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## Effectiveness of Instructional Activities in Military English Courses: Teacher and Student Perspectives

### Efektivita výukových aktivit ve vojenských kurzech anglického jazyka: Pohled učitelů a studentů

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**Abstract:** This study examines the perceived effectiveness of instructional activities in elementary-level military English courses from both teacher and student perspectives. Data were collected through a self-report questionnaire completed by 52 English teachers affiliated to the University of Defence Language Centre and 173 learners enrolled in Level 1 courses. Descriptive statistical analysis indicated broad agreement between teachers and learners regarding the usefulness of classroom activities. The results further suggest that teacher corrective feedback during interactive tasks substantially influences learners' motivation and perceptions of activity effectiveness. The study contributes to the understanding of the specific needs of adult beginner learners and supports the development of evidence-based instructional strategies for military English instruction.

**Abstrakt:** Tato studie zkoumá vnímanou efektivitu výukových aktivit v kurzech anglického jazyka na úrovni 1 z pohledu učitelů a studentů. Data byla získána prostřednictvím dotazníkového šetření, kterého se zúčastnilo 52 učitelů angličtiny působících v Centru jazykového vzdělávání Univerzity obrany a 173 účastníků kurzů. Deskriptivní statistická analýza poukázala na výraznou míru shody mezi oběma skupinami v hodnocení užitečnosti jednotlivých výukových aktivit. Výsledky dále naznačují, že zpětná vazba poskytovaná učitelem během interaktivních úloh významně ovlivňuje motivaci studentů a jejich vnímání efektivity výuky. Studie přispívá k hlubšímu porozumění specifickým potřebám účastníků začátečnických kurzů anglického jazyka a její závěry slouží jako podklad pro rozvoj výukových strategií v těchto kurzech.

**Keywords:** Adult Learners; Classroom Activities; Elementary-Level English Courses; Military Environment; Perceived Effectiveness.

**Klíčová slova:** vzdělávání dospělých; výukové aktivity; kurzy anglického jazyka pro začátečníky; vojenské prostředí; vnímaná efektivita.

## INTRODUCTION

As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Czech Republic recognises English proficiency as a vital operational capability within its armed forces. English serves as the principal medium of communication in multinational missions and exercises and constitutes as a key criterion for career advancement.

The Language Centre at the University of Defence in Brno plays a central role in developing this competence, particularly through the preparation of candidates for NATO STANAG 6001 examinations. As part of the military's lifelong learning system, the Centre provides intensive, refresher, and upgrade English courses at the elementary (STANAG Level 1 / CEFR A2), intermediate (Level 2 / CEFR B1), and upper-intermediate (Level 3 / CEFR B2+/C1) levels. While admission to the intermediate and upper-intermediate levels depends on placement test results, intensive elementary-level courses are open to all personnel, resulting in heterogeneous classes comprising both true and false beginners.

This study focuses on short-term elementary-level courses, where variation in learner proficiency can significantly influence instructional effectiveness and classroom cohesion. These challenges are compounded by limited opportunities for English use outside the classroom and by the specific learner demographic, as most participants are older adults. Data collected by the Language Centre in 2023–2024 indicate that 64% of learners were aged over 40, with 29% between 41–45 years and 35% aged 46 or older (see also Jonáková, Rozsypáková, and Veselá 2023, 109). These demographic patterns underscore the relevance of research on adult language learning, which highlights age-related cognitive and affective constraints, including reduced working memory and slower information processing (Castañeda 2017), entrenched learner beliefs shaped by earlier educational experiences (Cozma 2015; Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018), and strong reliance on the first language (L1). Psychological factors such as anxiety and reluctance to speak may further inhibit communicative development (Pawlak 2015). Nevertheless, adult learners typically demonstrate high motivation and clear goal orientation, which can help mitigate these limitations (Pawlak 2015).

