

KLÁRA ELIÁŠKOVÁ

ORCID 0000-0003-0799-5939

EVA HÁJKOVÁ

ORCID 0000-0003-4949-1368

Charles University

CZECH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH A DIFFERENT MOTHER TONGUE IN CZECHIA

ABSTRACT. Eliášková Klára, Hájková Eva, *Czech Language Instruction for Students with a Different Mother Tongue in Czechia* [Nauka języka czeskiego w Czechach dla uczniów posługujących się innym językiem ojczystym] *Studia Edukacyjne* no. 75, 2024, Poznań 2024, pp. 149-163. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 1233-6688. Submitted: 20.01.2025. Accepted: 06.03.2025. DOI: 10.14746/se.2024.75.9

The aim of our study is to examine the instruction of the Czech language for students with a different mother tongue (DMT students). We provide a brief overview of how language instruction is implemented in Czechia and, based on a research probe into teaching practices, identify the specific aspects and critical challenges. Through a case study, we focus on illustrating suitable methodological approaches for Czech language classes for DMT students, using practical examples to underscore the critical need for enhanced support within communication-oriented language instruction.

Key words: students with a different mother tongue; communicative model of language instruction; support measures for DMT students; methodological approaches to language instruction

Terminology

Students with a different mother tongue can now be found in nearly every Czech primary school classroom. To begin, let us first discuss the use of terminology. Twenty years ago, the term ‘foreign student’ was commonly used. But who exactly qualifies as a foreigner? For instance, children born in Czechia to Vietnamese parents who are legally and permanently settled in Czechia are officially registered as Czech citizens under Czech law, even if they may not speak Czech. In Vietnamese community practice, children are often sent to rel-

atives in Vietnam around the age of three to immerse in Vietnamese culture, lifestyle, and language. After the age of five, they return to Czechia, rejoin their parents, and enrol in Czech school at six. By this time, any Czech they may have known is often forgotten during their stay in Vietnam. Officially, they are not considered foreigners, yet they do not speak Czech. That is just one example. Today, Czech school classrooms include many children whose mother tongue is not Czech but a variety of other languages: Slavic, Germanic, Romance, and, besides Vietnamese, other Asian languages as well. This situation seems fully comparable to those found in other countries. Among experts involved in the education of these children, discussions continue about the best term to be used to describe this group. It is obvious that the term *foreign student* is entirely inadequate, as it is factually incorrect. There are also objections to the use of the term *mother tongue* (Adam, 2006-2007, pp. 244-246), since in many cases we might equally refer to the father tongue. References to national language are also problematic, especially given the complexities of defining the term 'nation'. Increasingly, there is support for the term 'first language', meaning the language into which one is born. However, this language may be a unique family microsocioclect, which may either align with or differ significantly from the microsocioclects of other families within the same social or national community. The term mother tongue is used largely out of habit, even though we understand, or at least suspect, that it is not entirely accurate. While *student with a different mother tongue* (DMT student) has been used in the discussed context for some time and is widely accepted by educators, it may soon need reconsideration. Increasingly, terms like *student from a multilingual/plurilingual background* (and, by extension, *plurilingual student*, etc.) are appearing in various materials. However, even this term faces challenges, particularly in defining and understanding bilingualism. Any negative categorisation of this group of students, or emphasis on their otherness or difference (e.g., as students with insufficient language knowledge, a different language, etc.), is considered inappropriate. Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that this group requires definition and designation, at least for legislative purposes, as they are recipients of support within the educational system, as outlined in official documents from the Czech Ministry of Education. In materials from key organisations that support these students and their educators, the term 'multilingual student' is most frequently used. Meanwhile, on the website of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, nearly all of the previously mentioned terms describing this group are used interchangeably, including 'foreign student' and 'DMT student'. Since 2021¹, the term 'children/

¹ Collective of authors, *Sbírka zákonů ČR – Vyhláška č. 271/2021, kterou se mění vyhláška č. 14/2005 Sb., o předškolním vzdělávání, ve znění pozdějších předpisů, a vyhláška č. 48/2005 Sb., o základ-*

students with insufficient knowledge of the Czech language' has also been introduced. This term, however, extends to students outside the categories of multilingualism or plurilingualism, as it encompasses monolingual students who may experience communication challenges for various reasons. This is undoubtedly an unsustainable, perhaps even alarming, situation. While we recognise that the term 'DMT student' is problematic (see above), we will use it in our case study, as it remains the established terminology in Czech language instruction (with application in other European countries as well).

