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Radmila Perclová

**The implementation of European Language
Portfolio pedagogy in Czech primary
and lower-secondary schools:
beliefs and attitudes of pilot teachers
and learners**

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Key words: foreign language teaching and learning, The European Language Portfolio, teachers' and learners' beliefs and attitudes, descriptors of communicative activities, learner self-assessment, teacher education

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine how European Language Portfolio (ELP) pedagogy is reflected in the beliefs and attitudes of primary and lower-secondary school teachers and learners who piloted this project of the Council of Europe in the Czech Republic. ELP pedagogy represents a profound shift in the methodology of language teaching and learning: it is a thoughtful process facilitating learner's autonomous achievement of internationally recognized and transparent objectives focusing on real-life use of languages.

The participants of the study were a group of 53 teachers of English, German and French and their 902 learners and a group of 53 potential ELP teacher trainers. The investigation took place from 1999 to 2002 when both groups of teachers met at seminars organized by the Czech Ministry of Education.

The research was underpinned by the assumption that the outcomes of the project would be affected by the meanings that the participants assigned to it. Three main problem areas of beliefs and attitudes were therefore investigated. They concerned 1. overall ELP evaluation and ELP use, 2. use of descriptors of communicative activities and 3. use of learners' self-assessment. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodology was employed, including questionnaires and interviews, class observations, study of documentation and field notes.

The teachers appreciated both the “European standards” defined in the descriptors of communicative activities and the introduction of learner self-assessment and they were stimulated by these innovations. Their beliefs and attitudes varied and indicated that the ELP usually provided a fresh impetus for a shift in their work but that it at the same time presented a considerable challenge. Use of the ELP in the Czech textbook-bound context required the integration of a structural syllabus with the analytical approach of the ELP, which was difficult to achieve. Teachers’ expectations that descriptors of communicative activities would facilitate their more objective assessment could not be met owing to the user-friendly feature of the descriptors. The concept of learners’ self-assessment was usually very distant from teachers’ everyday practice at the beginning of the project. Though it was a controversial issue, it appeared to become at the same time the most rewarding issue. The majority of the learners found their work with the ELP both interesting and useful, seemingly regardless of their school grades. The cooperation of teachers proved extremely beneficial and the study suggests it to be the key to the success of further ELP implementation in the Czech Republic.

Radmila Perclová

PORTFOLIOPEDAGOGIIKKA TSEKKILÄISISSÄ KOULUISSA:
pilottiopettajien ja oppijoiden uskomukset ja asenteet.

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Avainsanat: vieraiden kielten opettaminen ja oppiminen, The European Language Portfolio, opettajien ja oppilaiden uskomukset ja asenteet, kommunikaatiota kuvaavat indikaattorit, oppilaiden itsearviointi, opettajankoulutus

Tiivistelmä

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, kuinka Euroopplainen kielisalkku (ELP) -niminen pedagogia näkyy Euroopan neuvoston hankkeeseen Tšekin tasavallassa osallistuneiden esi-, alku- ja perusasteen opettajien ja oppilaiden uskomuksissa ja asenteissa. ELP-pedagogian käyttö tarkoittaa merkittävää muutosta kieltenopetuksen ja oppimisen metodologiassa: ELP on ajatuksia herättävä prosessi, joka tukee oppijan itsenäisiä saavutuksia kansainvälisesti tunnustettujen ja läpinäkyvien tavoitteiden kautta, hyödyntäen erityisesti kielenkäyttöä arkielämän tilanteissa.

Tutkimukseen osallistui 53 englannin, saksan ja ranskan kielen opettajaa ja heidän 902 oppilastaan sekä 53 ELP-pedagogian käyttöä harkitsevan opettajan ryhmä. Tutkimus toteutettiin vuosien 1999 ja 2002 välillä, jolloin molemmat opettajaryhmät tapasivat Tšekin tasavallan opetusministeriön järjestämissä seminaareissa.

Tutkimuksen vahvuutena oli oletus, että osallistujien näkemykset ja tutkimukselle antamat merkitykset vaikuttaisivat tutkimuksen tuloksiin. Hankkeessa tutkittiin siten kolmea tärkeintä ongelma-aluetta osallistujien uskomuksissa ja asenteissa. Nämä olivat 1. yleinen ELP:n arviointi ja ELP:n käyttö, 2. kommunikaatiota kuvaavien indikaattoreiden määrittely ja 3. oppilaiden itsearviointi. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin kvantitatiivista ja kvalitatiivista metodologiaa, kuten kyselylomakkeita,

haastatteluja, luokkatilanteiden havainnointia, tuotetun dokumentaation ja kenttämuistiinpanojen analyysiä.

Opettajat arvostivat sekä kommunikaatiota kuvaavien indikaattorien tarjoamia eurooppalaisia standardeja sekä oppijoiden itsearviointia ja olivat innostuneita näistä innovaatioista. Heidän uskomuksensa ja asenteensa vaihtelivat ja osoittivat, että ELP toi yleensä uutta puhtia opetustyöhön. Toisaalta opettajien näkemyksen mukaan ELP:n käyttö oli myös erittäin haasteellista. ELP:n käyttö tšekkiläisessä oppikirjakeskeisessä kontekstissa vaati strukturoidun opetusohjelman integrointia ELP:n analyttiseen lähestymistapaan. Tämä oli ajoittain vaikeaa.

Opettajien odotukset, joiden mukaan kommunikaatiota kuvaavien indikaattorien käyttö auttaisi oppilaiden suoritusten objektiivisemmassa arvioinnissa, eivät toteutuneet, koska nuo indikaattorit olivat liian käyttäjästävällisiä. Oppilaiden arvioinnin käsitteet olivat yleensä kaukana opettajien arkipäivän opetustavoista hankkeen alussa. Vaikka tämä kysymys oli kiistanalainen, siitä tuli samalla hankkeen palkitsevin osio. Suurin osa oppilaista koki työskentelynsä ELP:n avulla kiinnostavaksi ja hyödylliseksi, ilmeisen riippumatta heidän saamistaan kouluarvosanoista. Opettajien yhteistyö osoittautui erittäin hyödylliseksi; tutkimus osoittaa, että tämä olisi jatkossakin keskeinen onnistumisen avain ELP:n käytössä Tšekin tasavallassa.

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This study grew out of my involvement in the implementation of the European Language Portfolio in the Czech Republic, an involvement made possible by the support of the Czech Ministry of Education and I would like to thank Jaroslava Deliřová, Irena Mařková and Pavel Cink in particular. Charles University Education Faculty also provided very welcome support by, amongst other things, granting me an extremely useful semester's sabbatical.

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My work through the Council of Europe with European experts involved in the ELP project over the years was invaluable to this study's development and I am acutely aware of how much I learned from colleagues who generously shared their ideas and expertise with me. In particular, I benefited hugely from my work with a true expert in this field, Professor David Little. I am also grateful for Johanna Panthier's kindness, understanding and encouragement.

In terms of technical advice I relied heavily on my husband, Jiří Percl, and his colleague Martin Zikmund. A special mention should also go to my grandson Jiří for transatlantic advice and first aid in moments of computer crisis.

Clearly the participation of many Czech teachers was essential to this work and I am very appreciative of the commitment and creativity shown by them. The stimulation I received from this collaboration was a great inspiration for the study. The many pioneering schoolchildren who used the ELP and answered questionnaires also deserve my thanks for their contribution.

I am thankful to Ingrid Wisniewska, who provided very useful commentary. In my most immediate working environment I would like to express thanks for the support of my colleagues in the Charles University Education Faculty Department of English Language and Literature, particularly my colleagues Lenka Lánská, Míša Bojarová and the Head, Associate Professor Anna Grmelová, whose insistent confidence in my ability was a spur to the work's completion. Very special thanks go to two colleagues who commented on and proofread parts of the work, Joan Hood and Bernie Higgins. The latter also had the dubious privilege of witnessing the entire history of this work, from its inception to its completion, and I am very grateful for her cheerful and insightful support over the years, at all times of day and night.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the forbearance of all the members of my family, who waited patiently for the time when I could have a greater involvement in their everyday lives than was allowed to me by the exigencies of study. My late husband Jiří never doubted for a moment that I could, should and would finish this study and without his unflinching belief in me, this work would not exist. And so I very lovingly dedicate it to him.

Prague, April 2006

Radmila Perclová

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1. Introduction

1.1. Contextual background to the study

This study deals with the implementation of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in the Czech Republic. The ELP is a very promising large-scale Council of Europe project, which may have a far-reaching beneficial effect on language teaching and learning. Its goal is “to contribute to democratic citizenship and mobility within Europe by providing an instrument to record and give value to life-long language and intercultural learning” (Sheils 1999, 6). The ELP intends to support European linguistic and cultural diversity and it aims at higher learner motivation and higher pan-European transparency of language learning. It is designed to encourage learner autonomy and to put to use the Council of Europe’s common reference levels and scales of language proficiency, emphasizing an action-oriented approach to language use.

European Language Portfolio pedagogy highlighted in the title of the study aims at real-life language learning of various languages enabling the learners to understand and respect other cultures. The ELP aims, content, relevant methodology and assessment are closely interrelated. Real-life aims are expressed in coherent descriptors of communicative activities – in “can do” descriptors of language proficiency, in language and sociocultural awareness activities and learning-to-learn tasks. As for classroom settings, “can-do” objectives are accomplished by learners involved in the decision-making process of planning, monitoring and assessing their work.

The Council of Europe has developed a great number of high quality language teaching projects respecting diversity of teaching contexts and having an exceptionally broad impact and it therefore plays a leading role in European language education. Based on international expertise, recommendations made by the Education Committee of the Council of Europe are considered and implemented currently by 46 individual member states. The scales and the descriptors of language proficiency mentioned above were published after years of research on language teaching and learning carried out by the Council of Europe’s Language Policy Division. The research resulted in a compendium “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment” (2001) (called the Common Framework or CEF further on). Developed simultaneously with the research and arising from its findings,

the European Language Portfolio project was launched in 1998. This project was piloted from 1998 to 2000 by fifteen European countries, which included the Czech Republic and Finland. Several studies have been written since the pilot phase, explaining and describing the use of the European Language Portfolio (see e.g. the special issue of *Babylonia* 2000/4, Kohonen 2002, Little 2002, Little, Ridley & Ushioda 2002) and the Education Committee of the Council of Europe recommended proceeding with research on ELP implementation (European Language Portfolio Principles and Guidelines 2000).

Arising from a firm belief that the European Language Portfolio pedagogy can have positive effects on learners and teachers in Czech primary and lower secondary schools, my involvement in the project included the design of a Czech model of the European Language Portfolio for learners in compulsory education (up to the age of 15) and its implementation in the Czech Republic. To achieve this goal, I worked for 15 months, from 1999 to 2000, with 53 Czech teachers of English, French and German who piloted the ELP with 902 learners in primary and lower-secondary schools. During this period Learner, Teacher and Coordinator Questionnaires designed mainly by Rolf Schärer, the General Rapporteur of the project nominated by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, were conducted and analyzed in the pilot countries. From 2001 to 2003 I continued to work with another group of 53 teachers from the same types of school who had potential to become ELP teacher trainers.

The first model of the Czech ELP was aimed at learners up to the age of 15 and was published by the Ministry of Education in 1999 (Perclová 1999). The second version aimed only at learners aged 11 to 15 was published in 2000 and after some amendments this version was accredited by the Council for Cultural Co-operation, Education Committee - ELP Validation Committee (No: 7.2001) and published (Perclová 2001). At the same time, a new model for learners up to the age of 11 was developed, accredited by the above-mentioned Council of Europe Committee (No: 22.2001) and later published (Nováková, Perclová, Zbranková & Karásková 2002). Both these models, but particularly the model for 11-to-15-year-old learners, are the result of long, lively discussions and the great support of teacher trainers working at Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Education, Department of English Language and Literature as well as of other experts on language learning and of some teacher trainees from the Department of English Language and Literature who provided mainly translations of all texts into three foreign languages.

Due to direct involvement in the ELP design and dissemination in the Czech Republic and consequently due to participation in coordinators meetings organized by the Council of Europe Language Policy Division (Soest 1998, Enschede 1999, Budapest 1999, Radovjica 2000, Sèvres 2000, Coimbra 2001, Luxembourg 2002, Madrid 2004), I naturally attempted to have an in-depth understanding of the project and to gain an insight into its implementation. Participation in international seminars brought other coordinators' views to my knowledge and helped me to see the project from a European perspective. My own interest then led to the following questions: How does the project work in the Czech context?, and What should be done to assist its success? When redesigning the Czech ELP model for learners aged 11 to 15, necessary amendments to its design needed to be specified. When working with Czech teachers and running seminars for them, the most suitable issues to be discussed needed to be found and, furthermore, continuous gathering of results and showing them to the teachers and teacher trainers interested in the project appeared to be beneficial. Due to a firm belief that respecting teachers' attitudes towards teaching and tailoring seminars to the teachers' needs is a must, I attempted to investigate the teachers' beliefs, attitudes and needs continuously. The area of teachers' beliefs became my "intellectual puzzle" (Mason 1996, 6) several years ago when investigating teacher trainees' beliefs about presenting grammar structures (Perclová 1998).

When beginning the project, my ideas about some ELP concepts, learners' self-assessment in particular, were far from clear, which in fact made me use a discovery-oriented approach to teacher education, i.e. it made me give sufficient space to teachers' experiments and to their reflection and sharing of experience. Establishing a common ground and working towards a common goal facilitated a unique, positive atmosphere in the teachers' seminars and encouraged my further investigation. This study is its result.

1.2. Czech educational context

Czech society has been rather close and rigid, tending to marginalize ethnic minorities. It lacks a considerable positive experience of respecting and living harmoniously with other language and culture groups. This issue is highly pertinent to the Roma minority and to Vietnamese and people from the former Soviet Union who recently started moving to the

country. Their mother tongue is provided only exceptionally and society constantly struggles with their integration.

Most teachers are female. Their percentage is higher than in other OECD countries. In the Czech Republic in 1999, 84.5% of teachers in primary schools and 81.0% in lower-secondary schools were female (Průcha 2002, 27). A teacher's salary is below the national average salary. Approximately 20 to 66 per cent of all teacher trainees do not enter the profession (the percentage is influenced by the trainees' sex and by the location of their university), and 31 per cent of primary school teacher graduates and 50 per cent of lower and upper secondary school teacher graduates leave the profession after some years of practice (see Průcha 2002, 25-26). They leave it although their teaching time in primary and lower-secondary schools does not exceed the average teaching time in OECD countries (Průcha 2002, 37). Having said that, the pupil/teacher ratio is higher and less favourable: 23.4 in primary schools and 16.2 in lower-secondary schools (Průcha 2002, 92).

The reasons for becoming a teacher in the Czech Republic were examined in a research project done by Bláhová in primary and secondary schools in 1995 (see Vašutová 1998). The highest frequencies occurred in the following categories (all frequencies higher than 5% are stated in descending order): "love for children and young adults" ($f = 34.1\%$), "a free job" ($f = 21.9\%$), "a fabulous job" ($f = 11.4\%$), "an example in the family" ($f = 11.4\%$), "a way to earn one's living and at the same time to do something useful" ($f = 9.8\%$) and "more free time and holidays" ($f = 9.1\%$) (Vašutová 1998, 34). According to Vašutová (1998, 29), teachers accept responsibility for education due to their "enthusiasm and ethical optimism". They are aware of being a society stabilizer. The author points at the transformation of the Czech educational system advancing on the road to democracy and she identifies four main current school problems. In addition to feminization, which has already been mentioned, there is also "staff qualification, staff ageing, and the ratio of internal to external teachers" (Vašutová 1998, 36).

The learners under consideration in the study are eight to fifteen years old. This age group usually attends so-called basic school in the Czech Republic, which is the most common type of school in the country comprising both primary and lower-secondary level and providing altogether nine years of obligatory education. The maximum number of learners in a class is 30, the average number differs according to the type of school from 22 to 28 (Vašutová, 1998, 47). Teaching goals are pre-planned in the particular subject curriculum accredited by the

Ministry of Education. By tradition, teachers are expected to impart knowledge and skills to the learners and thus teaching is mainly teacher-fronted and a directive approach is common. Similarly, tasks in exams, language exams not excluded, accord a special attention to analytical views of learning.

A rigid assessment system has been conventional in schools: grades one to five are used, with grade one identifying excellent results and grade five identifying unsatisfactory ones. Biannual school reports use the same grading system and they also include a grade for Conduct. Learners obtaining a grade five in obligatory subjects in the end-of-school report have to redo the whole year but if they are in Years 5 to 9 and have two unsatisfactory grades at most, they can take a special re-sit exam before the beginning of the new school year. Their success in it allows them to continue in their study. An attempt to introduce verbal assessment in Year 1 in the school year 1988/1989 was unsuccessful. Since then verbal assessment has been exceptionally introduced as an alternative in some schools. The Ministry of Education permits its use in all subjects in Years 1 to 3, but it is in general very rare and when introduced, both the Head of the school and the parents have to agree with it. By tradition, young learners could have from 5 to 30 grades in subjects like foreign languages per term. Oral exams in front of the whole class are common in all subjects. Research done in the country at the beginning of the 1980s e.g. by Pelikán and Helus indicated that both positive and negative teachers' opinions on more than two thirds of learners were settled (cf. Mareš & Křivohlavý 1995, 132).

The fundamental importance of communication in education – interaction between teachers and learners, is sometimes highlighted (Mareš & Křivohlavý 1995). Teachers are criticized for the lack of useful feedback provided to learners. For example, Mareš and Křivohlavý (1995, 102) maintain that mistakes are corrected very quickly, in 10 to 15 seconds, assessment does not offer learners sufficient explanation and the learners are not asked to supply missing information or to participate in feedback. Kratochvíl (1998, 140) describes a research project in Year 8 which showed that 71% of the learners ($n = 61$) preferred checking the results of their work with the best learner to checking them against a printed sheet of paper ($f = 9\%$). He interprets the data as a need for social interaction, too. As for learners' awareness of making mistakes, Mareš and Křivohlavý (1995, 99) state that learners are sometimes not able to recognize the difference between a flawless performance of the task and their performance due to the following reasons: a) the mistakes

perceived as too little to be discovered, b) the lack of knowledge of the performance criteria and of the learning goals or c) the feeling of satisfaction with poorer performance. Particularly point b) can be also connected to the lack of classroom interaction.

1.2.1. Czech foreign language teaching and learning

Czech education in general and language teaching and learning in particular often refer to Comenius, a great Czech educational reformer and bishop living in the 17th century whose concept of teaching was well ahead of his time. Comenius emphasized the importance of the mother tongue and of the languages of our neighbours and he saw languages clearly as tools enabling us to gain knowledge and to communicate with others. He argued for learning by doing and he stressed the importance of learning to write by writing and learning to speak by speaking, which would be called nowadays production-based learning and the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis. According to him, learning should be supported by graded tasks (similarly to the reality that learning to walk precedes learning to dance) and learners' partial knowledge should be recognized. He explained that learning could be speeded up by setting up an aim and the means to attain the aim. Interestingly, he argued that there are four stages of language learning and in order to describe them, he used a metaphor of a building. The stages are a) the vestibule (requiring a knowledge of several hundreds of words), b) the entrance (requiring a knowledge of about 8000 words and of relevant grammatical rules), c) the dwelling and d) the treasury (which is used e.g. by writers who enjoy the exquisite pleasures of language to the full). The building cannot exist unless it has firm foundations (Komenský 1905). Comenius's ideas are undoubtedly relevant to the ELP concept.

Today, the learning of a foreign language, typically English or German, though it also could be French, Russian or Spanish, normally begins in the Czech Republic in basic schools at the age of nine in Year 4 and it is compulsory. The choice of the language depends on the school personnel, which often diminishes a real freedom of choice, and, in addition, there has been a high parental pressure in the past decade to provide English.

From the age of eight the learners can study in a school with extended language learning, which is an "elite" school for learners aged eight to fifteen. To be admitted to this type of school, learners have to pass an entrance exam and compared to a basic school they begin language

tuition one year earlier, i.e. in Year 3. The schools were established in the 1960's as the only schools in which children aged eight to fifteen could study – apart from Russian – another foreign language. In the recent past, when language teaching and learning was restricted in the Czech Republic before the political changes in 1989, the competition was intense but it is far from difficult nowadays. Though the programme does not differ from “common” basic schools substantially these days, the distinguishing feature of the selection of children remains and the schools are in most cases attended by very bright, hard-working and motivated learners who are aware of attending a “special” school. There were 214 of these schools in the country in year 2000 (in contrast with 4,032 basic schools).

At the age of eleven or thirteen another “elite” school can be entered, an upper-secondary school with extra classes for learners aged 11+ or 13+ (8-year grammar school or 6-year grammar school), requiring success in passing an entrance exam too and thus establishing an atmosphere similar to schools with extended language learning, or an atmosphere even more prestigious. This type of school was established after 1989. In year 2000 there were sixty 6-year and 8-year grammar schools in the country (the total of 4-year, 6-year and 8-year grammar schools was 260).

Learners from all three above-mentioned types of schools (i.e. from basic schools, schools with extended language learning and 8/6-year grammar schools) form the sample examined in this study, plus private sector learners of the same age who study English as an extra-school activity in addition to obligatory language classes.

Language teaching has struggled since 1989 with a notorious shortage of qualified teachers caused by languages being in great demand since then and by the political circumstances of about a fifteen-year period up to 1989 when the study of English in particular was not allowed at faculties preparing future teachers. The majority of the new graduates and some qualified teachers take advantage of having a very good command of a language and they seek jobs in the more lucrative private sector. To improve the situation, various in-service teacher-training projects have been implemented and teachers of subjects other than foreign languages or graduates from other than educational universities have extended their qualification with a foreign language. However, the number of unqualified teachers still exceeds 60% in basic schools. Having said that, many re-trainees and some unqualified teachers used their opportunities and became enthusiastic teachers of languages, willing to introduce new methods and modern ways of teaching.

In-service teacher training has usually focused on methodology; however, as it has been commonly provided in the target language after 1989, it also develops participants' foreign language communicative competence. As a high number of unqualified teachers having a pre-intermediate or elementary command of language entered the profession recently, language courses have been run for them since September 2003. The teachers intending to attend the courses were asked to self-assess their language abilities with the help of amended Council of Europe descriptors of communicative activities (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment 2001) so that they could be placed properly and the majority of them succeeded in the activity.

There are usually three 45-minute language lessons a week in basic schools and in schools with extended language learning, while in the initial classes of 6-year and 8-year grammar schools the number increases to four lessons per week. When the learners' number in class exceeds 24, which typically happens, the Head of the school can and in most cases does divide the class into two separate groups with separate tuition. "Elite" schools introduce the second foreign language at the age of eleven in Year 6 or one year later in Year 7 and they sometimes strengthen language learning through special classes called Conversation in the Foreign Language. Basic schools can begin teaching the second language at the learners' age of 12 or later but only as an optional subject. The learners continue studying two languages in upper secondary schools and one language in vocational schools.

The opinion that learners with study difficulties should be released from studying languages appears to be quite common. The ability to use a foreign language is often looked on as being a distinguished academic achievement lacking an emphasis on practice and real-life need. Consequently, a foreign language appears to be a formal subject for quite a few learners, having low immediate relevance to learners' lives outside of schools. Learners' language is often tightly controlled and particularly younger learners are rarely used to generating utterances beyond their range of practice. Grammar traditionally receives a strong focus.

National curricula were produced for particular types of schools by experts nominated by the Ministry of Education, however, textbooks are commonly used as the core of the curriculum. Various modern textbooks published abroad, mainly in Britain, Germany and Austria have been introduced into the country, setting an example for new Czech authors, yet justifications for traditional textbooks are not rare

either, especially due to the lack of regard for the mother tongue in the foreign textbooks. The most common English textbook in basic schools has been Project English (Hutchinson 1985, 1986, 1987) and its new version Project (Hutchinson 1999, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002) published by Oxford University Press. The syllabus of the textbooks is structural. Their author believes in discovery techniques of learning grammar and, particularly in the first edition of the textbook, in affective or cognitive “real-world” involvement activities, i.e. in attractive non-linguistic tasks that seemingly lack linguistic involvement as the main concern. As the communication during such activities echoes real-world message-oriented communication, subconscious acquisition of target language structures is promoted. This approach met with contradictory reactions among Czech teachers because the underlying structural syllabus did not become entirely transparent to some of them.

All national curricula for specific types of schools (Vzdělávací program Základní škola 1998, Učební osnovy pro vyučovací předmět Cizí jazyk 1995, Učební osnovy základní školy s rozšířeným vyučováním jazyků 1996) are designed as a common document for all languages taught (i.e. English, French, German, Russian and Spanish), with a shared text and specific parts for individual languages. The latter parts contain lists of grammatical structures subdivided according to the Czech common classification, e.g. all parts of speech are listed. The concept of the shared document is intended to reach a consensual level and objectives in all languages: although using different structures, all languages realize the same meanings. Attention is drawn mainly to the content, not to typical tasks and activities or to a week-by-week plan and thus an idea of “a framework within which activities can be carried out” (Widdowson 1984, 26) can be applied. The idea of the framework is explicitly emphasized in the school-with-extended-language-learning curriculum.

The curricula appear to show less awareness of modern approaches than the textbooks in use. They are a mixture of the influence of the Communicative Approach, the Audio-lingual Method and a structural view of the language, i.e. of viewing the language as a system of related elements that are to be mastered. While the Communicative Approach still appears to present a modern trend in the Czech Republic, the Audio-lingual Method influenced teaching to a great extent and the structural approach is in harmony with the Czech tradition of viewing language learning as an intellectual activity. The resemblance between the Audio-lingual Method and the curricula appears in the following aspects: a focus on communication, presenting language as an inventory of separate items,

providing an order in dealing with grammar and treating the language skills unequally, i.e. suppressing reading and writing.

All curricula are typical hybrids consisting of structural, functional-notional, topical, situational, skill-based, cultural and learning-to-learn aims. The basic-school curriculum (1998) is a short document with less than four pages of a shared text and about two pages of checklists of structures for each language, while the curriculum for schools with extended language learning (1996) is longer, fifty pages in total, as it provides various checklists of items to be learned. All the checklists are clear evidence of a focus on a measurable product, which is especially obvious in guidelines for vocabulary learning. The acquisition of 1,500 to 1,700 lexical items is required in basic schools and the acquisition of 3,500 lexical items in schools with extended language learning, with an additional objective to extend productive vocabulary receptively. Both documents define the terminal competence of the graduates but the description in the basic-school curriculum is extremely brief. It consists of six items: “the learner should be able to understand adequate direct and recorded speech of non-native and native speakers, express himself readily in common everyday situations, briefly express his opinion orally and in writing, use reading for gaining new knowledge, work with dictionaries and other handbooks and know the most important information about the target language country”.

The inventory of functions and notions is short (e.g. approval/disapproval) and so is the inventory of situations (e.g. visiting a doctor). Performance conditions and standards are rarely suggested. Topics include e.g. Town and Sport; cultural items concern learning about life in different countries but also about important facts from geography, history, politics etc. The skills are introduced in relative detail in the curriculum for schools with extended language learning (e.g. Year 5 to read texts prepared aural-orally aloud, fluently and phonetically correctly, Year 7 and 8 to learn to fill in common forms). Listening and speaking are preferred in all curricula, especially during the first years of the tuition when learning by heart and aural-oral preparation of texts is strongly emphasized. A conscious approach to learning grammar and to different target language structures arising from contrastive analysis is recommended in basic schools from Year 6.

Likewise in all primary and lower-secondary school subjects, the goals of foreign language teaching and learning are now under consideration and a new school law is being prepared.

1.3. The aim of the study

The present work is an evaluative large-scale case study that comes under the area of research on foreign language teaching and learning and teacher education. Its conceptual framework draws on new trends in foreign language teaching methodology and cognitive psychology. The purpose of the study is to examine the implementation of European Language Portfolio pedagogy in Czech primary and lower-secondary schools. In order to fulfil this purpose, beliefs and attitudes of the participating teachers and learners are described and used as a means of investigation. As an overall picture of the implementation is desired, quantitative analysis is often carried out as well as a naturalistic, qualitative methodology, and even the qualitative data are usually quantified. The study describes how an educational project operates in the given context and thus it is in accord with Lynch's (1996) illumination model of evaluation.

As the European Language Portfolio pedagogy of language teaching is innovative not only in the Czech Republic but also in Finland and other European countries, its investigation is of great importance. Smooth and effective implementation of the ELP is greatly desired, nevertheless, because it is a top-down project, its implementation cannot be guaranteed automatically by the qualities of the project themselves, however great they are. As Tudor (2001, 35) maintains, "the nature of the change (...) does not depend solely on the inner logic of the approach in question, but rather on the meaning which it assumes for participants, and this is situation-specific". Thus the present study derives from the perspective that language teaching project intents and theoretical assumptions can differ from the reality of their classroom adoption. Among other factors, it is mainly teachers' beliefs and attitudes that can influence project implementation to a great extent because "teachers are a key factor in the successful implementation of curriculum changes" (Richards 2001, 99) and their beliefs and attitudes have impact both on their own work and the work of their learners. Based on the teachers' and learners' beliefs, experience and personality preferences and a specific teaching and learning classroom context, complex interaction processes take place between the participants' goals and the project goals and various patterns of interaction develop. This interactive view of project implementation is the basis of the whole study. It is in harmony with an "ecological" perspective, i.e. understanding "situations in their own terms and in the light of dynamics which operate within each situation" (Tudor 2001, 26).

The study examines the beliefs and attitudes held by two groups of teachers working in primary and lower-secondary schools ($n = 53$ and $n = 53$, cf. 1.1) and beliefs and attitudes of one group of their learners ($n = 902$). The analysis is carried out in three areas: 1) an overall ELP evaluation, 2) the use of the descriptors of communicative activities and 3) the use of learners' self-assessment. It is based on 1) what the teachers expressed in surveys and during seminar discussions and what they did during foreign language classes and 2) what the learners expressed in surveys and what they did in their ELPs and during foreign language classes. The processes and products of the interaction between the project intent and previously established classroom reality are explored in the period from 1999 to 2002.

Although embedded in ELP pedagogy, the study does not examine several principal objectives of the ELP, mainly plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and learning and communication strategies because they were not dealt with fully in the Czech project.

The term "belief" is used in the study mainly in relation to the teachers and its concept is based on recent findings in educational science. Beliefs are our personal knowledge based on our experience and formed in interaction with the context in which we live. Beliefs establish a framework for our learning, which they can promote or hinder. Their concept is therefore highly relevant to the research which focuses on the introduction of an innovative approach to teaching. The term "attitude" is employed especially in relation to the learners and it builds on current findings in social psychology. An attitude expresses our likes and dislikes and it comprises a cognitive, emotional and conative component.

Before the validation of the first Czech ELP the terms "portfolio" or "language portfolio" were commonly used in the Czech context but the term "European Language Portfolio" in the European context, and so all these terms can appear interchangeably.

Though the study is definitely situation-specific and it cannot but bear witness to my perspectives, understanding and interpretation, it attempts to achieve "reduced or neutralised partiality" (Alderson 1992, 275). It is hoped that some of the findings and implications will contribute to further implementation of ELP pedagogy in the Czech Republic and that they might contribute to ELP research in general.

2. The European Language Portfolio concept, pedagogy and pilot project

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate and evaluate the principles and characteristics of the European Language Portfolio and its pedagogy. Firstly, the ELP concept is put into a larger context and background information about its history is given and secondly, the ELP general concept is characterized. Thirdly, the body of the chapter is devoted to two ELP distinctive features, which are 1) the scales of language proficiency and their descriptors of communicative language activities used for criterion-referencing and 2) learner's self-assessment contributing to learner autonomy. These features are discussed in this chapter in great detail because they are fundamental both to the ELP and to the present study. Fourthly, arising from the findings in the previous sections, the term ELP pedagogy is defined and the key concepts of ELP pedagogy as theoretical principle and as pedagogical reality are introduced. Finally, the results of the ELP pilot scheme are outlined and Czech ELPs for young learners are looked at. The focus of the individual sections therefore shifts from a broader perspective to a narrow context and from recent past to current issues.

2.1. The genesis of the ELP

In the 1970s the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project Group started promoting life-long language learning, i.e. systematic language learning by adults. The Group attempted to design a European unit-credit system corresponding to different learners' needs and recognized internationally. Basic objectives for learning English at the Threshold Level (communicative situations, topics, functions and notions) were specified by van Ek (1975). The Threshold Level presents, according to van Ek and Trim, "the minimal linguistic equipment which will enable a learner to deal with the more predictable situations of daily life, transactional and interactional, as an independent agent" (2001,1). Its description served as a model and was used later by other experts applying it to a range of European languages and to different groups of learners (the Threshold Level for Czech was published in 2001, Prahová úroveň - čeština jako cizí jazyk). The first description of a lower level called Waystage appeared in 1977 (Ek & Alexander 1977).

Though the work on the unit-credit system was delayed in 1977 until an indefinite time when more favourable conditions for the scheme occurred, other projects related to it continued, particularly attempts to identify appropriate objectives for different target groups. Specification of learning objectives was also one of the priority themes of the Council of Europe's project "Language learning for European citizenship" approved in 1988. The Threshold Level was revised and enriched by van Ek and Trim (1991) in Threshold Level 1990, containing supplementary chapters on sociocultural competence, compensation strategies and learning to learn strategies. At the same time an extended edition of the lower level Waystage was published (Ek & Trim 1991).

Further progress was facilitated in 1991, during the Symposium "Transparency and coherence in language learning in Europe" held in Rüschtikon, Switzerland, where twenty-six Council of Europe member states (included the Czech Republic and Finland) and various institutions involved in language learning were represented. Proceeding with the effort deferred in 1977, the Symposium officially proposed that a common framework of reference for life-long language learning should be created (Transparency and coherence in language learning in Europe 1992). In harmony with the name of the Symposium, the proposal intended to enable such assessment of learners' progress, certificates of proficiency and qualifications in modern languages that would help to make language learning transparent and coherent. A decision to offer this framework to the public in the ELP was taken and the fundamentals of the ELP established.

The concept of the ELP was introduced in Rüschtikon by John Trim, the General Rapporteur and Project Adviser, and described in detail by Rolf Schärer, Director General of the Eurocentres Foundation in Zürich. The conclusions of the Symposium related to the ELP recommended recording both formal and informal personal achievement and experience and to provide positive learning evidence. The ELP goals of increasing learners' motivation and facilitating learners' mobility were stated and the need for further investigation of the project emphasized.

During the Symposium discussion Richterich and Schneider (1992, 50) maintained that the ELP "would be a promising development", providing "an opportunity to put transparency and coherence into practice" and to act "as an important catalyst". Page (1992) presented a project similar to the ELP - UK graded objectives schemes, aiming to improve learners' motivation "by defining an attainable goal, rewarding it in a public way and pointing the way forward to the next goal". He

emphasized that while higher levels of language proficiency may be more difficult to attain, the beginning levels should be “relatively easy and reachable in relatively short periods of time” since “the main point is to get people on to the ladder and going up”. The fact that teachers themselves devised the graded objectives increased, according to Page, the teachers’ motivation and it encouraged them to carry out action research and seek new methodology. Kohonen (1992a), dealing with self-directed learning, drew attention to other key issues: to what extent self-directed learning can take place in a teacher-controlled setting and how the right balance between a teacher’s control and learner’s initiative might be struck. Other potential problems of the project were discussed: e.g. a) the ELP validity and credibility, b) the danger of rigidity and c) the contradiction between the need for simplicity and clarity and the amount of information that might be reported.

2.2. The ELP characteristics

ELP broader political and societal goals were identified later in the “European Language Portfolio (ELP) Principles and Guidelines” (2000), approved by the Education Committee of the Council of Europe. They comprise mutual understanding, cultural and linguistic diversity, protection of cultural and linguistic heritage, plurilingualism, life-long learning, autonomous learning, transparency and coherence in language learning and learners’ mobility.

Responding to the current European context, the ELP thus reflects three of five contemporary curriculum ideologies described by Richards (2001): a) “social and economic efficiency”, b) “learner-centeredness” and c) “cultural pluralism”. While social and economic efficiency emphasizes the importance of the “learner’s everyday life needs” and of the curriculum “planned to meet the practical needs of society” (Richards 2001, 117), learner-centeredness focuses on the individual as such; cultural pluralism is then concerned with the individual in relation to other human beings, i.e. with the development of learners’ intercultural communication and intercultural competence. (The two remaining ideologies identified by Richards are “academic rationalism”, aiming at the role of the subject matter in the development of the learners’ intellectual capacities, and “social reconstructionism”, aiming at school education against social injustices.)

The key expressions of the particular philosophies, and, due to their reflection in the ELP the key expressions of the ELP too, are identified in the following table.

TABLE 1. The ELP ideologies

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY	LEARNER-CENTEREDNESS	CULTURAL PLURALISM
needs of a society learners' needs graded objectives tasks competencies	an individual learning experience self-awareness relearning and growth learner's interest	A multi-cultural society diversity Openness to new experience mutual understanding Cross-cultural competency

Two of the three above-mentioned ELP ideologies, i.e. social and economic efficiency and learner-centeredness are identical to foreign language teaching value systems described by Clark (1987), building on Skilbeck, i.e. to “reconstructionism” and “progressivism” respectively. Clark highlights that reconstructionism emphasizes the importance of learning objectives and progressivism the importance of teaching methodology (1987, 6). As already stated and indicated above, the ELP unifies both of these value systems. It both provides its users with a system of graded objectives suitable for criterion-referencing (as opposed to norm-referencing, see 2.3.3) and it encourages the teachers to develop learners' autonomy, i.e. to facilitate learners' setting of their own objectives and learners' assessment of their achievement (see 2.4).

Though the symbiosis of the above-mentioned ideologies appears ideal, it raises questions about its feasibility. To what extent can such symbiosis exist, i.e. to what extent can the needs of a society be identical to the needs of an individual and at the same time respect cultural diversity? This problem will be further investigated in section 2.3.2.

In the initial phases of the use of the reconstructionist curriculum, according to Clark (1987, 22), teachers value the following changes in their work: expressing instructional objectives more overtly, monitoring the learners' progress more profoundly, giving feedback more sensitively and providing learners with feelings of achievement more often, periodically at

the end of each unit. Learners appreciate deliberate study, common feelings of achievement and criterion-referencing supporting collaboration.

The feelings of learners' achievement referred to by both teachers and learners are also highlighted in a clear definition of the ELP given in Rüşchlikon: the ELP is "an individual record of language learning achievement" (Trim 1992, 26). The ELP closely relates to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, a compendium on language teaching and learning, and it uses the Common Framework scales of language proficiency, but it also attempts to respond to the specific needs of particular learners and of their learning context. As stated above in the key expressions of learner-centeredness (Table 1), it places emphasis on the learner's reflection, individual experience and growth. The ELP belongs to the learner and it can help the learners to meet their needs and demands. In accordance with the Council of Europe's concept, it recognizes both formal and informal learning as well as both partial and specific language learning competencies.

According to the ELP Principles and Guidelines (2000) each ELP should consist of three sections: the Passport, the Language Biography and the Dossier. Specific content and functions of the individual sections are summarized in the following table.

TABLE 2. The ELP sections and their functions

THE PASSPORT	THE LANGUAGE BIOGRAPHY	THE DOSSIER
An overview of language competences, qualifications and intercultural experiences	A record of the language learning process	A presentation of language learning products – samples of work and certificates

All three above-mentioned sections of the ELP are interconnected. The Passport comprises continuous records of learner's competences in different languages made by both the learners and their teachers or other interested bodies and based on both learner's self-assessment and teachers' assessment or other institutions' formal assessment. In addition to the learner's acquisition of different languages, the records in the Language Biography facilitate the learner's more detailed planning, reflection and self-assessment of the study. These records are more common and specific

and consequently also less formal than those in the Passport and it is usually exclusively the learner who makes them. The Dossier illustrates the records kept in the Passport and the Language Biography; it is a collection of examples of the learner's work and the learner's certificates. All three parts of the ELP highlight the importance of the learner's self-assessment and e.g. the ELP Principles and Guidelines (2000) rank this form of assessment first among other forms.

The ELP differs from portfolios used in American writing classes both at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Such portfolios are collections of learner's writing, exhibiting a variety of samples of the learner's writing processes and products and showing the learner's growth and self-reflection but lacking reference to other communicative activities and to underlying common reference levels. Teachers' assessments made in such portfolios reflect specific teaching and assessment writing objectives (Hamp-Lyons 1996, 152).

The ELP attempts to integrate two types of portfolio pointed to by Kohonen (2002, 81): "(1) the process-oriented learning ("working") portfolios and (2) the product-oriented reporting ("showcase") portfolios". This coexistence could however bring problems and its feasibility should be investigated. The two above-mentioned types of the portfolio are also reflected in two functions that should be fulfilled by each ELP: a pedagogical function and a reporting function (see ELP Principles and Guidelines 2000). The ELP should both encourage the language learning process and, in addition, it should record language learning results. Kohonen warns against reducing the work with the ELP to the reporting function in the classroom context: such work on its own could become monotonous and time-consuming while the pedagogical function shows a great potential (2002, 84-85). Similarly to the two portfolio types, the connection of the two functions could create difficulty. How would documents reflecting the complicated learning process, all its flaws and personal shortcomings be accepted in public? And would one like to present such a document? In the adult sector, the ELP project attempted to avoid the potential problems by considering the Passport to be the formal ELP section and the remaining two parts personal and informal sections.

To carry out both functions, the ELP employs above all two key instruments: common reference levels of language proficiency and learners' self-assessment. These instruments will be discussed at greater length in the next sections of this chapter. While the common reference

levels have a decisive role in both functions, the learner's self-assessment fulfils mainly pedagogical aims.

2.3. The Council of Europe's description of the common reference levels of language proficiency

2.3.1. The concepts of language competences, communicative language activities and language proficiency

Contrary to the Chomskyan term "competence" (the abstract knowledge of linguistic rules), the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) uses the term "competence" to cover both knowledge and skills and the individual learner's characteristics that are important for language use (see the following Figure 1).

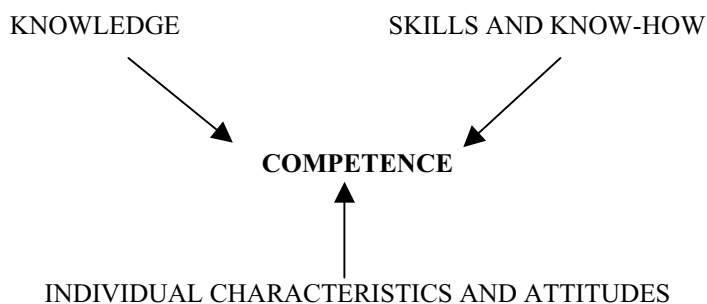


Figure 1. Denotation of the term competence in the CEF (2001)

Competences are divided into two broad categories, i.e. general (non-linguistic) competences of an individual and communicative language competences, and they are further subdivided as shown in Table 3 (a verbatim summary of the terms and expressions is provided). The term "existential competence" is applied to "the sum of the individual characteristics, personality traits and attitudes" (CEF, 11).

The CEF thus builds on the term "communicative competence" defined by Hymes in 1972 and on the term "communicative language ability" coined by Canale and Swain (1980) and further developed by Bachman

TABLE 3. Classification of language competences in the CEF (2001)

COMPETENCES	
1. GENERAL	1.1.declarative knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the world, sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness
	1.2. skills and know-how, i.e. practical skills and know-how (social, living, vocational and professional, leisure skills) and intercultural skills and know-how
	1.3. existential competence (attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive styles, personality factors)
	1.4. ability to learn, i.e. language and communication awareness, general phonetic awareness and skills, study skills and heuristic skills
2. COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE COMPETENCE	2.1. linguistic competence, i.e. lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, orthographic and orthoepic competence
	2.2. sociolinguistic competence (related to linguistic markers of social reactions, politeness conventions, expressions of folk-wisdom, register differences, dialect and accent)
	2.3. pragmatic competence (i.e. discourse and functional competence)

(1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) who included the learner's topical knowledge and affective schemata, i.e. non-linguistic components, in it. The fundamental importance of drawing on a fairly large number of competences when using a language is emphasized. The Chomskyan term "performance" (the use of the language knowledge) is avoided, however the meaning of this term is referred to in a comprehensive description of the "context of language use". Such a context includes "domains (personal, public, occupational, educational), situations, conditions and constraints, the user's mental context and the mental context of the interlocutor(s)".

The authors of the CEF explain that a system of language description that could be "used directly to facilitate language learning, teaching and assessment" is lacking and that a universal system for the description of all languages apparently cannot exist (CEF 2001, 109). Their description of

linguistic competences therefore does not radically differ from traditional descriptions.

A central concept of the CEF is the language use. A language user demonstrates his/her competences activated by tasks in communicative language activities with a help of a number of language strategies. Due to the emphasis on the language as a tool for action, the term “communicative language activities” has also a fundamental importance to the CEF, and is frequently used, completely replacing the traditional term “language skills”. (The term “language skills” is rejected by other authors, too; e.g. Widdowson (1998) finds the division into four skills problematic, because it does not reflect real use of language. He identifies the term skills with his term “usage”, i.e. “encoding and deciphering linguistic signals” and uses the term “abilities” for “contextual realization” of the language code as communication.) According to the CEF, the user’s competences are exercised in communicative language activities, which are productive, receptive, interactive and mediating. Competences and activities are interrelated. Development of the communicative language competence is reflected in more demanding communicative language activities and, vice versa, more difficult communicative language activities develop the communicative language competence. Based on this concept, the CEF uses two main types of scales and descriptors, differing thus markedly from other projects. These are scales of descriptors of communicative language activities and scales of descriptors of communicative language competences. Arising from the action-oriented approach to the language, a greater importance is attached to the descriptors of communicative language activities. They are placed first, given in more detail and their scales considerably outnumber the scales of communicative language competences (there are 40 scales of communicative language activities and strategies and 13 scales of communicative language competences in the CEF). Moreover, unlike the scales of communicative activities, the scales of communicative language competences sometimes have to use negative formulations to describe a lower level of language proficiency (e.g. “frequent breakdowns and misunderstandings occur”, “still systematically makes basic mistakes”).

The dual approach to the description of language use in the CEF is unique and is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to research on language teaching and learning. This approach also acknowledges statements made by some experts. For example, Wilkins (1976), one of the proponents of the functional-notional syllabus, argued for languages to be taught semantically, by drawing attention to the communicative

functions. Nevertheless, in spite of his strong belief in the emphasis placed on meaning, he maintained that “the acquisition of the grammatical system of a language remains a most important element in language learning”. Similarly, Brumfit (1980, in Clark 1987, 41) stated that “notional, functional, and situational specifications can be conceived of as a spiral round a basically grammatical core”. Finally, developing this concept, Widdowson (1998, 330) argues for a combination of “the skill-oriented and ability oriented approaches”, i.e. for a development of both linguistic competence and communicative abilities in activities that are purposeful for the learners.

The second broad term described in this section is the term “language proficiency”. The CEF (2001) usually connects it to the expressions “a scale”, “levels” or “descriptors”. It speaks e.g. about “gains in proficiency”, “a set of proficiency statements” facilitating comparison (p. 16) “a series of ascending bands of proficiency”, “the range of learner proficiency” (p. 40) and “greater proficiency in one language than in the others” (p. 133). Though not expressed explicitly, the use of the term thus indicates a certain degree of language ability and to this extent it is in accordance with Richards, Platt and Platt’s definition (1992, 204), denoting language proficiency as “the degree of skill with which a person can use a language”. As such, it can be measured (McNamara 2000, 5) and therefore scales of language proficiency can be supplied. This use of the definition is applied to the present study: the learner’s language proficiency denotes the degree of the learner’s communicative language competence. The perspective of what the learner is able to do in the language(s) is highlighted.

Similarly to Richards, Platt and Platt (1992), the term “proficiency” is also contrasted in the CEF with the term “achievement”, in the case of the CEF in order to distinguish achievement assessment and proficiency assessment (cf. language achievement vs. language proficiency in Richards, Platt & Platt 1992, 197, 204). While achievement assessment focuses on the course results, proficiency assessment focuses on the ability to apply the school knowledge to real-life situations (CEF 2001, 183).

The use of the term “language proficiency” has been far from straightforward and there has been considerable confusion about it among experts, which can be exemplified e.g. by definitions stated by Ellis. While in 1985 the author proclaims proficiency “synonymous with ‘competence’” and consisting of the knowledge of a language (1985, 302), in 1994 he contrasts it with competence and maintains that it relates to a “skill in using the L2” (1994, 720). Later on, in 1997, he presents an opinion of Taylor (1988) who distinguishes competence as referring “to abstract

linguistic and pragmatic knowledge”, performance as referring to “actual acts of communication” and proficiency as referring “to the language user’s ability to communicate appropriately and efficiently” (Ellis 1997, 100). The last definition of proficiency is close to the use of the term in the CEF.

2.3.2. The scales of communicative language activities

Each ELP is built on the scales of language proficiency (the scales in the CEF are illustrative). It therefore usually contains a self-assessment grid of language proficiency (a brief holistic user-oriented overview of ascending proficiency levels containing descriptors of communicative language activities, see Appendix 1) and self-assessment checklists of descriptors of language proficiency developed first and foremost from the descriptors of communicative language activities. Though the descriptors of communicative language competences are used to an extent in some ELP models, e.g. the Swiss models, their use is rare and it is the descriptors of communicative language activities that are entirely typical of the ELP.

All the descriptors were developed for the Common Framework and the ELP in the Swiss National Science Foundation project arising from the special Swiss national context and their copyright belongs to the Council of Europe that freely authorizes its use. Depending on the context, the self-assessment checklists in the specific national ELP versions are either a) directly accepted from the Common European Framework of Reference or the Swiss ELP, or b) partially adapted, or c) newly designed to meet the needs of a particular context.

The descriptors of communicative language activities have several sources: a) the work of Halliday and Hymes, b) the functional-notional approach originated in the Council of Europe in the 1970s, c) the Graded Objectives in Modern Languages schemes designed in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, d) the Competency-Based Language Teaching started in the United States in the 1970s, see e.g. the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the Australian Migrant Education Program and e) the standards movement that spread over the US in the 1990s.

When viewing the descriptors from the perspective of current theories about language teaching and learning, i.e. sociocultural theory (see Lantolf 2000, Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001, Watson-Gegeo 2004, cf. 3.1.1, 3.2) and an ecological perspective (see van Lier 2000, cf. 3.1.1, 3.2), their following key features emerge. The descriptors indicate meaningful actions and

they can encourage learners to become active, to organize their learning, establish specific objectives and fulfil them. An ecological perspective (van Lier 2000) can see them as general descriptions of potential actions that could be performed in the language at a specific stage of its cognition. They are examples of prototypical relationships between the language and the learner. The actions based on them and carried out by an active user of the language are shaped by the relationship between the properties of the language and their user - the user's perception. When studying the descriptors from the perspective of sociocultural theory (Watson-Gegeo 2004), mainly social interaction, which is a significant characteristic of many descriptors, should be highlighted. In addition, the usefulness of the descriptors is in their applicability to real communicative actions that begin with the users' legitimate but peripheral participation and lead to their full participation (cf. Watson-Gegeo 2004, 341). The descriptors are culturally bound, they are cultural models of language actions identified in the European context and based on European conceptions of language use. They can be formative, i.e. they can influence methods of teaching.

