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**ZJEDNODUŠENÍ ČASOVÝCH KONSTRUKCÍ JAKO  
NOVÝ TREND MEZINÁRODNÍ ANGLIČTINY NEBO  
MEZERA VE VZDĚLÁNÍ NIŽŠÍCH  
SPOLEČENSKÝCH TŘÍD**

**Galina Kratochvílová**

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**University of West Bohemia**

**Faculty of Education**

**Department of English**

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**TENSE SIMPLIFICATION AS A NEW TREND IN  
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH OR A LACK OF  
EDUCATION OF LOWER CLASS**

**Galina Kratochvílová**

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## **Abstract**

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Supervisor: Andrew Tollet.

This work provides the analysis of tense simplification cases in the speech of the native speakers of English. The reason for choice of this topic was the attempt of understanding whether tense simplification is gradually becoming a norm and thus whether the present and future teachers of English in Czech Republic should include this topic in their teaching courses.

The theoretical part focuses on the analysis of the notion of tense in English from the points of view of grammar, semantics and cognitive perception. It also provides the existing cases of tense simplification and their explanation.

The practical analysis is divided into several parts:

- 1) Interviews with the native speakers of English residing in Czech Republic (the full versions of the interview are attached in the appendix)
- 2) Analysis of the existing tense simplification examples by the native speakers
- 3) Analysis of the tense simplification cases found in speech of the native speakers during the interviews from the grammatical, semantic and cognitive points of view as well as the analysis according to the theoretical background part concerned with tense simplification

The results of the analysis show the tendencies in the native speakers' use of the language, their opinions about tense simplification in the speech of native speakers and non-native speakers, their perception of their native language in the context of living abroad. The results of the analysis also provide the new tendencies in tense simplification which were discovered during the interviews.

Finally, the results of the analysis show that tense simplification can be considered a lack of education of lower class by native speakers in communication with other native speakers whereas the non-native speakers are tolerated to speak with mistakes as long as the meaning is more or less clear. On the other hand, the results of the analysis show that tense simplification cannot be considered a trend in International English because its occurrence in speech is more or less occasional and it should not be regarded as a rule for teaching the students of English as for its deliberate use is the prerogative of the native speakers whose

perception of their knowledge of the language is close to absolute and that allows them to play with it by choosing the constructions they find appropriate.

Keywords: tense, tense simplification, grammar, semantics, cognitive perception, analysis, temporal domain, shift of temporal perspective, absolute tense, relative tense, respondent

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Language has always served as a means of human understanding of the world around. It is a living organism the cycles of which can be paralleled and divided the same as human generations. Due to technological devices of the last 20 years, the relatively open state borders and social networks that allow staying in touch with friends and family, the tendency towards better understanding of the world and a general feeling of the world shrinking are among the most noticeable. Finally, the popular notion of something being global seems to be becoming true. Of course, the world needs a means of communication in order to keep the pace of social and economic developing. In the past there was the era of the Latin language, which, in the Middle Ages, was the means of communication between educated people of different regions and nationalities. Medieval scientists, people of religion and scholars, who would later belong to one of the above mentioned groups in the future, spoke Latin while discussing the latest events in their area of study. Nowadays, however, Latin is mostly considered to be a dead language: there is no Latin nationality that would be using the language every day and thus keeping it alive and developing. As mentioned before, language is a living organism and without active usage and development it simply dies. There were attempts to substitute the lost lingua franca by inventing a language which would be relatively easy to learn and use. One of the relatively more successful attempts was Esperanto, invented by a Polish doctor Ludwick Lazar Zamenhof. Nevertheless, only a small percentage of its fans use it nowadays. The reason for that is its artificial origin.

Despite all the attempts to invent a “fair” language that would have to be learned by everyone equally, a simple look at the world map will help to understand that a huge number of people from different countries are already capable of understanding each other. The world of nowadays already has a lingua franca and that is the English language.

There are many reasons why a language that was spoken by a small number of people on the British Isles has conquered the globe. The spread of one language to the rest of the world is usually connected either with military activity or economic dominance of a particular country. A look at the past shows, that the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the age of explorers from Britain. During the subsequent century Britain became the leading colonial nation. Apart from a new political system, British explorers brought education, religion and important medical knowledge on their ships. The undeniable superiority of the newcomers due to the above mentioned reasons instantly made the English language a dominant one and subject to learning. One of the crucial achievements of that time was the discovery of America and thus the creation of a whole new country where the national language has since then been

established as English. Even nowadays, when the United States is called the land of immigrants, no matter what the native languages of the former generations are, English is considered to be a national language.

Returning now to the British Empire, before the United States declared independence Britain had become the leader of the industrial revolution, and as a consequence triumphed at the World Exhibition. Many scientific and technological achievements were given English names, were demonstrated to the public and since then it has become a tradition in many languages to simply borrow the English name for some new technological device. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century the leadership in economics has moved towards the USA, thus empowering the global position of the English language till nowadays.

A close look at the variety of countries where English is spoken provides a feeling of awe at the incredible diversity of English variations together with a certain feeling of anxiety for future English teachers. Not taking the pidgin and creole versions into account one certainly needs a firm structure to begin the teaching methods with. Unfortunately, due to the richness of variations of the English language around the world it is quite hard to choose a structure which would be considered the most correct one. Crystal (2003) introduces the notion of “new Englishes”, which he describes as “somewhat like dialects we all recognize within our own country (Britain), except that they are on an international scale, applying to whole countries or regions” As for the new linguistic varieties that usually tend to occur in general speech, these have traditionally attracted less attention as grammars totally devoted to speech are very rare and most traditional grammars focused on the printed forms of the English language. Crystal defines New Englishes as structures “lacking homogeneous entity, clear boundaries and easily definable phonology, grammar and lexicon” (p 165). He also prognoses the arising need of the World Standard Spoken English in the nearest future as for the teachers of English worldwide would gradually find themselves incapable of meeting the needs of their students targeted on the international linguistic situation: “The concept of WSSE does not replace a national dialect: it supplements it. People who can use both are in a much more powerful position than people who can use only one. They have a dialect in which they can continue to express their national identity; and they have a dialect which can guarantee international intelligibility, when they need it.” (Crystal 2003, p.188)

## **II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

As a means of international communication English is taught in many countries where it is not spoken on the basis of being one of the official languages. These are countries where the creation of an English-based dialect is nearly impossible. Quite often teachers find themselves puzzled by the choice of the variety of the language which they should take as a teaching standard for the beginners.

The earlier definition of language as a living organism presupposes that there must be some basis on which all other elements connect in order to become functional as a whole. Any foreign language lesson includes introduction of grammatical structures on which the vocabulary units are gradually attached. Basically, any student of a foreign language, supposing that he/she is planning to actively use the knowledge in the future, can expand his/her vocabulary to the measure he/she desires, but the basic grammatical units always remain stable and unchanged.

One of the main problems in studying English for students whose native language is of Slavic origin is understanding the concept of time in English. While in most Slavic languages the past and the future tense are represented by one grammatical structure, in English there are several means of expressing events that have happened or had happened before something else happened. This explains why the concept of time in English grammar has its own name, which is tense, whereas in most Slavic languages the grammatical notion of time and the actual time are expressed by the same word.

Before speaking about the simplification of tense in grammar, which is observed in fluent speech of native speakers, let us analyze the notion of tense in three aspects: tense in traditional grammar, tense in semantics and tense in cognitive perception.

### **Tense in Traditional Grammar**

The category of tense in traditional grammar denotes the form taken by the verb in order to locate the situation referred to in time. The traditional names for the tenses in English are:

- Present Tense (*I live here*)
- Past Tense (*I made a mistake*)
- Future Tense (*I will do it*)
- Present Perfect Tense (*We haven't met yet*)
- Past Perfect Tense (*I hadn't expected this*)
- Conditional Tense (*We would soon find out*)
- Conditional Perfect Tense (*She would have left by then*)

In English only the indicative forms are subject to tensing. All the tenses have nonprogressive and progressive forms: *I live here* and *I'm living here* are both sentences in the present tense. In cases where there is a complex verb form involving one or more auxiliaries it is the first auxiliary that is marked for tense, not the main verb. Ex.: *He (doesn't/didn't/won't) know the answer.*

There is a further division of tenses into Absolute tenses and Relative Tenses (Comrie, 1981,85):

**Absolute tenses** – express direct temporal relation

**Relative tenses** – express a singular temporal relation between the time of the situation referred to and an orientation time other than zero-time. They express one of the following temporal relations:

- 1) **Anteriority**: the time of the situation is represented as preceding the orientation time (*He said he had got up early*)
- 2) **Simultaneity** : the time of the situation is coinciding with the orientation time (*He said he didn't feel well*)
- 3) **Posteriority**: the time of the situation is represented as following the orientation (*He said he would save us*)

Special cases of tense usage can be observed in modal sentences. In these cases they do not express the usual temporal relations: modal past and conditional sentences.

**Modal past:**

*I wish I didn't know his number* – the subclause situation is not related to the time of speech but to the time of the head clause situation. In this case the past tense also represents the situation as contrary-to-fact : it implies that I do know his number.

**Conditional sentences:**

*I wouldn't be here if I didn't love you* – the tense forms in this case are used to express unreality, they are used for a modal reason. They do not locate their situation in the past.

Another aspect which is definitely worth mentioning is the metaphorical usage of tenses. In these cases the tenses are used to represent a particular time as if it were another time. For example, the present tense can be used to refer not only to the present, but also to the past and to the future. Similar examples can be found in narration where there is a switch from the past to the “historic present”: *One day, my youngest daughter sat in the garden brushing her rabbit when up comes Oscar...; Hurry up, the train leaves at 5.30!*

## Tense in Semantics

In terms of general semantics the category of tense is used to segment time in people's minds into past, present and future, where the present is the symbolical point in the middle and the past and future are stretching either to the left or to the right on an abstract line of time.

Generally there are not many publications devoted specifically to the semantics of tense as many linguists find this topic too philosophical and theoretical. Nevertheless, one of the first influential monographs, although met with suspicion - which is basically the fate of most pioneer events, was Bull's "Time, Tense and the Verb" (1960). In his work Bull insisted on the adoption of the semantic-based point of view of tense in English. He introduced the concept of time as the fourth dimension of reality where the tenses did not refer to the time segments; the concept of time was substituted by the calendric system which served to keep track of the events happening. Instead, Bull introduced the notion of tense as a relationship between an event and an experiencing subject. In Bull's terms the past tense was seen as a vector or an indication of order and direction. For example, in the sentence *He came* the event is designated but it is not put into any exact position in time. It signals that from the observer's point of view the event is anterior. The point from which the event is viewed is the "axis of orientation". This system made possible the analysis of the differences between the tense systems of languages without a past-present distinction (such as Hawaiian and Mandarin), which limit themselves to mere indication of order and simultaneity.

Another point of view on the semantics of tense was introduced by Hans Reichenbach (1947) when he turned his attention to three points of time: E – as the point of the actual event, S – as the point of speech and R – as the point of reference. Thus he introduced schemes for tenses where the dash meant temporal sequence separating the elements and the comma meant simultaneity:

**Present Tense:** E, R, S – the time of the event, the reference and the speech are the same

**Simple Past Tense:** E, R – S

**Present Perfect Tense:** E – R, S

**Past Perfect Tense:** E – R – S

Reichenbach also suggested that the relationship between time and tense should always be indicated by time adverbials. For example, in the sentence *Now I have understood it* the Present Perfect has its **R** (reference) in the present, corresponding the adverb *now*.

Later on Reichenbach's theory was questioned by Comrie's editions on the topics of tense (1981, 1985) and aspect (1976). According to Comrie, Reichenbach did not foresee the

possible variations of interpretation. For example, in the sentence *He will have left* the described event can be before, simultaneous or after the act of S (saying). Comrie's definition of tense is a "grammatical location in time". He distinguishes between **Absolute** and **Relative** tense. The Absolute tense is located accordingly to the moment of speech while the Relative tense refers to a reference time provided by the context. This distinction can be illustrated on the time adverbials: *yesterday* is absolute, whereas *the day before* is relative. As in the classical time line, Comrie has three absolute tenses: past, present and future. Apart from distinguishing the tense in terms of location, he also discusses the distinction in terms of remoteness. The overall formula summarizing Comrie's theory states that the Event time is related to Speech time possibly via some Reference times. He also mentions that the temporal relations may or may not be marked for temporal distance.

### **Tense in Cognitive Perception**

In the following passage the DIST abbreviation will stand for "distancing indirect speech/thought" and FIST for "free indirect speech/thought" according to the abbreviations provided by Vandelanotte (2009).

In the chapter devoted to spatiotemporal deixis and expressivity in free and distancing indirect speech or thought the author tries to expand the description of FIST and DIST on the basis of different behavior in the realm of person deixis (words and phrases that cannot be fully understood without additional contextual information). The intentional perspective of the represented speaker is prominent in the interpretation of tense in FIST, whereas tense is more strongly current speaker oriented in DIST. The author further deals with individual analysis of tenses in past and present spheres.

### **Tense in FIST**

#### **Past time sphere:**

In the context of past time narrative, according to Vandelanotte, relative tense is used in free indirect speech or thought act, except for one case which allows absolute tense and will be examined later on.

*Wild and frail and beautiful she looked, and thus the women of the Greek were, Jacob thought; and this was life, and himself a man and Florinda chaste.*

In the example above it can be seen that the tense forms in the reported clause are temporally subordinated to the central orientation time, which is the same as the represented speaker's time. This situation is coded in the reporting verb "thought". On the other hand, for example:

*(He was still worrying about Sarah ) Was she safe now? Or had she been abducted by the soldiers? But there was not really any point in worrying. Tomorrow he would know the answer.*

In this example the binding orientation time is implied in the absence of the reporting verb. Another interesting case is represented in passages where idioms, which are usually used in direct discourse, are shifting tense by their presence in free indirect speech. For example, the idiomatic expression “God knows” becomes expressed with a relative tense which is simultaneous with the time of the speaker’s thinking as in:

*Eternity, timeless experience of good, time as the substance of evil – it was bad enough, God knew, in books.*

According to Vandelanotte, bringing in an absolute tense, even an intentionally absolute one, introduces a present perspective which disrupts the obligatory representation of the speaker’s belief world at the moment of narrative as is shown in the example:

*When I met John, he immediately started asking me questions about Bill. Where has Bill gone, and when will he come back?*

The author broadens the idea further by introducing the concept of a “timeless”, absolute present, expressing a general truth as in:

*He would never learn to ask the right questions, he thought. Yes, God exists and yes, the earth is round, but what if God didn’t exist and the earth weren’t round? Would it make any difference, really?*

#### Present Time sphere:

The very nature of narration presupposes that usually only things that have already happened are narrated, which is why the present tense is quite rare. Nevertheless, the usage of the present tense in narration creates the illusion that the events unroll as one is reading:

*Am I pretty? she asked herself, putting down her comb and looking in the glass. What did Mrs. Fripp think of me, she wondered?*

In contrast to the past time sphere, where no absolute tense could occur because it brought in the current speaker’s perspective and the situation that was coded could last long enough to be present or future, in the present time sphere an intentionally absolute tense does not evoke the current speaker’s perspective as well as the represented speaker’s. Thus it can be analyzed as an intentionally absolute one relating directly to the time of reference which is simultaneous with the current time of the speaker.

