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**Information Technologies and Contemporary
Methods of English Language Acquisition**

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**Information Technologies and Contemporary
Methods of English Language Acquisition**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Plzeň, duben 2019

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Poděkování

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1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this presented bachelor's thesis is to describe the ways of English language acquisition. Learning English in the 21st century concerns not only textbooks, dictionaries, reading articles or listening audio records during lessons, but also means of modern information technologies.

The thesis is composed of the theoretical part and the practical part. The first segment of the theoretical part clarifies academic principles and terminology concerning the acquisition of English as a second language. In the second segment, a concrete psychological method for acquiring language is outlined. All theories are accompanied by corresponding figures and tables.

The theoretical part is followed by the primary practical part related to information technologies and its application in English language acquisition. Stressed are the most common devices employed on a daily basis: personal computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and smart devices, together connected by the Internet and influenced by popular culture. The main point of this segment is to highlight handling these devices in order to effectively learn English because the versatility of information technology very often distracts its user and conceals the particular ways of improving second language skills.

In the final part of this thesis, individual contemporary methods used for learning English are outlined and the foundation for this chapter is a special online questionnaire created by the author in order to collect authentic data from differently aged respondents. The questionnaire is focused on their own approach when acquiring the English language.

2 THE ACQUISITION AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Studying English as a second language is a process called Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning, sometimes also referred to as language 2 (L2) acquisition (En.wikipedia.org, 2018).¹ The terms 'second language' and 'English' will be interchanged in this thesis to express the same meaning.

2.1 The Monitor Theory

In order to clearly understand what is the difference between 'acquisition' and 'learning' English the term 'Monitor Theory' (developed by Stephen Krashen about Second Language Acquisition [SLA]) must be named. This hypothesizes the fact that adults have two autonomous systems for learning a second language: *subconscious language acquisition* and *conscious language learning*. Both these systems share particular interconnection and the subconscious language acquisition has a more significant impact on second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981, p. 5).

Subconscious language acquisition is similar to children's first and second language acquisition. It is based on real and natural communication in the target language, where speakers focus not on the grammatical form of their expression, but on the *value of the message*. Learning the language rules and correcting the error is irrelevant for language acquisition, nevertheless, addressees can modify their voicing in order to help the acquirer to understand. The conscious knowledge of grammatical structures is not important for the acquirer because they will correct only if they want to correct themselves according to the 'feeling of grammar' at that exact moment.

¹ En.wikipedia.org. 2018. *Second-language acquisition* [online].

² En.citizendium.org. 2015. *Monitor theory* [online].²

In contrast, conscious language learning is considered helpful in ways of error correction. A learner obtains feedback on his or her language representation according to a common language and social rules. Whether this process has a considerable impact on learner's language acquisition remains an open question.

In other words, Monitor Theory is based on the thought that word 'Monitor' stands for the conscious learning i.e. 'formal' knowledge to alter the expression (before or after realisation). It is improving language accuracy, but the fluency of the second language is founded on life experiences and real conversation with an English native speaker.

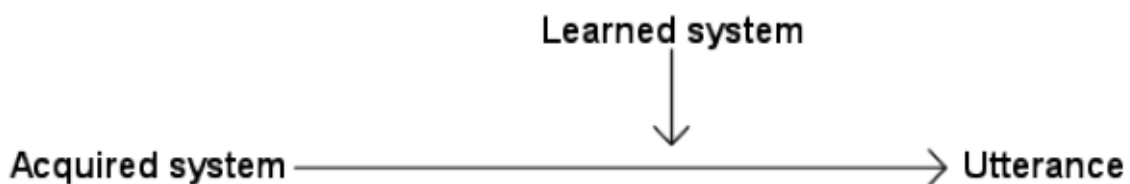


Fig. 1 Model for adult second language performance (Krashen, 1981)

Figure 1, which is summarizing an idea mentioned in this paragraph, is shown above (Krashen, 1981, p. 6).

On top of that, in reality, there are three important factors, which are necessary in order to apply Monitor in conversation. The first condition is time. Conversations normally gather momentum and performers do not have time to think about grammatical rules or implement them into a dialogue. In some conversations, there can be time for the Monitor but acquirers are involved in receiving or sending word message and not in 'grammatical rules check.'

The second condition refers to paying attention to the correctness or grammatical form. The third condition is knowledge of the specific grammar rule. This is an advanced condition because linguists, teachers or learners usually do not have the time or capacity to cover all possible variation of language rules. It is descending curve to learners and they do not ordinarily handle all the grammatical rules, learned in the lesson.

To summarise, it is considerably difficult to employ all three conditions in the same moment; therefore, these conditions usually apply to grammar tests and not on actual dialogues (Krashen, 1981, p. 7).

Another part of the Monitor Theory is named *Natural order hypothesis*. It concerns a process of adult language acquisition when the monitoring is not significantly involved and the development is closer to the first language acquisition by children. On that account, particular morphemes are being produced earlier than another one e.g. ‘-ing’ ending being produced earlier than third person singular ‘-s’ (En.citizendium.org, 2015).²

Essentially, Krashen affirms that language development can continue only through ‘*comprehensible input*’. In brief, learner’s language experiences must be both workable and rather beyond current learner’s e.g. English level. For this situation reference [i + 1] is created by Krashen, where ‘i’ stands for the current second language level. Processing corresponding input is essential for a beginner. Activity like early focus on speaking can significantly slow the process. On the other hand, extreme attention to e.g. English grammar rules can instead of learning, stop the input from becoming a contribution to second language acquisition.

The last part of Monitor Theory is defined as ‘*affective filter*’. This is the part, where the stress can have a serious impact on language acquisition. Learners with low ‘affective filter’ are more open to new language inputs and are more likely to transform it into their language contribution. Performing under stress, on the contrary, increase the level of ‘affective filter’ and can block new inputs of acquisition. This concrete phenomenon can vary from student to student even in the same surroundings.

² En.citizendium.org. 2015. *Monitor theory* [online].

The Monitor Theory is proved to be accepted by many linguists and lecturers e.g. in the matter of the number of corresponding inputs and in the distinction between expressions 'acquisition' and 'learning'. Strong criticism arose because of predominant temper in applied linguistics that gained knowledge forms part of the real acquisition. Another criticism is situated on the principle that more than just comprehensible input is essential or supportive (En.citizendium.org, 2015).

2.2 Environments in Second Language Acquisition

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the environment also plays a big role. According to Krashen's hypothesis, there are two environments, where contributions can be made: formal and informal. It is clear that the world outside can provide more input for the second language learner than during the lessons in the classroom. Living in the country, where the second language is spoken equals to everyday language lessons.

However, the key aspect of this kind of environment is the aforementioned comprehensible input. The informal environment outside the classroom can be helpful only when the acquirer is able to understand the language input. So it is a gradual process, where acquirer is able to understand more and more as the language acquisition continues (Krashen, 1982, p. 59). For example, a student who is in an English-speaking country may acquire more English in the part-time job than in a dedicated language course (Teachingenglish.org.uk, 2008).³

We can also look more deeply inside the informal environments to discover that not all of them are as efficient for the acquirers as they could be. We can find 'exposure-type' informal environments and 'intake-type' environments. And only the second one is able to supply effective input to the learner's language knowledge⁴ because exposure means

³ Teachingenglish.org.uk. 2008. *Second language acquisition (SLA)* [online].

⁴ Similar views on language acquisition and the environments suitable for this purpose, has also the other theorists e.g. Bandura or Vygotsky. Available at:

more stress and more stress means less language acquisition i.e. higher affective filter as mentioned in subsection before (Krashen, 1981, p. 41).

So now focusing on the word 'intake', 'intake-rich' informal environments and 'intake-poor' classrooms can be found. The true acquisition is happening in 'intake situations' and only when the amount of the input is comprehensible and sufficient for the learner, therefore, the most effective and perfect solution for the learner would be 'intake-rich' i.e. 'acquisition-rich' classrooms (Krashen, 1981, p. 116).

For instance, children are subconsciously more focused on the acquisition, than on actual formal learning. Based on this fact, we can consider the lessons as 'additional intake.' If there are 'intake-rich' environments for the children, extra language lessons are not needed. Often the important parts of the formal lesson are the informal ones e.g. when the teacher is talking about the exercise rather the exercise itself.

	In the classroom		Outside the classroom		
	"intake" informal (language use)	formal	"intake" informal	"exposure" informal	formal (self- study)
Acquisition	*		*		
Learning		*			*

Fig. 2 Linguistic environments relevant to second language proficiency in adults (Krashen, 1981)

In summary, Figure 2 shows how different environments affect the acquisition and learning of the language. Firstly, 'intake-rich' environments are important for both children and adults inside or outside the classroom. Secondly, formal learning serves only as feedback for the development of the Monitor i.e. grammar (Krashen, 1981, p. 11, 49, 50).

Figure 2 also implicates that 'exposure-type' environments outside the classroom can stop the process of acquisition due to increased stress

(higher affective filter) in concrete situations, where the acquirer must use e.g. English knowledge to achieve or to response on something.

2.3 The role of output in Second Language Acquisition

On the other hand, the role of speaking in the second language (output) is not that significant as it can be at first sight. The output can be considered as an *indirect* contribution of the language acquisition and also as the next stage of the language acquisition *but not its beginning* (Krashen, 1982, p. 60). These statements are supported by empirical evidence. The first example is about the parent, who was recording his child learning to speak. The child needed six months to produce the word 'water' with the first attempts as 'ga-ga' and then the calling it 'water' by the end of 6 months (Tsarikova, 2015).⁵

Another example is taken from Krashen's speech in the 1980s on Language Acquisition. In 1974, Krashen himself was teaching a 4-year-old girl English. She never responded when he was speaking to her for five months. After the five months, the process was similar to the first language acquisition (as mentioned in the example above). She started to use one word, two words and then more complicated ones. But then the progress showed to be even quicker than in first language acquisition. By the end of the first year, she was able to speak English as other children in her neighbourhood. First five months she was gathering comprehensible input, so when she started to speak it was not the beginning of the language acquisition (Rounds, 2010).⁶

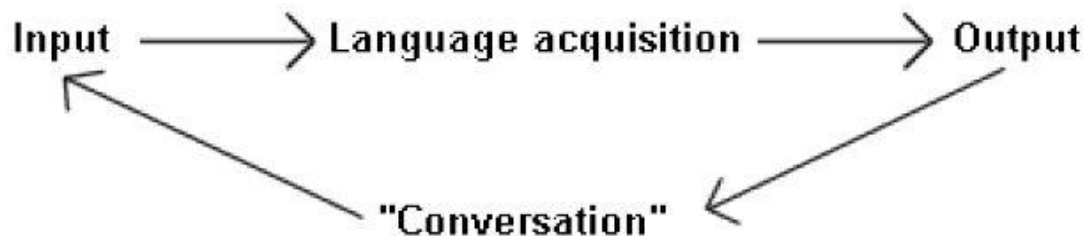


Fig. 3 How output contributes to language acquisition indirectly (Krashen, 1982)

⁵ TSARIKOVA, N. 2015. *From 'Ga-Ga' to 'Water'* [online].

⁶ ROUNDS, M. 2010. *Stephen Krashen on Language Acquisition* [Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiTsdURreug>].

Figure 3 summarises the above-mentioned examples and shows how output affects the input in an indirect way. The output (speaking) in the second language is another trigger to get more input because the acquirer is getting involved in more communicative situations (conversations) and can acquire more language acquisition from more sources.

2.4 First language interference

The current researches show, however, that the first and second language share joint influence over the oral and written production of the second language. More knowledge in the first language means better results in the second language (Ortega, 2018).⁷ In another word, if there is lack of knowledge for the second language, the behaviour from the first language is taken in order to fill what is not known in the second language, we refer to this as first language interference. This situation indicates that more second language acquisition is required in order to obtain new language behaviour (Krashen, 1981, p. 67).

2.5 Further differences in the acquisition and learning the second language (overview)

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Monitor Theory depicts individual aspects during second language acquisition by five hypotheses. Basically, the most significant effect on the final ability to use the second language fluently has the acquisition. In comparison to conscious learning (the Monitor), acquisition requires a great deal of time and it is usually invisible to us. We are usually barely aware that we have acquired something.

On the other hand, the Monitor is much faster and for some people even evident. This, however, is not the real language acquisition, despite the fact that learner can get immediate feedback and in some cases the satisfaction too (Krashen, 1982, p. 187).

⁷ ORTEGA, L. 2018. *What is SLA research good for, anyway?* [Video available at: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/what-sla-research-good-anyway>].

It follows that main stress should be put on the acquisition and this means to have corresponding input in a suitable environment as mentioned in the paragraphs above. More specifically, the input should be not only *comprehensible* but also interesting and/or relevant to the acquirer, with no direct focus on grammar and provided in satisfactory quantity (Krashen, 1982, p. 125).

This requirements clearly lay foundations for the acquirer to put more focus on informal input ('intake') as this is the relevant part of the language acquisition. Nowadays it means to find suitable tools e.g. information technologies to start to perceive the second language e.g. English as a natural communication device.

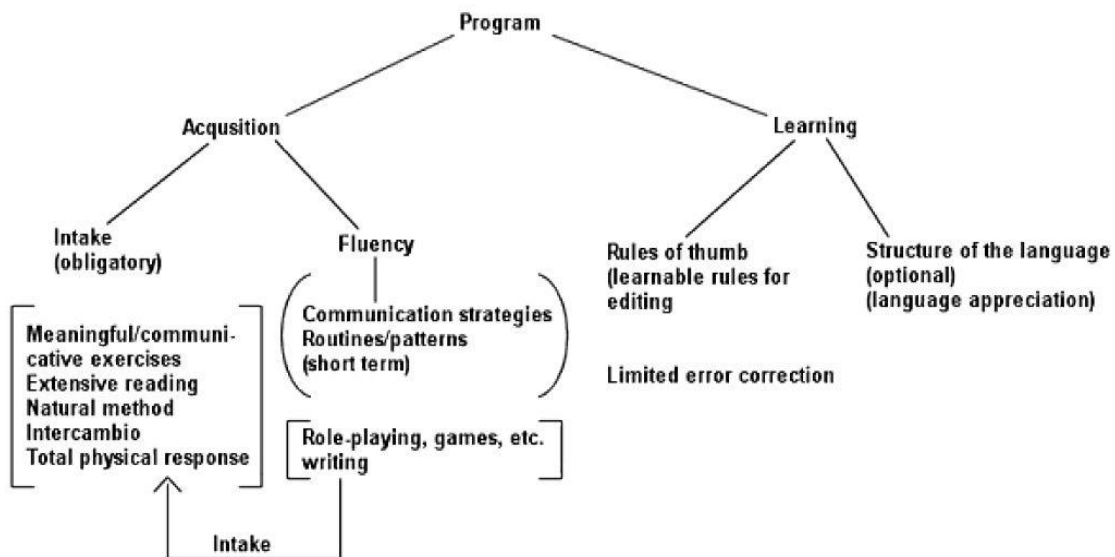


Fig. 4 A second language teaching program - overview (Krashen, 1981)

Figure 4 indicates the theoretical diagram with the principles mentioned above. This serves as an overview showing that the central part of this language learning program is founded in the 'Acquisition' node. We can see here that the intake comes from diverse activities mainly based on communication. Among them: Role-playing, writing or *games*.

At the time of creating this theoretical model, video games, for example, had not so potential for learning the second language as today. Nevertheless, Krashen was able to be ahead of one's time with his hypotheses and has created a basis, which is even more relevant in the 21st century of fast-growing technologies and the market with video games. This relevance is justified by the fact that video games can provide an *intuitive* environment to understand the language, which combines natural communication (with no special focus on grammar) and 'task-based language teaching' e.g.: "Speak with this person." or "Find this item." in particular game context (Hostýnek, 2016).

To summarise, when the learner wants to successfully acquire the second language, informal environments (e.g. video games) with a sufficient amount of comprehensible and relevant input are required. Moreover, the degree of acquired language knowledge is directly connected to learner's *attitude* and *motivation*. A lack of motivation and higher affective filter means lower acquired competence (Krashen, 1981. p. 110).