When developing the original scales of the descriptors in the above-mentioned Swiss project, six broad levels of language proficiency that had been recognized by the Modern Languages Project Group of the Council of Europe and ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) were taken as a starting point. The levels were called common reference levels (they include Waystage and Threshold, cf. 2.1). The large-scale research that followed is unique in language teaching both in its systematic approach and its range. It in fact responds to the critics of the functional-notional, but also of situational and topic-based approaches, arguing that such curricula use categories that lack a system and a theoretical underpinning and that they are intuitive and infinite (cf. Clark 1987, 39).

As North and Schneider 1998 and North 1996 report, forty-one proficiency scales utilized in various language curricula were analyzed (the Finnish Nine Level Scale of Language Proficiency 1993 was one of them). Based on the analysis a pool of about 1,000 descriptors referring to spoken interaction, spoken production and writing was created. The descriptors were provisionally classified and discussed with 100 Swiss teachers in 1994. They were categorized by the teachers during workshops when teachers' discussions about learners' proficiency in video dialogues were recorded in order to serve as a tool to double-check the correct phrasing of the descriptors. Questionnaires enumerating the refined

descriptors were designed and used by the teachers for assessing a sample of ten of their learners (preferably from two classes) and for assessing other learners' videoed performance. Consistency in assessment and in the use of individual descriptors was checked and the descriptors calibrated with the help of the Rasch item response theory. The procedure was to a great extent replicated in 1995 when a) 192 teachers participated in the enquiry, b) besides English a teachers' survey in French and German was conducted and c) spoken interaction, spoken production, listening and reading were in focus (North & Schneider 1998, North 1996). Altogether 212 descriptors were produced (North 1995, 459).

As can be seen from the project description, teachers' real-life assessment was the key to the development of the scales of language proficiency, nevertheless, a combination of intuitive, qualitative and quantitative methods was employed. This combination distinguishes the project from common curriculum designs that have generally been intuitive. North (1996, 430) identifies the project aim as "objective scaling of subjective judgements". He evaluates the teachers' as "naive users" and points to their lack of experience in work with descriptors of communicative language activities but he considers their inexperience important because it increases the feasibility of the descriptors. The teachers did not undergo prior teacher training so that their judgement was not distorted. Consequently, when assessing the learners, they did not avoid norm-referencing – comparing learners' performances and ranking them, though they were asked to use descriptor definitions as standards. Norm-referencing appeared quite natural in this case because the teachers were asked to select deliberately learners of different abilities and such learners were also recorded in the learners' video dialogues.

As mentioned above, the scales, self-assessment checklists and the self-assessment grid are divided into six common reference levels: Basic User - A1 (Breakthrough) and A2 (Waystage); Independent User - B1 (Threshold) and B2 (Vantage); and Proficient User - C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) and C2 (Mastery). The range of the communicative language competence in the particular levels broadens immensely towards the top: the shape of the scale resembles the shape of an ice-cream cone (CEF 2001, 18). Thus the higher levels are more difficult to be attained and the concept of Page (see 2.1), i.e. the concept of easily reachable beginning levels has been materialized. A detailed examination of the description of individual levels shows a vocabulary range that should be acquired. Level A2 requires a vocabulary of about 850 words (cf. Ek & Trim 1991), level B1 a vocabulary of 1,500 words (cf.

van Ek 1975) and level B2 4,500 words with over 8,000 semantic values (cf. the specification of the Cambridge First Certificate in English in Gairns and Redman 1986, 58).

The levels correspond roughly to the levels and exams of UCLES (the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate) and ALTE (ALTE initially did not recognize the lowest level A1). Other public examinations provided by various language institutions (e.g. the Goethe Institute, the French Institute) nowadays refer to the CEF reference levels too. A survey of language exams and their levels is given in Appendix 2 (based on Bohuslavová 2002). However, it should be taken into account that the summary is crude and that a complete picture can be built up only by careful study of both descriptors of communicative activities and descriptors of communicative competences (see e.g. Table 3 in the CEF). Such a combination is respected in a new project of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe that aims to standardize national and international certificates and diplomas. The project was launched in Helsinki in 2002, and in 2003 A Preliminary Pilot Version of the manual *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEF) was published. (For further progress in this complex area see <<http://www.coe.int/portfolio>>.)

The ELP organizes the description of the six reference levels in its instruments - the checklists and the self-assessment grid around receptive, productive and interactive communicative language activities (i.e. the four traditional language skills, with speaking divided in two different sub-skills - spoken interaction and spoken production, and listening and reading included in a higher category, comprehension). Mediating as a more specific activity is omitted. (Swiss descriptors from self-assessment checklists cited in the present study come from the Swiss pilot version of the ELP. They were also published as an Appendix in Little and Perclová 2001.)

While the checklists and the grid are written in the first person singular (Ich-form) to correspond to the learner's needs (e.g. Swiss self-assessment checklist - A1 spoken interaction: "I can ask people for things and give people things"), the illustrative scales in the Framework are written in the third person singular and their language sometimes resembles rather a formal metalanguage than user-friendly definitions (e.g. A1 spoken interaction - conversation: "Can understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs of a concrete type, delivered directly to him/her in clear, slow and repeated speech by a sympathetic speaker").

The CEF illustrative scales of communicative activities consist of an overall scale for each language activity (e.g. Spoken interaction) and of several specific subscales for corresponding components of the activity (e.g. Overall reading comprehension followed by Reading correspondence, Reading for orientation, Reading for information and argument and Reading instructions). Due to a strong similarity between overall and specific scales one can say that the overall scales in fact combine salient elements of the specific scales or that overall scales are further elaborated on in relevant specific scales. Each level is defined independently of the adjacent levels and it is clearly distinguished from these levels. Such fine distinctions are especially important to beginners and young learners whose need to experience a feeling of achievement is very strong.

All definitions in all descriptors of communicative language activities are positive, emphasizing thus learners' achievement rather than their incompetence (descriptors – which have the function of learning objectives – clearly should be formulated positively). In this way, partial communicative language competences are fully recognized and the reality of different proficiency levels in particular activities is acknowledged (e.g. CEF illustrative scales: A1 spoken interaction – conversation – “Can make an introduction and use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions”, A2 writing – creative writing - “Can write short, simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people” and B1 reading – reading for information and argument - “Can recognize significant points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar subjects”).

Each of the descriptors is based on a specific criterion, i.e. on “relevant communicative behaviour in the target situation” (McNamara 2000, 8). Each of them thus specifies a certain “ability domain” (Bachman 1990, 244). The descriptors usually refer to relatively longer pieces of discourse adequate for the specific reference levels. They also correspond to current social demands: e.g. in the Swiss self-assessment checklists B1 listening – “I can understand the main points of radio news bulletins”, A1 reading – “I can understand the most important orders in a computer programme such as “PRINT”, “SAVE”, “COPY”, etc”. They concern real-world contexts - life-like situations (e.g. in the same checklists C1 - reading - “I can read contemporary literary texts with ease”; B2 spoken production - “I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options”; B1 - writing – “I can write personal letters to friends or acquaintances asking for or giving them news and narrating events”; A2 spoken interaction – “I can ask for and give directions referring to a map or plan”). Nevertheless, however realistic, when used

in a classroom, real conditions can be only simulated and one should take this into consideration when judging learners' use of the language (cf. McNamara 2000, 8, Widdowson 1990). Some descriptors in spoken interaction follow the pattern of language functions (e.g. A2 "I can make and respond to invitations", "I can make and accept apologies", B1 "I can agree and disagree politely"), some focus on transactional goals (e.g. A2 "I can make simple purchases by stating what I want and asking the price") and others on socially-oriented, interpersonal talk (e.g. A2 "I can ask how people are and react to news"). Resemblance to grammatical structures is rare and implicit (e.g. A2 spoken interaction – "I can say what I like and dislike", A2 spoken production – "I can describe past activities and personal experiences (e.g. the last weekend, my last holiday)"). Some descriptors in spoken production in particular encourage learners' personal self-expression (e.g. B1 "I can explain and give reasons for my plans, intentions and actions"). All in all, according to Tudor's classification (2001) the descriptors arise naturally from the functional perspective of the language, from the vision of "language as doing things", but also from the vision of "language as self-expression".

The scales contradict Oller's Unitary Competence Hypothesis acknowledging "the same underlying capacity in the learner" integrating knowledge in language use (McNamara 2000, 15). They also contradict structuralists' discrete point items focusing on atomized, separate and isolated items of knowledge, although, paradoxically, due to a more detailed analysis of the communicative language competence (see 2.3.1) and due to the focus on particular aspects of language proficiency, McNamara (2000, 20) warns that we could nowadays in a way return to the problems of discrete point items. While this problem could arise when dealing with the communicative competence, it should not occur when descriptors of communicative activities are in use due to more complex pieces of discourse being covered by them.

In a school context, the descriptors of communicative activities can indicate what should be taught and as such they can fulfil seven interrelated functions. They can serve as 1) a source of identification of instructional objectives, 2) a language teaching syllabus, 3) a basis for the choice of the content of language tests, 4) a checklist of learner's achievement, 5) a description of individual levels of language proficiency, 6) an impetus for a shift in the teachers' work, and, when intelligible to the learners, as 7) a guide to the learner's independent study. While the reporting, "checking-off" function of the descriptors has been obvious since the beginning of the pilot project, their planning function has

been only gradually recognized, which also applies to the impetus for teachers' development (cf. Little, Ridley & Ushioda 2002, 35). Having said that, North (1996, 439), the originator of the descriptors, sees them as learning objectives very clearly.

Though commonly called for, predetermination of learning objectives might cause difficulties. Some authors point out that instructional objectives based on learners' objective needs do not have to correspond to learners' subjective needs and interests (Clark 1987, 36) and/or they refer to impracticability of defining learners' needs in advance, during the learners' compulsory education. Attempts of the authors of the textbooks to tackle the former objection (accommodating the textbook content to the learners' subjective needs) are common. Nunan (1988a) proposes another solution: information about objectives and activities should be exchanged between the learner and the teacher. He maintains that such information provided by the teacher in a meaningful way may assist the learners "to have a greater appreciation and acceptance of the learning experience they are undertaking or about to undertake" (1988a, 80). The latter objection, i.e. the impracticability of identifying the learners' needs in advance can hardly sustain in the Czech context in the case of young beginners grasping the fundamentals of the language.

Additional objections concerning the pre-selection of learning objectives that might be raised relate to teachers' and learners' motivation because the prescription of objectives might appear to prevent teachers and learners from taking responsibility for their work, i.e. it might prevent them from developing their autonomy (cf. comments on ELP ideologies in 2.2). However, by referring to real world behaviour, the descriptors provide only a basis for class activities, they do not define details of foreign language teaching and learning in specific classes and they do not necessarily cover broader teaching goals like making language learning enjoyable, maintaining learners' interest and increasing learners' intrinsic motivation. They provide a framework within which the teacher's and learner's autonomy can develop. Ideally, the potential of the ELP is fulfilled and the learners, encouraged by their teachers, seek opportunities to further develop their proficiency both within the framework of the descriptors and beyond it.

Notwithstanding all potential problems concerning the descriptors of communicative activities that have been raised, the use of the common reference levels and the corresponding scales of communicative activities can have a high impact in two areas of language teaching and learning. Firstly, it can strengthen communicative aspects of language teaching

and secondly, it can increase transparency in language teaching and learning and consequently help to standardize school achievements. The scales of communicative language activities can act like learning standards. When used for assessment, they “provide a basis for criterion-referenced assessment: assessment in relation to the criterion of real world proficiency” (North 1999, 25). They can be used successfully in classroom settings if the criteria are close to the class norm. Criterion-referenced assessment is of vital importance to the ELP and it is therefore discussed in the following section.

2.3.3. Criterion-referenced assessment and the descriptors of communicative activities

By tradition, school assessment is usually norm-referenced: the learners are placed in rank order, i.e. their abilities are compared in relation to their classmates’ abilities. This type of assessment often fails to provide the teachers, learners and parents with information on what the learners actually can and cannot do in the language (Clark 1987, 12), which should not be the case of criterion-referenced assessment focusing on the individual’s abilities in relation to a specific criterion. Criterion-referenced assessment is often compared to a high jump or to passing a driving test: everyone holding a driving licence is a driver but contrasts between various drivers’ abilities might be striking. While some of them can drive their car only on a deserted road far from heavy traffic, the others drive skilfully, smoothly and safely on a variety of roads. Criterion-referencing is yes-or-no assessment or pass-or-fail assessment. We either reach the criterion or we do not, irrespective of the other learners. This type of assessment is reliable under the condition that the criteria are clearly defined because their loose definition could worsen the teachers’ task and make it more subjective: the teachers would lack any element or norm to stand by their assessment as Slavík (1999, 40) warns.

When considering the scales of communicative activities with the help of McNamara’s metaphor (2000, 38, 39), we can see the scale as a ladder with six rungs identifying six main “different levels of achievement” and we can focus on each rung of the ladder and see it as “a hurdle or cut-off-point” “requiring a ‘yes/no’ decision (‘enough/not enough’) for that level”. Learners can proceed on the ladder at their own pace and they are not excluded from the process when they cannot clear a particular hurdle. The process thus requires criterion-referenced assessment rather than norm-referenced one, i.e. the learners strive “for a ‘personal best’

rather than against other learners” (McNamara 2000, 64). Their individual performance is assessed against a specific criterion described in the scale rather than against the description of the performance of other learners. Conversely, criterion or objective facility might be considered, i.e. an appropriate level of the criterion/objective, which should be neither too difficult nor too easy for individual learners. Moderate difficulty is argued for e.g. by Schunk (1996, 360) who also maintains that goals should not “extend into the distant future” and should not be general but specific. However, when considering the whole class objectives, Mareš and Křivohlavý (1995, 141) advise teachers to set rather minimal class objectives achievable by everybody than maximal objectives representing the highest attainment possible.

Although criterion-referenced assessment becomes desirable due to its fairness to the learners, it makes great demands on the language teachers. It is usually much easier to compare performances of individual learners than to assess a performance against a specific criterion. In addition, language use is a highly complex area. How exactly should the learners’ proficiency be judged? When can the teachers assert that the criterion has been met? In respect of the difficulty to set cut-off points North (1996, 434) cites Wright and Grosse: “No measuring system can decide for us at what point ‘short’ becomes ‘tall’”.

As for assessment of a global response mode such as an interview, Savignon (1997, 227) explains that either discrete or global rating can be used. While discrete rating focuses on the assessment of “distinct linguistic features”, global rating combines “features, such as effectiveness, appropriateness, coherence, comprehensibility, fluency, and so on” (Savignon 1997, 227). Similarly, two different assessment strategies can be distinguished (Pollitt 1991, in Pollitt & Murray 1996, 75): a) counting and b) judging. An analogy can be made between a) counting and a high jump competition when the tasks are ordered by difficulty, regardless of their performance and b) judging and competitive ice dancing when the quality of the performance is important. Criterion-referencing applying the scales of communicative language activities is difficult because it is complex. It should use the global rating, assessing thus the learner’s intelligibility, comprehensibility, fluency, etc. relevant to the particular descriptor, which are inevitably subjective features. Moreover, as the learner’s use of the language reflects his/her communicative language competence, such assessment could bear a resemblance to the counting strategy - the learner’s achievement of a higher level of language proficiency.

To achieve objectivity of criterion-referenced assessment might appear a formidable and daunting task. Teachers appear to focus on the quality of the learners' language (cf. North 1994, 7) and they perceive different aspects in the learners' performances and assess them according to their internalized scales. In this respect, McNamara (1996, 123) points at the different levels of leniency or harshness of individual teachers and maintains that there is a "rater-item interaction", i.e. a constant harsher approach of some raters to individual aspects of language use such as intelligibility, fluency and accuracy. From this perspective, the use of the scales of communicative activities can cause problems because their purpose is different, they are mainly user-oriented (and constructor-oriented), not assessor-oriented and diagnosis-oriented scales (cf. CEF 2001, 37-39) and they do not specify how well the specific activities should be done.

To increase the validity and reliability of the descriptors, their authors tried to be precise about their phrasing and they tried to meet the requirement of performance objectives (cf. Nunan 1988a, 64) sometimes called behavioural or instructional objectives (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992, 34). Thus besides a behavioural component, which is sometimes also called a performance or a learning goal or sometimes a task (North 1994), the descriptors very often enumerate specific conditions (however specific standards or criteria, called qualities by North 1994 are not stated, cf. assessor-oriented and diagnosis-oriented scales mentioned above). Common Framework illustrative descriptors are thus formulated in the following way (due to the focus of the present study only the descriptors for levels relevant to young learners, i.e. A1, A2 and B1 are considered here): e.g. B1 listening – understanding conversation between native speakers - "Can generally follow the main points of extended discussion around him/her, provided speech is clearly articulated in standard dialect" and B1 writing – creative writing - "Can write straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest"). The conditions of the tasks in listening, reading and writing are summarized aptly and usefully for each reference level in the DIALANG Project of the European Commission in the boxes "Conditions and limitations" and the boxes "What types of text I understand/I can write" and "What I understand/I can write" (CEF 2001, Appendix C, p. 238-243).

Though Swiss ELP self-assessment checklists of communicative activities are less detailed than the relevant CEF illustrative descriptors, the descriptions of the conditions of the tasks are common to them.

Such statements permitted the descriptors to avoid negative phrasing of what the learners cannot do in the language (cf. 2.3.2). Level A1 states the conditions and general expressions relating to the types of text to be processed as follows: e.g. “someone speaks very slowly”, “articulates carefully, with long pauses”, “articulated ... clearly”, “short, simple directions”, “the most important orders”, “basic expressions”, “simple questions, phrases, purchases, postcard”, “I can ask very simply”, “areas of immediate need”, “very familiar topics”, “encountered in everyday life” and “in everyday situations”. Of 30 descriptors for this level these expressions appear in 18 of them ($f = 60\%$); the words “simple” or “simply” are the most common, occurring in 12 descriptors – $f = 40.0\%$. In addition to the above-mentioned expressions, the following are used in level A2: “what is said ... directly to me”, “if the speaker can take the trouble”, “when the visual supports the commentary”, “clearly structured and illustrated”, “predictable everyday matters”, “in ... everyday conversation”, “expressions related to areas of most immediate priority”, “single expressions”, “in which numbers and names play an important role”, “very basic personal and family information”, “... briefly introduce myself”, “the main point”, “the essential information” and “important information” (words limiting the task appear in 32 of 47 descriptors, $f = 68.08\%$, the words “simple” or “simply” in 21 of them – $f = 44.68\%$). The higher proficiency described in level B1 is reflected e.g. in the following conditions and limitations: “in standard dialect”, “simpler recorded material”, “delivered relatively slowly and clearly”, “familiar topics” and “detailed directions”. For comparison, of 42 descriptors in this level the word “simple” appears in 10 of them – $f = 23.81\%$, otherwise expressions like “... understand the main points”, “the overall meaning”, “the most important episodes”, “on most topics pertinent to my everyday life” and “within my field of interest” are quite typical.

The above-mentioned conditions and general types of text to be processed refer to a) the speed of speech, its articulation, direct delivery (sometimes also to the other speakers’ willingness to help) and predictability, b) the length and predictability of a text (e.g. presence of pictures), c) the complexity, structure and familiarity of both received and produced speech and text, d) the range and frequency of occurrence of lexis and simplicity of grammatical structures and e) the complexity and frequency of occurrence of the task. As for receptive skills, the conditions thus relate both to schematic knowledge (top-down processing) and systemic knowledge (bottom-up processing) and context.

Though the enquiry of particular conditions appears instructive, it does not provide us with all the necessary information. As can be seen above, the number of the descriptors lacking specific conditions is relatively high. Such descriptors can often be found in spoken interaction and spoken production. Instead of stating conditions, they usually enumerate examples: e.g. A1 - "I can indicate time by such phrases as "next week", "last Friday", "in November", "three o'clock", or "I can give personal information (address, telephone number, nationality, age, family, and hobbies)". Thus, to develop descriptors of communicative activities relevant to the particular lowest levels of language proficiency, activities adequate for those levels were selected. The components of communicative language competences did not have to be the point of departure: it was the learners' needs that appear to have been given priority. Very basic situations in which the learners need to comprehend and express themselves were analyzed and combined with accessible elements of communicative language competence. This approach then permitted such phrasing of descriptors that lack both the conditions of the task and appropriate examples (e.g. A1 "I can handle numbers, quantities, cost and time").

The authors of the descriptors highlight that ambiguous expressions like "much", "many", "several" etc. were avoided (e.g. CEF 2001, 206). Nevertheless, can expressions "simple" and "short" be considered precise? And will the language proficiency of the descriptors such as "I can describe where I live" (existing both in A1 and A2 spoken production) or "I can describe my educational background, my present and most recent job" (A2 spoken production) be transparent to the teachers when standing alone? North and Schneider (1998, 243) maintain that "however good descriptors are ..., they are still subject to interpretation by raters in relation to groups of learners" and they believe that several factors can help to implement the descriptors effectively: experience, comparison with textbook levels, teacher training using "standardised performance samples", information based on tests and assessors' behaviour analysis. Teachers' training and collaborative work on assessment are also called for by Takala (2002), distinguishing three stages of such a system: "training, rating and feedback". Successful progress in this direction has been achieved mainly thanks to the University of Cambridge, ESOL Examinations that released in 2004 the Sample Levels Video showing sample interviews of candidates from level A2 to level C2. The video is accompanied by a booklet produced by Cambridge ESOL Main Suite and CELS Speaking Documentation (2004), which offers basic information

about the candidates and their performances. The complete set fully corresponds with the above-mentioned ideas put forward by North and Schneider (1998) and Takala (2002). Another helpful aid is the manual called *Relating Language Examinations to the CEF* (Preliminary Pilot Version, 2003, see 2.3.2), which provides valuable information and activities that could be used both by exam providers and by teacher trainers. All these materials appear to be very promising for teacher education.

The ELP looks at the assessment of learners' results in a complex way and introduces significant innovation that might help teachers to receive feedback on their work. This innovation is learner's self-assessment. However, learners are non-experts and their self-assessment should be seen mainly as an instrument fulfilling the pedagogical function of the ELP and increasing considerably learner's motivation. As has already been mentioned, this study considers it to be one of two key elements of the ELP. While the first element, descriptors of communicative language activities, were discussed in the previous sections, self-assessment is the focus of the following one.

2.4. Learner self-assessment

Self-assessment is generally viewed as an alternative assessment or as an alternative in assessment (Brown & Hudson 1998, McNamara 2000). It is one of the personal dispositions affecting learning (Birenbaum 1996), a metacognitive strategy (Hedge 2000, 94) that has major significance for autonomous language learning and that enables learners "to monitor their progress and relate learning to individual needs" (Harris 1997, 12). Learners' involvement in assessment develops skills that are of crucial importance in reflective teaching and learning (Little 1999, 4). Self-assessment is inseparably connected with reflection: reflection is a substantial by-product but also a prerequisite of self-assessment. The level of learners' reflective skills differs: Ridley (1997) speaks about reflective and non-reflective learners, Huttunen about mechanical, pragmatic and emancipatory reflection (in Little, Ridley & Ushioda, 2002). Concerning individual reflection and individual needs, self-assessment itself should be individualized, "tailored to correspond to the cognitive and metalinguistic maturity of the learners" (Genesee & Hamayan 1994, 219). To emphasize the duration of the process, a distinction is made between self-monitoring and self-assessment (Dickinson 1992, 32). While self-monitoring happens during a performance during short periods of time, self-assessment is

a more inclusive concept, a process going on after the performance but often dependent on self-monitoring (Dickinson 1992).

The CEF sees self-assessment as “a tool for motivation and awareness raising: helping learners to appreciate their strengths, recognize their weaknesses and orient their learning more effectively” (2001, 192). In relation to the ELP, Little (1999, 2) believes that the ELP will be implemented and will sustain itself only under the condition that self-assessment becomes a key component of language learning, interacting with assessments made by others.

In accordance with the CEF, the central aim of self-assessment in foreign language teaching and learning and the central aim of ELP pedagogy is, first, to involve learners deeply in the process of learning and, second, to make learners responsible for their own learning, i.e. to help them to become autonomous. The position of self-assessment in the long process towards learner autonomy is unique and irreplaceable. Dickinson (1992, 32) makes a radical statement: he sees the development of learners’ impartial judgement of their language proficiency as the teacher’s responsibility. Learners should be prepared for independent learning, which, in the case of language learning, is an indispensable undertaking.

Effective training in learner autonomy in a school setting depends on a range of factors, which include a) the specific context, b) the teacher’s willingness “to give up certain aspects of authority”, to accept the benefits of learners’ responsibilities and at the same time to guide learners in the curriculum, and, c) last but not least, the learners’ willingness “to accept some measure of responsibility” (Clark 1987, 78-79). In addition, effective training in learner autonomy also presupposes the teacher’s willingness to accept learners’ wrong decisions and ineffective actions as inevitable steps towards a final positive outcome (Lantolf 2000, 6).

Within this context, Clark (1987, 79) explains the progressivists’ concept of classroom negotiation, divided, according to its intensity, into three levels: 1) a weak level - the teacher explicitly informs learners about the objectives and activities and thus increases their involvement, 2) an intermediate level - the teacher informs the learners about the basic content and negotiates the planning of the procedure and of suitable activities with the learners, and 3) a strong level - all objectives and activities are negotiated. Clark maintains that the strong level of negotiation is extremely rare and the whole process of negotiation “still rather untried in school foreign language learning” (1987, 80). Examples of the intermediate and strong level of negotiation can be found e.g. in

Little (1991), Dam (1995), Little and Perclová (2001) and Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002). Huttunen (2002, 206-207) calls classes in which this type of negotiation is conducted emancipatory and explains that “meaning-oriented learning environments” are created in them, giving meaning to both the teacher’s and learners’ work.

In connection with the strong level of negotiation, Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002) define learner autonomy as “a capacity for reflective self-management” and they argue that it should not be understood as “an optional extra” but as “an essential characteristic of all truly successful learners”, actively supported by teachers who themselves became autonomous. The authors explain that learner autonomy develops through social interaction with others under the teacher’s guidance, and thus, paradoxically, in order to become autonomous, learners undergo a stage of interdependence on the teacher (and also on other learners). Social interaction helps learners to develop their metacognitive capacity and, consequently, the larger capacity improves learners’ involvement in social interaction. During the lengthy, complex process of becoming autonomous (which the authors characterize as never-ending), “the principle of learner empowerment” and “the principle of learner reflection” are applied; i.e. learners are encouraged by the teacher to accept responsibility for their work and to learn to reflect on their learning. The authors believe that the two principles are unthinkable without the third that is “the principle of appropriate target language use”.

When closely studying effective learner self-assessment carried out in a school setting, four characteristic features of self-assessment emerge: complementary, permeable, summative and formative, and planning features. Firstly, concerning the complementary features, self-assessment does not replace the teacher’s assessment, but it complements it, enriches it and better informs it, it helps to provide “a more balanced picture of a learner’s linguistic and communicative skills” (Tudor 1996, 165). The complementary aspect of self-assessment in overall assessment can thus be viewed from two perspectives: as another way of assessing the learner’s proficiency and progress and as a way of enhancing the teacher’s assessment. By monitoring their own performance, learners are better able to understand and express their needs and the articulated needs can as a consequence further modify and individualize teaching. Self-assessment can therefore increase the effectiveness of both learning and teaching. In this respect, Ushioda (1996, 57) argues persuasively for learner motivation and autonomy: instead of providing learners with the teacher’s thoughts, qualitative feedback on positive achievement should

guide learners to reflect on their achievement, because such reflection results in beliefs with “a much surer foundation”. The author offers teachers practical advice: begin the dialogue with learners with praise, and then, rather than making comments, proceed with questions about the challenges of the task and their responses to them and with questions about the experience and feelings relating to their performance.

Unlike formal assessment, learners’ self-assessment yields encouraging results in “situations in which candidates have nothing to gain by being less than truthful” (LeBlanc & Painchaud 1985, 686). On the contrary, situations in which learners should make a summative judgement can be awkward because they might prejudice the way their achievements are viewed. Genesee and Hamayan (1994, 219) emphasize that an important question to be considered is “who will use the results of assessment and how they will be used”. Some authors are even more radical, arguing against a connection of self-assessment with formal settings “in a context where marks have an intrinsic value in themselves and there is competition between students” (Harris & McCann 1994, 65).

The effective use of self-assessment aiming at learner autonomy has the second feature mentioned above, which is the feature of permeability. Self-assessment happens continuously and regularly, pervading the whole process of teaching and learning. Bearing in mind this perspective, the third characteristic of self-assessment, its summative and formative features, follows. Self-assessment is not reduced to a “final product”, but it focuses both on the product and process of learning. According to Little (1999, 5), summative assessment is successful on condition that formative assessment is practised. Formative assessment should play a central role in the learning process and should become “a habit of mind” (Little 1999, 5), because it can help to overcome the fundamental drawback of school assessment, which often does not provide feedback for learning. Harris and McCann (1994, 2) illustrate this drawback through a metaphor: there is a “generalised feeling of a divorce between learning and teaching on the one hand, and assessment on the other”. To overcome this problem and consequently to facilitate learner’s personal growth, Kohonen (1992a, 76) advises teachers to reflect on their answers to a series of questions. One cluster focuses on feedback: “Do (... learners) receive information on the development of their competence? Is the information descriptive of the progress (rather than evaluative)?”

The fourth feature of self-assessment is planning. Self-assessment permeating through the whole process of learning comprises a future aspect, an enquiry of the results due-to-be-obtained and, apart from

reflection on assessment, it includes reflection on planning and monitoring. These stages form a circle.

As for specific self-assessment activities, their classifications vary from general and continuous self-assessment (Oskarsson 1984) to global and task-based self-assessment (Tudor 1996). Self-assessment activities have evolved immensely over the last two decades from self-administered discrete-point tests, through ratings, questionnaires and surveys, to tests created by learners on their own and peer-assessment of essays, as well as to criteria for assessment, arising from a discussion between the teacher and the learners.

The self-assessment concept in language teaching and learning is relatively new, although it has been the object of the Council of Europe's attention and initiative for more than two decades (Oskarsson's illuminating study done for the Council of Europe was published in 1978). LeBlanc and Painchaud (1985) state explicitly: "Although self-assessment has been prevalent for a number of years in such fields as psychology, sociology, business and so on, its use in second language teaching/learning has remained rather rare." Its novelty is present implicitly in the ambiguity of the concept. For example, Blue (1988) considers the feasibility of the teacher's formal assessment being replaced by learners' self-assessment, which would consequently free teachers from the tiresome task of assessment. The feature of permeability of self-assessment has begun to expand very recently and is not common as can be seen e.g. in Brown and Hudson (1998). They distinguish three basic types in a classification of alternative language assessment: selected-response, constructed-response and personal-response. Though the two first categories are language task oriented, the third is learner oriented. Self-assessment is included in the categorization as a personal-response assessment, along with conference, portfolio and peer-assessment, as if it was a special category of language tasks and as if it could not be used in selected-response and constructed-response tests. The relative novelty of the formative facet of self-assessment might be documented by the high number of studies investigating the accuracy of learners' self-assessment, i.e. the correlation between learners' self-assessment and formal assessment (see the survey by Blanche & Merino 1989), in comparison with the few studies investigating the effects of learners' self-assessment. The target situation analysis, i.e. the planning function of self-assessment, is relatively new, too. For example, Oskarsson (1984) recognizes global and continuous self-assessment in his informative survey of research, but both types deal either with past or present learner language proficiency. Of fifteen studies described in

the survey, only one contains a reference to possible future projections: a commentary on an Austrian project by Heindler, 1980.

2.4.1. Coping with self-assessment in language learning

In language learning self-assessment is sometimes viewed as exceptionally difficult due to its content (e.g., LeBlanc & Painchaud 1985, 674). When compared with tasks and responses in subjects like maths, history or geography (closed tasks in particular), language tasks appear to be more complex and multifaceted, and, consequently, more difficult to judge. The range of potential judging criteria is vast, including accuracy and fluency, linguistic competence (lexical, grammatical, phonological etc.) and sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence (see 2.3.1). Each category might be further subdivided, e.g. lexical competence into appropriate vocabulary items, correct use of specific vocabulary items, richness of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, etc. Viewing self-assessment from the complexity of the language perspective and from the assessment criteria perspective, it becomes evident why learners enjoyed and appreciated the “test battery” designed by von Elek’s project (see Oskarsson 1984). The tests selected specific items and became in fact a battery of closed-tasks (e.g. “Do you understand the underlined word?”, “Can you repeat the sentence?”, “Can you produce correct sentences using these chains of words?”).

To assist learners in the activity, Tudor (1996, 191, 192) recommends a “selective focusing” strategy which can reduce learners’ discouragement, but he himself is aware of its difficulty as well as of the fact that some teachers and learners might resist it. Dickinson (1992, 32) suggests “judging one’s performance against some explicit or implicit standard”. However, what is the standard? Trim (1980, ix) recommends providing learners “with appropriate models” which might be a very good approach but not generally feasible. Other authors recommend providing learners with a measuring standard such as rating scales and checklists. They usually base their scales on the work of Oskarsson (1984), who presents five different types of scales, starting from a very general one and moving on to the more specific ones. The general scale uses two global extreme statements, e.g. “I write English without any difficulty at all” and “I cannot write English at all”, accompanied by a ten-point scale. The more specific scales proceed from a description of a specific situation to specific declarative statements introduced by a situation (e.g. meeting a foreigner), i.e. to statements like “I can tell him about things that might

interest a tourist in my home region”. The statements form checklists. The final scale employs declarative statements complemented by samples of appropriate structures (e.g. “I can express satisfaction. *This is very good. This is just what I want.*”). While the former general scale embraces the whole range of language proficiency, the latter ones are designed for the Threshold Level.

Though based on teaching and learning experience and/or research, language scales are sometimes viewed with certain reservations. Tudor (1996) objects to the specific characteristics of all the scales: they provide their user with a general level of language proficiency (some teachers do not recognize a clear cut-off point when using them, cf. North 1996, 434, in 2.3.3) and they lack a specification of both the reasons for the learner’s failure and the procedure that the learner has to undergo. The author is aware of the expert-driven nature of the scales and points out that they prevent learners from using their own initiatives by setting aside the question of learners’ “*own insights into their communicative agendas*” and thus, in his view, the scales in fact limit autonomy. Moreover, their use might lead to learner discouragement, “to a stock-taking of deficiencies and inadequacies”. Good scales should respect individual needs and should encourage the “setting of attainable objectives”.

The importance of a good quality rating scale is obvious: it can influence the quality of learners’ self-assessment, as LeBlanc and Painchaud empirically proved (LeBlanc & Painchaud 1985). In their research project involving students entering university, the authors found a strong correlation between learners’ judgement and scales which related to the learners’ situations as potential second-language users (e.g. “I would be able to *read and understand* the following in French when encountered on campus: written instructions for the use of various equipment (language lab, photocopier, projector, etc.)”). According to the researchers, the high correlation resulted from the scale corresponding with students’ interest and experience (the correlation reached levels of 0.80 and 0.82). In addition to this, the authors highlight another important quality of rating scales: the predictive value of descriptors that distinguish the learner’s level of proficiency.

Concerning good quality measuring standards, Little (1999, 2) argues for the CEF descriptors of communicative activities and maintains that with the help of the descriptor checklists even learners in the early stages of language learning are able to assess what they can communicate and at what level of proficiency they can do it. As for implementing the self-assessment checklists in classroom work, Kohonen (2001) cautions

against applying them too quickly without building a solid foundation for self-assessment. Foreign language learning self-assessment is a formidable task for which learners lack expert knowledge. Kohonen points out that the learners' personal beliefs about language learning should be made explicit at first and advises beginning "with the students themselves as learners in general and as language learners in particular" (2001, 23). He identifies an ability to self-assess as one of the learner's properties that often remain invisible, forming an "invisible curriculum" (2001, 11) and urges making language learning more explicit.

Apart from the internal difficulty of language self-assessment tasks and learners' beliefs and expectations, learners' judgement criteria might be influenced by extraneous factors: e.g. "parental expectations, teachers' judgements, peer group pressure" (Fok, in Oskarsson 1984). Difficulties are thus caused by the sociocultural context, predisposing learners to view self-assessment as an irritating activity that replaces one of the teacher's responsibilities. Learners' strong objections to self-assessment can then result in their insistence on the teacher's feedback; this is not unusual in Oskarsson's view (Oskarsson 1984).

Due to the difficulty of self-assessment in language learning, learner training in self-assessment is necessary and sometimes even the need for teacher education is emphasized (e.g. Oskarsson 1984, Blanche & Merino 1989). Bearing in mind the development of autonomy in social interaction with others, learner training includes peer-assessment, which is an activity highly conducive to self-assessment, because a) peer-assessment involves learners in an activity relevant to their own assessment, and b) it relieves learners of stress and makes identifying errors and problems easier.

Interestingly, when discussing the issue of learner training, the authors usually focus only on adults, as they are in their opinion the only learners who can accomplish the task (LeBlanc & Painchaud 1985, 675). The focus is justified explicitly by LeBlanc and Painchaud (1985, 675): adult learners are able to compare their expectations and needs with classroom reality, and they are able to realize the complexity of real-life communicative functions owing to their experience with communication in their native language. Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002) and Harris and McCann (1994) highlight the benefits of an initial introduction of self-assessment and recommend its use from the very beginning of a course or class. Harris and McCann (1994, 68,69) consider it a unique opportunity to look both back at previous learning experience and, first and foremost, forward at new objectives. Learners can think about the whole-year objectives and develop their assessing abilities.

As for various activities, Harris and McCann (1994) maintain that written production is difficult for learners to assess. Harris (1997, 16) therefore suggests outlining clear criteria for each piece of writing, discussing them in class and using them when producing a draft and assessing the final product. He also recommends that learners make a list of common mistakes and use it as a checklist. Similarly, Harris and McCann (1994) consider learners' assessment of their own speaking skills difficult. They advise using performance activities (e.g. role-play or simulation) and Harris (1997,16) argues for peer-assessment and for recording role-plays. Tudor (1996) suggests task-based self-assessment, i.e. mainly a) projection activities, i.e. generating situations in which the target language might be used, and defining and analyzing potential problems that might occur in these situations, and b) simulation activities which reflect real-life target language encounters. However, the latter category could of course include writing and/or speaking activities that Harris and McCann (1994) found difficult to assess.

2.4.2. Reliability of learners' self-assessment in language learning

The ability to self-assess objectively and to make an accurate judgement was the focal point of early studies on self-assessment in language learning. Relevant literature compared learners' self-assessment with their performance in formal tests and studied the problems of the validity and reliability of self-assessment. A comprehensive survey of 21 studies, dealing among other problems with this issue, was written by Blanche and Merino (1989) who even asserted that "self-assessment accuracy is a condition of learner autonomy" (1989, 314). Concerning the reliability of learner self-assessment, the survey provides rather contradictory results. However, in general, though some researchers did not find a significant relationship between learners' self-assessment and their performance, the overall results are optimistic: the degree of accuracy of learners' judgement was fairly high. The authors conclude that learners found their communicative skills easier to assess than their mastery of grammar. Oskarsson (1984, 32) makes the same conclusion, but he also adds pronunciation to the problematic area. Inconsistencies appeared in assessing different communicative activities (a distinction was usually made between receptive and productive activities). Interestingly, Bachman and Palmer (cited in Bachman 1990, 148) found that learners preferred questions about the difficulty of language use to questions

about their achievements as they perceived such tasks to be better indicators of their abilities. The issue of content validity in relation to tests constructed by learners is touched upon by Dickinson (1987, 149): content validity is guaranteed to the extent that constructed tests relate to common learning material and tasks.

A clear-cut explanation of the orientation of the studies focusing on the reliability of learner self-assessment is provided by Tudor (1996, 164): learners lacking language and evaluation expertise are expected to succeed in a complex task that is difficult for experts (cf. Kohonen 2001, in 2.4.1). An inevitable question thus must be raised: Can they succeed?

Although children are supposedly able to form a valid judgement of their academic competence around the age of 9 or 10 (Assor & Connell 1992), discrepancies between self-assessment and actual competence occur at any age, thus threatening the reliability of self-assessment. When examining this issue, researchers often explore affective factors, as these “may systematically bias the self-assessment of language proficiency” (MacIntyre, Noels & Clément 1997, 266). Several authors have investigated the problem of learners overestimating and underestimating themselves (cf. Blanche & Merino 1989). In long-term psychological research of school learners, Blatchford (1997, 179) concluded that there is a “decline in self ratings with age”. Learners’ assessment by the age of 11 was more modest than when they were 7 and the same pattern was true at the age of 16. The reasons for overestimating and underestimating are contradictory: while some psychologists affirm that anxiety relates to overestimating, others relate it to underestimating. The same contradictory findings apply to self-confidence (Blatchford 1997). Blanche and Merino (1989) summarized the findings of surveyed linguistic studies: good-achievers appeared to underestimate their abilities, while poor-achievers tended to overestimate them.

Also paying attention to affective factors, MacIntyre, Noels and Clément (1997) examined the correlation between actual competence, perceived competence and language anxiety. They suggest that there is a negative correlation between anxiety and both types of competence: learners with high anxiety underestimate their abilities, while learners with low anxiety overestimate them. Underestimation is connected with “self-derogation”, a personal defence against failure, and overestimation with “self-enhancement”, a need to feel personal satisfaction. Self-enhancement and overestimation are typical for beginners in language learning: they help to provide learners with “the impetus to invest the extra effort needed to confront a challenging obstacle” (1997, 269). This

bias did not appear in reading. The authors explain this by the fact that it is the least threatening and least embarrassing ego-involving language task. Referring to Bandura (1986,1988), the authors also explain that learners with high expectations will make more of an effort and thus will be more likely to succeed. Viewing teaching from the perspective of the above-mentioned findings, the importance of teacher's praise and encouragement is self-evident.

Though it has generated considerable interest, the reliability of learner self-assessment is not vital in ELP pedagogy. Concerning this issue in general, Tudor (1996, 164) points out that "there is (...) an understandable tension between the desirability in educational and motivational terms of involving learners in assessment, and questions about the objective reliability of their self-assessments". As highlighted at the beginning of this section, the issue of involving learners and helping them to become autonomous is key to ELP pedagogy. The approach of ELP pedagogy to self-assessment thus coincides with the origins of self-assessment, i.e. with the humanistic movement in language teaching. It also coincides with the philosophy of learner-centeredness (cf. 2.2) in which an autonomous learner is actively involved in the process of learning languages.

2.5. ELP pedagogy as theoretical principle

The pedagogy underpinning the ELP was to a large extent discussed in the previous sections (mainly 1.1, 2.2, 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.4) and thus this section summarizes the facts, builds on them and connects them to the issue of learner motivation, which is one of the desired effects of the ELP.

ELP pedagogy in primary and lower-secondary schools could be seen as a thoughtful process of foreign language teaching and learning methodology facilitating the learner's individual and gradual achievement of widely recognized and internationally transparent objectives focusing on real-life language use. Being actively involved in this process, the learners feel a sense of achievement and their autonomy increases. An inseparable part of the process is learners' positive encouragement to pause to reflect on learning and to record and plan its progress, and learners' encouragement to develop their intercultural awareness and skills. The process cannot take place without classroom interaction both between the teacher and the learners and between the learners themselves.

The ELP teaching and learning approach evaluated from the perspective of research findings sounds very promising. The ELP offers a guide, a pre-planned curriculum (cf. 2.3.1), which is in harmony with research results on effective teaching (Blum, in Richards 1998, 38). The focus on real-life communicative activities in the language proficiency scales is strong and evident, thus arousing hope that learners could attach a great value to the accomplishment of the specific tasks described in the activities and they could become highly motivated (cf. Williams & Burden 1997, 125). The descriptors can hardly be totally separated from language teaching methodology and seen only as a curriculum content. They express clear assumptions about communicative language teaching and learning and their overlapping with appropriate tasks and activities is an essential ELP feature. (This overlapping can however bring forth conflicts when the teachers' beliefs about language teaching differ.)

The principal characteristics of ELP pedagogy that can be exercised in a primary and lower-secondary school context are summarized in the following table using Breen's (2001) four elements of a language curriculum as an instrument for their classification.

TABLE 4. The key features of ELP pedagogy in a school context

Aims	To provide learners with tangible positive learning evidence by encouraging them to document their personal learning achievements
	To prepare learners for a communicative use of the language(s) in real-life contexts
	To provide learners with graded attainable objectives
	To facilitate the learning process by encouraging learners to plan, monitor and assess their learning
	To promote learners' self-awareness and self-reflection
	To promote learners' intercultural awareness, skills and know-how
	To recognize learners' informal study outside the classroom
	To recognize learners' partial competences in communicative activities
	To encourage learners a) to study more languages and b) to pursue this study after leaving the school
	To empower learners (Pollari 1996), (Little, Ridley & Ushioda 2002)
To provide learners with a guide for their independent study	

TABLE 4. continues on the following page

TABLE 4. continued from the previous page

Content	Meaningful use of the language, communicative language learning activities
	Activities developing learners' communicative strategies
	Activities developing learners' intercultural awareness, skills and know-how
Methodology	A combination of an experiential view of learning (language use is a goal and a means of learning) with learner's affective involvement (Tudor 2001, 99)
	Integration of planning, reflection and assessment into teaching and learning
	Recognition of each language learner's uniqueness
	Satisfaction of learners' needs for achievement
	Encouragement of learners to choose their own personal objectives
	Encouragement of learners to accept responsibility for their own learning and to develop their autonomy
	Promotion of classroom interaction
	Promotion of learners' collaborative work
	Use of authentic materials
Evaluation	Making the results of language learning explicit
	Making the results of language learning transparent
	Involving learners in assessment
	Using criterion-referenced assessment
	Developing learners' ability to assess their learning progress
	Standardizing school achievements

A number of features listed in Table 4 are recognized in research on foreign language learning motivation as factors increasing motivation. From the learner's point of view they are as follows: "task motivation" (Julkunen 1989, 43), "perceived value of the activity" (Williams & Burden 1997, 125), setting personal goals (Williams & Burden (1997, 134), "sense of agency", "perception of personal control" and learner autonomy (Williams & Burden 1997, 128, Dörnyei 2001, 29), "cooperative learning experiences" (Julkunen 1989, 70), "need for achievement" (Dörnyei 2001, 18) and self-assessment (Schunk 1996, 377). The following features focus on the teacher's motivational strategies: "setting appropriate goals" (Williams & Burden (1997, 131), making objectives clear and understandable to the learners (Williams & Burden (1997, 133), explanation of "the purpose and

the utility of a task” (Dörnyei 2001, 79, Williams & Burden 1997, 133), “creating learner autonomy” (Dörnyei 2001, 29), “providing experiences of success” (Dörnyei 2001, 89), promoting learners’ collaboration with classmates (Julkunen 1989) and constructive feedback in which the learners obtain useful information on what they should improve and how they should do it (Williams & Burden 1997, 135). Some of these features naturally assume that classroom interaction takes place. As can be seen, the list of motivational factors is long and shows beyond doubt the considerable motivational potential of the ELP.

2.6. ELP pedagogy as pedagogical reality

However outstanding the qualities of the ELP are, just as with all language teaching materials, the ELP can appear extremely effective to some teachers or to other experts but can be evaluated critically by others. The ELP itself cannot guarantee its effective use. In this respect, Widdowson (1990, 129), referring to syllabus and methodology, explains that what happens in the classroom is “a consequence of how the syllabus is methodologically mediated by the teacher”. When teachers do not understand an innovation clearly, the innovation can remain “in the region of wishful thinking and pious hope”. Similarly, Tudor (2001, 29) distinguishes the difference between methodology as theoretical principle and methodology as pedagogical reality and refers to Nunan who uses similar terms; curriculum “as a statement of intent” and curriculum “as reality” (in Tudor 2001, 29). The following figure summarizing the concept offers a schematic representation of Tudor’s view. An interaction between the specific factors is emphasized, which is an essential point.

As shown in the figure, original theoretical intent is influenced by the context in which the project takes place and this context comprises pragmatic and mental factors. While pragmatic factors were briefly described in the first chapter of the present study (1.2 and 1.3), mental factors, particularly beliefs and attitudes will be discussed in detail in the chapter which follows.

Having both the innovation features and situation analysis in mind, Richards (2001, 103-104) enumerates “adoption factors” that could influence the implementation of a new project or curriculum. They are as follows: advantages of the innovation, its compatibility with the existing context, its complication, comprehensibility and practicality for teachers, its clear presentation to teachers and its piloting.

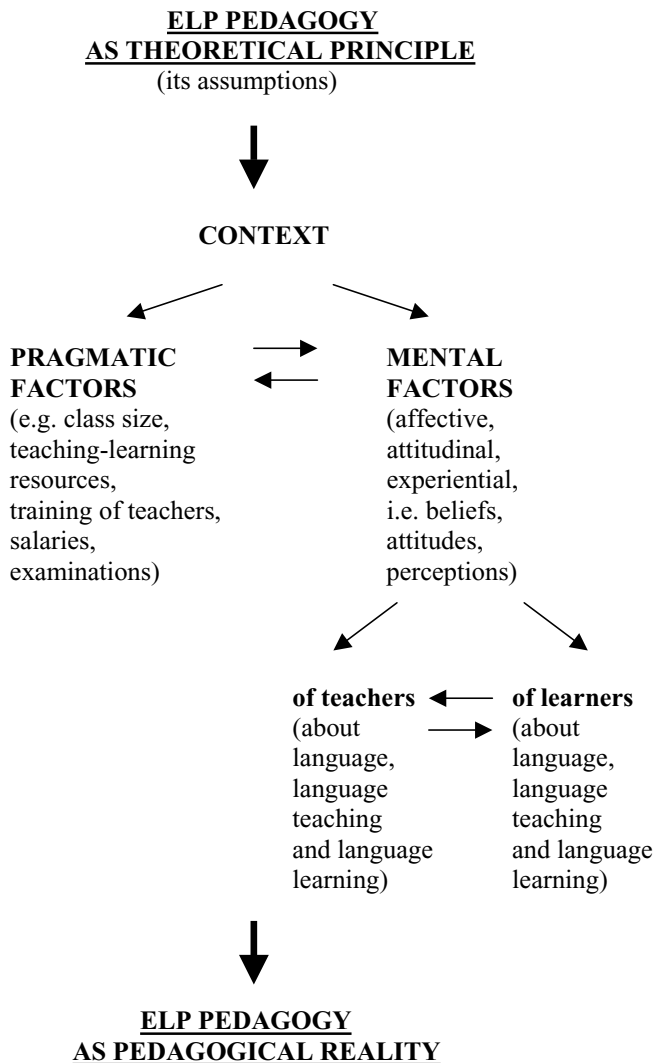


Figure 2. ELP pedagogy – theoretical principle and pedagogical reality (based on Tudor 2001)

The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe was well aware of the fact that difficulties with project implementation could be encountered and it was also fully aware of the importance of piloting such a large-scale project. It therefore initiated and organized a pilot project on an international level. The main facts about it are given in the following section.