Students with a Different Mother Tongue in the Context of Special Language Education

It should be noted that the current foundational document guiding schools and teachers in their instructional activities, the Framework Educational Programme for Primary Education², outlines expected outcomes within the educational area of Language and Language Communication, specifically in the subject Czech Language and Literature, that students are expected to achieve within a set timeframe. For students facing certain disadvantages, including DMT students, a more flexible set of expectations applies. This is specifically outlined as the Minimum Recommended Level for adjusting expected outcomes as part of support measures.

In our study, we focus on a group of students whose mother tongue is not Czech but who must learn the language to successfully participate in Czech primary education. Teachers often identify limited proficiency in the language of instruction as the most significant challenge in language instruction for DMT students (Nowosielski et al., 2021). According to S. 16 of the Education Act³, students in the Czech Republic who lack or have insufficient knowledge of Czech as the language of instruction may be granted support measures at Levels 1 to 3⁴. Support measures provide assistance

ním vzdělávání a některých náležitostech plnění povinné školní docházky, ve znění pozdějších předpisů [Collection of Laws of the Czech Republic – Decree No. 271/2021, which amends Decree No. 14/2005 Coll., on pre-school education, as amended, and Decree No. 48/2005 Coll., on primary education and certain requirements for the fulfilment of compulsory school attendance, as amended]. Tiskárna Ministerstva vnitra ČR. Prague 2021, pp. 2818-2820.

² Collective of authors, *Rámcové vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání* [Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education]. Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports of the Czech Republic, Prague 2023.

³ Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the Education Act), as amended. Online. 2004. Available at: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2004-561>; [cited: 2024-10-24].

⁴ The full range of support measures encompasses Levels 1 through 5.

for teachers working with students whose education requires varying degrees of modification to the instructional process. The primary goal of these adjustments is to create equitable educational conditions for students who may face mild challenges or significant difficulties due to factors such as lack of school readiness, diverse life circumstances, or distinct cultural backgrounds from which they enter the educational system⁵. For DMT students, Level 1 support measures primarily include the development of a pedagogical support plan, the adaptation of teaching methods (in this case, for Czech language instruction), and effective pedagogical intervention. These support measures can be implemented in teaching without requiring a special assessment from a specialised institution, such as a school counselling centre. At Level 2, students are entitled to three additional hours of Czech language instruction per week (up to 120 hours per school year), the option to establish an individual educational plan, adjustments to assessment methods, modifications to the curriculum, and adaptations to the organisation and methods of instruction. Students are also entitled to special textbooks and other didactic or specially adapted teaching aids (e.g., dictionaries, etc.). At Level 3, the additional hours increase to a maximum of 200 per school year. Beyond the provisions of Level 2 support, students may receive pedagogical assistance or, in some cases, have their primary education extended by one year⁶. Students eligible for support measures at any level (1 through 5) are classified in Czechia as students with special educational needs (SEN students). The classification implies that DMT students may be considered SEN students within the Czech education system. They fall into the category of students from different cultural backgrounds (a total of 6,212 students in the 2023/2024 academic year) and different life circumstances (a total of 10,337 students in 2023/2024), including those who meet both criteria (a total of 3,000 students in 2023/2024)⁷. In the 2023/2024 academic year, a total

⁵ Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports of the Czech Republic, *Podpůrná opatření [Support measures]*, online. Available at: <https://msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/podpurna-opatreni#o-tazka1>; [cited: 2024-10-14].