2.6 Chunks of language

In recent years, the phenomenon of 'chunks' has increased significantly, in particular, in studies and researches devoted to second language acquisition. These 'lexical chunks' are the fixed expression of words that are stored in our brain's memory. These 'chunks' can be created, for example, from idioms or phrases, but also from combinations of words that are used together frequently. These frequent combinations are called collocations (Zimmer, 2010).⁸

Going back to Stephen Krashen's research, we can discover that this phenomenon is labelled as 'prefabricated routines' and 'prefabricated patterns.' Prefabricated routines are complete phrases, which can be memorised and used without any further knowledge of the language e.g.

⁸ ZIMMER, B. 2010. *Chunking* [online].

“*How old are you?*” or “*Nice to meet you too.*” Conversely, prefabricated patterns provide some creativity as the words or phrases inside the pattern can differ (Krashen, 1984, p. 83). These patterns can be referred to as collocations as well.

The question is how effective can be these prefabricated routines and patterns in the second language acquisition process. Prefabricated routines can evolve into prefabricated patterns. In this position, learner relies only on what was memorised. In the same position, however, the prefabricated patterns can then directly evolve into the creative language. Thus, prefabricated routines and patterns can be part of the creative process of second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981, p. 83, 84).

Recent findings in Neuroscience are showing that our brain’s memory is able to remember only short patterns with a maximum capacity of four items at a time. This indicates that if we only memorise words, without fitting them into the patterns, it will be harder to recall them later (Abbott, 2017).⁹

In summary, this proves to be one of the approaches which can help the second language learner, especially when watching movies or listening to music to learn in English particular way. Still, the second language speaker is not capable of learning this same amount of formulae as the native speaker (Zimmer, 2010). That is the reason why this should not be considered as the main approach to learning the second language.

3 THE THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

There is also another theory developed by Howard Gardner that is concerned with the capability of the human mind. His model can be reflected in the acquisition of the second language (and the tools to do so) too. Gardner is using the particular word ‘intelligence’ and defines its

⁹ ABBOTT, R. 2017. *Learning chunks of language* [online].

specific meaning in this context. ‘An intelligence’ is a capability of looking for a solution to problems or to be productive (create products) inside particular one or more cultures. This defines nothing about the right methods of testing this intelligence or from when they come from (Gardner, 1993, p. 10).

Gardner says that an intelligence is possessed by every human being as a ‘biopsychological’ potential which is developed by each individual in a different way. Above all, this potential is expressed in the context of particular tasks, professions, disciplines or crafts (Davis et al., 2012, p. 9, 16). It follows that an intelligence is connected with the particular content and the different kinds of content exist in the world (Gardner, 1993, p. 21). Thus, there is a need for more than one general intelligence but rather a plurality of them depending on the context (Davis et al., 2012, p. 8).

Gardner’s theory consists of *seven* original intelligences: Linguistic Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence and The Personal Intelligences (Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Intelligence) (Gardner, 1993, p. 7). In the course of time, a critique of Gardner’s theory has arisen that the list of the intelligences should be longer than the original one, yet, partly owing to Gardner’s intellectual conservatism and mostly due to ‘generality’ of ‘proposed’ intelligences, the list was expanded only by one more: Naturalist Intelligence (Davis et al., 2012, p. 18).

Table 1 Gardner’s Eight Intelligences - adapted from (Davis et al., 2012, p. 6, 7)

Intelligences	Description
Linguistic	An ability to analyse information and create products involving oral and written language such as speeches, books, and memos.
Logical-Mathematical	An ability to develop equations and proofs, make calculations, and solve abstract problems.

Spatial	An ability to recognize and manipulate large-scale and fine-grained spatial images.
Musical	An ability to produce, remember, and make meaning of different patterns of sound.
Naturalist	An ability to identify and distinguish among different types of plants, animals, and weather formations that are found in the natural world.
Bodily-Kinesthetic	An ability to use one's own body to create products or solve problems.
Interpersonal	An ability to recognize and understand other people's moods, desires, motivations, and intentions
Intrapersonal	An ability to recognize and understand his or her own moods, desires, motivations, and intentions

Table 1 depicts all above-mentioned intelligences. The important fact is that these capabilities are based on specific content and by words of Gardner himself: “*never develop in a vacuum*” (Gardner, 1993, p. 372).

The functionality of this premise can be demonstrated on example, based on another overview of the original seven intelligences stated in a paper entitled ‘Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences’ composed in 2012 by Janet Giesen. The following example represents the fact that not only Linguistic Intelligence, as a device to interpret and explain ideas in concrete language, is needed in order to acquire a second language e.g. English.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence is needed too, because of the ability to analyse problems and detecting patterns in second language structures. This enables us to better understand the language. A specific example from English grammar can be named: conditionals. The acquirer needs to be aware of cause and effect based on the sentence e.g. ‘If you heat ice, it melts.’

Spatial Intelligence is very important in second language acquisition as the acquirers are able to interpret captured visual images and recreate ideas as the situation requires (Edutopia, 2010).¹⁰ In the

¹⁰ Edutopia. 2010. *Howard Gardner on Multiple Intelligences* [Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYgO8jZTFuQ>].

case of Musical Intelligence that correlates the most with oral speeches, an acquirer can hear for instance a specific accent or dialect of the second language and use it later in his or her speeches. In addition, speeches are also directly connected to the body, so Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence takes place in order to understand body language.

Finally, the Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Intelligence enables to understand relations between people and acquirer himself thanks to the language as the main device of the communication here. In a specific case of second language acquisition, nonetheless, the important role is played by the Interpersonal Intelligence. As we can see, an acquirer of the second language needs to blend in an individual way all these Intelligences in order to acquire the language fluently.

If we apply this to the present day, where information technologies play a big role, we can actually already find a foothold in Gardner's words in an interview from 1997. He said that if we can provide *software* (technology) and materials, which are interesting and attractive for the learner (in his example for the child) and at the same time can employ his or her intelligences together, the learner can be then able to present his or her knowledge in a comfortable form to him or herself (Edutopia, 2010).

With the reference to the aforementioned example of video games used in the previous chapter, the Interpersonal Intelligence has come nowadays to the foreground, mainly thanks to online video games as these games require a necessary aspect: the communication between players playing the game at the same time. Playing video games, the acquirer is using multiple intelligences at once in—according to Krashen's words mentioned in the previous chapter—low affective filter environment, consequently, this creates motivating, 'natural' and effective environment for the second language acquisition (Hostýnek, 2016).

To conclude the theoretical part of this thesis, it is necessary to say that both Krashen's and Gardner's hypotheses are to a certain extent interconnected as outlined in the paragraph above. Nonetheless, Krashen focuses directly on language and differences between 'acquisition' and 'learning' of the second language, stating that acquisition is the central part of the second language (e.g. English) learning and that 'real' acquisition may appear if the input is for the acquirer comprehensible enough and takes place in a low affective filter (a low anxiety) environment (Rounds, 2010).

Gardner, instead, bases his theory on a new, 'biopsychological' way concerning human intelligence itself. With his original seven, subsequently, eight multiple intelligences he depicts a theoretical model that can be also employed for the needs of second language acquisition. But basically shares similar thoughts as Krashen that learning will be most likely effective in environments, where the acquirer needs to solve suitable tasks and where he or she feels free to present his or her current knowledge; with regard to the fact that learner must be motivated in order to allow the intelligence to manifest in this kind of environments (Lingtechguistics.com, 2015).¹¹

4 APPLICATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Aforementioned theoretical models in the first and second chapter and their usage in the practice have never been as topical as today. And the main reason that is productive of this relevance is information technologies. In this instance, it is not just about for example already mentioned video games, but also about all current means of technology which are now part of everyday reality.

¹¹ Lingtechguistics.com. 2015. *Motivation and Learning theories for SLA through Chomsky, Bandura, Vygotsky, Krashen, and Gardner* [online].

Following chapter will be concerned with such kinds of technologies that available for the everyday user and which can also be employed as convenient tools for second language acquisition. Firstly, the chapter will look into: personal computers, laptops and video game consoles. Secondly, thanks to the contemporary significant expansion of mobile technologies: mobile devices, tablets, smartphones and smart devices will be mentioned as well and during and also at the end of this chapter the means of popular culture and their effect on English language acquisition as well as using information technologies will be outlined too. This includes video games, mobile games, television, movies, music and books.

4.1 Personal computers, laptops and video game consoles

The first domain where a new potential for learning and acquiring the second language emerged, had been computers. In the last decades, as the size of the computers has been getting smaller and accessibility to ordinary user wider, their potential has increased substantially. In this subsection of chapter 4, a particular methodology will be outlined that is concerned with computers as devices (including another one developed specially for video games) to acquire a second language. Consequential subsections comment on specific software that can be employed as second language acquisition tools (including video games).

4.1.1 Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

As mentioned in an introduction to this subsection, a methodology that deals with computers as language learning devices is called 'Computer Assisted Language Learning' hereinafter referred to as 'CALL'. This terminology and branch of applied linguistics are still new and thanks to incessant changes and improvements in the technological field, this research is being constantly updated by original ideas and concepts to contain up-to-date information. In order to clarify the permanently variable character of this methodology, we can simply say that CALL is *any activity* in which an acquirer uses a computer and can acquire more

knowledge in his or her second language learning or acquisition (Beatty, 2010, p. 1, 2, 7).

Since the interfaces of computers becoming more and more intuitive and the today target groups are not only about learned computer professionals but about pre-schoolers too, the computers play a significant role in today's English language acquisition. Even the ordinary computer user who has no direct intention in learning the second language can acquire an essential structure of language e.g. English to personal use. Apart from user-friendly interfaces, Beatty (2010) states another reason for this situation which is the ubiquity of information technologies e.g. computers and thus their invisibility in everyday life.

Furthermore, computer-based language learning tools differ from printed language learning materials in one important detail which is interactivity. Terms defined in CALL methodology i.e. 'hypertext', 'hypermedia' and 'multimedia.' can be related to this premise. A text presented in electronic version can be accompanied with 'hypertext links' which can take a reader to another page in the same document or for example web page which can contain another text with 'links.' This technological and today broadly natural function can subconsciously, but significantly increase the interest of the acquirer. 'Hyper' stands in this context for 'non-linear' (Beatty, 2010, p. 42, 43, 45). So if we consider linking not only on another text but on another media (hypermedia) we can gain interesting and referring to the first chapter and Krashen's hypothesis 'intake-rich' i.e. 'acquisition-rich' environment. Whereas paper-based materials are usually more linear and with many annotations.

On the other hand, the complexity and non-linear approach can deliver more distraction to the acquirer. In this respect, the printed texts stay even today still very relevant. Hence, the essential factor to successfully employ computer technology in English language acquisition is the amount of time that these technologies require *before* the language acquisition or rather language learning starts. According to the words of

Beatty himself: *“If the cognitive overhead is too high, then the technology, however wonderful, may not be worth the investment of time by teachers and learners”* (Beatty, 2010, p. 82).

To conclude this subsection, we can say that computer-based learning materials nowadays offer very intuitive and interesting environment for English language acquisition, thanks to non-linear approach provided, for example, by clickable hyperlinks connecting many kinds of different media i.e. hypermedia, where the language learner is also able to use a variety of media i.e. multimedia at the same time.

However, the computers can also, due to countless possibilities of usage, provide a distraction to the user or rather acquirer and time before the ‘real’ second language acquisition begins also plays a big role. As a result, it is important to provide computer software that is user-friendly and can immediately work as a language acquisition tool. The following two subsections of this chapter, thereby, will focus on specific computer software and web interfaces that can provide an effective environment for second language acquisition.

4.1.2 Programs for learning English

To start this subsection, it is necessary to name ‘word processing programs.’ These are the kinds of programs with which the ordinary user is most likely to come into contact when working on the personal computer. Also, the other personal computer programs specifically connected with the English dictionary and vocabulary will be discussed in this subsection.

In addition to the primary function of the above-mentioned programs i.e. ‘word processors’, these programs usually contain built-in algorithms dedicated to spelling and grammar check. Currently, this specific function emerges not only in stand-alone computer programs like Microsoft Office Suite but also in web interfaces when, for example, writing emails, notes or contributing to online discussions. For example in

Microsoft Word, this spelling and grammar check usually does not offer any kind of feedback to the user or rather second language learner, so the learner usually simply choose the first correction offered without further analysis of the misspelling, thus, this function cannot serve as a proper second language learning tool. Often, the correction does not have to necessarily be appropriate in the context of the particular document (Beatty, 2010, p. 9, 59, 60). However, there is one program on market called *Grammarly* that can provide additional feedback to the second language learner by analysing his or her writing in any document or even when writing anywhere on the Internet.

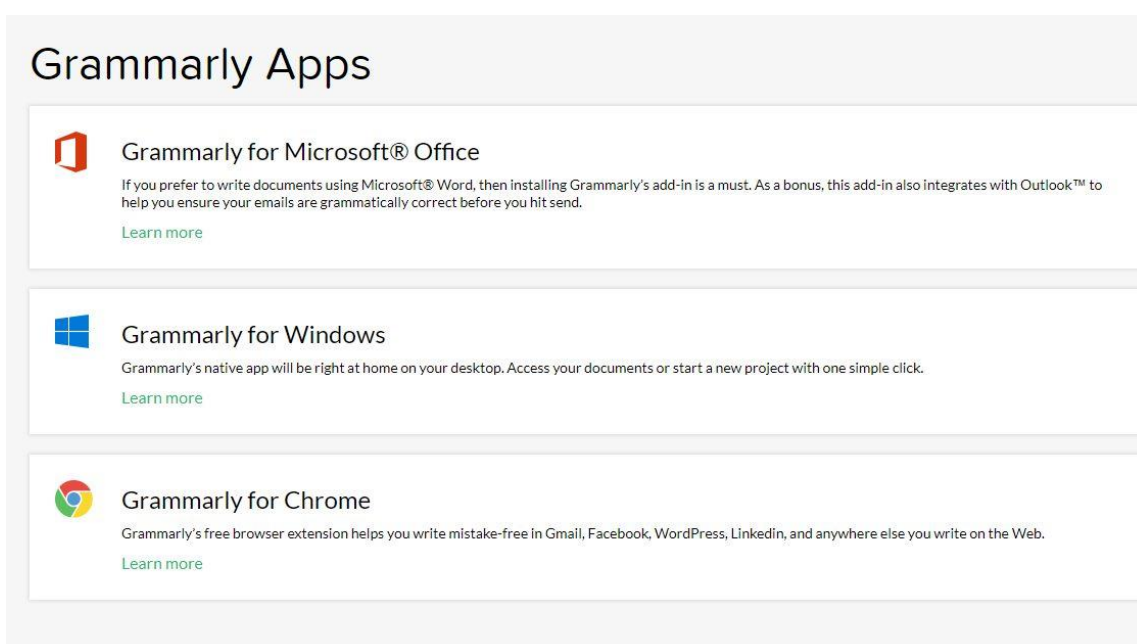


Fig. 5 Screenshot of Grammarly Apps overview in user menu (Grammarly.com, 2019)

As shown in Figure 5 above, *Grammarly* can assist as a stand-alone program, as an extension for the Google Chrome web browser and also as 'add-in' in word processing program Microsoft Word. This option can be particularly helpful by English language acquisition, while *Grammarly* being a part of Microsoft Word, can directly contribute to the learner as *additional feedback* and *motivation to rethink* misspelling in words actually produced. In another word, *Grammarly* can provide error

correction and suggest words for the better expression of oneself (Grammarly.com, 2019).¹²

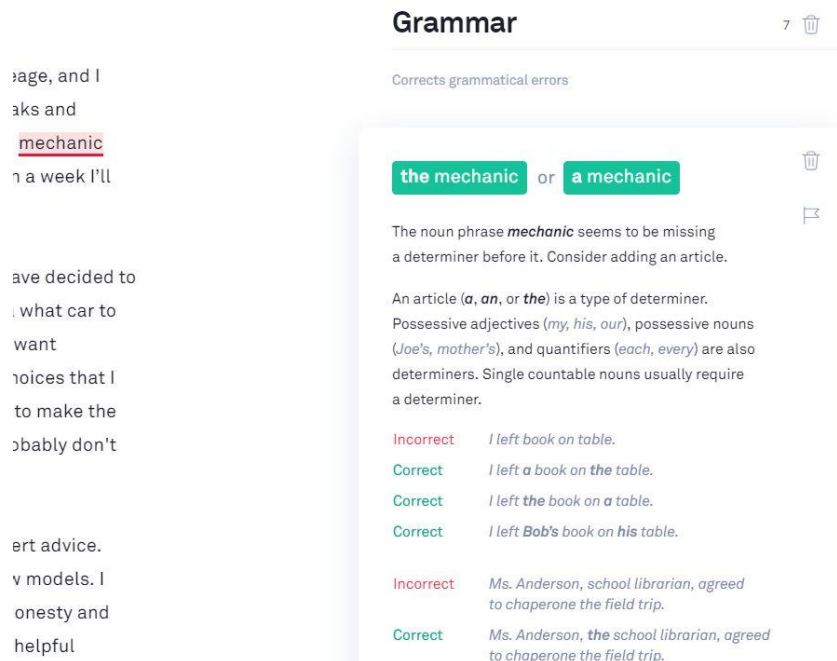


Fig. 6 Screenshot of Demo Document in user menu (Grammarly.com, 2019)

Figure 6 shows an example of misspelling from the Demo document prepared from *Grammarly* to demonstrate concrete suggestions on grammar corrections. The additional information about specific grammar rule is also available, so the learner can see the misspelling in a concrete context. However, as this can be a practical tool to improve English writing skills it does not mainly serve as a proper second language acquisition tool, rather, according to Krashen's theory as an example of online software for 'Monitor' i.e. conscious language learning.