Instructors in military educational settings employ diverse pedagogical strategies to promote learners' engagement and communicative development. However, their practices shaped by professional experience and training may not always align with learners' expectations (Abu-Radwan 2020; Borg 2018). Such misalignment can be particularly problematic at the elementary level, where learners are most vulnerable to cognitive and affective barriers.

Against this background, the present study investigates the alignment between teachers' and learners' perceptions of effective classroom activities for developing speaking skills in beginner-level English courses within a military context. Specifically, it explores potential discrepancies between instructors' and adult learners' perspectives at the Language Centre in Brno. To the best of our knowledge, this issue has not yet been examined within a military educational environment. The findings aim to contribute to evidence-based improvements in syllabus design, classroom methodology, and professional development in military language education.

## 1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The long-term evolution of teaching approaches and methodologies in language education has led to a diverse framework for language instruction, reflecting an expanded understanding of language as not merely a system of rules but as a dynamic instrument of communication, cultural exchange, and personal expression (Borg 2006; Littlewood 2013). In this regard, numerous articles have focused on reviewing both traditional (e.g. Grammar-Translation/ Direct methods) and modern language teaching methods (e.g. CLT/TBLT/CLIL), critically evaluating their respective strengths and weaknesses and offering insights into their theoretical underpinnings, practical implications, and potential limitations within different educational contexts (Babayev 2023; Hien 2021; Sharma and Joshi 2024; Qasserras 2023).

### 1.1 Instructed Language Teaching and Learning

In formal educational contexts, such as classrooms or language courses, instructed language teaching and learning are typically guided by a curriculum with clearly defined goals and learning outcomes. Students follow a syllabus and prescribed textbooks, and homework often mirrors textbook content (Leow 2019, 478).

#### 1.1.1 Communication-oriented Approach

Concerning foreign language (FL) instruction within classroom settings, research has extensively investigated teachers' pedagogical beliefs, highlighting a common preference for communication-oriented approaches that emphasise pair and group activities. Such activities are valued for providing ample opportunities for language practice and fostering learners' confidence in using the target language (Azal and Harun 2020; Basturkmen and Philp 2017; Bećirović, Dubravac, and Brdarević-Čeljo 2022; Bedir 2019; Brown 2009; Hien 2021; Le, Janssen, and Wubbels 2018; Sippel 2024). Nevertheless, surveys indicate that teachers frequently encounter practical challenges when implementing these strategies at the elementary level. Common difficulties include insufficient student proficiency, leading to L1 use, lack of motivation, off-task behaviour, limited knowledge of collaborative skills, and unequal participation, all of which can inhibit full engagement in

group or pair tasks (Borg and Alshumaimeri 2019; Jansem 2019; Koç 2018; Le, Janssen, and Wubbels 2018; Ökmen and Kiliç 2018; Young and Tedick 2016).

### 1.1.2 Grammar Instruction

In Instructed Second Language Acquisition (ISLA), research indicates that grammar instruction is commonly integrated into both communicative and non-communicative classroom practices (Jansem 2019; Li and Xu 2023; Mai 2017; Murdani, Andriyanti, Effendi, and Nadjib 2020). Its centrality in FL teaching is further emphasised in Gilakjani and Sabouri's (2017) review.

Within this broader context, researchers have identified diverse perspectives on effective grammar pedagogy, ranging from communicative approaches that embed grammar within skill-based tasks to traditional, form-focused methods such as drills, explicit rule explanation, and memorisation (Aronsson 2023; Jansem 2019; Jean and Simard 2011; Li and Xu 2023). Despite increasing support for communicative approaches, many classrooms continue to prioritise accuracy-oriented, teacher-centred practices. In an effort to reconcile grammatical accuracy with communicative competence, frameworks such as Newby's (2015) Cognitive+Communicative Grammar and Littlewood's (2018) continuum model integrate cognitive and communicative principles, offering adaptable, learner-centred instruction. In light of these developments, contemporary ISLA research emphasises the need for pedagogical models that balance explicit form-focused instruction with meaningful communicative use, promoting both linguistic accuracy and functional fluency in second language learners.

