptops*

_____ (steal - passive) from Ministry of Defence staff over the past five years. However, a spokesperson _____ (insist) that there had been no security problems as none of the computers _____ (hold) secret

information." Present perfect is used in the first clause because the action took past five years and has present result – the notebooks are missing. However, 36% of respondents made a mistake here. They considered it as finished action so they used past tense. On the contrary only 3 respondents made mistake with the verb *insist*. *The spokesperson insisted*, is an action in the past which is already finished and does not have any direct present result. The last sentence had even more correct answers. What the last clause concerns, only one person went wrong with the verb *hold* and used past perfect. Some of the students used incorrect past form for *hold*, instead of *held* they wrote *holded*. However, it was not considered as a mistake since the tense is more important than the form in this questionnaire. However, the past simple is correct because it is obvious that the notebooks held no secret information at the moment of being stolen and the possession of the information does not have any present result.

Another textbook example is a sentence: *"Do you have any matches? I*

_____ (lose) my lighter." Present perfect is used because the loss

happened in unspecified past time period and has present result – the speaker does not have it and needs a light. 82% of students had this sentence right. If the speaker wished to express, that the action is separated from the present he or she could use ‘I lost my lighter’. However, in this case it is clearly indicated by the prior question that the past action refers to the present.

1.2.Future perfect versus future simple and present simple

This exercise on expressing future was the least successful one. 33,56 points in average were scored per person.

The first sentence of this exercise is: “By the time you _____ (*get*) home I will have cleaned the house from top to bottom.” Present simple is used in the first clause because it is a time clause. Not too many problems were found here since 84% answers were right, nevertheless the remaining 19% did not recognize the clause as a time clause and used future tense.

Future perfect is used in the following sentence: “Most people _____ (*forget*) the fire by now.” Some respondents used present perfect even though this tense was not in the options. However, it shows they wanted to express the perfect aspect which is in fact correct, because the action of forgetting happened between the event of fire and the present and it has present result – people do not remember the fire. If we wish to express it by the following: $ET < RT = ST$. *Will* gives the utterance a little bit of a different meaning. *Will* expresses high level of certainty. The speaker wants to share that he is very sure about the statement.

Unfortunately, many students, 40%, were wrong with this sentence.

Even more students, 46%, made mistake in a typically future perfect sentence: “I am confident that I _____ (*finish*) the report before the end of the week.”

Future perfect is used because the action of finishing the report will be completed

before specific period of time – end of the week. The relationships between the time concepts are: $ST < ET = RT$.

The following sentence is: “*I think I _____ (take) an umbrella in case it _____ (rain).*” *Will* is used in the first sentence because it expresses the decision of the speaker at the moment. 88 % used *will* in the first sentence but 26 % used it in the second clause as well. The correct tense in the subordinate clause is present simple because it starts with *in case* which in this clause indicates potential purpose (Dušková 637).

In the next sentence “*Suppose we _____ (miss) the bus how _____ (get, we) home?*” present simple is used in the first clause. It starts with *suppose* and we speak of a future possible event (Hewings 20). Also past tense (*suppose we missed the bus*) could be used but it was not an option. In the main clause there is future simple since it is neutral future. Present simple was also used by 38 % but according to Carter and McCarthy (633) is present simple used for future with fixed events, for example arrangements and schedules. Quite a lot of students were not sure about this sentence; they wrote future verb form and then corrected it for present simple and vice versa. However, 66% of all answers were right. The scored points in the subordinate clause and the main clause were more or less the same. The main clause scored 62%.

In contrast to that sentence student usually found next sentence easy: “*What if the train _____ (be) late? Where shall I meet you then?*” It is a conditional clause so present simple is used, there again, past simple *was* could be used but it was not an option. This was no trouble for the respondents; 78% of them found out that it was a conditional clause and used the correct present simple tense. However, some of the students might have used present simple

because of the connection with *the train*, therefore present simple is used in connection with time tables. E.g.: "*The train arrives at 5 o'clock*". Nevertheless, it is only my personal supposition.