Following examples of selected computers programs focus on conscious language learning too, but also provide a wider spectrum of interactivity, thus, a more suitable environment for second language acquisition.

¹² Grammarly.com. 2019. *Free Writing Assistant* [online].

Namely, *Oxford Student's Dictionary* is an example of an English learning program based on the printed dictionary of the same name. This program is developed to expand the originally printed dictionary on the computer screen by a more interactive and comprehensible way.

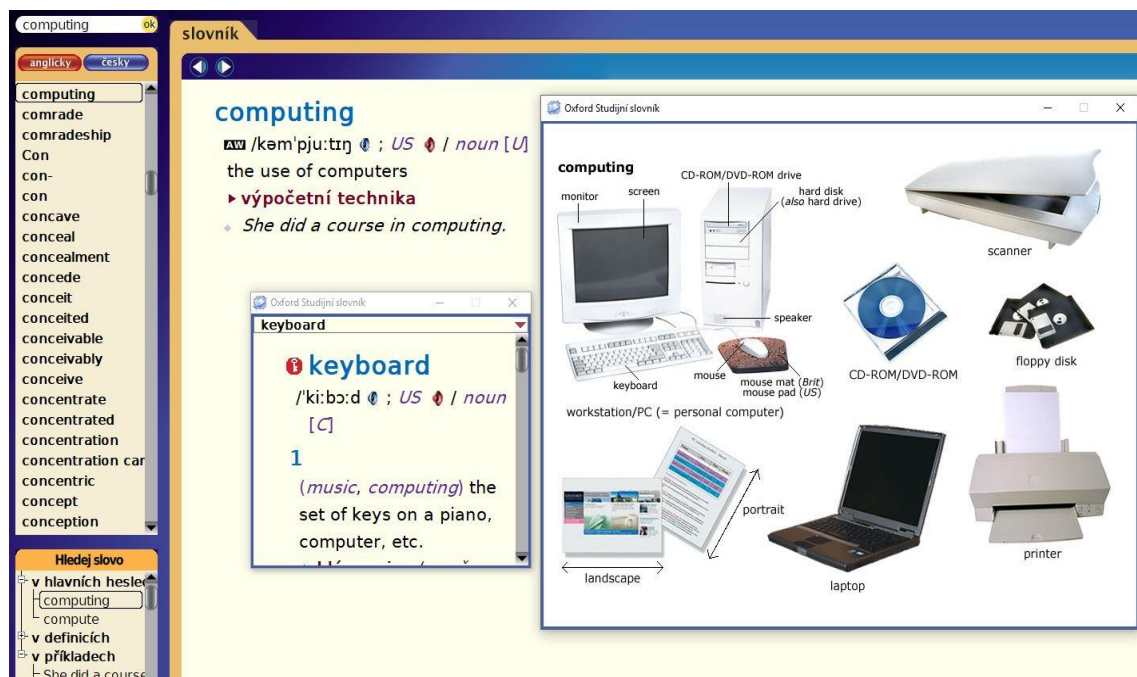


Fig. 7 Screenshot of Oxford Student's Dictionary program interface (Oxford studijní slovník, 2010)

Figure 7 depicts the interface of the *Oxford Student's Dictionary* program taken from the Czech edition of this publication. *Oxford Student's Dictionary* consists of 52 000 words, meanings and phrases. The acquirer can find here corresponding definitions, translations as well as British or American pronunciation of the words. In addition, collocations, idioms, phrasal verbs, grammar plus additional information and notes concerning the vocabulary and understanding complex English words are also part of this electronic dictionary (Oxford studijní slovník, 2010).¹³

Referring to the aforementioned CALL methodology and 'hypermedia context', this particular program can offer a non-linear approach to English language learning and acquisition too. Selected words contain, apart from definition and examples, additional images with

¹³ Oxford studijní slovník. 2010. *výkladový slovník angličtiny s českým překladem* [CD-ROM].

words expressing the same topic. Furthermore, words that are depicted on the image are clickable too, so the learner can very quickly get information about words connected with the original one, in the same window and context, as shown in the concrete example of word 'computing' in Figure 7.

In the left bottom corner of the program's interface, the acquirer can explore collocations and the usage of the word in other contexts. This function is also accompanied by a recent history of searched terms, so the learner can view and repeat all searched terms in the current relation of the program. This particular function is made accessible by small arrows in the left upper corner also visible in Figure 7. The program contains links to additional documents, exercises and games; the user can also record his or her pronunciation of the word and compare it to the original one.

Finally, the program has a practical function called 'Genie' which allows the user to minimise the dictionary window to 'a pop-up version' to have it at hand when for example browsing the Internet or using Microsoft Word (Oxford studijní slovník, 2010). This electronic version of *Oxford Student's Dictionary* offers, thanks to 'hypermedia connectivity', the non-linear approach to learning as well as to the acquisition of the English language.

The final part of this subsection is devoted to computer programs or rather 'applications' downloadable from official Microsoft Store built-in Windows 10 operating system. It is another and contemporary approach of how to find suitable software for English language acquisition. For the purpose of this subsection, two example applications from this platform will be named.

Firstly, the application called *Learn Speak English* that helps, in particular with practising English pronunciation. This application provides an overview of consonants and vowels with the possibility to directly

practice each sound inside the application interface. Each sound has its own window with pronunciation examples in a male and female voice and built-in video-player with video concerning particular sound. The BBC Learning English website is used as a source of videos and Cambridge University Press as a source of audio records and spelling rules (Learn Speak English, 2019).¹⁴ Both of these sources will be mentioned in the following parts of this thesis.

Secondly, the application that can be found in Microsoft Store under the name *Learn English 6000 Words for Free with Fun Easy Learn*, is an 'app' that connects acquiring the English vocabulary with game elements. The acquirer, as the case may be, the player collects virtual points called 'flowers' by completing various combinations of games connecting different 'Topics' and 'SubTopics' concerning 'real life' vocabulary (Angličtina Fun Easy Learn, 2019).¹⁵ Collecting the 'flowers', motivates the acquirer to practice for a longer time and also to unlock more words on 'Intermediate' and 'Advanced' level. Games also contain images of the words, for better visualisation and memorisation of the vocabulary discussed.

Both mentioned applications are designed to be user-friendly and, referring to Krashen, with the appropriate amount of 'comprehensible input' as well as, referring to Beatty, without too much 'cognitive overhead.' Figure 8 on the next page depicts interfaces of both Microsoft Store applications mentioned above.

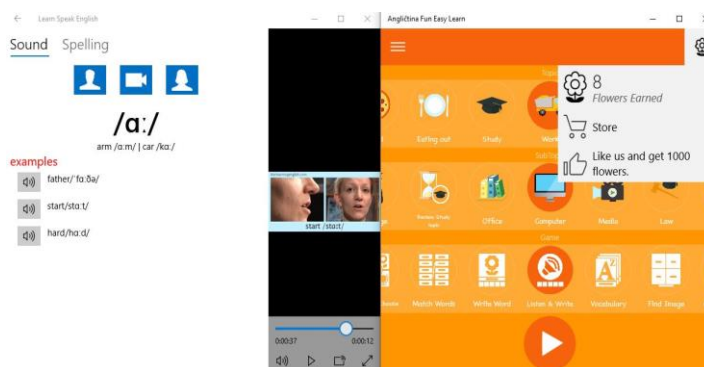


Fig. 8 Screenshots of (Learn Speak English, 2019) and (Angličtina Fun Easy Learn, 2019)

¹⁴ Learn Speak English. 2019. *SOUND ENGLISH* [Microsoft Store application version 1.1.5.0].

¹⁵ Angličtina Fun Easy Learn. 2019. - *6,000 Words* [Microsoft Store application version 1.7].

To summarise this subsection of chapter 4, it is necessary to say that many suitable programs for learning or acquisition of English are nowadays available on the market. They more or less differ in their interfaces focused on conscious second language learning or, for example, thanks to the game algorithms, ability to serve as a proper tool for English language acquisition. Selected examples of programs are based on different Internet-based platforms, apart from an electronic version of *Oxford Student's Dictionary*.

Today's fast-growing technologies, especially technologies in the mobile sphere 'push' the second language software on web interfaces and Internet-based applications. This trend is evident in the abovementioned Microsoft Store applications as well. But it is mainly reflected in the sphere of Internet-based learning platforms which will be the topic of the following subsection.

4.1.3 Internet and social media (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram)

As mentioned at the end of the last subsection, the Internet is a medium that is nowadays used on the daily basis, particularly for example as a source with quick access to any kind of information, a work tool, a cloud service, an entertainment platform or an education medium. Especially the first and last two mentioned possibilities lay foundations for second language acquisition. Specifically, in terms of *online communication* and *online software interfaces*.

We can refer to online communication as to computer-mediated communication (CMC) which is one of the popular methods in terms of CALL. It contains communication per email, discussions or chats using social networks platforms e.g. Facebook. This computer-based communication is not primarily focused on learning, despite the fact that this opportunity is actually present here, especially in cases, where the second-language learner and native speaker of the target language are involved in a direct communication situation (Beatty, 2010, p. 69).

In fact, CMC is currently being delegated to smart devices or rather smartphones which enable 'to have Internet in pockets' and communicate on every step. Therefore, social networks as a platform for communication and other related applications for the same purpose will be mentioned in subsection 4.2.

Whereas, this subsection will be concerned with online software interfaces designed for users or rather acquirers and their interaction with specific online English learning content. In this instance, CALL methodology is presented through WWW i.e. Internet interfaces and it is referred to as Web-Enhanced Language Learning - 'WELL' (Beatty, 2010, p. 11). WELL can provide even more interactivity in terms of hypertext and hypermedia linking than computer programs. Firstly, this is caused by the diversity of web interfaces which have an ability to be employed as English language learning or acquisition tools and secondly by their ability to have these two functions at the same time.

Hence, the first part of selected examples will be concerned with web interfaces mainly focused on English language conscious learning with the secondary option of acquisition as well and the second part of this subsection will be devoted to selected social media as platforms with the focus on subconscious language acquisition with the possibility to use them as English language learning tools too. Examples are chosen in general from English web platforms as well as from Czech websites with the aim of English language learning and acquisition.

Area, where information technologies facilitate conscious English learning the most are online dictionaries. The acquirer can find the word quicker than in printed ones. In addition, online dictionaries can be both bilingual and monolingual at the same time e.g. *Cambridge Dictionary* can provide besides other things semi-bilingual dictionaries and

explanations of written and spoken English e.g. grammar in one web environment (Dictionary.cambridge.com, 2019).¹⁶

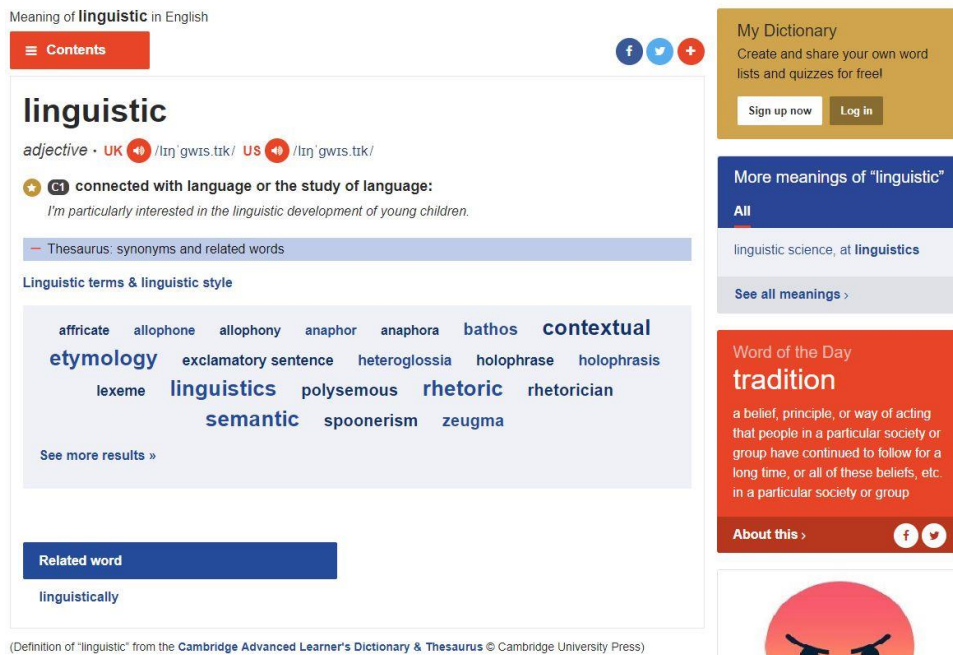


Fig. 9 Screenshot of Cambridge Dictionary web interface (Dictionary.cambridge.com, 2019)

Figure 9 shows the web interface of the searched term 'linguistic'. *Cambridge Dictionary* provides besides definition of the term accompanied by British and American pronunciation also the indicator of the level of English which is a very useful feature. It also provides thesaurus with synonyms and related words. Another plus side is the feature which shows part of speech of the word and by nouns also if they are countable or uncountable. A similar feature can be found by verbs indicating their transitivity or intransitivity.

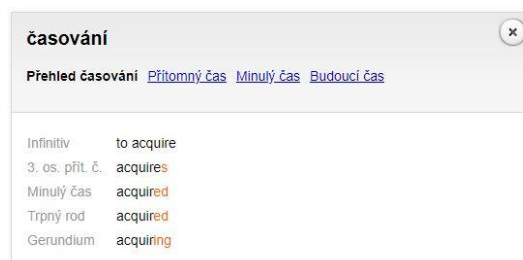
Cambridge Dictionary also contains a built-in translation algorithm and feature called 'Word of the Day' that is visible in Figure 9. This function shows each day a new word on every interface of the searched term. This online dictionary provides a wide spectrum of features in addition to the essential features of the printed dictionaries. Surely, the main purpose of this web interface is conscious English learning but acquisition can take place here too, thanks to the built-in features of

¹⁶ Dictionary.cambridge.com. 2019. © Cambridge University Press [online].

contextual examples of searched terms and examples of their synonyms and related words. The acquirer can also create an online account and save his or her searched terms to exercise them later on.

Another possibility would be *Wiktionary* that works with the online dictionary interface from a slightly different perspective than the first mentioned example. It is a project based on a free-content multilingual dictionary, where the focus is put on describing words from all languages by English definitions and descriptions. This web interface is also part of 'wiki' which means that everyone can contribute and edit pages for searched terms (En.wiktionary.org, 2018).¹⁷ This can ensure a significant amount of information concerning every word, but also the possible incompetence by certain entries. On contrary to the *Cambridge dictionary*, *Wiktionary* can provide also the etymologies of the words and entries of the searched term used in a different language on one web interface. In many cases, *Wiktionary* can work as a detailed overview of words in any languages.

An alternative taken from the Czech web environment is the online bilingual dictionary *Seznam Slovník* based on Lingea online dictionary. This dictionary provides, in addition to essential dictionary features, another practical feature showing e.g. complete conjugation tables by verbs (v. Figure 10) or comparison tables by adjectives. Furthermore, it has a user-friendly interface, by certain entries also useful collocations and phrases. Moreover, this web interface enables the user to practice vocabulary from certain 'real life' topics and save searched terms.