⁶ This measure is suitable for DMT students who began their education in the Czech Republic only in the 9th grade, by which the primary education in the Czech Republic concludes. These students lack sufficient knowledge of the Czech language to participate functionally in the instructional process. META INCLUSIVE SCHOOL. *Jazyková podpora na ZŠ (dle § 16 ŠZ) [Language support at primary school, according to S. 16 of the Education Act]*. Online. Available at: <https://inkluzivniskola.cz/jazykova-podpora-dle-paragrafu-16/>; [cited: 2024-10-14].

⁷ STATIS – Statistical Information System of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. *Statistická ročenka školství – výkonové ukazatele školního roku 2023/2024 – Základní vzdělávání [Education Statistical Yearbook – Performance Indicators for the 2023/2024 Academic Year – Primary Education]*. Online. Available at: <https://statis.msmt.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>; [cited: 2024-10-14].

of 19,549 students in this category were enrolled in primary schools in the Czech Republic⁸.

In the language instruction for DMT students, challenges are particularly evident in mastering Czech spelling and grammar. These students frequently struggle with lexical spelling – such as the use of “ú”, “ů”, and spelling after hard, soft, and ambiguous consonants – which in Czech has historical origins and is regulated by numerous rules, more so than in other languages. Additionally, morphological and syntactic spelling is governed by multiple rules that students must memorise and learn to apply. Significant challenges also arise in the phonetic-phonological domain (such as understanding the relationship between sounds/phonemes and letters/graphemes) and in the lexical-semantic domain (including identifying word boundaries in writing, maintaining vowel length, and classifying phonemes and vowels). Students face further difficulties in lexicology (word structure, related words, vocabulary expansion methods, prefixes, prepositions, and shifts in word or phrase meanings), morphology (parts of speech, grammatical categories, and forming word structures through declension and conjugation), and syntax (especially punctuation in simple sentences and complex sentences, word order, sentence components, and subordinate clauses). There is indeed a considerable amount to learn, as Czech language instruction in Czech schools places a strong emphasis on descriptive grammar.

Recent research in modern didactics of native language instruction reveals that a pronounced emphasis on teaching descriptive grammar (Awramiuk, 2019, pp. 88-100) persists, not only in Czech primary schools but also in other European educational systems (Štěpáník et al., 2019), often at the expense of developing communication skills. Within this, let us say, traditional approach to language teaching, the list of language instruction areas that are challenging for DMT students (see above) represents nearly two-thirds of the curriculum. In these areas, DMT students often struggle to perform adequate-

⁸ However, the largest group of SEN students in Czechia consists of students with specific developmental learning disorders (LD). *“Learning disorders are an umbrella term for a diverse group of disorders that manifest in marked difficulties in acquiring and using skills such as speaking, understanding spoken language, reading, writing, mathematical reasoning, or counting. These disorders are inherent to the affected individual and are assumed to involve dysfunction of the central nervous system. Although a learning disorder may occur concurrently with other forms of disability (such as sensory impairments, intellectual disabilities, social and emotional disorders), or alongside other environmental factors (such as cultural differences, inadequate or inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), it is not a direct result of such disabilities or adverse factors”* (Washington, National Institute of Health, 1980, in Z. Matějček, *Dyslexie: specifické poruchy čtení [Dyslexia: Specific Reading Disorders]*, H&H, Jinočany, 1995, p. 24). For statistical comparison, we note that in the 2023/2024 academic year, a total of 50,982 students with learning disorders (LD) were registered in mainstream primary schools, and 745 students in special primary schools, amounting to a total of 51,727 students with LD across the Czech Republic.

ly, whether temporarily or over an extended period. It is also worth noting that the curriculum described above often poses challenges even for native Czech speaking students, i.e., those without special educational needs, and for students with specific learning disorders. These classes are attended by DMT students who, despite having a different mother tongue, are expected to learn, alongside native Czech-speaking peers, to linguistically analyse the Czech language in language lessons – even without foundational knowledge of Czech language structure or broader semantic understanding. Even though native Czech-speaking students have acquired the language naturally, even they encounter situations where they face considerable difficulty in mastering the rules, algorithms, or thematic blocks of language instruction.