2.7. ELP pilot scheme and ELP implementation

The pilot scheme took place in 15 European countries, member states of the Council of Europe, and three non-governmental organizations in the period 1998 to 2000. The countries and organizations involved in it were as follows: Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Russia, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, Sweden, CERCLES (The European Association of Language Centres in Higher Education), EAQUALS (The European Association for Quality Language Services) and ELC (The European Language Council). Different designs of the European Language Portfolio were developed and piloted within the scheme and different groups of learners were involved in it, depending on the needs and goals of individual states and organizations. The pedagogical function of the ELP got priority. Arising from the project's positive results, the ELP was in 2000 officially recommended by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe for implementation in individual member states. One of the priorities determined at the conference in the joint resolution was ELP teacher education. In the same year, the Education Committee of the Council of Europe established the European Validation Committee, authorized to evaluate and approve ELP developed models.

The pilot phase was monitored operationally in all countries and institutions involved. The overall results were positive (three questionnaires were conducted; the last was submitted by 5370 learners and 370 teachers). The Final Report of the project enumerates four ELP features that were widely appreciated: a) the European dimension, b) the development of learners' self-assessment, c) the development of learners' autonomy and d) recognition of informal education (Schärer 2000, 10). However, as the General Rapporteur of the project, Schärer (2000), explains, the concept of learners' self-assessment was clearly perceived as a novelty. Interestingly, 62% of teachers believed that learners were able to assess

their proficiency, but 65% of them stated that they agreed with the learners' self-assessment and, contrary to expectations, only 53% of learners "reported that the teacher agreed with their self-assessment" (Schärer 2000, 8). The teachers and learners asked for the status of the ELP to be clarified and the link between the ELP and the national curricula, the ELP and the national exams and formal assessment and self-assessment to be established (Schärer 2000, 8-9). There was a call for time to be given to the innovation and the importance of teacher education was emphasized (Schärer 2000, 10).

Based on the experience from the pilot project, several actions were agreed on and a good variety of activities has been undertaken. By the end of 2004 sixty-five ELPs had been accredited and a considerable number of ELPs have been piloted in individual Council of Europe member states. The Guide for ELP developers was written (Schneider & Lenz 2001), a data bank of suitable ELP self-assessment descriptors established (Lenz & Schneider 2003) and various templates produced, mainly for the development of new ELP models and for the Language Biography to promote learning autonomy and the development of intercultural competence (Little & Simpson 2003). In order to contribute to the idea of European mobility, a standard Language Passport for adults was made and its electronic version, developed by the Council of Europe and the European Union, was put on the Europass website. Several countries launched initiatives leading to the design of electronic ELPs. The first electronic ELP produced by EAQUALS and ALTE can be downloaded. Specific examples of situations that bring about communicative activities indicated in the descriptors were identified in the Dutch project. European Language Portfolio (ELP) Principles and Guidelines, with added explanatory notes, were designed in 2004 to maintain the quality, validity and transparency of the ELPs and to help ELP developers. The explanatory notes clarify the policy of the Council of Europe and the specific objectives of the ELP. Among the factors that are emphasized, the following are particularly relevant to this study: respect for the specific context, records of competence in different languages, the teacher's assistance with the learner's self-assessment, respect for the needs of young learners (use of a simplified self-assessment grid and of properly formulated descriptors), separation of the teacher's and learner's assessments, provision of space for the learner's reflection and encouragement of teacher education. The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe made all the above-mentioned documents and materials plus other important documents accessible on the official website

(www.coe.int/portfolio) in order to support further implementation of the ELP.

Several theoretical and research studies focused on the pedagogical function of the ELP were written. Portfolio-oriented foreign language pedagogy was addressed by Kohonen (2001), who connected it with “visibility” in language learning, (i.e. visibility of learning goals and learning itself) which helps to develop learners’ awareness of themselves, of language and of the learning process (cf. 2.4.1). Kohonen’s concept of visibility is absolutely inseparable from a continuous dialogue and cooperation between the teacher and the learners. The Finnish ELP project, promoting this concept, has been exemplary in its intensive work with language teachers. It involved a great amount of collaborative support and reflection aimed at teacher and learner personal growth. The considerable potential of portfolio work for the development of both general and communicative language competences (i.e. personal growth and language proficiency) was highlighted by Hildén (2002, 116), who underlined the need to investigate these two interrelated domains. The pedagogical function was also the focus of the Irish longitudinal Learner Autonomy Project. A detailed description of systematic work with twenty Irish teachers and their classes and the research results were given in Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002). The authors described the fundamental changes that the project had meant for some teachers, including a) breaking down major misconceptions (e.g. learner autonomy equals relinquishing all the teacher’s control), b) freeing them from textbook-bound teaching and c) understanding the beneficial effects of collaboration with learners in planning and assessment. The teachers experimented with new ideas and appreciated building on the experiences of their colleagues. They aimed to increase and consequently sustain learners’ motivation (learners appeared to connect motivation with interest), and they apparently succeeded. Nearly all the learners appreciated the introduction of learning diaries.

The pedagogical function of the ELP was also the main focus of the Czech project, which is discussed in the last section of this chapter.

2.8. The Czech ELPs for young learners

The Czech ELP for learners up to the age of 11 (Nováková, Perclová, Zbranková & Karásková 2002) and the ELP for learners aged 11 to 15 (Perclová 2001) contain only checklists of descriptors of communicative

language activities. When used as a course content (cf. 2.3.2), the descriptors provide an analytic syllabus attempting to accomplish communicative learning purposes as opposed to a synthetic syllabus accumulating parts of the language learned one by one (the structural syllabus commonly used in Czech schools is a typical synthetic syllabus, cf. 1.2.1). The ELPs emphasize the vision of language as doing things and as self-expression. The descriptors address real target competences to such an extent that young learners could perceive their importance.

The philosophy underlying the ELP emphasizes that Czech young beginners should learn a foreign language by a constant practice that aims to be as meaningful as possible. Their communicative competences develop in a variety of activities, responding to the teacher's and classmates' tasks. As regards grammar teaching, this process should be rather implicit and developing procedural knowledge than explicit and developing declarative knowledge. The learners' ability to use particular structures in "communication" gradually increases and basic interactional exchanges become automatic (e.g. "How are you?" "I'm fine, thank you. And you?"; "Can I have a cup of tea?" "Yes, please."). As for the order of specific communicative activities, "production-based learning" (Skehan 1998) is highlighted, i.e. a prime focus on speaking and on learning to speak by speaking, reflecting the needs of the society. This approach is based on Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, refusing thus Krashen's Monitor Model and Comprehensible Input Hypothesis as being insufficient and irrelevant to the Czech context.

The Czech descriptors are based on the Common Framework and the Swiss ELP but their careful selection was made to meet the needs of Czech junior learners. The original phrasing was adapted and simplified: compare e.g. A2 listening – the Swiss ELP – "I can understand phrases, words and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment) and the Czech ELP for age 11 to 15 – "I can understand basic information about people, their family, home, work and hobbies"; or B1 reading – the Swiss ELP "I can guess the meaning of single unknown words from the context thus deducing the meaning of expressions if the topic is familiar" and the Czech ELP for age 11 to 15 – "I can guess the meaning of unknown words from a familiar context". A few original descriptors suiting the Czech educational domain are added to the ELP for younger learners up to the age of 11 (e.g. A1 reading – "I can understand simple instructions in a textbook", A1 spoken interaction – "I can prepare a short dialogue or a short scene with my friend", A2

reading – “I can understand the rules and instructions of a simple board game”).

The demand for simplicity of the descriptors responds to a serious challenge: the descriptors used by young learners have to be user-friendly. If young learners found them virtually incomprehensible, they would reject them as useless. In this respect, Průcha (1998, 123-125) argues for a limited number of abstract words in textbooks for primary and lower-secondary schools and for brevity of sentences generated in them and he maintains that the length of the sentences should not exceed 15 words.

The simplification of the Czech ELP descriptors could wrongly suggest that they completely lack conditions and limitations in them. The results of the descriptor analysis bear comparison with the results of such analysis in the Swiss ELP (see 2.3.3). The frequency of conditions and limitations in level A1 is very similar: of 21 descriptors (Perclová 1999) 12 contain them ($f = 57.1\%$). The frequency in level A2 (Perclová 1999) is lower in the Czech ELP but the difference is not striking: they exist in 15 of 30 descriptors ($f = 50.0\%$). In accordance with the Swiss ELP, the word “simple” occurs in the conditions most commonly and the lowest number of descriptors lacking specific conditions can be found in spoken interaction and spoken production where basic communicative activities requiring minimal communicative competences are listed (e.g. A1 – “I can introduce myself. I can thank someone.”; A2 – “I can order something to eat or drink”). As for writing, both the low number of the descriptors and their content prove that writing is not the central focus of beginners.

The analysis of the descriptors described above tends to focus primarily on their general characteristic. A more detailed study of the Czech self-assessment checklist descriptors for listening and reading (Perclová 2001) is conducted in the following tables, using the classification of the DIALANG Advisory Feedback section (CEF 2001, 238-243), see 2.3.3. As the Czech teachers investigated in the present study worked predominantly with the lowest common reference levels and as conditions and limitations are typical of the lowest levels, only the summary of levels A1 and A2 is given. The parts of the descriptors are provided verbatim.

Use of the DIALANG classification reveals that some of the Czech descriptors for levels A1 and A2 in listening and reading lack either the information about the type of the text or about the task or its conditions. Nevertheless, all the descriptors could be considered transparent because the majority of them provide essential and clear limitations. To show that the activities are designed for a beginner’s level, schematic and contextual

TABLE 5. Analysis of the Czech ELP self-assessment descriptors of communicative activities for listening

LISTENING	A1	A2
What types of text I understand	Simple instructions given by my teachers	Simple directions
	Simple questions	Short recordings about everyday matters
	Very simple sentences about myself and my family	
What I understand	The names of the most important things in the classroom	Basic information about people, their family, home, work and hobbies
	Numbers	What people are talking about when they speak slowly and carefully
	Simple instructions given by my teachers	Important information in short recordings about everyday matters
		Simple directions
Conditions and limitations	Questions spoken slowly and carefully	People speak slowly and carefully

clues are also often given (e.g. the classroom, family, hobbies, menus, pictures and posters).

An attempt to employ the DIALANG classification for the descriptors in speaking and writing failed due to the frequent repetition of the components in the first two boxes, i.e. the components in the first and the second box were identical (What types of text I say, What I say) and due to a notable lack of information in the last box (Conditions and limitations). Similarly to the Swiss descriptors (cf. 2.3.3), when taken out of the context of the reference level, the descriptors of some activities in spoken interaction and spoken production can seem imprecise.

Descriptors of speaking activities, especially in spoken interaction in levels A1 and A2, require formulaic language learning - learning of whole language chunks, which is based on memory (e.g. greetings, asking for things, asking for directions and giving directions, making and

TABLE 6. Analysis of the Czech ELP self-assessment descriptors of communicative activities for reading

READING	A1	A2
What types of text I understand	Very short, simple texts	Short, simple texts
	Short, simple messages on postcards	Short, simple personal letters
		Common signs (for example in streets and railway stations)
What I understand	Familiar names, words and phrases	Simple information on menus and information leaflets
	What short, simple texts are about	Specific information in simple texts
	Basic information such as where a film is on and when it starts	Simple instructions, such as on how to use a public telephone
	Short, simple holiday greetings	
Conditions and limitations	The texts have pictures	

accepting offers). This approach is also recorded in CEF descriptors of communicative language competences, e.g. general linguistic range A2 – “can (...) communicate with memorized phrases, groups of a few words and formulae” (CEF 2001, 110). Skehan (1998) explains that such lexical units create an exemplar-based system of the language and he contrasts it with a rule-based system. A good knowledge of natural ready-made lexical items “can ease the processing burden while composing speech” (Skehan 1998, 38) and is extremely important for beginners. When directly accessed, the phrases enable certain “fluency” of speech and though learned by heart, they can make language learning meaningful because they can differ significantly from school-like sentences such as “This is a boy and this is a girl”. Tudor (2001, 94) adds an important factor: “habit- formation based learning” can also increase learners’

confidence. Internalized instances of rules can become exemplars later on, accelerating thus the process of communication. Nevertheless, as Skehan (1998, 18) maintains, “the automaticity (...) requires frequent opportunity to link together the components of utterances so that they can be produced without undue effort, so that what will be important will be the meanings underlying the speech rather than the speech itself”. The emphasis on meaning differentiates this approach fundamentally from behaviourism.

Although the individual Czech descriptors describe the learner’s communicative language activities, when carried out in the classroom, some of them relate directly to teaching methods and techniques in use and they require specific foreign language teaching methodology (e.g. A1 reading - “I can understand what short simple texts are about, especially if they have pictures”, A2 listening – “I can recognize what people are talking about when they speak slowly and carefully” or A2 reading – “I can find simple information on menus and in information leaflets”), cf. 2.5.

As for assessment, both teachers’ and learners’ assessments are incorporated in the Passport. Classroom interaction - talking about progress to friends and to the teacher is encouraged explicitly in the instructions. References to the Passport are made in the Biography and vice versa (e.g. “When you are able to do all the tasks in one skill, for example in spoken interaction, you will achieve level A1 in it. Record this on page 7 in the Language Passport”). Additional pages for the learners’ reflection on their achievement are provided in the Language Biography, encouraging learners to make notes on their progress either in their mother tongue or, when attainable, in the target language.

Extra pages are designed for learners’ own more detailed lists of what they have learnt. These pages are intended to satisfy young learners’ need for achievement, help learners (and teachers) to think in the way of “can do” objectives and help teachers to bridge the differences between the textbook and the ELP. The idea of creating own descriptors corresponds to North’s concept (1999, 26) of the CEF calibrated descriptors forming “a ‘hard core’ around which teachers can add descriptors of their own”. Empty pages are added, so that learners can design lists of their achievements and enjoy working with the ELP. The purpose of the extra and empty pages is also to create conditions for further improvement and fine-tuning of the descriptors of language proficiency.

The majority of the instructions contain examples of good practice to help both the learners and the teachers (e.g. “Write down your plans,

for example to create a crossword or a game for my classmates, to write a short poem, to act out a fairy tale with my classmates, to give directions to a foreigner”). Three pages in the Biography focus on learning-to-learn strategies. To promote the concepts of plurilingualism, transparency and language learning, all texts of the Czech ELP for learners aged 11 to 15 (Perclová 2001) are written in Czech plus in the three languages most commonly taught in the Czech Republic, which are English, German and French. Free spaces are provided for the learners to put down the descriptors of language proficiency in any other language. Minority languages (Slovak, Polish, Romany and German) are used on one page of the ELP for learners up to the age of 11 (Nováková, Perclová, Zbranková & Karásková 2002). The approach to getting to know other cultures is sensitive to the learners’ age particularly in the ELP for learners up to the age of 11 (children are asked to think e.g. about their friends, about meals, music, magazines and sportsmen and sportswomen).

To sum up, Czech ELPs use descriptors of communicative activities that attempt to find balance between precision and intelligibility. The ELP could positively influence foreign language teaching and learning. Apart from common ELP features such as great emphasis on self-assessment, teachers and learners are given methodology hints and above all space for their own creativity.

3. Beliefs and attitudes related to language teaching and learning and teacher education

In the previous chapter, a scheme of ELP pedagogy as theoretical principle and as pedagogical reality was presented, the core of which was the interaction between the context of project implementation and ELP pedagogy itself. Within the context, pragmatic and mental factors playing an active role in it were distinguished. In this chapter, mental factors operating in ELP implementation, i.e. beliefs and attitudes are defined and considered. Their relation to teacher education is shown and an interactionist view on teacher education characterized. Special focus is given to teacher reflection and to bridging the gap between theory and practice. The chapter finishes with a description of features typical for ELP teacher education, establishing its conceptual framework.

3.1. Beliefs and attitudes

3.1.1. The construct of teachers' beliefs

The construct of beliefs has not received special attention in the disciplines to which it appears to be crucial, i.e. in general psychology and social or developmental psychology (cf. little information in Nakonečný 1995, Hayesová 1998, Nakonečný 1998 and Hartl & Hartlová 2000, Čáp & Mareš 2001). In these disciplines beliefs have usually been seen as an element of human value orientation and as strong emotionally conditioned faith in phenomena that cannot be confirmed or refuted by clear and irrefutable evidence because their understanding is beyond human abilities. Belief or conviction has been described as a state of readiness to behave in a certain way and it has often been connected with religion (Hartl & Hartlová 2000). A more intensive study of beliefs began in the middle of the 20th century in other scientific disciplines in connection with the development of cognitive science and later, in the 1970's, in connection with the study of artificial intelligence.

Cognitive science and the theory of frames, schemas and scripts influenced educational research and as a result various field studies have been conducted in this area. Although educational research embraced the concept of beliefs and its popularity began to grow, explicit and unambiguous definitions of it have been rare. A working definition that should be, according to Hofer and Pintrich (1997, 112), congruent

across various disciplines was provided by Richardson (1996): “Beliefs are thought of as psychologically-held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are thought to be true” (in Hofer & Pintrich 1997, 112). Gleitman (1991, 456) gave a simple, condensed explanation: a belief becomes “a cognitive axiom of our everyday experience”. Contemporary educational linguistics connects belief with social interaction and includes it in cognition, i.e. in the process of learning (Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001, Watson-Gegeo 2004, Woods 2003).

Strong interest in beliefs has recently been shown in research on second language acquisition. Barcelos (2003a) enumerated and analyzed a long list of terms and definitions related to the construct of beliefs but some of the definitions are closely connected with SLA and others are rather loosely defined. Noteworthy features include a) subjective individual reality, b) experience as a source of beliefs, c) interrelation between beliefs and changing context and d) a social factor in forming beliefs. The author refers to Dewey (1933) who emphasizes in his explanation of beliefs the importance of personal confidence in using certain knowledge, taking this knowledge on trust and accepting it, although sometimes accepting it only temporarily. The definition clearly connects the construct of beliefs with knowledge and belief change. Both these issues will be discussed in this chapter later on. In reference to Dewey (1938), Barcelos (2003b) also points out that beliefs can be “obstacles and promoters of knowledge at the same time” (2003b, 176).

Similarly to the studies on SLA, the literature on education has not only used the term “belief” for the given concept. According to Hofer and Pintrich (1997, 112), belief is “a particularly slippery term” and thus the literature dealing with the concept lacks consistency. The term “belief” or “belief system” is used by several authors (e.g. Richards & Lockhart 1994, Woods 1996, Williams & Burden 1997), others use e.g. the expression “an individual’s ideas about teaching” (Freeman & Richards 1993, 210), or “preconceptions” (LaBoskey 1993, 24), or “preexisting conception of teaching” (Freeman, in Freeman & Richards 1993, 210), or “misconceptions” (Little, Ridley & Ushioda 2002). The most complete enumeration of different names for the given concept was compiled by Pajares (1992), altogether 21 expressions. Pajares (1992) remarks that beliefs “travel in disguise and often under alias” and calls beliefs “a messy construct”. Of the common terms in his list, attitudes, conceptions, conceptual systems, dispositions, implicit theories and practical principles, amongst others, are commonly found in other expert literature. Pajares

(1992) emphasizes the importance of “cleaning up” the concept and above all the need for investigating it thoroughly.

Some of the above-mentioned terms, e.g. “preconceptions” or “preexisting conceptions of teaching” indicate that beliefs are sometimes considered to be a preliminary stage of development. The terms reflect studies conducted in the 1980’s and 1990’s which examined teacher trainees’ beliefs (e.g. Bird, Anderson, Sullivan & Swindler 1993, Johnson 1994, Graber 1996, Shuck 1997, Tillema & Knol 1997, Perclová 1998). The studies highlight that when entering a teacher education programme, trainees are not “blank slates” (LaBoskey 1993, 24) because they established their beliefs before they got to college, through the experience of being a student (Freeman & Richards 1993, 210). This everyday experience is long-lasting and influences trainees to such an extent that their education, i.e. the influence of their former teachers, appears to act as a decisive factor in their selection of their own conceptions of teaching. The former teachers become the trainees’ “ghost behind the blackboard” (Weintraub 1989, Tyler 1989, in Wajnryb 1992, 13). Although trainees’ beliefs originate in their role as learners and are therefore “inaccurate, inappropriate and incomplete”, they can block new information and act as filters during the trainees’ study at college (LaBoskey 1993, 24). Pajares (1992) characterizes teacher trainees as “insiders in a strange land”: they know schools and they are certain that they know them well (1992, 323). The studies on trainees’ beliefs confirm that trainees’ prior beliefs form a ready-made, easily accessible and therefore attractive model for trainees’ teaching practices. The authors of the studies are thus rather sceptical about belief change, however they discuss qualities of teacher trainees’ education and argue for challenging the beliefs. The beliefs should be made explicit, trainees should participate in revealing them and work with them consciously. Trainers should support and encourage trainees’ discoveries and reinforce trainees’ learning by consensual agreement on their tuition. These studies have been currently criticized e.g. by Woods (2003, 202), who points out that they arise from a trainer’s perspective and that this view is overly prioritized.

Recent research studies transferred attention from teacher trainees to experienced teachers (e.g. Richards & Lockhart 1994, Woods 1996, Williams & Burden 1997, Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver & Thwaite 2001). Beliefs have been a popular construct especially in the literature on teacher education, which succeeded in producing convincing proofs that beliefs exert a strong influence on classroom actions. As Woods (1996) demonstrates, teachers use networks of their beliefs, assumptions and

knowledge in a cycle that continually repeats itself and that consists of carrying out classroom actions (events), understanding (interpreting) them and planning (expecting) new actions. The pervasiveness of beliefs both in frequency of occurrence and effect is typical: belief systems underlie everything that teachers do. Williams and Burden (1997, 56-57) assert that beliefs affect teachers to a greater extent than their knowledge in the areas of lesson planning, decision making and general classroom practice and that teachers' beliefs about language learning "pervade (...) classroom actions more than a particular methodology".

In order to clarify the concept of beliefs more precisely, beliefs are often compared with knowledge and attempts to make a distinction between them are made, although, as Pajares (1992, 309) states, it is "a daunting undertaking". Some authors (Abelson 1979, Nisbett & Ross 1980, Nespor 1987, all in Pajares 1992, 309-311) emphasize a cognitive element in knowledge and strong affective or evaluative or both affective and evaluative elements in belief. This mixture is reckoned inseparable and an increasing importance has been attached to affect (Arnold 1999) and the proposition that emotion is closely connected with cognition and their symbiosis shape our actions. As Watson-Gegeo (2004, 333) demonstrates, "without emotional capacity, people cannot make rational judgements". Similarly, Woods (2003, 205) underlines the evaluative element because "a value judgement (...) is inherent in beliefs". Knowledge and belief are sometimes seen as different ends of a continuum, where the boundary is often blurred (Clandinin & Connelly, in Pajares 1992, 309). This opinion appears to be highly relevant to language teaching and to teacher education, which can sometimes hardly define "objective" knowledge and identify where knowledge ends and belief begins. The image of a continuum and blurred boundaries is also used by Woods (1996) who explains that beliefs and knowledge, and according to him also assumptions, are interwoven and integrated in a network, knowledge being "more publicly accepted" and beliefs being "more idiosyncratic" (Woods 2003, 206). In 2003 Woods introduces a more radical concept produced by the social constructivist theory: "knowledge is a subset of beliefs, those beliefs for which there is the greatest consensus, the greatest demonstrability, and the least personal identification" (Woods 2003, 205). The concept seems entirely justifiable on the grounds of the development in specific science disciplines and the history of mankind. The recognized "superordinate status" of beliefs leads to another statement of the social constructivist theory: beliefs are not "the periphery but the central framework within which all learning takes place" and thus "the

formation and development of beliefs can be seen as a type of learning” (Woods 2003, 202).

The view about a direct connection between beliefs and learning is reflected in three characteristics of beliefs that can be found in recent research on second language acquisition. As these notions can be, to a great extent, applied to the study of teachers’ beliefs, they are described here. Firstly, sociocultural theory (see Lantolf 2000, Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001, Watson-Gegeo 2004) and an ecological approach (see van Lier 2000) dealing with second language acquisition refuse the notion of beliefs and cognition being “locked” in our brain. According to sociocultural theory, knowledge and understanding are not properties of an individual because they are formed by communities, in social interaction and active collaboration between the members of these communities. To identify this process, the expression “distributed cognitions” is sometimes used (Watson-Gegeo 2004) and the importance of experts interacting with novices recognized (Woods 2003). As social interaction exists in a specific social context and is inseparable from the context, beliefs arise from cultural history and are culturally constructed (Lantolf 2000, Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001, Watson-Gegeo 2004). Therefore, belief systems of individuals can overlap and interface (Woods 1996). An ecological approach (cf. 2.3.2) uses similar arguments: verbal and non-verbal communication are of particular help in understanding learning and therefore future research should focus on the learner who is actively involved in social interaction (van Lier 2000). Communication includes negotiation, which is closely connected with the development of beliefs: negotiation helps to clarify unclear concepts (cf. van Lier 2000).

The above-mentioned views reflect paradoxical and contradictory features of beliefs that are currently reflected in the literature on beliefs about second language acquisition: beliefs are “social, but also individual; unique, but also shared; rational and emotional; diverse, but also uniform” (Barcelos & Kalaja 2003, 233). They evolve but they are at the same time “anchored (...) to incidents in the subject’s past” (Dufva 2003, 143). Beliefs are polyphonic (Dufva 2003, 138).

Secondly, in agreement with the context-bound and culture-bound features of beliefs, an ecological approach posits that relationships between beliefs and context evolve. The type of an action carried out by an active person in relation to a specific environment does not depend only on what the environment or a particular object “offers” to the person but also on how the person perceives the environment, what the person’s intentions are etc., and these phenomena are individually specific (van

Lier 2000). In this respect, activity theory puts emphasis on the related factors of perceived significance and consequent investment in actions (Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001). Perceived social significance is also a key factor in Woods' (2003) theory of events. When applying this theory to the given study, ELP implementation could be considered as an event of a higher level and one seminar or even one try-out activity as events of lower levels. Events of higher levels create the context and goals for events of lower level. People can participate in events and thus they also structure them, they interpret them and plan new events according to their beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (Woods 2003).

The relationship between beliefs and context is in an ecological approach sometimes termed "affordance" (Gibson 1979, in van Lier 2000). "An affordance affords further action (but does not cause or trigger it)" (van Lier 2000, 227, cf. 2.3.2). The concept of an affordance helps us to understand why some teachers believe that they follow a certain methodology, although their way of teaching suggests otherwise: they interpret either the methodology or their teaching in their own way. They focus on elements that make sense to them and do not pay attention to those that seem to be incompatible with their methods of teaching. Woods (2003, 216) illustrates that changes of activities in a way that makes them harmonious with the person's belief system are quite common.

The third feature of beliefs refers to the crucial issue discussed at great length in the literature on beliefs, i.e. the phenomenon of belief change. As can be seen from some of the above-mentioned statements, earlier opinions on beliefs usually seem to be rather reserved when dealing with this phenomenon. Kennedy, quoted by Freeman and Richards (1993, 210) and referring to teachers' beliefs in particular, maintains that beliefs are "seemingly indelible imprints of teaching" and are "tremendously difficult to shake". Our prior beliefs form "a procrustean bed for the development of new knowledge" (Pintrich, Marx & Boyle 1993, 191) and so belief change is difficult to achieve.

The current emphasis on the link between beliefs and learning gives reasons for optimism about belief change: beliefs are not viewed as "discrete static entities" (Woods 2003, 201) and their change appears to be considered a natural developmental process. Nevertheless, as Woods (2003) notes, beliefs do not change easily and we still lack "a thorough analysis of the factors that play a role in why beliefs change in some cases and are resistant to change in other cases" (2003, 222). Woods reports on his research and admits that the process of belief change is extremely

lengthy: belief systems of teachers that he studied did not change, as such, but rather evolved over a period of years (2003, 224).

The length of the process can be caused by the coherent structure of beliefs. Beliefs are interconnected and they exist in clusters in which their boundaries are not clear. They also differ in the level of their consciousness (Woods 2003) and so a belief often “emerges or becomes articulated at the very moment” (Dufva 2003, 144). As indicated in Wood’s (2003) theory of events, beliefs build up hierarchical relationships and they differ in strength, some being central and others peripheral. Central beliefs, beliefs having more connections with others and those created a long time ago, are deeply held and more likely to be followed (Pajares 1992, 318).

Interestingly, the literature dealing with beliefs does not pay special attention to individual components of beliefs when discussing belief change or evolution, although it appears that it could be the very strong affective and value features of the beliefs at the “idiosyncratic” end of the continuum that could cause the resistance to change. These beliefs seem “to be held too closely to one’s identity and sense of self” (Woods 2003, 226) and cannot become “a personal irrelevance”, which could be the case of the beliefs positioned at the other end of the continuum. This view accords with that of Kohonen (2004) who describes “teacher growth as emotional involvement” (2004, 19).

Researchers working in the field of education often highlight the dominant influence of experience and reflection in change. Experience and solving conflicts arising from new or unusual situations can, in interaction with teacher’s beliefs, develop and change belief systems. The development is positively influenced by a variety of experiences (Woods 1996). Woods (1996) indicates other factors causing change: in agreement with sociocultural theory it is social interaction with colleagues, but he also adds theoretical knowledge. During social interaction novices achieve a state of “cognitive readiness” and proceed from legitimate peripheral participation to full participation in new actions (Woods 2003, 209, Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001, cf. 2.3.2). As for the theoretical knowledge, a link between theory and beliefs can be built, as Widdowson (2003, in Newby 2003) points out. “Engaging in theory”, that he calls theorizing, should be regarded as a dialogue in which “teachers critically assess innovative ideas but also reflect on their own beliefs and practices” (Widdowson 2003, in Newby 2003, 33). Theorizing, i.e. a teacher’s continuous shared dialogue on the professional literature, became a substantial and integral part of the Finnish ELP project. Newby (2003) suggests that such dialogue

“moves us forward and prevents us from being subject to the dictates of dogma, to the whims of our individual intuitions or the stranglehold of the traditions of the learning and teaching cultures in which we operate” (2003, 33-34).

When dealing with belief change, developmental and constructivist psychologists refer to Piagetian theories of assimilation and accommodation (e.g. Pintrich, Marx & Boyle 1993, Williams & Burden 1997, Bertrand 1998). Both processes seek equilibration, i.e. balance between our previous knowledge and our current practice. In the case of the first process, assimilation, we modify new information in order to be able to accept it. This approach is documented by Woods (1996, 222) who gives an example of a teacher reinterpreting curriculum goals so that they made sense to his beliefs. Gleitman (1991, 457) explains that when encountering a new experience, we attempt to understand it by seeking its consistency with our previous experiences. We interpret the new experience in a way that minimizes all inconsistencies so that a potential state of cognitive dissonance is reduced. Or, according to Pintrich, Marx and Boyle (1993, 171), we can accept new information if our knowledge about the topic is not extensive and the new information can be combined with our current beliefs. In the case of the second process, accommodation, we reorganize and modify our belief system and we allow the reality of the outside world to enter our cognition, even though we have to destroy our previous system and build a new one (Bertrand 1998, 70). Accommodation can occur, according to Pintrich, Marx and Boyle (1993, 172), under four conditions: a) our “dissatisfaction with current conceptions”, b) intelligibility of a new concept, c) its plausibility and d) fruitfulness. Brown and McIntyre (1993, 5,8) see accommodation similarly, but they are more pragmatic and have down-to-earth ideas: a decisive role in belief change can be ascribed to practical arguments.

Both experience and practical arguments operate in a constructivist theory of conceptual change developed by Giordan (1990, in Bertrand 1998, 73-80) and called, by analogy with a chemical process involving proteins, the allosteric model. According to this model, our active “conceptual places” enable us to decode new information. In order to restructure our conceptions, we have to be active, interested in new reality and certain that we can make use of it for specific purposes. However, in accordance with Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development, we cannot remain isolated in this process and we have to be assisted. This view accords with that of Woods (2003) who highlights the role of experts interacting with novices, and with sociocultural theory, which

distinguishes the role of social interaction in the development of beliefs. According to the allosteric model, we need to be confronted with new knowledge several times and various arguments have to be presented to us (cf. Woods' similar statement about the need for a variety of experiences mentioned above). The problems occur when we are not able to connect the new knowledge with the old or when we are not able to use the knowledge we have. This fact is in harmony with Woods' (2003) research results: while some respondents "found the (... new) concept difficult to understand", others "seemed to understand the activity, but they found it difficult to do" (Woods 2003, 215).

An exemplary study related to teachers' beliefs was carried out by Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver and Thwaite (2001). The researchers, together with 18 experienced Australian teachers, examined relationships between teaching practice and principle. They compiled a list of teachers' common classroom practices observed during lessons and identified the pedagogic principles underlying them. All the data were gathered in close collaboration between the teachers and researchers, without distorting the teachers' ideas, and the study highly recommends this approach of shared reflection on practice as the only effective method of investigation of teaching. According to the authors, beliefs create and shape teacher's principles and the principles consequently influence or cause teachers' actions. The study reveals a rich diversity of practices and principles and, most importantly, it demonstrates that a specific principle formulated by individual teachers promoted different practices and, conversely, individual teachers attributed a specific practice to several different principles. This view accords with that of Woods (1996) who demonstrates a) that teachers' belief systems are highly individual, b) that teachers' understanding and interpretation of a concept and pedagogical theory can significantly differ and c) that their application of one principle can vary. Breen et al. (2001) show that teachers' practices and principles appeared to closely interact and that they formed a coherent, highly individual personal construction for each teacher.

The above-mentioned findings about the potential diverse effect of a particular teaching principle and different sets of practices are key for the present study. They suggest a) that when encountering ELP pedagogy, the teachers can choose and apply its different principles, and b) that the principle shared by a group of Czech teachers working in a similar context and having similar experience can encourage repertoires of different practices or repertoires of different configurations of practices. When having this perspective in mind, it is clear that the configuration in

Figure 2, Chapter 2 does not fully express the complexity and importance of the teacher's contribution. Figure 3 redefines and specifies the role of individual teachers and their beliefs about implementing ELP pedagogy. This new perspective establishes the teacher's dominant position in the ELP implementation. Whereas the model in Figure 2 highlights the importance of ELP pedagogy and its "superior" role in the initiation of the project, figure presented below acknowledges the decisive role of teachers. Figure 2 demonstrates top-down processing and focuses on the whole group of teachers and learners, Figure 3 demonstrates bottom-up processing and focuses on individuals.

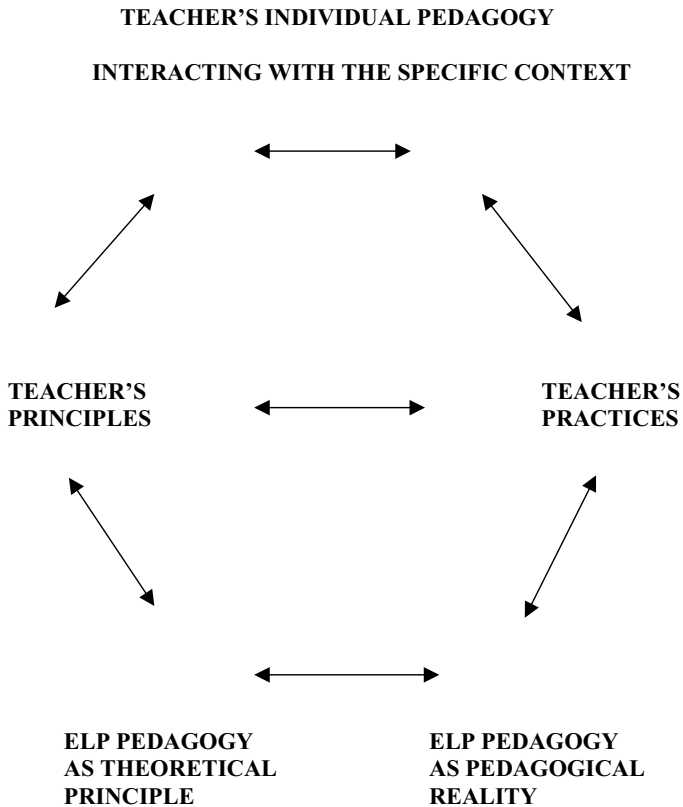


Figure 3. A model of teacher's individual pedagogy interacting with ELP pedagogy (based on Breen et al. 2001)

As for the study of individual teachers' beliefs, it should be noted that beliefs are often supposed to exist at an implicit level (Tann 1993, 55) and in a complex system that is difficult to make explicit (Woods 2003) and so it is hard to identify them. They "cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend and do" (Pajares 1992, 314). Moreover, even if they are explicitly defined, they can be in disharmony with real beliefs due to the respondent's deliberate intention to express consistent opinions or please the audience (Woods 1996, 71, 72). For this reason, Woods (1996, 72) recommends longer periods of enquiry into them and/or enquiry under different circumstances.

According to Barcelos (2003a), three different approaches to the study of beliefs can be distinguished: the Normative, the Metacognitive and the Contextual Approach. The Normative Approach aims to examine whether the respondents' beliefs are in accordance with the norm that was set up by institutions or new trends in teaching or research etc. The approach consequently views some beliefs as misconceptions and its research tools are mainly questionnaires evaluated through descriptive statistics. The Metacognitive Approach considers beliefs to be individual theories in action, i.e. metacognitive knowledge that should be studied primarily through content analysis of semi-structured interviews. Both approaches point out that beliefs are causes of actions and therefore they are not deduced from actions. The Contextual Approach focuses on investigation of beliefs in a specific context from an "emic" perspective. It recognizes a connection between beliefs and experience (and thus also belief evolution) and it deploys a variety of primarily qualitative research methods and techniques, including metaphors and discourse analysis. All three approaches described here overlap, and although all of them have their advantages and disadvantages, the Contextual Approach is prioritized by Barcelos (2003a) and has been used in several studies edited by Kalaja and Barcelos (2003), first and foremost, for its respect for an "emic" perspective, respondents' voices and their "truth". With regard to this focus of contemporary studies, Woods (2003) highlights that our concern should not be "accuracy of beliefs, but (...) the process of construction and reconstruction of beliefs for specific situated and contextualized purposes" (2003, 206).

As indicated in this section, beliefs are a popular term in the literature on education and in educational linguistics, but because they are highly complex, they deserve further study. Undoubtedly, teachers' beliefs can exert a strong influence on learners' beliefs and attitudes. The construct of attitudes is explained in the following section, however, due to the

dearth of references to this notion in literature on educational linguistics, the explanation is very brief.

3.1.2. The construct of attitudes

While beliefs are often compared with knowledge, attitudes are often compared with motives. The Latin origin of the word attitude is “aptitudo meaning fitness” (Reber 1985, 65), i.e. fitness to express our likes and dislikes.

An attitude is a crucial concept of social psychology, in fact originating this field of the psychological discipline at the beginning of the 20th century. Though the description of the concept varies in the literature and it sometimes becomes extremely vague, social psychologists traditionally distinguish three components of attitudes: a) cognitive, b) affective and c) conative components (e.g. Weber 1991, Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith & Bem 1993). To exemplify this, some teachers can take a negative attitude towards practising speaking in pairs. This attitude comprises the following components: a) a cognitive component - “when doing pair work students often work inefficiently, they use their mother tongue and when using the target language, they make a lot of mistakes”, b) an affective component - “I don’t like pair work, it is not effective” and c) a conative component “I am not going to use pair work”. Similarly to beliefs, the individual components are combined, they form our mental or emotional “habitual mode” (Morgan 1993, 64). In comparison with beliefs, however, the affective component of all attitudes completely dominates and has most influence, and the conative component is added.

When explaining the term, social psychologists (e.g. Hayesová 1998) often refer to Fishbein and Ajzen who defined attitudes in 1975 as “learned predispositions ” that lead to “favourable or unfavourable reactions to objects, people or situations” (hence the comparison with motives mentioned above is facilitated). Opinion polls that examine attitudes usually focus on issues concerning public interest, e.g. the environment, politics, education, human behaviour.

A view that attitudes can predict behaviour was often the focus of research, but its results did not demonstrate a direct relationship, i.e. attitude-behaviour consistency. On the contrary, arguments have been put forward recently claiming that behaviour influences attitudes.

Attitudes can be evaluated on a scale ranging from positive, through neutral, to negative attitudes. To increase the reliability of a scale, generally defined attitudes should be avoided and replaced by more

specific definitions (Gleitman 1991, 460). According to this author, the respondents' answers can but do not have to predict the respondents' behaviour due to e.g. situational pressures, personality characteristics and cognitive consistency or cognitive dissonance (one strives for consistency in attitudes, beliefs and behaviour and is ready to change some of these factors in order to achieve consistency and maintain a favourable self-picture, cf. Woods 1996, in 3.1.1).

Ideas about attitudes and beliefs have been brought to bear on research on teacher education. The following section enquires into this area.

3.2. Approaches to language teacher education

Reflecting the importance attached to beliefs and attitudes, language teacher education has recently moved from questions of its appropriate content, relevant materials and effective activities to the area of the teacher's learning (Freeman 1998, vii). The idea that a teacher should be regarded as a learner is not exceptional nowadays (e.g. Grima & Fitzpatrick 2003). The shift draws a parallel to the development in language teaching and its progression from issues of content and teaching methods to issues of learner-centred teaching. According to Freeman, teacher education dealing with the questions "what" and "how" explores only the "surface aspects of delivery", while in the latter case when it investigates how teachers learn, "a rich and complex learning process" is explored (Freeman 1998, vii). The difference between the two approaches is summarized in the following figure.

Though beneficial, gaining awareness of one's teaching process and its impact is not an easy task and "more ambiguous questions" (Freeman 1998, vii) can arise. Some experts do not believe that teachers can perform

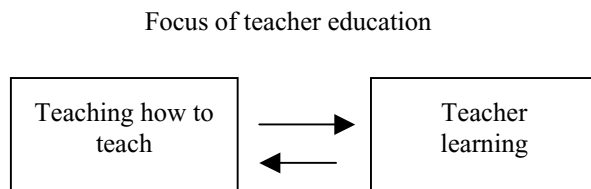


Figure 4. A different focus of teacher education (based on Freeman, in Richards 1998)

this task individually (Gebhard & Oprandy 1999) and therefore they sometimes encourage teachers to make collaborative analyses. This advice accords with contemporary arguments deployed in sociocultural theory and in an ecological approach that highlight the decisive role of shared objectives, social interaction, negotiation and collaboration in cognition (van Lier 2000, Watson-Gegeo 2004, cf. 3.1.1). An active role ascribed to the teachers' and their involvement in the enquiry is described e.g. by Bailey (1996), who worked with seven teachers who revealed their autobiographies under her guidance.

However enriching an exploration of teacher learning appears, the most effective results in teacher education are likely to be achieved when both above-mentioned approaches, i.e. teaching how to teach and teacher learning are used, combined and complemented. Freeman mentions their link as "a third area of work" without developing it further (1998, ix) but it appears to be precisely this direct link and its formative influence that can produce effective results. Instead of seeking a dichotomy, a close integration of both approaches should be considered. This integration should not be accidental but based on an ongoing and complex interaction. The content and methodology of education then a) adapt to teachers' beliefs and attitudes and to the mode of teachers' learning and, at the same time, b) they raise the quality of teacher learning. Richards (1998, 2) points to this approach in his discussion of pre-service education and calls it an "interactionist view". Its scheme is shown in the following figure.

A pervasive component of the interactionist approach to teacher education is reflection that can aid teachers in two complex processes

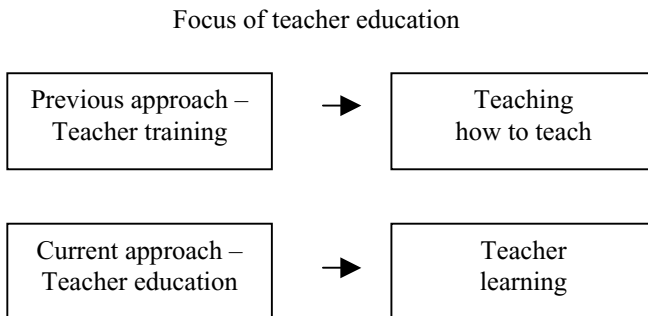


Figure 5. An effective approach to teacher education

pointed to by Tsui (2003): 1) theorizing experiential knowledge and 2) practicalizing received knowledge. The process of theorizing experiential knowledge is often investigated in teacher education. It goes through four stages described by Kolb (1984, 42), which are “concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation”. When used in seminars, the teachers are encouraged to become aware of their experience, they reflect on it and share it with others and, based on the results of their reflection, they consequently seek new modes of teaching in practice. As Ur suggests (1996, 7), in order to avoid a constant reinvention of the wheel, the experience can be vicarious, e.g. observation of a video lesson. Nevertheless, an objection to it can be raised: when the vicarious experience is too distant from the teachers’ zone of proximal development or it threatens teachers’ strongly held beliefs, the process of reflection can be blocked and a total rejection of the idea can occur.

The process of practicalizing received knowledge can be related to theories of problem solving. As Sternberg (2002) explains, to achieve good results in solving a problem (to relate this to the ELP e.g. the problem of introducing learner self-assessment), a careful and unambiguous definition of the problem is needed (e.g. what is meant by learner self-assessment in the context of primary and lower-secondary schools and why it is introduced). This preliminary stage can be long and difficult or on the contrary entirely ineffective when the problem is ill defined. In the following stage, during which suitable strategies to solve the problem are sought, divergent thinking is applied and different strategies considered, analyzed and evaluated and only then convergent thinking is done, individual elements synthesized and an optimal solution reached. Lastly, monitoring and an evaluation follow when new problems, new strategies and/or sources of a problem solution can occur. Success in solving a problem is threatened by a fixation on a wrong procedure, on traditional stereotypes or on a specific function, e.g. a fixed belief that the primary aim of assessment is its objectivity, hence it is the only aim of learner assessment. Both a positive and a negative transfer of solving related to other problems can take place. When solving a problem, experts have more declarative and procedural knowledge available to them than beginners. Beginners often neglect reflection in the preliminary stage of defining the problem and instead they sometimes concentrate on various strategies and try out a number of them. Conversely, routines established firmly by experts can prevent them from identifying a problem.

When relating the theory of problem solving to teacher education and considering at the same time Kolb's experiential learning cycle, the teacher's active involvement and an approach to teacher education called "exploratory" by Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) are essential. Arguments put forward by Wallace (1991) should be presented too. As for practicalizing theoretical knowledge, Wallace (1991, 56) maintains that this process is "a fairly sophisticated operation" in which the trainees should be helped. Though he refers to pre-service education, in-service education could have a similar experience. In addition, he highlights a connection of both the experiential and the received knowledge to practice ("it is the practice element which is the central focus of the knowledge base"). Considering these ideas in the practical terms of teachers' seminars, teachers reflect on input individually and/or collaboratively, using properly structured tasks. In this respect, teachers' awareness of the considerable number of options at their disposal is crucial. Gebhard and Oprandy (1999, 8) suggest that instead of encouraging teachers "to follow prescriptions", the teachers should be encouraged "to collect descriptions of teaching" and reflect on them. The wealth of options available for teaching differ markedly experienced teachers from beginners, whilst teacher reflection can dissolve this boundary and both deep processing and surface processing reflection can be applied to both categories of teachers.

Another feature that can dissolve the difference between experienced teachers and beginners is the issue of teacher creativity. In general, creativity relates to factors such as extremely high motivation, great stamina and discipline, willingness to criticize work and improve it and divergent thinking (Sternberg 2002, 423). Creative teachers seek challenges in which "one has to go beyond one's current level of competence by developing new skills and new knowledge", they respond to the challenges professionally and benefit from them (Tsui 2003, 272).

All teachers can undoubtedly be challenged by the implementation of an innovative approach to teaching. Abrami, Poulsen and Chambers (2004) describe such a situation in their study examining the introduction of cooperative learning in Canada. In order to understand the reasons for teachers' resistance to the innovation, or conversely their decision to introduce it, the authors applied the following components of expectancy theory: perceived value, expectancy of success and cost items. The results indicate the crucial importance that teachers attached to expectancy of success and the authors therefore suggest that groups of practitioners sharing ideas should be formed and presentations on the success of other teachers should be given in order to boost teachers' self-confidence.

Inspiring examples of such teachers' strong collegial support and collaboration were provided by the Finnish project implementing the ELP (Kohonen 2003, Kohonen 2004).

Conclusions corresponding to the Canadian study, particularly to the teachers' need for success, were also reached in a Dutch project (Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld 2004) analyzing the results of a one-year course developing teachers' sensitivity to individual learner differences. According to the authors, the key catalysts for change were as follows: a supportive and safe atmosphere during the course, collaborative learning, examples of practical activities, positive feedback on personal change, and, in addition to these factors, also teachers' personal experience as learners. Though reasonably optimistic, the authors warn against false optimism: a change in beliefs and attitudes does not guarantee a change in practice. They suggest that teacher's own positive results contribute to the further development of their sensitivity, beliefs and practice (Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld 2004, 481).

A majority of the ideas presented in this section is underpinned by three common factors: factors of motivation, action and conditions. As Lantolf (2000, 8) explains, these factors represent three levels of an activity described by Leontiev (1978, in Lantolf 2000) in the theory of activity. A person's involvement in an activity is triggered by personal concrete biological or cultural needs that become motives when they focus on a particular object. Under specific conditions and through mediational means people attempt to achieve by their actions a desirable goal. Lantolf (2000) notes, in agreement with Breen et al. (2001, cf. 3.1.1), that motives and goals are sometimes difficult to discover, because different motives and goals can become a source of one specific activity and, conversely, a specific goal and motive can lead to a variety of activities. When applying these ideas to the process of teacher education, the following conclusions can be drawn: teachers' different individual needs, motives and objectives can be expected and a range of distinctive activities can consequently evolve. However, "there can be no guarantees" that the outcome of the education will be achieved (cf. Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld 2004), because "what ultimately matters is how individual learners decided to engage with the task as an activity" (Lantolf 2000, 13, cf. Tudor 2001, in 2.6). If some teachers find a task extremely demanding but they intend to pursue a common goal, they will look for a different mediation. They might ask other people to assist them in their undertaking and evoke thus social processes or look for other mediation means, e.g. relevant literature (Lantolf 2000, 15).