### 1.1.3 Explicit Language Teaching and Learning

A central debate in ISLA concerns whether explicit or implicit learning is more effective for the acquisition and internalisation of L2 input (Leow 2019, 479). Evidence indicates that explicit, intentional instruction tends to be more effective in structured educational settings (Leow 2019, 486; see also Abu-Radwan 2005). Consistent with this view, Tajeddin and Mansouri (2024) advocate pre-teaching critical language elements and providing corrective feedback during collaborative tasks, underscoring the instructional role in scaffolding learner output (10-11; see also Borg and Alshumaimeri 2019; Brown 2016; Jean and Simard 2011).

Empirical investigations also reveal cross-contextual variation in explicit grammar instruction. For instance, Schulz and Coumel (2023) found that Austrian teachers typically employ structured, form-focused methods, whereas Swedish and French educators adopt progressively less direct approaches, with French instruction becoming increasingly implicit at higher educational levels. Complementing these findings, Pouresmaeil and Vali (2023) demonstrate that higher-proficiency learners benefit more from incidental focus on form, while lower-proficiency learners rely on explicit guidance.

The discussion of explicit language teaching is closely linked to the use of learners' L1 in the classroom. Research highlights pragmatic rationales for code-switching in grammar explanations, practice, review, and lexical translation, particularly at beginner levels (Brooks-Lewis 2009; Cakrawati 2019; Molway, Arcos, and Macaro 2022; Ong and Tajuddin 2020; Sevy-Biloon, Recino, and Munoz 2020; Wach and Monroy 2020). Nevertheless, a central rationale for L1 use lies in its capacity to enhance immediate comprehension

and scaffold learning (see also de la Fuente and Goldenberg 2022; Samar and Moradkhani 2014; Yildiz and Su-Bergil 2021). Drawing on her own experience as an adult FL learner, where L1 use was prohibited and learners' needs overlooked (217), Brooks-Lewis (2009) designed a course that gradually transitioned from L1 to English while using cross-linguistic and cultural comparisons to support understanding (222-223; see also Cakrawati 2019; Ibrahim 2019; Samar and Moradkhani 2014; Shimray and Wangdi 2023).

Empirical studies also indicate cross-national variation in L1 use. Molway et al. (2022) found that secondary FL teachers in England used L1 more frequently than those in Spain, attributing this to Spain's greater L2 curriculum time, which facilitates student progress, motivation, and the use of L2 for more complex tasks (663-664). Correspondingly, Wach and Monroy (2020) reported differences between Polish and Spanish teacher-trainees in L1 use, particularly for grammar instruction, with most Spanish participants rejecting L1-based explanations (863). As illustrated above, the relationship between explicit language teaching and the use of L1 remains a subject of ongoing pedagogical debate.

The preceding literature review highlights persistent gaps between pedagogical ideals and actual classroom practices, underscoring the need for closer investigation into how both instructors and learners perceive and evaluate these methods, particularly at the elementary level, where scaffolding, accuracy, and the development of learner confidence are salient. Prior research has also identified mismatches between teacher beliefs and learner expectations, further supporting a comparative approach.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Objective and Research Questions

**The objective of this study is to compare the perceptions of adult learners and instructors regarding the effectiveness of instructional activities designed to enhance speaking skills within lifelong elementary-level EFL courses provided at the Brno Language Centre. The study addresses one primary research question and two supporting sub-questions.**

- Main Research Question: Is there a difference between adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional activities aimed at developing speaking skills?
- Sub-Question 1: Are activities that incorporate teachers' corrective feedback perceived as more effective than those without such feedback by both learners and instructors?
- Sub-question 2: Are translation activities aimed at basic grammar acquisition and vocabulary development perceived as effective by both learners and instructors?