An insufficient command of the language of instruction naturally limits DMT students in this linguistic analysis as well. Since descriptive grammar and its mastery are central components in assessing student performance, as previously noted, the resulting evaluation of DMT students is often problematic, unfavourable, and ultimately demotivating.

Communication-oriented Instruction as a Functional Solution

In light of the above observations and recent validated findings in language instruction research, it is important to note that the inefficacy of traditional grammar instruction has prompted changes and led many countries to explore new approaches to language instruction. The situation is particularly concerning because a significant proportion of DMT students are eligible only for Level 1 support measures (see above), meaning they use standard didactic resources designed for native Czech-speaking primary school students (primarily a language textbook and workbook). If these didactic materials continue to predominantly contain tasks that focus on acquiring grammatical knowledge without applying it in communicative practice, students will experience setbacks, and their progress will be slow. To illustrate, we provide an example from a Czech language textbook:

Exercise 4 provides an example of the types of activities offered by a Czech language textbook used in schools. We see a typical example of completely unsuitable exercises, which not only fail to meet the needs of DMT students but are also problematic for native Czech-speaking students, as they entirely disregard the requirement for a communicative approach to Czech language instruction. The mere fact that exercises of this type always prioritise grammatical aspects first, completely detached from the meaning of the text, and that the task often only vaguely points toward communication – frequently

4. Přečtete si, jak své první školní ráno prožíval Olda. Doplněte chybějící písmena ve slovech, pravopis zdůvodněte.

Záříjové ráno

Prvn_ školn_ den volal do oken: „Vstávat, d__ti, hola, konec prázdn__n, škola volá!“ Olda, zvaný „B__stré očko“, náčeln__k kmene Medv__dí tlapa, zaboř__l hlavu hloub__ji do polštáře a přes uš__ si přetáhl deku, ab__ ho n__c neruš__lo v boj__ s vetřelc__ z Kraj__ny zapadajíc__ho slunce.

Oldova starš__ sestra J__tka __plně přeruš__la vřavu indiánského boje pron__kavým hlasem. „Tak d__lej, hošánku, máš čtvrt na osm a ještě ses neum__l a nenasn__dal.“ A tak náčelník B__stré očko musel přeruš__t boj.

V osm hod__n v__tal na schodech do školy v__m__dleného žáka Oldř__cha Kadavého známý hlas zvonku a školn__k Vopršálek se káravě pod__val na hodink___. Co on m__že v__dět o starostech indiánského náčelníka...

(Václav Fischer, časopis Sluníčko; upraveno)

a) Vysvětlíte význam slov *vetřelec*, *vřava*, *káravě*.
 b) Vyhledejte slova příbuzná ke slovu *škola*.
 c) Vyprávějte, jak probíhalo vaše první ráno tohoto školního roku.
 d) Uvažujte, jak asi trávil Olda prázdniny.
 e) Zazpívejte si písničku Září (HV 4, str. 9).




Fig. 1. Sample exercises from a 4th grade Czech language textbook (Doležalová, 2015, p. 5)

Přepis zadání úkolu z učebnice českého jazyka viz Fig. 1 (See the transcription of the assignment of the language exercise from the mother tongue textbook – see Fig. 1:

4. Read about Olda's first morning at school. Fill in the missing letters and explain the spelling.

September morning

The first day of school called through the window: "Wake up, children, hey, summer's over, school is calling!" Olda, nicknamed Sharp Eye, the chief of the Bear Paw tribe, buried his head deeper into the pillow and pulled a blanket over his ears so that nothing would disturb him in his fight with the intruders from the Land of the Setting Sun.

Olda's older sister Jitka cut through the turmoil of the Indian fight with her piercing voice. "Come on, little man, it's already a quarter past seven, and you still haven't washed up or had breakfast!" And so Chief Sharp Eye had to stop the fight.