časování	
Přehled časování Přítomný čas Minulý čas Budoucí čas	
Infinitiv	to acquire
3. os. přít. č.	acquires
Minulý čas	acquired
Trpný rod	acquired
Gerundium	acquiring

Fig. 10 Screenshot of conjugation table - 'to acquire' (Slovník.seznam.cz, 2019)

¹⁷ En.wiktionary.org. 2018. *the free dictionary* [online].

Online dictionaries primarily focus on definitions of the searched words with extra complementary functions that WELL makes available. Specific complementary functions of online dictionaries which are ‘pronunciation audio records’ and ‘contextual example clauses’ of searched terms provide following two web interfaces.

Firstly, if the acquirer wants to focus on authentic pronunciation of the native speakers of the target language and not only on official examples e.g. in the aforementioned *Cambridge Dictionary* website, *Forvo* can serve this purpose. It can be also referred to as the ‘audio pronunciation guide’ or rather a dictionary. In this web interface, authentic native speakers share pronounced words and phrases in their original languages. Nowadays, this web interface consists of a database of nearly 5 million words in 370 different languages (Forvo.com, 2019).¹⁸ The acquirer can find specific words and related phrases, synonyms, translations as well as the world map with the pronunciation of the searched term in different regions based on users’ locations as shown below in Figure 11.



Fig. 11 Screenshot of world map and different accents (Forvo.com, 2019)

Secondly referring to chapter 2.6, the human brain can remember the new words better, when fitting them into patterns i.e. context. Contextual example clauses help to remember the words better and can (to a certain extent) imitate real communication, therefore contribute to

¹⁸ Forvo.com. 2019. *About Forvo, the audio pronunciation guide* [online].

second language acquisition. Appropriate web-based tool for this purpose is *Linguee* a bilingual dictionary which places emphasis on 'Linguee's examples sentences' and translated phrases from the context in the user-friendly interface (Linguee.com, 2019).¹⁹ This specific emphasis helps to improve second language skills

Finally, still concerning online dictionaries, there is another possible approach. Referring to the aforementioned 'Word of the Day' by *Cambridge Dictionary* the online service called *ONE-WORD-A-DAY* (OWAD) shares a similar idea. In fact, it extends the idea by sending to the subscriber on a daily basis one English word or idiom chosen from international press per email. The learner can then choose the correct definition of the word or the idiom from three options and compare his or her result with other subscribers. Background information of the word or idiom is provided too (OWAD.de, 2019).²⁰

The second area, where WELL provides suitable input for second language learners are online learning servers dedicated to English as a second language. These servers are mainly focusing on learning English with plenty of materials available, for example, via authentic data from the news.

To start with, the *BBC Learning English* web platform can be named. This extensive web interface provides various activities concerning learning English as a second language. Albeit this website offers an enormous diversity, it can also deliver distraction to a learner or rather an acquirer. Referring once again back to Beatty (2010), if 'cognitive overhead' is too high it simply doesn't worth the investment of learner's time. However, this can vary per each individual. Nevertheless, if we concentrate on the above mentioned specific method based on learning English through news we can find a suitable solution for this

¹⁹ Linguee.com. 2019. *About Linguee* [online].

²⁰ OWAD.de. 2019. *One Word A Day* [online].

purpose on this BBC online learning platform. It is called 'Lingohack' and it is a part of this learning platform that once a week upload new article based on the latest authentic BBC World news bulletins. These articles are, in addition, accompanied by definitions of words and phrases used to better understand the message (BBC.co.uk, 2019).²¹ Furthermore, each article also delivers the video with the same information presented in the article to help the acquirer to visualise and remember specific vocabulary in a context as shown in Figure 12 below.



Fig. 12 Screenshot of concrete Lingohack article video (BBC.co.uk, 2019)

Another possible approach is the direct focus on online English learning based on different learning activities. Firstly, a diversity of web interfaces with the primary aim of listening can be found. *Eillo* is one of them. This 'English Language Listening Library Online' provides free listening exercises with always two new lessons a week (Eillo.org, 2016).²² This server offers to learner different activities accompanied by audio records, transcripts, definitions on grammar and vocabulary and quizzes concerning particular lesson. The web interface is unambiguous and well arranged, so the learner can immediately start learning.

²¹ BBC.co.uk 2019. *BBC Learning English - Lingohack* [online].

²² Eillo.org. 2016. *English Listening Lesson Library Online* [online].

Besides classical methods of learning English online, another and unorthodox method exists as well. A web platform with the name *Quizlet* has not the main intention in learning English as a second language; it is rather an online learning platform in general, where users can share online learning materials to learn anything in the more entertaining and effective way. In particular, using flashcards and connected activities e.g. exercising spelling, playing learning games or testing the knowledge of concrete learned material (Quizlet, 2019).²³ The design of this web interface and intuitiveness makes it a very powerful tool for the second language acquisition tool. The acquirer just needs to create or find concrete set e.g. 'English Words' and start practising selected terms by learning and memorising the flashcards and then practice them by various activities e.g. 'Gravity' game. Joint screenshot (v. Figure 13) shows sections of *Quizlet* online interfaces for learning flashcards (on the left) and the 'Gravity' learning game.

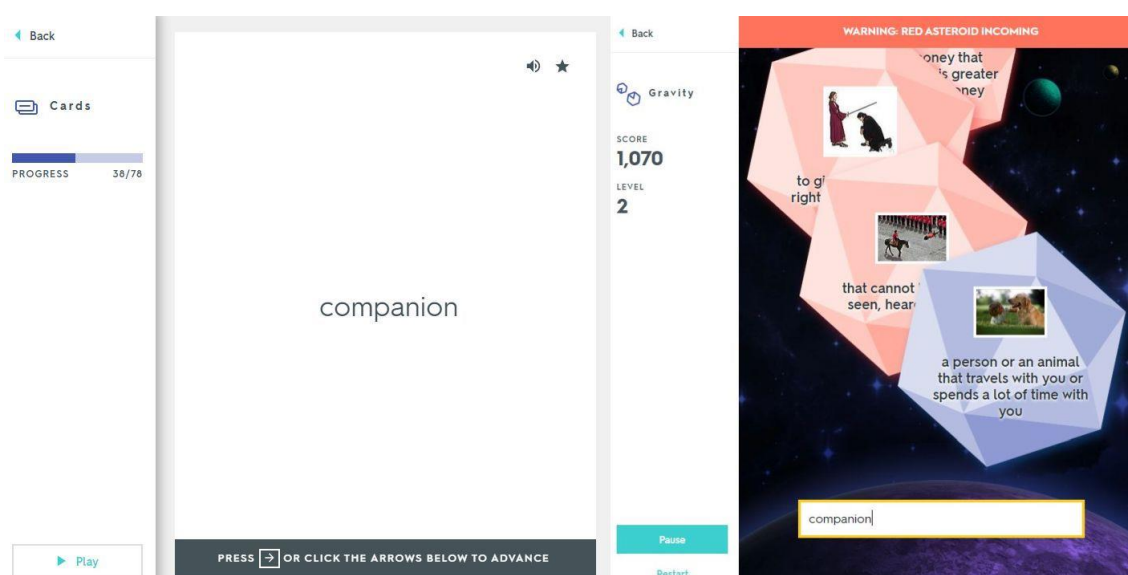


Fig. 13 Screenshots of concrete Quizlet online interfaces (Quizlet.com, 2019)

Concerning the Czech online platforms for learning English as a second language, *Help for English* is a detailed and useful tool for this purpose. It provides 3 basic types of materials: articles, interactive exercises and vocabulary concerning a particular topic. Moreover, online

²³ Quizlet.com. 2019. *Learning tools & flashcards, for free* | Quizlet [online].

tests can give not only the correct answer but also an explanation in the Czech language, related to the particular mistake. Another feature is the aforementioned method of 'Word of the Day' that in this case each day explains a different term, where the Czech students of English make most mistakes. *Help for English* authors also created paid learning application for computers and mobile devices 'English Me!', which is interconnected with free *Help for English* web interface and extends exercises devoted to English. Learners can also write commentaries, contribute to the online discussion or send messages to the authors and other users. Part of this web interface is also a built-in online dictionary with more than 18000 entries (Vít, 2010).²⁴

As mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, the second part will be dedicated to the social media as this can be today one of the most beneficial platforms for both learning and acquiring English as a second language. Only the 'surfing' through posts, following particular profiles of personal interests or reading comments of the other users in a second language itself, can significantly contribute to the English language acquisition. Nonetheless, social media can interactively connect English language acquisition through entertainment and also—from another point of view—serve as an effective English learning tool. Following examples will put emphasis on popular social media i.e. YouTube, Facebook and Instagram as possible platforms for conscious English language too.

Yet, the first example is the combination of online learning servers mentioned hereinbefore and online video platform YouTube. This project is named *engVid* and provides the acquirers with 1361 free English video lessons hosted by native-speaking professional English tutors. Online video classes published on YouTube include topics concerning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, writing, slang, expressions and video guides to international exams too (Engvid.com, 2019).²⁵ At the *engVid* web interface itself, the home page shows the most recent video

²⁴ VÍT, M. 2010. *Jste tu poprvé? - Help for English - Angličtina na internetu zdarma* [online].

²⁵ Engvid.com. 2019. *engVid* [online].

Simultaneously, as she is referring to another teacher the clickable link pops up and allows the user to stop the video and immediately play a video with the recommended lesson. This specific YouTube feature enables the learner to promptly acquire more and learn a specific topic in a context. It is an innovative method of how to use information technologies or rather WELL for learning a second language. The collaboration of *engVid* and YouTube platforms provide immediate and user-friendly access to English language learning and acquisition too.

Furthermore, another possible approach to reach *engVid* learning platform is from the perspective of YouTube itself. The home page of YouTube channel 'engVid: Learn English' represents this learning platform in general, showing all YouTube 'subchannels' devoted to each *engVid* tutor as well as recent video lessons from every teacher. After clicking on a particular video, learner also gets an opportunity to click on the hyperlink in the video's description and be transmitted to a similar interface as shown in Figure 14 above. Additionally, YouTube allows the users to subscribe to every channel in general, so the learner can subscribe main channel 'engVid: Learn English' and regularly be informed about new lessons or subscribe to each *engVid* tutor separately (EngVid, 2019).²⁶

To sum up briefly, *engVid* provides a dual approach combining an online learning platform and a video online platform; it is for free and, most importantly, with immediate access to all online video lessons with related quizzes available.

Following examples will conclude this subsection of chapter 4 and also put emphasis on social media as learning platforms itself. Still, concerning the YouTube video platform, we can state that watching any video in English—especially those of personal interests—can contribute to second language acquisition in a significant way. However, we can still find here very popular channels with tutors of English that broadcast and

²⁶ Youtube.com. 2013. *engVid: Learn English - YouTube* [online].

teach English more informally than in the case of *engVid* and also with the connection to the popular culture which makes it amusing for the acquirer as well.

The first example of the channel of this type is named *Learn English with Papa Teach Me*. Author and host of this channel Aly connects learning of English with sketches and short entertaining videos concerning spoken English, vocabulary or e.g. facts related to English pop culture and English speaking countries. The content of videos available on this channel summarises the description of the channel itself: to speak more, to improve communication and learn English in an entertaining way. The main image of the channel also states that videos are released on every Wednesday and Saturday with another possibility to be part of live English video broadcast on every Sunday (*Learn English with Papa Teach Me*, 2011).²⁷ This specific YouTube feature enables the learners to immediately communicate with other viewers and also the author himself. It is another innovative method of how to contribute to second language acquisition. The author himself also prepares content on another social media e.g. Instagram, so he interconnects his activities and motivates the learners to learn English in a particular context.

Concerning the Czech teachers of English on the YouTube platform, *Bronislav Sobotka* is currently one of the most popular ones. He publishes video content with the focus on improving English skills, pronunciation, vocabulary as well as tips on how to learn English in an amusing and modern way. According to his channel description, he helps people 'to fall in love' with English (*Bronislav Sobotka*, 2008).²⁸ He shares new video every Tuesday and also operates on other online platforms, creating English learning content as well.

Another possibility would be acquiring and learning English from videos that are showing contextual situations based on interpersonal

²⁷ Youtube.com. 2011. *Learn English with Papa Teach Me - YouTube* [online].

²⁸ Youtube.com. 2008. *Bronislav Sobotka - YouTube* [online].

communication in English. YouTube channel *Easy Languages* is a non-profitable project that publishes video content that can help in acquiring the second language. Every video episode points at a different topic and shows the language in everyday situations, from authentic interviews recorded on the streets of a particular country. Each video also contains built-in subtitles in the target language and in English (Easy Languages, 2006).²⁹ Besides learning English, this video channel offers a wide range of videos and 'subchannels' focusing on different languages e.g. 'Easy German' channel.

The last example concerning YouTube online video platform is channel labelled *Rowan Atkinson Live*. This channel contains videos showing selected sketches of stand-up tours performed by actor Rowan Atkinson in the years 1981 to 1986 (Rowan Atkinson Live, 2006).³⁰ Videos provide both educative and entertaining content owing to humorous scenes based on the usage of standard English.

Social media that enable, besides watching videos in English, another kind of interactivity which can be also employed on learning English as a second language are e.g. Facebook or Instagram.

Firstly, we can start by the example taken from Facebook, in particular, the Facebook page *Learn English*. This page provides free content for English language learning in the form of Facebook posts and it is managed and produced by Australia's national public broadcaster ABC (Learn English, 2010).³¹ It is an online platform that consists of learning materials combining image, video content and also a specific Facebook platform feature of creating polls which are labelled on this page as 'Pop Quiz!.' These posts effectively serve a purpose for learning English by showing example questions and options to choose the missing words i.e. right answer. As this is a poll, a percentage of choosing the answers by other users is visible too as shown in Figure 15.

²⁹ Youtube.com. 2006. *Easy Languages - YouTube* [online].

³⁰ Youtube.com. 2006. *Rowan Atkinson Live - YouTube* [online].

³¹ Facebook.com. 2019. *Learn English - Home* [online].



Fig. 15 Screenshot of 'Pop Quiz!' on Learn English Facebook page (Learn English, 2019)

Finally, when concerning social media Instagram as a platform for conscious English learning, the essential feature of this platform, can be employed for this specific purpose. This feature is 'hashtag' that connects Instagram posts published by different users of the same topic. Instagram enables to follow particular profiles as well as hashtags, so by using the Instagram built-in searching engine and typing e.g. '#learnenglish', the acquirer can get posts and temporary 'Insta Stories' from different users but with same aim i.e. learning English. In view of the fact that Instagram is currently one of the most popular social media, the content is updated on a 24-hour basis. In addition, 'Insta Story' feature allows users to be part of created polls, similarly to Facebook polls as shown above as well as to transparently communicate with the author. Nowadays, Instagram contains a wide range of different content not only on learning English, so the built-in feature of using 'hashtags' and therefore an opportunity to display only a specific content remains crucial even for conscious English language learning. Referring back to the online Cambridge Dictionary, the Instagram profile named *cambridgewords* is provided by Cambridge University Press Dictionary

too. And it contains the posts featuring the same ‘Word of the Day’ as on the online Cambridge Dictionary interface. Thus, when a user is ‘surfing’ through new posts of followed profiles, he or she can find and learn a new English word every day. The example of ‘Insta Story’ based on ‘hashtag’ #learnenglish (#learnenglish, 2019)³² and one particular post from Instagram profile cambridgewords (cambridgewords, 2019)³³ is shown in Figure 16 below.