## 2.2 Participants

Between July 2019 and July 2020, 173 military professionals enrolled in Level 1 English courses at the Language Centre of the University of Defence in Brno participated in the initial phase of the study presented in this paper. The sample comprised 112 participants in intensive, 19 in upgrade, and 42 in refresher courses. Demographically, over half of the learners were aged between 36 and 45 years, and approximately three-quarters had completed upper secondary education - ISCED 344, 354 (Jonáková et al. 2023).

A follow-up phase of the research was conducted between April and July 2022, involving 52 English instructors from military institutions in Brno, Chocerady, Olomouc, Prague, and Vyškov. All participants were affiliated to the Language Centre of the University of Defence and were selected based on their instructional experience in Level 1 English courses. The cohort included 14 male and 38 female participants, all of whom were non-native English speakers holding a master's degree and possessing between 2 and 20 years of teaching experience. To ensure validity, participants were explicitly instructed to draw upon their routine pedagogical practices, thereby grounding the data in the realities of classroom instruction.

## 2.3 Pedagogical Context

The Language Centre in Brno provides three types of English elementary-level courses, two of which are designed to prepare Czech military personnel for the final English examination at level 1, corresponding to the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Intensive Level 1 courses span 11 weeks and include 330 instructional units (45 minutes per unit), delivered through 30 contact hours per week. Notably, participants are not subject to placement testing prior to enrolment, resulting in mixed-ability cohorts comprised of both true and false beginners. Upgrade courses offer a 7-week programme (210 instructional units) designed for learners who have previously completed the intensive course but did not fully meet Level 1 requirements. Admission to these courses is conditional upon performance in a placement test. Both the intensive and upgrade courses conclude with a comprehensive proficiency examination that assesses all language skills, aligned with the NATO STANAG 6001 framework (NATO Standardization Office 2016, 15-21). Refresher courses are conducted over 4 weeks (120 instructional units) and do not include a final examination. Upon entrance, participants are expected to possess a Level 1 NATO STANAG 6001 Certificate in all four language skills, as the primary objective of the course is to help students maintain their English language proficiency.

Across all three formats, the instructional emphasis is placed on communicative competence at the elementary level. Learners are expected to understand and produce routine exchanges related to immediate personal relevance, such as greetings, personal information, and everyday tasks. At this level, frequent errors and breakdowns in

comprehension and production are anticipated and tolerated within the assessment criteria of NATO STANAG 6001.

## 2.4 Instrument

A descriptive quantitative design was employed, grounded in the theoretical principles advocated by Creswell (2012).

The present study builds on the findings of two earlier investigations that examined the perceived effectiveness of classroom activities from the perspectives of students (Jonáková et al. 2023) and teachers (Jonáková and Rozsypálková 2025). The survey items utilised in both studies were derived from Nunan (1988, 188-190), with selected items modified to provide more specific insights into aspects such as the usefulness of role-plays and conversations in the classroom. Since all respondents were non-native English speakers, additional items were included to assess attitudes toward L1 use in EFL learning and teaching. Both original versions of the questionnaire were reviewed by a panel of five experienced foreign language instructors from the Brno Language Centre, chosen for their expertise in questionnaire design.

For the present analysis, a standardised subset of thirteen items—identical in both the student and teacher questionnaires—was employed. Each item was rated using a four-point Likert-type scale ('useful,' 'rather useful,' 'rather not useful,' and 'not useful at all'). Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = .78$ ) confirmed reliability and high internal consistency of the subset.

## 2.5 Data Collection and Its Processing

This study draws on data originally collected for Jonáková et al. (2023) and Jonáková and Rozsypálková (2025), encompassing learners' views (gathered in 2019–2020) and instructors' views (gathered between April and July 2022) on the usefulness of classroom activities. Therefore, issues such as data collection, their processing, and the anonymity of both students and instructors were thoroughly addressed in the original studies. Using these datasets, the current study analyses perceived usefulness, represented by the mean for each item. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed and the Compare Means procedures were applied to examine differences in how students and teachers evaluate the effectiveness of specific classroom activities (Field 2024).