At eight o'clock the familiar voice of the bell greeted the freshly washed pupil Oldřich Kadavý on the school steps and the schoolmaster Vopršálek glanced reproachfully at his watch. What would he know about the troubles of an Indian chief...

(Václav Fischer, Sluníčko magazine; adapted)

- Explain the meaning of the words *intruder*, *turmoil*, *reproachfully*.
- Find related words for the word *school*.
- Tell us how was your first morning of this school year.
- Imagine how Olda might have spent his summer vacation.
- Sing the song *September* (Music textbook, p. 9).

limiting itself to commenting on factual information even when the topic could allow for more meaningful discussion – is problematic. Due to its visual layout – missing letters and the way spaces are marked – the main text for exercises (a–e) can be challenging even for native Czech-speaking students, making reading considerably more difficult. For DMT students, this layout can render the text almost unreadable. A DMT student will get completely lost in this exercise. The text of the exercise is disproportionately long, making it difficult for the student to stay focused and understand its meaning. Additionally, the student's reading experience is repeatedly interrupted by the need to justify missing spelling in incomplete words, whose meanings are often unclear. The core issue with this exercise for DMT students lies in the instructions, which require them to handle two tasks simultaneously: understanding the text (i.e., reading comprehension) and applying spelling rules. In addition, below the exercise are several questions and tasks that a DMT student must first assess to determine whether they relate to the main exercise text. All of this also requires a certain amount of time – certainly more than a native Czech-speaking student would need. As a result, a DMT student often not only struggles to understand exactly what they are supposed to do but also frequently falls behind the pace of the class. Explaining the meaning of less common words in Task (a) is manageable only for a student who has already achieved a very strong command of Czech, and the same is true for identifying related words in Task (b). A DMT student gets the first real opportunity to succeed only in Task (c), provided the teacher allows enough time for spoken expression.

A fundamental requirement of the communicative approach in teaching is that instructional content be presented in a genuinely communicative way; for a DMT student, this primarily consists in focusing on achieving communicative effectiveness. Simply put, the assessment should consider not only what is correct or incorrect but also what is effective or ineffective in interpersonal communication.

An opportunity for a DMT student lies in capturing their spontaneous expression. Practising written expression is also advisable, even if the student's proficiency in the language of instruction is not yet fully developed. However, it is essential for students to practise expressing themselves in writing so that they do not develop a reluctance towards writing in the language they are learning.

To illustrate, we present a communication-oriented methodological approach to a language exercise for a DMT student, enabling students to experience success in language learning. Unlike the example from the textbook above, this approach focuses on developing communication skills instead of grammar spelling skills.

At the beginning of the school year, the student's proficiency in written expression should be assessed, including letter formation, vocabulary development, declension and conjugation, as well as the ability to form sentences and compound sentences. This essentially involves reviewing subject matter covered in the previous year. The needed information can be gathered through a variety of language and composition tasks (e.g. transcribing a poem, answering questions about a specific text, or creating questions related to the text, etc.). In our illustrative example, we present a cohesive written piece on the topic: *What I Did Over the Summer Holidays*, created by a DMT student based on the assigned topic. The key is that the student can draw from their own authentic experience (i.e. summer holiday memories). To guide students in creating their own written piece, we use a three-step methodological approach:

Phase 1: Creation – The student writes spontaneously on the topic, based on their personal experience. The focus is primarily on content, so there is no need to check correct grammar spelling at this stage.

Phase 2: Teacher Review – A joint review of the student's output, providing explanations for the correct form of various linguistic or spelling elements, with particular attention to sentence and compound sentence structure.

Phase 3: Rewriting – The student rewrites the corrected piece, eliminating errors.

In each phase, the teacher has ample opportunity to assess the level of written expression, observing progress in vocabulary development, the ability to form grammatical structures through declension and conjugation, and so forth. Through this type of writing, the student has a chance to develop their communication skills in everyday contexts based on real-life experiences, such as the holiday theme, rather than using words whose meanings are contextually and communicatively distant, as in the previous example (Task 4 and the exercise above).