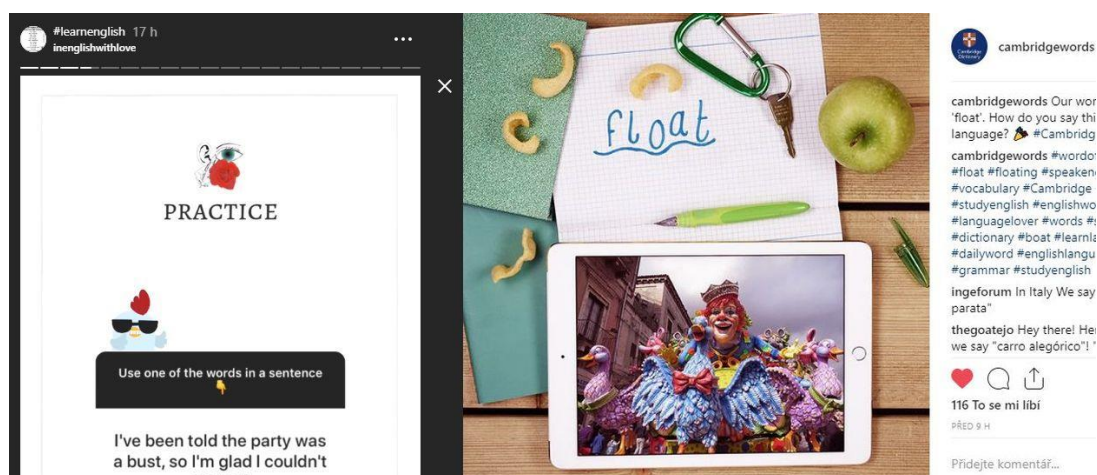


Fig. 16 Screenshots of ‘Insta Story’ feature (#learnenglish, 2019) and particular Instagram post (cambridgewords, 2019)

To summarise this subsection, it is necessary to say that Internet has currently a significant impact on almost every human being in our society, thus, it should be considered as one of the main methods of learning English as a second language, right after the interpersonal communication. On the contrary to real conversation e.g. with native English speaker, the Internet provides the immediate access ‘from one click’ to an immense number of websites with the aim of learning English online, thus, a possible ‘overload’ of web interfaces that can serve as the sources and approaches to English language learning and acquisition too. Therefore, the main purpose of this subsection is putting the emphasis on concrete utilisation of various online software interfaces as tools for English language acquisition and learning, concerning the

³² Instagram.com. 2019. *Hashtag #learnenglish na Instagramu Fotky a videa* [online].

³³ Instagram. 2019. *Cambridge Dictionary (@cambridgewords)* [online].

classical and unorthodox, contemporary and innovative approaches as well.

4.1.4 Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL)

As mentioned at the end of subsection 2.5, video games can substantially improve English as a second language, because of ability to provide convenient environment including the balance of entertainment and parable with real-life actions e.g. interpersonal communication. Specific method that involves using the video games as the tools for learning e.g. second language learning is ‘Digital Game-Based Learning’ hereinafter referred to as (DGBL). DGBL is designed to provide equilibrium between learning topic and gameplay elements and help the learner to utilise gained knowledge in real-life scenarios (Rivera, 2016).³⁴

DGBL covers a wide spectrum of video games as the original definition coined by Prensky (2001) states: this method involves *any kind* of learning video game on a computer or in an online form (Eskelinen, 2012, p. 6). Moreover, DGBL is about entertainment and aspects of involvement together with the learning process—according to Prensky himself—“*exciting medium*” i.e. learning video games (Prensky, 2001, p. 5). There are many perspectives on how to make a distinction between video games genres. Terminology is not in many cases identical, however, the fundamental differentiation can be based on educational games or rather ‘serious’ games (used as an umbrella term) and non-educational games also referred to as commercial games. There are, nonetheless, games in a commercial section which are also offered for free and usually referred to as ‘indie’ games (Eskelinen, 2010, p, 6).

‘Serious’ games started to be involved in many types of research as they enable players to gain new knowledge by being at the same time involved in an engaging video game environment (Zin et al., 2009, p. 10). Referring back to subsection 4.1.3, *Quizlet* based ‘Gravity’ game offers

³⁴ RIVERA, M. 2016. *Is Digital Game-Based Learning The Future Of Learning?* [online].

this particular kind of environment; more specifically, DGBL can be an effective tool to English language conscious learning if following essential elements are involved: *competing, involvement, immediate rewards* and *feedback* (Rivera, 2016). The further conceptualisation of the second group of video games i.e. commercial video games and concrete examples of commercial video games with regard to English language acquisition will be outlined in the following subsection 4.1.5.

Referring back to immersing game environment, DGBL applies specific characteristics of video games to establish learning characteristics that are attractive and can deliver concrete learning aims (Zin et al., 2009, p. 2). As a follow-up to the previous statement, Prensky shares his promise that DGBL method can be found useful for topics that are difficult to explain. This difficulty can arise from the uninteresting subject matter or particularly complex content (Prensky, 2001, p. 17).

Specifically, the video game is a risk-free environment—referring back to Krashen’s hypothesis the low affective filter environment—where the learners or acquirers can make mistakes and these situations can subsequently become challenges (Rivera, 2016). Learning a second language also requires exercising and time (Eskalinen, 2012, p. 7), thus, spending time by playing a video game and practising English in context over and over, the learner can acquire significant experiences with the second language e.g. English.

In addition, the central part of video games are puzzles or rather ‘in-game mechanics’ that creates an environment with the potential of improving skills in solving particular problems. Player or acquirer is exposed to complex puzzles in order to continue in the video game story. These situations require memorisation, logical thinking and ability to experimentation because game designers usually provide no or little help to particular video game situation. Thus, players tend to employ the method of trial and error in order to continue further (Granic et al., 2014, p. 69).

Although DGBL is also considered as research with no dynamic progress or hard empirical evidence on its efficiency, along with argumentation that video games can develop an anti-social behaviour or short attention spans, video games can still significantly contribute to developing specific players skills and this also includes learning a second language. Due to fast-growing technology and its specific nature of updates and upgrades, the fact about attention spans can be considered as a relevant point, however, in case of antisocial behaviour, there is a considerable percentage of video games based on real-time communication that can contribute to player's interpersonal communication skills and help him or her later in personal or business situations (Rivera, 2016).

To sum up briefly, this subsection outlines specific characteristics and benefits contained in DGBL model, in order to utilise video games as a second language tools. Similarly to real-life situations, games in general help to develop skills and experiences in certain spheres and situations. Furthermore, games based on the digital platform can imitate real-life scenarios connecting senses of sight, hearing and touch, thus, expose the player or rather acquirer to similar situations as in his or her personal or professional life.

4.1.5 Learning English by means of popular culture - part I (video games)

In addition to benefits promoted by DGBL model, video games are also one of the youngest media in connection with the popular culture. The market with video games shows an annual growth rate of approximately 4% and an overall number of video game industry at 108 billion USD. This contributes to the fact that this particular industry has already outdone another popular culture media e.g. movie or music industries (Hostýnek, 2018).

Owing to current intensity and diversity in video game industry, this subsection will be concerned with the commercial games as mentioned in subsection 4.1.4 as their main purpose is not to educate, *but to entertain*

and thus substantially contribute to English language acquisition. The possible conceptualisation of commercial games as well as examples of these games in the context of social interaction and other perspectives with the reference back to the DGBL model premises will be outlined in this subsection.

As outlined in the previous subsection, video games are based on the fundamental feature of *interactivity* which means that a player is involved in video game storyline, rather than following the story in a passive way like e.g. by watching television programmes or movies. The level of interactivity differs from each video game and the corresponding platform. For example, the players can choose if they want to play alone ‘singleplayer video games’ or ‘multiplayer video games’ (Granic et al., 2014, p. 67, 68). Moreover, multiplayer video games also enable—with regard to second language acquisition—to communicate in real-time with other players and accomplish concrete video game tasks together or against each other, so the competitive aspects work as the motivation and are crucial for acquiring the English too.

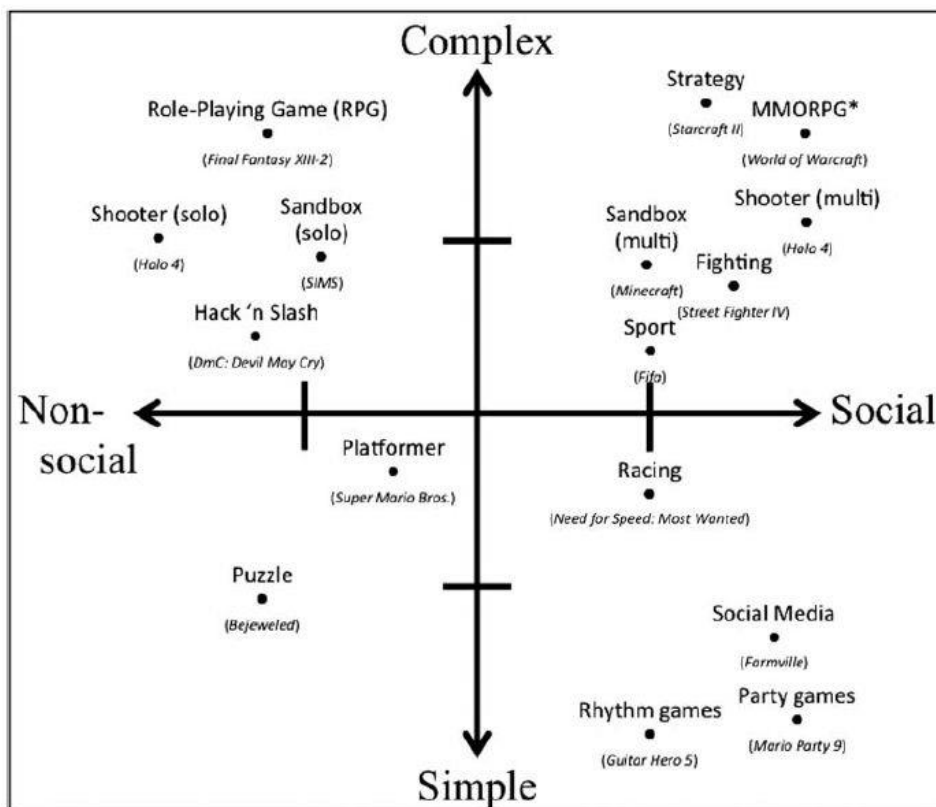


Fig. 17 Conceptual Map of the video game genres (Granic et al., 2014)

Figure 17 shown above, depicts the conceptual map that sorts video game genres with concrete examples on the basis of two dimensions that significantly influence the video game experiences: 'Level of Complexity and 'Extent of Social Interaction Required'. This map is not based on the empirical but rather conceptual basis with the intention to show the diversity of commercial video games genres and the corresponding degree of player's interactivity in the gameplay (Granic et al., 2014, p. 70). Examples of video games are taken from diverse platforms e.g. *Super Mario Bros.* from Nintendo video game consoles or *World of Warcraft* from Blizzard Entertainment designed as 'personal computer game' (PC game), which was one of the first 'massive multiplayer online role-playing games' (MMORPG) that have started to generate vast success on worldwide scale.

The research study by Lee & Gerber (2013) has been made with the aim of connecting the gameplay of *World of Warcraft* with effects that this game can have on the acquisition of English as a second language. A 21-year-old Korean male was observed for a one year while playing this game in English language interface. Results of this research have highlighted three different patterns in terms of English language acquisition. Firstly, referring back to chapter 2.4 and first language interference, the player was using his first language knowledge to communicate in target language i.e. English. Secondly, the player started to acquire English from the interaction of other players playing at the same time. Finally, after some period of acquiring the English, the Korean player was able to communicate without any difficulties with other *World of Warcraft* players. This research has shown that English language skills were developed by the community of other players and social interactions, albeit the main focus of the player is not on language learning, but on discovering the video game content and related 'in-game mechanics'. In addition, communicating in multiplayer video game interfaces is based on textual forms, so the acquirer does not have to

concentrate on accents, pronunciation or immediate answers to other players (Lee & Pass, 2014, p. 95, 97, 99).

The contemporary situation on the video game market offers an infinite number of video game titles and thus facilitates entrance into virtual worlds to anyone than, for example, in the 1980s. Yet, the player owning video game console (Xbox ONE, PlayStation 4, etc.) can experience issues to play the video game in English language setting, because video games are usually arranged for local video game market and thus not necessarily contain full selection of languages used in the video game interface (Stimola, 2014).³⁵ In the case of the English however, owing to the status of 'lingua franca' video games nowadays usually contain English language interface at least in the form of subtitles, as this is also the goal of the video game developers to reach this market in the widest possible range.

On contrary to video game consoles mentioned in the paragraph above, the following part of this subsection will be concerned with specific digital PC game platforms and examples of two video games that are situated in inverse position with regard to the conceptual map in Figure 17. More specifically, 'Complex - Social' dimension in opposition to 'Non-social - Simple' dimension. The emphasis is put on the contribution of these platforms and video games to the acquisition of English as a second language.

To start with, one of the most popular digital platform for PC games today is *Steam*. *Steam* is a digital distribution platform established in 2003 by Valve Corporation. It offers digital content including video games and enables direct communication between publishers and costumers as well as players (Valvesoftware.com, 2019).³⁶ This platform contains a vast selection of video game titles. Players or rather acquirers can filter the video games according to in-game languages. Selecting the English,

³⁵ STIMOLA, M. 2014. *Learn or Die! 5 Epic Ways to Learn Languages by Playing Video Games* [online].

³⁶ Valvesoftware.com. 2019. *About Us - Valve Corporation* [online].

ensures at least the English language interface of the game, additionally the full English audio and subtitles as well. Playing the video game in a complete English language interface, multiplies the English language acquisition and enables the acquirer to be engaged in a *coherent contextual in-game environment*. After choosing the specific game, *Steam* provides the ‘Languages’ overview with all in-game Languages (Stimola, 2014). Figure 18 above depicts an example of the ‘Languages’ overview for the video game *Batman™: Arkham Knight* available on *Steam* digital platform.

Languages:	Interface	Full Audio	Subtitles
English	✓	✓	✓
French	✓	✓	✓
Italian	✓	✓	✓
German	✓	✓	✓
Spanish - Spain	✓	✓	✓
Korean	✓		✓
Portuguese - Brazil	✓	✓	✓
Polish	✓		✓
Russian	✓		✓

Fig. 18 Screenshot of ‘Languages’ overview for *Batman™: Arkham Knight* (Store.steampowered.com, 2019)

Furthermore, video game genres outlined in Figure 17 are searchable terms in the *Steam* digital platform database. This facilitates the acquirer’s input requirements for his or her preferences of the video game. Albeit, the main page of the *Steam* can be complex at the first sight, using the built-in ‘browsing algorithm’ with the aforementioned features can substantially simplify the acquirer entrance to the video games as tools for second language acquisition. Besides, ‘surfing’ the *Steam* platform in general and looking for the specific video game, can contribute to English acquisition as well.

Secondly, the focus will be put on a particular example of a video game called *Candy Box 2* that can be conceptualised—referring back to Figure 17—as a ‘Non-social - Simple’ type of video game. Importantly,

this conceptualisation does not, however, lower the potential of this video game to be contributive to second language acquisition. Quite the contrary, owing to the text-based interface implemented in the website, this game provides the player immediate access to the game. The main principle of this game is simple; the player, just being present on the website, collects 'candies' that enables to expand *Candy Box 2* interface and with it also the further 'in-game mechanics'. These mechanics then imitate mechanics contained in role-playing games i.e. 'collecting items' and accomplishing quests. The player can also plant another commodity used in the game which is the 'lollipop' and grow even more 'lollipops' to invest them e.g. to construct new buildings. This particular algorithm is present in strategy video games.

Regardless of the primitiveness of *Candy Box 2* graphics interface, the player or rather an acquirer is still progressing through the game being engaged in the *context gameplay*, which is the focal point for the second language acquisition no matter the complexity of the game in the sense of graphic design or game storyline. Moreover, this game does not contain a plethora of words and phrases, rather use the vocabulary in entertaining context e.g. 'lollipop farm', so it is ideal for English learners of any level.

On the other edge of the conceptual map presented in Figure 17, there is the 'Complex - Social' dimension that is the domain of 'massive multiplayer online games' (MMO). MMO games add to the 'contextual learning benefit' also the 'communication package' as outlined in the aforementioned research study based on MMORPG *World of Warcraft* above.

Another example of the video game with similar aspects like *World of Warcraft* is *Overwatch* which is a 'massive multiplayer online first-person shooter' (MMOFPS) produced by the same company - Blizzard Entertainment. Blizzard provides similar service as *Steam* called 'Battle.net' that puts together all quality video game titles produced by this

company into one interface or rather one 'app'. In this personal computer application, players can communicate and play together and also, which is the added value with regard to *Steam*, for example, watch live streams and all other information connected to 'Overwatch League', the contests between esports teams as shown in Figure 19.