## 3 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Since representative samples were not employed, a T-test was not used to compare the means of both groups. The data display the difference between levels of perceived

activity usefulness from the teachers' and students' points of view. As the answers ranged from 1 (not useful at all) to 4 (useful), the mean values of 3 and higher refer to a higher level of usefulness.

**Table 1:** Difference between levels of perceived activity usefulness from teacher and student points of view

Activities	Mean difference	Student (N=173)		Teacher (N=52)	
	Ss-Ts	M	SD	M	SD
listening to songs	0.00	2.42	0.95	2.42	0.78
translation from L1 to L2 for grammar practice	0.04	3.46	0.69	3.42	0.78
mini talk by heart	0.05	3.05	0.88	3.00	0.77
language games	-0.06	3.21	0.83	3.27	0.74
listening to colleagues	0.06	3.25	0.67	3.19	0.82
translation from L1 to L2 for vocabulary practice	0.12	3.49	0.68	3.37	0.82
role-play with teacher	0.12	3.95	0.27	3.83	0.43
mini-dialogues by heart	-0.13	2.89	0.90	3.02	0.75
role-play with peers	-0.31	3.06	0.87	3.37	0.69
conversation controlled by teacher	-0.34	3.51	0.70	3.85	0.36
translation from L2 to L1 for vocabulary practice	0.42	3.48	0.66	3.06	0.83
conversation among students without teacher control	-0.56	2.27	0.91	2.83	0.86

### 3.1 Results of the Main Research Question: Is There a Difference between Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Instructional Activities Aimed at Developing Speaking Skills?

As shown in Table 1, results reveal subtle but noteworthy differences in perceptions of the activity's effectiveness with limited teacher involvement. Teachers expressed a stronger preference for peer-only role-plays ( $M = 3.37$ ;  $SD = 0.69$ ), in contrast to adult learners ( $M = 3.06$ ;  $SD = 0.87$ ), whose opinions differed considerably.

Discrepancies also appeared in perceptions of memorisation-based activities. Adult learners evaluated the usefulness of memorising mini-dialogues slightly lower ( $M = 2.89$ ;  $SD = 0.90$ ) than instructors ( $M = 3.02$ ;  $SD = 0.75$ ), with a greater variability in learners' responses.

Translation-based activities focused on vocabulary improvement revealed further divergence. Adult learners regarded translation exercises from English into Czech as more beneficial ( $M = 3.48$ ;  $SD = 0.66$ ) compared to teachers' responses, which were characterised by greater inconsistency ( $M = 3.06$ ;  $SD = 0.83$ ).

Overall, a general positive consensus emerged regarding activities involving teacher participation, but the degree of preference and the consistency of responses varied slightly. Role-plays conducted with the teacher received high ratings from both learners

( $M = 3.95$ ;  $SD = 0.27$ ) and instructors ( $M = 3.83$ ;  $SD = 0.43$ ), with learners demonstrating a slightly stronger and more consistent preference. Similarly, teacher-guided whole-class conversations were perceived as effective by both parties. However, instructors rated them more highly ( $M = 3.85$ ;  $SD = 0.36$ ) than learners ( $M = 3.51$ ;  $SD = 0.70$ ), and their answers were more homogenous.

When assessing the value of memorising mini-talks on various topics, both groups reported similar mean scores (learners  $M = 3.05$ ;  $SD = 0.88$ ; teachers  $M = 3.00$ ;  $SD = 0.77$ ), though the responses in both groups varied significantly. A comparable pattern was observed in learners' appreciation of listening to peers' utterances, which was slightly more appreciated by learners ( $M = 3.25$ ;  $SD = 0.66$ ) than by teachers ( $M = 3.19$ ;  $SD = 0.82$ ).