All three sections presented in this chapter so far are pertinent to ELP education, i.e. to the theme of the last section, because their underlying connecting thread is the teachers' potential interaction with ELP pedagogy. The expert opinions discussed here often overlapped and their ideas about beliefs and teacher education were very similar. Major aspects common for language teacher education in general and ELP education in particular could be summed up as follows: 1) respect for teachers' beliefs and attitudes, 2) an impetus for a variety of experiences including the experience of the teacher as a learner, 3) finely tuned education, 4) support of teacher collaboration, 5) encouragement of teachers' reflection, 5) stimuli to theorize practical knowledge and practicalize theoretical knowledge and 6) encouragement of teachers' feelings of success. Consequently, the modes of education should include awareness-raising activities, reflective tasks, learning from the experience of the teacher himself/herself and from the experience of others, theoretical input and collaborative learning. Issues specific to the ELP are identified in the next section.

3.2.1. ELP teacher education

The knowledge base of ELP teacher education comprises three interrelated content domains: a) theories of teaching, b) teaching skills and c) pedagogical reasoning and decision making (cf. Richards 1998). As for theories of teaching, both theories recognized in the educational literature and teachers' beliefs should be considered and the interactionist approach to education adopted.

As regards theories of teaching, ELP teacher education includes both 1) science-research conceptions, i.e. operationalizing learning principles, and 2) theory-philosophy conceptions, which are a) rational approaches and b) values-based approaches (Richards 1998, cf. Zahorik 1986). Both conceptions are top-down and both build on teachers' understanding and monitoring of learning and teaching process. Science-research conceptions require understanding of research findings and theory-philosophy conceptions require understanding of theory and values. The science-research conceptions represent ELP goals of learner autonomy because this goal is based both on general educational research and language learning research confirming the positive effects of learner autonomy (e.g. learner autonomy in relation to learner motivation). The theory-philosophy conceptions represent the scale of language proficiency, the emphasis on communicative goals and communicative activities and learner self-assessment, because it is "conviction, experience, intuition"

(Richards 1998, 41) from which beneficial effects of communicative goals derive, as with the communicative approach. Learner self-assessment draws on the learner-centred conception, respecting learners' needs and interests and providing the learners with good learning strategies.

Introductions to the ELP concept might sometimes fail to refrain from using a large amount of high-inference expressions such as learner autonomy, self-assessment or real-life objectives. Such expressions often lack transparency and they might be perceived incorrectly. Special importance should be attached to this issue in the context where teachers may lack both procedural and declarative knowledge about some of these terms.

The second problem area of ELP education indicated at the beginning of this section - teaching skills - was to a large extent covered in the description of ELP pedagogy (cf. 2.5). The necessary technical skills comprise above all setting communicative objectives, selecting communicative activities, interaction with learners, involving learners in the activities, using criterion-referenced assessment, using continuous assessment and developing learners' self-assessment skills. The third problem area, pedagogical reasoning skills and decision making, was discussed above in section 3.2 in connection with reflection, experiential learning and problem solving.

The issues tackled by the teachers might be numerous, but essentially go in three clear directions: overall introduction of the ELP, introduction of "can-do" tasks and introduction of learner self-assessment. These three directions therefore act as the central focus of the present work.

4. Research problems

Three main problem areas identified at the end of the previous chapter, i.e. the ELP in general, “can do” tasks and learner self-assessment, form the core of this study. The vital issue of “can do” tasks is divided into two sections and in addition to the beliefs and attitudes concerning the ELP, general teaching and learning beliefs and attitudes are also explored. The study thus addresses five areas of research: 1. participants’ beliefs and attitudes related to language teaching and learning, 2. evaluation of the ELP and use of the ELP, 3. the correspondence between participants’ instructional objectives and the descriptors of communicative activities, 4. beliefs about the descriptors of communicative activities, and 5. beliefs about learners’ self-assessment and use of self-assessment. While the first problem area provides background information to the study, the second focuses on the ELP in general and the three following areas of research cover specific features of ELP pedagogy.

Problem area 1

General foreign language teaching and learning beliefs and attitudes

- 1.1. What beliefs about foreign language teaching did the teachers have?
- 1.2. What attitudes and beliefs relating to foreign language learning did the learners have?
- 1.3. What language components and activities did the teacher trainers assess?

Problem area 2

General evaluation of the ELP and ELP use

- 2.1. How did the teachers evaluate the ELP and its use?
- 2.2. How did the learners evaluate the ELP and its use?
- 2.3. What beliefs about ELP use and ELP seminars did the teacher trainers have?
- 2.4. How did the teachers use the ELP?
- 2.5. How did the teacher trainers use the ELP?

Problem area 3

Instructional objectives and the ELP descriptors of communicative activities

- 3.1. What beliefs about the correspondence between instructional objectives and the descriptors of communicative activities did the

teachers and teacher trainers have?

- 3.2. What instructional objectives did the teacher trainers set?
- 3.3. How did the teachers and teacher trainers evaluate the textbooks in use and their harmony with the descriptors of communicative activities?
- 3.4. Which ELP descriptor activities were deficient in the teacher trainers' textbooks?

Problem area 4

Use of the ELP descriptors of communicative activities

- 4.1. What functions did the teachers attribute to the descriptors of communicative activities?
- 4.2. How did the teachers evaluate the use of the descriptors of communicative activities?
- 4.3. What expectations about the descriptors of communicative activities did the teacher trainers have?

Problem area 5

Use of learners' self-assessment

- 5.1. What beliefs about learners' self-assessment did the teachers have?
- 5.2. How did the teachers use learners' self-assessment?
- 5.3. What beliefs about self-assessment did the learners have?

5. Method

5.1. Participants

There are two main phases of investigation in the study, comprising two different groups of participants: a) the pilot phase and b) the pre-dissemination phase. The subjects under investigation in the first pilot phase were a group of teachers of English, German and French (N_{T1} 53) working with learners aged 8 to 15 (N_{L1} = 902) from 55 classes in 40 state and private schools. The group is identified as the pilot group in the study. The majority of the learners were learners of English (n = 626, 69.4%), less than one-third were learners of German (n = 261, 28.9%) and one class was learners of French (n = 15, 1.7%). For financial reasons (the cost of the ELP copies was covered by the Ministry of Education), the teachers were asked to choose only one class to work with in the project and the choice was their responsibility. The highest number of learners (n = 251, 27.8%) enrolled in the project from Year 6 (aged 11). This is the year when learners can enter another type of school - the selective 8-year grammar school (for 11 to 18 year-olds), and also the year when instruction in the second foreign language begins in another type of a selective school, the school with extended language learning (for 8 to 14 year-olds) (see 1.2.1). The second biggest group (n = 210, 23.3%) involved learners from Year 4 (aged 9), which is the year in which compulsory learning of languages usually begins in the Czech Republic.

One teacher had to withdraw from the project after four months, in June 1999, for organizational reasons. 893 learners (N_{L2}) aged 8 to 15, from 54 classes and 39 schools, and their teachers (N_{T2} = 52) took part in the pilot scheme throughout the school year 1999/2000, completing the project in June 2000. An age and language breakdown of the learners' sample in the school year 1999/2000 is provided in Figure 6.

The schools participating in the project ranged in type from state to private (although the number of learners attending private language schools was very low – n = 37, 4.1%), and from the common basic schools for learners aged 6 to 14 to the schools with extended language learning and the 8-year grammar schools. The frequency of the individual types of schools in the sample did not correspond to the Czech context, since the frequency of the “elite” schools (schools with extended language learning and 8-year grammar schools) exceeded greatly their overall frequency in the country (see 1.2.1): more than half of the pilot learners,

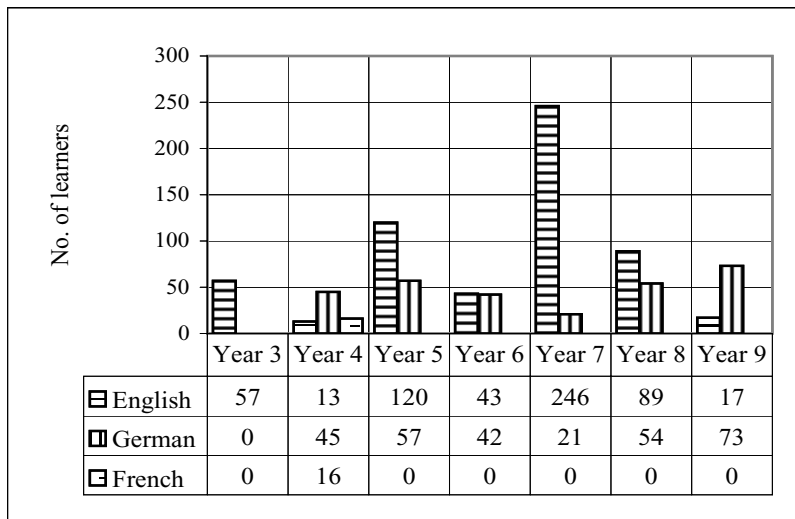


Figure 6. Year and language breakdown of the learners' sample in the pilot phase of the project

52.2 per cent of the total, studied in them. In ten schools more than one teacher participated in the project.

During the second, pre-dissemination phase a new group of teachers of English, German and French ($N_{T3} = 53$) working with learners of the same age as the pilot group (learners aged 8 to 15) enrolled in the project. These teachers prepared to become teacher trainers, disseminating the idea of effective work with the European Language Portfolio in their local regions; hence this group is classified here as the teacher trainers' group. Learners' attitudes were not investigated during this phase. The choice of the classes and their number was left up to the teacher trainers and they chose from one to three classes. The types of schools corresponded to those in the pilot group, with two exceptions: private schools were not involved, and, in particular, higher education teacher trainers from Faculties of Education and in-service teacher trainers took part in this phase to facilitate the dissemination.

For ethical reasons, a non-probability method of sampling was used: the teachers were not randomly assigned either in the pilot or in the pre-dissemination phase, due to the firm belief that the teaching approaches used in the ELP should not be forced on teachers. Thus the teachers

enrolled in both phases on the basis of their interest, having responded to articles published in professional journals and newspapers. This procedure helped to involve participants from the whole country. In addition, as the choice of outstanding future teacher trainers was of great importance, local school authorities were asked for help in the pre-dissemination phase. They informed the schools about the opportunity for exemplary teachers of foreign languages to participate in further education and subsequently in running seminars for their colleagues.

5.1.1. Background information about the teachers

Table 7 provides more detailed information about the pilot teachers. The data about learners' age and Year refer to the second year of the pilot project, i.e. 1999/2000.

Table 8 summarizes the data about the teachers' sample and provides basic information for a statistical analysis of the data.

As can be seen in Tables 7 and 8, a high percentage of unqualified teachers participated in the project, altogether 30.8 per cent (plus the qualifications of 5.8 per cent of the teachers were unknown), and 25.0 per cent of the teachers were inexperienced. Nevertheless, the percentage of unqualified teachers still did not reach their percentage in the country and thus the situation in Czech schools and in foreign language teaching in particular is reflected only to a small extent (see 1.2.1). The frequency of teachers of English was significantly higher than the frequency of teachers of German.

Basic information about the second group, the teacher trainers' group, is provided in Table 9. It was compiled when the teacher trainers embarked on the project.

Table 9 shows that unqualified teachers participated in the pre-dissemination phase too. Correspondingly to the pilot group, the percentage of teacher trainers of English ($n = 64.2\%$) substantially exceeded the percentage of teacher trainers of German ($n = 34.0\%$). In harmony with the smaller proportion of French classes in Czech foreign language teaching, there was only one teacher trainer of French in the group. Concerning the type of schools, although the percentage of "elite" schools was again too high, the teacher trainers' sample corresponded to the Czech context slightly better than the teachers' sample (60.4 per cent of the teacher trainers worked in basic schools).

TABLE 7. Characteristics of the teachers in the pilot phase

<i>Identifi- cation no.</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Qualifi- cation</i>	<i>Teaching experience – no. of yrs</i>	<i>Working as a teacher trainer</i>	<i>Type of school</i>	<i>Pilot class</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>Language taught</i>	<i>Learners’ proficiency level</i>
1	f	Yes	24	Yes	Ext	3	8	E	A1
2	f	Yes	8		Ext	3	8	E	A1
3	f	Yes	17	Yes	Ext	4	9	G	A1
4	f	?	?	?	Ext	4	9	F	?
5	f		23		P	5	10	E	A1
6	m	?	20	?	B	5	10	E	A1
7	f		9		Ext	5	10	E	A1
8	f		25		P	5	10	E	A1
9	f	Yes	5		Ext	5	10	E	A1
10	f	Yes	10		P	5	10	E	A1
11	f	Yes	18		B	5	10	G	A1
12	f	Yes	22	Yes	B	5	10	G	A1
13	f	Yes	14		B	4, 5	9, 10	G	A1
14	f		25		B	5	10	G	A1
15	f		9		B	6	11	E	A2
16	f		16		B	6	11	E	A2
17	f		23		B	6	11	E	A2
18	f		13		B	6	11	G	A1
19	f	Yes	23	Yes	Ext	6	11	G	A2
20	f		10	Yes	B	7	12	E	A2
21	f	Yes	10	Yes	Ext	7	12	E,F	A1
22	m		4		B	7	12	E	A1
23	f	Yes	21		B	7	12	E	A1
24	f	Yes	12		Ext	7	12	E	A1
25	f	Yes	26		Ext	7	12	E	A2
26	f	Yes	29		Ext	7	12	E	A2
27	f	Yes	18		G	2	12	E,R	A2
28	f	Yes	28	Yes	G	2	12	E	A1
29	f	Yes	15		B	7	12	E	A2
30	f		12		B	7	12	E	A1
31	f	Yes	29		G	2	12	E	A2

TABLE 7. continues on the following page

TABLE 7. continued from the previous page

<i>Identifi- cation no.</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Qualifi- cation</i>	<i>Teaching experience – no. of yrs</i>	<i>Working as a teacher trainer</i>	<i>Type of school</i>	<i>Pilot class</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>Language taught</i>	<i>Learners' proficiency level</i>
32	f		27	Yes	B	7	12	G	A2
33	f	Yes	5		G	3, 4	13, 14	E,G	B1
34	m	Yes	5	Yes	Ext	8	13	E	A2
35	f	Yes	28		B	8	13	E	B1
36	f	?	28	?	B	8	13	E	A2
37	f	Yes	18		B	8	14	E	A2
38	f	Yes	24	Yes	B	8	13	G	A2
39	f	Yes	16		Ext	8	13	G,R	A2
40	f	Yes	5		G	4	14	E	A2
41	f	Yes	15	Yes	B	9	14	G	B1
42	f		6		B	9	14	G	A2
43	f	Yes	25		G	4	14	G	B1
44	f		13		B	6, 7	11, 12	G	A1
45	m		3		B	7, 8	12, 13	G,E	A2
46	f		9		B	7	12	E	A2
47	f	Yes	27	Yes	Ext	4, 8	9, 13	G,R	A1 B1
48	f	Yes	29		G	4	14	G	B1
49	f	Yes	16	Yes	Pri	1- 9	6- 14	E	?
50	f	Yes	20		Ext	7	12	E	A2
51	f	Yes	5		Pri	3, 4	8, 9	E	A1
52	f	Yes	5	Yes	Pri	3- 5	8 – 10	E	A1

Notes:

B = basic school, P = primary school, Ext = school with extended language learning, G = 8-year grammar school, Pri = private language school

In some higher classes the second language which learners started to learn in Year 6 is indicated, hence level A1 is worked on.

TABLE 8. The sample of pilot teachers – a survey (school year 1999/2000)

<i>Categories</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex	Male	4	7.7
	Female	48	92.3
Type of school	Primary + Basic schools	27	51.9
	Schools with extended language learning	15	28.9
	8-year grammar schools	7	13.5
	Private language schools	3	5.8
Language taught	English	34	65.4
	German	17	32.7
	French	1	1.9
Qualification	Qualified	33	63.5
	Unqualified	16	30.8
	Data not supplied	3	5.8
Teaching experience –no. of years of language teaching	Inexperienced (1-5 years' experience)	13	25.0
	Experienced (6 –15 years' experience)	29	55.8
	Experienced (16 + years' experience)	7	13.5
	Data not supplied	3	5.8
Total		52	100

TABLE 9. The sample of teacher trainers – a survey (school year 2001/2002)

<i>Categories</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex	Male	4	7.6
	Female	49	92.5
Type of school	Basic schools	32	60.4
	Schools with extended language learning	8	15.1
	8-year grammar schools	8	15.1
	Faculties of Education	3	5.7
	In-service teacher training	1	1.9
	State language school	1	1.9
Language taught	English	34	64.2
	German	18	34.0
	French	1	1.9
Qualification	Qualified	42	79.2
	Unqualified	11	20.8
Teaching experience –no. of years of language teaching	Inexperienced (1-5 years' experience)	7	13.2
	Experienced (6 -15 years' experience)	29	54.7
	Experienced (16 + years' experience)	17	32.1
Experience as a teacher trainer	Yes	36	67.9
	No	17	32.1
Total		53	100

Both in the pilot and the in the pre-dissemination phase teachers from the whole country participated. They came from different places as indicated in the following tables.

TABLE 10. Location of schools participating in the pilot phase

Population of places in which the schools involved in the pilot phase were located	Up to 5,000	Up to 25,000	Up to 85,000	Up to 400,000	More than 1,000,000
No. of teachers	10	17	8	12	6

TABLE 11. Location of schools participating in the pre-dissemination phase

Population of places in which schools involved in the pre-dissemination phase were located	Up to 5,000	Up to 25,000	Up to 85,000	Up to 400,000	More than 1,000,000
No. of teacher trainers	6	13	8	18	8

5.2. Materials

There were three types of questionnaires used in the study: a) the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project Group Teacher and Learner Questionnaires, from which only selected items were analyzed, b) one questionnaire for the learners conducted at the end of the project and three questionnaires for the teachers conducted at the end of the project and one year after the end of the project, and c) three teacher-trainer questionnaires conducted during the pre-dissemination phase. All of them are described in the following subsections.

5.2.1. The pilot phase questionnaires

Three CE Teacher and Learner Questionnaires conducted during the pilot phase were designed by the Modern Languages ELP Pilot Project Group or by the General Rapporteur of the project to monitor ELP use and to evaluate its results. They contained: a) a cover letter, b) an opening section of basic data (mainly name, class, school, language taught, number of years of teaching experience, learners' age and number of lessons per week), c) a series of closed-response items with possible answers "yes", "no"

and “don’t know” and d) two open-response questions, asking what the participants liked and disliked about the ELP. Section c, i.e. closed-response items, investigated the role of the ELP in clarifying learning objectives, in involving learners actively in class, in showing progress in learning, in self-assessment and in training learners to become autonomous. Both Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 1 contained six of these closed-response items, Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 2 contained nine and seven of them respectively and the number increased to 28 and 18 in Questionnaire 3 respectively. This questionnaire also included quotations from previous teachers’ and learners’ responses to open questions (e.g. *“I needed initially more time to prepare my lessons”*, *“The ELP takes up too much time”* + the scale “agree”, “don’t know”, “disagree”). Some questions were repeated in two or all three questionnaires (e.g. *“Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?”*, *“Does the Portfolio help you understand your learners’ potential?”*). Some teachers’ items were designed to parallel the learners’ items (e.g. *“Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?”* and *“Did your teacher(s) agree with your self-assessment?”*).

As the main sources of the findings in this study are not the CE questionnaires and only some data compiled from them were used (in total the responses to less than half of the designed questions), the description of the questionnaires is limited to their above-mentioned overall picture. Nonetheless, the tables that they generated, with the results indicated by them, can be found in the Appendices (Appendix 3-5). The selection of the items relevant to the purpose of the study and the data themselves were extremely beneficial. They related to three key issues (see Chapter 4): 1. teachers’ and learners’ overall attitudes towards the ELP (e.g. *“What do you like best about the Portfolio?”*, *“What do you like least about the Portfolio?”*, *“Does the Portfolio help you see progress in learning?”*), 2. teachers’ opinions on the descriptors of communicative activities (e.g. *“Does the Portfolio help you make the learning objectives clear to your learners?”*, *“The descriptors used in the checklists are not always clear”*), and 3. teachers’ and learners’ attitudes towards the use of self-assessment (e.g. *“Are learners able to self-assess their competence?”*, *“Did the Portfolio help you self-assess what you can do?”*).

Self-made Teacher Questionnaire A (see Appendix 6) was attached to the CE Teacher Questionnaire 3. Its objectives were to gain insights into the teachers’ evaluation of the project and to obtain basic data about the teachers and their future intentions. The questionnaire included the following sections. Firstly, bio-data questions asked about the teachers’

professional status and qualification (as they could be sensitive issues, an apology was made for asking about them in a cover letter). Secondly, 13 questions referred to the teachers' plans for further use of the ELP and for its promotion (e.g. an intention of using the Portfolio in other classes, of exhibiting Portfolios, writing articles to professional journals, becoming an ELP teacher trainer). Thirdly, two opinion questions were about the need for further in-service teacher education focusing on ELP use and for changes in the Portfolio design. Fourthly, and most importantly, ten open-response questions were designed to investigate two of three main problem areas of this study: the teachers' general opinions on their involvement in the project and on the use of self-assessment. To that end, specific questions asked about: a) the teacher's objectives in the project, the evaluation of their work, achievements and critical issues (e.g. "*What are you proud of in your work with the Portfolio?*", "*What did not turn out well?*"), b) their opinions on learners' self-assessment (e.g. "*What is your opinion on self-assessment?*" and "*What had a major influence on your opinion on self-assessment?*" and c) a suggested piece of advice to colleagues who would like to start working with the Portfolio ("*What advice would you give to colleagues who would like to start working with the Portfolio?*"). An open-response format was used in the opinion questions to obtain more complete data. While the questions in section 2) and 3), i.e. plans, concerning further use of the ELP and suggestions for improvement, served mainly to further develop and organize the project, the bio-data questions in section 1), and the open-response questions in section 4) were significant for this study.

Teacher Questionnaire B (see Appendix 7) was directed at teachers' beliefs about language teaching. Its objective was to gain insight into the teachers' general beliefs and to provide a framework for other findings. Because of this, an open-response question about the main teachers' principles of language teaching was employed (based on Nunan 1992, 147), along with an adaptation of Eltis and Low's (1985) survey of teaching activities and Nunan's survey "teacher ratings of selected learning activities" (in Nunan 1988b, 89, 92). Likert-scale questions were used in the survey, ranging from 1 – absolutely unimportant, to 7 – very important. The same scale was also employed in another part of the questionnaire that listed characteristics of a good language teacher (an adaptation of McDonough and Shaw's list published as an activity for teacher reflection in 1993, 297).

Teacher Questionnaire C (see Appendix 8), administered to the teachers one year after the end of the pilot phase, was a one-page questionnaire

comprising eleven items. They were primarily intended for deepening the findings concerning the use of the descriptors of communicative activities and examining teachers' updated opinions on the ELP and its use. As the previous results indicated a close connection between the teachers' objectives and the textbook used, this connection was also studied. The majority of the items were a five-point Likert-like scale. The teachers informally called the descriptors of communicative activities "bubbles" due to the design of the Czech ELP and so this name was used in the questionnaire. In addition, the terms "monologues" and "dialogues" were used instead of "spoken production" and "spoken interaction" and they were employed in the questionnaire too. The following items were included: a) the teacher's evaluation of the textbook in use (the scale "excellent", "good", "average", "below average", "very bad"), b) the way the textbook tallied with the descriptors of communicative activities ("*Does the textbook match the Portfolio, i.e. the activities in the "bubbles"?*", the scale "completely", "mostly", "partly", "slightly", "not at all"), c) the teacher's attitudes towards the descriptor activities ("*Are the activities used in the Portfolio, i.e. in the "bubbles", in harmony with the objectives you would like to achieve in teaching?*"), d) the teacher's current use of the Portfolio ("*Did you use the Portfolio this year?*") and e) the teachers' beliefs about the Portfolio and the impact of its use ("*Can the use of the Portfolio improve the teaching and learning of languages in the Czech Republic?*"). Some items in the questionnaire focused on so-called language skills but they were not used in the study.

Learner Questionnaire A (see Appendix 9) was attached to the CE Learner Questionnaire 3. It was designed to examine the first problem area, i.e. the attitudes towards Portfolio use in the Czech context, and also to deepen knowledge about the learners' foreign language learning. It also aimed to correlate the results with the findings from the teachers' questionnaires and to triangulate the data. To that end, it presented the learners with a series of 13 closed statements investigating the learners' attitudes a) to the use of the Portfolio, b) to the foreign language(s) they were learning, c) to their learning of this/these language(s), and d) to the ELP "can do" objectives. The statements formed two groups, based on two different sources: the first group, comprising two statements, was inspired by the questionnaire used by Schools Council 1968 (in Williams & Burden 1997, 126), surveying British secondary school students' attitudes towards foreign language learning. This group used a four-point Likert-like scale ("*Using the Portfolio / Learning a foreign language / is (a) useful and interesting, (b) useful but boring, (c) interesting*

but useless, (d) useless and boring”). The second group contained eight slightly adapted statements chosen from Horwitz’s “Beliefs about language learning inventory: ESL student version” (in Richards & Lockhart 1994, 72) and three analogous additional statements about the ELP descriptor activities. The statements were chosen and adapted to suit the age of the learners and the purpose of the study. They might be further divided into two subgroups, both using a five-point Likert-type scale and enquiring about learners’ views: 1. on the difficulty of the foreign language(s), with the scale ranging from “very difficult” to “very easy”, and 2. on language learning and Portfolio activities, with the scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” (e.g. “*The most important thing is to learn words*”, “*I am afraid of speaking to foreigners*”, “*I can do some Portfolio tasks very well*”).

5.2.2. The pre-dissemination phase questionnaires

Three self-made questionnaires conducted at the beginning of the pre-dissemination phase were short. They attempted to stimulate teacher trainers’ reflection and raise their awareness of issues related to ELP use. The teacher trainers completed them during the seminars. The questionnaires examined primarily the area of the descriptors of communicative activities, because this area appeared to play a decisive role in further use of the ELP and they consisted of several open-response items. Firstly, in Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1, two broad questions were used to investigate teacher trainers’ opinions and expectations: “*What do you expect from your work with the ELP?*” and “*What do you expect from the seminars?*” Secondly, in the same questionnaire, an enquiry about the teacher trainers’ common practice and about their own instructional objectives was made to obtain baseline data (“*Do you reflect on lesson objectives? If yes, would you state three objectives typical of your lessons?*”, and “*What do you follow when specifying the content of the lessons?*”). Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 2 examined the content of the learners’ assessment with the purpose of a) determining language areas important to the teacher trainers and b) comparing these areas with the descriptors of communicative activities. The following question was used: “*What type of schoolwork do you grade?*” Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 3 made a parallel to Teacher Questionnaire C. It investigated teacher trainers’ beliefs about the harmony between their instructional objectives, textbooks and the descriptors of communicative activities and it evaluated the textbooks.

5.3. Procedures

The study is a large-scale case study and as such it combines ethnographic methodology with program evaluation and descriptive methodology (Anderson 1990). It is a hybrid comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods are important, because the objective of the enquiry is not “to produce quantified . . . , generalizable conclusions” (Bell 1993, 5) but by “adopting a qualitative perspective . . . (to be) more concerned to understand individuals’ perceptions” (Bell 1993, 6) of ELP pedagogy. Several different data-gathering methods were used in the research. Apart from the questionnaires described in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, the following methods were used during the pilot phase: a) observation of eight classes, b) discussion with learners in six classes, c) interviews with fifteen teachers and one head of school, d) telephone interviews with two teachers, e) direct study of documentation – investigation of 36 filled-in ELPs from six classes, f) retrospection after school visits and teachers’ seminars, g) study of posters and transparencies made by the teachers during the seminars, and h) field notes. Fewer methods were used during the pre-dissemination phase: a) interviews with three teacher trainers in their schools, b) direct study of documentation – investigation of 24 filled-in ELPs from three classes, c) retrospection after the teacher trainers’ seminars, d) study of posters and transparencies made by the teacher trainers during the seminars, and e) field notes. Individual methods often covered more than one research problem (e.g. school visits focused on both general beliefs about the ELP and ELP use and on beliefs about the descriptors of communicative activities and learner self-assessment; questionnaires usually explored more problems too). For that reason, references to the same methods are made in different sections of chapter 6.

There were two main interrelated drawbacks in the research procedure in the pilot phase. Firstly, some relevant baseline data were not compiled, because the research was initiated after the project had begun. Secondly, in the initial phases in particular, the work was project-driven instead of research-driven.

The pilot phase and the pre-dissemination phase differed in length. The pilot phase was longer, lasting one year and a half from March 1999 to July 2000, and spreading thus over one and a half school years. The research of the pre-dissemination phase lasted ten months from September 2001 to July 2002 (one school year). As the whole pre-dissemination phase finished in June 2003, only a part of its duration was examined.

A survey of the activities done during the pilot phase and used for data-gathering procedures is as follows:

TABLE 12. A survey of the pilot phase activities

<i>Date</i>	<i>Activity</i>
October 1998 – January 1999	Articles in professional journals for language teachers offering participation in the CE project + application forms
11 March 1999	1 st seminar with pilot teachers
April – May 1999	Distribution of ELP copies to schools
29 May 1999	Interview with 4 Prague teachers
3 June 1999	2 nd seminar with pilot teachers
June 1999	Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 1 – Modern Languages Project Group
11 November 1999	3 rd seminar with pilot teachers
November 1999	Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 2 – Modern Languages Project Group
9-11 December 1999	4 th seminar with pilot teachers - Prof. David Little – Working with the European Language Learning Portfolio: reflective learning and self-assessment
3 February 2000	5 th seminar with pilot teachers
30 March 2000	School visit – Plzeň; observation of 4 classes, interview with 3 teachers, discussion with 3 classes, study of documentation – ELPs of 19 learners (from 3 classes)
31 March 2000	School visit – Prague; observation of 1 class, interview with 2 teachers and discussion with 1 class, study of documentation – ELPs of 6 learners (from 1 class)
7 April 2000	School visit – Dvůr Králové; observation of 1 class, interview with 1 teacher and the Head of the school, discussion with 1 class, study of documentation – ELPs of 5 learners (from 1 class)
5 May 2000	Interview with 1 Prague teacher
4 May 2000	School visit – Brno; observation of 2 classes, interview with 1 teacher and discussion with 1 class, study of documentation – ELPs of 6 learners (from 1 class)
8 June 2000	6 th seminar with pilot teachers

TABLE 12. continues on the following page

TABLE 12. continued from the previous page

<i>Date</i>	<i>Activity</i>
June 2000	Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 3 – Modern Languages Project Group (widened by Teacher and Learner Questionnaire A)
21 June 2000	Interview with 3 teachers
End of June 2000	Teacher Questionnaire B
30 July 2000	Completion of the pilot project
June 2001	Self-made Teacher Questionnaire C
February 2002	Telephone interviews with 2 teachers

The pre-dissemination phase included the following activities:

TABLE 13. A survey of the pre-dissemination phase activities

<i>Date</i>	<i>Activity</i>
October 2000	Article in a professional journal for language teachers offering training for ELP teacher trainers
August + September 2001	Letters to school authorities asking for help with the choice of ELP teacher trainers and an invitation to the National Conference
26 September 2001	European Day of Languages – National Conference The European Language Portfolio – an effective tool in language teaching and learning Recruitment of teacher trainers (1 st seminar for ELP teacher trainers)
12 November 2001	2 nd seminar for ELP teacher trainers + Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1
17 December 2001	3 rd seminar for ELP teacher trainers + Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 2
30 January 2002	4 th seminar for ELP teacher trainers + Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 3
9 May 2002	5 th seminar for ELP teacher trainers
24 June 2002	School visit – Lysá nad Labem; observation of 1 class, interview with 1 teacher trainer and discussion with 1 class, study of documentation – ELPs of 21 learners (from 2 classes)
25 June 2002	School visit – Praha; interview with 1 teacher trainer
27 June 2002	School visit- Sokolov; interview with 1 teacher trainer, study of documentation – ELPs of 3 learners (from 1 class)

As can be seen from Table 12 and Table 13, both groups of teachers met at seminars. The first group met six times: there were five one-day seminars run by the author of the study and one three-day seminar run by David Little from Trinity College, Dublin. The teacher trainers' group met five times; all its seminars were run by the author of the study. As both groups included teachers of different target languages, the working language was Czech (the seminar run by David Little was interpreted). With two exceptions (the fourth seminar with pilot teachers and the fourth seminar for ELP teacher trainers), seminar attendance did not drop below 75 per cent.

The seminars focused on ELP parts and ELP characteristics, descriptors of communicative activities and foreign language teaching and learning objectives, various types of assessment (criterion-referenced assessment in particular), learner autonomy, learner self-assessment, classroom interaction, effective teaching techniques, ELP introduction and the Council of Europe's initiatives. In addition, the teacher trainers prepared an outline of their future seminars for teachers. When available, research results from the Czech Republic and other piloting countries were presented.

While during the first seminar a high proportion of all the work was conducted by the trainer, during all the seminars that followed (both for the teachers and the teacher trainers) the main role transferred from the trainer to the participants. The sharing of ideas and group discussions, followed by presentations of group work results, were fundamental. However, it became clear that input from the trainer could not be neglected either and therefore presentations were made, especially to counterbalance the lack of expertise in supporting learner autonomy and self-assessment. A combination of a) group discussions with feedback to other teachers, b) presentations prepared before the seminar by individual teachers and teacher trainers and c) trainer's input seemed to be ideal. Participants reflected on descriptions of effective ELP pedagogy techniques presented by their colleagues and "collected" those techniques that suited their beliefs and attitudes. They were sometimes invited to use an exploratory approach to their education: e.g., the teacher trainers examined their textbooks and attempted to find all the descriptors of communicative activities that were not taught in them. This task helped to diminish teacher trainers' feelings that there were discrepancies between their own objectives and the descriptors of communicative activities. The process of "practicalizing received knowledge" (see 3.2) was relatively

common, especially in the pilot phase, owing to the lack of experiential knowledge.

Collaboration of teachers of different languages working in various regions and their sharing of ideas was supported and informal teachers' and teacher trainers' networks were formed. In both groups, following the second seminar, discussion was very productive. Field notes were always taken and they were completed within one week after the seminars; transparencies or posters summarizing the main points of discussion were gathered.

Discussions and group summaries were usually semi-structured. For example, a discussion in the second seminar followed the questions for structured reflection presented by Prof. Gerard Westhoff in the ELP coordinators' seminar in Enschede, Holland, 1999: "*What have you done? For what reason or with what purpose? Did it work? How do you know? What have you learned from this activity?*" 41 teachers participating in this seminar formed eight groups according to the Years with which they were working with the ELP. When summarizing the discussion, the teachers presented specific examples of their class work (the presentations were of course group summaries, not records of work or the opinions of all individuals). In the fifth seminar, a group discussion was facilitated by the following summary agenda: a) positive experience and examples of tried-out, effective techniques and procedures, b) problems to be solved, and c) suggestions about their solution. Although the main topic of the discussion was learners' self-assessment, the teachers widened it and included a description of a variety of activities developed owing to the work with the ELP and involvement in the pilot project. In another seminar, run by Prof. David Little, apart from thirty pilot teachers, two coordinators of the project from abroad, fifteen Prague mentors and three teacher trainees participated. This external perspective stimulated all discussions, in particular the discussion analyzing advantages and drawbacks of the ELP, and challenged pilot teachers to clarify the concept of the project.

Brief informal interviews conducted during the pilot phase with inexperienced Prague teachers (graduates of Faculty of Education in Prague) were unstructured and they assisted in both further development of the project and in discussing and checking the instruments of data collection. The first interview also facilitated preparation for the seminar, i.e. it aimed at finding issues that the teachers questioned and wanted to have answered. The issues raised concerned technical details (e.g. how to fill in the information in the ELP, the possibility of additional notes), though

two key problems occurred (a possibility of filling in the information for more languages and the use of the ELP descriptors for planning). The interview in May 2000 focused on the learners' ability to assess their performance and proficiency and on the way to deal with contradictions between the teacher's assessment and learner's self-assessment.

As for Teacher and Learner Questionnaires 1, 2, 3 and A, depending on the dates of the seminars, they were either administered in the seminar and mailed back, or they were mailed to the teachers and submitted in the seminar. The teachers often welcomed the latter procedure. To prevent teachers and learners from feeling overburdened with data-gathering procedures, as already mentioned, Teacher and Learner Questionnaires A were attached to those of the CE. The teachers were informed about the further items, asked for additional information and given an explanation about the purpose of the study. For ethical reasons, concerning the low number of qualified language teachers in the Czech Republic, and in an effort to enable all interested teachers to enrol in the project, the questions about teachers' qualification were not posed at the beginning of the project. Both Teacher Questionnaire B administered at the end of the pilot phase and Teacher Questionnaire C administered one year after the finish of the pilot phase had a cover letter clarifying the study and asking for help.

Regarding the learners' questionnaires, first and foremost, the teachers were asked to support valid research results and to restrain from influencing learners' opinions. A recommendation was made to fill in the learners' questionnaires in classes to increase their return rate, but the final decision rested with the teachers; it was also recommended that the learners divide Questionnaire A and fill it in in two lessons.

Voluntary enrolment in the project along with common meetings in the seminars and the respondents' feeling of taking an active part in an important Council of Europe's project maximized return rates. They were high (e.g. Teacher Questionnaire A 90.4%, Learner Questionnaire 3 and A 78.5%), except for Questionnaire C conducted one year after the end of the project with return rate 34, i.e. 65.4 %.

The teacher trainers participating in the pre-dissemination phase were also acquainted with the purpose of the study and asked for assistance, and, when possible, the findings were discussed with them. Three questionnaires were conducted and incorporated in the seminars. They also served another purpose: questions about teacher trainers' expectations were a great help when preparing the seminars that followed and questions about lesson objectives were an awareness-raising activity

and a basis for the work with the descriptors. The task of studying the descriptors and seeking those that were not covered in the textbooks was intended for the teacher trainers' assurance that the descriptor activities were not totally unknown to them.

School visits comprising class observation, interviews with the teachers, discussions with whole classes and study of filled-in ELPs were invaluable research instruments. They were planned and arranged at the teachers' and teacher trainers' invitation. (All project teachers were asked in the fifth seminar in February 2000 and all teacher trainers in the fifth seminar in May 2002 whether a visit to their school might be carried out.) As an open door policy in Czech schools is far from being a common tradition, the direction of each visit depended heavily on the teachers' ideas and decisions. In view of the teachers' time available, their diverse experience and the school and class conditions, the interviews were unstructured; however, the main issues under investigation were predetermined to obtain in-depth information. They related to the quality of ELP use, the quality of work with descriptors of communicative activities and use of learner self-assessment. Broad opinion questions appeared best to begin the interview, e.g. "*What do you like about the ELP?*" and "*What is difficult?*" followed by questions "*What do you think about the descriptors of communicative activities?*" and "*What do you think about learner self-assessment?*" More specific experience questions included e.g. "*How do you link the textbook with the ELP?*", "*How did the parents react to the ELP?*" "*Do learners with different school results react to the ELP differently?*" and solution questions "*How do you cope with the situation when some learners cannot achieve a specific descriptor task for a long time?*"

When carrying out an interview with a class, the following questions produced the best results: "*Which tasks in the Biography can you do well?*", "*Which tasks do you find very difficult?*", "*Have your parents seen the Portfolio?*" and "*What is not clear to you?*" Content analysis of the ELPs focused mainly on the frequency, content and quality of learners' entries and on use of the free pages.

A continuous recording technique was used during the interviews and classroom observations. Written field notes were made during the visits and completed no later than one week after the event.

5.4. Treatment of the data

A case study methodology was applied to the research and so both statistical and qualitative analyses were carried out (cf. Nunan 1992, 75). Lynch's description (1996, 15) of quantitative methods is clearly applicable to the study. He maintains that "quantitative methods are at times "subjective" in the sense of techniques such as opinion polls being concerned with human feelings and beliefs (one definition of subjective). Merely quantifying something does not ensure objectivity."

Investigation of all five areas of research (see Chapter 4) used a mixture of methods. Of eighteen questions phrased in these areas, the study of three of them employed only quantitative methodology, whereas research into eight of them was only qualitative (the research of seven questions was a hybrid). Quantitative methodology only was used preferably for the sample of learners. The learners were asked closed questions with the intention a) of shortening the questionnaires and making them easier to complete and b) of compiling manageable data. On the contrary, qualitative methodology was typical for examining the teacher trainers' beliefs. It was responsive to the need for widening the scope of the research (e.g. identifying the common instructional objectives and the content of the assessment of learners, cf. Goddard & Villanovn 1996, 92). As the study focused rather on the beliefs and attitudes of the whole sample than on those of individuals, the majority of the qualitative data were quantified so that the distribution of the teachers' responses could be compared.

Regarding the pilot phase, learners' and teachers' questionnaires were stored separately and learners' questionnaires were also grouped according to the individual classes. Names of all teachers were numerically coded and these codes were used throughout the whole enquiry for both the teachers and their learners.

Concerning the quantitative data, all closed-response answers from all teachers' and learners' questionnaires as well as basic data about the teachers and learners (sex, Year, language taught/learned, learners' grades) were numerically coded too and they were compiled in the rows-and-columns approach of the Excel spreadsheet programme. The analysis was limited, as a rule, to descriptive statistics: raw frequencies, percentages and means were calculated. Other indicators of central tendency than means (mode, median and dispersion - low-high and range) were calculated in the responses to Likert-scale questions (see 6.1.1). One questionnaire was based on the survey designed by Nunan and therefore

a comparison with the original results was made (see 6.1.1, Nunan 1992). When analyzing key data from Learner Questionnaire A (see 6.1.2 and 6.2.2), frequency comparison statistics, i.e. the chi-square statistic was used to study the statistical significance of results (the alpha level was set at 0.1 and the degrees of freedom were 1). To meet the assumptions about the χ^2 statistic (the need for expected frequencies greater than 10), fewer categories were made (Brown 2001, 169). The significance of a frequency comparison was determined for the categories of learners according to their gender, age, language learned and school-report grade as well as for the categories of different learners' responses to specific survey questions. Procedures described in Brown's publications (1988 and 2001) were very helpful in carrying out all analyses. Graphs were made only for analyses of key issues.

To gain insight into the teachers' and teacher trainers' beliefs and attitudes, the data were cross-referenced to three variables: to the teachers' and teacher trainers' qualification or length of experience, the type of school in which they worked and the language they taught. A variable of their learners' language proficiency was used in the comparison of teachers' objectives with the descriptors of communicative activities and in the analysis of teachers' evaluations of the scales of language proficiency. Where possible, pilot teachers' responses were also cross-referenced to relevant responses of learners. This was carried out mainly when analyzing beliefs about learner self-assessment.

Qualitative data analysis was frequent in the research. For example, to examine teachers' overall attitudes towards the work with the ELP, open-response value questions from Teacher Questionnaire A were used: "*What are you proud of in your work with the Portfolio?*" and "*What did not turn out well?*" All the teachers' responses to one answer were transcribed together and the data were scanned for main patterns. The word processor search function was used to facilitate key-word analysis and categorization of responses. Several expressions occurred repeatedly in the responses (e.g. in the answers to the first question "on their own/autonomously, active, effort/tried hard, more, higher, motivate, enjoy, interesting, think, assess, low-achieving learners"). With their help, the content of the responses was re-examined and key repeated points were listed to generate categories (Highlen & Finley 1996, 187); to avoid the researcher's bias, this was not done in advance (the research could be characterized rather as hypothesis-forming than hypothesis-confirming, cf. Brown 2001, 214). Individual teachers' responses sometimes occurred in several categories due to the number of elements contained in them.

The categories were checked to limit overlapping. Evaluations of the items in reverse order and random order were beneficial. Special attention was given to categories in which more than one response by the same teacher was made. Such responses were double-checked and usually only the most expressive answer was chosen so that repetition and redundancy were avoided (this procedure was not followed in the investigation of teachers' beliefs about self-assessment in which the need to express more specific responses was felt). The categories were placed in a matrix and grouped, referring to broader issues. Iterative attempts to arrange and rearrange the groups were made in order to establish groups that were aptly illustrative. During this process all categories were double-checked against all groups to make certain that they could not be assigned to other groups. Returns to the original transcription were sometimes beneficial. Finally, raw frequencies of categories and groups were calculated and where appropriate, percentages were calculated too. (The calculations of percentages and means were not done when they would have distorted the data, e.g. when there were more than one response from individual teachers or, on the contrary, when fewer teachers responded). To increase the reliability of the analysis, the categorization of the responses was double-checked one month later. The intracoder agreement coefficient was counted. It was .90 (the number of codings that agreed 70, the total number of codings 78).

With two exceptions, qualitative analysis of responses to open questions followed the steps mentioned above. Firstly, iterative reading, highlighting and marking usually substituted for the use of the word-processor search function. This was possible because the transcribed texts to be analyzed were short, each response containing a minimum of one line and a maximum of four lines. Nevertheless, the use of the word processor at the beginning of the enquiry was very helpful. Secondly, the coding was double-checked iteratively on the day of the development of the table and then on two following days, when an initial set of category definitions was refined. In three cases additional amendments were made later when designing a new table and cross-checking the previous data.

Matrices helped to analyze and synthesize the data but they also brought the problem of the general and the specific. When some of the items were included in particular general categories, their specific characteristics were lost and when specific subcategories were kept, too many items were listed and so the problem of striking a balance between general and specific had to be continually considered. Respondents' expressions were used as much as possible in the categories to preserve

the data (e.g. “Learners thought about themselves, assessed themselves”) and paraphrasing was done exceptionally. Unfortunately, paraphrasing usually meant losing the teachers’ authentic language, e.g. one teacher wrote “The learners stopped answering the question “What did you learn in the recent months?” with the word “nothing”; or another teacher commented “Most importantly, the portfolio is the learners’ result in my group, I did not try to lead the learners too much, saying to them “put this into your file”, “let’s all do this point today”, etc.”

5.5. Validity, reliability, credibility, transferability and dependability

As quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the research, both 1) validity and reliability and 2) credibility, transferability and dependability are considered in this section (cf. Brown 2001). (The issues concerning the reliability and dependability of the findings were addressed to a considerable extent in the previous section.)

The samples investigated in the study were not representative of language teachers in the Czech Republic as a whole (cf. 5.1 – the significantly higher number of teachers from schools with extended language learning and from 8-year grammar schools). A non-probability method of sampling (Cohen & Manion 1989) seriously threatens the external validity and transferability of the findings: they cannot be generalized (cf. Wampold 1996). The teachers and teacher trainers had a special quality: a deeper interest in the teaching profession demonstrated both in their enrolment on the project and in their study of the educational journals and newspapers that called on them to participate in a European project. Notably the teacher trainers’ sample significantly differed from the Czech teaching population. Conversely, work with the ELP in the future is expected to be carried out on a voluntary basis too, which means that, similarly to the pilot phase, only the teachers who will be interested in ELP pedagogy should attempt to implement it.

The Hawthorne effect (Brown 1988) might have influenced the research, especially its pilot phase, owing to the special attention paid to its participants. The seminars took place at the Ministry of Education and were exclusive to these teachers. The pilot teachers received a small amount of money from the Ministry of Education and their expenses were reimbursed. Letters of thanks were sent to the Heads of schools, appreciating the teachers’ participation in a significant Council of Europe

project. As a result, some teachers could have tended to conform to the concepts presented in the seminars and could have responded in a way they considered “appropriate”, showing thus subject expectancy tendency (see Brown 1988, 33-34), rather than describing what they really thought and what really occurred in the classrooms. Therefore the importance for valid, credible and reliable data was often emphasized, teachers were urged to avoid any bias and distortion of facts and they were repeatedly reminded about the need for an honest approach to the research in which they participated. In the pre-dissemination phase, to increase the validity and reliability of the results, the teacher trainers were asked in two questionnaires to indicate their basic data (the type of school, language taught and number of years of teaching experience) but to fill in the questionnaires anonymously. (At the same time this “anonymous” approach had a drawback because the consistency or development of teacher trainers’ responses could not be judged.)

The Hawthorne effect could also have influenced the learners. They were specially selected by teachers to pilot the project and they could, with justification, have a feeling of being involved in a very important activity. The teachers most probably chose classes that they themselves enjoyed to teach. The final result of the choice showed the teachers’ natural inclination to introduce the ELP during the learners’ first encounter with the foreign language (and/or during the learners’ first encounter with a new teacher or a new school) when learners are assumed to be more motivated. All these facts again threaten the validity and transferability of the findings.

The researcher’s role in the study was problematic. Deep involvement in the project and participation in all the activities resembled an emic perspective (Pike 1963). However, other activities made the present author take on heavy responsibility for the outcomes, namely: the design of the Czech version of the ELP, presentations in the seminars and conducting all the questionnaires. To increase the reliability and dependability of the outcomes (to avoid bias and at the same time a feeling of disappointment over less favourable findings), analysis of the data was not carried out immediately and the wisdom of hindsight was extremely beneficial.

The research question was posed in such a way as to minimize the threat to internal validity and credibility. The aim of the study was not to investigate the differences in the beliefs and attitudes of individual subjects or to examine casual relationship. The project respected both the different situations in which the participants worked and the different factors that influenced their situations.

A considerable effort went into the careful design of the questionnaires used in the research but leading questions still occurred in Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1 (“*Do you reflect on lesson objectives? If yes, would you state three objectives typical of your lessons?*”), and “*What do you follow when specifying the content of the lessons?*”). Some questions used in Teacher and Learner questionnaires by the General Rapporteur of the Modern Languages ELP Pilot Project Group and some questions in Teacher Questionnaire A displayed this tendency too.

The validity and credibility of learners’ answers in questionnaires could not be absolutely ensured: every teacher could have conducted the questionnaires in a different way and the context in which the responses were filled in was unknown. Having said that, the return rate of Learner Questionnaire 3 and A was high, 78 per cent ($n = 701$). As some data were missing in three classes, the number of completely analyzed questionnaires reduced in some responses to 660 or 659, which still represents a relatively high percentage, i.e. 74 per cent of all the learners involved. Unfortunately, the solitary French class did not submit the questionnaire.

Return rates of Teacher Questionnaires 3 (+A) and B were extremely high: 90.4% and 92.3% respectively. The rates decreased only in Teacher Questionnaire C that was conducted one year after the end of the pilot phase (65.4%). Return rates of Teacher Trainer Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3 were 92.5%, 81.1% and 58.5% respectively, however the teacher trainers completed and submitted the questionnaires during the seminars.

To increase the internal validity and credibility of the findings, techniques provided by Guba and Lincoln (1989, in Lynch 1996, 57) were used during the project, i.e. prolonged engagement, persistent observation, progressive subjectivity, member checks and negative case analysis. The groups were observed and the data were collected during a longer period of time when the researcher had a unique opportunity to get to know the teachers and teacher trainers and build up good relationships with them. As some data compiled in the pilot phase needed further explanation, the enquiry went through the second phase (cf. use of open-ended questions in Goddard & Villanovn 1996, 92). Field notes and continuing recording and study of all the materials and findings helped the researcher to develop personal constructions. Interviews with Prague teachers, interviews during school visits and making the findings explicit during the pre-dissemination phase were very helpful too and so was the search for responses that were not in harmony with initial expectations.