As an example, we present the final written piece of a student from Ukraine, who has been residing in the Czech Republic for two years, dated 9 September, 2024⁹.

This short composition exercise, written according to the steps outlined above, fully confirms the communicative success of the DMT student. Certainly, there are a number of shortcomings in the text – excessive use of pronominal subjects, unclear word order, lack of thematic cohesion (e.g., the park theme is repeated four times, each time interrupted by unrelated information), illogical sequencing, and so on. The teacher also added a formal comment: the text lacks a title but has a very well-crafted ending, both linguistically and

⁹ In the Czech Republic, the school year starts on 1 September.

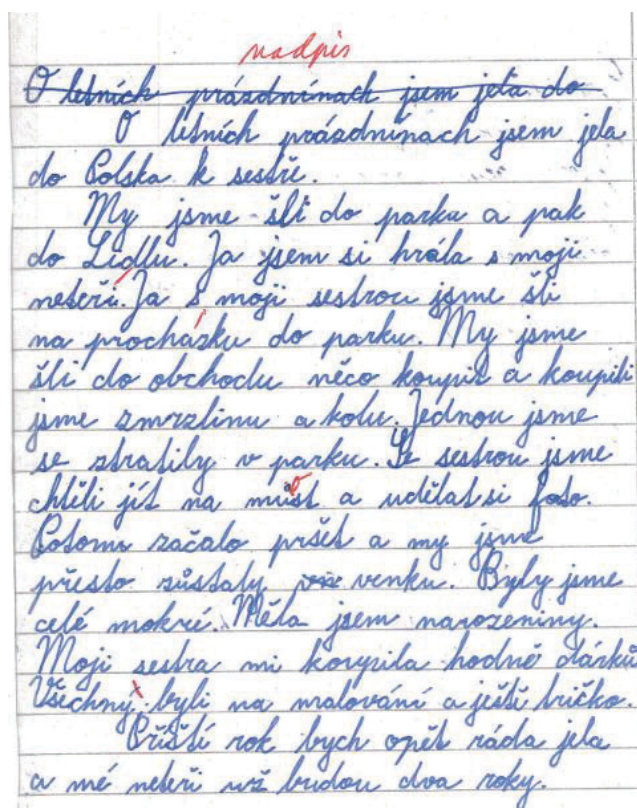


Fig. 2. Example of written composition by a student from Ukraine

Přepis textu z ukázky – See the transcription of the sample – see fig. 2: (errors have been corrected in the transcript): The word ‘title’ is written in red by the teacher.

During the summer holidays, I went to Poland to visit my sister.

We went to the park and then to Lidl. I played with my niece. My sister and I went for a walk in the park. We went to the shop to buy something and bought ice cream and a coke. Once, we got lost in the park. My sister and I wanted to go to the bridge and take a photo. Then it started to rain and we stayed outside anyway. We were all wet. I had my birthday. My sister bought me a lot of presents. All of them were for painting and also a T-shirt. I’d like to go again next year, and my niece will be two years old.

argumentatively sound. Overall, the text is quite successful, and the student effectively accomplished the assigned communicative task of reporting on a holiday trip. Additionally, the student respects the formal structure of the composition by organising the text into paragraphs, which she also marks formally. From the perspective of mother tongue instruction, it is worth noting that the composition contains several errors, primarily in morphological and

lexical spelling. However, the teacher deliberately chose not to mark these errors in red (such as incorrect forms of personal pronouns and subject-verb agreement errors) to avoid discouraging the student. An approach that prioritises content in evaluation can be considered highly appropriate.

Nonetheless, the assessed output will also include spoken expression. For this to be evaluated as successful, it must be clear what the student intended to convey and why they wished to convey it. This will involve not only shorter, situationally anchored utterances but also a coherent, logically ordered narrative with an uninterrupted storyline. The teacher could assign this on the same topic – a holiday experience.