While results were somewhat heterogeneous, both groups expressed a preference for translation exercises from Czech into English for grammar practice (learners  $M = 3.46$ ;  $SD = 0.69$ ; teachers  $M = 3.42$ ;  $SD = 0.78$ ) and vocabulary practice (learners  $M = 3.49$ ;  $SD = 0.68$ ; teachers  $M = 3.37$ ;  $SD = 0.82$ ).

Both groups agreed on the limited usefulness of listening to songs, although learners' responses differed more significantly (learners  $M = 2.42$ ;  $SD = 0.95$ ; teachers  $M = 2.42$ ;  $SD = 0.78$ ).

Language games were rated as highly useful by adult learners ( $M = 3.21$ ;  $SD = 0.83$ ) and by teachers ( $M = 3.27$ ;  $SD = 0.74$ ); nevertheless, the responses of both groups varied considerably.

No disagreement emerged regarding learner-led conversations without teacher support, as both groups perceived this approach as the least effective, with learners more critical ( $M = 2.27$ ;  $SD = 0.91$ ) than instructors ( $M = 2.83$ ;  $SD = 0.86$ ).

### 3.2 Results of the Sub-question 1: Are Activities that Incorporate Teachers' Corrective Feedback Perceived as More Effective than Those without Such Feedback by Both Learners and Instructors?

Based on the evaluation of four types of classroom interaction (role-plays with the teacher, role-plays with peers, teacher-controlled conversations, and learner-led conversations without teacher intervention), the research findings suggest that both learners and instructors perceive activities involving teacher CF as more effective than those without such input. Role-plays facilitated by the teacher were rated most positively by both groups, with learners expressing slightly stronger appreciation ( $M = 3.95$ ;  $SD = 0.27$ ) than teachers ( $M = 3.83$ ;  $SD = 0.43$ ), and demonstrating more consistent responses. Similarly, teacher-guided whole-class conversations were perceived as effective by both groups, with particularly high ratings from teachers ( $M = 3.85$ ;  $SD = 0.36$ ) and moderate support from learners ( $M = 3.51$ ;  $SD = 0.70$ ). In contrast, activities lacking teacher involvement, such as peer-only role-plays and learner-only conversations, were viewed less favourably, particularly by learners ( $M = 3.06$ ;  $SD = 0.87$  and  $M = 2.27$ ;  $SD = 0.91$ , respectively). These patterns highlight the importance both groups place on teacher involvement, suggesting that CF plays a crucial role in shaping the perceived effectiveness of communicative classroom activities.

### 3.3 Results of the Sub-question 2: Are Translation Activities Focusing on Basic Grammar Acquisition and Vocabulary Improvement Perceived as Effective by Both Parties?

The findings indicate that both students and teachers perceive translation activities as effective for basic grammar acquisition and vocabulary improvement, though with some variation in emphasis and consistency. Oral translation exercises from Czech into English were rated similarly by both groups in terms of their usefulness for grammar acquisition (students  $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ; teachers  $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ), suggesting a shared recognition of their value. In contrast, for vocabulary improvement, adult learners consistently rated translation exercises, both from English into Czech ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ) and from Czech into English ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), as more beneficial than teachers did. Teachers' responses in this area were characterised by greater variability and slightly lower mean scores ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.83$  and  $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ , respectively), indicating a less uniform perception of the effectiveness of such activities for vocabulary development.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Instructional Activities

The findings reveal both convergence and divergence between student and instructor evaluations of instructional activities. Both groups recognised the pedagogical value of memorising mini-talks on everyday topics, supporting Qiu's (2020) observation that repetition of familiar topics enhances accuracy and fluency among Chinese EFL learners, though with a slight reduction in lexical richness (761). Similarly, Doe (2021) found that time-pressured repetition improved fluency among Japanese university students across proficiency levels without compromising complexity or accuracy (16–17). Listening to classmates' utterances under teacher supervision was likewise valued, suggesting an appreciation for peer models as sources of linguistic input.