Another powerful tool for enhancing the validity, credibility, reliability and dependability of the research was triangulation. Altogether three types of triangulation recommended by Brown (2001, 228) were employed: data triangulation, methodological triangulation and time triangulation. Data were collected from teachers, teacher trainers and learners. A good variety of methods was typical for the study and, in addition, the data were gathered continually. Procedures for triangulation are depicted in the following table. (Triangulation was not carried out in the case of the data that had a complementary function. These were general foreign language teaching and learning beliefs and attitudes, i.e. problem area 1).

In order to clarify the procedures further, the following part of this section describes how triangulation was used when examining teachers'

TABLE 14. Identification of the types of triangulation used in the specific problem areas

	<i>Data triangulation – different sources</i>	<i>Methodological triangulation – different techniques</i>	<i>Time triangulation – different occasions</i>
Problem area 2 – General evaluation of the ELP and ELP use	Teachers, learners, teacher trainers	Questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews, study of the ELPs	The end of the pilot phase and one year after the end of the pilot phase
Problem area 3 – Instructional objectives and the ELP descriptors of communicative activities	Teachers, teacher trainers	Questionnaires, study of posters	Different stages of the pre- dissemination phase
Problem area 4 – Use of the descriptors of communicative activities	Teachers, teacher trainers	Questionnaires, study of posters and transparencies, field notes, interviews	The beginning of the pilot phase, five months later, the end of the pilot phase
Problem area 5 – Use of learners' self-assessment	Teachers, learners	Questionnaires, study of posters, field notes	The beginning of the pilot phase, five months later, the end of the pilot phase

and teacher trainers' beliefs about the descriptors of communicative activities (problem areas 3 and 4).

The enquiry about the teachers' beliefs comprised four main phases (cf. Table 13).

In the first phase the answers to an open question from Teacher Questionnaire 1 "*How useful were individual parts of the ELP?*" were analyzed to find out what importance the teachers attached to the descriptors. The functions of the descriptors were indicated and these were categorized with the help of a qualitative data analysis. The responses to question B in the same Teacher Questionnaire 1 "*Does the Portfolio help you make the learning objectives clear to your learners?*" were calculated to support or refute the previous findings. Ideas referring to the descriptors presented in the second seminar were examined and compared with the above-mentioned results.

The investigation in the second phase started with the teachers' seminar. The issues under discussion in this seminar were analyzed. Answers to two open-ended questions ("*What do you like best about the Portfolio?*" and "*What do you like least about the Portfolio?*") compiled from Teacher Questionnaire 2 were examined with an intention identical to that in the first step in phase one, i.e. to explore the importance that the teachers attached to the descriptors. The functions of the descriptors expressed by the teachers were again categorized, where possible identically to the categories based on Teacher Questionnaire 1. Cross-checking of the findings against the answers to question B in Teacher Questionnaire 2 was carried out (the question "*Does the Portfolio help you make the learning objectives clear?*") to examine the results more thoroughly. The correlation with the group of the teachers dissatisfied with the descriptors was investigated. The responses to the very similar B questions in Teacher Questionnaires 1 and 2 were compared. Lastly, discrepancies in answers were sought. All items referring to the descriptors in the teachers' poster summaries made in the 4th seminar were analyzed and the results of the analysis were compared with previous findings. The teachers' beliefs expressed in the 5th seminar were examined.

The investigation of the third phase consisted of the following steps. Four closed items in Teacher Questionnaire 3 were examined to obtain further data about the teachers' beliefs about the descriptors and the scale of language proficiency. These were a repeated but slightly differently worded question "*Is the ELP useful in clarifying learning objectives with your learners?*"; item 1 "*The levels in the Common Framework are so broad that they do not allow my learners to appreciate their progress*"; item 7 "*The*

descriptors used in the checklists are not always clear"; and item 8 "*I hope more detailed sample lists for the different levels will become available*". The answers were cross-referenced to the basic data about the teachers and learners (the language taught, the age of the learners, their level of language proficiency, teacher's qualification and type of school).

The fourth phase of the enquiry contained two moves and it began with an evaluation of the textbooks because the textbooks were evidently an extremely important factor influencing teachers' specification of instructional objectives and lesson content. The teachers' views on textbooks and on the harmony between the textbooks and the descriptors were examined. The data were cross-referenced to three variables: the teachers' qualifications, the type of school in which they worked and the language they taught. A study of the teachers' own opinions on the descriptors and on the relationship between the descriptors and teachers' goals followed, accompanied by the use of the same variables. The data obtained by all three analyses were compared to gain a richer insight into this problem area. Subsequently the planning and reporting functions of the descriptors and the perspective of using the descriptor as instructional objectives were discussed with two experienced teachers participating in the project with regard to their applicability in the Czech context.

Scrutiny of the beliefs about the descriptors was carried out during the pre-dissemination phase too, with the aim of obtaining supplementary data and enriching the findings. Similarly to the pilot phase, the investigation began by analyzing responses to broad questions from Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1 "*What do you expect from your work with the ELP?*" and "*What do you expect from the seminars?*". These questions were used to find out if the teacher trainers identified the ELP with the descriptors. Categories regarding use of the descriptors were created, based on a qualitative data analysis, and, to ensure a continuation of the research, those formed in the pilot phase were employed where possible. To compile significant baseline data, an enquiry about teacher trainers' own instructional objectives was conducted in the same Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1. To assist involvement in the project, the teacher trainers were invited to study the descriptor activities of one proficiency level and to find the activities that were not taught in their textbooks, with the researcher's great hope that the discrepancies would not be large. The examination of the missing descriptors that followed attempted to reveal their characteristics. Evaluation of the textbooks and of their harmony with the descriptors was carried out, following the same procedure as

when examining teachers' beliefs about the textbooks so that a comparison analysis could be made.

To sum up, the aim of the study was to provide a "thick" description as well as "to minimize the biases of different data sources" (Brown 2001, 230). The former was only possible due to the researcher's partially emic perspective (cf. Brown 2001, 226).

6. Results

6.1. General foreign language teaching and learning beliefs and attitudes

In order to place the study into a broader perspective, this section examines mental factors operating in the context of foreign language teaching and learning in which the European Language Portfolio was piloted in the Czech Republic. The focus is on general teachers' beliefs about language teaching and general learners' attitudes towards language learning. Firstly, the overall beliefs of pilot teachers regarding a good foreign language teacher's qualities and the teaching of languages are explored and, secondly, there follows an investigation of pilot learners' attitudes towards foreign language learning and an investigation of their beliefs about this activity and foreign languages themselves. Thirdly, the teacher trainers' choice of language components and activities to be assessed is analyzed because this choice gives clear evidence of what the teacher trainers highly valued in language teaching and learning.

6.1.1. Teachers' beliefs about foreign language teaching

This subsection focuses on the beliefs of the pilot teachers. It shows the teachers' opinions on three areas: a) the significance of a foreign language teacher's qualities, b) the significance of principles determining foreign language teaching and c) the significance of foreign language teaching and learning activities.

The table that follows presents teachers' views on the significance of qualities that can characterize a good foreign language teacher. The teachers gave their responses to Likert-scale questions ranging from 1 (absolutely unimportant) to 7 (very important). The qualities are based on McDonough and Shaw's survey (1993, 297), apart from items 11 and 16-20 that were added to the list owing to their importance for ELP pedagogy and /or the Czech context. Altogether twenty factors are listed: 1) knowledge of the language system, 2) good pronunciation, 3) experience of living in a foreign country, 4) further education, 5) classroom performance, 6) cooperation with other language teachers, 7) length of employment as a teacher, 8) creating own materials, 9) careful planning of lessons, 10) same L1 as students, 11) ability to evaluate own work, 12) personal qualities (interested in learners etc.), 13) publications,

14) knowledge of learning theories, 15) wide vocabulary, 16) ability to encourage learners' interest in learning, 17) learners' preparation for exams, 18) positive attitude towards the profession, 19) ability to evaluate textbooks and 20) looking for new ideas.

TABLE 15. Teachers' beliefs about the qualities of a good foreign language teacher ($n = 48$, Teacher Questionnaire B, the end of the pilot phase)

	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Q 6	Q 7	Q 8	Q 9	Q 10
Mean	6.3	6.5	5.1	6.0	6.3	5.8	3.6	5.1	6.0	4.0
Mode	7	7	6	7	7	6	3	5	6	4
Median	7	7	5	7	6.5	6	3	5	6	4
Min	3	4	2	5	4	4	1	2	3	2
Max	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	7	7	5
Range	5	4	6	3	4	4	6	6	5	4
	Q 11	Q 12	Q 13	Q 14	Q 15	Q 16	Q 17	Q 18	Q 19	Q 20
Mean	6.3	6.4	3.1	5.0	6.0	6.9	5.0	6.8	5.1	6.4
Mode	7	7	3	5	6	7	6	7	6	7
Median	7	7	3	5	6	7	5	7	5	7
Min	4	4	1	2	3	5	3	5	3	4
Max	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Range	4	4	7	6	5	3	5	3	5	4

The teachers' evaluation of the significance of the enumerated teacher's qualities showed that the teachers ranked ability to encourage learners' interest in learning (Q16) and a positive attitude towards the profession (Q18) as the highest and their beliefs about them were homogeneous. These factors were followed in descending order by good pronunciation (Q2), personal qualities (interested in learners etc.) (Q12), looking for new ideas (Q20), ability to evaluate own work (Q11), knowledge of the language system (Q1) and classroom performance (Q5). The responses to these factors were relatively homogeneous, with the exception of the last but one item, i.e. knowledge of the language system. Its higher

dispersion of answers also occurred in the relatively highly evaluated items careful planning of lessons (Q9) and wide vocabulary (Q15); the same significance but the highest homogeneity of opinions was attached to the item further education (Q4). Such homogeneity of opinions was achieved only in Q16 and Q18, i.e. in the items that have the highest significance too. Significance was attached to cooperation with other language teachers (Q6) and five other items were evaluated as less significant (the items are listed in descending order): $M = 5.1$ - experience of living in a foreign country (Q3), ability to evaluate textbooks (Q19) and creating own materials (Q8); $M = 5.0$ - learners' preparation for exams (Q17) and knowledge of learning theories (Q14).

Generally, the teachers' opinions on a good language teacher's qualities were rather heterogeneous and they were spread out most in the item publications (Q13), followed in descending order by experience of living in a foreign country (Q3), length of employment as a teacher (Q7), creating own materials (Q8) and knowledge of learning theories (Q14). The teachers considered that publications (Q13) lacked significance and the majority of them tended to evaluate length of employment as a teacher (Q7) and same L1 as students to be of no significance (Q10); nobody attached great significance to the last two items.

The second table represents the pilot teachers' beliefs about the principles that determine their way of teaching and that are an absolute necessity for language teaching. (Each teacher was to state two principles.) Nunan's categories of "teachers' beliefs about the nature of language and learning" (Nunan 1992, 147) were used to summarize the responses, accompanied by ten other categories: encouragement of speaking, tolerance of learners' mistakes, a systematic approach, vocabulary enrichment, clear lesson objectives, assessment and monitoring, drilling, a balance between "traditional" and communicative methods, correct pronunciation and regular practice at home.

The percentage breakdown of the main categories was similar to Nunan's results (1992), though the sample investigated in the present study attached slightly less importance to the category "Reference to language/learning" and slightly more importance to the category "Reference to the learner". The percentages of the main categories in Nunan's survey were 54.3, 27.4 and 18.3 respectively and the percentages in the sample investigated here 41.4, 31.3 and 27.3 respectively. Both the added and the excluded subcategories (apart from "home, parental influence") belonged to the type "Reference to language/learning", in which Czech teachers attached great significance to "Encouragement of

TABLE 16. Teachers' beliefs about the main principles of language teaching (n = 48, Teacher Questionnaire B, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Category</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>	<i>f</i>
Reference to language/learning		41
Grammar, structures, correctness	50	1
Oral/written language relationships	41	1
Direct instruction	46	1
Input	43	1
Integration of four skills	9 28 52	3
Encouragement of speaking	3 10 11 17 20 22 29 30 35 41 42 43 44 45	14
Tolerance of learners' mistakes	2 41 44	3
Systematic approach	5 15 27 31 48	5
Vocabulary enrichment	8 30 42	3
Clear lesson objectives	24 33 49	3
Assessment and monitoring	15 24	2
Drilling	10	1
Balance between "traditional" and communicative methods	40	1
Correct pronunciation	3	1
Regular practice at home	35	1
Reference to environment/climate		31
Creation of rich, positive environment	2 6 12 16 18 23 25 26 27 28 51 52	12
Wide variety, many opportunities, frequent practice	14 16 17 19 20 31 32 38 39 40	10
Meaningful experiences/context	1 11 13 29	4
Social, collaborative, interactive learning	6 9 18 21 46	5
Reference to the learner		27
Individual differences	13 24 33	3
Relevance, purposefulness	1 8	2
Individual differences, readiness, stages of development	23 32 37 49	4
Confidence, motivation	1 3 8 12 14 18 19 21 22 25 27 45 48 50	14
Active involvement, child centred	5 25 47 50	4
Total		99
Not submitted	4 7 34 36	4

speaking”. The same great significance was attached to the subcategory “Confidence, motivation” ($f = 14$) in the category Reference to the learner. The subcategories “Creation of rich, positive environment” and “Wide variety, many opportunities, frequent practice” from the category “Reference to environment/climate” were frequently represented in both investigations ($f = 19.1\%$ of all responses in Nunan’s survey and $f = 22.2$ of all responses in this survey).

The last table of this subsection summarizes teachers’ beliefs about the significance of various foreign language class activities. Based on Nunan (1988b, 92) and Eltis and Low (1985, in Nunan 1988b, 89), the significance of eighteen activities was evaluated by the teachers on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (absolutely unimportant) to 7 (very important). These were: 1) conversation practice, 2) presentation of new subject matter, 3) grammar practice, 4) drills and memorizing, 5) vocabulary development, 6) pronunciation practice, 7) error correction, 8) language games, 9) drama activities and role-play, 10) using songs, 11) using pictures and real objects, 12) using film and video, 13) listening and using cassettes, 14) communication tasks, 15) reading books and magazines, 16) writing stories and descriptions, 17) learner self-correction of errors and 18) pair work and group work. (Nunan’s broad category “Explanations to class” was replaced by a narrower and more traditional category “presentation of new subject matter” – Q2.)

The teachers indicated conversation practice (Q1) and communication tasks (Q14) as the equally most significant activities and their opinions on this significance were exceptionally homogeneous. They further attached high importance to listening and using cassettes (Q13), to pair work and group work (Q18) and to using pictures and real objects (Q11) (the items are listed in descending order) and their responses to these items were relatively homogeneous. They evaluated relatively highly, on average, the items vocabulary development (Q5), presentation of new subject matter (Q2) and reading books and magazines (Q15) but of their beliefs about these items only their beliefs about vocabulary development were more homogeneous. Relative significance and homogeneity was attached to learner self-correction of errors (Q17) and to pronunciation practice (Q6). These items were followed in descending order (descending both in the significance and homogeneity of the responses) by language games (Q8), drama activities and role-play (Q9) and writing stories and descriptions (Q16). The items using songs (Q10) and using film and video (Q12) had the highest dispersion. The lowest significance was attached to drills and memorizing (Q4) which were evaluated exceptionally negatively ($M =$

TABLE 17. Teachers' beliefs about the significance of foreign language class activities ($n = 48$, Teacher Questionnaire B, the end of the pilot phase)

	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Q 6	Q 7	Q 8	Q 9
Mean	6.8	6.0	5.2	4.0	6.0	5.9	5.1	5.8	5.6
Mode	7	6	5	4	7	5	6	6	6
Median	7	6	5	4	7	6	5	6	6
Min	6	3	3	2	5	4	3	3	3
Max	7	7	7	6	7	7	7	7	7
Range	2	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	5
	Q 10	Q 11	Q 12	Q 13	Q 14	Q 15	Q 16	Q 17	Q 18
Mean	5.3	6.2	5.0	6.5	6.8	6.0	5.4	5.9	6.3
Mode	5	7	5	7	7	6	6	6	7
Median	5	6	5	7	7	6	6	6	6
Min	2	4	2	4	6	3	3	4	5
Max	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Range	6	4	6	4	2	5	5	4	3

4.0). All other items reached at least the mean 5.0 ($M = 5.0$ - using film and video - Q12, $M = 5.1$ - error correction - Q7, $M = 5.2$ - grammar practice - Q3 and $M = 5.3$ using songs - Q10), however, from the ELP perspective, there were teachers who evaluated extensive reading and free writing activities as lacking significance and teachers who found grammar practice highly significant.

When comparing the responses described in the individual tables of this subsection a numerous group of teachers appeared ($f = 37$, 77.1%) expressing their beliefs both about the great significance of conversation practice (see Table 17) and the teacher's ability to encourage learners' interest in learning (see Table 15). 32 teachers ($f = 66.7\%$) indicated both the teacher's ability to encourage learners' interest in learning and their positive attitude towards the profession as highly significant and all three above-mentioned factors were indicated at the same time as highly significant by 31 teachers (64.6%). The beliefs of 38 teachers ($f = 79.2\%$) were classified in one or more of the most common categories of Table 16: a) encouragement of speaking, b) confidence, motivation, c) creation

of rich, positive environment and d) wide variety, many opportunities, frequent practice).

6.1.2. Learners' attitudes and beliefs relating to foreign language learning

The aspects of the learners' attitudes and beliefs examined in this subsection combine two dimensions of language learning: 1) the affective dimension, including the intrinsic value placed on language learning and enjoyment or anxiety caused by this activity, and 2) the self-concept-related dimension. All analyzed data were gathered from Learner Questionnaire A compiled in June 2000.

The first table of this subsection examines the value that the learners placed on language learning. It depicts the learners' responses to a four-point Likert-like scale: "Learning a foreign language is (a) useful and interesting, (b) useful but boring, (c) interesting but useless, (d) useless and boring".

TABLE 18. Learners' attitudes towards foreign language learning ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Learning a foreign language is</i>					
4	3	2	1	Not submitted	<i>Total</i>
Useful and interesting	Useful but boring	Interesting but useless	Useless and boring		
560	132	3	3	3	701
79.9%	18.8%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	100%

The frequency of occurrence of the learners who considered language learning both useful and interesting was extremely high, nearly 80 per cent, whereas the percentage of the learners considering language learning useless was negligible. Approximately every fifth learner viewed language learning critically and evaluated it as boring, or useless, or as both boring and useless ($f = 19.7\%$).

When exploring the learners' attitudes further, four different contingency tables were prepared focusing on the learner's a) gender, b) age, c) language learned and d) school-report grade. The chi-square statistic was applied, using the value required for significance at .01 probability level.

In comparison with Table 18, fewer categories were established in the contingency tables: the first contained only the learners totally satisfied with language learning, finding it both interesting and enjoyable, and the second comprised all the remaining learners, i.e. those who objected to language learning and evaluated it either as boring, or useless, or as both useless and boring.

	<i>Learning a foreign language is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
Boys	224	64	288
Girls	336	74	410
Total	560	138	698

$\chi^2 = 1.86, p < .01$

Figure 7. Comparison of boys' and girls' attitudes towards learning a foreign language ($n = 698$)

Figure 7 shows that there was not a statistically significant difference between boys' and girls' attitudes towards foreign languages.

Similarly, there was no statistical significance between the learners' attitudes towards language learning and their age ($n = 698, \chi^2 = 0.01, p < .01$).

	<i>Learning a foreign language is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
Learners of English	389	87	476
Learners of German	171	51	222
Total	560	138	698

$\chi^2 = 2.11, p < .01$

Figure 8. Comparison of attitudes of learners of English and German ($n = 698$)

As can be seen in Figure 8, when examining the language learned, the obtained value also did not exceed the value required for significance.

When using the learners' grades as an independent variable, the learners were divided into two categories - the first combining the learners with the best grades (i.e. grades one and two) and the second combining the learners with grades three, four and five.

Grades	<i>Learning a foreign language is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
1 + 2	429	83	512
3 – 5	97	51	148
<i>Total</i>	526	134	660

$$\chi^2 = 23.62, p < .01$$

Figure 9. Learners' attitudes towards foreign language learning in relation to the learners' school grades ($n = 660$)

Predictably enough, the chi-square statistic produced in Figure 9 showed statistically significant results, i.e. an association between the learners' attitudes towards language learning and their school grades. The better the grades, the more positive the learners' attitudes towards language learning were and, correspondingly, lower-achievers adopted negative attitudes towards language learning more often.

Further investigation of this association is presented in the two following figures using a gender breakdown.

Figures 10 and 11 show a difference in the observed frequencies when alpha level was set at .01. Whereas the boys' attitudes were associated with their grades and positive attitudes increased with better grades, this association was not confirmed in the girls' category.

Learners' attitudes towards learning foreign languages were also tested by the question "I am afraid of speaking to foreigners" which produced relatively good results. 52.8% of the learners denied a fear, 26.5% were not certain about it and 20.5% expressed their negative feelings (one learner did not give an answer).

Boys – Grades	<i>Learning a foreign language is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
1 + 2	164	31	195
3 – 5	48	32	80
<i>Total</i>	212	63	275

$$\chi^2 = 19.71, p < .01$$

Figure 10. Boys’ attitudes towards foreign language learning in relation to their school grades ($n = 275$)

Girls – Grades	<i>Learning a foreign language is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
1 + 2	265	52	317
3 – 5	49	19	68
<i>Total</i>	314	71	385

$$\chi^2 = 4.96, p < .01$$

Figure 11. Girls’ attitudes towards foreign language learning in relation to their school grades ($n = 385$)

Table 19 illustrates the learners’ beliefs about the difficulty of the specific foreign language, responding to the Likert-type scale ranging from “very difficult”, to “very easy”.

The majority of the learners found the language that they learned neither difficult nor easy, but the distribution of the results was negatively skewed and the number of the responses evaluating the foreign language as very difficult and difficult ($f = 28.0$) exceeded the number of the responses evaluating the language as easy and very easy ($f = 9.1\%$).

Figure 12 proceeds with the investigation of the learners’ perceived difficulty of languages by using a language breakdown (the categories “very difficult” and “difficult” and the categories “very easy” and “easy” are combined).

TABLE 19. Learners' beliefs about the difficulty of the foreign languages ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>English / German is</i>						
1 Very difficult	2 Difficult	3 Neither difficult nor easy	4 Easy	5 Very easy	Not submitted	<i>Total</i>
6.0%	22.0%	62.6%	7.6%	1.6%	0.3%	701 100%

<i>The difficulty of the language</i>	1+2 Difficult + very difficult	3 Neither difficult nor easy	4+5 Very easy + easy	<i>Total</i>	Not submitted
English	127	306	44	477	
German	69	133	20	222	2
<i>Total</i>	196	439	64	699	2

$$\chi^2 = 1.51, p < .01$$

Figure 12. Learners' beliefs about the difficulty of English and German ($n = 701$)

As can be seen from the contingency table, observed frequencies did not differentiate significantly between English and German.

The following figure focuses on the evaluation of the second foreign language that some of the learners studied.

<i>The difficulty of the language</i>	1+2 Difficult + very difficult	3 Neither difficult nor easy	4+5 Very easy + easy	<i>Total</i>
English	17	31	31	79
German	83	53	17	153
<i>Total</i>	100	84	48	232

$$\chi^2 = 34.18, p < .01$$

Figure 13. Learners' beliefs about the difficulty of English and German as a second foreign language ($n = 232$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

Figure 13 indicates that the learners' beliefs about the second foreign language differed from their beliefs about the first foreign language: statistically significant differences were found in the evaluation of the perceived difficulty of English and German. When studied as a second foreign language, English was considered easier than German and, correspondingly, German was considered more difficult than English.

Table 20 compiles the responses to the statement "I learn languages easily", using the scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

TABLE 20. Learners' beliefs about their ability to learn foreign languages ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>I learn languages easily</i>						
5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 I don't know	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree	Not submitted	<i>Total</i>
5.3%	29.4%	24.5%	33.0%	7.7%	0.1%	701 100%

The responses in the table are slightly negatively skewed: the number of learners perceiving the process of learning languages as difficult ($f = 40.7\%$) exceeded the number of those who evaluated it as easy ($f = 34.7\%$).

Figure 14 investigates a correlation between the perceived difficulty of learning foreign languages and learners' grades. Fewer categories were made to make the comparison feasible.

<i>I learn languages easily</i>					
Grades	Agree 5+4	I don't know 3	Disagree 2+1	<i>Total</i>	Not supplied
1 + 2	200	127	184	511	
3 – 5	20	37	91	148	
<i>Total</i>	220	164	275	659	42

$$\chi^2 = 40.43, p < .01$$

Figure 14. Learners' beliefs about their ability to learn foreign languages in relation to their school grades ($n = 701$)

Figure 14 shows a high correlation between the responses: the learners with lower grades were less confident about their language learning abilities.

When analyzing the data in Figure 14 and using age breakdown, statistically significant results did not occur and an association between the learners' perceived difficulty of language learning and the learners' ages was not found.

The table that follows examines an association between the learners' attitudes towards learning foreign languages and their beliefs about their ability to learn languages.

TABLE 21. Comparison of learners' attitudes towards learning foreign languages with their beliefs about their ability to learn foreign languages ($n = 699$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>I learn languages easily</i>	<i>Learning a foreign language is</i>				<i>Total</i>
	1 Useful and interesting	2 Useful but boring	3 Interesting but useless	4 Useless and boring	
5 Strongly agree	5.3%	0%	0%	0%	5.3%
4 Agree	27.2%	2.0%	0.1%	0.1%	29.5%
3 I don't know	20.8%	3.3%	0.1%	0.3%	24.5%
2 Disagree	22.9%	10.0%	0%	0%	33.0%
1 Strongly disagree	4.0%	3.6%	0.1%	0%	7.7%
<i>Total</i>	560 80.2%	132 18.9%	3 0.4%	3 0.4%	698 100%

$$\chi^2 = 40.86, df = 1, p < .01$$

The chi-square statistic of the data presented in Table 21 used a lower number of categories, joining categories a) "strongly agree" and "agree", b) "I don't know", "disagree" and "strongly disagree" and c) "useful but boring", "interesting but useless" and "useless and boring". Only the category "useful and interesting" stood alone.

The perceived high ability to learn a foreign language differentiated significantly between the learners with favourable and critical attitudes

towards language learning. The learners who believed that their ability was limited or low took a negative attitude towards language learning more often.

Table 22 indicates the learners' beliefs about language components and learning procedures. It compares learners' responses to the statements "The most important thing is to learn words"; "The most important thing is to learn grammar"; and "The most important thing is to translate sentences from Czech".

TABLE 22. Learners' beliefs about the fundamentals of foreign language learning ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>The most important thing is</i>	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 I don't know	2 Disagree	1 Strongly disagree	<i>Mean</i>	Not submitted
To learn words	23.1%	37.9%	13.4%	19.6%	6.0%	3.53	1
To learn grammar	14.1%	37.7%	29.1%	17.0%	2.0%	3.45	1
To translate sentences from Czech	15.0%	37.1%	21.4%	21.0%	5.4%	3.35	1

The distribution in all three items is positively skewed: the frequency of occurrence of learners who found such learning important highly exceeded the frequency of those who considered it insignificant. The positive responses to all three items were similar, with the mean between 3.3 and 3.6. The highest mean related to learning words – 3.53 and the lowest to translation from the mother tongue – 3.35. The number of the learners who did not know if learning grammar was important was high. Statistically significant relationships between these items were examined but significant relationships were not found. Significant differences also did not occur between high-achievers and low-achievers and their beliefs about the importance of learning the items listed in the table.

To sum up, learners' overall attitudes towards learning foreign languages appeared to be very positive. The learners expressed their strong interest in language learning and they believed in the high prestige of this activity

though a majority of them did not evaluate languages as easy (see Table 19) and 40.7 per cent of them indicated that learning languages was difficult (see Table 20).

6.1.3. Teacher trainers' assessment of foreign language learning

The value given by language teachers to various aspects of language teaching and learning is often reflected in the focus of their learners' assessments. This subsection hence presents teacher trainers' ($n = 43$) responses to the question of what type of schoolwork they graded. The tested language components and tasks are divided into two categories – oral tasks and written tasks and they are enumerated in descending order.

As can be seen in Table 23, testing of both oral and written tasks was common, though the distribution of frequencies was slightly higher in written tasks than in oral tasks. Eight teacher trainers commented on written tests: they preferred them because they saved time. There was one trainer in the sample who completely rejected oral testing and another who, conversely, strongly preferred it.

Testing grammatical structures through writing appeared to be the most popular assessing technique ($f = 33$), followed by oral testing of dialogues ($f = 26$) and by two items that equalled in frequency ($f = 25$), i.e. oral testing of monologues and written testing of vocabulary items. With regard to the dialogues, the majority of the teacher trainers appeared to have in mind pre-prepared dialogues of two classmates, though dialogues between the teacher trainer and the learner were not exceptional either ($f = 6$ of the total $f = 26$). One trainer preferred assessing dialogues between learners of equal abilities and two trainers believed in examining learners' reactions to real-life situations. Spoken production appeared to be in general often based on memorization. One trainer believed that it was the only oral performance that could be assessed objectively and another argued for memorized reproduction of texts. Four trainers justified examining vocabulary items: a) when not assessed, new words were not learned, b) school management and parents required the testing, c) vocabulary testing had raised low-achievers' hopes of success, and d) testing of eight words in every lesson had distinctly improved learning results. In three cases the trainers clarified that they examined vocabulary items in context, otherwise it appeared that only Czech and English equivalents were taken into account.

TABLE 23. Language areas and activities used by the teacher trainers for assessment (*n* = 43, Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 2)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>
Oral tasks	119
Spoken interaction – dialogues	26
Spoken production – monologues (narrative, description)	25
Reading	17
Vocabulary items	15
Active successful effort during lessons (answering teachers' questions, pair work, reading etc.)	12
Grammatical structures	6
Translation	5
Pronunciation	5
Listening comprehension (answering questions)	4
Knowledge about aspects of the target language country/countries life and customs	2
Homework exercises of various types	2
Written tasks	131
Grammatical structures (gap-filling, transformation drills etc.)	33
Vocabulary items	25
Reading comprehension (answering questions, multiple-choice items, true/false questions etc.)	17
Written production – essays, narratives, descriptions, projects	15
Tests combining various tasks (published in textbooks, usually used after each unit)	12
Translation	10
Listening comprehension (answering questions, multiple-choice items, true/false questions etc.)	8
Dictation	8
Writing dialogues	3
Total	250

Reading mostly represented pre-prepared reading aloud, testing thus in fact pronunciation; oral testing of reading comprehension was explicitly mentioned twice. Testing of pronunciation as such was not exemplified further, likewise oral testing of grammar. Unlike the majority of the trainers, five respondents criticized tests designed by textbook authors for their uniformity and simplicity and lower suitability for a specific context.

The trainers made interesting comments on the choice of assessment techniques. (The number of responses is provided only when more than one trainer held the opinion.) As for the above-mentioned dilemma about having a preference for oral or written assessment, various statements were made, some of them contradictory. The teacher trainers noted that a) unfortunately, there had never been enough time for oral assessment, b) written tests had to be done because learners were used to them and needed them, c) the trainers had to examine orally so that the learners had a sufficient amount of grades, d) the trainers disliked examining in front of the class for its frustrating impact on learners ($f = 8$), and, correspondingly, e) they attached weight to learners' oral performance in lessons when considering the end-of-term grades ($f = 3$). As regards opinions on dealing with learning difficulties, apart from the above-mentioned vocabulary testing, a) one trainer recommended examining low-achievers' pronunciation, b) three trainers emphasized that only subject matter revised many times could be tested, and c) two trainers did not grade all the learners' work, especially not abortive attempts to complete a task.

All in all, the teacher trainers' modes of assessment varied a lot but they appeared to be rather traditional, bearing resemblance to communicative language teaching to a limited extent.

6.2. General evaluation of the ELP and ELP use

The ELP general evaluation in this section is divided into three main parts: 1) evaluation done by the pilot teachers, 2) evaluation done by the pilot learners and 3) expectations of the teacher trainers involved in the project. The evaluation is followed by examples illustrating ELP use. Descriptions of school visits during the pilot and pre-dissemination phases are given.

6.2.1. Teachers' evaluation of the ELP and its use

Firstly, this subsection comprises six tables classifying pilot teachers' answers to open-ended questions about positive and negative aspects of the ELP and its use. The data were compiled from questionnaires filled in at the end of the pilot phase (questions "What do you like best/least about the Portfolio?" and "What are you proud of in your work with the Portfolio?" and "What did not turn out well?") and from questionnaires

filled in one year after the end of the pilot phase (questions “How do you evaluate the work with the Portfolio now with the benefit of hindsight?”, “What was its greatest benefit/What are its biggest drawbacks?”). The first three tables focus on positive factors (examples of the answers to the question “What advice would you give to colleagues who would like to start working with the Portfolio?” are added to these tables) and the last three tables list negative factors.

Secondly, the subsection presents data on a) teachers’ beliefs about the impact of the ELP, b) teachers’ plans related to ELP use, c) teachers’ beliefs about ELP in-service teacher education and d) teachers’ further ELP use.

The categories in the following Table 24 which presents ELP positive features begin with the learners, proceed to the class and the teacher and conclude with the ELP itself.

TABLE 24. Qualities of the ELP indicated by the teachers ($n = 48$, Teacher Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ELP ...</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>
Learners’ autonomy	15	Encourages learners’ autonomy	4	1 24 31 32
		Enables learners’ freedom of choice	1	22
		Encourages learners’ individual work	9	5 10 15 26 27 28 30 38 44
		Encourages out-of-school activities	1	46
Learners’ self-assessment	16	Encourages learners’ self-assessment	16	1 9 11 15 20 21 23 24 25 26 30 31 34 37 38 45
Learners’ motivation	5	Increases learners’ active involvement, motivation and initiative	5	11 14 16 28 52
Learners’ self-esteem	10	Increases learners’ awareness of achievement and development, encourages their self-esteem	6	2 11 20 29 41 46
		Enables learners to gather best examples of their work, to present their work	4	12 16 42 52
Effects on learners’ reflection	7	Encourages learners’ reflection on their learning	7	12 15 23 29 34 44 47

TABLE 24. continues on the following page

TABLE 24. continued from the previous page

Respect for individuals	9	Gives space for learners' self-expression and creativity	7	7	17	19	25
		Supports individual progress, pace	2	32	37		
Interaction among learners and among learners and teachers	5	Encourages dialogue between learners	2	3	16		
		Encourages competition, comparing learners	2	16	17		
		Encourages dialogue between teachers and learners	1	18			
Effects on teachers' reflection and initiative	2	Supports teacher's reflection	1	2			
		Has an innovative concept encouraging new approaches to teaching and learning	1	5			
Teaching and learning objectives	11	Provides specific teaching and learning objectives, adequate to the learners' ages	6	8	32	33	39
		Provides language levels, a European dimension	4	13	20	40	43
		Shows why to learn languages	1	10			
Portfolio design	9	Has an attractive graphic design	4	43	44	45	51
		Is systematic, well-structured and purposeful	2	13	40		
		Assists systematic work	1	38			
		Its content is rich and varied	1	5			
		Is user-friendly	1	22			
Total	89		89				
No response	1		1	35			
Not submitted	4		4	4	6	36	49

As shown in Table 24, the teachers appreciated mainly the ELP potential for development of learners' self-assessment ($f = 16$) and learner autonomy ($f = 15$), specific European teaching and learning objectives ($f = 11$) and the building up of learners' sense of self-esteem ($f = 10$). On average, the teachers gave 1.9 responses.

Table 25 follows the logical order designed in Table 24 but concentrates on teachers' beliefs about their achievements when introducing the ELP. It summarizes teachers' responses to the question "What are you proud of in your work with the Portfolio?"

TABLE 25. Teachers' positive beliefs about their work with the ELP ($n = 47$, Teacher Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>
Learners' independent work	8	Some learners worked with the Portfolio by themselves	7	1 2 8 11 27 37 52
		Some learners used it regularly	1	9
Learners' self-assessment	7	Learners thought about themselves, assessed themselves	5	7 18 22 24 43
		Learners themselves tried to persuade others about their knowledge	1	8
		Learners in other classes which did not pilot the Portfolio wanted to assess themselves	1	32
Learners' motivation	18	Learners were active, they tried hard	6	3 7 19 30 31 45
		Some learners were more interested, motivated	5	11 16 17 46 52
		Low-achieving learners became involved and interested in work	4	13 23 25 50
		Learners were filled with enthusiasm for doing the tasks in the Portfolio	1	5
		Learners enjoyed working with the Portfolio	1	34
		Some learners prepared at home more intensively	1	15
Learners' self-esteem	5	Learners could experience success	4	18 23 29 46
		Learners realized what they had learned	1	51
Effects on learners' reflection	1	Learners thought more about a better way of learning languages	1	47
Learners' results	2	Some learners improved	1	21
		Learners' knowledge was good	1	14
Interaction among learners	1	Learners influenced each other, worked together	1	19
Effects on teachers' reflection and initiative	7	I joined in the project	3	26 28 30
		I liked the samples of learners' work in the Dossier	2	12 42
		I videoed learners and taught them how to achieve better results in speaking	1	33
		I started to reflect more on myself and my learners	1	39

TABLE 25. continues on the following page

TABLE 25. continued from the previous page

Learners' attitudes towards the Portfolio	3	Learners accepted the work with the Portfolio, a majority of them found it useful and interesting	2	26	41
		Learners who initially looked down on the Portfolio joined in actively in the end	1	35	
Total	52		52		
No response	5		5	10	20
				40	44
Not submitted	5		5	4	6
				36	48
				49	

Table 25 demonstrates that a substantial number of the teachers ($f = 18$) identified their positive beliefs about their work with the ELP with learners' higher motivation and active approach to learning. When evaluating their work, they stated e.g.

Children were happy, they tried to create their portfolios and they tried to think about themselves more. (Teacher ID 7)

Learners actively come up to me with other "bubbles" that they have achieved, with their own activity – other actions, projects etc. (Teacher ID 31)

I warmed children to their own nice initiative (their own small projects in the "Album"), children motivate each other, draw topics from each other (not all of them). (Teacher ID 19)

Some learners started to be more interested in the subject, they started to work on their own!! (Teacher ID 11)

I managed to stir up some learners to make a harder effort and to see learning differently, i.e. to want to learn. (Teacher ID 16)

I feel that thanks to the Portfolio two learners changed their attitudes towards learning English because my way of teaching up to now had not suited them and the Portfolio made it possible for them to show their abilities. (Teacher ID 46)

Even the weakest learners became really involved, they got interested at “their level”, but they tried and they had a feeling of coming into their own. (Teacher ID 23)

Some learners were motivated to work more intensively at home. (Teacher ID 15)

Teachers’ responses sometimes referred to two ELP positive features, however, as can be seen in Table 25, frequency of other items was significantly lower and the number of enumerated items was distinctly lower than in Table 24. Teaching and learning objectives were not mentioned and five teachers did not make any point. On average, the teachers gave 1.2 responses.

The teachers’ beliefs about the importance of learners’ active involvement were also clearly expressed in the following teachers’ answers to the question “What advice would you give to colleagues who would like to start working with the Portfolio?” (Teacher Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase).

The ELP is about collaboration between the teacher and pupils. Listen to your pupils’ opinions and you will understand them better. (Teacher ID 7)

Rely on children’s initiative. If children are suitably motivated, they seek other possibilities of work themselves. (Teacher ID 19)

Start the work with enthusiasm. If you give responsibility to your learners, you will not see the ELP as a heavy burden at all! (Teacher ID 1)

Table 26 analyzes teachers’ responses given one year after the end of the pilot phase. It was possible to use the categories and subcategories designed in Table 24 but some new subcategories needed to be added.

Table 26 illustrates that when evaluating ELP positive features with the benefit of hindsight, the teachers emphasized an increase in learners’ motivation ($f = 16$), specific European real-life teaching and learning objectives ($f = 13$) and learners’ encouragement to carry out self-assessment ($f = 11$):

Learners started to be more interested in self-assessment, in finding ways to get to know their mistakes and abilities and they found out that they underestimated themselves. What was important was setting

TABLE 26. Qualities of the ELP and its use indicated by the teachers ($n = 34$, Teacher Questionnaire C, one year after the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ELP ...</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>
Learners' autonomy	6	Encourages learners' autonomy	1	18
		Encourages learners' individual work	5	6 14 27 31 35
Learners' self-assessment	11	Encourages learners' self-assessment	11	1 9 15 16 18 19 25 28 35 47 50
Learners' motivation	16	Increases learners' active involvement, motivation and initiative	14	11 12 14 16 19 26 27 28 31 35 36 39 41 47
		Stimulates low-achieving learners	2	6 18
Learners' self-esteem	7	Increases learners' awareness of achievement and development, encourages their self-esteem	4	5 6 10 12
		Enables learners to gather best examples of their work, to present their work	3	12 25 50
Effects on learners' reflection	3	Encourages learners' reflection on their learning	3	1 31 39
Respect for individuals	2	Gives space for learners' self-expression and creativity	2	19 30
Learners' results	2	Provides a survey of increasing language competences	2	5 6
Interaction among learners and among learners and teachers	3	Encourages competition, comparing learners	2	16 34
		Encourages dialogue between teachers and learners	1	1
Effects on teachers' reflection and initiative	9	Supports teacher's reflection	2	9 18
		Has an innovative concept encouraging new approaches to teaching and learning	3	34 45 51
		Increases teachers' initiative and motivation	3	25 28 39
		Enables easier comparison of results	1	1

TABLE 26. continues on the following page

TABLE 26. continued from the previous page

Teaching and learning objectives	13	Provides specific teaching and learning objectives, adequate to the learners' ages	1	39
		Provides language levels, a European dimension	2	34 43
		Shows why to learn languages	5	11 19 23 40 47
		Completes missing parts of the textbooks	2	6 26
		Shows the aims clearly	1	8
		Encourages the setting up of attainable objectives	1	15
		Shows clearly how to achieve the aims	1	8
Portfolio design	2	Is systematic, well-structured and purposeful	1	50
		Assists systematic work	1	10
Total	74		74	
No response	3		3	38 48 52
Not submitted	18		18	2 3 4 7 13 17 20 21 22 24 29 32 33 37 42 44 46 49

their own objectives by themselves and then at the end finding out what they had in fact achieved and what they hadn't. They found out that it was better to work with small objectives than with huge ones. (Teacher ID 15)

On average, the teachers gave 2.4 responses. They often mentioned several positive features and sometimes made references both to the learners and to themselves:

The learners knew what knowledge they should achieve, they thought about their own skills and development, it motivated them (and it motivated me too). (Teacher ID 39)

Both the learners and I (and I enjoyed it a lot) had to think about our own assessment, about our skills and the level of our knowledge. (Teacher ID 9)

Some of the teachers' responses were brief:

Positive – the idea as such, comparison. (Teacher ID 43)

New methods. (Teacher ID 45)

The number of the teachers who did not submit the questionnaire and did not give any response was extremely high ($f = 21$).

Negative responses in Table 27 are ordered according to their importance for the implementation of ELP pedagogy.

As can be seen in Table 27, though some teachers ($f = 15$) did not state any negative points related to the ELP, others criticized its format and design ($f = 13$) and the formulation of the descriptors of communicative activities ($f = 10$). On average, the teachers gave 0.8 responses.

Table 28 presents teachers' responses to the question "What did not turn out well in your work with the Portfolio?"

Table 28 table illustrates one of the issues of the work with the ELP at the end of the pilot phase: the teachers ($f = 17$) criticized some learners' negative or indifferent attitudes towards the ELP. Their answers to the question "What did not turn out well in your work with the Portfolio?" were as follows:

Winning all learners over, some are "bored" (especially boys).
(Teacher ID 14)

Motivating older learners. (Teacher ID 39)

Convincing all children of the purpose of the Portfolio. Based on the reactions of my colleagues at our common meetings and on my experience I formed this opinion: Children in basic schools (and especially in primary schools) are slightly different, our children are motivated to succeed in the subject as such, to be good in class...
(Teacher ID 43)

The second most common group of issues were time constraints and a lack of a system in the work with the ELP ($f = 11$).

All the time I find myself in a race against time, trying to link the time for the fulfilment of the curriculum together with the Portfolio and also together with new ideas. (Teacher ID 16)

I need to see everything through, a lot of ideas, little time. (Teacher ID 18)

TABLE 27. Negative characteristics of the ELP indicated by the teachers (n = 48, Teacher Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>
Time constraints	2	Too time consuming	2	31 50
Formulation of the descriptors of communicative activities	10	General formulation of the descriptors, problems with level specification	6	14 22 41 42 45 47
		Lack of more specific descriptors	2	20 44
		Unsuitable formulations for younger learners	2	1 11
Unsuitable for the age group	8	A separate Portfolio for younger learners needed	6	2 11 12 37 39 43
		A separate Portfolio for low-achievers needed (only level A1)	1	10
		Unsuitable for older learners	1	48
Failure to involve learners	2	Initiative-bound, the content of the Language Biography should be learners' own initiative	1	46
		Learners' underestimation of the ELP role in teaching and learning	1	24
Format and design	13	Unsuitable format and construction	4	2 7 15 26
		Lack of space for writing, more pages needed	4	3 15 28 32
		Lack of clarity, compartmentalization	3	34 51 52
		Too colourful graphic design	1	47
		Too costly	1	38
Other opinions	3	Insufficient help to the teacher due to the ELP being a learner's personal matter	1	21
		Wrong approach of some teachers using the Portfolio for marking	1	23
		Change in the location of the seminars needed	1	20
Total	38		38	
No criticism	15	No criticism of the ELP supplied	15	5 8 9 13 16 17 18 19 25 27 29 30 33 35 40
Not submitted	4		4	4 6 36 49

TABLE 28. Teachers' negative beliefs about their work with the ELP ($n = 47$, Teacher Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>
Time constraints, a lack of system in the work	11	There was a lack of sufficient time to devote to the Portfolio	5	3 16 17 18 52
		There was a lack of system and method	4	15 25 37 50
		The Portfolio was not put in the programme regularly	2	10 28
Distinction of proficiency levels	1	Distinction of specific levels of language proficiency	1	41
Self-assessment and teacher's assessment deficiency	5	Leading of the learners to a more frequent exchange of experience with self-assessment	1	7
		Self-assessment as such	1	27
		Making of self-assessment automatic	1	46
		My assessment of individuals	1	37
		Comparison of my assessment with the assessment of individuals	1	47
Failure to involve all learners	17	Not all learners were convinced of the benefits of the work with the Portfolio	16	1 2 9 10 14 19 21 29 31 32 35 39 42 43 44 45
		Low-achievers were afraid of working with the Portfolio	1	5
Lack of publicity	3	The introduction of the Portfolio to other teachers at school	2	7 25
		The arousal of parents' interest in the Portfolio	1	8
Lack of learners' abilities and positive approach	2	Learners' imagination when setting up their goals	1	34
		Learners' consistency of approach –it changed for the worse at the end of the year	1	24

TABLE 28. continues on the following page

TABLE 28. continued from the previous page

Lack of learners' independent work	10	Not all learners were convinced of the need to work with the Portfolio on their own	4	12	26	40	51
		Some learners failed to work with the Portfolio on their own	4	11	13	35	52
		Not all learners were taught how to work with the Portfolio on their own	2	9	20		
Failure to achieve personal intents	4	"I have not implemented many plans"	2	18	30		
		"I have not paid enough attention to learning strategies"	1	33			
		"I have not used what the Portfolio offers"	1	38			
Total	53		53				
No criticism	1	No criticism of the ELP supplied	1	23			
Not submitted	5		5	4	6	36	48
						49	

As I can see learners only twice a week for sixty minutes and we have to go over the textbook, I didn't have as much time for the Portfolio as I'd like to and as would be needed. Some learners got started but then they forgot about it. (Teacher ID 52)

I didn't work with the Portfolio systematically and I didn't co-ordinate well my collaboration with the native speaker who taught my group one lesson of Conversation in English. (Teacher ID 25)

The third group of issues referred to a lack of learners' independent work ($f = 10$).

(What did not turn out well?)

Attracting students to work with the Portfolio on their own. Students see the point of the Portfolio and its importance but they don't enjoy working with it. During the time when we've been using the Portfolio students have done and created a lot of autonomous pieces of work but I don't know anybody who would put them into their Dossier. (Teacher ID 40)

Teaching learners to work with the Portfolio on their own, for example to fill in the Language Biography continuously. They all

the time relied on our work with the Portfolio during the lessons.
(Teacher ID 20)

On average, the teachers gave 1.2 responses in Table 28.

The following table summarizes teachers' critical responses given one year after the end of the pilot phase.

TABLE 29. Teachers' negative beliefs about the work with the ELP and about ELP negative characteristics ($n = 34$, Teacher Questionnaire C, one year after the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>
Time constraints	11	There was a lack of time	5	19 23 26 31 34
		It was time-consuming	2	12 14
		Optional subjects are needed for the work with the Portfolio	3	14 19 36
		There was not enough time for the Portfolio in private language schools	1	52
Distinction of proficiency levels	1	Distinction of specific proficiency levels and an assumption that learners had achieved the levels were difficult	1	41
Self-assessment	1	Self-assessment was time-consuming and it was not always objective, learners' progress could be seen only after a longer period of time	1	16
Failure to involve all learners	5	All learners did not work well	1	16
		Older learners were not interested except for those preparing for language exams	1	47
		Portfolio is only for young learners, older learners should be already used to working with it	1	48
		The work with the Portfolio should begin with young learners	2	35 41
Lack of publicity	2	Promotion was low	1	45
		Other teachers were reluctant to work with the Portfolio	1	6
Lack of learners' independent work	1	Learners did not work with the Portfolio on their own	1	51

TABLE 29. continues on the following page

TABLE 29. continued from the previous page

Failure to achieve personal intents	1	“I was not able to harmonize the textbook with the Portfolio”	1	26
Lack of continuity	1	Continuous work with the same learners cannot be always guaranteed	1	9
Price	1	The price will be higher in the future	1	6
Other opinions	1	Portfolio should not be obligatory	1	18
Total	25		25	
No criticism	15	No criticism of the ELP supplied	15	1 5 8 10 11 15 25 27 28 30 38 39 40 43 50
Not submitted	18		18	2 3 4 7 13 17 20 21 22 24 29 32 33 37 42 44 46 49

As Table 29 shows, one year after the end of the pilot phase time constraints were prevalent ($f = 11$) in the teachers' negative comments about the ELP, e.g.

There is little time to work with the portfolio well. (Teacher ID 23)

Time-consuming. (Teacher ID 12)

This result accorded with a withdrawal of some teachers from the use of the ELP after the pilot phase, which is presented in this subsection further on.

Teachers' responses often coincided with findings shown by other research techniques, e.g.