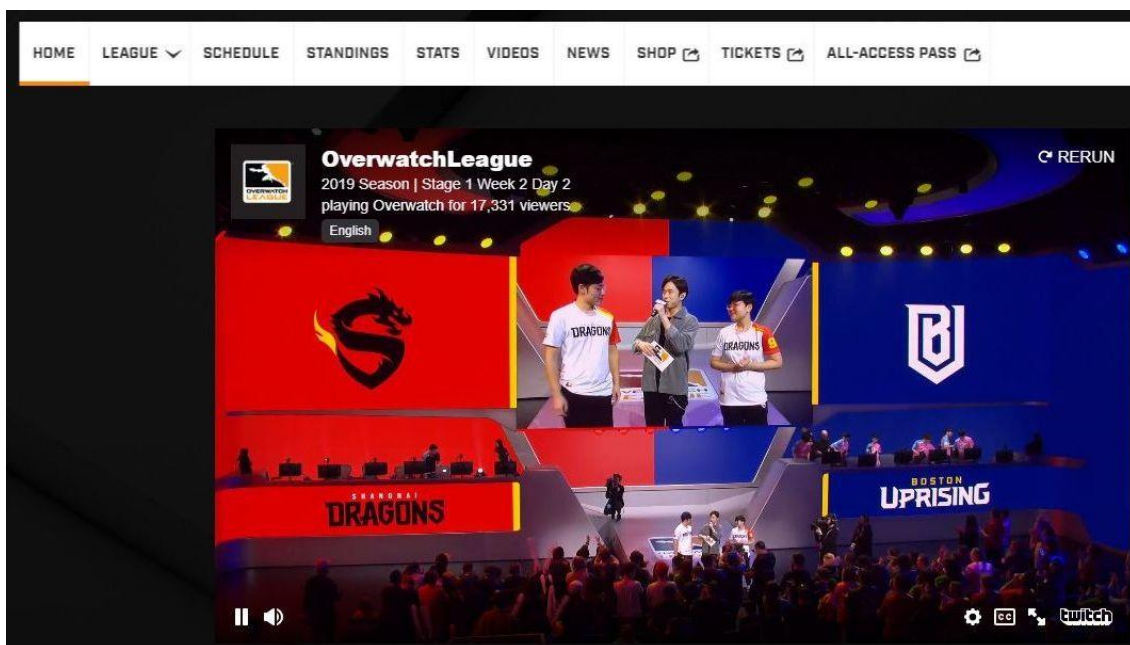


Fig. 19 Screenshot of Blizzard App interface (Blizzard App, 2019)

This specific interactive feature enables the acquirer to expand the context beyond the game itself and acquire the English language in an even more attractive perspective, still concerning the same topic i.e. *Overwatch* video game.

To summarise, video games represent immense potential in the sense of second language acquisition. Entering into this world nowadays requires only a few clicking, Internet connection and corresponding video game platform. Albeit, this area is still not so considerably researched and sometimes also rejected. The success and popularity of the video game market speak the opposite. Video games can imitate real-life scenarios e.g. by acquiring English words in context, communicate with other people to achieve certain gameplay objective. These features play the main role in English language acquisition as they have been already

outlined by Krashen's or Gardner's hypothesis, at a time when they did not have the as significant position as in today's popular culture world.

4.2 Tablets and smartphones

Referring back to subsection 4.1.3, in particular, to CALL and CMC methodology, today's trend is to use mobile devices as tools for communication in various ways. In addition, tablets, smartphones and smart devices provide a vast spectrum of possibilities of how to consciously learn or subconsciously acquire English as a second language. Hence, this subsection of chapter 4 will be concerned with the methodology dealing with mobile devices and their potential and specific attributes for second language acquisition. The second part will be devoted to concrete examples of applications and approaches (concerning smart devices) and their possible utilisation for English language learning and acquisition.

4.2.1 Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Today's trend of rising potential on the usage of mobile technology in various human activities declares the essential role of technology as a tool for gaining different aspects of knowledge (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012, p. 315). Due to this fact, we can say that we are now in 'post-CALL era' because the area of using technology is no longer only about personal computers and 'assisted language learning', but rather the mobile devices and their concrete utilisation (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, two terms with respect to this topic can be named: 'Mobile Assisted Language Learning' hereinafter referred to as 'MALL' and 'Mobile Assisted Language Use' hereinafter referred to as 'MALU'.

Albeit, the first term is referring more to CALL and its nature to be preferred as a tool for conscious language learning, on contrary to mobile devices, which are majority employed more as the English language acquisition tool (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013, p. 9), both acronyms shares the same content in terms of potential of mobile technology on learning

particular knowledge. The usage of these two terms is interchangeable in the context of this thesis.

On contrary to CALL, MALL provides the acquirer with the usage of individually customizable, easily accessible hand-held devices that are open to modern ways of learning and accessing the specific usage of mobile devices in terms of various contexts and spontaneous actions (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013, p. 2, 3).

Learning and acquisition of English by means of mobile technology have the potential mainly in ways of spontaneity, informality, personalisation and ubiquity. One of the biggest advantages is *portability* in terms of size and weight of mobile devices. No matter where or when the users can access specific kind of learning materials as well as digital entertaining platforms and start the second language acquisition. Mobile platforms also lay foundations for social interactivity by e.g. chatting with other users or context sensitivity, which is referring to data inside the devices and their interaction e.g. with current position and time. Connectivity also plays a vital role as e.g. the smartphones can be connected with other devices and create a common network (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012, p. 309, 310).

In other words, MALL offers the learner similar environment as CALL with the essential benefit of portability and more intense focus on second language acquisition. This also means an easier tendency to distraction, where the second language acquisition can take apart, but not necessarily in an efficient way. This issue can be related to MALU and its definition of using mobile devices for accessing and working with information no matter where or when and utilisation of mobile devices for social and/or academic purposes in English. To put it more simply, MALU is comprised of working with information on the basis of English user in the worldwide connected network (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013, p. 9).

To summarise, choosing either MALL which is the approach derived from CALL i.e. with a focus especially on conscious English learning or MALU that is more motivated by nature of mobile technology itself, the acquirer can utilise knowledge from both the approaches. Nonetheless, achieving the significant improvement in the English language requires using mobile devices in effective ways e.g. in means of suitable mobile applications. Matter of applications, mobile games and approaches based on smart devices (including tablets, smartphones, smart assistants, etc.) will be outlined in the following subsections of chapter 4.

4.2.2 Mobile applications and games for learning English

As mentioned in subsection 4.1.2, current programs or rather applications tend to be user-friendly in the sense of the interface design and in programmed features. Referring back to the previous subsection, widespread availability and mobility of portable devices e.g. tablets or smartphones causing that more and more developers are developing their software for mobile platforms because users are keen to use these devices. Consequently, a vast spectrum of applications concerning basically any human activity is nowadays being present in mobile platforms such as 'Google Play' (online store with applications for tablets, smartphones, etc. based on Android operating system) or 'iTunes - App Store' (online store with applications for tablets, smartphones, etc. based on iOS operating system developed by Apple Inc.).

This subsection of chapter 4 will be concerned with examples of applications and mobile games that are available at both above mentioned widespread mobile platforms and, more importantly, are focused on conscious language learning as well as the subconscious acquisition of the English.

To begin with, the first example is an application with the name *Duolingo*, which is currently one of the most popular mobile applications used for second language learning. As the name suggests, the learning

takes place in the context of two languages, where the first language is used as interface language and the other one e.g. English is used as a target language for learning. *Duolingo* appropriately combines user-friendly interface with a simple and colourful design with the game elements e.g. by gaining 'XP' points (feature adopted from e.g. RPG games) for completing every exercise and thus motivating the learner to continue using this app. Every exercise includes learning activities in connection with listening, speaking, translation and multi choice challenges. *Duolingo* also gives immediate feedback on each chosen answer, in the case of misspelling, this application quickly adapts the exercise to depict possible improvement. *Duolingo* also shows the 'Streak Count' to motivate the user by showing how many days in succession he or she spends by learning e.g. English. Another game element is 'Hearts'; if the acquirer answers incorrectly, he or she loses heart and when out of hearts, the exercise needed to be restarted. This application is free and can be used no matter when and where (En.duolingo.com, 2019)³⁷, which is a suitable example for MALL and MALU methodologies mentioned in the previous subsection.

The second example is *Tandem*, which is the language learning application based on online communication and 'language exchange' method. It consists of over 2 million members with different target language goals. When the acquirer becomes part of this community, he or she can find another user, who speaks the target language and ask him or her to start a built-in chat conversation. This conversation can be then in the form of text, audio records or even video chat. Therefore, the learner can communicate in target language anytime and anywhere (Tandem.net, 2019)³⁸ and, moreover, in context with other language learners. In addition, users can even correct each other's messages and comment on grammar. In fact, this feature improves the experience from

³⁷ En.duolingo.com. 2019. *Duolingo: Learn Spanish, French and other languages for free* [online].

³⁸ Tandem.net. 2019. *About Tandem - Language Exchange - Speak any language* [online].

texting or video chatting (which may be the most popular activities over mobile devices), closer to the target of acquiring a second language.

Figure 20 below depicts screenshots from both above-mentioned applications. The screenshot on the left shows one type of exercise in *Duolingo* in combination Czech (as the interface language) and English (as the target language). The screenshot on the right shows authentic text and audio messages from the author's *Tandem* chat conversation.

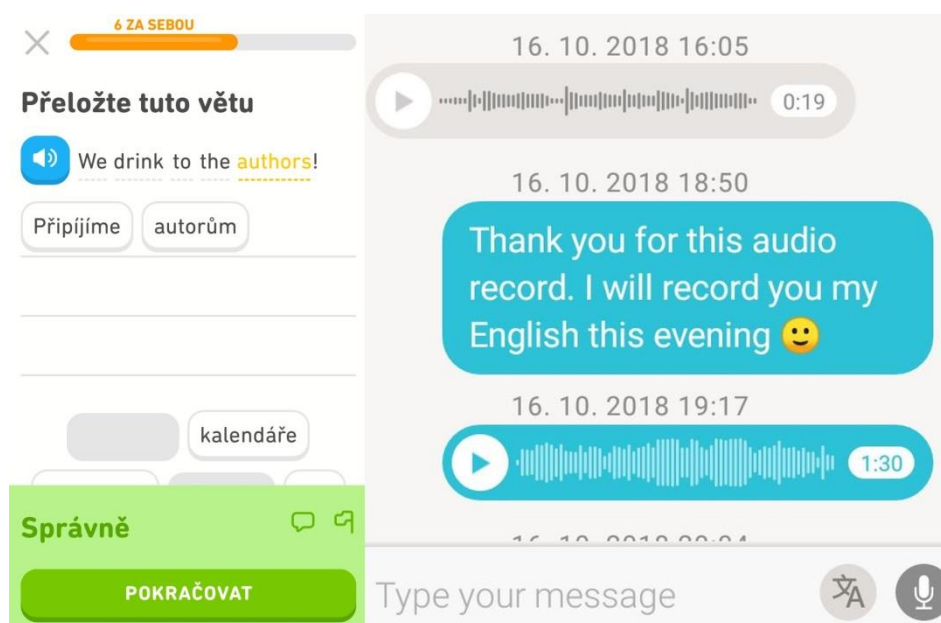


Fig. 20 Screenshots of application interfaces - (En.duolingo.com, 2019) and (Tandem.net, 2019)

Similarly to CALL methods described in subsections 4.1.1 - 4.1.5, MALL and MALU offers not only applications with the main focus on conscious English learning as shown in examples of popular language mobile platforms above, but also the opportunity to play mobile games with the secondary impact on English language acquisition. Owing to the high performance of contemporary mobile hardware e.g. smartphones or tablets, the acquirer can play equally complex and highly-developed video games as on personal computers or consoles and acquire the English language in context and in communication with other players. In other words, current mobile games can provide the same video game experience as by playing computer or console games.

The first example of a mobile game that can deliver this kind of experience is called *Cards and Castles*. Moreover, this title is a ‘cross-platform video game’ which means it is playable from the digital platform *Steam* mentioned in subsection 4.1.5 and also from mobile platforms mentioned at the beginning of this subsection. This enables the player to play the game with the same account on any devices that supports these digital platforms. This digital title is a combination of ‘collectible cards’ and strategy game, where the player can transform the ‘abilities’ of the cards into to playable characters and spells in online tactical matches with other players (Store.steampowered.com, 2019).³⁹ These ‘abilities’ can contribute—with the respect to English language acquisition—the most, because the player needs to understand the ‘ability’ of the card in full, in order to use it meaningfully in the context of a particular online battle with another player. This video game mechanics enhances the gameplay and intensify improving English language skills.

The final example concerning mobile games is a digital title *Reigns*. This is also a ‘cross-platform video game’ available not only on above-mentioned platforms but in addition, also on the portable video game console Nintendo Switch. This game also takes advantage of built-in cards as in the example above, however, in this case, the player needs to decide upon one specific card and choose his or her move by swiping the card to the left or right. The topic of this video game is a kingdom, so in the role of king, the player makes decisions about the king’s reign and receives next cards related to his or her previous decisions (Reignsgame.com, 2019).⁴⁰ Different results based on different decisions can immediately change the game storyline, so this makes *Reigns* entertaining and, moreover, the importance of each decision requires to fully understand the challenge, thus, in fact, second language acquisition including English vocabulary expansion plays a vital role here. The video game *Reigns* has sequels using the same game mechanics: *Reigns:*

³⁹ Store.steampowered.com. 2019. *Cards and Castles ve službě Steam* [online].

⁴⁰ Reignsgame.com 2019. *REIGNS* [online].

Game of Thrones and *Reigns: Her Majesty* (Reignsgame.com, 2019). *Reigns: Game of Thrones* is expanding original video game mechanics by incorporating characters and context from worldwide successful television series *Game of Thrones* and amplifies already intriguing video game with the necessity of English language comprehension, thus, second language acquisition.

Figure 21 shows screenshots of mobile games *Cards and Castles* and *Reigns*. The video game *Cards and Castles* on the left depicts in-game match, where depending on the ‘ability’ of each card the strategic moves need to be done in order to be first to destroy enemy’s castle and win the match. On the right is shown concrete challenge from *Reigns* as player needs on the basis of the challenge’s description make a decision in order to continue in the game storyline.



Fig. 21 Screenshots of *Cards and Castles* (Store.steampowered.com, 2019) and *Reigns* (Reignsgame.com, 2019)

To summarise this subsection, mobile applications and games based on MALL and MALU methodologies offer same tools for conscious English language learning and subconscious English acquisition as programs, web platforms and video games based on CALL and WELL models. On top of that, the ubiquity and portability of mobile technology make these platforms nowadays accessible to almost every learner or rather an acquirer.

4.2.3 Smart devices

Apart from standard approaches based on using the software on mobile platforms in order to improve English language skills, another approach focused on mobile hardware can be utilised too. This includes, for example, using smart assistants and corresponding hardware, which is the subject matter of this subsection.

The first possible approach is focused on improving English language pronunciation by using the Apple smart assistant called 'Siri' that is a built-in feature in iPhones. This particular and innovative approach is described and presented by aforementioned (subsection 4.1.3) video English tutor Aly from YouTube channel 'Learn English with Papa Teach Me' in one of his online video lessons. The tutor Aly implies that the learner can use Siri to check his or her pronunciation by simply saying the word to the virtual assistant and if the iPhone reproduce the spoken word in correct written form, the pronunciation is understandable. Changing Siri settings from American English to British English also plays an important role, for example, by pronouncing of nonrhotic 'r' in example word 'Alarm' showed in this particular video lesson (Learn English with Papa Teach Me, 2017).⁴¹

Smart assistant Siri can also operate in specifically designed product for this purpose named 'HomePod', which can communicate and connects other smart devices into one responding network. YouTube creator Petr Mára is describing on one of his video features of this device and also refers to the example of language learning method, when e.g. children can exercise their English language skills by simply asking Siri: What is the weather like? So in this case, Siri is an attractive method in a way of learning (Mára, 2018).⁴²

⁴¹ Learn English with Papa Teach Me. 2017. *Can Siri teach you English?!* [Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82o9RitLCWc>].

⁴² MÁRA, P. 2018. *Apple HomePod. Je opravdu nejlepší? [4K]* [Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QExjh67_oJY].