The methodological approach outlined above clearly emphasizes the fundamental principles of communication-oriented Czech language instruction¹⁰: students work with an authentic communicative task based on their own experience, which is thus semantically comprehensible to them. Students create their own communication piece, which the teacher can then use as didactic material and a tool for language exploration, supporting the development of communication skills for students (including those with DMT) in a way that aligns with their needs, current skills, and cognitive level.

The selection of a communication piece for use in the cognitive-communication model of instruction does not necessarily have to rely on students' own work; any didactically suitable written or spoken piece can be chosen. Texts in textbooks are often rich in indirect expressions and artistic language devices, which can be semantically challenging for DMT students. This is characteristic of communication pieces in the artistic (*belles-lettres*) functional style, but even these can be effectively used in language classes. The key, however, is to choose an appropriate and functional piece that supports communicative practice and aids in developing communication skills in DMT students. We present an example of a methodological approach for making communication pieces in the artistic functional style accessible and functional for DMT students.

Example of an appropriate methodological approach for working with artistic language devices

DMT students often face significant challenges when reading fairy tales or other texts well known in the Czech context, as well as when attempting to reproduce them. The common perception of fairy tales as suitable material for children and young students to retell or reproduce can be misleading, as

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion see e.g. S. Štěpáník (2015). *Konstruktivismus a jeho didaktické implikace ve vyučování českého jazyka* [Constructivism and Its Didactic Implications in Czech Language Instruction], in *Čeština doma a ve světě*, 2(2), pp. 11-22.

many fairy tales are linguistically demanding, at the very least due to frequent doubling of narrative lines and the complexity of vocabulary required for storytelling. Stories with repeated passages, such as the fairy tale *The Gigantic Turnip*, are therefore ideal. (A grandfather planted a turnip, and the turnip grew big, very big. When it was ripe, the grandfather wanted to pull it out. He pulls and pulls but can't pull it out. The grandfather called the grandmother. The grandmother grabs the grandfather, the grandfather grabs the turnip, they pull and pull but still can't pull it out. The grandmother called the granddaughter. The granddaughter grabs the grandmother, the grandmother grabs the grandfather, the grandfather grabs the turnip, they pull and pull but still can't pull it out, and so on.) Similarly, *Cook, Little Pot!* fairy tale is communicatively straightforward but significantly richer in content. It remains a simple story to retell, and a lack of familiarity with the Czech context is not an obstacle. Verified methodological procedure:

The teacher reads the fairy tale aloud while the students listen. *The reading may be repeated.*

1. The students are then shown pictures and asked the following questions:

What do you see in the pictures? Does it remind you of anything?

(Items from the fairy tale: pot, strawberries, porridge in the pot, porridge spilling onto the road; to check understanding)

2. Answer the questions.

(The questions are intentionally simple, with repeated wording to support comprehension. If students respond quickly and show a tendency to narrate the story, we may skip some questions. The questions again serve to check comprehension.)

- a) Why did Little Mary go to the forest?
- b) Who did Little Mary meet there?
- c) What did the old woman ask for? Why?
- d) What did Little Mary do?
- e) How did the old woman reward Little Mary?
- f) What could the pot do?
- g) What did Little Mary have to say to make the pot start cooking?
- h) What did Little Mary have to say to make the pot stop cooking?
- i) What happened when Little Mary went to town?
- j) What did her mother do?
- k) What did her mother forget?
- l) What happened then?
- m) Who stopped the cup?
- n) How much porridge did the pot cook?

3. Try telling the fairy tale yourself. Maybe these sentences will help you:

Little Mary got a pot from the old woman.
She said, *Cook, little pot!* and the pot started cooking sweet porridge.
Her mother soon got hungry.
She just couldn't remember how to stop the pot.
The porridge spilled all the way to the village square.