It's difficult to define the levels of knowledge, to sign them up (Has the learner already achieved the level? Does he deserve the signature?) (Teacher ID 41)

Learners don't work on their own. (Teacher ID 51)

Negative points? I don't know but I hope that the Portfolio won't become obligatory in the future both for the learner and for the teacher. It would be a real shame! (Teacher ID 18)

The number of the teachers who did not submit the questionnaire ($f = 18$) was extremely high but so was the number of the teachers who did not give any critical comments ($f = 15$). On average, the teachers gave 1.25 responses.

Comparison of the data in Table 26 (teachers' beliefs about positive qualities of the ELP) and Table 29 (teachers' beliefs about negative qualities of the ELP and its use), shows the following results (all these data were compiled one year after the end of the pilot phase). Of 34 submitted questionnaires, one did not supply any comment, fifteen referred only to positive features, two were only negative and responses in other questionnaires, $f = 16$, contained both favourable and critical comments. In the last group, a combination of learners' active involvement and time constraints was most commonly pointed up ($f = 6$ teachers):

The work with the Portfolio stirred up children's interest in the language and it motivated them. Especially girls were really thrilled with it, they themselves broadened their knowledge above the level that was required by the curriculum. The negative side – time-consuming work, we moved a part of the work with the Portfolio into an extracurricular activity in German. (Teacher ID 14)

The teacher finds out what is missing in the textbooks and what should be taught. The learners see it as an interesting activity, a change, their attitude towards learning is more conscious. But there is a lack of time. Or I am not able to harmonize the textbook with the Portfolio. (Teacher ID 26)

The last table of this subsection presents teachers' beliefs about the impact of the ELP on their teaching. Teachers answered the questions "Has the Portfolio somehow changed your work? If yes, how? If not, why not?"

Table 30 demonstrates that teachers highlighted mainly the ELP impact on their reflection ($f = 16$) and on fostering innovations in their teaching ($f = 15$), e.g.

I think more about the way I teach. I know that I could do a lot of things differently and I try to support learners' initiative. (Teacher ID 30)

TABLE 30. Teachers' beliefs about the impact of the ELP on their work (n = 47, Teacher Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>
Teachers' deeper reflection	16	More thinking about own work	13	7 10 11 13 14 17 25 27 29 30 32 39 52
		Thinking about classification of subject matter into smaller units	1	5
		Thinking about the lessons from the perspective of the descriptors	1	21
		Deeper thinking about what is important for learners	1	2
		Teachers' motivation to change their work	15	More attractive methods used
More group-work and learners' independent work used	2	15 47		
Attempts to make learners reflect	2	22 51		
More systematic and thoughtful assessment	2	34 35		
Increased focus on practical skills	1	26		
Setting homework from the perspectives of learners' interest	1	8		
Learners' self-assessment	8	Different view on self-assessment, deeper thinking about assessment	8	3 9 12 18 23 33 44 45
Better interaction among learners and teachers	2	More discussion between teachers and learners	2	2 31
Learners' motivation	1	Learners worked independently	1	28
No substantial impact, problems	3	Only better phrasing of objectives and output	1	40
		Less time for language exercises in the textbook	1	19
		Interference in class work	1	16
No impact	6	No changes in teachers' work	6	1 20 24 37 41 42
Total	51		51	
Not submitted	5		5	4 6 36 48 49

It made me think more about the structure of the lesson. (Teacher ID 17)

I started to think more deeply about how I could more strongly influence specific stages of learning. (Teacher ID 32)

It made me change my way of teaching, to use always more activities + to think! (Teacher ID 39)

It motivated me to look for other teaching techniques and it helped me to get away from one mode of teaching – the textbook - the exercise book - the game. (Teacher ID 46)

Lower importance was attached to learners' self-assessment ($f = 8$).

Comments referring to problems were rare:

I have less time for other language activities and work with the textbook and I look for possibilities of including the work with the Portfolio into teaching in the most optimal way. (Teacher ID 19)

The category “No impact” is problematic because it could include both the teachers who had worked in harmony with ELP pedagogy before ELP introduction and the teachers whose teaching ran counter to ELP pedagogy.

In Teacher Questionnaire A, 44 teachers ($f = 84.6\%$ of the whole sample) expressed their intention to continue in the work with the ELP in the same class/classes and 35 teachers ($f = 67.3\%$) also expressed their intention to use the ELP in other classes. 41 teachers ($f = 78.9\%$) maintained that they were trying ELP approaches when working with other classes. 45 teachers ($f = 86.5\%$) believed that in-service seminars should be organized for teachers who would decide to introduce the ELP. 30 teachers ($f = 57.7\%$) proclaimed that their colleagues were interested in the ELP (unlike 17 teachers, 32.7%, who did not meet with any interest from colleagues). 27 teachers intended to exhibit the ELPs and 15 considered submitting an article about their experience to a professional journal. Ten teachers were interested in becoming an ELP teacher trainer.

Regarding in-service teacher education, 39 teachers expressed their beliefs about the content and organization of the seminars explicitly. Some of them gave two or more comments. The majority of the teachers ($f = 33$) reflected consciously or subconsciously on the predominance of either a practical or theoretical focus for the seminars. A practical focus was preferred by the biggest group of the teachers ($f = 23$): they

suggested that an exchange of ideas with colleagues would be the most profitable outcome. Some teachers commented on it: *“experience cannot be substituted”*, *“it is necessary to get on one another’s wavelength”*, *“it enriches me and helps me to recharge my batteries”*. Of this group, five teachers thought that common work on bigger parts of a textbook and accommodating them to the ELP would be helpful. Another teacher was more radical: he thought of *“working without the crutch of the textbook”*. Six teachers asked for a practical focus for the seminars too and they preferred being provided with examples. Two of them asked for demonstration lessons (one of them for videoed lessons showing Czech teachers at work). Apart from the above-mentioned group of 23 teachers requiring the sharing of ideas, nine teachers requested a combination of *“theory and practice”* and, on the contrary, one teacher said she needed theory, *“many teachers know only teachers’ verbal assessment and grades”*.

More specific beliefs about the content of the seminars were sometimes expressed. Four teachers suggested addressing issues concerning learner autonomy, self-assessment, peer assessment and motivation. One teacher thought that discussing the aim of ELP use would be helpful. Rather than amending a textbook, one teacher suggested that teachers working with the ELP in the future should consider the absolute integration of the ELP: *“they have to clarify a system in which the Portfolio will become an integral part of each lesson without learners’ working with it directly”*. One teacher criticized current ways of language teaching and explained why further in-service education would be needed: *“if teachers teach in a style “vocabulary, exercise and an introductory text” then seminars are definitely needed, such teachers have to change their methods of teaching totally”*.

As for the organization of the seminars, one teacher thought that a system of two or three seminars in a year would be suitable and one teacher recommended that seminars for different groups of teachers should take place (according to the age of learners and type of school). One teacher suggested that various topics should be offered for the teachers to choose. One teacher thought that a guidebook for ELP use would be helpful and another teacher believed that introducing the Portfolio in pre-service teacher education and using it through the whole study would be beneficial.

Concerning the intention to continue in the work with the ELP, different responses were given in Teacher Questionnaire C, one year after the end of the pilot phase ($f = 34$). Seven teachers (ID 5, 8, 19, 31,

34, 35, 36) maintained that they continued using the ELP systematically. Twenty stated that they used it sometimes (ID 1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 28, 30, 38, 39, 43, 45, 47, 50), three that they did not use it (ID 40, 48, 51) and four that they could not proceed with its use for organizational reasons (ID 18, 26, 41 and 52). The responses that had not been submitted did not necessarily indicate that the teachers had ended their use of the ELP (two of the teachers who did not supply the questionnaires were ELP enthusiasts and participated in the pre-dissemination phase as teacher trainers). In the same questionnaire, four teachers were rather pessimistic about ELP influence (ID 16, 36, 40 and 51). Nine teachers expressed their belief that the ELP could definitely improve foreign language teaching and learning in the Czech Republic (ID 5, 11, 15, 18, 31, 34, 39, 47 and 52) and 21 teachers were certain about an ELP impact to a lesser extent.

6.2.2. Learners' evaluation of the ELP and its use

In this subsection, learners' perceived value of the ELP is examined and their overall evaluation of the ELP and work with it is presented. The analysis begins with quantifying qualitative data and concludes with learners' quotations, proceeding from generalization to specific examples.

Firstly, the learners' general attitudes towards the work with the ELP are shown, derived from the following Likert-like scale: "Using the Portfolio is (a) useful and interesting, (b) useful but boring, (c) interesting but useless, (d) useless and boring". Because responses to the same type of statement were investigated in Table 18 (see 6.1.2) compiling the learners' responses about the value placed on language learning, data in the following table provide parallel information.

TABLE 31. Learners' attitudes towards the use of the ELP ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Using the Portfolio is</i>					
4	3	2	1	No response	<i>Total</i>
Useful and interesting	Useful but boring	Interesting but useless	Useless and boring		
504	149	35	11	2	701
71.9%	21.3%	5.0%	1.6%	0.3%	100%

As Table 31 illustrates, there was a high frequency of learners who evaluated the work with the ELP very positively, while about 28% took rather negative or totally negative attitudes towards it.

In accordance with the method applied in 6.1.2, in order to examine the learners' attitudes further, four different breakdowns of the sample were used (according to the learner's a) gender, b) age, c) language learned and d) school-report grade) and fewer categories were made in the Likert-like scale (the first included only the learners with entirely positive attitudes towards the ELP and the second comprised all the others, i.e. categories 3, 2 and 1 in Table 31). The results of the frequency comparison statistics relating to the individual breakdowns are shown in the four following contingency tables analyzing the learners' attitudes by means of the chi-square statistic.

	<i>Using the Portfolio is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
Boys	186	102	288
Girls	318	93	411
<i>Total</i>	504	195	699

$$\chi^2 = 13.83, p < .01$$

Figure 15. Comparison of boys' and girls' attitudes towards the use of the ELP ($n = 699$)

The contingency table presented in Figure 15 reveals the statistical significance of the results: there was a reciprocal relationship between the gender and the attitude towards the ELP. While the boys tended to be more critical, the girls evaluated the use of the ELP more positively.

Figure 16 illustrates another statistical significance. There was a great difference between the observed and expected frequencies in the categories of primary and lower-secondary school learners. The younger learners adopted a positive attitude towards the use of the ELP more frequently than the older ones.

	<i>Using the Portfolio is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
Primary school learners	213	33	246
Lower-secondary school learners	291	162	453
<i>Total</i>	504	195	699

$$\chi^2 = 39.53, p < .01$$

Figure 16. Comparison of primary and lower-secondary learners' attitudes towards the use of the ELP ($n = 699$)

	<i>Using the Portfolio is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
Learners of English	347	130	477
Learners of German	157	65	222
<i>Total</i>	504	195	699

$$\chi^2 = 0.32, p < .01$$

Figure 17. Comparison of attitudes of the learners of English and German ($n = 699$)

In Figure 17 the obtained value χ^2 did not exceed the value required for significance at the .01 probability level and thus the category of the learners of English was independent of the category of the learners of German: the language variable was not statistically significant.

The chi-square analysis depicted in Figure 18 indicated that there was no reciprocal relationship between the learners' attitudes towards the ELP and their school report grades: the observed frequencies did not differentiate significantly between the high achievers (those with grades one and two) and the lower achievers and low achievers (those with grades three, four and five).

Grades	<i>Using the Portfolio is</i>		<i>Total</i>
	4 Useful and interesting	3+2+1 Useful but boring + Interesting but useless + Useless and boring	
1 + 2	371	140	511
3 – 5	103	45	148
<i>Total</i>	474	185	659

$$\chi^2 = 0.53, p < .01$$

Figure 18. Comparison of learners' attitudes towards the use of the ELP with their school grades ($n = 659$)

Statistically significant results were shown correlating the learners' attitudes towards the ELP and their attitudes towards learning a foreign language ($\chi^2 = 10.71, p < .01$) (see 6.1.2). The learners tended to remain consistent and to adopt either positive or negative attitudes towards both the ELP and language learning.

Proceeding with frequency comparison statistics, Table 32 compares the frequencies of the learners' responses to the value attached to the ELP use to the frequencies of the learners' responses to the statement "I learn languages easily".

Interestingly, the highest frequency of responses in Table 32 occurred in the category of learners who found the work with the ELP useful and interesting but did not agree with the statement "I learn languages easily" ($f = 24.9\%$). When the number of those who strongly disagreed with this statement was added, the total was 29.9%. However, as can be seen in the table, the obtained value of χ^2 did not show a statistical significance between the learners' attitudes towards ELP use and their beliefs about the difficulty of language learning (the chi-square statistic of the data presented in Table 32 used a lower number of categories, in accordance with the statistic of the data in Table 21 in 6.1.2).

Three other frequency comparison statistics also produced insignificant results. The learners' attitudes towards the ELP were compared to the statements "I am afraid of speaking to foreigners", "The most important thing is to learn words" and "The most important thing is to learn grammar". However, interestingly, significant results were generated in a comparison of the learners' attitudes towards the ELP to the statement "The most important thing is to translate sentences from Czech ($\chi^2 =$

TABLE 32. Comparison of learners' attitudes towards the use of the ELP with their beliefs about their ability to learn foreign languages ($n = 699$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>I learn languages easily</i>	<i>Using the Portfolio is</i>				<i>Total</i>
	1 Useful and interesting	2 Useful but boring	3 Interesting but useless	4 Useless and boring	
5 Strongly agree	3.9%	1.3%	0.1%	0%	5.3%
4 Agree	20.7%	6.6%	1.1%	1.0%	29.5%
3 I don't know	17.6%	4.7%	2.0%	0.3%	24.6%
2 Disagree	24.9%	6.9%	0.9%	0.3%	32.9%
1 Strongly disagree	5.0%	1.9%	0.9%	0%	7.7%
<i>Total</i>	504 72.1%	149 21.3%	35 5.0%	11 1.6%	699 100%

$$\chi^2 = 0.32, df = 1, p < .01$$

7.80, $p < .01$). Learners appreciating the ELP sometimes tended to attach more importance to translation.

The learners' general attitudes towards the ELP were also examined by the question "Do you think that the time spent on keeping your Portfolio was time well spent?" (Learner Questionnaire 3) which yielded overall positive results: of the total, there were 76.8% positive, 18.4% "don't know" and 4.9% negative answers. The school report grade breakdown of the learners' responses to this question is provided in Figure 19 (answers "no" and "I don't know" were combined).

As Figure 19 shows, the observed frequencies did not differentiate significantly from the expected frequencies to be statistically significant at the given probability level and thus a relationship between the learners' attitudes and their school grades was not discovered.

Other learners' responses compiled from Learner Questionnaire 3 and important for this subsection (nine items in total) are presented in Table 33.

Table 33 illustrates that the lowest frequencies of positive responses occurred in the item referring to an ELP impact on the learners'

Grades	<i>Do you think that the time spent on keeping your Portfolio was time well spent?</i>		<i>Total</i>
	Yes	No + I don't know	
1 + 2	400	112	512
3 – 5	104	44	148
<i>Total</i>	504	156	660

$\chi^2 = 3.93, p < .01$

Figure 19. Comparison of the learners' attitudes towards the use of the ELP with their school grades ($n = 660$, Learner Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

TABLE 33. Learners' evaluation of the ELP use ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>I don't know</i>
A 3L Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?	88.6%	2.1%	9.3%
B 3L Does the Portfolio help you see progress in learning?	69.5%	9.6%	21.0%
D 3L Does the Portfolio stimulate you to participate more fully in the language learning process?	32.8%	37.5%	29.7%
E 3L Do you feel the Portfolio puts more responsibility on you as learner?	41.8%	28.3%	30.0%
H 3L Do you think all learners should be encouraged to keep a Language Portfolio?	82.5%	5.7%	11.8%
2 LA The ELP helps to reflect on language learning.	61.2%	12.1%	26.7%
4 LA The ELP takes up too much time.	16.6%	69.8%	13.7%
5 LA A waste of time – school marks are sufficient.	6.6%	78.6%	14.8%
10 LA The ELP improves the dialogue between me and my teacher(s).	37.1%	18.8%	44.1%

involvement in the learning process (D 3L), followed by teacher and learner interaction (10 LA) and development of learner autonomy (E 3L). Conversely, the item referring to the reporting function of the ELP (A 3L) received the highest positive score, followed in descending order by the demand for the wide use of the ELP (H 3L) and the statement that

school marks were not sufficient (5 LA). A lower number of the learners thought that the ELP takes a reasonable amount of time (4 LA), that it can become a reflection of learner's progress (B 3L) and it can help in learner's reflection (2 LA).

Finally, Table 34 demonstrates learners' responses to the statement "The tasks in the Portfolio can be learned step by step".

TABLE 34. Learners' beliefs about their ability to achieve the ELP tasks ($n = 700$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>The tasks in the Portfolio can be learned step by step</i> <i>f</i>	5 Strongly agree	4 Agree	3 I don't know	2 Dis-agree	1 Strongly disagree	<i>Mean</i>	No response
	35.7%	54.4%	8.6%	0.6%	0.7%	4.24	1

The distribution of the responses in Table 34 is very positively skewed ($f = 90.1\%$ of positive answers). The table reveals both learners' beliefs in the ELP and in their own self-efficacy.

The last two tables of this subsection display learners' answers to two open-response questions: "What do you like best about your Portfolio?" and "What do you like least about your Portfolio?"

The responses are ordered according to their frequencies within individual categories in descending order, and because the number of enumerated items varied substantially from learner to learner (from zero to four items), the percentage was not calculated.

TABLE 35. Learners' responses to the question "What do you like best about your Portfolio?" ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>ELP attributes appreciated by the learners</i>	<i>f</i>
Developing of self-confidence	326
Presenting of own work, one's own work in the Dossier	157
Opportunity to fill in what the learner can do	47
Clarity in showing achievement by the language levels	37

TABLE 35. continues on the following page

TABLE 35. continued from the previous page

Achievements survey and the different levels	30
Possibility to feel pride in achievement	29
Opportunity to display own projects	23
Clarity in showing school work	3
ELP design	207
Graphic design	144
Clear presentation, user-friendliness	31
Opportunity to draw in the ELP and to collect cuttings	23
Feeling of pride of ownership	9
Fostering of a sense of agency	165
Self-management of work, independent work, freedom to express ideas	61
Possibility of self-assessment	50
Free pages	48
Own list of what the learner has learned	6
Indeterminable specification	102
“Everything”	60
The Language Biography	42
Fostering of learning	98
Support for learning	37
Enjoyment, fun when working with the ELP	19
Setting learning goals	18
Specific tasks, their content	10
Resource for learning	6
Reflection on learning	5
Openness to varied approaches	3
ELP international status	45
The Passport	37
International dimension	4
Use of other languages, including the mother tongue	4
Total	943
Objectionable responses	5
Opportunity to avoid school work	4
Avoidance of school marks	1
No point given	92
Nothing specified	56
“I don’t know” answer	36
Total	1040

Learners' reflective and evaluative skills varied considerably, sometimes independent of the age. Altogether 604 learners, i.e. 86.2%, gave positive responses, the average number of which was per learner 1.6. The references to boosting the learners' self-confidence were dominant: the learners appreciated first and foremost that the ELP gave them the possibility to present their own work and to show clearly their achievement, and it engendered their feeling of pride in achievement. The learners were surprised at how much they knew and it appeared that this knowledge was only made available to them via the ELP.

Altogether 285 learners, i.e. 40.7% gave negative responses, the average number of which was per learner 1.16. The highest percentage objected to the ELP design, demonstrating thus vital importance of materials design for young learners.

In general, the attitudes of the learners within one class showed a striking similarity and the influence of the class atmosphere appeared to be significant. The responses in some classes tended to follow the same direction and the same comments were repeated, sometimes differing greatly from those of other classes: e.g. a reluctance to reflect on learning strategies, a criticism of the layout of some ELP pages, a strong preference for the Dossier, a deep admiration for the ELP. The number of learners evaluating the ELP negatively (see Table 31, category 3, 2 and 1 and at the same time the question "Do you think that the time spent on keeping your Portfolio was time well spent?", answers "no" and "don't know") equalled or exceeded the number of the learners evaluating it positively in six classes (Teacher ID 22, 24, 28, 39, 40, 50). More than 50% of the learners opted for a negative answer only in one of these questions in five classes (Teacher ID 25, 33, 47, 48, 51). Unexpectedly, in some classes, learners chose to display unsuccessful work in their Dossier as a challenge to themselves to improve in the future.

Surprisingly, some low-achieving learners reacted very positively to the ELP and they seemed to be motivated by it while high-achieving learners sometimes either rejected it or valued only its reporting function, as can be seen in the following quotation:

The Portfolio was nothing special for me. Just a file which will overload my rucksack and take up my time. The teachers told us that it should be an overview of what we can do in languages. Why should I keep it then? I myself know very well what I am able to do, what I need to repeat or to learn in a better way. I can put it on a piece of paper and display it on my notice board at home and add something to it from time to time. I don't need a special Portfolio

TABLE 36. Learners' responses to the question "What do you like least about your Portfolio?" ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>ELP features criticized by the learners</i>	<i>f</i>
ELP design	221
Size construction	100
Graphic design	53
Lack of space for writing	22
Insufficient number of free pages	12
Lack of clarity	11
No additional materials (films with vocabulary, tests, songs)	10
Use of too many foreign languages	7
Use of a low number of foreign languages	3
Associated expenses (plastic folders, a photo)	2
Free pages	1
Work with the ELP	63
Brevity of the ELP, a need to increase the number of tasks	13
Inefficient use of time	11
Filling in information	10
Self-assessment of "can-do" tasks	7
Boring, difficult work	6
Inappropriate design of the descriptors	6
Reflection on learning	4
High number of tasks	3
Work with the ELP without the teacher	2
Too long texts	1
Indeterminable specification	33
The Passport	18
The Language Biography	11
The Dossier	4
Self-criticism	14
Feeling of a lack of achievement	11
Need to improve own filling in	3
Total	331
Features that can be evaluated as positive	29
Underuse of the ELP in classes	20
Use only by a limited number of learners and only in languages	9
No point given	387
Nothing specified	305
"I don't know" answer	82
Total	747

for that. But then I found out that the Portfolio is mainly for others so that they could see what I am in fact able to do. Though I still don't go into raptures over it, I am slowly but surely getting to like it. And the best thing is to know that I'm not doing it in vain. (a 14-year-old girl) (Teacher ID 39, her own questionnaire)

Similarly, some learners ($f = 22.7\%$, Learner Questionnaire 3) did not find that the ELP helped them enough in setting their learning objectives. They saw the ELP only as a checking instrument and not as a planning instrument. Having not been significantly influenced by ELP pedagogy, the ELP was additional work for them. Consequently, the learners could not feel a real connection to it, as can be seen in the quotation that follows:

The only thing I might like about the Portfolio is its layout. Otherwise I don't like it very much and I don't like working with it. Especially at home. And what happens then is that I have nearly nothing filled in it because I hardly ever set my mind to writing in it. Thus the only things written there are those that we wrote together at school. (a 14-year-old girl) (Teacher ID 39, her own questionnaire)

The learners were also unaccustomed to self-assessment. Some of them did not feel happy with their new role and some of the older ones found it particularly difficult to lose their inhibitions when asked to express their achievements:

It's much easier to list or put down what I'm not able to do than what I am able to do. I can't imagine myself putting down that I am able to do something. (a 14-year-old boy) (from the interview with the class, Teacher ID 39)

There's nothing I am really able to do.

(The interviewer) *Really? Does it mean that you can't introduce yourself?*

Well, maybe I can do that (laughing). (a 14-year-old girl) (from the interview with the class, Teacher ID 39)

Some of the learners, in keeping with their teachers' views, asked for tests to verify their precise knowledge:

There should be tests in the Portfolio. When I should say myself what I can do, I am not sure if I am able to do it. (a 10-year-old boy) (Learner Questionnaire 3, Teacher ID 13)

Despite the above-mentioned problems, the data arising from the pilot scheme were extremely promising. Examples of specific positive comments conclude this subsection.

Anyone who comes across the Portfolio will see its point. My personal opinion is that it helps me learn German because it helps me get things straight – what I am able to do and what I should learn. I think it's an entertaining way to have a variety of learning. Another advantage is that you can also use it for other languages. (a 14-year-old girl) (Teacher ID 39, her own questionnaire)

I like the Portfolio because it is something which shows my knowledge. When I am big, I will be able to tell my children, 'so this is how I learned when I was a young girl'. (a 9-year-old girl) (Learner Questionnaire 3, Teacher ID 2)

6.2.3. Teacher trainers' beliefs about ELP use and ELP seminars

This subsection summarizes the teacher trainers' responses to two questions: 1) "What do you expect from your work with the ELP?" and 2) What do you expect from the seminars? The responses are displayed in the two following tables.

TABLE 37. Teacher trainers' beliefs about the ELP impact ($n = 49$, Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>
Learners' motivation	46
Learners' higher motivation, higher interest in language learning	35
Motivation of underachievers	5
An interesting way of learning languages	4
Interesting work showing progress quickly	2
Learners' involvement	19
Learners' better self-study, guidelines for their homework	4
Learners' independent work	3
Learners' higher responsibility	11
Learners' involvement in lesson preparation	1
Learning results	6
Better knowledge of the language	6

TABLE 37. continues on the following page

TABLE 37. continued from the previous page

Classroom interaction	4
Sharing ideas between the learners and the teacher, further cooperation	3
Bounding the class	1
Teaching and learning objectives	12
Knowledge of European levels of language proficiency and their use	3
Exact and unambiguous specific objectives	6
Attainable objectives	1
Help with setting objectives and lesson planning	1
Criteria for assessment and self-assessment	1
Learning for life	8
Making language learning meaningful	4
A choice of real-life topics, using real-life language situations	3
Examples of young natives' language	1
Self-assessment and assessment	39
Improvement in learners' ability to assess their skills	3
Learners' assessment of their achievement	8
Learners' understanding of their achievements and of new tasks	2
New forms of assessment	9
A possibility for assessment without grading	2
More objective assessment, better assessment	4
Transparent assessment of achieved objectives	2
Learners' positive self-assessment, higher self-esteem	7
Comparison with other teachers, schools, on an international level	2
Teacher's personal motivation	22
Motivation for the teacher	9
New teaching and learning ideas, a better approach to teaching	12
Higher respect for individual needs	1
ELP dissemination	2
Proceeding with ELP introduction to common practice	1
Educating other teachers	1
Broader educational impact	8
Other teachers' understanding of real-life teaching and learning	1
Transparency when learners move to another school	1
Everybody's life-long learning	1
A recognition of the need for teaching and learning other languages	3
An inspiration to study other languages	1
Higher prestige of education	1
Social impact	9
Getting to know other countries, sharing ideas	2
Cooperation, involvement in international projects	2
European integration, results comparable to other countries	2
Better opportunities to work or study abroad	3
Total	169

On average every teacher trainer referred to 3.5 items. The trainers believed in the motivating impact of the ELP that would affect mainly the learners but also the trainers themselves. The category “Learners’ motivation” was given the highest weighting ($f = 27.2\%$ of all responses) and it was followed by “Self-assessment and assessment” ($f = 23.1\%$), “Teacher’s personal motivation” ($f = 13.0\%$) and learners’ higher involvement including higher responsibility ($f = 11.2\%$), though the last category testified to a specific approach to learner involvement, converting it sometimes ($f = 7$) rather to the learners’ solitary study at home. Only a few trainers mentioned classroom interaction.

School breakdown of the responses (total - basic schools $n = 61.5\%$; schools with extended language learning $n = 17.8\%$; 8-year grammar schools $n = 18.3\%$; Faculties of Education $n = 2.4\%$; only categories with $n > 8$ were considered) showed that the trainers in basic schools emphasized the categories “Teaching and learning objectives” ($f = 83.3\%$) and “Social impact” ($f = 77.8\%$). 8-year-grammar-school trainers’ responses in individual categories circulated around the percentage of the total and they did not differ from it more than \pm ten per cent. The same applied to the responses of the trainers from schools with extended language learning. With regard to the language breakdown, the results in particular categories usually corresponded to the percentage of the total (English teachers $n = 32$, 65.3% ; German teachers $n = 15$, 30.6% ; French teachers $n = 2$, 4.1%) with the exception of two categories highlighted by English trainers: “Self-assessment and assessment” ($f = 82.1\%$) and “Learners’ involvement” ($f = 79.0\%$).

Teacher trainers’ beliefs were also implied in their expectations of the seminars organized for them. Individual views are shown in Table 38.

When referring to their further ELP education, on average every teacher trainer contributed 3.2 responses. The most common trainers’ needs were “ELP general issues”, particularly the subcategory of receiving knowledge about the work with the ELP and getting practical examples, while the frequency of the subcategory requiring learning by doing (“Acquisition of methods for using the ELP”) was lower (there was one trainer in the sample asking for peer-teaching to be used in the seminars). As expected, the next most common needs referred to “Preparation for the teacher trainers’ role”. Learning by cooperation and sharing ideas were also favourable. The trainers wished to learn from the pilot project and to improve their personal teaching skills. When expressing their needs, one trainer criticized the national curriculum and characterized it as too demanding and lacking emphasis on real-life competences. Two trainers

TABLE 38. Teacher trainers' anticipation of the seminar content and methods ($n = 49$, Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1)

<i>Category</i>	<i>f</i>
ELP general issues	51
Detailed knowledge of the ELP and its aims	10
Knowledge about the work with the ELP, getting practical specific examples	19
Acquisition of methods for using the ELP, getting ideas and inspiration	10
Learning how to incorporate the work with the ELP into the lessons	4
Learning how to motivate learners to work with the ELP	5
Learning how to encourage learner autonomy	1
Smoother introduction of the ELP in schools, dissemination in Europe	2
ELP specific issues	9
Clarification of personal unclear issues, help with specific situations	3
Clarification of a connection between the ELP and grammar in textbooks in use	1
Learning how to begin the work with the ELP	2
A fundamental notion of the time necessary for the ELP use	1
Knowledge of the process of certification of proficiency levels	2
Learning from the pilot project	14
Familiarization with the pilot projects experience	4
Discussion with pilot teachers, pilot teachers' presentations	5
Familiarization with problems in the work with the ELP	4
Study of filled in ELPs	1
Learning about assessment	7
Learning how to assess learners	4
Learning how to use the descriptors of communicative activities for assessment	3
Learning about the descriptors of communicative activities	3
Detailed knowledge of proficiency levels and of descriptors of activities	2
Learning how to work with the descriptors	1
Personal improvement in teaching skills	14
New teaching ideas, new inspiration, widening of knowledge of methodology	8
Increase of work quality	2
Acquisition of a creative approach to teaching languages	1
Stimulus to reflection	2

TABLE 38. continues on the following page

TABLE 38. continued from the previous page

Clarification of ideas about the communicative approach, finding clear priorities	1
Cooperative learning	24
Getting in contact with other teachers, meeting enthusiasts	5
Sharing ideas with other colleagues, learning from them, cultivating opinions	19
Preparation for the teacher trainer's role	28
Learning how to work as a teacher trainer, how to run seminars	14
Learning how to attract teachers' interest and motivate them to work with the ELP	8
Knowledge of persuasive positive arguments to be used	1
Being well prepared for unexpected questions	2
Learning how to organize teachers' seminars	1
Information about ELP publishers, costs, selling	1
Familiarization with the concept of ELP dissemination	1
Broader educational issues	4
Learning how to persuade school authorities of the benefits of the ELP	1
Development of language education in the region	1
Impact on the current national curriculum	1
Possibility of incentives for the teachers using the ELP	1
Teacher trainers' seminars	1
Good quality seminars	1
Total	155

were uncertain who would be authorized to confirm an achievement in the ELP and they asked if an independent institution would be established to certify the proficiency levels. The trainer asking for a fundamental notion of the workload involved in using the ELP wished to clarify the proportion of it taking place in the lessons.

6.2.4. Teachers' use of the ELP

To get insight into the piloting classes work with the ELP, findings obtained during the school visits are reported on in this subsection. The reports are arranged according to the pilot teachers' identification numbers. Basic data are supplemented by an account of the main findings. In the case of two teachers two entries are made owing to their work with the

ELP in two classes (ID 39 and 47). A summary of the results from all visits comes after the reports.

TABLE 39. School visit 1 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
2	3 (9 yr olds)	Extended language learning	English	A1 (1 st foreign language, 2 nd yr of learning)	?	Interview with the teacher	Textbook in use: Jelínková, L. (1997) <i>Angličtina žádná dřina</i> . Brno: Nová škola.

The teacher did not find any contradictions between the textbook in use and the ELP descriptors of communicative activities and, in her opinion, the same applied to the national curriculum. However, she emphasized that while the national curriculum focused on obligatory requirements, the ELP highlighted positive aspects of what learners were able to do. In her view, the teacher's explanation of the descriptor activities is necessary because it helps to narrow the scope of the tasks. She believed that there were no hard-and-fast rules about good achievers and poor achievers and their attitude towards the ELP: a very clever boy had never brought the Portfolio to school whereas some poorer learners had tried very hard.

As she had found concepts presented in Prof. Little's seminar extremely useful and wanted to disseminate them, she organized a workshop for language teachers in her town.

Altogether, the learners worked on pages 5 (personal data in the Language Passport), 9 (contacts with a foreign language outside of school), 11 (personal plans), 13 (descriptors for level A1 in spoken interaction, spoken production and writing) and 21 (their own lists of achievements) of the ELP. They used the free pages for making lists of songs and poems they had learned (altogether seven songs and eight poems). They especially enjoyed filling in page 5 (their own personal data), probably owing to the novelty of their work with the ELP and a feeling of being important. It appeared that the learners had not developed their work

TABLE 40. School visit 2 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
4	4 (10 yr olds)	Extended language learning	French	A1 (2 nd yr of learning)	21	Classroom observation, interview with the whole class	The teacher taught the class after her colleague who was an enthusiastic supporter of the project.

in the previous year essentially. (The class had a new teacher who had not been involved in the project since the beginning.)

The learners believed that they were good at activities in spoken interaction in particular (introducing someone, asking for something), one activity in spoken production (saying where they live) but they found writing activities difficult (filling in a questionnaire and writing a birthday card). The discussion revealed that several learners did not understand the word “questionnaire”.

The learners performed several dialogues during the lesson and sang songs they had learned.

TABLE 41. School visit 3 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
8	5 (11 yr olds)	Primary	English	A1 (1 st foreign language, 2 nd yr of learning)	8	Classroom observation, interview with the whole class, interview with the teacher, study of the ELPs	The teacher presented her experience in the 6 th seminar in June 2000 and in the National conference in September 2001.

The teacher planned the work on the descriptors of communicative activities with the whole class. All descriptors of level A1 were rewritten on posters and displayed in the classroom. There had been quite a lot of discussion of how to achieve the “can do” objectives. The learners confirmed their achievement by writing their signature next to a particular descriptor. When all the objectives in listening, spoken interaction and spoken production had been attained, though not the objectives in reading and writing, the learners decided to prepare additional practice activities for their friends in order to help them. Achieving all the A1 objectives became a common task of the whole class in which the learners, supported by their teacher, took the initiative.

The teacher emphasized the benefit of learning by way of taking small, attainable steps. According to her, parents appreciated the transparency of the learning process with the ELP. The learners were able to reflect on their language proficiency and they were fully acquainted with the descriptor activities. They claimed that they enjoyed working with the descriptors, e.g. because they helped them to find out what had been learned, they could be used for recording their achievements and they were a challenge. The learners were also able to identify their personal difficulties with specific tasks and give reasons for that. Their opinions varied (e.g. reading is easy because the text is given and so it is comprehensible even if one makes mistakes; spoken production is easy because one can correct oneself when one recognizes a mistake and can change the speech accordingly; spoken interaction is easy because if one is not able to go on, the person one is speaking to can help; there is no difference between the tasks, the difficulty of all of them is uniform).

Six randomly chosen ELPs were examined. They were a conclusive proof of systematic work. The entries were frequent and various and they corresponded with the teacher’s confirmation of the achieved sections.

The aim of the lesson was to practise reading comprehension and writing a simple personal letter. One girl prepared a treasure hunt activity run in the whole school (i.e. a reading activity with comprehension tasks). Individual learners competed one by one with their classmates. In the meantime, the whole class worked on the replies to the letters they had received from another class. Their younger classmates described themselves without mentioning their name, finishing their letters with the question “Guess who I am”.

Unquestionably, the ELP encouraged the teacher’s reflection on her way of teaching.

TABLE 42. School visit 4 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
15	6 (12 yr olds)	Basic	English	A2 (1 st foreign language, 3 rd yr of learning)	11	Classroom observation, interview with the whole class, interview with the teacher, study of the ELPs	The teacher presented her ideas about learners' personal objectives in the 3 rd seminar in November 1999.

The descriptors of communicative activities were rewritten on a notice board in the classroom.

Five randomly chosen ELPs were examined. The learners began to keep a record of their accomplishment of “can do” tasks at the very beginning of the project and they had ticked off a majority of the descriptor activities in level A1 and about a quarter of the activities in level A2. The teacher’s confirmation of achievement varied but she had often signed the A1 and A2 levels of listening (sometimes even when the learners had not). The learners were encouraged to develop their own individual goals and to reflect on their results and modes of learning. Their resolutions were usually very broad, different from the descriptor activities and often focusing on grammar (e.g. “*I want to learn fluency. To learn words from lesson 1 to 27*”; “*I would like to improve in tests, in articles and in the auxiliary do, does. And to learn the past tense, simple and continuous and the future tense.*”)

When discussing specific descriptor activities of the lower level A1, the learners were not certain of their accomplishment. The discussion confirmed their speaking problems. By contrast, one boy was dissatisfied with the simple descriptor activities of A1 level and he argued for more complex use of the language.

The learners found the A1 descriptor activity “I can understand numbers, prices and times” extremely difficult. In the teacher’s view, they were caught off guard by listening to tapes recorded by native speakers. She also thought that they had real trouble performing dialogues owing to the need to both listen and react.

A revision lesson consisted of a dictation dictated by one learner (who subsequently corrected the texts of all learners at home), correction of a written narrative and a feedback on it and dialogues performed in front of the whole class. Dictation done by learners was the teacher's new favourite technique and she believed in its effectiveness.

TABLE 43. School visit 5 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
24	7 (13 yr olds)	Extended language learning	English	A1 (2 nd foreign language, 2 nd yr of learning)	16	Classroom observation, interview with the whole class, interview with the teacher, study of the ELPs	Very intensive use of the Dossier, the ELP substituting a textbook.

The learners claimed that they often worked with the ELP, nearly in every lesson. The focus of their attention was the Dossier and they believed that they would always find it enjoyable. They were especially proud of a newspaper collage that they had made and had used repeatedly for highlighting newly learned expressions (different colours were used for each entry). Decisions about pieces of work to be collected in the Dossier were made by the teacher.

Six randomly chosen ELPs were examined. The dates occurring in the Language Biography ranged from 6 September 1999 (i.e. from the beginning of the new school year, about two months after the beginning of the project) to 22 February 2000 (the school visit took place one month later). The records related to spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. Accomplishment of listening and reading “can do” tasks had not been noted. Notes were on the whole rare. The teacher intended to sign the achievement of level A1 in the following week but the learners' level of language proficiency was evidently higher. The intensive work in the Dossier appeared to lack a correlation with the descriptor activities.

The learners did not understand the purpose of one page designed for their own lists of achievements and they asked what would happen when they attained all the “can do” tasks. The class spent several hours on practising the topic “Shopping” (the level of the dialogues related to the topic and collected in the Dossier was again clearly above level A1). The teacher saw the descriptor activities as “objectives of a traveller”. In her view, their general description would enable everybody to attain them, even though the level and quality of the attainment might vary (she made a comparison to project work).

The aim of the lesson observed was to practise the topic “Town” and the function “showing the way”. The learners developed their vocabulary through different tasks (e.g. matching activities) and they worked in four groups, including one group of boys working on a computer and seeking airplane departures. Practice of a dialogue with a map of a town followed. Representatives of each group performed the dialogue and all learners assessed their performance on a scale from –3 to +3. The assessment was limited to giving this specific grade and was not commented on. The teacher gave the learners constructive feedback.

TABLE 44. School visit 6 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
39	4 (10 yr olds)	Extended language learning	German	A1 (1 st foreign language, 2 nd yr of learning)	13	Classroom observation, interview with the teacher, study of the ELPs	The teacher attempted to design her own Portfolio.

Although the learners were not “officially” included in the pilot group, the teacher decided to do so unofficially later. She designed for them her own two pages of descriptors of communicative activities for level A1. The majority of the descriptor activities were identical to the original ones, but going through this process gave her a feeling of “ownership” and developed something more meaningful for her. She was proud of the result and enjoyed working with the Portfolio. Six columns of a

Likert-like scale were added next to the descriptor activities so that the learners could colour in or mark in another way an appropriate column, showing their achievement based on self-assessment (categories used: yes, no, not much, a bit, probably not, probably yes; a blue colour used for “yes”, a red colour for “no”). The teacher made corresponding notes about each learner in her notebook. Five randomly chosen Portfolios were examined. The learners worked with them as required and about half of the lines were filled in, covering all language activities.

The aim of the lesson observed was to practise the topic “Clothes”. The learners watched video sequences, answered comprehension questions, read dialogues and acted out short scenes prepared at home. Emphasis was put on listening comprehension and on accuracy, i.e. on correct grammatical structures.

TABLE 45. School visit 7 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
39	8 (14 yr olds)	Extended language learning	German	A2 – B1 (1 st foreign language, 6 th yr of learning)	12	Interview with the whole class, interview with the teacher, study of the ELPs	Big differences in the work with the ELP, hard-working girls

The learners made their own lists of what they had learned. As they placed a lot of emphasis on grammar, the lists contained expressions like, e.g. “prepositions with the 3rd and 4th case”. In addition, they made notes of what they had not yet learned well, referring again to grammar (e.g. verbs “haben”, “sollen”, endings of nouns, prepositions in, im, am, um) and they considered these notes very useful. They were uneasy about communicating in the target language when meeting foreigners and their anxiety appeared to be genuine.

Eight ELPs were submitted and examined. The first dates in the Language Biography relating to the descriptors of communicative activities were from December 1999 (about four months after the

beginning of the project). The number of entries and the system of working with the “can do” tasks varied a lot: while one learner (a boy) had not confirmed attainment of all the objectives in level A1, another learner (a girl) had confirmed attainment of fifteen objectives in level B1. Based on the teacher’s evaluation, the reasons for the huge differences could not be the real level of the learners’ proficiency. Whilst another boy worked only with levels A1 and A2, all remaining learners (girls) marked as acquired from two to fifteen activities in level B1, mainly listening activities. Descriptors in levels A1 and A2 often remained unmarked, which might be a natural reaction, because the learners had not worked with the ELP since beginning to learn German. Although English was their second foreign language, entries were not made for it. One girl had an achievement of three language activities in level B1 signed by the teacher but she had not confirmed it herself. It appeared that the learners mostly worked with the descriptors of communicative activities on their own at home.

TABLE 46. School visit 8 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
47	4 (10 yr olds)	Extended language learning	German	A1 – A2 (1 st foreign language, 2 nd yr of learning)	25	Classroom observation, interview with the whole class, interview with the teacher	The teacher presented her ideas in the 6 th seminar in June 2000.

The teacher believed that the ELP assisted her with the formulation of learning objectives and with systematic revision. She admitted to neglecting revision before. In her view there were no discrepancies between the descriptors of communicative activities and the textbook in use.

According to the learners, all of them showed the ELP to their parents when they received it, thirteen showed it to them later too, nobody did more than three times. Ten learners asserted that they had worked with the ELP at home on their own, without having been reminded about it

by the teacher. Eight learners considered all activities equally difficult, ten thought writing was more difficult, five spoken production and two reading. On the contrary, nine learners considered reading and six spoken interaction the easiest. Reading was in their opinion easy because they could see the text in front of them and had more time for the activity; at the same time, spoken interaction could be practised at home with relatives. Nine learners believed that they had accomplished some “can do” tasks in level A2, both the particular language activity and the scope varying (from one to sixteen activities). Nobody found any activities very difficult, except for four learners who thought that acquiring the ability to “understand words and phrases on common notices ...” might take them too much time.

There was a notice board concerning the ELP in the classroom on which the learners were reminded about various kinds of homework (e.g. to sort out the materials in the Dossier according to the given topics: songs, tests, conversation, grammar, letters). The learners received grammatical surveys from the teacher to be included in the Dossier.

The aim of the lesson was to assess and correct the learners’ written assignment (a short postcard greeting) and to revise simple speaking activities mocking-up real-life target language encounters. The majority of the activities were closely related to the descriptor activities. The learners practised the activities in pairs and performed them in front of the whole class. In addition, they attempted to say in pairs as many questions and instructions as possible within a one-minute limit.

TABLE 47. School visit 9 – basic information

Teacher ID	Year	Type of school	Language taught	Level	No of learners	Research techniques	Notes
47	8 (14 yr olds)	Extended language learning	German	A2 – B1 (1 st foreign language, 5 th yr of learning)	20	Study of the ELPs	

Six randomly chosen ELPs were studied. The quality and number of entries varied. It appeared that the majority of the learners had worked with the Language Biography three times when they had added dates to

the achieved objectives, including those having been achieved previously. The teacher confirmed attainment of level A1 and sometimes of some language activities of level A2 but the learners proceeded to level B1 and left some activities in level A2 unconfirmed. One girl seemed to reflect on her progress continuously. Another girl planning to take a state exam in German filled in the ELP for English too. All learners reflected on their way of learning and three used free pages for making their own lists of achievements. Various materials were incorporated into the Dossier: e.g. printed surveys of new German spelling regulations and surveys of grammatical structures – declension of articles, summary of prepositions, and also tests and pages from German magazines.

Generally, as observed during the school visits, the ELP implementation undoubtedly encouraged teachers' reflection and turned their attention to the development of new techniques. The majority of the teachers understood that the descriptors of communicative activities define real-world objectives and some of them appreciated their attainability and positive formulation. However, they had problems with recognizing if the learners had met the requirements of a particular descriptor / level. Their uncertainty manifested itself in setting more difficult assessment criteria, exceeding the appropriate level considerably. Correspondingly, the learners sometimes enumerated the tasks of the lowest level, i.e. below their level of proficiency when asked what they were able to perform well. One teacher emphasized the teacher's role in task specification. Two teachers maintained that the textbook objectives corresponded with the "can do" objectives. Free pages were only exceptionally used, in contradiction with the aims of the Czech project, and the use of the ELP for other languages learned was extremely rare.

Individual descriptors of communicative activities were brought into the learners' focus in whole class discussions during the school visits, however, attempts to discover the activities causing learners problems were rarely successful.

Particularly in schools with extended language learning, responsibility was often given to the learners to work with the ELP at home. Naturally, the quality of the learners' work then depended on the intensity of their goal orientation and/or diligence. A correlation between the teachers' qualifications and positive results was not found: an unqualified teacher of English, though a very experienced primary school teacher, seemed to produce excellent results.

6.2.5. Teacher trainers' use of the ELP

Based on school visits, three in total, this subsection describes specific examples of the work with the ELP done by the teacher trainers in the pre-dissemination phase. The format of the section is identical to that followed in the previous subsection.

TABLE 48. School visit I – basic information

Teacher trainer qualification	Type of school	Language taught	Year	Level	Research techniques
A qualified language teacher	Extended language learning	English	7 (13 yr olds)	A2 – B1 (1 st foreign language, 5 th year of learning)	Classroom observation, interview with the whole class, interview with the teacher, study of the ELPs

The teacher trainer participating in the pilot project decided to broaden his experience with the ELP and to become involved in ELP teacher education. He had already gained some experience as a teacher trainer in his local area. He described his pilot experiments with the ELP as philosophizing that had sometimes lacked anchoring in practice. He admitted that he had not worked with the descriptors intensively at that time and he had not thought over their content because he had considered them a tool for learners' independent study at home. He found out later that the learners had not been able to imagine a specific content behind the descriptors and had not been able to work with them on their own without a teacher's guidance. To exemplify the learners' specific problems, he pointed to the descriptor in B1 listening – "I can understand the main points of many radio or TV programmes if people speak relatively slowly and clearly" and explained that the key expression "the main points" needed to be specified by questions about what, who, where and when something happened to make it transparent to the learners.

The teacher trainer thought he was still feeling his way, nevertheless he came to the conclusion that the textbook was the backbone of teaching and the ELP should be grafted onto it. He considered the descriptors more abstract than the tasks in the textbooks but at the same time more detailed

and he admitted that the knowledge of the descriptors of communicative activities improved his understanding of textbooks. According to him, the learners identified English with the textbook, which represented the language for them and they could not make the link between the textbook and the ELP on their own. To spark the learners' interest in the ELP, the teacher emphasized that ELP work would not be marked.

In the trainer's opinion, the reference levels were difficult to identify because the same topic could be covered on more levels. He believed that there was a strong need to provide the learners with a situation in which the descriptor activity might be done ("imagine you are in London") and started establishing a framework for each descriptor. He wished to develop learners' appetite for speaking and expressing their feelings and opinions. He found it difficult to specify how much time the learners usually needed to be able to succeed in a descriptor activity because "knowledge proliferates". As for the progress in ELP use, he believed that younger learners in Years 3, 4 and 5 should slowly get accustomed to the ELP and their work with it should flourish in Years 6 and 7. In his opinion, the ELP could work perfectly for dyslexics who could use it as their individual study plan because the ELP reflects practical language use.

During the mini-lesson in Year 7 the teacher tried to elicit from the learners the differences between the common reference levels A1 and A2, clearly aiming at improving learners' explicit knowledge about the levels. He reminded the learners of what they should be able to do with the language. The learners listened to a tape recording about cosmonauts and they shared what they understood. Their proficiency level fluctuated between A2 and B1. During a class discussion the learners did not want to express their opinions on the descriptors in level B1 because they had started working on them and they had a feeling that it would not be appropriate. They agreed that the descriptors in level A2 were of moderate difficulty, with the exception of two learners. Each of them indicated one descriptor as too difficult ("I can recognize what people are talking about when they speak slowly and carefully" and "I can describe what I plan to do").

Twenty-one learners' ELPs from Year 7 were examined. The learners filled them for both English and German. They usually used the pages designed for making notes on their progress for recording relevant vocabulary items and formulaic expressions that they had learned ($f = 17$) and/or sometimes for noting what they had not attained yet ($f = 7$), e.g. "I don't know how to answer the phone in German" – a boy; "I can't

say that our family is big” – a girl. Eight learners emphasized that they could fulfil the tasks only under specific conditions or to a limited extent, showing thus their analytic abilities. For example, a girl underlined “*slowly and carefully*” or the learners commented on the descriptors as follows: “*It’s difficult for me to understand some stories but I can understand when people talk about themselves*” – a girl; “*It depends on what people are going to speak about, when it is school, yes, but when it is about constructing something, no*” – a girl; “*About what I know in vocabulary*” – a girl; “*I can ask questions but I cannot help somebody else*” – a girl; “*Yes, but I mix up thirty with forty*” – a boy. One boy expressed his wish to be able to communicate at a higher level: “*I don’t know many words about what I would like to write. Yesterday there was a football match on TV and Sparta had won*”, or “*I can’t say that I would like to have more extra-school activities or better facilities in the classrooms*”. Apart from specific notes related to achievement, four learners expressed very general plans, e.g. “*I would like to learn grammar*”, “*I would like to be able to pronounce words*”, “*I want to improve in reading*”. Comments on the achievement of descriptor activities did not occur in two ELPs.