The sentence "*The sun _____ (rise) at 5.16 tomorrow*" describes an event which happens regularly, the knowledge of the world tells the speaker that the sun rises every day and *tomorrow* is no exception. Moreover, the speaker tells the exact time of the sunrise, so he had probably read about it in newspapers or heard it in the news, so he claims it as a fact. So present simple form *rises* is correct. However, adverbial of time *at 5.16 tomorrow* confused 30% of students, who used *will rise*.

Future perfect is used in the following sentence: "Even by the time he _____ (reach) the infant school, the child _____ (develop) some attitudes." The subordinate clause is a time clause, so the present simple is used. The main clause expresses action which will be completed before the period of time which is indicated by the time clause. For that reason future perfect must be used. Unfortunately, only 60% of the respondents used the correct tense in the first clause and only 52% in the second clause. Students used future simple in the time clause and did not realise the temporal relationships between these two events, which are: $ST < ET < RT$. Surprisingly, the adverbial of time *by the time* did not help them to come up with the future perfect.

Future simple is used in the following clauses: "*The sun _____ (set) in a minute. The temperature _____ (drop) abruptly...*" The speaker is talking about an action which will happen in a very near future. About half of the respondents (52%) used the correct future simple in both clauses. The other half used present simple.

The sentence “By next January we _____ (live) here for ten years” is another typical textbook example. This time students scored much better since 86% of them were right. So it was surprising that the next sentence: “The weather forecast says that the rain _____ (clear) by the morning ...” was the second most difficult question. It has only 16 correct answers, which is 32%. The future perfect is used because there is an action – rain and there is a time indication - morning. The speaker wants to express that the action will be completed before morning, so he or she uses future perfect.

In the following clause there is a future simple: “...and tomorrow _____ (be) dry.” There was no problem since only one person made a mistake here.

1.3.Past simple versus past perfect

The last part, where past simple or perfect were to be chosen from, was according to the correct answers the easiest one.

In the first sentence “When I first _____ (see) the old house I _____ (move, just) to the area.” there are two actions: the speaker moved to the area and the speaker saw that house. The speaker chooses to talk about seeing the house at first so he has to make clear that he moved to the area already, before he saw that house. So he uses past simple in the first clause and present perfect in the second one. The relationships between the temporal concepts are: $ET < RT < ST$. The first clause did not cause any troubles (47 right answers, 94%) but in the other 32% of respondents used also past simple. The speaker could use past simple in both clauses if he or she said: “I moved to the area and then I saw that house.” However, in the sentence there is also an adverbial *just*, which is typically used with present perfect, so also with past

perfect. The speaker also wants to express the present result for them in that time. He or she had just moved, so he or she was living there and saw that house. In contrast to the preceding sentence, the following one was nearly hundred per cent right. Only one person in the first and two persons in the second clause were wrong. In the next sentence “*As Geoff was introduced to Mrs Snape, he _____ (realize) that he _____ (meet) her before.*” again, there are two actions. Geoff met Mrs. Snape and when he was introduced to her he realised it. It is seen from the time perspective of the moment he was introduced to her. So the verb realise is in past simple form. The speaker uses past perfect to indicate that they had met before the moment of his realizing occurred. The relationships between the time concepts are: $ET < RT < ST$.

In the sentence: “*The boy _____ (tell) me that he _____ (lose) his train ticket and _____ (not know) how he would get home.*” there are three actions: the boy lost his ticket, he told it to the speaker and did not know what to do. All respondents used correct past simple for *tell*, only 10% of them did not recognize the past perfect in the next clause. 88% of student used correct past simple for the verb *know*. However, the rest of the students used past perfect. Which eventually could be used in the following situation: the boy lost the ticket and did not know what to do and then he told it to the speaker. But this would mean that the boy already knows what to do. In that case the boy would be only telling him a story that had happened to him. However, logically we suppose that the boy talked to the speaker because he did not know what to do at the moment and probably wanted some help so *didn't know* is correct. For the verb lose past perfect is used. It is seen from the time perspective of the moment the boy told him. The boy had lost his ticket which means he did not have it anymore

- the lost had present result for him. Also it happened before he told it to the speaker so past perfect is used.