A similar approach—in the sense of communicating with a virtual assistant—can be employed on another virtual assistant called ‘Alexa’ developed by Amazon. Using *Alexa* as a ‘language learning assistant’ is showed in a video lesson hosted by another aforementioned online English tutor Bronislav Sobotka. He shows *Alexa* in a similar device to HomePod called ‘Echo Dot’. This device can be effective not only by checking the ‘good’ pronunciation but also to conclude easy conversation and in receiving related and amusing answers. He also emphasizes another possibility of learning and communicating with *Alexa* by uploading ‘English word games’ through Amazon mobile application. He shows this on the example of playing the game ‘Twenty Questions’. A different approach is possible by utilising this device to its original purpose i.e. voice control, for example, saying *Alexa* to play music or the latest news in English (Sobotka, 2019).⁴³

To conclude, mobile technologies provide significant potential for English language learning and acquisition too. Besides the portability of these devices, contemporary and fast-growing trends in developing voice control mobile devices open the learner the entire new spectrum of language learning possibilities as outlined above. Albeit, these voice control technologies are not specifically designed for language acquisition, they can serve as an expansion, for example, during the self-study of English.

4.3 Learning English by means of popular culture - part II

Previous chapters of this thesis have subtly outlined influence that popular culture can have on using information technologies and connected software for the purpose of learning and acquiring the English language. In general, however, it is not a simple task to accommodate this topic and it is not the main focus of this thesis either, thus, following subsection will inquire slightly more into this topic, but mainly by showing

⁴³ SOBOTKA, B. 2019. *Virtuální asistentka (nejen) pro výuku angličtiny* [Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P70xPn6dbUQ>].

premises in context of specific examples concerning television, movies, music, podcasts and books and their possible utilisation for the second language acquisition.

To begin with, popular culture is an area that was in history accompanied by many disbelieves and distrust; nonetheless, due to its today's ubiquity, this area is starting to be the aim of academic attention and researches. Even though it is still a complex task to establish any conceptualisation concerning this topic, the popular culture's potential in reflecting the world and related customers' visions of daily reality provides considerable benefits in many academic research areas. In addition, it is reasonable to state that *more popular the specific language, the more popular is the related popular culture and its production* (Hostýnek, 2018).

In this respect, provides the English language with a vast 'tangle' of popular culture sources concerning different kinds of media. The persuasive character of these media is nowadays even more intensified due to the pervasiveness of information technologies and related software approaches as described in previous subsections.

An area that is currently one of the most popular around the world is based on the audio-visual experience i.e. television and movies. However, these two terms include currently not only the television sets or movie theatres; Internet and today's trend of cloud-based online services extend this spectrum into the every day available forms as is showed in following examples.

Firstly, contemporary popular online platforms are video streaming web interfaces, where the user has immediate access to an extensive amount of movies, series and television shows. A first example concerning popular culture and video streaming platform *Amazon: Prime Video* is TV show *The Grand Tour*. This TV show has a current rating of 4.6 stars out of 5 stars with 90,576 customer reviews. It is hosted by British motoring journalists Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and

James May. In this show, they go on global adventures with cars including many humorous moments from the tours and their friendship too. As stated on the official Amazon website of this show: “*Sometimes it’s even a show about cars*” (Amazon.com, 2019).⁴⁴ More importantly, though, owing to British articulate pronunciation of the hosts, this particular TV show can effectively serve a purpose to English language acquisition. The author confirms this fact because when he is watching this show he frequently pauses the episode to find in the dictionary the specific word (usually for colloquial British expression or specific automotive terminology) mentioned in the show. Nevertheless, watching this *The Grand Tour* itself is salutary for English language acquisition as it connects interesting and entertaining audio-visual content with articulate pronunciation and catch-phrases on popular culture basis expressed by the hosts themselves.

Similar worldwide popular video streaming platforms are e.g. *Netflix* or *HBO GO* which provide for monthly fee access to movies, TV series and TV shows of many genres and productions. Moreover, they enable to play the video in many language mutation and subtitles, so the learner or rather an acquirer can choose audio-visual content of personal interests and start to acquire the second language as well.

An alternative that lay foundations for the above-mentioned principles as well, yet adds a complementary interface for the specific purpose of learning a second language is titled *Mooveez*. This mobile application modifies the watching of the movie into the interactive language exercise. The learner can watch the selected famous movies chosen especially for second language learning with accompanying detailed subtitles including footnotes e.g. explaining popular culture references or grammar phenomena. There are also exercises where you can practice grammar and vocabulary from the film (Mooveez.com, 2019).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Amazon.com. 2019. *Watch The Grand Tour Season 1 | Prime Video* [online].

⁴⁵ Mooveez.com. 2019. *Mooveez, more than a language course* [online].

Now focusing only on audio content, where the popular culture also shows its persuasive power, the online streaming platform for music *Spotify* is an appropriate example. *Spotify* is currently one of the most popular platforms of this kind and offers the users access to extensive content songs and, moreover, to podcasts with specialisation to acquire and learn English as a second language.

One of the examples that are focused on these kinds of podcasts is *Speak English Now Podcast* created and hosted by Georgiana, founder of website *SpeakEnglishPod.com*. This podcast in 79 episodes provides the learner with effective tips and techniques on how to develop fluency and confidence in English speaking skills as well as the focus on listening and developing knowledge about English language culture too. Each episode also contains a transcript available at *SpeakEnglishPod.com* (*Open.spotify.com*, 2019).⁴⁶

Referring back to movies and specific learning platform *Mooveez*, a similar online platform exists for music content as well. It is called *LyricsTraining*. This platform is the innovative way how to exercise listening skills in a second language e.g. English by music based on YouTube platform and completing the gaps in lyrics while listening to a particular song or even karaoke (*Lyricstraining.com*, 2019).⁴⁷ The mechanics of this platform is based on an interactive game with four different difficulties: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced or Expert as well as a counter of score missing words left, correct and incorrect answers. Video stops, when the words needed to be completed and the replay to find the missing word is available too. Competitive video game features (including comparing score with other players) combine the listening experience of popular culture based song with the second language acquisition.

⁴⁶ *Open.spotify.com*. 2019. *Speak English Now Podcast through Mini Stories | No Grammar. No Textbooks* [online].

⁴⁷ *Lyricstraining.com*. 2019. *Learn Languages with Music Videos, Lyrics and Karaoke!* [online].

The screenshot displays the LyricsTraining website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the 'lyricstraining' logo, a 'Genres' dropdown, a search bar, and options for 'Language', 'Log In', and 'Sign Up'. Below this, a game status bar shows a score of 206, 21/227 gaps, 21 hits, and 0 fails. A red progress bar is positioned below the status bar. The main content area features a video player for 'The Beatles - Help!'. The video shows the band performing, with the lyrics 'When I was younger, so much younger' displayed at the bottom. The video player includes a 'Přehrát později' (Watch later) button and a 'Sdílet' (Share) button. Below the video player, the user's name 'Help!' and the artist 'The Beatles' are listed. The video's metadata shows it is 4 years old, has 76594 plays, and is tagged with '#ENG' and a UK flag.

Fig. 22 Screenshot of LyricsTraining platform (Lyricstraining.com, 2019)

Figure 22 above shows the concrete example of one 'lyrics exercises' based on the famous song 'Help!' produced by worldwide known music group 'The Beatles'. It depicts features outlined in the paragraph above. Additional information consists of 'red disappearing line' showing the time left for completing the missing words as well as information about the user, who uploaded lyrics and for how long and how many times the song is being played on this particular platform.

Finally, the last example focuses on another popular culture media, which are the books and so also one of the oldest media concerning this topic. Contemporary methods of information technologies enable to have books in digital or even audio form. *Digitalbook.io* is an online database platform that makes audiobooks and eBooks accessible to everyone. It includes the browse algorithm to find titles based on their genres as well as a list of trending and top-rated titles. This website also enables the user to save favourite books to the online personal bookshelf

(Digitalbook.io, 2010).⁴⁸ The books are essential in the sense of gaining knowledge, thus the contribution of information technologies in enabling and facilitating access to books is beneficial for second language acquisition as well because the acquirer can nowadays learn English no matter where or when with no need to individually visit libraries or bookshops.

To summarise chapter 4, information technologies offer the inconceivable amount of possible approaches on how to acquire the second language e.g. English. This chapter has described relevant theoretical models as well as selected practical approaches for English language acquisition and learning on different hardware and software platforms including personal computers (laptops), programs, Internet and social media, consoles, video games, mobile devices, mobile games, smart devices and popular culture media.

To a certain extent, the popular culture media interconnects all aforementioned phenomena and motivates the learner or acquirer to persist in second language learning and acquisition as well. This is also caused by the fact that the popular culture provides—according to Krashen’s hypotheses mentioned in chapter 2—‘low affective environment’ as well as an amusing potential set in context and, thus, it is capable in imitating real-life scenarios and communication, where the second language acquisition takes places in a natural way.

5 CONTEMPORARY METHODS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The final chapter of this thesis will be concerned with contemporary methods of English language acquisition i.e. individual methods of English acquisition based on an online questionnaire created by the author specifically for the purpose of this thesis. The aim is to support

⁴⁸ Digitalbook.io. 2010. *Digitalbook.io Free audio books and eBooks - Download or listen online* [online].

methods and examples introduced in chapter 4 by individual answers from respondents of different age groups.

5.1 Individual methods of English acquisition - questionnaire (different age groups)

The author created the online questionnaire with the name “*Individuální metody osvojení si anglického jazyka*” using the online platform *Google Forms*. All following information, data, analyses and Diagrams are based on this particular questionnaire (Blažek, 2019):⁴⁹

The total number of respondents participated in this questionnaire survey (up to 10.3.2019) is 136. Most respondents (55.1 %) belong to the age group from 21 to 29 years of age. The second largest group is formed by respondents of 31 to 39 years of age (18.4 %). Below 10 % stands other age groups of respondents participated. Most of the respondents have completed secondary school with a school-leaving examination (52.2 %) or university studies (41.9 %) and simultaneously 48.5 per cent of respondents are still studying, whereas 36.8 per cent of respondents have a full-time job (remaining groups are formed by respondents with the individual systems of gainfully employed activities).

The main part of the online questionnaire was divided into two sections, according to the answers on the particular question, researching if the respondent is nowadays actively trying to acquire the English language (59.6 per cent of respondents have answered ‘YES’, 40.4 per cent have answered ‘NO’).

Respondents, who answered ‘YES’, were subsequently asked to check which hardware and software tools they use for English language acquisition. The answers are shown in the following Diagram 1 and Diagram 2.

⁴⁹ BLAŽEK, J. 2019. *Individuální metody osvojení si anglického jazyka*. Google Forms [online].

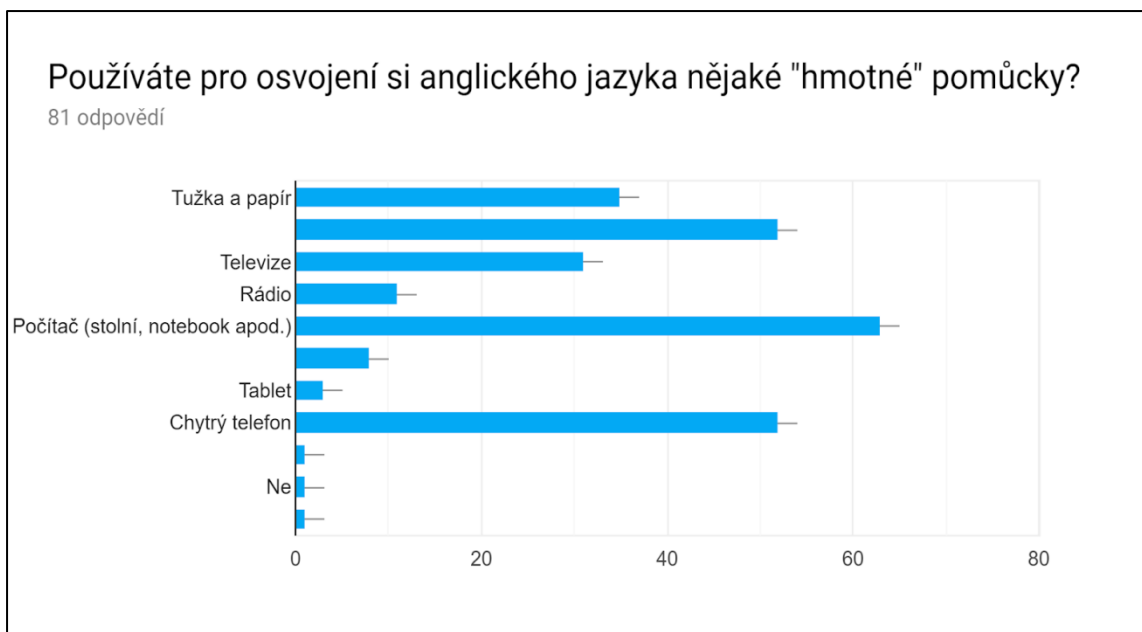


Diagram 1 Answers on the question about hardware tools used for English acquisition (Blažek, 2019)

As shown in Diagram 1 above, the respondents' most checked option is using a personal computer of any kind (77.8 %) for English language acquisition and on the second place is with the same percentage of 64.2 % printed learning materials and smartphones. 43.2 % of respondents also checked the answer of simply using a pen and a paper and 38.3 % on using the television for this purpose. These results show that the contemporary tendency of choosing pervasive information technologies as primary or complementary tools for English language acquisition together with printed materials concerning textbooks, books, etc. is gradually increasing, owing to the fact that these technologies are nowadays easily accessible and persist to be as user-friendly as possible. Choosing the smartphone option over the tablet one indicates the increasing performance of smartphones and the contemporary trend of having 'all-in-one device' in pockets.

As a follow-up to The Diagram 1, Diagram 2 on the next page depicts concrete software methods and related approaches for learning English by multimedia devices. The most checked option (82.7 %) was listening to the music in English following by option of using the Internet and social media related sources with 76.5 %. In this case, options can

be related to each other as the most checked answers are followed by watching movies, series or TV shows in English without or with English or Czech subtitles⁵⁰ and then by options about using specific applications and programs for English language acquisition. This relation is based on fact that software is reliant on hardware and that acquirer usually chooses the hardware to entertaining activities rather than exercising the English language knowledge i.e.—in relation to Krashen’s terminology—subconscious language acquisition rather than conscious language learning.

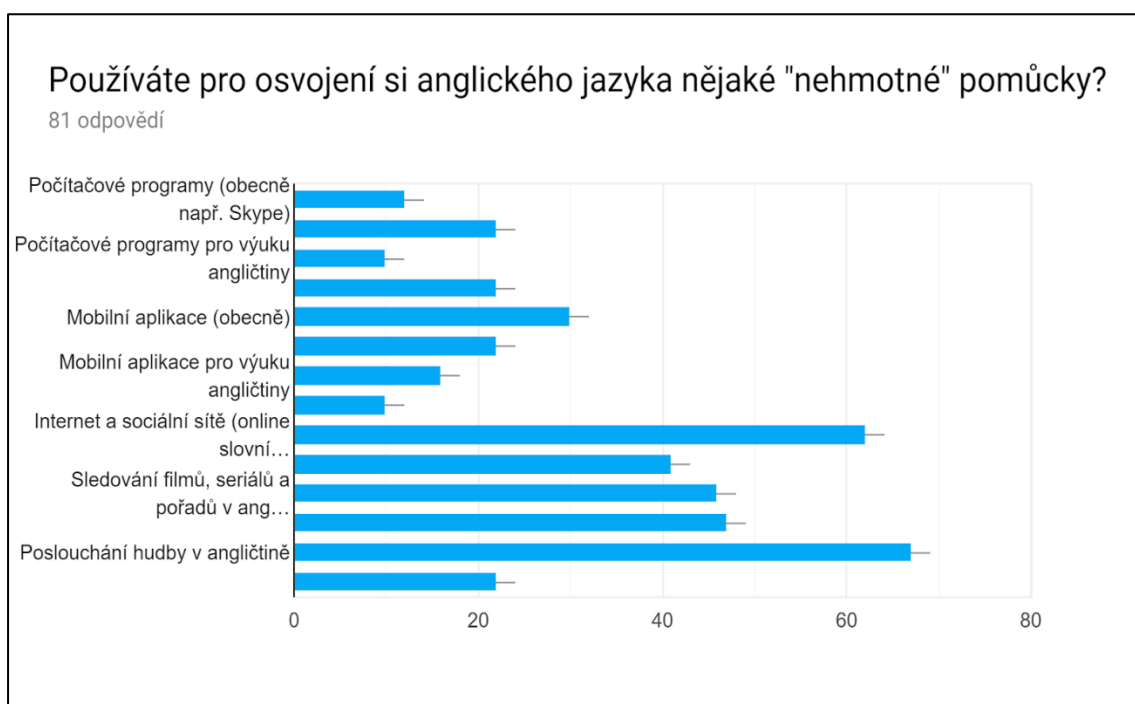


Diagram 2 Answers on the question about software tools used for English acquisition (Blažek, 2019)

On the other hand, participants with the answer ‘NO’, were asked how probable is the fact that they would start to acquire English by engaging information technologies into education and self-study. Following Diagram 3 depicts that most respondents in this group adopt a ‘neutral’ attitude in the middle (38.2 %), the second group—table column number 5 on the Diagram—(23.6 %) would use information technologies and third group—table column number 2 on the Diagram—(21.8 %) wouldn’t in the case of English language acquisition. We can assume,

⁵⁰ Without subtitles = 58 %; with English subtitles = 56.8 %; with Czech subtitles = 50.6 %

according to the neutral position of the most respondents that they would start to learn English if they would know what exactly to use in order to effectively acquire the English language or they can also have the e.g. uncertain attitude to information technologies owing to lack of personal empirical evidence.