TABLE 49. School visit II – basic information

Teacher trainer qualification	Type of school	Language taught	Year	Level	Research techniques
A qualified language teacher	Basic	German	7 (4 th year of learning)	A2	Interview with the teacher

The teacher trainer was one of the pilot teachers and at the end of the pilot project she started teaching in another school. She felt that she had not succeeded in the pilot phase but wanted to continue in ELP teacher education seminars and begin her work as a teacher trainer. During the interview she explained that she herself had detested grammar and the traditional way of teaching languages as a learner (she had attended a school in the former Eastern Germany) and that was why she had a liking for the descriptors of communicative activities. She used the ELP in Year 5 and Year 7. She wanted the learners to discover what descriptor tasks

they had achieved on their own but as they had not been able to do so, she had to encourage them a lot.

The Head of the school was present during the majority of the interview and a teacher of PE whose daughter was in Year 7 came and asked for clarification of the ELP purpose. He appeared to doubt whether another assessing instrument was necessary.

TABLE 50. School visit III– basic information

Teacher trainer qualification	Type of school	Language taught	Year	Level	Research techniques
A qualified teacher of Maths, an unqualified language teacher	Extended language learning	German	7 (2 nd foreign language, the end of the 2 nd year of learning)	A2	Interview with the teacher, study of the ELPs

The teacher trainer (bilingual in Czech and German) joined the project at the beginning of the pre-dissemination phase. Though an unqualified language teacher, she organized teachers' seminars in her local area and prepared demonstration lessons for her colleagues. She was committed to the frequent use of real-life language tasks in her teaching. She facilitated her learners to create e.g. menus for the school canteen, forms for a hotel, calendars about parts of Germany and Switzerland and materials concerning the school centenary. She organized a reading club as an extra-school activity. The learners prepared parts of lessons as peer-teaching and the teacher emphasized her role as the second adviser during this activity. Sometimes she recorded learners' reading because she wanted the learners to perceive their performance better. She believed she taught everything that was covered in the descriptors and she had a feeling she had not tackled any problems when working with them. She considered the ELP to be a good reference manual for the teacher and she evaluated the textbooks in use in terms of being in harmony with it. However, she was ambitious for her learners and showed a tendency to overestimate the communicative ability needed for specific proficiency levels (the learners appeared to achieve level A2 and began B1 but she still doubted whether some of them had achieved level A1). She would

appreciate the availability of samples of learners' proficiency of levels A1 and A2.

As for setting goals, she e.g. encouraged the learners to find out the issues covered in the textbook units. To assist the learners' work with the descriptors of communicative activities, she provided them with a context (e.g. "you are abroad and you have appendicitis", "you should attract me to stay in your hotel").

Three randomly chosen ELPs from Year 7 were studied. The learners expressed their targets in them: e.g. "I would like to improve in forming sub-ordinate clauses", "in the past tense", "in verbs." When assessing their achievement of the descriptor activities, they sometimes rewrote parts of the descriptors or they made brief notes and/or drew smiling or frowning faces. The teacher gave constructive written feedback on the learner's assessment and inserted it or wrote it directly in the ELP, e.g. "You could present a lot more", "Can't you sing a Christmas song?" or "Yes, I can usually understand it. Now continue on your own". She believed that the teacher should teach the learners how to work with the ELP when starting with level A1, facilitating this process greatly and, consequently, the learners would be able to continue with their assessment themselves.

6.3. Instructional objectives and the ELP descriptors of communicative activities

The following section examines the relationship between teachers' and teacher trainers' established instructional objectives and the ELP descriptors of communicative activities with the aim of providing background information on effective use of the descriptors. It shows pilot teachers' and teacher trainers' beliefs about the extent to which instructional objectives that they specified and that the textbooks in use promoted corresponded with the tasks incorporated in the ELP descriptors. The opinions of the two groups of teachers (i.e. of teachers and teacher trainers) are compared and baseline data about the teacher trainers' beliefs about effective lesson objectives are analyzed. To demonstrate the relationship between the objectives and the ELP, those descriptors of communicative activities whose content, in the teacher trainers' view, was lacking in the textbooks that they used are enumerated.

6.3.1. Beliefs about the correspondence between instructional objectives and the descriptors of communicative activities

This subsection depicts pilot teachers' and teacher trainers' opinions on their instructional objectives and the similarity of these objectives to the descriptors of communicative activities.

Table 51 presents pilot teachers' beliefs about the extent to which their objectives concurred with the tasks contained in the descriptors of communicative activities.

TABLE 51. Teachers' beliefs about the similarity between their objectives and the descriptors of communicative activities ($n = 34$, Teacher Questionnaire C, one year after the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Q4 – The teacher's objectives correspond with the descriptors of communicative activities</i>					
Type of school	Basic	ELL	Grammar	Private	
---	Teacher ID				Total
Completely 5	6 8	1 25 26 47	---	---	17.6%
Mostly 4	5 10 11 12 14 15 18 23 30 35 36 38 41 45	9 19 34 39 50	27 28 31 40 43 48	52	76.5%
Partly 3	16	---	---	51	5.9%
Slightly 2	---	---	---	---	---
Not at all 1	---	---	---	---	---
Total					100%

$M = 4.12$

As shown in the table, the majority of the teachers opted for the category "mostly". The frequency of occurrence of the teachers who believed that their own teaching objectives completely accorded with the descriptor activities was relatively low. Of these, the highest percentage was from the schools with extended language learning (there were no teachers from the 8-year grammar schools and from the private language

school in this category). The language breakdown of the category showed a higher percentage of the teachers of English, ($f = 83.3\%$), exceeding their percentage in the total ($f = 66.2\%$). Two teachers admitted that their objectives were consistent with the tasks in the descriptors only partly, one of them working in a private language school and piloting the ELP with younger learners on level A1, the other working in a basic school and piloting the ELP with 12-year olds on level A2, both teachers of English. Nobody selected the lowest categories, i.e. “slightly” and “not at all”.

The following table replicates the same process of enquiry but it focuses on the teacher trainers’ beliefs.

TABLE 52. Teacher trainers’ beliefs about the similarity between their objectives and the descriptors of communicative activities ($n = 31$, Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 3)

<i>Q4 – The teacher trainer’s objectives correspond with the descriptors of communicative activities</i>				
Type of school	Basic	ELL	Grammar	
---	Teacher trainer ID			Total
Completely 5	1 3 6 8 9 11	13 15 20 21 26	---	35.5%
Mostly 4	2 4 5 7 10 12	14 16 17 18 19 22 23 24 25 28 29	30 31	61.3%
Partly 3	---	27	---	3.2%
Slightly 2	---	---	---	---
Not at all 1	---	---	---	---
Total				100%

$M = 4.32$

Compared with Table 51, the results in Table 52 were more positive: the frequency of the responses in the category “completely” outnumbered that in Table 51. Still, the mode remained unchanging: the majority of the teacher trainers found their objectives mostly consistent with the descriptors of communicative activities. There was another agreement in

both tables too. Most importantly, responses in the categories “slightly” and “not at all” did not occur and responses in the category “partly” were exceptional. As with the pilot teachers, the teacher trainers in the 8-year grammar schools did not select the “completely” category. The percentage of the teacher trainers of English in this category ($f = 81.8\%$) outnumbered their percentage in the total ($f = 61.3$).

To sum up, with a few exceptions, both groups of teachers claimed that their instructional objectives and the communicative activities indicated by the ELP descriptors were mostly in harmony, yet this harmony was not perfect.

6.3.2. Instructional objectives set by teacher trainers

This subsection presents baseline data about teacher trainers’ common instructional objectives and it exemplifies these objectives.

The majority of the teacher trainers ($f = 34, 69.4\%$) stated in Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1 that they followed the textbook in use when specifying the lesson content and they considered the textbook the main instrument for identifying lesson objectives. Five teacher trainers referred to the national curriculum and four to a thematic plan as a point of departure. The responses of six teacher trainers had no source. Generally, the teacher trainers appeared to be over-focused on a specific textbook, and, consequently, in an extreme response, the objective was “to acquire a grammatical structure needed for the exercises in the textbook”.

The types of the lesson objectives formulated by the teacher trainers are summarized in the following table. Although two teacher trainers admitted that they did not think about lesson objectives and eight claimed that they gave them some thought only sometimes, they specified the objectives clearly and hence all these ten answers are incorporated in the table.

There was a high level of agreement among the teacher trainers on the selection of the elements that the learners should master in individual lessons. The elements stated most frequently were grammatical structures along with communicative activities (given by 29 teacher trainers). They comprised two subgroups: one ($f = 16$) contained a) grammatical structures, b) communicative activities and c) lexical sets and/or a specific topic, and the other ($f = 13$) combined a grammatical focus with two communicative activities. With regard to the individual communicative activities listed in both subgroups, spoken interaction predominated ($f = 17$), reading and listening were given less weighting and were roughly

TABLE 53. Examples of teacher trainers' lesson objectives ($n = 49$, Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1)

	<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>
Language-related objectives	A combination of a grammatical structure, lexical set and a communicative activity	16
	A combination of a grammatical structure and a communicative activity	13
	Communicative activities	4
	Grammatical structures	1
	Lexical competence	1
Non-language objectives	Broader educational objectives	11
Not applicable	Lesson description	1
	Data from higher education academic disciplines (e.g. morphology)	2

equal (9 and 8 tallies) and spoken production and writing were seldom considered ($f = 4$ and $f = 3$ respectively). Typical lesson objectives were usually formulated as product-oriented, rarely as process-oriented. The teacher trainers either wrote their objectives in broad, general terms ($f = 17$) and then formulations such as the following occurred: “internalizing a grammatical structure”, “mastering a specific conversational situation” or “a conversation on a given topic”, “comprehending a listening text”, “learning to seek information in a text” and “practising and developing vocabulary range in a particular area”. Or they exemplified specific objectives ($f = 12$), and then a representative sample of the objectives was as follows: “to automatize the use of do/does in questions”, “My daily routine”, “to learn how to do shopping”. Four teacher trainers distinguished various types of objectives: grammatical, communicative, lexical and global educational and they enumerated a listening objective and a functional objective. In one case, work with magazines for language learning was included, and in another development of sociocultural knowledge mentioned (Christmas customs and traditions in German-speaking countries).

Regarding grammatical structures, the trainers either mentioned their presentation and practice, or they also considered their functions and practical usage, which resembled in some cases behavioural objectives (e.g. “to make a four-sentence dialogue on a given topic using modal

verbs”, “to use the present continuous tense – who is doing what just now”, “to be able to use the structure in a narrative”). The former attitude, i.e. explicit grammar teaching in the form of the presentation-practice model predominated ($f = 20$); declarative knowledge about grammar was highlighted three times, once emphasizing the teacher’s activity rather than that of the learners (“to learn to distinguish countable and uncountable nouns”, “to learn everything about the use of the past infinitive”, “to explain the difference between the past tense and the present perfect tense”). One teacher trainer indicated that grammatical structures were basis for all subsequent teaching, e.g. s/he emphasized “including a newly acquired grammatical structure into an oral performance, understanding it in authentic material”.

In the third subgroup there were four teachers strongly preferring to specify the objectives in the form of communicative language activities (e.g. “to ask for directions”, “to understand the weather forecast”, “to express an opinion on a given topic”). One of them combined in one example a communicative activity with a grammatical structure (“to be able to understand and use prepositions – to describe where things are”). Another used these components in one example in the opposite order and exemplified the way she described the objectives to the learners (“We’re going to learn how you will apologize for forgetting something, e.g. your homework – negation + nouns in accusative”). This teacher commented on the ELP use: “I like the language situation. It’s better to tell children ‘We’re going to learn how to boast about the present you got’ than to say ‘We’re going to learn the accusative today’.”

Apart from the above-mentioned subgroups, one trainer focused on grammatical structures exclusively and another on lexical competence combined with skills that the learner would be able to exhibit at the end of the lesson owing to vocabulary acquisition (e.g. “answering questions that check reading comprehension”).

By contrast to the biggest group described above, which brought to bear a linguistic rationale when specifying instructional objectives, the second group ($f = 11$) selected broader educational aims and/or focused rather on what the teacher does (e.g. “different attitudes towards high-achievers and low-achievers”, “all learners’ involvement”). Five teachers in this group expressed their objectives vaguely, in an extreme response as “the new subject matter that I want to teach (its range varies)”.

The importance attached to learners’ grammatical competence in the teacher trainers’ exemplification of their instructional objectives appeared to be evident ($f = 30$). However, though usually in a combination with

grammatical competence, the frequency of occurrence of communicative language activities was higher ($f = 33$) and the communicative activities appeared to be a clear focus of the teacher trainers' interest.

6.3.3. Evaluation of the textbooks and of their harmony with the descriptors of communicative activities

Data in this subsection make a connection with the textbooks used by the pilot teachers and teacher trainers and they show the teachers' and teacher trainers' views on the extent to which their textbooks covered the descriptor activities. Two types of frequency tables depicting the participants' opinions are presented, each type separately for the teachers and the teacher trainers. First, to provide a broader context, the evaluation of the textbooks is outlined. Second, the relationship between the textbook activities and the descriptor activities is reported.

TABLE 54. Teachers' evaluation of the textbooks in use ($n = 34$, Teacher Questionnaire C, one year after the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Q2 – The textbook in use is</i>					
Type of school	Basic	ELL	Grammar	Private	
---	Teacher ID				<i>Total</i>
Excellent 5	10 35 38	---	27 31 43 48	---	20.6%
Good 4	5 8 11 12 14 15 16 18 23 30 36 45	1 9 19 25 26 47 50	28	---	58.8%
Average 3	6 41	34 39	40	51	17.7%
Below average 2	---	---	---	52	2.9%
Very bad 1	---	---	---	---	---
Total					100%

$M = 3.97$

Table 54 depicts that nearly four fifths of the teachers ($f = 79.4\%$) appreciated the textbooks either fully, evaluating them as excellent, or to a great extent, evaluating them as good. Notably, 8-year grammar school teachers appraised the textbooks extremely positively; the percentage of

this subgroup in the highest category ($f = 57.1\%$) exceeded its percentage in the total ($f = 17.6\%$). On the contrary, two groups of the teachers did not use the highest category in their evaluation at all: these were teachers working in the schools with extended language learning and in the private language school (the teachers from the private school being the most critical). All unqualified teachers assessed the textbooks as good. The frequency of the responses of young teachers, with up to five years of teaching practice, in the categories “average” and “below average” was high ($f = 57.1\%$) compared with their frequency in the total ($f = 17.7\%$).

All the teachers apart from six (five teachers of German and one teacher of English) used textbooks written abroad. The variety of the titles was wide, altogether 19 different series, 11 for English and 8 for German. The specific textbooks are enumerated in Appendix 10.

The following table focuses on the teacher trainers’ textbook evaluation. Five teacher trainers evaluated two textbooks but their opinions were counted as one answer (half a point was given for each response) so that the data were not distorted. The same procedure was applied to Table 57.

More than 90 per cent of the teacher trainers ($f = 90.3\%$) evaluated their textbooks as excellent or good. Analogous to the pilot teachers’

TABLE 55. Teacher trainers’ evaluation of the textbooks in use ($n = 31$, Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 3)

<i>Q2 – The textbook in use is</i>				
Type of school	Basic	ELL	Grammar	
---	Teacher trainer ID			<i>Total</i>
Excellent 5	5 6 8 8	13 16 17 20 21	30 31	29.0%
Good 4	1 2 3 4 6 7 9 11 12	14 15 18 19 22 23 24 25 26 26 28 29	---	61.3%
Average 3	10	21 22 27	---	9.7%
Below average 2	---	---	---	---
Very bad 1	---	---	---	---
<i>Total</i>				100%

$M = 4.19$

evaluations, the mode was again the second value on the scale. With regard to the individual types of schools, the distribution of 8-year grammar school teacher trainers' answers was limited to the "excellent" category, however their very low frequency should be taken into account. The percentage of the teacher trainers of English in the category "excellent" was higher than the percentage of the total group ($f = 88.9\%$ vs. 61.3%).

Generally, the teacher trainers' evaluation was slightly more positive than the evaluation of the pilot teachers: the number of the teacher trainers appraising their textbooks as excellent was higher, and, at the opposite end of the scale, the percentage in the category "average" was lower, with no responses occurring in the category "below average".

Except for eight teacher trainers (one teacher trainer of English and seven teacher trainers of German), all others used textbooks written abroad, including the teacher trainer of French. Altogether, 14 different series of textbooks were identified. The specific textbooks are enumerated in Appendix 11.

As shown in the two following tables, both the teachers and the teacher trainers were more critical when evaluating the extent to which the textbooks dealt with the descriptor activities.

TABLE 56. Teachers' opinions on the concurrence of the textbooks with the descriptor activities ($n = 34$, Teacher Questionnaire C, one year after the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Q3 – The textbook follows the descriptor activities</i>					
Type of school	Basic	ELL	Grammar	Private	
---	Teacher ID				Total
Completely 5	35 38	---	---	---	5.9%
Mostly 4	5 8 10 11 12 14 15 23 30 36	1 9 19 25 34 47 50	27 28 31 40 43 48	---	67.7%
Partly 3	6 16 18 41 45	26 39	---	51	23.5%
Slightly 2	---	---	---	52	2.9%
Not at all 1	---	---	---	---	---
Total					100%

$M = 3.76$

The frequency of the responses in the highest category on the scale did not equal the frequency in the corresponding category referring to the textbook evaluation (see Table 54). Only two pilot teachers maintained that the textbook activities were completely consonant with the descriptor activities, both of them qualified, one a teacher of English and the other a teacher of German, both working in basic schools. According to the majority of the pilot teachers, the textbooks dealt with the descriptor activities, but the connection was looser. More than one-quarter of the teachers ($f = 26.5\%$) claimed that the textbooks followed the descriptor activities only partly or slightly.

The framework of the following table replicates the design of Table 56 and analyzes the teacher trainers' opinions.

TABLE 57. Teacher trainers' opinions on the concurrence of the textbooks with the descriptor activities ($n = 31$, Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 3)

<i>Q3 – The textbook follows the descriptor activities</i>				
Type of school	Basic	ELL	Grammar	
---	Teacher trainer ID			Total
Completely 5	---	13 17 20	---	9.7%
Mostly 4	1 2 3 4 5 6 6 8 8 9 10 11 12	14 15 16 18 19 21 22 23 24 25 26 26 28 29	30 31	82.3%
Partly 3	7	22 27	---	8.1%
Slightly 2	---	---	---	---
Not at all 1	---	---	---	---
Total				100%

$M = 4.02$

The majority of the teacher trainers maintained that the textbooks mostly dealt with the activities contained in the descriptors. The few exceptions occurred mainly among the teacher trainers from the schools with extended language learning: three teacher trainers of English took the option “completely”, and, on the contrary, two teacher trainers of German the option “partly”. The frequency of the teacher trainers' answers

in the category “partly” was significantly lower than the frequency of the pilot teachers’ answers in the corresponding category and none of the teacher trainers selected the category “slightly”.

To facilitate a comparison of the teachers’ and teacher trainers’ views, the data from Table 54 and Table 56 and, correspondingly, the data from Table 55 and Table 57 are put together in Appendices 10 and 11 respectively. All textbooks enumerated by the teachers and teacher trainers are listed (only titles of the textbooks are provided).

The frequency of occurrence of the textbooks that were according to the teachers and teacher trainers excellent and completely corresponded to the descriptor activities was extremely low (see Appendices 10 and 11). Both the teachers’ and the teacher trainers’ opinions were heterogeneous and the evaluation of individual titles varied immensely. Discrepancies were common: one textbook was classified as both excellent and average, or as consonant with the descriptor activities completely or partly.

All in all, in the majority of the teachers’ and teacher trainers’ views, the textbooks did not completely harmonize with the descriptor activities.

6.3.4. The deficiency of ELP descriptor activities in the teacher trainers’ textbooks

The previous subsection presented the opinions of some teachers and teacher trainers on the insufficient compatibility of the descriptor activities with the textbooks they used. This subsection hence focuses on concrete descriptor activities that the teacher trainers lacked in their textbooks and that they identified during the third seminar. They worked in groups to complete the identification and each of them evaluated only one level of language proficiency - either A1, or A2, or B1. The results are presented in Appendix 12. The descriptors come from the “European Language Portfolio for learners aged 11 to 15 in the Czech Republic” (2001) and they are cited verbatim. Altogether, there are 23 descriptors of level A1, 36 of level A2 and 36 of level B1.

Correspondingly to the textbook evaluation, the teacher trainers’ opinions on the lack of the descriptor activities in the textbooks varied. Regardless of the frequency of occurrence, the number of enumerated missing descriptors was highest in level A2 (55.6%), while level A1 (39.1%) and B1 (38.9%) had similar results. With regard to the individual language activities, spoken interaction had the highest number of listed descriptors in all three levels, but the descriptors for this activity also represented the highest percentage in total. Level A1 was the only

level for which a relatively high percentage of the teacher trainers ($f = 28.6\%$) explicitly stated that the content of their textbooks completely or nearly completely harmonized with the descriptor activities. Moreover, A1 listening was the only category with no descriptor activity listed as missing. Otherwise fewer than 30% of the descriptors enumerated within one area of language activities could be found only in A2 spoken production, B1 reading and B1 writing. Conversely, more than half of the descriptors within particular language activities were enumerated in A1 spoken interaction, A2 listening, A2 reading, A2 spoken interaction, A2 writing, B1 spoken interaction and B1 spoken production.

The distribution and dispersion of the teacher trainers' answers concerning the descriptor activities that were lacking in the textbooks are shown in Appendix 13. The mode in level A1 is zero and the level has relatively low dispersion, whereas level A2 and B1 are relatively heterogeneous. The number of the descriptors indicated as missing increases as the level of proficiency rises, reaching its peak in level B1.

6.4. Use of the ELP descriptors of communicative activities

The Council of Europe's descriptors of communicative activities are a key element in the ELP and teachers' abilities to work with them effectively are crucial to the successful implementation of ELP pedagogy. To that end, teachers' work with the descriptors was examined throughout the whole project, in both the pilot and the pre-dissemination phases. The outcomes of this enquiry are presented in this section, showing a) the functions that the pilot teachers attributed to the descriptor activities and b) the benefits and problems related to the use of the descriptors as indicated by both teachers and teacher trainers.

6.4.1. Functions attributed to the descriptors of communicative activities by the teachers

This subsection focuses on the pilot teachers' views and determines four functions of the descriptors of communicative activities that could be fulfilled according to the teachers.

The answers to the question "How useful were individual parts of the ELP?" in Teacher Questionnaire 1 showed that the ELP descriptors of communicative activities had met teachers' interest in the initial

phase of the pilot project. The Language Biography containing the descriptor activities was considered the most useful part of the ELP by twenty pilot teachers (41.7%), however it should be taken into account that apart from the descriptors some teachers were also attracted by its activities encouraging reflection on language learning. For comparison, thirteen teachers claimed that all parts of the ELP were useful (i.e. the Language Biography included), nine appreciated the Dossier and seven the Language Passport (ten teachers named more than one part). Nine teachers found their initial experience too short to make a judgement. Of the teachers evaluating the individual parts, eighteen attributed specific functions to the use of the descriptor activities. Similarly, five months later, in Teacher Questionnaire 2, sixteen teachers highlighted functions of the descriptor activities when answering the question “What do you like best about the Portfolio?” The outcomes of both questionnaires (Teacher Questionnaire 1 and Teacher Questionnaire 2) are summarized in the following table. Altogether, the answers of 26 teachers (50% of the sample) are presented (eight teachers responded in both questionnaires, two repeating the same answer, only one of which was counted). Two teachers identified two functions.

As can be seen, Table 58 determines four main functions of the descriptors of communicative activities: 1) assessing, 2) planning, 3) facilitating learners’ self-assessment, and 4) stimulating teachers’ initiative. The teachers who expressed their opinions on the functions of the descriptors considered them to be mainly a tool for assessing learners’ attainment, including language revision ($f = 21$). This assessing function occurred as the most important in the answers to both questionnaires. It was in fact also present in the category “Facilitating learners’ self-assessment”. Within the assessing function, as well as within all the answers, a comparison of learners’ achievements with the descriptors of communicative activities was of major importance in the initial phase of the project, i.e. inspecting the fulfilment of the newly stated “European requirements”, while evidence for progress in learning dominated later. The planning function of the descriptor activities was relatively low in frequency ($f = 7$) and the two other functions even lower.

The role of the descriptors of communicative activities in planning was also shown in the answers to the repeated question in Teacher Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3 “Does the Portfolio help you make the learning objectives clear to your learners?” The answers are depicted in Figure 20, based on all three questionnaires, and summarizing the teachers’ opinions throughout the whole project.

TABLE 58. The functions of the descriptors of communicative activities indicated by the teachers in Teacher Questionnaire 1 ($n = 48$) and Teacher Questionnaire 2 ($n = 49$)

<i>Functions</i>	<i>TQ1</i>	<i>TQ2</i>	<i>f</i>
Assessing			21
Comparing learning outcomes with “European requirements”, encouraging learners’ reflection on their results	6	-	6
Checking and assessing achievement	2	-	2
Providing evidence for learning results and progress in learning	1	6	7
Helping to sort achieved knowledge	-	1	1
Specifying language levels and activities	-	2	2
Revising and practising language	3	-	3
Planning			7
Helping to set plans and specific learning objectives	3	4	7
Facilitating learners’ self-assessment			4
Encouraging learners’ self-assessment	2	1	3
Raising achievement awareness	-	1	1
Stimulating teachers’ initiative			2
Encouraging teachers’ reflection on the content and methods of teaching	2	-	2
Total	19	15	34

Illustrative examples of putting the functions of the descriptors of communicative activities into practice were discussed in the teachers’ seminars. Their description is given in chronological order.

In the second seminar (at the beginning of the pilot phase) the teachers worked in eight groups. Of these, six groups mentioned the descriptors of communicative activities in their presentations (the critical views of two groups are presented in the following subsection). The Year 2 and 3 teachers described going through the ELP with the learners and learning that - to their surprise - with the help of the descriptors of communicative activities, children as young as eight or nine were able to determine what they could and could not do in the language. These teachers also thought that the descriptors might help them as professionals to see their concrete teaching results more clearly. Some learners in Year 7 were surprised at how much they knew, and this knowledge was made available to them

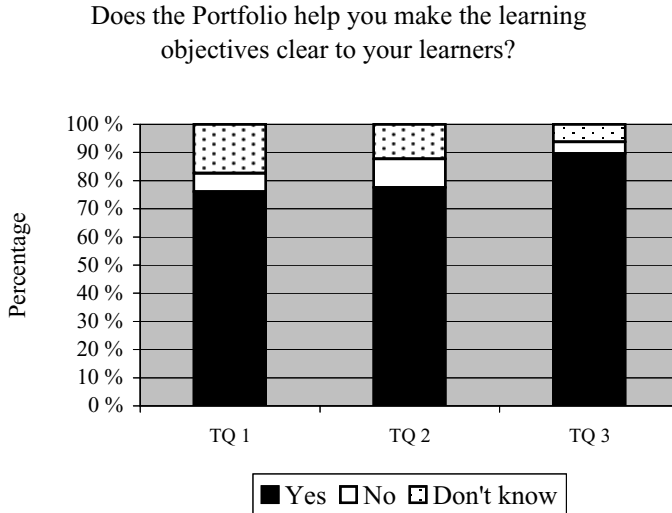


Figure 20. Teachers' responses to the question "Does the Portfolio help you make the learning objectives clear to your learners?" ($n = 46, 49$ and 48 , Teacher Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3 respectively)

via the descriptors of communicative activities. Two classes of Year 8 tried to define their language level, and, because they found out what they had forgotten, they were encouraged by their teachers to revise previously learned subject matter. One group of the teachers from Year 3 mentioned above learned that the descriptors might also be of help when formulating learning objectives, and, in addition, the Year 5 teachers reported on their encouragement of the learners to choose one language activity and focus on learning the relevant descriptor activities.

Similarly, in the third seminar (after about four months of work with the ELP), three teachers (ID 8, 24 and 36) maintained that they had encouraged the learners to find their own aim, i.e. a particular "can do" statement to work on, allowing them a free choice. Two teachers (ID 18 and 22) supported the idea of including additional sheets in the ELP where learners would write a personal journal commenting on their learning and on their attempts to accomplish descriptor activities. Some teachers appeared to be inspired by the descriptor activities to reflect on the aims of their work more deeply.

An influence of the ELP descriptors on teachers' reflection and work was reported on in the fifth seminar (after seven months of work with the ELP). The descriptors encouraged some teachers in Year 6 to use authentic materials on a considerably larger scale (ID 18, 19). The basic school teachers reported on various activating techniques stimulated by the descriptor activities. As for the assessing function of the descriptors, the teachers from Year 9 appreciated their role in enabling the learners to see their achievement in black and white. The teachers in Year 8 valued criterion-referencing, respecting individual progress and encouraging learners to work systematically.

The functions of the descriptor activities were consulted with two experienced pilot teachers (ID 1, 21) in a telephone interview (one and a half year after the end of the pilot phase). Both teachers admitted that in general they had not used the descriptor activities as lesson objectives. When clarifying their opinions, one of them (ID 21) inclined to psycholinguistic and philosophical ideas about lesson objectives and the different perception of them by teachers and learners due to their disparate schematic knowledge, perception and perspective. She argued for the different objectives of teachers and learners and considered the descriptors of communicative activities to be long-term objectives. She highly appreciated the ELP as an instrument showing the learners their progress. The second teacher (ID 1) believed that the view on learning languages in terms of setting "can do" objectives was not part of the common Czech tradition and that teachers were not used to it, as opposed to listing and setting grammatical structures and vocabulary items as teaching and learning objectives. She recommended emphasizing the descriptor activities as learning objectives in workshops for teacher trainers. In her view, the ELP relates to practical life and its aims are global and attainable step by step. The ELP mainly aids self-assessment and it should be seen as an instrument encouraging self-assessment, not as a syllabus. She further claimed that teachers usually follow a textbook and when revising its units they do not check "*if learners can buy a ticket or carry on a conversation but if they have mastered individual grammatical structures and vocabulary items*". According to her, a change of the national curriculum might be extremely useful, yet she could not imagine textbooks being changed, owing to their strong connection with a fixed order of grammatical structures to be learned.

6.4.2. Teachers' evaluation of the use of the descriptors of communicative activities

Within the determination of the functions of the descriptors of communicative activities, subsection 6.4.1 indicated some benefits related to the use of the descriptor activities, which this subsection investigates further. Apart from benefits, it also shows drawbacks of the use of the descriptors as seen by the pilot teachers. As the data are ordered chronologically, they also help to follow the development of the teachers' attitudes.

In the second seminar, some problems of working with the descriptors of communicative activities were pointed out relating to: a) their general formulation, b) uneasiness over their use and c) the effort to shift the work with the descriptor activities and with the ELP in general out of the regular timetable. A group of the teachers working in Year 4 thought that successful work with the ELP would require more detailed assessment criteria. The teachers of the fifth-year learners were uncertain about defining a borderline indicating mastery of the descriptor activities. They also asked about the appropriate setting for ELP work: should the learners work with the Portfolio in a regular class, in a special class as an out-of-school activity, at home or where? According to the teachers in Year 4, some descriptors should be tested on the basis of real-life achievement in a target language community (e.g. making themselves understood in a shop, writing a postcard).

Conversely to the above-mentioned issues, the results of the discussion in the third seminar sounded in general positive. Some teachers appreciated the help given by the ELP in its clear statements of the objectives of teaching. They emphasized the positive aspect of the value placed on practical abilities in the descriptors. Nevertheless, the following results were compiled from the answers to an open-ended question "What do you like least about the Portfolio?" in Teacher Questionnaire 2 filled in during the same phase of the project.

Cross-referencing of the teachers whose opinions were listed in the previous table to their characteristics (Table 7) revealed that the number of unqualified teachers in the group was higher than in the whole sample ($f = 7, 53.9\%$; and so was the number of the teachers from the basic schools ($f = 9, 69.2\%$).

The following teachers' views and approaches compiled from Teacher Questionnaire 2 exemplified the situation further (all responses are given here). One teacher asked how precisely the ELP measured language

TABLE 59. Teachers' objections to the descriptors of communicative activities expressed in Teacher Questionnaire 2 (after five months of work with the ELP)

<i>Category</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>	<i>f</i>
Teachers' uncertainty with level specification		
Problems with level specification	9 16 17 30 32 37	6
General formulation of the descriptors of communicative activities	20 24	2
Lack of a test booklet enabling determination of the acquired knowledge	33	1
Little focus on the needs of young learners up to the age of eleven		
Objectives not specific enough for young learners	7 12	2
Elaborate for young learners, higher levels unnecessary	6	1
Unsuitable formulation of the descriptors of communicative activities	8	1
Total		13

proficiency. Two teachers required vocabulary range specification and performance samples of particular levels. Descriptors of communicative activities such as "I can understand a slow, short dialogue when the speaker helps me" were found too general ($f = 1$). The level of the learners' language proficiency was judged as A1, although the learners wrote essays such as "My favourite animal", "My new identity", "My plans", i.e. essays clearly exceeding the given level ($f = 1$). One teacher limited the work with the ELP to special lessons of conversation and another disliked beginning work with the ELP with older learners because previous achievements could not be filled in properly.

The following characteristics of the descriptor activities were emphasized in the teachers' poster summaries made in the fourth seminar (the teachers worked in seven groups). As for positive effects of the descriptor activities, the teachers claimed that by setting their own objectives the learners were encouraged to think more deeply about their abilities, problems and mistakes and were more motivated (four groups), that the ELP helped learners to set objectives and plan how to achieve them (three groups), and that teaching and learning with the ELP focused more on communication than on minor grammatical mistakes and thus

improved learners' language proficiency (one group). Regarding difficulties, the teachers referred to the following issues: the lack of time to work with the ELP and the need to be consistent (four groups), the need for a different ELP for younger learners (three groups), the need to make language levels and descriptor activities more detailed and specific (two groups), and the need to clarify the role of the teacher when working with the ELP (one group).

A lively debate in the fifth seminar (after about seven months of work with the ELP) focused on a wide range of issues. Notably basic school teachers emphasized the concept of a language as a means of communication and the philosophy of learning as doing things, i.e. communicating in a relaxed, supportive atmosphere. The teachers from 8-year grammar schools in particular contradicted them and argued for more intense grammar practice, including drilling, because otherwise there was a serious threat of learners' performing poorly in higher education entrance exams and in surveys carried out by research institutions and the Ministry of Education. They recommended a transfer of communicative activities and work with the ELP to lessons of conversation. Interestingly, the teachers of English and German had opposing beliefs about the use of more enjoyable and real-life activities. The teachers of German took the view that the system of the German language requires a different attitude towards teaching: the need to start with declension and conjugation and postpone enjoyable activities. This belief was also held by one teacher of both English and German (ID 33).

Several teachers made suggestions on improvement. The teachers in Years 3 and 4 emphasized the need for the teacher's creative work when specifying the descriptor activities and the need for subdivision of the descriptor activities into smaller and more easily attainable tasks (they exemplified the idea through the subdivision of the notion "time" in the descriptor "I can understand numbers, prices and times"). The teachers in Year 9 believed that the learners should be provided with more materials and teaching aids for their independent work at home but considered this provision too time-consuming for teachers. The Year 8 teachers placed emphasis on the teacher's systematic work and the teachers working with Year 7 thought that teaching the learners self-reflection, learning from other teachers' first-hand experience and respect for local conditions might be helpful.

In the seminar discussion, the teachers repeatedly expressed their sense of insecurity when doing achievement assessment based on the descriptors of communicative activities. Especially the teachers progressing from

level A1 to level A2 (e.g. in Year 7, second foreign language), but also others (teaching Years 4, 5 and 6) demanded more precise definitions of language proficiency and they pointed out that a clarification of the range of learner proficiency was needed. The teachers in Year 7 emphasized the difficulty in judging the learners' proficiency owing to the learners' diverse abilities. The group of Year 3 and 4 teachers considered "can do" objectives too distant for younger learners and the formulation of acquired abilities too general. The teachers in Years 4 and 9 complained about having few lessons of the foreign language in the curriculum and the teachers in Years 6 and 7 stated that an inclusion of ELP work in the lessons was problematic. For the first time, the problem of learners refusing to work with the ELP was mentioned (the teachers in Year 9). Another issue concerned the learners' tendency to follow the teacher's advice without using their own initiative and the lack of their ability to be independent of the teacher (the teachers in Year 9).

The teachers' opinions on the specification of proficiency levels and on the clarity of the descriptors of communicative activities were also examined in items 1, 7 and 8 in Teacher Questionnaire 3. Both the whole sample ($n = 48$) and different groups of the teachers were investigated. Figure 21 presents teachers' responses to item 1 ("The levels in the Common Framework are so broad that they do not allow my learners to appreciate their progress").

The figure illustrates that when finishing the project, 31.3 % of the teachers found language levels too broad to facilitate the learners' awareness of their progress in language learning and they were not certain about the facilitating role of the levels. While the opinions of the teachers of English and German were nearly identical, the teachers working with the learners in primary schools were markedly more positive than their colleagues in lower-secondary schools. Of those teachers dissatisfied with the level specification, six teachers taught learners on level A1, seven level A2 and two level B1. The percentage of unqualified teachers in the dissatisfied group exceeded that in the whole sample ($f = 9, 60.0\%$) and so did the percentage of teachers working in basic schools ($f = 11, 73.3\%$). Regarding the teachers from 8-year grammar schools, the highest number gave an undecided answer ($f = 4, 57.1\%$) and the same applied to the teachers from schools with extended language learning ($f = 8, 57.1\%$).

Figure 22 depicts the teachers' responses to item 7 ("The descriptors used in the check lists are not always clear").

The levels in the Common Framework are so broad
that they do not allow my learners to appreciate
their progress

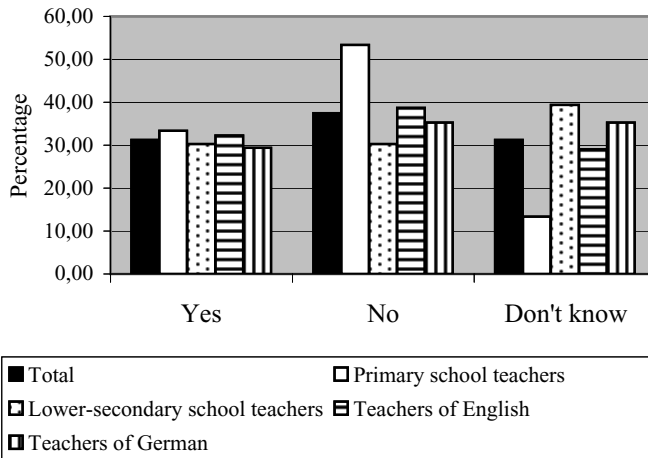


Figure 21. Teachers' responses to item 1 ($n = 48$, Teacher Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

Figure 22 demonstrates that the descriptors of communicative activities were often unclear to the teachers at the end of the project. 64.6% of the teachers agreed on their ambiguity and only 27.1% had a contrasting view. The number of "don't know" answers was very low in this item ($f = 8.3\%$). In contradiction to findings in answers to item 1, the opinions of the teachers of English and German differed, the teachers of German being more negative, but the results in primary and lower-secondary schools were nearly the same. Except for one unqualified teacher who found the descriptors of communicative activities clear enough, all other unqualified teachers belonged to the group of the critics of their clarity ($f = 15$, 93.8%). Likewise, their clarity was reckoned to be sufficient by a very small percentage of the teachers from basic schools ($f = 4$, 16.0%). Conversely, a majority of the 8-year grammar school teachers ($f = 5$, 71.4%) and also four teachers from schools with extended language learning were satisfied with the clarity of the descriptors ($f = 28.6\%$).

The descriptors used in the check lists are not always
clear

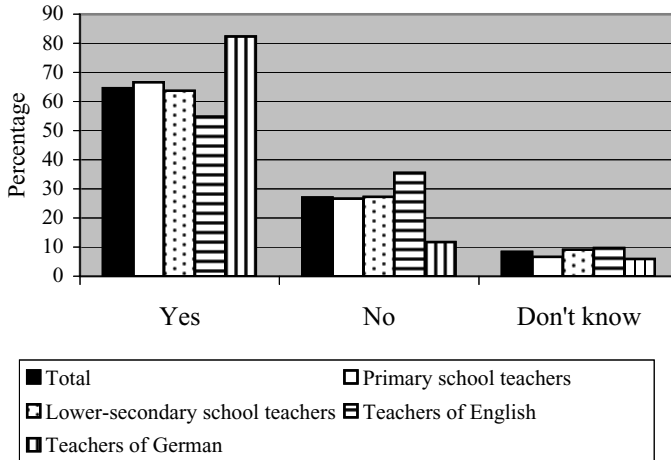


Figure 22. Teachers' responses to item 7 ($n = 48$, Teacher Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

The whole satisfied group consisted of thirteen teachers, six of them teaching level A1, five level A2 and two level B1.

Figure 23 shows teachers' answers to item 8 ("I hope more detailed sample lists for the different levels will become available").

The figure indicates that the ratio of the teachers requiring sample lists for the specific language levels was high ($f = 32$, 66.7%) and that the opinions of the teachers of English and German were nearly identical. There were also minimal differences between the teachers in primary and lower-secondary schools (the teachers in primary schools were slightly more positive). Only six teachers did not ask for the lists ($f = 12.5\%$); this group included four teachers from basic schools, one teacher from a school with extended language learning and one teacher from an 8-year grammar school. Four of them taught A2-level learners and two A1-level learners. The frequency of occurrence of unqualified teachers requiring the samples was very high ($f = 12$, 75.0%). Three teachers made a comment on their answer: of these two teachers added that the sample

I hope more detailed sample lists for the different levels will become available

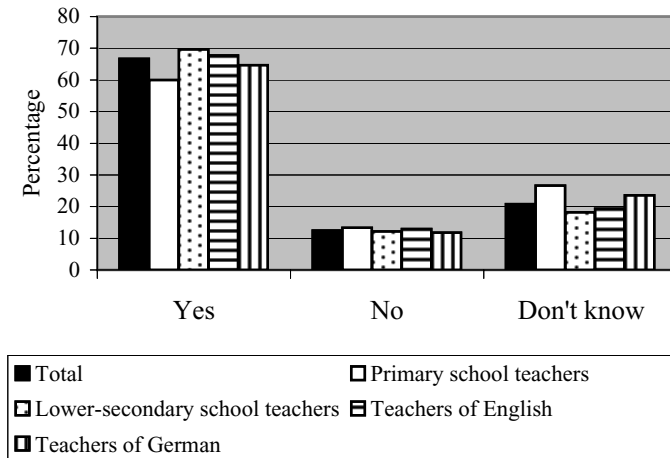


Figure 23. Teachers' responses to item 8 ($n = 48$, Teacher Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

lists would be welcome but were not indispensable and one explained that samples would be needed if we wanted to compare the results of individual schools or if there were teachers lacking creative thinking or wishing to rank learners.

To sum up, the figures in this subsection show that the pilot teachers held rather critical views on the formulation of the descriptors and on the scale of language proficiency at the end of the project. Though the teachers' opinions varied and they were sometimes contradictory, the majority of the teachers asked for more detailed and more precise descriptors.

6.4.3. Teacher trainers' expectations about the descriptors of communicative activities

By describing teacher trainers' beliefs about the descriptors of communicative activities this subsection makes a parallel with the previous

subsection 6.4.2. Nevertheless, as the teacher trainers' involvement in the project only began at the time of the data collection, a majority of the data relates rather to teacher trainers' anticipation than to their direct experience.

Of 49 potential teacher trainers, 18 referred to the descriptors in their responses to the question "What do you expect from your work with the ELP?" on which they reflected during the second seminar. The teacher trainers expected that the descriptors could serve one or more of the functions displayed in the following table (three trainers stated two items). Where possible, functions of the descriptors indicated by the teachers in 6.4.1 are used.

The teacher trainers' emphasis on the category "Reflection on on-going learning process" ($n = 9$) highlighted the planning potential of the descriptor activities, i.e. their role in specifying learning objectives. This

TABLE 60. The teacher trainers' expectations about the descriptors of communicative activities ($n = 18$, Teacher Trainer Questionnaire 1)

<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>
Reflection on achievement	1
Providing evidence for step-by-step progress in learning owing to short-term objectives	1
Reflection on on-going learning process	9
Showing clear direction and providing clear, accessible short-term objectives	6
Helping to set specific learning and teaching objectives, helping in lesson planning	1
Stating attainable objectives for low-achievers	1
Raising achievement awareness and helping to set objectives	1
Learners' assessment and self-assessment	4
Specifying norms of achievements	1
Providing clear criteria for more objective assessment and self-assessment	3
Real-life language use	4
Encouraging language use in situations corresponding to real-life experience	4
Learners' self-study	3
Providing guidelines and objectives for learners' independent learning at home	3
Total	21

function of the descriptors was given more weighting than the assessing function, represented in the category “Reflection on achievement”, in the last subcategory of “Reflection on on-going learning process” and in the category “Learners’ assessment and self-assessment”. Seven respondents expressed a belief that the descriptors would be clear and unambiguous, thus helping a higher objectivity of assessment. Two trainers wished to be thoroughly familiar with them. Four teacher trainers believed that the descriptors might stimulate real-life-task involvement as opposed to obtaining declarative knowledge about grammar. One trainer specified the role of short-term objectives: when following them, learning is not frustrating, which is very important, especially for older learners. Another trainer commented on the national curriculum and criticized its global formulations. The responses in the category of “Learners’ self-study” ($n = 3$) testified to a specific teacher trainers’ approach to learner autonomy - a conversion of the notion of learners’ responsibility to the idea of solitary study at home.

The following references to the descriptors were made in the teacher trainers’ responses to the question “What do you expect from the seminars?” As with the previous answers, the teacher trainers gave them in the second seminar. Altogether thirteen responses referred to the descriptors of communicative activities. The trainers demanded detailed knowledge of individual levels, of the rationale behind the choice and wording of individual descriptors and of the ways of working and assessing with them ($f = 6$). Two trainers were uncertain as to who would be authorized to confirm an achievement in the ELP and they asked if an independent institution would be established to certify the proficiency level. Two teacher trainers required that the connection between the ELP and the grammar in textbooks in use would be clarified and one of them was afraid that learners might forget what had been learnt over time. One trainer asked for a fundamental notion of workload representing ELP use and the proportion of it, which should take place in the lessons. Another wanted to be informed how to incorporate ELP work into the lessons. Finally, one trainer made a remark about the national curriculum and found it, as opposed to the descriptors of communicative activities, lacking real-life competences and being too demanding. In the discussion that followed one trainer raised questions about the clarity and preciseness of the descriptors and pointed to expressions that were ambiguous in her opinion, such as “a short text” and “a simple text”.

In the third seminar the teacher trainers considered in pair work grammatical structures and formulated their functions and use in a

way meaningful to young learners and relating to real-life objectives. The majority of the teacher trainers appeared to be highly competent to do this task.

6.5. Use of learners' self-assessment

The descriptors of communicative activities discussed in sections 6.3 and 6.4 are the principal component in implementing ELP pedagogy. As highlighted in chapters 1 and 2, the second important component is learners' self-assessment, making it the centre of enquiry both in the pilot and in the pre-dissemination phases. However, as teacher trainers' experience with self-assessment was at the very beginning during the research, their attitudes are not described and only beliefs and attitudes of two groups of subjects are examined, i.e. those of the pilot teachers and pilot learners. Contradictory answers are sometimes given in the questionnaires, confirming thus the novelty of the self-assessment concept in the Czech school system.

6.5.1. Teachers' beliefs about learners' self-assessment

Firstly, this subsection is concerned with teachers' beliefs about learners' abilities to carry out self-assessment and to carry it out objectively. Secondly, it looks at teachers' general beliefs about both positive and negative aspects of learners' assessment and about the role of self-assessment in Czech schools, and thirdly, it investigates the sources of the teachers' beliefs.

Figure 24 presenting the teachers' beliefs about the learners' ability to assess their achievement with the help of the ELP refers to the beginning of the project.

As can be seen in the figure, the frequency of the response "don't know" was very high at the beginning of the project.

Teacher Questionnaire 2 (after five months of work with the ELP) did not establish a link between self-assessment and the ELP as an assessing instrument (in contrast to the above-mentioned Questionnaire 1). The question "Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?" generated the following results: there were 27.5 positive, 10.5 negative and 10 "don't know" answers.

Altogether, 32 pilot teachers replied in the same way in both questionnaires (Teacher Questionnaire 1 and Teacher Questionnaire 2).

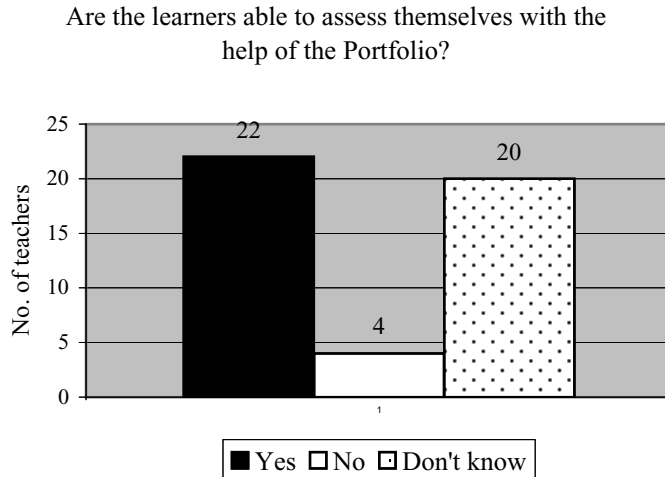


Figure 24. Teachers' responses to the question "Are the learners able to assess themselves with the help of the Portfolio?" ($n = 46$, Teacher Questionnaire 1, the beginning of the pilot phase)

Consistency occurred especially in the category of schools with extended language learning (78.6% of the answers were identical). Although the teachers from these schools did not give any negative answers, the highest percentage of "don't know" answers occurred in their category (42.9%). Three teachers responded positively in Teacher Questionnaire 1 but negatively or with a "don't know" answer in Teacher Questionnaire 2 (comments were made on the "don't know" answers: "We haven't managed to do it yet" and "They are learning it"). The reverse happened in the case of ten respondents who became more optimistic as the project continued. (Four teachers' answers could not be compared because their Teacher Questionnaires 1 were not submitted.)