The following sentence comes from The Guardian: "*Targets were set for child poverty, help was given to pensioners; but politicians _____ (tackle) the inequality that _____ (grow) so much under Margaret Thatcher.*" For *tackle* 94% of the respondents used correct past simple but nobody used negation, probably because I did not indicate the negation there and possibly they might have not understood the exact meaning of the verb. In the subordinate clause there is past perfect used because it is a past event which happened before later event. The inequality had grown under Margaret Thatcher but politicians who came after her did not tackle it. The action of growth of inequality happened before the time, when the politicians were supposed to solve it. It had present result for the politicians – the inequality was large. 74% of students chose the correct option for *grow*.

The sentence "*I'd just turned 40 and _____ (be) with the same partner for 20 years.*" is similar to a typical textbook sentence but it comes from a newspaper article. In the textbooks there are usually sentences of this type: "I have been living here for five years.", "I have been married to my husband for 30 years." These sentences refer to present tense but the analogy is obvious. However, the past perfect is used because speaker wants to explain that the action was finished by the time he is referring to. It does not mean that he finished the relationship with the partner but it means that at that time the number of years they were together reached 20. To know the context of this sentence, the speaker is talking about the time when he was told he had cancer and these two pieces of information give us some more details of his life at that crucial moment. We find out that at that time he had a partner with whom he had

spent last 20 years and that he had celebrated his 40th birthday. 86% of the students were right with their choice. The first clause I'd just turned 40 probably ensured them in their choice of past perfect in the next sentence.

The following sentence has lot of gaps to fill in: "I first _____ (meet) him when I _____ (be) assistant editor of the Sun because he _____ (write) a weekly column and I _____ (be) his nominal

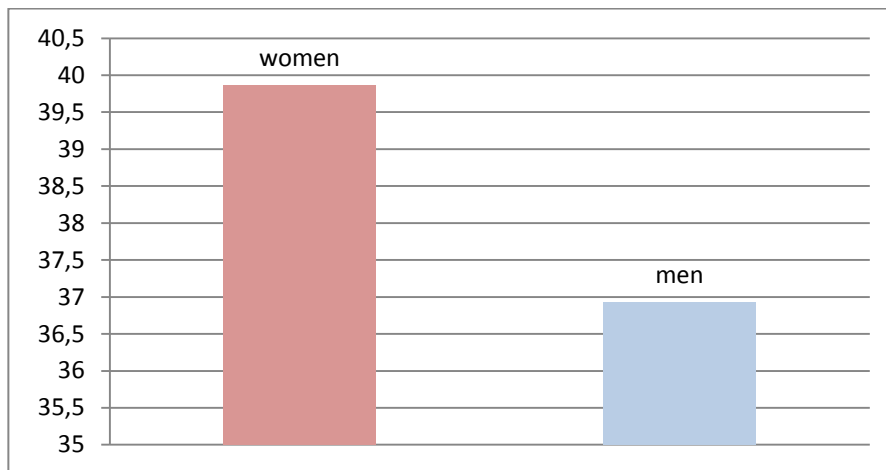
boss." all these clauses have past simple form because all the events happened in the same period of time. There is no sequence how the events followed. None of them were hundred per cent right but the only bigger problem for respondents was the verb *write*. The speaker wants to express that his employee wrote the weekly column regularly not that he had written a weekly column before he became his boss. The past simple forms of both verbs signify that these two events were happening simultaneously. However, 30% of students used past perfect. The first clause scored 84%, the second one 94%, and the last one 90%.