While elementary adult learners expressed limited enthusiasm for memorising mini-dialogues, teachers regarded them as equally beneficial as mini-talks, providing conversational models for learner scaffolding (Jonáková and Rozsypálková 2025). This view aligns with Jansem's (2019) finding that Thai CLT-oriented teachers favour dialogue memorisation to reduce the risk of failure in less guided tasks. Similarly, Philp, Adams, and Iwashita (2013) argue that repeated practice of fixed sequences enhances fluency and automaticity in language production (60–62).

Listening to songs, however, was generally viewed as unsuitable for language learning, consistent with Tegge's (2017) findings on their lexical difficulty (96; see also Tegge

2018; Lund 2023). Nonetheless, Yung (2023) reported greater learner engagement with song-based tasks when these were perceived as directly relevant to test preparation, indicating that perceived task utility may influence learner attitudes.

By contrast, language games received positive evaluations from both groups. This aligns with Zondag's (2021) conclusion that games promote speaking confidence and creativity by fostering enjoyment and a low-anxiety environment (9–15). However, as Al-Bulushi and Al-Issa (2017) caution, their pedagogical effectiveness depends on alignment with specific instructional objectives (189).

## 4.2 Perceived Effectiveness of Teacher Corrective Feedback

The findings underscore a clear pedagogical preference for teacher-mediated instructional activities, particularly teacher-controlled whole-class discussions and role-plays. The presence or absence of corrective feedback (CF) during interactive activities in elementary-level classrooms appears to substantially influence perceptions of instructional efficacy. CF provided by teachers is especially valued, reflecting learners' views of instructors as authoritative sources of accurate linguistic input – an authority not attributed to peers, whose limited L2 proficiency may result in less reliable feedback (Philp et al. 2013, 51). This dynamic raises important questions regarding the optimal timing and delivery of teacher feedback. Brown's (2009) study revealed a strong learner preference for immediate correction accompanied by clear explanations of oral errors. Similarly, Jonáková et al. (2023) found a learner preference for immediate correction during oral performance, with only a minority favouring delayed or private feedback. However, although many learners appreciate oral corrective feedback as a means of enhancing linguistic accuracy, not all favour continuous correction. Katayama (2007) found that approximately 20% of learners preferred selective correction, particularly when errors did not interfere with communication (68).

From the teacher perspective, the timing and frequency of oral error correction are often guided by the nature of the error. Immediate correction is generally preferred when delayed intervention hinders retention. As Jean and Simard (2011) observed, teachers tend to prioritise errors that impede comprehension or involve key grammatical features (474; see also Brown 2016). Nevertheless, teachers' corrective practices do not always align with learners' preferences, underscoring a persistent tension between pedagogical judgment and learner expectations.

The issue of CF is central to communicative pedagogy, as participation in peer-interaction tasks alone is insufficient for interlanguage restructuring (Sato and Lyster 2012, 612). Limited L2 proficiency among elementary-level learners often results in minimal or inaccurate peer feedback, which may inadvertently reinforce erroneous forms (Borg and Alshumaimeri 2019; Philp et al. 2013; Adams 2007; Yoshida 2008). Addressing this challenge, several studies have examined the impact of explicitly training learners to provide CF during meaning-focused interactions. Sippel (2024), in a study with low-proficiency German learners, found that both peer feedback training and form-focused instruction improved grammatical accuracy, whereas peer interaction alone yielded negligible gains

(430–433). Similarly, Sato and Lyster's (2012) study demonstrated that explicit CF training can effectively enhance learner outcomes, though its success depends on participants' prior grammatical knowledge (617; see also Sato 2013, 626). This raises a critical pedagogical question: To what extent can CF training benefit learners who lack sufficient explicit linguistic knowledge to provide accurate feedback?