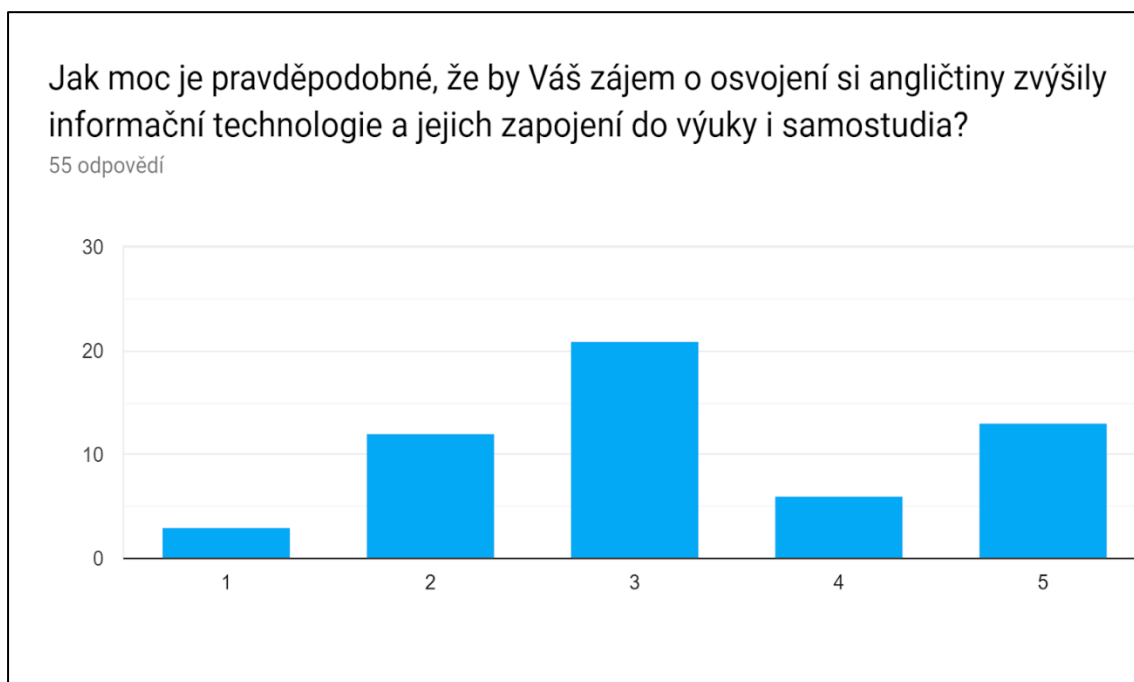


Diagram 3 Answers on the question about probability of using information technologies for English acquisition (Blažek, 2019)

Next is Diagram 4 which is a comparison of the same question asked in both groups i.e. respondents, who are actively acquiring English (the diagram on the left), and respondents, who do not. This question dealt with the subject of how often respondents come into contact with English.

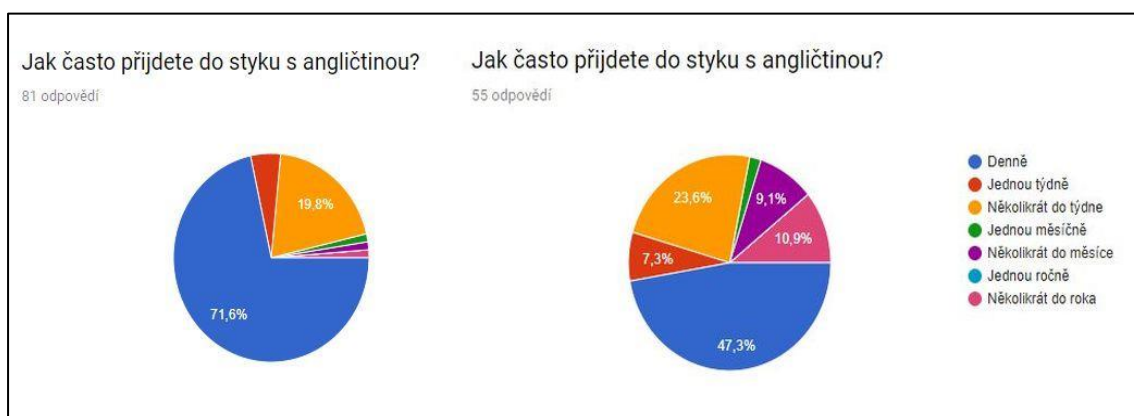


Diagram 4 Answers on the question - how often respondents come in contact with English (Blažek, 2019)

In Diagram 4 is visible that both groups come in contact with English on a daily basis, which proves that English has nowadays the status of 'lingua franca', even in the Czech region. And this is also owing to the fact that English is connected with information technologies on the operating system basis, so the user can 'come across' English vocabulary even e.g. on a smartphone with Czech language interface. Another reason can be the contemporary trend of 'blending' English into the Czech vocabulary, so the Czech native speaker can experience using English words instead of Czech expression with the same meaning. This trend is visible across any kind of media, normally utilised even, for example, in advertising media or promotion materials. This is also clarified by the fact that the second most checked answer in both groups is 'several times a week'. Remaining percentages started to differ owing to the active focus on English acquiring contra passive attitude to the English language.

The final part of the questionnaire was optional and with the aim of collecting respondents' individual personal experiences, concerning the topic of acquisition of English as a second language. Referring back to subsection 4.2.2, the mobile application with the focus on language learning *Duolingo* was mentioned by three different respondents and one respondent emphasized the online learning platform based on 'learning by flashcards (v. subsection 4.1.3) *Quizlet*.

With another reference to chapter 4.3 and popular culture media, one respondent emphasized the fact that he or she learned English not by educational methods in school, however, watching the movies and TV series: "*Angličtinu mě nenaučila škola, ale seriály a filmy.*" Similar opinion is shared by another respondent, who is stating another reason concerning dubbing of the movies, as sometimes the translation can be incorrect or even confusing and, thus, he states that the motivation for him was to learn English in order to be able to watch movies and play video games in the original version and intensify the experience from it: "*Největší motivací pro mě se naučit anglicky bylo to, abych chápal, o co*

jde v počítačových hrách a také ve filmech, které nebyly přeloženy do češtiny. Postupem času jsem zjistil, že originální znění ve filmu i ve hrách je v 99% lepší než dabing (a občas je překlad dokonce chybný nebo zavádějící) a doporučuji tak všem, co se o tato média zajímají, aby se anglicky naučili na dobrou úroveň, budou pak z toho mít úplně nový zážitek.”

In addition to that, one respondent also mentioned the specific approach of acquiring the second language described in chapter 4.3, which is learning English through lyrics of the popular songs (Karaoke) via online platform *LyricsTraining*. He emphasized this method in the context of the possible ways, on how to utilise information technologies for second language acquisition, by contrast, that information technologies do not necessarily have to be an effective tool for every learner. He prefers e.g. education with an actual tutor: *“Záleží na učebním typu studenta, zda pro něj budou informační technologie při osvojování cizího jazyka efektivním nástrojem. Patřím mezi kognitivně-sociální typy, z tohoto důvodu preferuji výuku pod vedením “živého” lektora, ať už ve větší skupině nebo individuálně. K informačním technologiím mám vlažný vztah, výuku cizího jazyka mi neusnadňují. Dovedu si představit jejich využití při karaoke, osvojování skrze písňové texty.”*

In this respect, other respondents stated that English is best to learn in real life scenarios e.g. by in practice or by travelling to foreign countries. One respondent also stated that information technologies can be even demotivating for learning English, because of one-way communication, with the lack of experience or eye contact. He stated that he prefers other methods and approaches in the sense of learning or acquiring a second language: *“Nemyslím si, že informační technologie v souvislosti s výukou angličtiny je výhra, jedná se o jednostrannou komunikaci, chybí prožitek, oční kontakt a může to být i demotivační... dávám přednost jiným metodám a přístupům k výuce cizího jazyka či k jeho osvojování si.”*

These individual preferences (without utilisation of information technologies for English language acquisition) are in contrast with another answer of the respondent, who is referring to his experience when playing MMORPG video game *Guild Wars 2*, as this was experience, which ‘toughened’ his skills in many ways: “*Guild Wars 2 - dělat 3 roky šéfa člověka zocelí po mnoha stránkách!*”

Video games (mainly the multiplayer video games) and their potential in imitating real-life scenarios, creating contextual interpersonal communication with others in order to achieve a particular objective and, thus, actively acquire the English language was also the part of author’s analysis in subsections 4.1.4 and 4.1.5.

To summarise the analysis of questionnaire in this subsection, results of participated respondents show, in general, positive attitude to information technologies for the purpose of English language acquisition, especially by using a personal computer, mobile devices and related Internet and social media-based platforms.

In addition, the contemporary worldwide position of the English compared to other languages is showing that even respondents without intention to actively acquire English come with contact with it on a daily basis. Individual preferences, lack of additional empirical evidence or researches in this subject matter can make the technologies even inefficient. In another word—referring back to Beatty’s words in subsection 4.1.1—if the ‘cognitive overhead’ of the technology is too high, it will maybe not worth the investment of learner’s time.

6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the main objective of this thesis is to describe theoretical models and particular approaches based on information technologies and contemporary methods that can be utilised in sense of second language acquisition as well as second language learning.

Chapters 2 and 3 comprise the theoretical part of this thesis, which describes conceptual models that lay foundations for specific examples based on modern technologies in the following chapters of this thesis. Chapter 2 is devoted to Krashen's hypotheses depicting the difference between subconscious language acquisition and conscious language learning. Stressed is the more important role of second language acquisition, although, it is 'invisible' and takes a long time it is crucial when acquiring the second language. However, in order to acquire the English effectively, it is essential to acquire 'comprehensible input' in 'low affective intake-rich environments', where output i.e. speaking serves only as an indirect contribution and indicates next stage of second language acquisition and not its beginning.

Chapter 3 outlines another theoretical model introduced by Howard Gardner. This model is based on eight intelligences which include different, yet interconnected human potential abilities. This chapter gives an example on each intelligence in the sense of second language acquisition showing that to effectively acquire a second language all these intelligences needed to be utilised in full. In particular, 'Interpersonal Intelligence' i.e. acquirer's ability to communicate with others to achieve certain objective plays a crucial role e.g. in the context of multiplayer video games also discussed in this thesis.

Both theoretical models mentioned in chapter 2 and 3 share a similar opinion in the case of suitable environment for the English language acquisition as it must be in the first place engaging for the

acquirer as well as without any stressful impacts (a low anxiety environment), so the acquirer feels free to express him or herself.

The main practical part of this thesis is formed by chapter 4 and related subsections, each showing the specific methodology and then examples for technological platform discussed.

Firstly, personal computers, laptops and video game consoles are outlined based on CALL, WELL and DGBL methodologies. Today's trend based on fast-growing technologies shows the tendency 'to migrate' from 'classical' personal computer programs to mobile platforms as well as Internet platforms.

Subsection 4.1 shows this trend by the means of programs as well as concrete Internet-based platforms with the main focus of conscious English language learning. This part of the thesis is also accompanied by specific and unorthodox approaches for second language acquisition e.g. via Quizlet or Instagram's hashtag '#learnenglish' showing an infinite number of possibilities on how to utilise the information technologies for the purpose of second language learning.

In addition, video games and related approaches (including the conceptual map depicted in Figure 17) are mentioned to stress the significant potential that this media can have on acquiring the English as a second language. It is mainly based on the fact that video games can provide the acquirer with similar scenarios as in personal or business life and most importantly, enables players to use a second language in meaningful context and, in the case of multiplayer video games, in communication with other players. This closely corresponds with hypotheses outlined in chapters 2 and 3.

Subsection 4.2 depicts the MALL and MALU methodologies on concrete contemporary mobile software and hardware. Mentioned mobile applications refer to the portability of mobile devices and, thus, possibility to learn a second language no matter where or when as well as two

specific examples of mobile games that can effectively contribute to English language acquisition based on author's experience. Mobile technologies are showing constant development and so smart devices as voice control mobile technologies outlined in subsection 4.2.3 can nowadays serve as an expansion for self-study of the English.

The final part of this thesis is concerned with contemporary methods of English language acquisition by differently aged respondents based on authentic online questionnaire created by the author especially for the purpose of this thesis. The aim is to compare the relevance of approaches described by the author in chapter 4 with respondents' answers in subsection 5.1. Results based on this questionnaire, refer to concordance in the sense of positive attitude and growing trend of employment the information technologies for the purpose of second language acquisition (mainly personal computers and smartphones) as well as status of the English as 'lingua franca', based on the fact that even the respondents (situated in the Czech region), who do not acquire English actively, come in the contact with the language on a daily basis.

Respondents' commentaries are expressing approaches using information technologies and their effects that are similar to author's approaches outlined in chapter 4 as well as the main importance of real-life communication in the sense of second language acquisition and possible inefficiency of information technologies used for this purpose.

This, for that matter, remains the principal aim of this thesis, to outline practical concrete approaches and methods based on information technologies, in order to effectively acquire and learn the English as a second language. In other words, to present a 'probe' to still unexplored—yet today's most relevant and vast—area of modern and fast-growing information technologies and their utilisation in the sense of second language acquisition.

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8 ABSTRACT

The purpose of this bachelor's thesis is to highlight contemporary and information technology-based approaches for second language acquisition. In particular, to outline more widely what different ways can be employed by a 21st century person to learn English as a second language. The first part focuses on theoretical models of second language acquisition and multiple intelligences; the central part of this thesis is composed by outlining related methodologies and particular examples based on various technological platforms and their utilisation for this specific purpose. The last chapter points out the individual methods of learning English by differently aged respondents on the basis of authentic data collected from an online questionnaire created by the author especially for the purpose of this bachelor thesis.

9 RESUMÉ

Die Absicht dieser Bachelorarbeit ist die modernen und Informationstechnologie-basierten Approachs für den Zweitspracherwerb zu hervorheben. Das Ziel ist dabei, einen breiten Überblick darüber zu geben, welche unterschiedlichen Möglichkeiten eine Person des 21. Jahrhunderts einsetzen kann, um Englisch als Zweitsprache zu lernen. Der erste Teil konzentriert sich auf theoretische Modelle des Zweitspracherwerbs und das Konzept der mehrerer Intelligenzen. Der zentrale Teil dieser Bachelorarbeit besteht aus der Beschreibung von Methoden und speziellen Beispielen, die auf verschiedenen technologischen Plattformen basieren, und werden für diese spezifische Absicht verwenden. Das letzte Kapitel zeigt die individuellen Methoden des Englischlernens. Dies wird auf der Grundlage der Antworten von unterschiedlich gealterter Befragter realisiert. Das heißt aus den authentischen Daten, die aus einer Online-Umfrage gesammelt wurden. Diese Online-Umfrage wird speziell vom Autor für die Absicht dieser Bachelorarbeit erstellt.