As for the aspect of the historic present tense, according to Vandelanotte, it has a strongly “hearer-oriented” function and is used to liven up the narrative and thus to capture the hearer’s attention:

*He looked out of the window. His porter. Oh, where is his porter? His porter! He looks out up and down, down and up. Where is his porter? Where his bags? The train is going!The train is moving. The train is gone.*

Vandelanotte also mentions that historic present tenses are strongly suggested by the surrounding past tenses which show that the narrative as a whole is told in the past tense.

### **Tense in DIST**

#### **Past Time sphere:**

The concept of distanced indirect speech/thought requires the determination of a grammatical person; the information has to be retrieved from the current speaker’s deictic center together with determination of choice of pronouns or full noun phrases.

Vandelanotte introduces two types of different usages of DIST in the past time sphere:

- 1) A more narrative-like type, where a narrator expresses his/her attitude towards some character’s thought or utterance
- 2) A more matter-of-fact type, which serves to perform a speaker’s speech act in the context of the evidences

1.

In the narrative cases the speaker assumes speech functional responsibility over the claim/question. Typically there is a certain light form of irony/sarcasm/mild mockery, which highlights the patronizing effect of utterances such as:

*He hoped I would understand his position.*

The interpretation of tense use is speaker-related: there is a relation between the current reporting and represented speech situation. On the other hand, the current speaker-related absolute tenses downplay the semantics of “reporting” and situate both component clauses in the speaker’s time, even though the original utterance is also involved in the represented speech situation:

*The two women exchanged more glances. Mrs. Arb had come to a decision. Mrs. Arb desired as much information as possible before coming to a decision. Women had the right to look after themselves against no matter what man. Women were women, and men were men.*

2.

The more matter-of-fact, or, according to Vandelanotte, evidential type, refers to the examples where the current speaker’s claims /questions are referred to an ultimate source:

*John will be late, he said.*

Basically, in such cases the current speaker is “speaking twice”, which means that he/she is making two claims: at the time of the actual speech act he/she says that John will be late and that in the past John said something to make the speaker conclude that he will be late.

The speaker’s timeline in this case can be shown as follows:

Said \_\_\_\_\_ actual time of speech \_\_\_\_\_ will be \_\_\_\_

In comparison to the narrative type, absolute tense is perfectly allowed as in the example provided above.

#### Present Time sphere:

The present tenses in distanced indirect speech cannot be considered historic present tenses; they allow only an absolute interpretation:

*I’m going to third. Where’s he going? “Basement”,  
he says. He’ll wait while I go up, then he’ll go down.*

This absolute tense is speaker-related. On the other hand, in the example:

*Whatever happens, it will be no use asking him for details. He will not have seen anything  
and he will not know anything at all.*

There is the so-called “absolute-relative” future perfect tense which signals the speaker’s prediction that the person talked about will pretend to know nothing.

Finally, Vandelnotte analyzes a shift of temporal focus, which means that a speaker mentally assumes another temporal location or relation:

*That was my brother.*

The utterance provided above, pronounced when somebody who is unknown to the partner in communication has just entered and left the room shows the shift of temporal focus back to the past moment when the speaker’s brother entered the room and the speaker’s interlocutor wondered who the person was.

The represented speaker’s perspective is not prominently evoked. The focus is more on the speaker’s claims which are based on the previous utterances or his/her attitude towards the utterance.

#### **Tense Simplification**

The definition of tense simplification is considered to be somewhat informal. Basically, it is the phenomenon when the speaker does not use the logically expected tense but instead another, allegedly simpler tense.

Declerck (1994) argues that there is no special rule in English which would cover the simplification of tense: the idea that the tense actually used is not the one to be expected, not

the one that is logically predictable from the English tense system, is mistaken. Nevertheless, Declerck analyzes some typical examples of tense simplification in speech and provides a theory of natural explanation for the various seemingly anomalous usage of tenses.

Declerck divides the notion of time-sphere of the speakers into three sectors: the pre-present (the portion of the time-sphere that precedes the moment of speech), present (the portion that is centered around the moment of speech) and the past-present sector (the portion that follows the moment of speech). When two situations are located within the same sector there are two possible interpretations: either both are represented as related to the time of speech, or one situation is related to the time of speech while the second is related to the first. Declerck introduces the notion of temporal domain which is a time interval taken up either by one situation or by a number of situations that are temporally related to each other by means of special tense forms.

*John said that he had worked hard all day, that he was tired and that he would go to bed early.*

In the sentence provided above the first clause contains an absolute tense form which locates the situation in the past sector. It represents the central situation of the domain. The situations referred to in other clauses are temporally subordinated to the central situation.

The past tense can be used in two ways: either as an absolute tense (establishing a past domain) or as a relative tense (expressing the domain-internal relation of simultaneity). On the other hand, the past perfect and the conditional tense can only be used as relative tenses. When a domain has been established, the situation of the next clause may or may not be incorporated into it. If there is no incorporation, it means that a new domain is established and there is a shift of domain.

*John went to the door, opened it and left.*

In the sentence above there are three consecutive past domains. As can be seen the temporal relation between them is not expressed by the tense forms. Thus, the hearer should deduce the order of the situations from his pragmatic knowledge, or he/she can rely on the fact that, by convention, it is preferable to report situations in the order in which they have happened.

### **Cases of Tense Simplification:**

According to Declerck (2004)

#### **1) Temporal subordination and a shift of domain**

*The boy who arrived first had started two hours earlier.*

*The boy who arrived first started two hours earlier.*

The example provided above shows the possibility of choice between temporal subordination and shifting of the domain. In the first sentence the anteriority is expressed both by the adverbial *two hours earlier* and by the past perfect. In the second sentence the speaker chose not to express the anteriority twice and used an absolute past form which shifted the domain. Although the tenses no longer help us to find the temporal relation between the two situations, the time adverbial *two hours earlier* still does.

Nevertheless, there is one type of clause in which it is nearly always possible to choose between a past perfect and a past tense and that is the time clause introduced by *after*. There is no clear difference in meaning between the following sentences:

*He left after I had arrived.*

*He left after I arrived.*

The only difference between the sentences is that there is temporal subordination in the former one and a shift of domain in the latter.

## **2) Shift of temporal perspective (Case 1)**

The shift of temporal perspective appears when there is an expansion of a domain, that is when the domain in question is sometimes treated as if it belonged to another time sector.

*Has the woman ever told you that she loved you?*

*Has the woman ever told you that she had been beaten by her husband?*

*I have never promised that I would help you.*

The first clause of the sentence establishes a pre-present domain. However, its central situation is treated as if it were a past situation and the tenses used are relative: the past perfect for anteriority, the past tense for simultaneity and the conditional tense for posteriority. The shift of perspective from the pre-present to the past is obligatory when the pre-present domain is established by existential perfect – when the situation referred to by the present perfect is interpreted as having come to an end before the moment of speech.

*I have often cried when I felt lonely.*

*I have often cried when I have felt lonely.*

The provided examples are often treated in terms of tense simplification. However, it is not in terms of simplicity that a past tense is used instead of a present perfect: the pre-present domain must be treated as if it were a past one when a new situation is incorporated into it.

The similar shift of perspective can be seen in post-present domains:

*His excuse next time will be that he has been ill all week.*

The central situation of a post-present domain is treated as if it coincided with the moment of speech. Thus, the set of relative tenses used in a past-present domain is the same as the set of

absolute tenses: past tense/present perfect for anteriority, present tense for simultaneity and future tense for posteriority.

### **3) The usage of the present tense (instead of the future tense) and of the past tense (instead of the conditional tense)**

The usage of the future tense is also ungrammatical in adverbial time clauses:

*John will leave before Mary arrives / \*will arrive.*

*John expected he would be there before I arrived / \* would arrive.*

The reason why it is more appropriate to use *arrive* rather than *will arrive* is that Mary's arrival is not represented as posterior to John's leaving but rather as simultaneous with a time of reference, which is itself posterior to John's leaving. Thus, it is logical that a tense form expressing simultaneity should be used.

### **4) Shift of temporal perspective (Case 2)**

There are examples of usage of the present tense to refer to the future:

*The train arrives at 5:45.*

*John is leaving tomorrow.*

Such sentences involve a shift of temporal perspective because they represent a post-present situation as if it were holding to the moment of speech. In examples like these there is an attempt to achieve a particular semantic effect, as for semantically the situation is also drawn into the present.

*John says that the train will arrive at 5:45.*

*John says that the train arrives at 5:45.*

The first sentence expresses a prediction or expectation (hypothetical situation), but the second sentence represents the situation as if it had already become a fact at the time of speech.

There is also a shift of temporal perspective when the present tense is used to report a situation which is in fact anterior to the time of speech:

*I hear you have been promoted.*

This kind of shift of perspective from the pre-present to the present is possible only with verbs referring to the productive or receptive end of the process of communication (verbs of saying, hearing, and understanding). Its function is to dramatize the communication act by representing past situations as if they were present ones. Thus their relevance is highlighted.

### **5) Choice of interpretation**

The following examples might also seem quite tempting candidates when speaking about tense simplification:

*I heard that John had been reading the newspaper while he was waiting.*

*I heard that John had been reading the newspaper while he had been waiting.*

Since both the reading and the waiting are anterior to hearing, it would seem logical that the past perfect should be used in both subclauses. Nevertheless, some people definitely prefer the past tense and the usage of the past perfect with *while* is comparatively rare.

In the first sentence the waiting is represented as simultaneous with the reading; since the latter is represented as anterior to hearing, the listener can understand that the waiting is also anterior to the hearing. In the second sentence both the reading and the waiting are represented as anterior to the hearing. In fact, that they are simultaneous is not expressed by the tense forms, but is clear from the use of *while*.

It seems evident, therefore, that the past tense form *was waiting* is not a simplification of *had been waiting*. It is a choice of detailed interpretation; both possibilities are available because neither obscures the temporal relations.

### **III. THE METHOD OF THE RESEARCH**

One of the main aims of the following research is the tracking of the occurrence of the examples of tense simplification in the fluent speech of the native speakers together with the providing of the analysis of the existing cases of tense simplification by native speakers of English from different countries. The research was conducted in two parts:

The first part of the research were a series of interviews with native speakers residing in Czech republic focusing on their perception of their native language in the context of living abroad and communicating with the non-native English speakers in their everyday life.

Much attention was also paid to the individual change of linguistic habits of the native speakers as a result of their long-time residence in Czech Republic.

One of the main questions that this part of the research tried to find an answer to was the awareness of the native speakers of tense simplification in English and their relationship and opinion to this notion based on their personal experience.

All the respondents were informed that their speech would be recorded and that the results of the interview would serve for academic purposes.

The interviews were conducted in two stages:

1) Answering the following questions:

- Brief introduction (name, age, occupation, length of stay in the Czech republic)
- The frequency of usage of English in everyday life (at work, at home, with friends)

- Possible problems in acquiring the knowledge of English as the first language during childhood. Relationship of the respondent's parents to the process of English language acquisition.
  - Notifications of mistakes in the speech of native and non-native speakers of English. The problematic of correction of someone's mistakes in communication. Specification of the biggest mistakes or features which made communication hard from the respondent's point of view.
  - Theoretical part of the language: whether the focus on the study of grammar is more important than the broadening of the vocabulary. The recommendations of the native speakers to the students of English.
  - The change of native linguistic habits after spending some time in Czech republic. Speaking and writing in English and the measure of concentration during these activities.
  - Summarization and defining whether it is the grammatical form in which something is said is what plays the main role in successful communication or the general message of the utterance as long as the native speaker is able to interpret it.
- 2) In the second part of the interview the respondents were asked to analyze the examples of tense simplification found in speech of native speakers in Canada, USA and Great Britain together with the examples of tense simplification provided in the theoretical background by Declerck (2004). The examples for the analysis were as follows:
- You knew I am mean. (UK )
  - I live here for five years. (Canada)
  - He left after I arrived (Declerck)
  - I never promised that I help you. (Declerck) - – this sentence was deliberately changed due to experimental purposes of the research as for a similar construction was heard in the fluent speech of a person who claimed of being a native speaker in the USA
  - John will leave before Mary will arrive. (Declerck) - – this sentence was deliberately changed due to experimental purposes of the research as for a similar construction was heard in the fluent speech of a person who claimed of being a native speaker in the UK
  - Katie is leaving tomorrow (USA, UK, Canada)
  - I hear you have been promoted (Declerck)

The second part of the research was concerned with the analysis of the tense simplification cases in the speech of the respondents during the interviews basing on the information provided in the theoretical background. The respondents were unaware that their own manner

of speech was monitored in order for the interviewer to gain as genuine and natural manner of speech as possible.

## IV. THE ANALYSIS

### Part I

- a) **Native Speakers in Czech Republic**
- b) **Tense simplification from the native speaker's point of view**

### Native Speakers in Czech Republic

- 1) Brief introduction (name, age, occupation, length of stay in the Czech republic)

Ten respondents took part in individual interviews. Some of them refused to reveal their age and the area of their present occupation. Most of them work in a technological department in Information and Technology Company in Prague the name of which is not revealed due to confidential reasons. Before their current position many of them worked as teachers of English in various cities of Czech Republic. The list of the respondents is as follows:

- Alex : UK, London, over 10 years in Czech Republic
- James : USA, Director of technical information, 18.5 years in Czech Republic, former teacher of English in USA and Czech Republic
- Rob : UK, technical writer, 7 years in Czech Republic
- Louise: Australia, information engineer, 2 years in Czech Republic, former teacher of English in Czech Republic
- Vince (35): Ireland, technical writer, 13 years in Czech Republic, former teacher of English in Czech Republic
- Toby: USA, over 15 years in Czech Republic, technical writer, former teacher of English in Czech Republic
- Robin: UK, England (North), 5 years in Czech Republic, quality assurance engineer
- Chazz: USA, Vermont (North-East), 5 years in Czech Republic, former teacher of English in Czech Republic
- Brad (49): USA, California, 8 years in Czech Republic, former teacher of English in Czech Republic
- Sam: UK, Rochdale, technical writer, 17 years in Czech Republic, former journalist for the Prague Post newspaper

2) The frequency of usage of English in everyday life (at work, at home, with friends)

Most of the respondents know other languages besides their native language (English) such as German and French on different levels. Some of them speak Czech on an advanced level. Many of them have family relations with people from other countries such as France, Czech Republic or Denmark which also, in their opinion helped them to fortify their knowledge of the languages. Nevertheless, even if the respondents use English every day in their work some of them use Czech at home when speaking to their wives. Most of them speak English to their children, thus trying to bring them up to be bilingual.

However, a great number of the respondents are still uncomfortable using Czech as the main language of communication in Czech Republic and they tend to use English more often while meeting Czech people. In most cases they switch to Czech only when they notice that their partner in communication is experiencing problems communicating in English.

3) Possible problems in acquiring the knowledge of English as the first language during childhood. Relationship of the respondent's parents to the process of English language acquisition.

A quite surprising result of the interviews was that none of the respondents has experienced any problems with the study of English as their native language at school. Many of them claimed that there was no particular focus on grammar during their studies, that they learned the language naturally, through speech.