### 4.3 Perceived Effectiveness of Translation Activities

The findings underline the pedagogical significance of incorporating L1 in EFL instruction at the elementary level. Both instructors and learners valued oral translation exercises from L1 to L2 for acquiring basic grammatical structures. This aligns with Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020), whose research highlighted the usefulness of L1 in grammar instruction, while stressing adaptation to learners' proficiency levels (285). Similarly, Scheffler (2013) found that translation from L1 into L2 deepened learners' understanding of English grammatical structures, and Samar and Moradkhani (2014) reported that explaining rules in L1 and making explicit comparisons between L1 and L2 facilitated comprehension and retention of newly acquired language forms.

Oral translation exercises from L1 to L2 were also perceived to support vocabulary learning by reinforcing form-meaning connections. Correspondingly, Shimray and Wangdi (2023) observed that teachers considered strategic L1 use effective for vocabulary retention in early-stage EFL classrooms (6; see also de la Fuente and Goldenberg 2022; Ong and Tajuddin 2020).

Vocabulary translation exercises from L2 to L1 also proved valuable. Castañeda (2017) noted that adult learners often rely on direct translation to enhance comprehension and build communicative confidence (12). Wach and Monroy (2020) reported that nearly half of Polish teacher trainees identified lexical translation as the most effective strategy for supporting vocabulary acquisition and text comprehension among lower-proficiency learners (863–864). Hunt and Beglar (2002) likewise advocated for explicit vocabulary instruction for beginners, arguing that effective contextual guessing requires knowledge of approximately 95% of a text, or around 3,000 high-frequency English words (264). In contrast, Metruk and Rafajdusová (2024) found more ambivalent teacher attitudes toward translation from L2 to L1 for comprehension checks (762).

Overall, the findings suggest that carefully managed L1 use through targeted translation exercises and explicit cross-linguistic comparisons can facilitate both grammatical understanding and vocabulary development in elementary EFL classrooms, while remaining sensitive to learners' proficiency levels and instructional objectives.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed to identify potential divergences between adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional activities in elementary-level

military EFL courses. The results indicate a broad alignment in perceptions, suggesting that both groups generally concur on what constitutes effective classroom practice. This convergence provides valuable insights for refining EFL syllabi and instructional strategies in elementary-level military settings, facilitating the design of activities that better correspond to learners' needs and expectations. Given that adult learners tend to engage more readily with activities perceived as purposeful and directly linked to their language proficiency goals, such alignment may enhance motivation and active classroom participation – both crucial for sustained learning progress.

The findings reaffirm the pivotal role of teacher-mediated activities involving CF, highlighting that both groups, particularly adult elementary-level learners, view teacher involvement as essential for effective language acquisition. These results underscore the pedagogical significance of timely, strategic CF in fostering linguistic accuracy and learner confidence.

Furthermore, the outcomes support the inclusion of learners' L1 in instructional practices, showing that translation-based activities are widely regarded as effective for grammar and vocabulary development, thus reinforcing the legitimacy of L1 use as a scaffolding tool in foundational EFL contexts.

This research responds to the specific needs of adult beginner learners in military EFL contexts, offering evidence-based insights for designing classroom activities aligned with the distinctive requirements of military language training. Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted through a questionnaire within a specific FL setting and a limited context. Second, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential bias. Third, the relatively small sample size in both the initial and follow-up phases of the research presented may have affected the statistical robustness of the findings. Subsequently, the findings cannot be generalised to a broader population.

Despite these limitations, the study offers practical contributions to the instructional planning of condensed exam-oriented elementary-level EFL programmes, ensuring alignment with learners' immediate goals, such as passing proficiency examinations. Furthermore, attaining a solid command of English at the elementary stage constitutes a prerequisite for successful progression in the subsequent Level 2 course, which represents one of the most highly demanded courses within the Czech Army.

Notably, the findings served as the foundation for the development of the “*English Speaking Skills Development Handbook Level 1*”, which has already been implemented at the University of Defence Language Centre.

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