Years later, after we both _____ (leave) the Sun, I _____ (appear) regularly on his programme on Talk Radio UK (since renamed TalkSport) and we _____ (renew) our friendship. The only past perfect is used in the first clause, in the other two clauses there is past simple.

There are three events which followed in this way: they both left the Sun, after some years the speaker appeared on his former employee's programme and they renewed their friendship. Because it is not written in this sequence, the speaker must use past perfect for *leave*, which was used by only 46% of the respondents. The other two did not cause any trouble. The second clause scored 90% and both the third and fourth one 92%.

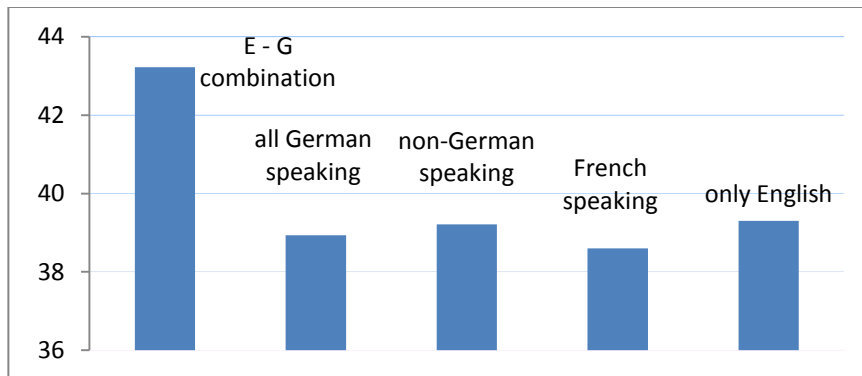
1.4.Results

The questionnaire contains 52 questions and for each correct answer the respondent gets a point. The maximum of points is then 52. The average amount of points per person is 39,04. Concerning the sex the female respondents reached higher scores. The following table shows that the women scored approximately 3 points more than the men, in average. From that we can assume, that since there were more female respondents, the results are better than if the amount of men was bigger.

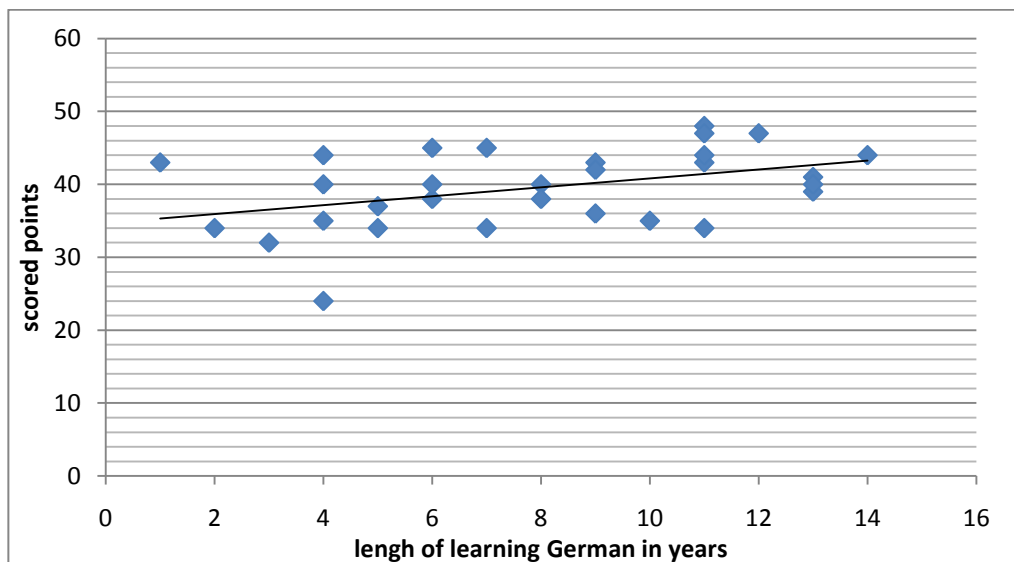


When comparing the scored points, there is only a small difference between students who claim to speak German, meaning not necessarily studying German as their major at university, and who do not, which is 0,25 points. Also the third most spoken language among these respondents, French, was considered as well, but unfortunately also in this case there was no significant difference between French speaking and German speaking respondents, only 0,34 points. Also the difference between people who speak only English and no other language and the respondents who speak at least one other language, was very small. In contrast to that, students of English and German, both as their major at university, scored significantly more than the others. There are 9 of them, which is 18% of all