Some of the respondents remembered their childhood problems with the spelling of certain words in English or the pronunciation of some sounds; the latter was later resolved in therapy courses. Some of them admitted that they discovered the notion of English grammar only when they came to Czech Republic to work as teachers of English. One of the respondents admitted his failure in an English examination at school, but blamed this more on his lack of imagination at that time when writing compositions than on a lack of grammar knowledge.

However, some of the respondents admitted that members of their families, especially those who belonged to the older generation, paid attention to their manner of speech as children and corrected them to use the language properly. They were also encouraged in reading and some respondents admitted that it made them feel more conscious about their native language and the way they use it. Some of them have deliberately worked on changing the way they speak in terms of pronunciation to make sure that a larger number of people will be able to understand them when they leave their native town.

4) Notifications of mistakes in the speech of native and non-native speakers of English. The problematic of correction of someone's mistakes in communication.

Specification of the biggest mistakes or features which made communication hard from the respondent's point of view.

Most of the respondents were more active in specifying the mistakes of the Czech people they communicated with but some of them also mentioned the noticeable mistakes of the native speakers of English. Almost all the respondents agreed that they tend not to correct the mistakes they hear out of respect to the speaker unless they are asked to do so. For most of the respondents the greatest problem in communication was an accent which delayed their process of interpretation of the message.

Alex (UK): Feels awkward about correcting people. Considers typical Czech mistakes to be:

- Using a wrong article
- Using a wrong word

As long as the meaning is clear for him he does not correct people. The only exception he mentioned was his wife: "Sometimes I have problems with my wife about the tenses because she does not get the tenses right. So, sometimes we have misunderstanding over some simple thing... I can't think of any example now but when she's trying to say that she was at the shop or that she was going to the shop or she just come from the shop it's not clear to me what she's trying to say exactly and rarely, but sometimes it is important, but it's not very often."

James (USA): In spite of having been a teacher, when hearing Czech friends speak English in a restaurant he would not correct them out of respect. However, in the case of native speakers the situation is different:

"Well, I used to hire teachers for the school I worked at. It was my job to find the teachers to come in and teach. And we would have someone coming very often with a degree, in some cases even a degree in English who made mistakes. And they were teaching the students to wrong things or teaching incorrect grammar or vocabulary because they themselves didn't even know it. When I started at the school they had an Australian who was teaching there who misspelled continuously the word "Britain", he spelled it "Britian" and when I first saw that on a paper that he'd written I thought it was a typing error. And then I saw him teaching, I had to go and watch his teaching once in a quarter and he would spell wrong on the board, he would spell "Britian" and that just really made me upset. And that is just one example of many. We finally got rid of the person, we fired him. That bothers me, when I hear someone speaking English incorrectly and teaching incorrectly." He also mentioned that it is common to use the wrong past tenses in the US:

"It's very common in America. We don't use Present Perfect tense as often as we should.

As a matter of fact there've been many studies done showing that the more educated person is

in the US the more likely they are to use Present Perfect tense. Also it bothers me when I hear people avoiding it. For example, my family. I speak to my family in the US. They use it, but they don't use it as often as they should. They are automatically default to the past tense when they are saying things. I hear that mostly in people who are not educated.”

Rob (UK): Considers English to be a broadly spoken language and he got used to people making mistakes while growing up and hearing non-native speakers speak English. The biggest problem in understanding for him is an accent, but despite of that he would rather have the people get the meaning right. He admits that he does not hear the common mistakes anymore.

“I know that there are specific examples I remember that the first time hearing them: a Czech person describing going out to the nature on the weekend it was rather odd but now I don't hear.”

Louise (Australia): She hears a lot of grammatical and language mistakes. When she was a teacher her job was to correct these mistakes, but even when doing it she did not want to cause any problems with confidence to her students. When spending time with non-native speakers socially she does not correct them unless they request it or if the mistake they make may embarrass them when talking to someone else. As for the problems in communication she remembered of having a Czech boyfriend once who made a lot of grammatical mistakes but had a very good vocabulary, so she always understood what he was trying to say. The occasional misinterpretations were mostly connected with the cultural differences.

Vince (Ireland): He notices the mistakes all the time, it used to bother him, but does not bother as much anymore. The examples of the mistakes:

- To be used to doing something X someone used to do something

He does not correct people openly, it depends on the situation. Sometimes he corrects his colleagues at the office out of fun, and sometimes he corrects the members of his family (non-native speakers). One of the main problems in communication that he encountered was communicating with a person who presented himself to be a native speaker but who used verbal constructions that he found extremely unnatural (very formal and technical expressions while sitting in a pub). It made him doubtful about the person's native speaker origin.

Toby (USA): He finds the mistakes in the speech of the native speakers quite amusing. Living in Czech Republic he notices a lot of mistakes, but does not correct them unless he asks for permission first. Having grown up in the US he is used to non-native speakers who immigrated to the country and made mistakes in their speech. The main thing for him in those cases was the general understanding. Examples of the Czech mistakes:

- To borrow X to lend
- To teach X to learn

His main problems in communication were because of the various accents of English such as the accents of the UK, Australia and India.

Robin (UK): He thinks that the English people do not really pay much attention if somebody makes a mistake as long as they can understand what the person is saying, especially in informal situations. He has not heard many grammar mistakes in the speech of the native speakers but his opinion on the matter is the following:

“.. I think that probably what is when someone doesn't use the correct language because of being lazy, they try ... they actually know the correct grammar but they're cutting it short to make it quicker. It is like a laziness. If you talk like talking slang...”

His main problem in communication was because of the Italian accent when the speakers pronounced every last letter as in the word “wanted”.

Chazz (USA): Consistently sees and hears the mistakes and some of them he finds irritating because of their frequency:

- Misuse of preposition (on cottage, in the nature)
- Misuse of verb tenses
- British pronunciation (the word “herb”)

As an example of the problems in communication he told the following:

“I have one Czech friend who used to use continuous all the time, for everything. He doesn't do that anymore, thankfully... but that drove me crazy. Or another friend of mine repeated pronouns so when she was speaking she would say something like “the man, he went to the store”, so subject and then pronoun duplicated, and that also drives me crazy. Certain phrases, when they are misused, like “on cottage” which is a very common Czech mistake, or “in the nature”, which is something that comes from German rather than from English, being a direct translation. And that was because it was just very consistently the same mistake again and again and it was something they were taught to say in schools even though is incorrect.”

He admitted that he corrects people frequently and that the difficulty for him is the measuring when to stop correcting them. The biggest problem for understanding in communication was the thick Liverpool accent that one of his colleagues at work had.

Brad (USA): He meets people who make mistakes very often. One of the reasons for this he considers to be the imposing of the grammatical syntax of their native languages onto English. One of the biggest problems for him was a Malaysian accent speaker who would apply Malaysian intonation onto English emphasizing the final syllable of the word:

“And really I had a delayed process when someone continues to speak like anyone translating a language in their head, you fall behind what is currently being spoken while trying to process the language. That was a specific example with that guy I had to collaborate with sometimes, I really struggled to understand and had to “I’m sorry, can you repeat that?” I missed the last part. I am used to it, but it happens.”

Sam (UK): Occasionally hears people making mistakes and explains it in the way of switching from thinking in Czech grammar to terms of English grammar. He thinks that correcting people who make mistakes in their speech is a bit rude and that it makes people angry. His main problem in communication was the realizing that the Czech tenses are a lot simpler than the English tenses and sometimes it was hard for him to get the sequence of things. He thinks that it is probably easier for the British people to understand the Americans than the Americans to understand the British because there are a lot of American TV shows and films. He also thinks that the Americans tend to use the language more loosely: “I think that is generally true. I work with writers so they are quite careful with grammar and things like that but I think Americans in general... the language is used more loosely and there is a kind of new ideas and new words spring more often in American English than in British English which tends to be a bit more conservative, I suppose.”

- 5) Theoretical part of the language: whether the focus on the study of grammar is more important than the broadening of the vocabulary. The recommendations of the native speakers to the students of English.

Eighty percent of the respondents claimed that broadening of vocabulary is the most important aspect in learning the English language. Only two respondents admitted that it is important to start from grammar when teaching children so that later they can broaden their vocabulary basing on the fundamental knowledge of the basic structure of the language. As for adult speakers of English, most of the respondents agreed that native speakers are able to understand what a person means even when the syntax of the sentence is not correct. Alex: “I think in normal speech it is not important, you can normally tell from the context. I was told a trick from my Czech colleague- just specify the time, like “Last year I played tennis” or “when I was young I played tennis” or whatever... When they specify the time it is much clearer, you can tell from the context which is the correct tense normally. I think that on very rare occasions it is important because the point of the sentence is really about the time and you get it wrong and the meaning of the sentence is changed but I think 9 times out of 10, probably more, it doesn’t matter if you get the right tense as you can tell from context what people mean.”

Many of the respondents who used to be teachers in the past said that the main thing their students were interested in was the gaining of the ability to speak English without studying grammar. Nevertheless, some of them tried to maintain a balance between theory and practice. James: “Well, that’s the thing about the English language. It is easy to be able to communicate fast in English, to learn a few things, to make yourself understood. However, to really know the language it is very very difficult. In English there are many tenses, so like if you really want to learn English it is a very difficult language: lots of irregularities, but the thing is that in English you have this false sense of security – you learn a few words, people understand you, you listen to a few songs on the radio, you make yourself understood really easily, but you don’t know the language as a whole different thing.”

The respondents also specified the focus on grammar as a factor which is dependent on the aim of the student: the better impression the student wants to produce the more he/she should pay attention to the manner of his/her speech and to the way he/she constructs the sentences. Otherwise, the opinions of the native speakers were as follows:

Rob (UK):”Most of the times grammar is not such an issue in understanding what people are saying, because I think that English is generally much more of a bitty language. It is more composed of smaller parts.”

Louise (Australia): “Of course it is important to increase your vocabulary but I think native speakers don’t always use the most complicated words. Sometimes it is just better to use something more simple to get your message across.”

Vince (Ireland): “Absolutely not, I think vocabulary is essential but also fluent speech is essential even if it is full of mistakes, speech fluency and speed of responding to another speaker is the essence of communication, I think. People can be extremely successful in spite of the way they speak. Look at ArnordSchwarznegger for example. I guess in America there are many examples. But if people are good communicators, engaged with their listener, if they are speaking with enthusiasm about their message then I think the number of mistakes and the types of mistakes are not really an obstacle.”

Robin (UK): “Broadening the vocabulary, definitely...and don’t worry too much about the grammar. Only really worry about the grammar if you got a job where you really got to write reports and things like that...but otherwise don’t worry about it. The vocabulary is more important.”

- 6) The change of native linguistic habits after spending some time in Czech Republic. Speaking and writing in English and the measure of concentration during these activities.

All of the respondents admitted that their native linguistic habits have changed since the time they came to the Czech Republic. Most of them agreed that the manner of their speech has simplified due to communication with non-native speakers of English as a result of avoiding constructing long and complicated sentences because they thought that it would be hard for the non-native speakers to understand them. They have also admitted the deliberate slowing of their speech when communicating in the Czech Republic and the loss of their regional accents due to the aim of making their speech understandable for the non-native speakers of English. Some of them have admitted the decreasing of their vocabulary due to their choice of using more simple words in their speech. Due to their long stay in Czech Republic some of them have gained a new accent which makes them sound like foreigners when they visit their families abroad. Also they admitted that they lacked knowledge of the development of language in their native lands so that when they return there for a visit they often have to ask people about the meaning of some words that became quite usual in the everyday speech of the locals who live there. Nevertheless, all the respondents admitted that they pay more attention when writing than when speaking because they did not want anyone to think that they do not know their native language properly.

Alex (UK): “So, at home I speak much faster and I am relaxing to my normal accent, south London accent. Here I try to speak with a kind of neutral accent and use more simple words and speak more clearly.”

Louise (Australia): “The speed with which I speak, yes, I definitely think a lot more about what I’m saying. I’ve also sometimes felt like my vocabulary in English is decreasing which is not good because I’m not speaking another language so that shouldn’t be the case.”

Vince (Ireland): “I think for me I am sensitive to the environment that I’m in. Something that has changed I have completely lost my regional accent and when I go back home people think I am a foreigner, which I hate.”

Toby (USA): “Yes, when I first moved here I lived in a small Czech town of about 900 people. In the beginning of the year, before I came here I was solving crossword puzzles in New York Times. By the end of the year I can barely do one in the USA Today.”

Chazz (USA): “For me I would say my pronunciation has changed. I announce a lot more. In Vermont we tend to drop the second half of every word, so that can be very difficult to understand because we speak quickly and drop half of what we’re saying.”

Brad (USA): “So, my English has definitely simplified and when I go home for visits, I’d (I would) once in two years, people say I have an accent and people say I talk like a dictionary or an encyclopedia and not like a native speaker and actually sometimes I have to ask them

what they mean: I haven't watched the same TV shows or television ads, I have no idea what they're talking about sometimes.”

- 7) Summarization and defining whether it is the grammatical form in which something is said is what plays the main role in successful communication or the general message of the utterance as long as the native speaker is able to interpret it.

All the respondents agreed that the general message is more important than the form in which it is said. Some of them admitted that their opinion is based on the simplification of their speech during their long term stay in Czech Republic.

Sam (UK): “I think I've lived here for such a long time and I used to be quite snobby about these things but I think eventually you realize that the message is more important than the way it is said. I think as a writer I've gone from being quite a flowery writing style to trying to write in a much simpler way because it is more important to communicate the message than to impress people with the way that you say something.”

Others specified their answer in the dimensions of teaching English and everyday communication.

Brad (USA): “... comprehension is more important in every day, but if I'm teaching then corrections are huge.”

A small percentage of the respondents noted that even though the general message will always be the core of communication the way it is represented also plays a certain role.

Louise (Australia): “I do not think that one or the other is more important but I think that if you can express your ideas well then people will listen to your message.”

Toby (USA): “Well, it is 70 percent how you say it and only 30 percent what is said. That's what the standards, but they are not real for decades...”