4. If your retelling didn't go well, try putting the sentences in the correct order:

(First, we read all the sentences together with the students. We offer this task even if the students successfully retold the story on their own. By arranging the sentences, students practise not only expression but also abstract thinking. To make the text easier to work with, we cut it into strips, each containing a single sentence. Students can physically arrange the sentences, making it easier to correct any misplacement.)

- A. One day, Little Mary went out to pick strawberries.
 - B. There was already plenty of porridge, but her mother forgot how to stop the pot.
 - C. When she got hungry, she sat down on a tree stump in the forest and took out her bread and butter.
 - D. Luckily, Little Mary returned from town and said: "Stop, little pot!"
 - E. The porridge had already spilled out of the house, onto the street, and all the way to the village square.
 - F. Suddenly, an old woman appeared and asked Little Mary for something to eat.
 - G. One day, when her mother was home alone, she said: "Cook, little pot!"
 - H. Little Mary shared her bread with the old woman, and in return, the old woman gave her a little pot.
 - I. All you had to say was "Cook, little pot!" and, when the porridge was ready, "Stop, little pot!"
 - J. There was so much porridge that when the neighbours came home, they had to eat their way through it.
5. The students retell the fairy tale on their own. (Each student might retell just a small part.)

Conclusions

The growing number of DMT students in Czech and other European primary schools is increasing the need to effectively address native language instruction in multicultural classrooms. Within the Czech educational system, DMT students receive structured support based on specific support measures, which must be implemented in instruction. In the context of language

instruction, it has become clear that DMT students, like native Czech-speaking students, benefit significantly from a communication-oriented approach to language instruction. When language instruction is grounded in students' personal experiences, memories, and backgrounds – constructed around models of natural communicative situations, connecting learning with experience, and addressing communicative needs in classroom activities – it enables DMT students to learn Czech in a natural way that aligns with the objectives of language instruction.

The approaches outlined in response to DMT students' needs also raise questions about teachers' preparedness for this type of work. A typically trained Czech language teacher is prepared to address the instructional content for the majority of students, meaning teaching Czech as a native or first language. However, with the increasing number of DMT students in the classroom, the teacher must also master the instruction of Czech as a second language and, above all, manage instruction for all students in the class. This is certainly a different issue from those we addressed in our study. Nonetheless, it is a highly important topic, which we plan to address in a future article.

Authors contributions

The authors confirm being the sole contributor of this work.

REFERENCES

- Adam, R. (2006-2007). *O nejvlastnější mateřštině [On the Most Intrinsic Mother Tongue]*. Český jazyk a literatura, 57/2, 244-246
- Awramiuk, E. (2019). *Argumenty pro mluvnici ve škole – víra, nebo důkazy? [Arguments for Grammar in Schools – Belief or Evidence?]* (pp. 88-100). In: S. Štěpáník et al. (Eds.), *Vztah jazyka a komunikace v česko-slovensko-polské didaktické reflexi [The Relationship of Language and Communication in the Czech-Slovak-Polish Didactic Reflections]*. Prague: Karolinum
- Doležalová, A.B. (2015). *Český jazyk 4, učebnice pro 4.ročník [Czech language 4, textbook for the 4th grade]*. Brno: Nová škola, 5
- Nowosielski, M. et al. (2021). *Edukacja elementarna uczniów z doświadczeniem migracji w Polsce i Czechach. Doświadczenia – Wnioski – Rekomendacje – Zasoby*. Płock: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Mazowieckiej Uczelni Publicznej w Płocku
- Štěpáník, S. (2015). *Konstruktivismus a jeho didaktické implikace ve vyučování českého jazyka [Constructivism and Its Didactic Implications in Czech Language Instruction]*. Čeština doma a ve světě, 2(2), 11-22
- Štěpáník, S. et al. (2019). *Vztah jazyka a komunikace v česko-slovensko-polské didaktické reflexi [The Relationship of Language and Communication in the Czech-Slovak-Polish Didactic Reflections]*. Prague: Karolinum
- Tiskárna Ministerstva vnitra ČR. (2021). Prague, 2818-2820