respondents, and they scored 43,22 points in average per person, which is 4,18 points above the overall average. The following table shows the differences in points reached by groups divided according to the language they speak.



Also the length of learning the German language was considered. The following table shows that there is a tendency: the longer the respondents learn (or learned) German the better score they achieved. From this table it is obvious that the difference between the students who have been learning German for one year and those who have been learning it for 14 years is 8 points.



1.5. The influence of knowledge of German on learning

English

Thirty-one respondents claimed to speak German and 17 of them stated how learning English and German influenced each language. Most of them, 59%, marked vocabulary as the most interfering aspect, for 41% of them it was grammar. Four students claimed that it was nothing. One person also indicated idioms. One student of English and German combination added linguistic disciplines and explained: “the knowledge of linguistic disciplines helps me in the other language (syntax, ...) $E \leftrightarrow G$ ”. That might be the reason why the students of English and German combination were significantly better than the others. Learning both languages and their linguistic disciplines probably helps to understand the structure of each of them and probably to somehow link the knowledge together. It could be that the good results are also connected with the length of time of learning German; all of them have been learning German for more than 6 years, but in average approximately 10 years.

Apart from the respondent with linguistic experience, others also shared some more specific experiences with learning English and German. Three of them agreed with the example sentence: “Thanks to knowledge of German Plusquamperfekt I understood the English Past perfect easily.” This experience corresponds to interference of grammar. Two students also expressed negative experience: “Sometimes I mix the languages (I use English words in German and vice versa)” and “Learning German confuses me in learning English vocabulary and word order.”

CONCLUSION

In my bachelor thesis I describe the history of the English and German language focusing on verbs, to show how similar the two languages are, since they have a common ancestor. I explain and compare their verbs and usage of tenses. First and second language acquisition is introduced and I focus on the acquisition of temporality. My research is realised through the questionnaire, which is focused on the perfect and imperfect tenses. It is put together from sentences from English newspapers and some examples are taken from grammar books. The questionnaire is filled in by students who have English as their major at university. My hypothesis was that knowledge of German positively influences learning English. This appears to be partly true. The results do not prove that German speaking respondents achieve better results than other language speaking people. What the results prove is the fact, that among the German speaking students, the length of their learning German influences their results. The longer they had been learning the better results they scored. Who appeared to be significantly better than the others, were students of English and German combination. They scored 4,18 over the average. 59% of students claim that vocabulary is the most interfering aspect between the two languages and 41% claim it to be grammar. The high score of students of English and German combination can be explained by the fact stated by one of the respondents: "the knowledge of linguistic disciplines helps me in the other language (syntax, ...) E↔G".

The research clearly shows that the knowledge of German has an influence on learning English. The results of this thesis can be useful for students of English

and German. Thanks to the similarities in the history and grammar of both, the students can realise how affinitive the two languages are.

This thesis also helps students of English to refresh some of their tense grammar knowledge, since the research has shown that not even C1 students are sure about English tenses yet, so they can learn from mistakes the respondents made in their exercises. The explanations given for each grammatical phenomenon hopefully make it clear, why the particular tense is used. This thesis might also be an inspiration for other more detailed research.