### **Tense simplification from the native speaker's point of view**

In the following part of the interview the respondents were asked to tell their opinion of the examples of tense simplification heard in the speech of native speakers in Canada, UK and the USA together with the examples of tense simplification provided in the study of Declerck (1994). The respondents were asked to judge the examples in the way of what they would have thought of them if they heard them in fluent speech of the native speakers. The examples were as follows:

- 1) You knew I am mean. (UK )
- 2) I live here for five years. (Canada)
- 3) He left after I arrived (Declerck)

- 4) I never promised that I help you. (Declerck) – this sentence was deliberately changed due to experimental purposes of the research as for a similar construction was heard in the fluent speech of a person who claimed of being a native speaker in the USA
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. (Declerck) – this sentence was deliberately changed due to experimental purposes as for a similar construction was heard in the fluent speech of a person who claimed of being a native speaker in the UK
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow (USA, UK, Canada)
- 7) I hear you have been promoted (Declerck)

Vince (Ireland):

- 1) You knew I am mean - OK
- 2) I live here for five years. - Probably American English (usage of present tense instead of Present Perfect in the USA)
- 3) He left after I arrived. - sounds like a non-native speaker
- 4) I never promised that I help you. - sounds like a non-native speaker
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – ambiguous
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. – OK
- 7) I hear you have been promoted. – colloquial

Rob (UK):

- 1) You knew I am mean. – OK in certain contexts
- 2) I live here for five years. - wrong
- 3) He left after I arrived. – more or less OK
- 4) I never promised that I help you. - wrong
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – OK depending on the context
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. - OK
- 7) I hear you have been promoted. – acceptable if the context allows it

Brad (USA):

- 1) You knew I am mean. – OK
- 2) I live here for five years. – Czech grammar adapted
- 3) He left after I arrived. – depends on the context, but is acceptable
- 4) I never promised that I help you. – very bad, very wrong
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – OK, but for non-native speakers
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. – OK

7) I hear you have been promoted. – classic for native speakers to say that

Chazz (USA):

- 1) You knew I am mean. – sounds strange
- 2) I live here for five years. – would not notice in speech
- 3) He left after I arrived. – normal in British English but not in American English
- 4) I never promised that I help you. – would not catch it in speech
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – wrong
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. – OK
- 7) I hear you have been promoted. – different interpretations but more or less acceptable

Louise (Australia):

- 1) You knew I am mean. – more or less OK
- 2) I live here for five years. – non-native speaker
- 3) He left after I arrived. – more or less OK
- 4) I never promised that I help you. – non-native speaker
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – more or less OK
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. – OK
- 7) I hear you have been promoted. – more or less OK

Sam (UK):

- 1) You knew I am mean. – not good
- 2) I live here for five years. – not good
- 3) He left after I arrived. - OK
- 4) I never promised that I help you. – not good
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – not good
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. – OK
- 7) I hear you have been promoted.- OK

James (USA):

- 1) You knew I am mean. – OK
- 2) I live here for five years. – Slavic speaker
- 3) He left after I arrived. - OK
- 4) I never promised that I help you. - wrong
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – Slavic speaker
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. – OK
- 7) I hear you have been promoted.- OK

Toby (USA):

- 1) You knew I am mean. – acceptable
- 2) I live here for five years. - wrong
- 3) He left after I arrived. - acceptable
- 4) I never promised that I help you. – non-native speaker
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – wrong
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. – OK
- 7) I hear you have been promoted.- OK

Alex (UK):

- 1) You knew I am mean. – OK
- 2) I live here for five years. - wrong
- 3) He left after I arrived. – more or less acceptable
- 4) I never promised that I help you. - wrong
- 5) John will leave before Mary will arrive. – wrong
- 6) Katie is leaving tomorrow. – OK
- 7) I hear you have been promoted.- OK

SUMMARY:

Judging from the analysis above the most acceptable cases of tense simplification from the native speaker's point of view were the following:

- 1) Katie is leaving tomorrow. X Katie will leave tomorrow.
- 2) You knew I am mean. X You knew I was mean; You know I am mean.
- 3) I hear you have been promoted. X I heard that you have been promoted.
- 4) He left after I arrived. X He left after I had arrived.

**Part II**

**Tense simplification cases in the speech of the respondents during the interview**

The following part will be devoted to the analysis of the individual examples of tense simplification that the native speakers made during the interview. The analysis will concern only with the tenses used by the respondents – other mistakes will not be taken into account; they are the result of free and spontaneous speech of the individuals and were written down exactly the way they were heard during the interviews. Each example will be analyzed from four different aspects:

- Grammar: the notification of the grammatical mistake in the sentence
- Semantics: the meaning of the sentence; in some cases different interpretations

- Cognitivity: analysis of the possible reasons for the native speaker to construct his/her sentence in the particular way which became subject to analyzing
- Tense simplification: defining the temporal relations in the sentence according to the theoretical background provided earlier

Examples:

- 1) I speak also French from my time in France, some German...not very good at German( I am not very good at German )

Grammar: there is the omission of the verb “to be” and a pronoun which make the sentence grammatically incomplete;

Semantics: specification of the speaker’s knowledge of German language;

Cognitivity:the speaker presupposes that this cubclause is going to be connected with the previous clauses referring to his experience in France and the consequent knowledge of French. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether his lack of knowledge of German is his connected with his supposed stay in Germany or is connected with some other reason which is not specified by the speaker;

Tense simplification:choice of interpretation; two temporal domains in the present; absolute present tenses in both domains make them temporally equal (basing on the logical presupposition of the listener);

- 2) It comes naturally because I probably learned it very young, I don’t know.  
(because I have probably learned it)

Grammar: the Present Perfect tense, which would signal an action that took place in the past and the result of the action is represented in the present is replaced by Simple Past tense which makes the sentence ambiguous;

Semantics: explanation of something being used naturally by the speaker as a result of acquiring the knowledge of it at a young age;

Cognitivity: in the moment of speech the speaker is not sure whether he wants to express the process which has ended in the past or whether he wants to emphasize the course of the process that took some time in the past; the only thing that is clear from the sentence is that the action of learning described by the speaker took place in the speaker’s past;

Tense simplification:shift of temporal perspective; the pre-present domain is treated as if it were a past one when a new situation is incorporated into it (it comes naturally – evaluation of the result by the speaker);

- 3) Actually I think it somehow humiliating them... (it is somehow humiliating them)

Grammar: omission of the verb “to be” makes the sentence incomplete and ambiguous;

Semantics: something is humiliating someone;

Cognitivity: at the moment of speech the speaker did not know whether he wanted to emphasize his opinion of something being humiliating like in “I find it somehow humiliating” or to emphasize the relationship of something being humiliating for someone. Probably his initial intention was to express his own opinion on something being humiliating which changed in the course of his speech and that explains his omission of the verb “to be” in the beginning of the sentence;

Tense simplification: choice of interpretation; two temporal domains in the present; absolute present tenses in both domains make them temporally equal (basing on the logical presupposition of the listener);

- 4) ..I can't think of any example now but when she's trying to say that she was at the shop or that she was going to the shop **or she just come from the shop** it's not clear to me what she's trying to say exactly and rarely, but sometimes it is important, but it's not very often. (she has just come from the shop)

Grammar:incomplete form of Present Perfect tense: omission of the auxiliary verb “to have”;

Semantics: the woman has recently been to the shop;

Cognitivity: there are two explanations of this mistake: it is not clear whether the speaker is reporting the exact words of the woman he refers to (the way she uses the tenses in her speech) or whether he presupposes the listener's ability to connect the subclause to the previous clauses referring to the past and showing different tenses that could be used in the particular context according to his opinion;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective: the speaker refers to the past temporal domain from the present temporal domain; a case of Free Indirect Speech or Thought (FIST) – past time sphere;

- 5) I think nobody minds a slight pause in conversation **while you think** of right word (while you are thinking)

Grammar:the Present Continuous tense (which is implied by “while”) is replaced by Simple Present tense;

Semantics: people will willingly give someone time to remember the right word during conversation;

Cognitivity: the speaker presupposes the simultaneity of making a pause in conversation on one side and the process of looking for the right word on the other side; he does not consider the process of thinking of the right word as prior to making a pause in conversation;

Tense simplification: equality of the temporal domains: two absolute present tenses are used in two separate temporal domains in order to show their simultaneity;

- 6) I simplify my speech a bit **when I am speaking** with the non-native speakers (when I speak)

Grammar: the Simple Present tense, expressing a general every day activity is replaced by Present Continuous expressing a momentary activity;

Semantics: the person simplifies his speech while speaking with the non-native speakers;

Cognitivity: In the moment of speech the speaker imagines/remembers himself speaking with the non-native speakers thus prospecting the situation he is talking about to the immediate present; at the same time he implies that his behavior remains stable in all the situations of meeting the non-native speakers of similar kind;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a post present situation (judging that the speaker refers to her future encounters with the non-native speakers) or a pre-present situation (in case the speaker remembers her experience from the past) as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

- 7) Because I work in a profession where **we all writers** and even though we work for technical documentation **we all writers** at some point in our lives and other writers **are looking** at the e-mails that I've written so I don't want them to think that I don't know English so of course I give it a second look. (we are all writers, look)

Grammar: omission of the verb "to be"; Present Continuous is used instead of Simple present tense;

Semantics: the speaker is a writer and he works with other writers who see the e-mails that he has written;

Cognitivity: the omission of the verb "to be" is probably due to the fast tempo of speech of the speaker and the high level of reduction which made the hearing of the correct version impossible; the use of Present continuous tense instead of the Simple Present can be explained through the speaker's perception transference of the described situation to immediate present when he imagines/remembers the other writers reading his e-mails;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a post present situation (judging that the speaker refers to his future encounters with the writers) or a pre-present situation (in case the speaker remembers his experience from the past) as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

- 8) The biggest **difference I noticed**, it must be subconscious, that when I go to the UK for 2 or 3 weeks when I come back I speak far more quickly. (I have noticed)

Grammar: Present perfect tense is replaced by Simple Past tense;

Semantics: the speaker noticed that he speaks more quickly after he comes back from the UK;

Cognitivity: probably the speaker has noticed the feature of his speech he described several times and that made him represent the fact not as a one-time notice but as a series of notifications from various time spans;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; the pre-present domain is treated as if it were a past one because a new situation is incorporated in it (the speaker's observations);

- 9) If I spend time with people that speak English as a second language, **but I am spending time** with them socially I don't correct them unless they request it or maybe if the mistake they make could cause confusion if **they were speaking** with someone else and maybe might embarrass them or something. (I spend time, spoke)

Grammar: Present Simple tense is replaced by Present Continuous tense; the conjunction "if" is missing; Past Simple tense is replaced by Past Continuous tense;

Semantics: the speaker does not correct people's mistakes during social occasions unless these mistakes could cause confusion or embarrassment in the future;

Cognitivity: during the moment of speech the speaker imagines herself in the situation she is speaking about and thus she transfers the speech situation to the immediate present; she does the same when speaking about the possible situation of the people she is speaking about being in a possibly embarrassing situation for them;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a post present situation (judging that the speaker refers to her future encounters with the non-native speakers) or a pre-present situation (in case the speaker remembers her experience from the past) as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

- 10) Of course sometime **there has been some language barriers** that when **we haven't fully understood** each other. (there were some language barriers, we did not fully understand)

Grammar: Simple past is replaced by Present Perfect; the auxiliary verb is used in the wrong person category when referring to the plural subject;

Semantics: the speaker admits that there were some language barriers when they did not understand each other;

Cognitivity: the speaker probably refers to the language barriers as to one massive problem in her communication with the person she is speaking about; her use of Present Perfect might show that the effects of the language barriers she remembers are still present in her today life; also the Present Perfect tense she uses in the subclause may signal that she is still in contact with the person of whom she is speaking;

Tense simplification: equality of the temporal domains; using of two relative tenses signals the simultaneity of the situations rather than one as the reason of another;

- 11) **Since I started being** an English teacher I feel a lot more conscious of the words I choose to use and a lot more conscious of the way that I express my feelings.(since I have started being)

Grammar: Present Perfect tense is replaced by Simple Past tense;

Semantics: from the time the speaker has started to work as a teacher he feels himself a lot more conscious about his language and speech;

Cognitivity: supposedly in the moment of speech the speaker subconsciously returns to the time when she began working as a teacher and thus implies the course of the process of understanding the things she speaks about later on in a certain time span;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; the pre-present domain is treated as if it were a past one when a new situation is incorporated into it (I feel a lot more – evaluation by the speaker);

- 12) I've also sometimes felt like my vocabulary in English is decreasing which is not good **because I'm not speaking** another language so that shouldn't be the case.(because I do not speak)

Grammar: Simple Present tense is replaced by Present Continuous tense;

Semantics: the speaker has sometimes felt that her vocabulary was decreasing and it made her sad because she did not speak another language;

Cognitivity: the supposed use of the Present Continuous Tense can be explained on the account that the utterance was said in the only language the respondent knows and thus the speaker emphasized the urgency of her problem;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a present situation as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

- 13) Here in the office we sometimes correct each other but **it more like a playful way** of annoying each other, making fun of each other as colleagues do. (it is more like a playful way)

Grammar: omission of the verb “to be”;

Semantics: the speaker admits of correcting his colleagues sometimes at the office because he considers it to be a playful way of making fun of each other;

Cognitivity: due to the fast tempo of speech the speaker automatically presupposed that the listener will add the missing grammatical part to the sentence; the mistake was not made intentionally;

Tense simplification: equality of temporal domains using absolute present tense ( basing on the logical presupposition of the listener);

14) Actually quite recently there **was** someone **whom I have** terrible trouble understanding. (has been, whom I had)

Grammar: Tense concord – Simple Past is replaced by Simple Present, Simple Past is used instead of Present Perfect;

Semantics: the speaker admits that quite recently he has met someone whom he had big trouble understanding;

Cognitivity: the sentence is a bit ambiguous – it is not clear whether the speaker is still in contact with the person he is speaking about or whether the problem he complains about has disappeared already;

Tense simplification: temporal subordination: the first clause refers to the pre-present domain and the second one refers to the present domain; both clauses have absolute tenses;

15) But if people are good communicators, engaged with their listener, **if they are speaking** with enthusiasm about their message then I think the number of mistakes and the types of mistakes are not really an obstacle. (if they speak)

Grammar: Simple past is replaced by Present Continuous;

Semantics: the speaker thinks that the number of the mistakes is not important as long as someone speaks with enthusiasm, is engaged with his/her listener and is a good communicator;

Cognitivity: the speaker emphasizes the qualities of the people whom he speaks about as if he is already hearing them speak at the moment of speech;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a present situation as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

16) That’s what the standards, **but they are not real for decades..** (they have not been real for decades)

Grammar: Simple Present is used instead of Present Perfect Continuous

Semantics: the speaker admits that there used to be certain standards which are not real anymore;

Cognitivity: in this case the speaker emphasizes that the standards he speaks about are not real with the phrase “for decades”, meaning “for a very long time”; judging from his sentence it is not quite clear whether the standards are present but deliberately neglected in the language now or were present there once, but are not anymore;

Tense simplification: two absolute present tenses are used in two separate temporal domains in order to show their simultaneity;

17) I **never really thought** about it myself because I tend to listen to the meanings. (I have never really thought)

Grammar: Present Perfect tense is replaced by Simple Past tense;

Semantics: the speaker admits that he has never thought about the matter because he tends to listen to the meanings;

Cognitivity: the speaker tends to represent his thought about the matter not as a quick impulse or an idea that had come to him in the past, but rather as a longer period of thinking about the matter;

Tense simplification:: shift of temporal perspective; the pre-present domain is treated as if it were a past one when a new situation is incorporated into it (I tend to listen to the meanings);

18) Before I came here I **was solving crossword puzzles** in New York Times.(solved)

Grammar: Past Continuous tense is used instead of Simple Past tense which makes the sentence ambiguous;

Semantics: the speaker was solving crossword puzzles before he came (primary interpretation); the speaker was able to solve crossword puzzles before he came to the place where he is now (interpretation from the context of the interview);

Cognitivity: the speaker tends to represent his act of solving crossword puzzles as a long time activity in the past which probably was of a regular type;

Tense simplification: shift of domain; the time adverbial “before” helps to establish the temporal relations between the two situations;

19) By the end of the year I **can barely do** one in the USA Today (I could)

Grammar: Simple Present tense is used instead of Simple Past tense; historic present;

Semantics: the speaker can barely do a crossword in the USA Today by the end of each year (primary interpretation); the speaker could barely do a crossword puzzle in the USA Today by the end of his first year in Czech Republic (interpretation from the context of the interview);

Cognitivity: by using the Simple Present tense the speaker emphasizes that the problem was unexpected for him at the time he discovered it and that it still persists in the present day situation;

Tense simplification: choice of interpretation depending on the context: either a shift of temporal perspective from the post-present to the present (historic present – metaphorical usage of tense) or a shift of domain where the time adverbial “by the end of the year” helps to establish the temporal relations of the situation described;

20) See, I **downed down** a lot. (I have downed down)

Grammar: Simple Past tense is used instead of Present Perfect tense;

Semantics: the speaker admits his level in something to have decreased;

Cognitivity: the possible explanation of using the Simple Past tense is that the speaker thinks that the process has finished in the past and that it is not going to happen again in the present or the nearest future;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; the pre-present domain is treated as if it were a past one when a new situation is incorporated into it (See – the speaker admits the fact in the moment of saying);

21) I've got an accent from North of England which **you probably not heard** before.  
(You have not heard before)

Grammar: the Present Perfect tense form is incomplete (auxiliary verb “have” is missing);

Semantics: the speaker admits of having an accent that has not been heard before;

Cognitivity: the speaker presupposes that the listener will add the missing grammatical part as for the meaning of the situation happening in the past with the reference to the present is maintained by the negative particle and the verb in the past tense;

Tense simplification: temporal subordination: the second clause is temporally dependent on the first one;

22) I just **didn't have** an imagination to dream of some story, so, I failed my English exam. (had not have)

Grammar: Past Perfect tense is replaced by Simple past;

Semantics: the speaker admits of failing his English exam because of his lack of imagination;

Cognitivity: the speaker depicts the events he is speaking about as simultaneous and not as something being prior or a reason for something else to happen as a consequence;

Tense simplification: equality of temporal domains; absolute past tense in each of them signals the simultaneity of the temporal relations rather than one situation being a consequence of another;

23) Yes, **just recently, the Italian speakers, with the strong Italian accent.** (there have been the Italian speakers)

Grammar: the omission of any existential verb and tense;

Semantics: the speaker has recently encountered with the Italian speakers with the strong Italian accent;

Cognitivity: the speaker presupposes the listener to connect his sentence with everything that has been said before using intonation and pauses;

Tense simplification: shift of domain: the time adverbial recently marks the temporal relation of the described situation as pre-present;

24) But **I never had** any pronunciation problems or grammar problems. (I have never had)

Grammar: the Present Perfect tense form is incomplete;

Semantics: the speaker has never had any pronunciation or grammar problems;

Cognitivity: the speaker presupposes that the adverb “never” and the verb “have” in Past Tense will be enough to show the listener the main idea of the message;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; the pre-present domain is treated as if it were a past one when a new situation is incorporated into it (the speaker admits the fact by saying it);

25) Or another friend of mine repeated pronouns so when she was speaking she would say something like “the man, he went to the store”, so subject and then pronoun duplicated, and **that also drives me crazy.** (that also drove me crazy)

Grammar: Tense Concord: Simple present is used instead of Simple Past;

Semantics: the speaker tells a story from his past which made him angry;

Cognitivity: the speaker emphasizes that the mistake he speaks about is probably still present in his communication with the person he speaks about, although later in the interview he denies it;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective from past to the present;

26) He actually wasn't a problem to understand because other than the misused verb tenses his communication was very clear and **he has** excellent understanding of English and a very wide vocabulary. (he had)

Grammar: Tense Concord: Simple Present is used instead of Simple Past;

Semantics: the speaker tells about someone who he met in the past;

Cognitivity: probably the speaker is still in contact with the person he is speaking about, but it is not clear whether other problem in communication with that particular person were solved;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective from past to the present;

27) There are some people who have had thick accents that **take** me a while to understand. (took)

Grammar: Tense Concord: Simple Present is used instead of Simple Past;

Semantics: the speaker admits of having had problems in understanding some accents in the past;

Cognitivity: it is not clear whether the speaker is referring to the past or to the present situation when the problem he describes is still bothering him;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective from past to the present;

28) **There is** a guy who used to work here, from England, who had really thick Liverpool accent. (there was)

Grammar: Simple Present is used instead of Simple Past;

Semantics: the speaker tells about a person with a thick accent with whom he used to communicate;

Cognitivity: the speaker is probably thinking of the situation that he describes as one particular case which he perceives as a whole with reference to the present as he feels that it has influenced him;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective from past to the present;

29) Currently **I am using** English all the time. (I use)

Grammar: Present Continuous is used instead of Simple Present;

Semantics: the speaker uses English all the time;

Cognitivity: the sentence is ambiguous because the speaker means that he is speaking English at the moment of speech and at the same time that he uses English every day;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a present situation as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

30) **So, I'm speaking** English to people in the US and the UK for work and **I am speaking** English at home with my wife. (I speak, I speak)

Grammar: Present Continuous is used instead of Simple Present;

Semantics: The speaker speaks English to people in the US and the UK and he also speaks English at home with his wife;

Cognitivity: the speaker refers to speaking English to people at work because at the time the interview was taken he was at the office and he also uses the Present Continuous tense when

referring to speaking with his wife to show that it is as natural for him as his use of English at the office at the moment of speech;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a present situation as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

31) I don't have difficulty expressing feelings, but my language **is simplified** a lot. (has simplified)

Grammar: Simple Present is used instead of Present Perfect tense;

Semantics: the speaker does not have difficulties in expressing his feelings, but his language has simplified a lot;

Cognitivity: the speaker tends not to perceive the simplification of his language as a consequence of some factors, but rather just as a present day fact;

Tense simplification: equality of temporal domains; absolute present tense in each of them signals of the simultaneity of the described situations rather than one situation being a consequence of another;

32) The Malaysian example is what **I think** about (I am thinking about)

Grammar: Simple Present tense is used instead of Present Continuous;

Semantics: the speaker is remembering about a Malaysian example of use of English;

Cognitivity: the speaker does not use the Present Continuous tense because he feels that the example he is ready to show does not require much thinking/remembering from his side; he already has the answer to the question;

Tense simplification: present temporal domain; absolute present tense;

33) And really I had a delayed process when someone **continues** to speak like anyone translating a language in their head. (continued)

Grammar: Simple Present is used instead of Simple past (Tense Concord);

Semantics: the speaker had a delayed process of understanding when someone continued to speak like anyone translating the language in their head;

Cognitivity: the speaker refers to the present because at the moment of speech he remembers/imagines what he is speaking about;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a pre-present situation as if it was a present one;

34) A little verb tense problem there or some missing articles – that is OK, but if it is really ugly then people **give up** and say “Hey, why don't you send it to me in

German or Czech and I will just put it in the Google translate and see what I can do". (would give up)

Grammar: Simple Present is used instead of Conditional;

Semantics: the speaker thinks that if someone's grammar is very bad then people would just give up and ask him/her to send them an e-mail to be translated later through Google translate;

Cognitivity: the speaker avoided using the Conditional because he wanted to emphasize that the reaction of the people he describes is general and most common to occur;

Tense simplification: present temporal domain; absolute tense;

35) But teaching – it was different: you have to correct people because that is why they **are taking** the lessons, that is what they **are hoping** for.. (take lessons, hope for)

Grammar: Present Continuous is used instead of Simple Present;

Semantics: the speaker thinks that it is right to correct people whom he teaches because it is the reason why those people take classes and what these people hope for;

Cognitivity: the speaker avoided using the Simple Present tense because at the moment of speech he imagined/remembered himself in the situation he is speaking about and thus transferred the reference of the situation to the immediate present in the moment of speech;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a present situation as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

36) There was an idea that **it is** quite fashionable that children should not be taught grammar. (it was)

Grammar: Tense Concord: Present Simple is used instead of Simple Past;

Semantics: the speaker tells about an idea that was quite fashionable that the children should not be taught grammar;

Cognitivity: the speaker announces the idea itself, as he once heard it, keeping personal distance from it and keeping his opinion of it to himself;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective from past to present;

37) I was never actually **taught** grammar; it **was never spelled** to me in that way. (I have never been taught, it has never been spelled to me)

Grammar: Simple Past is used instead of Present Perfect;

Semantics: the speaker admits that he has never been taught grammar and that it has never been spelt to him in that way;

Cognitivity: the speaker tends to perceive the process of being taught grammar as something that is not a one-time experience in the past which has an effect on his present; the same situation is with his perception of the spelling of grammar;

Tense simplification: equality of two temporal domains; absolute past tenses used in domains signal of simultaneity of situations described rather than one situation being a consequence or an addition to another;

38) If somebody **is struggling** to find a word or if someone asks me specifically to correct them then I will do. (struggles)

Grammar: Present Continuous is used instead of Simple Present;

Semantics: the speaker says that if he sees a person who struggles to find the right word or if someone asks him to correct his/her mistakes then he would help;

Cognitivity: the speaker is imagining/remembering a situation that he describes and thus transfers it to the immediate present in the moment of speech;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a present situation as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

39) I worked with a lot of British but I worked with a lot of Americans, but nearly all the time I think that the **communication is** fairly simple. (communication was)

Grammar: Tense Concord: Simple Present is used instead of Simple Past;

Semantics: the speaker has worked with a lot of Americans and a lot of British, but the communication was fairly simple for him in both cases;

Cognitivity: the speaker implies that his perception of easiness in communication with the British and the Americans that he speaks about is still present in his everyday life;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective from past to present;

40) Definitely when I **am speaking** to Czechs who don't speak English so well I try to speak as simply as possible in a lot of cases. (I speak)

Grammar: Present Continuous is used instead of Simple Present;

Semantics: the speaker admits of speaking as simple as possible while speaking to Czechs who do not speak English;

Cognitivity: the speaker imagines himself in the situation he describes and thus transfers the focus to the immediate present of the moment of speech;

Tense simplification: shift of temporal perspective; representation of a present situation as if it were holding to the moment of speech; representing a situation as if it had already become a fact;

41) I think I've lived here for such a long time and I used to be quite snobby about these things. (I have been living)

Grammar: Present Perfect is used instead of Present Perfect Continuous;

Semantics: the speaker thinks that he has been living here for a very long time and that he used to be quite snobby about some things in the past;

Cognitivity: the speaker perceives his experience of living here as a finished stage of his life from which he learned some lessons and that the present stage of his life is/will be concerned with something different;

Tense simplification: the shift of temporal perspective; the situation referred to is interpreted as having come to an end before the moment of speech;

#### SUMMARY:

Judging from the analysis of the examples above the most common examples of tense simplification in the speech of the native-speakers during the interviews were the following:

- 1) Using Present Continuous instead of Present Simple referring to general everyday activities:

*So, I'm speaking English to people in the US and the UK for work and I am speaking English at home with my wife.*

- 2) Using Simple Past tense instead of Present Perfect tense:

*The biggest difference I noticed, it must be subconscious, that when I go to the UK for 2 or 3 weeks when I come back I speak far more quickly.*

- 3) Omission of any verb / tense in speech using just intonation:

*Yes, just recently, the Italian speakers, with the strong Italian accent.*

- 4) Omission of some parts of grammatical constructions of the Past tenses:

*I've got an accent from North of England which you probably not heard before.*

- 5) Inattentiveness to the Concord of Tenses in speech:

*And really I had a delayed process when someone continues to speak like anyone translating a language in their head.*

## **V. RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS**

The research provided above was conducted in several parts. Each part was devoted to the analysis of something different. The first part of the research dealt with the socio-cultural aspects of linguistics: it examined the perception of the English language by its native speakers who currently reside in Czech Republic. The aim of this part of the research was the attempt of finding answers to the reason of the rising number of tense simplification cases in the fluent speech of native speakers of English from different countries. The research

conducted through individual interviews made possible the formulation of the following tendencies among the native speakers:

Socio-cultural approach:

- ) Most native speakers tend not to correct mistakes in someone's speech when they hear them, unless they are asked or supposed to do so (during their work as teachers of English);
- ) Despite admitting the existence of tense simplification in the fluent speech of native speakers none of the respondents could give any example of it as for, according to their words, they tend to listen to the general message and later they forget the grammatical construction it was put into;
- ) There is a division in perceiving a native speaker and a non-native speaker of English: non-native speakers are allowed to make mistakes in their speech, unless the meaning of their utterances is not changed by the mistakes whereas a native speaker who speaks with mistakes usually produces a bad impression and is subject to evaluation of his/her level of education;
- ) The more a native speaker communicates with non-native speakers of English the more his/her speech becomes simplified in terms of diminishing of a personal vocabulary. Most native speakers want people to understand them and thus they avoid using idioms, complicated grammatical constructions (long sentences); they use simple words and announce a lot more. In a longer period of time they tend to lose their original regional accents and tend to acquire the intonations of the language of the country they reside in;

Functional approach:

The second part of the interviews was focused on the native speaker's opinion about the existing cases of tense simplification in order for the interviewer to find out whether it has become a trend and is considered to be a normal use of English. Only one example (Katie is leaving tomorrow) was considered to be absolutely correct for use in communication; although some of the respondents admitted that they would probably concentrate on the meaning depending on the context of the situation rather than on the grammatical form of the utterance.

Practical approach:

The third part of the research was focused on the analysis of the examples of tense simplification in the speech of the native speakers during the interviews. The results made the following tendencies to be specified:

- ) Using Present Continuous instead of Present Simple referring to general everyday activities;
- ) Using Simple Past tense instead of Present Perfect tense;

- ) Omission of any verb / tense in speech using just intonation;
- ) Omission of some parts of grammatical constructions of the Past tenses;
- ) Inattentiveness to the Concord of Tenses in speech;

## **VI. THE CONCLUSIONS**

The main focus of this work was on tense simplification and whether it is a new trend in International English or rather a lack of education of lower class people. The reason for the choice of topic was an attempt to clarify whether the norms of the English language have gradually shifted in the course of time and one of the intentions of the author of this work was to assist present and future teachers of English in Czech Republic in establishing the borders of a normative (acceptable) and non-normative (wrong, simplified) use of English to teach to their students.

The theoretical study of the notion of tense in English from three aspects (grammatical, semantic and cognitive) brought the broadening of understanding the native speakers' particular choice of some grammatical constructions without the prescribed limitation of the language to schemes and rules and therefore it brought the expansion of the perception of the communication.

As was stated at the beginning of the work, language is a living organism which continues to develop as long as its speakers keep it alive by their constant transformation of thoughts, feelings and opinions into words and sentences. Just like changes in the human organism through time, which are not always necessarily bad but more of a natural and logical kind, the English language of today is also changing according to natural rules which are governed by logic of reasons and consequences, the definition of which can be found in many areas starting from the environment of the native speaker and ending in his/her psychological, biological and cognitive processes while using the language.

As for a definite answer to the topic of this work, it can be explained in several dimensions: definitely the constantly wrong usage of tenses in the speech of native speakers has always been a matter of lower education but in order to judge people who tend to belong to a group of society thus defined one has to be a native speaker oneself.