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THE LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Questionnaire
2. Respondents
3. Results

Questionnaire

English Perfect Forms - bachelor thesis questionnaire

Which combination do you study? _____

How old are you? _____

What is your sex? M/F

Do you speak German? YES/NO

If yes:

When did you start learning German? And English? _____

How long have you been learning each of the two? _____

In which aspect do you think that German helps you in learning English and vice versa?

a) vocabulary b) grammar c) idioms d) other _____

Do you have any specific experience in learning German and English you would like to share?

(e.g.: thanks to knowledge of German Plusquamperfekt I understood English past perfect easily)

Do you speak any other languages? Which? _____

Present perfect or past simple? Choose the more appropriate tense for the verbs given.

The gathered trouser hem _____ (appear) on the fashion-forward end of the high street for a while.

They were styled with a hefty-soled shoe-boot in red. Note: red _____ (establish) itself as the accent colour of next season, appearing at collections including Ann Demeulemeester and Louis Vuitton.

Paul Smith _____ (open) his show with a silver Puffa-style coat that screamed astronaut.

"The Mekong Delta _____ (change) dramatically since tourism _____ (make) a mark there in the mid to late 90s."

I _____ (not be) to Laos for a while... If anyone _____ (be) recently, I'd welcome your suggestions on travelling here.

Air Canada's £833 return from London to Goose Bay is a little pricey, but I _____ (get, yet) to the bottom of whether there's an overland option for this leg of the trip.

The announcement of the departure of Carol Browner, the senior White House energy and climate change adviser, ahead of the State of the Union address _____ (deepen) concerns among environmentalists that Obama is prepared to modify his green agenda to win support from Republicans in Congress and the business community.

"The president _____ (talk) since the beginning of the administration about how important it is to move us to a clean energy economy. He'll talk about it tonight," she _____ (tell) reporters ahead of the speech.

Harry, 26, _____ (plan, then) for his 28-year-old brother and their friends to end the day with a barbeque and a trip up a nearby estuary to visit a number of pubs and restaurants only accessible by boat.

The couple _____ (make, also) it known they don't want lavish trips abroad while the country is in recovery from recession.

The USA space shuttle _____ (return) safely to earth. It _____ (land) in Florida this morning...

Nearly 600 laptops _____ (steal - passive) from Ministry of Defence staff over the past five years. However, a spokesperson _____ (insist) that there had been no security problems as none of the computers _____ (hold) secret information.

Do you have any matches? I _____ (lose) my lighter.

Present simple, future simple or perfect? Choose the more appropriate tense for the verbs given.

By the time you _____ (get) home I will have cleaned the house from top to bottom.

Most people _____ (forget) the fire by now.

I am confident that I _____ (finish) the report before the end of the week.

I think I _____ (take) an umbrella in case it _____ (rain).

Suppose we _____ (miss) the bus how _____ (get) we home?

What if the train _____ late? Where shall I meet you then?

The sun _____ (rise) at 5.16 tomorrow.

Even by the time he _____ (reach) the infant school, the child _____ (develop) some attitudes.

The sun _____ (set) in a minute. The temperature _____ (drop) abruptly...

By next January we _____ (live) here for ten years.

The weather forecast says that the rain _____ (clear) by the morning and tomorrow _____ (be) dry.

Past simple or past perfect? Choose the more appropriate tense for the verbs given.

When I first _____ (see) the old house I _____ (move, just) to the area.

As Geoff was introduced to Mrs Snape, he _____ (realize) that he _____ (meet) her before.

The boy _____ (tell) me that he _____ (lose) his train ticket and _____ (not know) how he would get home.

Targets were set for child poverty, help was given to pensioners; but politicians _____ (tackle) the inequality that _____ (grow) so much under Margaret Thatcher.

I'd just turned 40 and _____ (be) with the same partner for 20 years.

I first _____ (meet) him when I _____ (be) assistant editor of the Sun because he _____ (write) a weekly column and I _____ (be) his nominal boss.

Years later, after we both _____ (leave) the Sun, I _____ (appear) regularly on his programme on Talk Radio UK (since renamed TalkSport) and we _____ (renew) our friendship.