As for the definition of tense simplification as a new trend of International English, it cannot entirely fulfill the logical criteria of the notion of trend. A trend, being something popular with the tendency of expansion based on human beings' attraction to it and their free will to join it, cannot be applied to tense simplification. Thus, it is better to define this part of

the use of language as an occasional peculiarity which should not become a general rule or a model of teaching to the students of English. It can be perceived as a stage of language acquisition when a speaker can afford himself/herself to play with the language - that is at a stage when his/her perception of it is close to being absolute, which is observed in native speakers. An attempt to achieve this stage artificially, namely by introducing the possibilities of tense simplification to students who are in the process of language acquisition, can be compared to explaining the basics of nuclear physics to students who have just finished learning the topic of Newton's laws.

One of many interesting observations of the research was the great amount of tolerance from native speakers towards people who speak English as a second language. They treat them with respect and some kind of admiration for their language achievements and they do not judge people for occasional mistakes as long as the message they hear is more or less clear for understanding. In some way this fact may serve as a "green light" for many students of English who may know the grammar but are afraid to speak because of the possible mistakes which, in their own opinion, would embarrass them in the eyes of the native speakers.

The study of a language is not only the memorization of rules, constructions, irregularities, exclusions and some units of the vocabulary; it is a matter of great self-discipline and can be compared to going into sports professionally. As in sports the more effort a student invests into the process of language acquisition the further he/she can develop; the more he/she includes the studied language in his/her everyday routine the greater confidence he/she gets while using it; the more he/she is interested in the culture of the country of the studied language the greater perfection of the knowledge he/she wants to achieve.

Nowadays English is considered to be the language of possibilities: it opens ways to travelling, exploration of new cultures and communities around the world and, of course, communication with a great number of speakers, both native and non-native. Therefore, as in the case of tense simplification, it is very important to be able to see things that tend to hide under the dry, quite often boring and seemingly unnecessary surface of theory.

Sometimes it is said, that the rules exist to be broken, but it is necessary to specify that only someone who knows the rules thoroughly has the right and knowledge of how and when to break them and what consequences it might produce.

## Shrnutí

Tato práce pojednává a rozebírá případy zjednodušení gramatických časových konstrukcí v řeči rodilých mluvčích Anglického jazyka. Důvodem zvolení tohoto tématu byl pokus o zjištění, jestli zjednodušení časových konstrukcí se postupně stává normou a na základě toho jestli by mělo být zařazeno do výuky Anglického jazyka v České Republice.

Teoretická část této práce se soustřeďuje na analýzu pojmu gramatického času v Angličtině z pohledu gramatiky, sémantiky a kognitivní percepce. Také popisuje již existující případy zjednodušení časových konstrukcí a jejich vysvětlení.

Praktická část je rozdělená do několika částí:

- 1) Pohovory s rodilými mluvčími angličtiny, kteří žijí v České republice
- 2) Analýza existujících případů zjednodušení časových konstrukcí rodilými mluvčími
- 3) Analýza případů zjednodušení časových konstrukcí nalezených v řeči rodilých mluvčích během pohovorů z hlediska gramatiky, sémantiky a kognitivní percepce a v souladu s teoretickou částí

Výsledky této analýzy ukazují tendenci rodilých mluvčích ve volbě gramatických časových konstrukcí při řeči, jejich názory na zjednodušení časových konstrukcí v řeči rodilých mluvčích a studentů angličtiny a také jejich vnímání mateřského jazyka v kontextu jejich dlouhodobého pobytu v zahraničí. Výsledky analýzy také poskytují nové tendence v zjednodušení časových konstrukcí, které byly vypořádané během pohovorů.

Výsledky průzkumu ukazují, že zjednodušení časových konstrukcí může být nahlíženo jako mezera ve vzdělání ze strany rodilých mluvčích při komunikaci s jinými rodilými mluvčími angličtiny, ale chyby v řeči lidí pro kteří Anglický jazyk není mateřštinou jsou tolerované pokud celkový význam vzkazu je jasný. Na druhou stranu výsledky analýzy ukazují, že zjednodušení časových konstrukcí nemůže být nahlíženo jako trend v Mezinárodní Angličtině protože vyskytnutí tohoto jevu je více méně náhodné a proto by nemělo být nahlížené jako pravidlo pro výuku studentů z důvodu, že schválné použití tohoto rysu v komunikaci je prerogativou rodilých mluvčích či percepce znalosti své mateřštiny je blízka k absolutní a proto dovoluje jim hrát si s Anglickým jazykem cestou zvolení té či oné gramatické konstrukce kterou uznají za vhodnou.

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## Appendix

All the participants of the interviews were informed that the interviews would serve for academic purposes and that their speech will be recorded. They agreed to participate in them on their free will. The interviews are written in the exact manner they were recorded. The yellow marks are for tense simplification examples which were analyzed in the practical part of the research.

### Interview 1

#### Alex, London, UK

I'm Alex, I've been living in Czech Republic just over 10 years. I moved here from Switzerland and before that I was living in England, for some time in France.

I: Do you speak Czech or do you know some other foreign languages besides English?

A: Yes, I speak Czech, I speak Czech at home with my wife, I speak also French from my time in France, some German... not very good at German...but a little I can get by..

I: You have mentioned that you have a wife, who is Czech. I would like to ask you how often you use English. Because you mentioned that you speak Czech at home...

A: I use English 99 percent of the time at work. Just one or two people who struggle a bit with English and I help them by speaking Czech but otherwise I use English with my son. We have a son so we switch languages; we speak our native languages to our son and non-native languages to each other. So, it's a bit confusing...

I: Do you go home often? I mean your home in England. Is your manner of speech a bit different when you go there?

A: I don't go home very often. I've been twice in the last two years. But before that I think I hadn't been for five years. But, yeah, I do speak English differently there. I speak English in the pub with my English friends and it is very different than the English I use at work, when I have to try to make myself clear to non-native speakers. So, at home I speak much faster and I am relaxing to my normal accent, south London accent. Here I try to speak with a kind of neutral accent and use more simple words and speak more clearly.

I: Have you ever had any problems with your native language? Grammar?Pronunciation issues?

A: I don't remember many specific cases, but my father was, my mother is quite strict about grammar. I suppose pronunciation is an issue. Actually I had that issue now even because I don't live in England anymore so when I see new words in English I don't know how they pronounce because I've never heard them said by an English speaker. So, like the car maker Dacia , for example, is it Dachia or Dasia, I don't know, I've never heard an English person say it. So, pronunciation is difficult, I remember having a trouble as a child; I didn't know how to pronounce words sometimes because you can't know English until you hear it spoken but I don't remember any particular problems with grammar or tenses. It comes naturally because I probably learned it very young, I don't know.

I: You have been living abroad for quite a long time. Have you ever noticed any mistakes in speech of other people? Did you correct the mistakes?

A: Very rarely I correct people. Actually I think it somehow humiliating them so and I appreciate that my level of Czech is probably much worse than their level of English. So, I feel awkward about correcting people, I don't like doing it. But yes, sometimes I do if I can do it in a sentence while they are still talking and use a wrong article which is very common

for Czech people. Or, if they hesitate and use the wrong word I can just correct it – say the right word for them, but generally I don't, as long as the meaning is clear then I don't correct people normally. Not even my wife.

I: Was there anyone whom you found very difficult to understand?

A: I can't really think of any specific case where is about the grammar or sentence construction. Sometimes I have problems with my wife about the tenses because she does not get the tenses right. So, sometimes we have misunderstanding over some simple thing. **I can't think of any example now but when she's trying to say that she was at the shop or that she was going to the shop or she just come from the shop it's not clear to me what she's trying to say exactly and rarely, but sometimes it is important, but it's not very often.**

I: Do you think that the correct use of grammar is more important than the broadening of vocabulary?

A: My son is only four, but he is bilingual already and for him I think is more important the grammar because the vocabulary he can learn later, more easily, but the grammar is something with which I have trouble in Czech – I can't think fast enough to calculate the rules in my head. **I think nobody minds a slight pause in conversation while you think of right word**, but if you got the grammar wrong it's kind of the foundation of the language and you can't think fast enough when you're trying to speak to work out which tense you should be using or which case in Czech and this kind of thing. It has to come naturally, so I think for young children the grammar is more important. And maybe as you get older, definitely when you are my age I think maybe vocabulary is more important now. If I have some basic grammar, enough to communicate and the vocabulary is more important and I can usually make myself understood if I need to.

I: Do you think that it is really crucial to use all the past tenses in English correctly?

A: I think in normal speech it is not important, you can normally tell from the context. I was told a trick from my Czech colleague- just specify the time, like “Last year I played tennis “or “when I was young I played tennis” or whatever. When they specify the time it is much clearer, you can tell from the context which is the correct tense normally. I think that on very rare occasions it is important because the point of the sentence is really about the time and you get it wrong and the meaning of the sentence is changed but I think 9 times out of 10, probably more, it doesn't matter if you get the right tense as you can tell from context what people mean.

I: Have you ever noticed that your manner of speech has simplified basing on your experience of living abroad?

A: Yes, I think I do it voluntarily, as I mentioned earlier **I simplify my speech a bit when I am speaking with the non-native speakers** just because I want them to understand me and I don't want them to feel that they are somehow deficient in English because they can't understand me. So, I try to simplify my speech, definitely... And the second sentence you showed me “I live here for five years”, that definitely sounds wrong but I can imagine myself saying that if I'm talking to somebody who doesn't speak English very well. I would probably say that because it is simple, it is incorrect but I'd know they'd understand it as I speak very basic English.

I: Do you pay more attention when writing in English or when speaking?

A: I do do that with the emails, I write correctly, I assure that everything is correct. I can't do this text-speech or anything like that. I have to write all the commas and punctuation and put it in the right place.

I: What is more important for you – the way something is said in terms of grammar or the general message?

A: The general message is more important, normally. I suppose there might be situations where the construction of the sentence is more important, maybe when you're dealing with a native speaker and for some it is a very sensitive subject and they would be very careful, maybe there is a message there that they try to avoid saying something or they are trying to give you some message without actually saying it, but, again 99 times out of a 100 it is a general message.

## **Interview 2**

### **James, USA**

My name is James, I'm a director of technical information, I moved here in 1993, so I've been here for almost 20 years, was away for 2.5 years, so 18 and a half years.

I: Do you know some other foreign languages?

J: Yes, I speak fluent Czech, I speak fluent German, I speak fluent Slovak, I speak bits and pieces of Danish ( my ex-wife is Danish ), my daughter speaks Danish with me. I speak some Polish. Just...I love languages.

I: How often do you use English?

J: Daily. I use it in my job. At home we speak mostly Czech. My wife is Czech.

I: Have you ever had any problems with the English language?

J: Well, my parents were not strict at all, as a matter of fact I come from the part of the US which is very rural, very poor, very uncultural. As a matter of fact we have our own dialect of American English, it is called Indiana English and we pronounce some words differently there, for example they don't say "wash", they say "worsh", you've got a "Worshington" and things like that and other things that pronounce differently as well. They were never strict as far as English is concerned when I grew up. I did well in English at school, I was fast about the structure and the grammar, everything. I really tried to improve my English myself when I grew up.

I: While living abroad, have you ever noticed any mistakes in the speech of other people speaking English? Have you ever corrected someone?

J: I think we have to divide people into various groups because if I hear... Well, first – I was an English teacher for 10 years; I've published 31 books on the language. So, part of my job was to correct people when they were speaking but if you ask me when I'm somewhere in a restaurant and I hear my Czech friends speak English I probably would not correct them out of respect for the other person. However, when I hear a native speaker speaking, usually an American, but not always, incorrectly using English it makes my blood curl.

I: Could you remember some examples that made you angry?

J: Well, I used to hire teachers for the school I worked at. It was my job to find the teachers to come in and teach. And we would have someone coming very often with a degree, in some cases even a degree in English who made mistakes. And they were teaching the students to wrong things or teaching incorrect grammar or vocabulary because they themselves didn't even know it. When I started at the school they had an Australian who was teaching there

who misspelled continuously the word “Britain”, he spelled it “Britian” and when I first saw that on a paper that he’d written I thought it was a typing error. And then I saw him teaching, I had to go and watch his teaching once in a quarter and he would spell wrong on the board, he would spell “Britian” and that just really made me upset. And that is just one example of many. We finally got rid of the person, we fired him. That bothers me, when I hear someone speaking English incorrectly and teaching incorrectly. In my job I’ve taught a lot of places: the Czech government, Czech TV and lot of my job was correcting previous teacher’s mistakes.

I: Can you remember of some example of mixing of tenses, of using the wrong past tense?

J: It’s very common in America. We don’t use Present Perfect tense as often as we should. As a matter of fact there’ve been many studies done showing that the more educated person is in the US the more likely they are to use Present Perfect tense. Also it bothers me when I hear people avoiding it. For example, my family. I speak to my family in the US. They use it, but they don’t use it as often as they should. They are automatically default to the past tense when they are saying things. I hear that mostly in people who are not educated.

I: What is more important for students who decide to study English: the correct use of grammar or the broadening of their vocabulary?

J: I would say both. I’ve encountered many people who have told me “Oh, I don’t want to learn the grammar, I just want to learn to speak” but you really can’t do it because you’re behaving as a robot would behave if you don’t know the grammar if you cannot formulate your own sentences correctly. You can memorize vocabulary, you can memorize phrases, words and so on, but you won’t be able to react if the situation varies from the original situation. Grammar is more important than people realize.

I: Do you think that in the present time in the US it is crucial to use all the past tenses correctly?

J: Well, that’s the thing about the English language. It is easy to be able to communicate fast in English, to learn a few things, to make yourself understood. However, to really know the language it is very very difficult. In English there are many tenses, so like if you really want to learn English it is a very difficult language: lots of irregularities, but the thing is that in English you have this false sense of security – you learn a few words, people understand you, you listen to a few songs on the radio, you make yourself understood really easily, but you don’t know the language as a whole different thing.

I: Do you pay more attention when writing or when speaking?

J: I don’t pay that much attention when I’m speaking. I do when I write e-mails. Because I work in a profession where we all writers and even though we work for technical documentation we all writers at some point in our lives and other writers are looking at the e-mails that I’ve written so I don’t want them to think that I don’t know English so of course I give it a second look.

I: Have you ever noticed that you make some mistakes in your speech?

J: Yes, I do. And I do that because I blame it on knowing lots of languages and the older I get the more my head is cluttered with information. I try to correct myself right away.

I: What do you think is more important: the way something is said in terms of grammar or the general message?

J: I’d say the general message.

### Interview 3

#### Rob, UK

My name is Rob, I'm a technical writer and I've been living seven of the previous nine years in the Czech Republic. I spent two years back in Britain.

I: Do you know any other foreign language?

R: I've learned French at school. I speak a little Czech, not terribly well.

I: How often do you use English?

R: I use English basically every day. I use it at work because it's main language. I use it at home as well. My wife is Czech; my children are half Czech half English. Most of them speak Czech.

I: Was there any problem in your study of English as your first language?

R: I didn't really have any problems. I come from the South-East of England so it is considered Received Pronunciation, probably my grandparents taught me to speak properly. But I had no problems learning. Generally it is not such of emphasis on the use of grammar in the UK. I found a lot far more when I actually came to Czech Republic to teach English. There wasn't any problems with my pronunciation. As far as I remember everything was fine.

I: While living in the Czech Republic have you noticed people speaking English with mistakes and how did it make you feel?

R: English is quite a broadly spoken language so generally you hear it spoken by a lot of non-native speakers and kind of when you grow up you get used to it. Plus you've got a variety of countries where they speak English too with slight differences. The biggest problem for me was probably more accent in understanding people. Czech people who speak English there is a variety of common mistakes which in the beginning sound very odd but I don't know whether it is my personality or just how often we hear it I'd rather have people get the meaning rather than sort of going "no, that's not right". It is more important. I know that there are specific examples I remember that the first time hearing them: a Czech person describing going out to the nature on the weekend it was rather odd but now I don't hear. I basically don't hear the common mistakes anymore.

I: Do you think that learning the grammar is more important than expanding the vocabulary?

R: I think probably more expanding the vocabulary. And, simultaneously pronunciation is probably the most important. Most of the times grammar is not such an issue in understanding what people are saying, because I think that English is generally much more of a bitty language. It is more composed of smaller parts. Meaning it is not that difficult but sometimes pronunciation can lead to difficulties, if a word is pronounced maybe in Czech phonetics.

I: Have you ever met anyone with whom the communication was very difficult for you?

R: Well, again I'd say it is probably the level of English that if you cope with it than it is generally OK to understand. My wife is Czech and I have some difficulty dealing with my parents-in-law. They both speak a certain level of English. It can be quite difficult sometimes. Especially when they speak English with Czech grammar. It is like: "Is it a question or a statement?"

I: Since the time that you came to Czech Republic have you ever noticed that your speech has in a way somewhat simplified?

R: I'd say it has always been a problem trying to find the right word for me. The biggest difference I noticed, it must be subconscious, that when I go to the UK for 2 or 3 weeks when

**I come back I speak far more quickly,** I notice people having to stop me a lot more. I need a couple of weeks of acclimatizing. A kind of a strange thing because I have two small children, one of them is one year and a half, the other is three and a half and the oldest one is getting sort of bilingual so sometimes it takes a little bit of time to try and explain where I go exactly.

I: What is more important to you – the way something is spoken in terms of grammar or the general message?

R: I say the general message always is far more important to me. Definitely.

#### **Interview 4**

##### **Louise, Australia**

My name is Louise. I have been living in the Czech Republic for almost two years. I work as an information engineer or a technical writer. I'm from Australia, so English is my native language. Before working here I was an English teacher.

I: Do you know any other foreign language besides English?

L: No, I only speak English and my Czech is extremely limited to just a few basic words and sentences.

I: Can you remember if you had some problems when studying English as your first language?

L: As far as grammar goes I don't remember learning any specific grammar points. I also don't remember having any problems with grammar points. I feel like I must just have learned to speak English through my parents and then at school it was more focused on comprehension and like reading and writing more than grammar itself. That might be wrong, but that is just how I remember it. There is not a huge focus on grammar in Australia because we just learn it through speech. I did have some problems with pronunciation when I was a very small child. I am not sure why but I do know that I had to attend some speech therapy courses when I was maybe less than 5 years of age, maybe no more than 6. It was some sounds such as the "th" sound, also the "s" sound. These are the ones I really remember and it was only a short problem, which was resolved.

I: While living here, in the Czech Republic, have you noticed people, non-native speakers, trying to speak English, that they make mistakes while using the language? Do you correct these mistakes? What do you feel when you hear people making some obvious mistakes in grammar?

L: Of course I hear a lot of grammatical and even just language mistakes with people that speak English as the second language. It doesn't cause any bad feelings for me. When I was an English teacher it was my job to correct these mistakes but even in doing that I didn't want to cause problems with confidence to my students so you need to be really selective about the mistakes that you do correct maybe it would depend on what grammar point we were focusing on that day or things that were bigger mistakes and others might have been a focus. **If I spend time with people that speak English as a second language, but I am spending time with them socially I don't correct them unless they request it or maybe if the mistake they make could cause confusion if they were speaking with someone else and maybe might embarrass them or something.** But generally I have no problems spending time with people who speak English as a second language. I think it's amazing when people can communicate in English when it is the second language.

I: Was there anyone in your life who you found difficult to understand?

L: I can't think of anyone who played a major part in my life being difficult to understand. I've had ex-boyfriends who spoke English as a second language so **of course sometime there has been some language barriers that when we haven't fully understood each other** but nothing I couldn't get around.

I: Could you provide some examples of these language barriers? Were they connected with the lack of some words, like the limited vocabulary or more with the grammatical structures?

L: Well, I had a Czech boyfriend once and he made a lot of grammatical mistakes but had a very decent vocabulary. I always understood what he was trying to say. I think sometimes it is more about culture than about the language. So, sometimes we misinterpreted each other not because of the words we were using but the cultural differences, I think...

I: Is the correct use of grammar more important than the broadening of vocabulary? What would you recommend your students to focus on as a teacher?

L: Depends, I think...to sound more closer to being native you should focus on grammar, the way that you construct your sentence is obviously going to make you sound better. Of course it is important to increase your vocabulary but I think native speakers don't always use the most complicated words. Sometimes it is just better to use something more simple to get your message across.

I: Have you ever noticed that, for example, since the time that you moved to Czech Republic, that your manner of speech has somewhat simplified?

L: Yes, absolutely. **Since I started being an English teacher I feel a lot more conscious of the words I choose to use and a lot more conscious of the way that I express my feelings.** It is not just about being in a foreign country it is also with colleague that do speak English I have to think about some certain expressions that they are familiar with because they are not from Australia. The speed with which I speak, yes, I definitely think a lot more about what I'm saying. **I've also sometimes felt like my vocabulary in English is decreasing which is not good because I'm not speaking another language so that shouldn't be the case.**

I: What is more important for you – the way something is said or the general message?

L: Well, I think that a message is going to be stronger if it is said well. I do not think that one or the other is more important but I think that if you can express your ideas well then people will listen to your message.

## **Interview 5**

### **Vincent, Ireland**

My name is Vince, I've been in the Czech Republic for 13 years now. I work as a technical writer. I am 35 years old. I am originally from Ireland.

I: Do you know any other foreign languages?

V: I speak Czech quite well, I also speak German up to pre-intermediate level and I have some experience in studying French and Russian.

I: How often do you use English in your everyday life?

V: Every day.

I: When you meet with your friends is it more often that you use English or Czech?

V: I use different languages with different friends. With some of my Czech friends we use Czech, with others we use English. And with my English speaking friends we use English.

I: Have you ever had any problems with the English language?

V: I would say no. **From a very young age I read a lot,** I was encouraged, my whole family were enthusiastic readers and I think that helped me in my studies of English.

I: While living in the Czech Republic have you ever noticed people make mistakes when they speak? Both native and non-native speakers?

V: I notice it all the time. It used to bother me. But it doesn't bother me as much anymore.

I: Can you remember some examples of the mistakes that bothered you?

V: Well, for example, the phrasal verb "to be used to doing something" and when you say "you used to do something". These are very often confused and once someone used them incorrectly I needed to clarify what they were trying to say if it wasn't clear from the context.

I: Have you ever corrected someone's mistakes in their speech?

V: I think I am very aware and I think I notice when people make mistakes in their speech. I don't always correct them openly. It depends. **Here in the office we sometimes correct each other but it more like a playful way of annoying each other, making fun of each other as colleagues do.** But sometimes I would correct members of my family and in my work as a teacher I've spent most of my time correcting.

I: Was there anyone in your life that you found difficult to understand?

V: Definitely. **Actually quite recently there was someone whom I have terrible trouble understanding.** This was a case of someone who presented himself as a native speaker but he used verbal construction that I found extremely unnatural.

I: For example?

V: To think of specific example I can't. I can give you a quote of something he said but I can tell you that he used very formal expressions in a context where you are sitting in a pub having a beer where you making small talk and he used very formal, sometimes very technical kind of expressions and I needed to clarify constantly what he was trying to say and I also found his grammar to be a bit confusing.

I: So, you didn't believe that he was a native speaker?

V: I was very doubtful about it.

I: Do you think that the correct use of grammar is more important than the broadening of vocabulary?

V: Absolutely not, I think vocabulary is essential but also fluent speech is essential even if it is full of mistakes, speech fluency and speed of responding to another speaker is the essence of communication, I think. People can be extremely successful inspite of the way they speak. Look at ArnordSchwarznegger for example. I guess in America there are many examples. **But if people are good communicators, engaged with their listener, if they are speaking with enthusiasm about their message then I think the number of mistakes and the types of mistakes are not really an obstacle.**

I: Do you think that using the tenses correctly is crucial or would it be enough for someone to use simple past tense? Would people understand him/her?

V: I think people would understand. There could be certain, more complex things he might want to say, or, to say it in another way – if he limits himself to the simple tenses, particularly to the simple past he will have a narrower range of expression and he might find it difficult to say more complex things. I think people would understand most of what he would say.

I: Have you ever noticed while living in the Czech Republic that your manner of speech has somewhat simplified?

V: I would say “yes” and “no”. There was a time when I worked in a almost completely Czech environment and I think my use of English was more restricted. I found myself using more limited vocabulary. However, now I am working in a primarily English environment with mostly native speakers and I think this enriches my vocabulary. I think for me I am sensitive to the environment that I’m in. Something that has changed I have completely lost my regional accent and when I go back home people think I am a foreigner, which I hate.

I: Do you pay more attention while you are writing or when you are speaking?

V: I am very aware of how I write and I make a conscious effort to use correct grammar, correct sentence structure, to choose my words carefully when I write.

I: What is more important for you – the way something is said or the general message?

V: I would say that the general message is the core of the communication and that has to be a value. If it is not a value or if it is against my own beliefs then I may sometimes use the style in which the message is delivered as a way to judge somebody or as a way to disregard the message, but I think content matters most.

## **Interview 6**

### **Toby, USA**

My name is Toby, I’m American, I’ve been in Czech Republic for over 15 years, 16 years with a few years break in the middle. I speak, obviously English as a native speaker, a bit of Czech and a little German.

I: How often do you use English?

T: I use English every day. Sorry, I forgot – I am a technical writer.

I: Do you use English or Czech with your friends?

T: Depends on the friends, mostly English.

I: Have you ever had any problems with the English language?

T: I think normal, what normal kids have. You know, all kids make mistakes saying things. That is why you have teachers and parents to correct you.

I: Can you remember some particular examples?

T: No, I mean there are always things like when you say “I” instead of “me”, things when your parents remind you to be polite, but I can’t think of any specific things.

I: While living in Czech Republic have you ever noticed people making mistakes when speaking English? Did you correct them? Both native speakers and non-native speakers.

T: With native speakers it is always amusing. With non-native speakers...**I was a teacher once so I used to correcting people.** There have been some things you said that I haven’t corrected because **you are not to correct somebody unless you ask their permission first**, but I notice lot of mistakes. I of course make them too but you just get used to it. Also, **growing up in the States you used to non-native speakers who have moved there speaking English** so I used to people butchering the language. So as long as you understand the meaning you are happy. It is just when you are with friends you ask them whether to correct them or not.

I: Can you please remember some of the examples of the mistakes?

T: “Borrow” and “lend” and “teach” and “learn” – it’s another type of thing where often they just use them the wrong way.

I: Do you mean the native speakers?

T: No, the Czechs

I: What about the use of tenses in sentences?

T: It depends on the level, I've talked with the people of so many levels I can't think of anything that stands up now but that is because I am on the spot to think about it and if I really put more time and talk to some people it would just come back to me.

I: Have you ever met anyone with whom the communication was very difficult for you?

T: Usually if the use of language is that difficult for me to understand then it is because they are not using it correctly. They just use it in such a messed-up way. Often if it is not a non-native speaker it will happen that the other ...that they just don't speak English that well. Other times if it's a native speaker ...Sometimes the way they say things, phrases, accents... It is a combination... That can happen with someone from Great Britain and from Australia, from India..

I: What is more important for you – the way something is said or the general message?

T: Well, it is 70 percent how you say it and only 30 percent what is said. **That's what the standards, but they are not real for decades...I never really thought about it myself because I tend to listen to the meanings,** but that's just anything presentation-wise. What is more important for me – I'd like to say it's what is said, but I don't even know – I never thought about it.

I: Have you ever noticed that while living abroad your manner of speech has a bit simplified?

T: Yes, when I first moved here I lived in a small Czech town of about 900 people. In the beginning of the year, **before I came here I was solving crossword puzzles in New York Times.By the end of the year I can barely do one in the USA Today.** If you know what I am talking about but it is basically difficult ones to very simple ones because **every day I didn't have any native speaker friends for 6 months** and so I change my language, the way I speak, how I speak based on who I am talking to. So when I knew that people would not understand things. Well, I was always a teacher, but I wouldn't even bother saying them – phrases and expressions ...that... just wasn't worth saying because I knew I'd have to get into a 20 minute explanation. **See, I downed down a lot.**

### **Interview 7**

#### **Robin, England, UK**

My name is Robin, I've been in the Czech Republic for five years, my work is a quality assurance engineer. I am from England, originally... So, you will notice **I've got an accent from North of England which you probably not heard before.** It's quite a regional accent.

I: Do you know any other foreign languages?

R: No, **I'm a typical sort of lazy English person who is not learned any foreign languages.**

I: What about Czech?

R: I tried to learn it but I gave up.

I: How often do you use English?

R: All the time, yeah... My wife is a Ukrainian, so she has been learning English so I kind of make my English very simple when I talk to her so that it is no confusion or so she can understand me.

I: Can you remember of any possible problems with English at school?

R: I don't think it was my parents, it was probably the schooling where it was sort of taught...to properly express the English. I did actually fail my English exam.. I think you like had to write stories or write an essay on going swimming or... I think it wasn't so much my

English, it was like a lack of imagination. I just didn't have an imagination to dream of some story, so, I failed my English exam.

I: So, it wasn't the grammar?

R: Don't think so, no.

I: While living in Czech Republic have you noticed people who speak English, both native and non-native speakers, making mistakes in their speech? How did these mistakes make you feel? Did you correct them?

R: Yeah, they do make mistakes and I just let it go. Thing I find frustrating when people try to learn English they seem they got everything correct but English people don't really care if you make a mistake as long as they understand what you're saying, the matter. Especially in informal situations if you make a mistake...none cares really...

I: Have you ever heard grammar mistakes made by native speakers?

R: I don't think so, no... I think that probably what is when someone doesn't use the correct language because of being lazy, they try ...they actually know the correct grammar but they're cutting it short to make it quicker. It is like a laziness. If you talk like talking slang...

I: There is a tendency that the speakers in the US tend not to use Present perfect tense at all...they tend to use simple past almost for every context.. Do you agree with it?

R: I've never noticed that, to be honest..

I: Was there anyone with whom you found the communication difficult?

R: Yes, just recently, the Italian speakers with the strong Italian accent it is quite difficult to understand what they're saying because they pronounce "ed" like in "wanted" they pronounce it as "wantEd", pronounce every last letter.

I: What would be your advice for the new students of English? Should they focus more on the study of grammar or should they focus on broadening of their vocabulary?

R: Broadening the vocabulary, definitely...and don't worry too much about the grammar. Only really worry about the grammar if you got a job where you really got to write reports and things like that...but otherwise don't worry about it. The vocabulary is more important.

I: Do you pay much attention to your speech when you speak?

R: It is just spontaneous because I don't really understand all this past perfect; I just do it naturally because I've learned it like this.

I: What is more important – the way something is said or the general message?

R: What it means is the most important.

## **Interview 8**

### **Chazz, Vermont, USA**

My name is Chazz, I'm from Vermont in the North-East of the US, I've been in the Czech Republic for almost five years.

I: Do you know any foreign languages?

C: I've studied a lot of foreign languages but I wouldn't say that I know any of them.

I: When you meet with your friends do you speak Czech or English?

C: English only.

I: Even when you meet Czech friends?

C: Yeah, my Czech is terrible.

I: Have you ever experienced any problems when studying your first language?

C: The only problem I had learning English was the spelling. Because English is somewhat non-phonetic which was big difficulty for me as a child. **But I never had any pronunciation problems or grammar problems.**

I: While living in Czech Republic have you noticed people making mistakes when they speak English? Native speakers and non-native speakers?

C: Yes, I see people making mistakes and how I feel depends on the mistake. Some mistakes drive me crazy because of the frequency of the mistakes.

I: For example?

C: Consistent misuse of prepositions or consistent misuse of verb tenses. I have one Czech friend who used to use continuous all the time, for everything. He doesn't do that anymore, thankfully...but that drove me crazy. **Or another friend of mine repeated pronouns so when she was speaking she would say something like "the man, he went to the store", so subject and then pronoun duplicated, and that also drives me crazy.** Certain phrases, when they are misused, like "on cottage" which is a very common Czech mistake, or "in the nature", which is something that comes from German rather than from English, being a direct translation. And that was because it was just very consistently the same mistake again and again and it was something they were taught to say in schools even though is incorrect. And then certain British uses of English irritate me...For example, British pronunciation of the word "herb" in English because it is "herb". In American English we say "erb", pronouncing the last 3 letters and in British English they say "Herb" and they drop the "r" but when the British want to make fun of American pronunciation they say there is a hitch in "herb", and my response is "Yes, there is also R in that word". Lesser in speaking but more in writing when people take the contraction of "would" or "should" plus "have" and they use "ve", so "wouldve" instead of "would've" that drives me crazy but also makes me expect that sometime in the next 100 years or so we'll have new phrasal verbs for these forms.

I: Have you ever corrected people who misuse English?

C: Yes, frequently. I was an English teacher for 4 years and a number of my friends asked that I correct them and help them. My girlfriend is Czech and I'm constantly helping her improve her English. So, the difficulty is measuring when to stop correcting someone because there is a certain point when they've had enough and they don't want any more corrections.

I: Was there anyone in your life with whom the communication was very difficult? Besides the friend that you mentioned who used continuous all the time?

C: **He actually wasn't a problem to understand because other than the misused verb tenses his communication was very clear and he has excellent understanding of English and a very wide vocabulary, just always used the wrong tense. There are some people who have had thick accents, that take me a while to understand. There is a guy who used to work here, from England, who had really thick Liverpool accent,** like a working class Liverpool accent, that was really difficult to understand. In terms of non-native speakers...the biggest thing is the accent; once the pronunciation is clear enough...as long as the word make sense...that they're using.. I don't think it is much of a problem to understand.

I: What would be your recommendation for the new students of English? Should they focus more on the grammar or on the broadening of their vocabulary?

C: I would say the first thing to focus on would be communication. Both grammar and vocabulary are part of that but if you're not able to speak to someone, having great grammar

and great vocabulary doesn't help you much. And then it depends on the context of communication: if you're learning English because you want to kind of get in touch with the culture or to be able to travel and have conversation with people then the vocabulary is more important. Same thing if you're going to study abroad the vocabulary be the important thing first. If you're doing it for work or because you want to pass an exam the grammar should be the first focus with vocabulary not neglected.

I: Have you ever noticed since you came to Czech Republic that you manner of speech has changed?

C: For me I would say my pronunciation has changed. I announce a lot more. In Vermont we tend to drop the second half of every word, so that can be very difficult to understand because we speak quickly and drop half of what we're saying. Even before I left the US I started training myself to not to do that for years but then coming here it became even more so and the way that I pronounce vowels has shifted, just a little bit, to be closer to Czech pronunciation of English because I find that helps people understand me better, but I don't always realize that I'm doing it. In terms of simplification I think I was highly influenced by being an English teacher here because I would have to go from class to class and very quickly shift the level of English that I was using. So, I use different range of vocabulary, the complexity of the sentence structure depending on the audience.

I: You have mentioned that in the US there is a general tendency to simplify the past tenses. What do you think of this tendency? What causes it?

C: I don't think it is a problem, that would be my opinion. It doesn't make it more easier or difficult to understand. What I think it comes from is two parts: one is a history of immigration to America – past perfect tense is not the one that we would use often anywhere, so if you have an immigrant to come and learn English as a second language and then have children who would learn English as their first language they probably wouldn't hear the past perfect used correctly in their home growing up and because it is not something causing confusion it just slips out of the language. I think that is how it is probably left of the language in American English.

I: What is more important for you – the way something is said in terms of grammar or the general message?

C: The general message as long as errors don't change the message. That's something that happens a lot of the times : for example if you change the words "by" and "until" – that can really change the context of the sentence. Or "too much " VS "enough". This really changes the meaning of the sentence. So, if it's that kind of mistake it needs to be corrected because you lose the message and the message is more important.

## **Interview 9**

### **Brad, California, USA**

I'm Brad, I'm 49 years old, I've been living in Czech Republic 8 of the eleven last years with a year and a half in Singapore and a year and a half which I was back in California, 2004 and 2005. I speak Spanish, I speak Czech in about A to B1 level, I speak a bit of Japanese, a bit of French, German and have a vocabulary of about 100 words in 10 languages, but I don't speak these languages, just know the words. **Currently I am using English all the time,** I don't work with Czech developer team **so I'm speaking English to people in the US and the UK for work**

and I am speaking English at home with my wife because she is French and has been speaking English all her life. So, unfortunately, I've become somewhat monolingual last three years.

I: Can you remember of having some problems with English when you were a child?

B: Well, the women in my mother's family would correct us to make sure that we spoke grammatically correct and also to use polite language and all this... that was the more developed side of our family. So, yeah, they did a bit but I didn't have any difficulty. I always read and used language on several rates higher than whatever grade I was in. So, language was easier my stronger area comparing to math and science.

I: Since you came to Czech Republic have you ever noticed that your language has simplified a bit?

B: I don't have difficulty expressing feelings, but my language is simplified a lot. I think sometime around the second or third year of living here and my previous job in Prague – I was dealing with Czech every day and speaking a mix of Czech and English, but lots of English, because there was also Polish and Ukrainian guys, people from everywhere. So, my English has definitely simplified and when I go home for visits, I'd once in two years, people say I have an accent and people say I talk like a dictionary or an encyclopedia and not like a native speaker and actually sometimes I have to ask them what they mean: I haven't watched the same TV shows or television ads, I have no idea what they're talking about sometimes. So, definitely English has simplified and my wife's English is very good but I still speak dictionary English with her. I don't use too many idioms, even though her English is quite good – she has been speaking it her whole life. But I still speak about, let's say B2 style of English. Very straightforward English, but she doesn't have problems with it because French has even more tenses than English: pluperfect and subjunctive, these things..

I: Have you ever met anyone with whom the communication was difficult for you in terms of understanding?

B: Sure, it happens all the time, because... living abroad there's people with different accents and people who impose their grammatical, their syntax to English language or whatever language they are speaking.. I've done proof reading for about 6 different languages: Israeli English is different proof read than Russian English or Czech English or Spanish English. I thought Malaysian speakers especially difficult because they would apply Malaysian intonation onto English and I had no idea what they were saying. I think when I travel sometimes I meet people with a very limited vocabulary so I really have to try to help them to find the simplest possible words to gain understanding of what we are about to do or finding some place in the city..

I: Can you please remember any of the examples of these difficulties?

B: The Malaysian example is what I think about: a Malaysian colleague in Singapore – he spoke 4 languages, he spoke English, Malaysian, Mandarin and some Japanese, but he would always talk like this (showing the intonation). So, it's kind of Mandarin, kind of Malaysian intonation with an emphasis on the final syllable, but he would apply it to English. And really I had a delayed process when someone continues to speak like anyone translating a language in their head, you fall behind what is currently being spoken while trying to process the language. That was a specific example with that guy I had to collaborate with sometimes, I really struggled to understand and had to "I'm sorry, can you repeat that?" I missed the last part. I am used to it, but it happens.

I: What would be your recommendation for the new students of English? Should they focus more on grammar or in the broadening of their vocabulary?

B: It depends on what they need to do. Just in my brain vocabulary works better. I have really good static memory so that is why I've got a part of the vocabulary of the languages I don't speak and with a little bit of vocabulary you can do a lot: you can point onto other things to help people understand if you're travelling. If you're communicating professionally that's a little bit different because your grammar and syntax usage is going to reflect on you and it has to be understandable. So, if you've got good vocabulary but your syntax is so broken people can't comprehend it that's going to be a problem. So, if you're just talking about social interaction the vocabulary is really important, you need that core – 800 to 1200 words to be able to have some basic communication with someone in another language, maybe a little bit less if it is a pub, but for professional communication grammar is going to be important: it doesn't have to be perfect but it has to be close enough. **A little verb tense problem there or some missing articles – that is OK, but if it is really ugly then people give up and say “Hey, why don't you send it to me in German or Czech and I will just put it in the Google translate and see what I can do”.**

I: What is more important for you – the way something is said in terms of grammar or the general message?

B: So, there is two different answers: as a teacher my job was to correct people's grammar and that was a skill that took a while to build up. I taught for a little more than 3 years and I still teach on occasion and that was something that took some confidence to do to interrupt someone or to echo back the corrections, to find that pause, but some people don't pause so you have to really interrupt them, say it correctly and make them repeat it. That is a teaching method but if you are at a meeting of developers' comprehension is the only thing that matters. I cannot interrupt a senior manager and say “Oh, Mark, you should have used perfect tense” – that's nonsense. So, professionally I would never interrupt people in the office for corrections. Unless so I can do that privately and after the fact. I don't correct my wife very often, unless she makes a big mistake. **But teaching – it was different: you have to correct people because that is why they are taking the lessons, that is what they are hoping for...** is to say the things the right way, use the right preposition, use the right “this”, “that”, whatever connector they need. So, two different contexts: comprehension is more important in every day, but if I'm teaching then corrections are huge.

### **Interview 10**

#### **Sam, England, UK**

My name is Sam, I'm 41 years old, I've lived in the Czech Republic for 17 years since the end of 1996. I am currently a technical writer.

I: Do you any foreign languages?

S: I speak some Czech and I studied French at school but I'm not very good at either of them. I mainly speak English at home and almost all time at work.

I: When you meet with you friends who are non-native speakers (Czech friends ), do you use English or Czech with them?

S: Nearly always English. I sometimes speak Czech with friends of my fiancé who don't speak English but most of the time I speak English socially.

I: Have you ever had any problems in studying your first language?

S: I don't think so, I mean I'm a writer, I've always been quite good at English. One odd thing was when I was at school, in a primary school in the 1970s there was an idea that it is quite fashionable that children should not be taught grammar so I was never actually taught grammar, it was never spelled to me in that way. We also learned a simplified version of English called ITA, I think we wrote in a more simple phonetic way which wasn't a problem for me but some of the people I went to school with had difficulties switching from ITA to normal English which was for some reason known as TO. It was quite an odd system that I think eventually got stopped, it was used for few years.

I: While living in Czech Republic have you ever noticed people making mistakes when they speak English? Native and non-native speakers?

S: I think so, yes. I think occasionally people will switch from kind of thinking in terms of Czech grammar to the thinking in terms of English grammar and even native speakers can make mistakes like that. I think it is possible.

I: Can you remember any of the examples?

S: I am sorry, I can't think of anything.

I: Do you tend to correct people who make mistakes?

S: Not much. If somebody is struggling to find a word or if someone asks me specifically to correct them then I will do but it seems a bit rude to start criticizing the way people speak. My fiancé was very angry that she was saying "fishes" for a long time and I didn't point out that it is actually "fish", so, she wasn't happy about that.

I: Was there anyone with whom you found the communication difficult?

S: There are definitely cases. I used to work as a journalist at the Prague post and we would work with Czech researchers and in those cases it was very difficult sometimes that you would write questions in English, they would translate them into Czech, ask the person you are interviewing, usually by fax or e-mail and you would get answers back and somewhere along that line it became very difficult to understand the exact meaning of the answers that we got; a lot of the time there was not much meaning to the answers that we got. It was often quite difficult to understand them completely. I think cases because I understand that Czech tenses are a lot simpler than English and so it is sometimes hard to get the sequence of things clear in my head.

I: Was there ever a similar problem with a native speaker?

S: I don't think so, no. I worked with a lot of British but I worked with a lot of Americans, but nearly all the time I think that the communication is fairly simple. It is probably easier for British people to understand Americans than for Americans to understand British people because we see a lot more American TV and film.

I: There is a theory that the American people tend to be more relaxed about their use of the language. That the British tend to be more traditional, that they are very attentive to grammar. Do you agree with that?

S: I think that is generally true. I work with writers so they are quite careful with grammar and things like that but I think Americans in general... the language is used more loosely and there is a kind of new ideas and new words spring more often in American English than in British English which tends to be a bit more conservative, I suppose.

I: Do you think that it is more important to study grammar than to broaden the vocabulary?

S: I think up to a point grammar is more important, you need a basic understanding of the grammar, but I wouldn't get too bogged down in understanding every tense. Once you have a basic understanding of the grammar, I think vocabulary becomes more important, but grammar to begin with I think.

I: There is a theory that the American native speakers tend not to use Present perfect, they usually tend to use simple past. Have you noticed it? Do you agree with it?

S: I think so. They would say "I went" rather than "I was going to". I suppose so, yes. They use shorter and more direct kind of language whereas maybe British English is more "around the houses"...

I: Do you think that one of the explanations to this is time economy?

S: I think Americans are more people who are native speakers in America than in Britain so their language developed so that people try to be simple as possible to get the meaning across. Time is also perhaps an issue, but I would say it is as simple as possible so that as many people as possible can understand it. Whereas in Britain outside of the big cities you come across far few people who are immigrants or second generation of immigrants who don't speak English as a first language.

I: Have you ever noticed that you pay more attention when writing than when speaking?

S: Definitely when I am speaking to Czechs who don't speak English so well I try to speak as simply as possible in a lot of cases. Also when I first moved to Prague I had quite a strong regional accent and I think as a result of not just working with Czechs but working with Americans as well that I've had to kind of modify and moderate that accent. I don't have anyone near with a strong regional English accent that I used to have. If I spoke the way people speak in my home town almost nobody would understand me here.

I: From which part of the UK are you?

S: I was born in Rochdale which is close to Manchester; it is between Manchester and Leeds, but closer to Manchester in the north-west of England.

I: What is more important for you – the way something is said or the general message?

S: I think the general message. I think I've lived here for such a long time and I used to be quite snobby about these things but I think eventually you realize that the message is more important than the way it is said. I think as a writer I've gone from being quite a flowery writing style to trying to write in a much simpler way because it is more important to communicate the message than to impress people with the way that you say something.