The breakdown of the replies from Teacher Questionnaire 2 showed that the frequency of the teachers disbelieving learners' self-assessing abilities (merely "no" answers) was relatively high in the 8-year grammar schools (57.1%) and low in the basic schools (24.1%). Whereas the majority of the teachers in the 8-year grammar schools had a tendency to disbelieve learners' judging abilities and more than two-fifths of the teachers in the schools with extended language learning had a tendency

to resist self-assessment use, the majority of the teachers in the basic schools appeared to experiment with learners’ self-assessment.

The frequency of the positive answers to the question “Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?” increased at the end of the project, as can be seen in the following table.

TABLE 61. Teachers’ beliefs about learners’ abilities to self-assess their language competence (*n* = 48, Teacher Questionnaire 3, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?</i>					
Type of school	Basic	ELL + private	Grammar		Total
---	Teacher ID			<i>f</i>	%
Yes	8 11 12 14 17 20 23 30 32 35 37 38 42 45 46	1.2.3.7.9.19 21 24 34 39 47 51	28 31 33 40 43 48	33	68.8
No	10 15 16 18 22 29 41	26 52	27	10	20.8
Don’t know	5 13 44	25 50	---	5	10.4
Total				48	100

A comparison between negative and “don’t know” responses in Teacher Questionnaire 2 and Teacher Questionnaire 3 showed that eight teachers had consistent negative or vague opinions on the learners’ self-assessing abilities throughout the whole project (four “no” answers - ID 18, 22, 27, 41, and four “don’t know” answers – ID 5, 25, 44, 50). While eleven teachers changed their responses from negative to positive in the last questionnaire, the reaction of five teachers was the reverse, changing from positive to negative (*f* = 4) and “don’t know” responses (*f* = 1). Cross-referring to all three questionnaires revealed that there were only seven teachers whose responses were consistently positive throughout the project (ID 1, 9, 20, 24, 32, 39 and 42).

The question “Did you in general agree with their (i.e. the learners’) self-assessment?” yielded different results: 91.8% of the responses were positive and 8.2% “don’t know” (*f* = 4) in Teacher Questionnaire 2; and there were six negative (12.5%, ID 11, 22, 23, 27, 29, 41) and three “don’t know” answers (6.3%, ID 25, 40, 50) in Teacher Questionnaire 3.

When comparing the responses to this question with the distribution of the responses in Table 61, it became evident that the answers were not always without contradictions. At the end of the project, nine teachers doubting learners' judging abilities or evaluating their quality as low stated that they had usually agreed with the learners' self-assessment. On the contrary, three teachers holding a positive opinion on the learners' judging abilities maintained that they had not agreed with the learners' self-assessment or had not been certain about it. Consistent responses occurred, apart from thirty positive views, in replies of six teachers expressing negative or unclear opinions on the learners' self-evaluating skills in both replies (ID 22, 27, 29, 41, 25, 50).

In Teacher Questionnaire 3 filled in at the end of the pilot phase almost all the teachers confirmed that self-assessment had been the most critical part of the project because it had not been a common Czech tradition (item 11 TA; positive answers $f = 44$, (91.7%), negative answers $f = 4$, (8.3%), ID 8, 11, 42, 47).

Table 62 examines teachers' general beliefs about learners' self-assessment. It results from an open-response question "What is your opinion on self-assessment?" (Teacher Questionnaire A completed at the end of the project). The table provides insights into the teachers' opinions, summarized under two main categories: a) positive aspects and b) critical items and negative experience. Within these broad categories and within subcategories each respondent was counted only once, irrespective of the number of their responses.

As shown in Table 62, the positive aspects of the learners' self-assessment are higher in frequency than the negative ones. 23 teachers (48.9%) emphasized only positive contributions of self-assessment to teaching and learning:

The teacher should encourage learners to self-assessment, school grades aren't the only important thing but learners' feelings from their work are important too. (Teacher ID 18)

I think that self-assessment is very important for the whole development of children, because children can have a feeling of injustice, self-pity, that they were injured and when they underestimate themselves it can do them harm. (Teacher ID 32)

It increases self-esteem and it helps children to realize what they can in fact do and what they could do better. When learners find out where they're behind they try hard to get better. (Teacher ID 51)

TABLE 62. Teachers' beliefs about self-assessment ($n = 47$, Teacher Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Teachers' opinions on self-assessment</i>		
	Teacher ID	<i>f</i>
<i>Positive aspects of self-assessment (70.21%)</i>		33
Its general value		19
An important, worthwhile activity not only for language learning but also for further life skills	1 2 3 7 8 18 20 25 26 29 30 32 33 37 44 45	16
It should become a part of school assessment policy	2 18	2
Learners should be trained in self-assessment	29 31 35 41 44	5
The role in learning		8
It increases learners' self-esteem	9 25 27 31 50 51	6
It promotes learners' involvement in learning	25 51	2
Learners learn to identify what they have learned and what needs to be improved	31 34 51	3
Learners should become responsible for their learning	40	1
Objectivity		7
A majority of the learners were able to make a valid judgement of their skills	8	1
Some learners were able to self-assess well	11 24 47	3
Learners assessed their proficiency quite well	9	1
Learners' self-assessment gradually improved	23 52	2
Teachers' feedback		1
Learners welcomed congruence with the teacher's assessment	42	1
The impact and findings		6
Self-assessment was introduced in other subjects and classes	41 42	2
Some learners began to understand the process	21	1
Some learners found self-assessment important	47	1
Learners understood that they could express their opinion	15	1
Young learners were better able to become involved in the process than older learners	35	1

TABLE 62. continues on the following page

TABLE 62. continued from the previous page

Critical items and negative experience (51.06%)		24
Unfamiliarity with the concept		9
Learners are not trained in self-assessment; it is not a part of traditional Czech education	7 10 20 27 44 46	6
Teachers need training and special methodology	41 43 46	3
Learners initially did not understand the process	15	1
Need for initial introduction		2
Initial introduction of self-assessment is necessary and it should be used in all subjects	40 43	2
Need for the teachers' feedback		2
Learners insist on the teachers' feedback	19	1
The teacher's feedback is necessary	50	1
Difficulty for learners		10
Self-assessment is very difficult for learners	10 14 16 17 19 27 28 33 41 46	10
Objectivity		8
Learners' self-assessment is not objective	13 16 17 22	4
Learners often underestimate their abilities	5 17	2
Older learners lose their enthusiasm and they become more critical of themselves	38	1
Younger learners are not critical enough of themselves and they overestimate their abilities	12	1
Because of parental influence, some learners do not assess themselves critically	24	1
Learners' negative attitudes		1
Learners should not be forced to self-assess	39	1

Ten teachers (21.3%) pointed both to advantages and problems when implementing self-assessment into Czech schools:

I think that self-assessment is connected with self-confidence and self-esteem. When students can assess themselves and be objective, it's very good – but it's very difficult. (Teacher ID 27)

I think that self-assessment is important in education and I'll definitely work at it. On the other hand, I think that learners have quite big problems with it. (Teacher ID 33)

It's very important, but children can't do it yet, they need more time for it, to learn how to assess themselves (it's very important for life). (Teacher ID 44)

It's very useful but it's not common in our country. We use the textbook Cambridge English for Schools and among other things it gives learners help with self-assessment (even to the very young ones). (Teacher ID 20)

It's a very important part of education but unfortunately schools aren't interested in it very much. (Teacher ID 7)

14 teachers (29.8%) referred merely to problems:

Because of the learners' age, I am detached from self-assessment. Not all learners are objective. (Teacher ID 16)

Learners often tend to underestimate themselves. (Teacher ID 5)

The responses of some of these teachers were brief and reluctant.

Self-assessment is very difficult. (Teacher ID 28)

Learners lack objectivity. (Teacher ID 22)

As for various positive aspects of self-assessment, the highest percentage of the teachers highlighted its general value ($f = 19, 40.4\%$).

Self-assessment is very important. It should be a part of the whole assessment of learners. (Teacher ID 3)

I see it as very valuable – to be able to make a realistic assessment of oneself is important for life, not only for learning foreign languages. (Teacher ID 2)

Six teachers believed that self-assessment increased learners' self-esteem.

I think that self-assessment is very useful for gaining self-esteem (even for less successful learners) Learners were able to assess themselves quite well. (Teacher ID 9)

It's good to develop learners' ability to find out what they know and what they don't know and how well they know it, in that way their healthy self-esteem can develop. (Teacher ID 31)

As for learners' abilities to carry out self-assessment objectively, the frequency of teachers expressing a critical view of the learners' self-assessing abilities (both the category "Objectivity" and the category "Difficulty for learners" in the group "Critical items and negative experience") clearly exceeded ($f = 16$) the frequency of those who evaluated learners' judgement as adequate ($f = 7$, the category "Objectivity" in the group "Positive aspects of self-assessment"). Furthermore, in the latter group of teachers making positive comments on the learners' self-assessing abilities, only one teacher maintained that on the whole a majority of her learners were able to make a valid judgement of their performance; all other teachers in the group acknowledged the learners' abilities with higher reservations (e.g. one teacher underlined twice the word "some", suggesting that only some learners could adequately assess themselves).

The teachers emphasized the unfamiliarity of the concept in Czech schools, and they sometimes asked for special training both for the learners and for the teachers.

We have to show it to learners and teach them to assess their work and themselves. It's easier in lower classes. (Teacher ID 35)

It's difficult for learners, they are not used to it. It's necessary to train self-assessment more. (Teacher ID 10)

My group of children was not used to self-assessment, neither I, nor my colleagues encouraged them to do it. So far they have been very uncertain about it (and the same applies to me too). (Teacher ID 46)

It's very difficult. It's not only learners who have to learn it, but even teachers have to learn it too. (Teacher ID 41)

According to some teachers, learners' training should start before the beginning of foreign language learning (see especially the category "Need for initial introduction", but also the categories "General value" and "Unfamiliarity with the concept").

Three teachers considered both the assessing and the planning function of self-assessment (the category "The role in learning"). A

misunderstanding occurred in the category "Need for the teacher's feedback".

The teachers in the 8-year grammar schools tended to judge the introduction of self-assessment critically: only one of them gave only positive responses (ID 31). The frequency of occurrence of the teachers from the basic schools in the two main groups, i.e. expressing either positive or critical comments was roughly equal ($f = 11$ and $f = 10$ respectively) and it was equal for the unqualified teachers ($f = 6$ in each group). The percentage of teachers of German in the "negative" group exceeded that in the whole sample ($f = 50.0\%$).

Table 63 investigates the reasons for the teachers' above-mentioned beliefs; it analyzes teachers' responses to the question "What had a major influence on your opinion on self-assessment?" (six teachers gave two answers).

The categories "Teaching experience and reflection" and "Teacher's personality" are high in frequency in Table 63, confirming thus the importance of experience in forming beliefs (cf. 3.1.1). The following examples illustrate teachers' opinions:

What influenced me most was my life experience and the attitudes towards self-assessment that the children in my family have. (Teacher ID 47)

I compared the reactions of the learners with my own life experience. (Teacher ID 3)

I was influenced by my experience with my learners and by my own experience as a student of a foreign language. (Teacher ID 51)

Conversely, the frequency of the answers that were not applicable and that were not supplied ($f = 10$) was a matter of concern.

All respondents in the category "Learners' attitudes" worked in basic schools and in schools with extended language learning. Only three teachers in this category indicated that a discussion with the learners was a major factor determining their opinions on self-assessment. However, a discussion also appeared to be implied in the item "Confirmation of learners' knowledge in the Language Biography" in the same category because this response referred to the statement in Table 62 about the majority of the learners being able to self-assess their skills well. Conversely to the above-mentioned answers, in some cases the learners apparently initiated the discussion themselves by their enquiries (ID 19, 42, the

TABLE 63. Teachers' beliefs about factors influencing their opinions on self-assessment ($n = 47$, Teacher Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Factors influencing teachers' opinions on self-assessment</i>		
	Teacher ID	<i>f</i>
Teacher's personality		13
Teacher's own experience with self-assessment	1 3 27 47 51	5
Participation in the seminars on the ELP, discussions with colleagues	15 23 25 29 50	5
Study of new foreign language teaching methodology	7 20	2
Teacher's stereotypes	43	1
Teaching experience and reflection		16
Monitoring learners' work and their self-assessment	3 9 21 28 51	5
Comparison with the learners' assessment	12 24 44	3
Work with the ELP	14 25 33 50	4
Teaching experience with self-assessment	18 26 41	3
Self-assessment with an additional group of learners	35	1
Teaching results		3
Good classroom atmosphere	45	1
Learners' unfavourable reaction	22 39	2
Learners' attitudes		8
Learners' enquiries, statements and opinions	2 19 42 46	4
Discussion with learners	12 13 23	3
Confirmation of learners' knowledge in the Language Biography	8	1
School policy – sociocultural context		3
Current assessment is discouraging and authoritarian	5 10 37	3
Not applicable	16 17 38	3
No response	11 30 31 32 34 40 52	7

same category). This seemed to be typical for the item “Comparison with the learners’ assessment” categorized as “Teaching experience and reflection”.

The teachers indicating their own experience in self-assessment as essential ($f = 5$) were all teaching in schools with extended language learning, the private language school or the 8-year grammar school. The teachers from these schools only also related their beliefs about their learners’ self-assessment to the monitoring of this process (the category “Teaching experience and reflection”). One 8-year grammar school teacher admitted that her teaching was stereotypical (ID 43), and though she tried to change her approaches, she had not succeeded. She found self-assessment extremely difficult both for her as a teacher and learner and for her learners. Of the three teachers recognizing both the assessing and the planning function of self-assessment (presented in Table 62, ID 31, 34, 51), two did not supply any response regarding the basis of their belief and the third teacher (ID 51) referred both to her experience as a teacher and a learner.

In general, the teachers’ beliefs about self-assessment presented in this subsection show that this strategy for autonomous learning was new to the teachers. Although the teachers often doubted the learners’ self-assessing abilities, the majority of them attached high value to this activity.

6.5.2. Teachers’ use of learners’ self-assessment

Following on from the previous subsection, this subsection examines teachers’ experiments with learners’ self-assessment. These were shared in the seminars during the project and described in the questionnaire at the end of the project.

Because the concept of learners’ self-assessment was far from well known, a clarification of the term and of processes related to it were discussed in the seminars. In the third seminar (after about four months of work with the ELP), examples of learners’ self-assessing statements were given (ID 18):

“We did listening about time. I wasn’t too good at it and I got a five”, “It’s boring, I have a four again”, “You will look at it anyway, I won’t write anything there”.

The presenting teacher emphasized the need for the learners’ understanding of the purpose of self-assessment. She hoped that expressing their opinions

would improve, and, at the same time, she stated that self-assessment was their first “private” undertaking. According to her, the learners were able to identify what they were and were not able to do (e.g. using numerals for expressing price but not time) and they started taking some responsibility for working on particular tasks. They set individual goals to be achieved by the end of the school year. In the discussion that followed the presentation, one teacher raised the question: What issue is of greater importance: the way the learners assess themselves or the way we assess them?

The presentations in the sixth seminar held at the end of the pilot phase often dealt with self-assessment. One teacher (ID 8) described how she gradually involved learners in the work with the ELP and how she increased their responsibility for their work. In her opinion, it took six months for the learners to become independent. However, the teacher’s role in this process was indispensable, facilitating the learners’ progress, because the learners could not come up with ideas on their own. Other teachers presented various effective activities during group work: four teachers asked learners to write individual reflections on how much they had learned after a longer period of time; three teachers encouraged learners to write brief individual reflections on their achievements in every lesson; two teachers helped learners to make their own tape recordings of their monologues and dialogues; one teacher videotaped learners and asked them to assess their performance; four teachers encouraged their learners to prepare their own activities, tests and whole lessons for other learners.

While the above-mentioned specific examples illustrate how several individual teachers used learners’ self-assessment, Table 64 shows in general terms how the whole group of the teachers facilitated it. The table presents the teachers’ answers to the questions “Did you guide the learners to self-assessment? If yes, how?” compiled from Teacher Questionnaire A at the end of the project. Thirteen teachers enumerated two activities; respondents who gave more answers within a category were counted only once.

The majority of the teachers stated that they had carried out one type of activity; twelve teachers’ activities fell into two items (ID 10, 15, 18, 19, 23, 25, 26, 32, 33, 34, 37, 52) and a variety of techniques occurred only in two teachers’ responses (ID 2, 41). The highest number of teachers appeared to prefer self-assessment done by individual learners without further teacher’s or other learners’ help ($f = 14$, the category “Individual assessment”), sometimes including norm-referencing. The

TABLE 64. The type and frequency of self-assessment activities used for learner training ($n = 44$, Teacher Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Self-assessment activities used by the teachers</i>		Teacher ID	<i>f</i>
Variety of techniques			2
Variety of self-assessment techniques	2 41		2
Peer-assessment			10
Self-assessment of accomplished “can do” objectives, followed by a peer-assessment discussion	3		1
Listing achievements at the end of each unit, followed by peer-assessment	51 52		2
Peer-assessment of written and in some cases also oral tasks	11 15 18 23 24 30 33		7
Tests created and administered by learners themselves	52		1
Whole-class involvement			5
Whole class (learners and the teacher) discussion	23		1
Presentation of achieved activities for the class	8 19 34		3
Self-assessment of video-taped performance	33		1
Learners’ involvement in goal-setting		1	1
Individual reflection on potential improvement	10		1
Textbook assistance			4
Following a textbook that integrates self-assessment at the end of each topic	2 20 35		3
Use of self-assessment tests provided by the textbook	29		1
End-of-term summative assessment			4
Twice-a-year learners’ assessment of attained “can do” objectives	40 47		2
End-of-year assessment of objectives set up at the beginning of the year	37		1
Twice-a-year learners’ assessment written before receiving the school report, followed by teacher’s comments	7		1

TABLE 64. continues on the following page

TABLE 64. continues on the following page

Individual self-assessment		14
Individual self-assessment of class work and accomplished tasks	1 9 10 18 22 26 32 37 46	9
Individual comparison with other learners' performance	15 31 32 34 38 43	6
Learners' introduction to the activity		3
Teacher's explanation of the process	13 28	2
Attention to the descriptor activities	21	1
Connection of self-assessment with formal assessment		12
Self-assessment (and sometimes also peer-assessment) of individual performances (usually oral) for the class	12 16 17 19 25 26 27 42 44 50	10
Self-grading of tests before their submission	25 39 45	3
Limited use of self-assessment		2
Minimal guidance provided	14	1
No guidance provided	5	1

connection of self-assessment with formal assessment received the second highest number of tallies ($f = 12$). After having been examined, the learners usually evaluated their performance and suggested a grade for themselves in front of the whole class. The teacher commented on the learner's evaluation and graded the performance. Peer-assessment was relatively popular ($f = 10$).

According to the teachers' answers, self-assessment was not integral part of the process of teaching and learning in some classes (see the range of the activities mentioned above and the categories "End-of-term summative assessment", "Learners' introduction to the activity" and "Limited use of self-assessment"). It also lacked the planning aspect; the results to be obtained occurred only twice (ID 10 and 37, the categories "Learners' involvement in goal-setting" and "End-of-term summative assessment"). The connection with the descriptor activities appeared to be weak, reflected only five times (ID 3, 21, 37, 40, 47), but probably existing also in the subcategory "Presentation of achieved activities for the class" (ID 8, 19, 34). One of the teachers in the latter group attempted to use

exclusively simulation activities mocking up real-life language encounters for learners' self-assessment (ID 34). The importance of the textbook encouraging the teachers to introduce self-assessment was sometimes emphasized (all the textbooks cited were of a foreign origin).

The learners' discussion with the teacher seemed to be rare, referred to explicitly by only one teacher (ID 23, the category "Whole-class involvement"); however, based on the school visits, it could also exist in the category "Presentation of achieved activities for the class". Discussion between learners was more frequent in the answers. Pursuing the formative function of self-assessment and peer-assessment could hardly be predicted from the responses.

On the whole, it appeared that learners' self-assessment was not widely used by the teachers; it was often left up to the learners, who had no help, and it was connected with formal assessment. However, a majority of the teachers attempted to implement self-assessment in their teaching and some teachers seemed to find it rewarding.

6.5.3. Learners' beliefs about their self-assessment

In the two previous subsections, learners' self-assessment was viewed from the perspective of the teachers. In this subsection, learners' beliefs a) about their abilities to assess themselves and b) about the ELP in relation to this activity are presented. In order to properly understand learners' beliefs, where relevant, references to the teachers' beliefs and teachers' use of learners' self-assessment are made.

Learners' beliefs about their self-assessing abilities and about the ELP help with self-assessment expressed in the answers to Learner Questionnaire 1 (the beginning of the pilot phase) were more positive than those of the teachers (Teacher Questionnaire 1, cf. 6.5.1). When answering the question "Does the Portfolio help you assess what you can do?" ($n = 730$), 75.2% of the learners responded positively and only 3.3% answered negatively (21.5% of the learners were not certain). Contrary to these results, fewer learners found it useful to compare the teacher's assessment of their language proficiency with their own assessment: 64.3% replied positively, 7.4% negatively and 28.4% of the learners chose the "don't know" answer (Learner Questionnaire 1: "Do you find it useful to compare the teacher's assessment with you own assessment?").

The frequency of the positive responses to the first, a little modified question ("Did the Portfolio help you self-assess what you can do?") decreased slightly in Learner Questionnaire 2 (after five months of work

with the ELP, $n = 747$): 66.5% gave positive responses, 8.4% negative and 25.0% answered “don’t know”. Furthermore, when replying to the question “Did your teacher(s) agree with your self-assessment?”, only 45.4% of the learners responded positively; 2.0% responded negatively and 52.6% gave “don’t know” answers.

The results compiled from Learner Questionnaire 3 (the end of the pilot phase, $n = 701$) were similar to those from Learner Questionnaire 2: the responses to the question “Does the Portfolio help you assess what you can do?” were 69.5% positive, 9.4% negative and 21.1% “don’t know”. All learners in three classes responded positively (teacher ID 19, 27, 48). On the contrary, a strong tendency to reply negatively or with a “don’t know” answer occurred in eight classes, in which more than 50% of the learners gave such responses (teacher ID 11, 15, 24, 25, 28, 38, 50, 52). A majority of these ($f = 5$) were classes of 13 and 14-year olds. In one of these classes all learners chose the answer “don’t know” (teacher ID 38).

Learners’ beliefs about the positive role of the ELP in self-assessment were reexamined in the item “It is easy to find in the Portfolio what I can and I can’t do” (Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase). 58.4% of the learners agreed with the statement, 26.0% opted for the “don’t know” answer and 15.6% answered negatively. Negative and “don’t know” responses exceeded the positive ones in twelve classes (ID 2, 3, 18, 19, 23, 24, 28, 39, 44, 50, 51, 52). The χ^2 statistic used the categories of the learners’ gender and age, but insignificant results were generated and the same happened with the responses to the question “Do you think that you can assess your skills well?” However, a difference between observed and expected frequencies occurred in the category of learners’ language ($\chi^2 = 7.08, p < .01$). In comparison to learners of English, learners of German tended to evaluate the ELP help in self-assessment slightly less positively.

Learner Questionnaire A produced other important findings. The learners were very sceptical in their replies to the question “Do you think that you can assess your skills well?”

The chi-square statistic proved that the results displayed in Figure 25 were independent of the categories of the learners’ gender, age and language learned. Therefore, the tendencies within particular classes were of special interest. Table 65 presents all classes ($f = 20$) reacting predominantly doubtfully or negatively to the question “Do you think that you can assess your skills well?” At most only two learners evaluated their self-assessing abilities positively in these classes.

Do you think that you can assess your skills well?

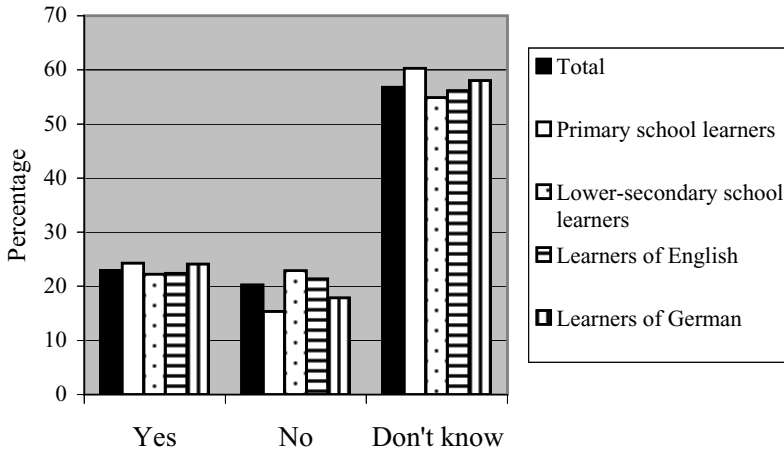


Figure 25. Learners' beliefs about their self-assessing abilities ($n = 701$, Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

As can be seen in Table 65, the frequency of occurrence of the learners uncertain about their self-assessing abilities, i.e. selecting the answer “don't know”, was extremely high ($f = 66.0\%$). In the majority of the classes listed in the table, these learners were higher in frequency than the learners disbelieving their abilities completely. The reverse happened in three classes (teacher ID 15, 24, 27); in two of them the high frequency of the learners selecting the answer “no” was puzzling. Regarding the age of the learners, the highest percentage of the classes responding negatively occurred in Year 7 (13-year olds). The frequency of other years was relatively balanced.

The teachers' qualification and language breakdown showed that the frequency of the unqualified teachers whose classes were listed in Table 65 ($f = 35.0\%$) corresponded with their total frequency, and the percentage of the teachers of English ($f = 72.5\%$ vs. $f = 67.3\%$) only slightly exceeded that of the teachers of German in the total ($f = 27.5\%$ vs. $f = 32.7\%$). Apart from the private schools, the proportion of the individual school types surveyed was also very similar to their total breakdown.

TABLE 65. Classes of the pilot learners disbelieving their self-assessing abilities (Learner Questionnaire A, the end of the pilot phase)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Teacher ID</i>	<i>Type of school</i>	<i>Language level</i>	<i>Learners' responses</i>		
					<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
3+4	9+10	51	Pri	A1	1	-	6
3-5	9-11	52	Pri	A1	1	1	5
4+5	10+11	13	B	A1	1	7	9
5	11	5	B	A1	1	-	10
5	11	7	Ext	A1	1	2	12
6	12	15	B	A2	-	10	2
6	12	16	B	A2	2	2	9
6	12	17	B	A2	2	2	5
7	13	22	B	A1	1	3	6
7	13	23	B	A1	1	3	10
7	13	24	Ext	A1	1	5	4
7	13	27	8-yr	A2	-	10	4
7	13	29	B	A2	1	2	11
7	13	50	Ext	A2	2	2	7
7+8	13+14	45	B	A2	1	4	4
8	14	34	Ext	A2	-	1	8
8	14	38	B	A2	1	1	11
8	14	39	Ext	A2	1	4	8
9	15	43	8-yr	B1	-	-	9
9	15	48	8-yr	B1	2	-	13
					20	59	153

Contradictory to the findings in Table 65, there were five classes without a single learner expressing his/her complete disbelief about the validity of their self-assessment (ID 8, 12, 35, 37, 46); i.e. all learners in these classes responded “yes” or “don’t know” in their replies to the query “Do you think that you can assess your skills well?”. Of the teachers working in these classes, three believed that their opinion on learners’ self-assessment hinged on their reflection on the learners’ attitudes (cf. Table 63, ID 8, 12, 46), one tried out self-assessment techniques with another class (ID 35) and one referred to the current discouraging school policy (ID 37).

Two teachers giving negative answers to the question “Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?” in Teacher Questionnaire 3 conducted a survey in their classes. Learners responded to an open-

ended leading question “Why is self-assessment difficult?” 11-year-old learners of English (Teacher ID 10, $n = 13$) explained that they did not want “to blow their own trumpet” ($f = 3$); three did not know the cause of the difficulty; three only confirmed the difficulty; one stated that self-assessment was silly and s/he would prefer the teacher’s assessment; one explained that s/he could give a worse grade to somebody whom s/he couldn’t stand and the other way round, but it was difficult to do it to himself/herself; one explained that s/he could not hear himself/herself well while others heard him/her better; and lastly, one maintained that “*it is not difficult but sometimes it is*”.

Another class of 13-year-old learners of English (Teacher ID 22, $n = 10$) emphasized that self-assessment is difficult ($f = 2$), especially because one has to know a lot about oneself ($f = 3$); the learner is not able to do it, it is the teacher’s task ($f = 1$); self-assessment does not provide the learners with others’ opinions about their competence ($f = 1$); the learners do not concentrate on how good or bad they are ($f = 1$); and, one does not do it honestly ($f = 1$). One learner argued against the difficulty. When answering the questions “Do you think that the learners should learn how to assess themselves? Why?” three learners gave negative answers to the first question, one could not decide and six agreed with the need for training in self-assessment because it helps the learners to find out what they should learn ($f = 4$), it is important for their future ($f = 1$) and the learners become independent ($f = 1$).

Responses to the item “I can do some Portfolio tasks very well” in Learner Questionnaire A were in general positive, with 22.2% answering “strongly agree” and 45.8% “agree”. They were only in partial agreement with some of the above-mentioned findings. There were only six classes in which more than half of the learners selected a “don’t know” answer (teacher ID 15, 30, 34, 37, 48, 51); except for two of them (ID 30 and 37), the others enumerated were presented in Table 65, too. In two additional classes listed in Table 65 more than half of the learners selected the answers “don’t know” and “don’t agree” (teacher ID 5, 17). In all other classes positive responses exceeded the negative.

The chi-square statistic indicated a reciprocal relationship between learners’ responses to the statements “I can do some Portfolio tasks very well” and “It is easy to find in the Portfolio what I can and I can’t do” (Learner Questionnaire A, $\chi^2 = 9.97$, $p < .01$). Learners tended to be consistent: those who believed that they could do the tasks well also believed that they could easily check their competences in the ELP,

while those who disbelieved their achievements also disbelieved the ELP assistance in assessment.

Generally, though the learners' answers about their self-assessing abilities were quite positive at the beginning of the project, the frequency of the learners giving "don't know" answers throughout the whole project was high.

7. Discussion of results

7.1. General foreign language teaching and learning beliefs and attitudes

The data on pilot teachers' and learners' beliefs and attitudes that are discussed in this subchapter were compiled at the end of the project and not at its beginning, and therefore it has to be taken into account that they could have been influenced by the development of the project.

When reflecting on the qualities of a good language teacher (Table 15), the teachers evaluated extremely highly, in fact highest in the whole survey, "ability to encourage learners' interest in learning". Their evaluation was confirmed in Table 16, which showed high importance attached to the principle of learner "confidence and motivation" and pointed to two other features that have undoubtedly considerable motivating potential: a) "creation of a rich, positive environment" and b) "wide variety, many opportunities and frequent practice". Four other qualities of a good language teacher were considered important and the choice was very promising. These were "personal qualities (interested in learners etc.)", "looking for new ideas", "classroom performance" and "ability to evaluate own work".

Another factor especially relevant to ELP implementation was the teachers' belief about the key importance of speaking and communication: the items "conversation practice" and "communication tasks" were ranked first among significant foreign language class activities (see Table 17). Several teachers confirmed this belief in Table 16, too, when stating their beliefs about principles of language teaching. They highlighted "encouragement of speaking", which gave evidence about both their interest in learner motivation and the significance of speaking activities in the Czech context, in which the teachers themselves most probably experience or have experienced speaking as an issue.

Conversely, the project faced some counterproductive facts. Nine qualities of a good language teacher were not recognized as important by some teachers. Teachers' negative or neutral beliefs sometimes appeared in clusters, e.g. "ability to evaluate own work" and "personal qualities (interested in learners etc.)", $f = 3$, or "ability to evaluate textbooks" and "looking for new ideas", $f = 2$, or "ability to evaluate textbooks" and "knowledge of learning theories", $f = 2$.

The lowest weight was given to the items “knowledge of learning theories”, “ability to evaluate textbooks” and “creating own materials”. This result leads to the conclusion that a) to attract teachers’ interest, teacher ELP education should systematically build on practice and on theorizing experiential knowledge rather than practicalizing received knowledge and that b) in a textbook-bound context, the conditions for an intermediate and strong level of classroom negotiation (see Clark 1987, 79, in 2.4) and the development of learner autonomy are not optimum.

Another hindrance could seem to be the teachers’ focus on their performance and on an established way of teaching rather than on learners’ practice, which appeared, first, in their ranking of the teacher’s “presentation of new subject matter” as highly as learners’ “conversation practice” ($f = 15$) or even higher ($f = 2$) among significant class activities (Table 17). However, to put this aspect into perspective, a very similar result was produced in Nunan’s survey (1988b) and, in general, the responses in both surveys coincide, apart from “learner self-correction of errors” and “pair work and group work” that were given slightly lower ratings in the present study. The prime focus on the teacher’s performance also appeared in ranking the teacher’s “good pronunciation” very high, i.e. third among the qualities of a good language teacher, preceded only by the qualities “ability to encourage learners’ interest in learning” and “positive attitude towards the profession” (see Table 15). (This result also shows the emphasis placed on teacher’s pronunciation when working with young learners in the Czech Republic).

As for the learners, the enquiry into their attitudes and beliefs relating to foreign language learning (see 6.1.2) confirmed that societal, i.e. macro-contextual influences were clearly reflected in them. Czech society generally attaches great significance to the ability to communicate in foreign languages and this attitude was demonstrated in the learners’ responses. A majority of the learners evaluated learning a foreign language as useful and interesting and they adopted this attitude regardless of gender, age and language learned. They held this attitude although only 9.1 per cent of them believed that English or German are easy or very easy languages (contrary to common Czech beliefs about the relative easiness of German, observed frequencies did not differ significantly for English and German when learned as a first foreign language). Nevertheless, the chi-square statistic showed some statistically significant results. A positive correlation was observed between: a) the learners’ attitudes towards language learning and their school grades, b) the learners’ attitudes towards language

learning and the learners' beliefs about their ability to learn languages and c) the learners' beliefs about their ability to learn languages and the learners' school grades. The correlation demonstrated the importance to the learners' attitudes of a) the teachers' feedback in the form of school grades and b) the learners' feelings of competence.

The third group of participants in the project, i.e. the teacher trainers, expressed their beliefs about language learning in relation to its assessment. About a half of the assessment techniques that they enumerated as commonly used bore relevance to ELP communicative activities but some teacher trainers' approaches to assessment were rather traditional. This feature became evident in the content of the assessment (testing grammar and vocabulary, both orally and in writing, covered about a third of all items; reading aloud rather than reading comprehension was tested). There was also a traditional quality to the atmosphere in which the assessment procedure took place (learners appeared to be often examined individually in front of the whole class) and in the control of the language that the learners produced (assessed dialogues and monologues often appeared to be pre-prepared and memorized). Assessment of project work and of effort during lessons that would allow more real-life and spontaneous language use did not seem to be common. However, it should be taken into account that the control of the learners' output appeared to be in complete harmony with forming an exemplar-based system of the language, with linking together the components of utterances and with habit-formation based learning, all of which are typical for young beginners (see Skehan 1998, Tudor 2001, in 2.8).

To sum up, teachers' and teacher trainers' beliefs about language teaching and learning appeared to indicate that a number of the teachers and teacher trainers were predisposed to successfully implement ELP pedagogy. Nevertheless, it seemed that some teachers and teacher trainers had to modify either ELP pedagogy or their own approaches towards teaching in order to be able to integrate the ELP into their current practice. Learners' beliefs and attitudes appeared to be extremely promising, forming a good basis for ELP implementation.

7.2. General evaluation of the ELP and ELP use

7.2.1. Teachers' evaluation of the ELP and its use

Teachers' general evaluations of the ELP presented in the questionnaires were predominantly positive. In the teachers' responses to ELP qualities, the positive features substantially exceeded the negative. There were 89 and 74 positive items (Tables 24 and 26 respectively), but only 38 and 25 negative items (Tables 27 and 29 respectively). However, the teachers' evaluations of their work with the ELP differed and the number of positive and negative items in them was balanced ($f = 52$ and $f = 53$, Tables 25 and 28). This difference appears to indicate two facts: on the one hand teachers' overall appreciation of the ELP as such but on the other hand teachers' slight disappointment with the practical work with the ELP. In general, the teachers suggested two main reasons for their critical comments on ELP use (Table 28). These were a) a lack of interest of some learners in the ELP and/or their inability to work with it effectively and b) time and space constraints of the curriculum and of the established teaching practice.

There was a broad agreement between the categories of the corresponding tables but only a partial agreement in the distribution of the teachers' responses as can be seen in the two following tables that summarize the results (Tables 66 focusing on positive features and Tables 67 focusing on negative features).

A broad range of categories included in all three positive evaluations (Tables 24-26) reflects a variety that came into the teachers' focus during the project. The categories and individual items have the key features of ELP pedagogy in a school context, defined in subsection 2.5, and they show that the teachers understood in general outline the ELP concept. Only three features were not included. These were a) an intercultural awareness that was not dealt with fully during the pilot phase in the Czech Republic as stated in 1.3, b) support for the study of more languages, and c) standardizing of school achievements. The items were not realized owing to an exclusive concentration of the teachers on their subject and owing to the typical participation of individual teachers in the project, not the whole staffs. The broad range of the teachers' answers also reflects the complexity of ELP pedagogy and it might explain to some extent their relative lack of consistency (elements of a very complex concept are often intertwined).

TABLE 66. Frequency distributions in the tables showing positive features of the ELP and teachers' use of the ELP

<i>Category</i>	<i>Table 24</i>	<i>Table 25</i>	<i>Table 26</i>	<i>Total</i>
Learners' autonomy / independent work	15	8	6	29
Learners' self-assessment	16	7	11	34
Learners' motivation	5	18	16	39
Learners' self-esteem	10	5	7	22
Effects on learners' reflection	7	1	3	11
Respect for individuals	9	-	2	11
Learners' results		2	2	4
Interaction among learners / and among learners and teachers	5	1	3	9
Effects on teachers' reflection and initiative	2	7	9	18
Teaching and learning objectives	11	-	13	24
Learners' attitudes towards the Portfolio	-	3	2	5
Portfolio design	9	-	-	9
<i>Total</i>	89	52	74	215

TABLE 67. Frequency distributions in the tables showing negative features of the ELP and teachers' use of the ELP

<i>Category</i>	<i>Table 27</i>	<i>Table 28</i>	<i>Table 29</i>	<i>Total</i>
Time constraints, a lack of system in the work	2	11	11	24
Formulation of the descriptors of communicative activities / Distinction of proficiency levels	10	1	1	12
Self-assessment and teacher's assessment deficiency	-	5	1	6
Unsuitable for the age group	8	-	-	8
Failure to involve all learners	2	17	5	24
Lack of publicity	-	3	2	5
Lack of learners' abilities and positive approach	-	2	-	2
Lack of learners' independent work	-	10	1	11
Failure to achieve personal intents	-	4	1	5
Lack of continuity	-	-	1	1
Format and design	13	-	-	13
Price	-	-	1	1
Other opinions	3	-	1	4
<i>Total</i>	38	53	25	116

In both positive and negative evaluations a relatively high number of the teachers placed fundamental importance on an increase in learners' motivation: the greatest frequency of the positive responses fell in the category "learners' motivation" and, unfortunately, correspondingly, in the negative responses in the category "failure to involve all learners". These highest counts occurred in the teachers' answers to the interconnected questions "What are you proud of in your work with the Portfolio?" (Table 25) and "What did not turn out well?" (Table 28). The positive role of the ELP in learners' motivation was verified by Table 26 (the evaluation of the greatest benefit of the work with the ELP carried out one year after the end of the project). In Tables 25 and 28 four teachers referred to learners' motivation from both positive and negative perspectives. Six teachers explicitly mentioned the positive influence of the ELP on the motivation of low-achieving learners (Tables 25 and 26), while one teacher stated that low achievers were afraid of working with it (Table 28). The teachers' interest in learners' motivation was in accordance with their general beliefs about foreign language teaching. As stated in 7.1, the teachers put a heavy emphasis on their ability to encourage learners' interest in learning. However, the overall frequencies of both positive and negative responses to learners' motivation in Tables 24-29 point to the conclusion that teachers' likely expectations about an ELP contribution to an increase of learners' motivation were satisfied only to a certain extent.

The teachers appreciated several other ELP positive qualities concerning learners. These were mainly learners' self-assessment, followed by learners' autonomy and by the impact on learners' self-esteem. All qualities that related to individual learners (apart from learners' motivation) represented in total more than a third in each of the three tables showing teachers' positive responses and their frequency was very high in the evaluation carried out at the end of the project (Tables 24-26, $f = 53.9, 40.4$ and 36.5 respectively). Negative references to learners (apart from the failure to involve all learners) were not frequent. They were highest in the teachers' comments on shortcomings in their work with the ELP (Table 28) but they slightly exceeded only 20 per cent.

In the critical evaluations of the ELP at the end of the project (Table 27) the teachers made technical comments referring to the ELP format and design and they demanded a separate ELP for younger learners. In the evaluation of the teachers' work with the ELP (Table 28) time constraints became important. As some teachers needed additional time and space for the use of the ELP, they appeared to regard the ELP

as an extra external instrument that could not be fully integrated into their common practice. Though they seemed to intuitively understand advantages of ELP pedagogy, an incorporation of the ELP into their everyday practice seemed too arduous. A clear indication of this problem came up in the evaluation carried out one year after the end of the project too (Table 29).

Some teachers referred to a positive contribution of the descriptors of communicative activities to foreign language teaching and learning. They appreciated that the descriptors could be used as attainable teaching and learning objectives and that they helped learners to realize the importance of languages in real life; thanks to the ELP the characteristics of a foreign language as another school subject learned only for good marks ceased to exist. (This opinion was shared, among others, by a teacher who otherwise took a critical stand on the ELP.) However, references to the descriptors of communicative activities were not made in Table 25 (the evaluation of teachers' work with the ELP). Moreover, several teachers criticized the descriptors, mainly their general formulation and the insufficient help they provided in distinguishing the levels of language proficiency.

Contrary to expectation, interaction among learners or interaction among learners and teachers was rarely mentioned. In all three tables interaction among learners was mentioned three times and interaction between teachers and learners twice.

Teachers' responses reflected two crucial issues. Firstly, some teachers appeared to take learner autonomy for granted, they believed that it was the learner's duty (see Table 28 - the category "Lack of learners' independent work") and they did not consider it a lengthy process. In this respect, the subcategory "some learners worked with the Portfolio by themselves" (Table 25) becomes problematic because it could comprise both the teachers who failed to grasp the concept of learner autonomy and the teachers who actively supported learners to gradually become autonomous. Secondly, contrary to the concept of criterion referencing, competition among learners and a comparison of learners' results were indicated in three classes (see Tables 24 and 26).

An important issue raised in the research was teachers' beliefs about the impact of the ELP on their teaching (Table 30). The beliefs can be classified from two different perspectives. Firstly, there is a large group of teachers that recognized an impact of the ELP on their work ($f = 38$), contrary to a substantially smaller group whose members either did not express any ideas or became a little critical ($f = 9$). Critical

comments were made by three teachers. Two of them pointed out ELP interference in common teaching practice and confirmed thus teachers' problems with ELP incorporation, which was highlighted in Tables 28 and 29 and discussed above. Secondly, while some teachers' responses were fairly specific ($f = 17$, e.g. "setting homework from the perspectives of learners' interest"), a majority of the responses remained general ($f = 28$, e.g. "more attractive methods used"). The specific responses were highly compatible with ELP pedagogy (e.g. "thinking about the lessons from the perspective of the descriptors"), but the general responses sometimes did not seem to avoid a clichéd response. At the same time, the general responses referred to three complex areas of teachers' activity (teacher's reflection, teacher's assessment and encouragement of learner's self-assessment and teaching methodology) which appear to suggest that the ELP could exert a relatively wide influence on teachers. A question remains whether this influence was a direct result of the work with the ELP or a direct result of teachers' discussions and cooperative work during ELP seminars.

Teachers' beliefs about education focusing on ELP pedagogy confirmed that teachers regarded practice as very important. Practical sharing of experience, cooperation and learning from colleagues' experience was extremely popular and clearly considered to be essential to teacher education.

Teachers' beliefs about an ELP impact on their teaching were verified with teachers' beliefs about an ELP impact on foreign language teaching in the Czech Republic in general. The majority of the teachers who expressed their positive beliefs about an ELP impact on their teaching had absolutely positive or fairly positive beliefs about an overall ELP impact. Conversely, two teachers reacted rather negatively in both questionnaires. The ratio of the teachers making specific responses about the impact on their teaching to the ratio of those making general responses was more favourable in the group that strongly believed in an ELP overall impact.

A critical indicator of the study was the number of teachers who dropped out of ELP use one year after the end of the project. Only seven teachers stated that they continued using the ELP systematically. These teachers had varied clusters of beliefs. They gave e.g. absolutely positive, fairly positive and "don't know" answers to the question about the overall impact of the ELP on foreign language teaching. In their evaluation of the qualities of a good language teacher the responses ranged in the item "looking for new ideas" from the response "very important" to

the response “moderately important”, in the items “ability to evaluate own work” and “personal qualities (interested in learners etc.)” from “very important” to “undecided” and in the item “ability to evaluate textbooks” from “moderately important” to “rather unimportant”. In the evaluation of significant class activities the responses to the item “presentation of new subject matter” ranged from “very important” to “rather unimportant”. One of the teachers (ID 8) in this group appeared to incorporate elements of learners’ autonomy into her regular teaching and she created an environment in which learners themselves wanted to perform in front of their classmates what they had learned. One teacher (ID 36) used the ELP only in an optional class (Conversation in the Foreign Language). As she did not have a curriculum for the course, she made use of the ELP (the teacher felt that the textbook was a “straitjacket” in obligatory classes that did not create space for ELP use).

Though the responses of the teachers who proceeded in systematic use of the ELP varied substantially, as regards individuals, they remained highly consistent. Therefore pictures of the individual teacher’s main beliefs can be created. These are as follows: an appreciation of a) the innovative ELP concept (Teacher ID 5), b) the stimulus for development of learner autonomy (Teacher ID 8), c) learner and teacher creativity and initiative (Teacher ID 19), d) learner independent work (Teacher ID 31) and e) new approaches to assessment (Teacher ID 34). The teachers positively welcomed all these features of teaching and learning but at the same time some of them felt that the activities were time-consuming, reducing the space for established, tried and tested teaching procedures (Teacher ID 19, 31, 34). Moreover, all learners were sometimes not really interested in them and the teachers had to face the challenge of involving individuals (Teacher ID 5, 19, 31, 35).

Three teachers maintained that they had stopped using the ELP altogether (two of them teaching in an 8-year grammar school, one in a private language school). Their responses in individual questionnaires showed consistency. One of them (Teacher ID 40) did not feel a substantial impact of the ELP on her teaching and gave negative answers in some of the questionnaires. She appreciated the system of explicit descriptors of communicative activities but appeared to consider them to be objectives of learners’ independent study at home. Her beliefs about the ELP thus corresponded to an idea of an external tool that should help to solve potential problems in the internal world of her class. Another teacher (Teacher ID 51) faced the same problem: learners’ independent study with the ELP was not sufficient. The teacher appreciated the ELP

design, innovative concept and the fact that the ELP descriptors helped her learners to realize what they had learned. She encouraged learners' reflection but she considered the ELP to be too compartmentalized and the large number of its sections did not allow her to see its full complexity. The third teacher (Teacher ID 48) often did not submit the questionnaires and did not deem that the ELP was appropriate for her older learners in an upper-secondary 8-year grammar school. As for the general beliefs about language teaching (see 7.1), all three teachers evaluated the category "teacher's presentation of new subject matter" as highly as learners' "conversation practice" and two of them did not regard "creating own materials" as important.

All in all, the teachers' beliefs and attitudes expressed in the questionnaires obviously varied. They indicated that though the ELP often provided teachers with impetus for a shift in their work, an implementation of ELP pedagogy often represented a challenge.

7.2.2. Learners' evaluation of the ELP and its use

The frequency of learners' absolutely positive attitudes towards ELP use (Table 31) was very high ($f = 71.9\%$) but slightly lower than the frequency of learners' absolutely positive attitudes towards language learning in general ($f = 79.9\%$, Table 18). The reliability of this result was confirmed by the frequency of occurrence of positive answers to two questions (Table 33): 1) "Do you think that the time spent on keeping your Portfolio was time well spent?" ($f = 76.8\%$) and 2) "Do you think all learners should be encouraged to keep a Language Portfolio?" ($f = 82.5\%$). It was also verified by the frequency of negative responses to the statement "The ELP takes up too much time" ($f = 69.8\%$, Table 33). Slight differences in the percentages of responses to the above-mentioned questions and statements might be caused by their nature and focus. First and foremost, the question examining learners' general attitudes, the results of which are given in Table 31, emphasized learners' individual pleasure at working with the ELP and the responses of learners finding the ELP "useful but boring" were counted as negative.

When evaluating the ELP, learners mainly appreciated its considerable potential for boosting their self-confidence (see Table 35): according to them, individual positive achievements were easily visible due to the ELP. This ELP feature was in full harmony with the primary aims of ELP pedagogy (cf. 2.5) and it was also referred to in Table 33: 88.6% of the learners stated that the Portfolio allowed them to show what they

could do in foreign languages. Nevertheless, some of learners failed to perceive a significant progress in their learning (the question “Does the Portfolio help you see progress in language learning?” in Table 33 received 30.5% of negative and “don’t know” answers). These answers appear to suggest that 1) the learners worked with the ELP for a short period of time and/or 2) more detailed descriptors of communicative activities were needed. They also suggest that the concept of the Czech ELP (i.e. the possibility of creating own, specific and more detailed lists of descriptors of communicative activities) was not welcome and was not fully exploited (see 2.8).

One of the aims of ELP pedagogy, i.e. encouragement of learners’ self-confidence, seemed to be fulfilled more successfully than the making of initial steps towards learner autonomy. References to this ELP characteristic were not too frequent in Table 35 (see the category “Fostering of a sense of agency”) and positive responses to the question “Do you feel the Portfolio puts more responsibility on you as learner?” in Table 33 ($f = 41.8\%$) were also infrequent. A relative failure to achieve this aim could be also felt in learners’ and teachers’ repeated demands for the provision of language tests. Learners sometimes preferred listing their failures instead of their achievements and ELP potential for communicative language use was rarely mentioned (see only a few items in the category “Fostering of learning”, Table 35).

Generally, the number of learners who appreciated some ELP attributes (86.2%, see Table 35) substantially exceeded the number of those who were critical (40.7%, see Table 36). The highest frequency of critical responses related to the ELP design, which brought mixed reactions (cf. Tables 35 and 36).

Learners’ attitudes towards the ELP differed according to the learners’ gender and age: attitudes of girls and younger learners were more favourable than attitudes of boys and older learners (see Figures 15 and 16). (This difference was not seen in the attitudes towards language learning, cf. 6.1.2.) Different responses were not found in the category of language (Figure 17) and, most importantly, in the category of school report grades (Figure 18). While the learners’ evaluation of language learning was influenced by their school grades, a statistically significant result was not yielded in the case of the ELP evaluation: learners had positive or negative attitudes towards the ELP regardless of their school grades. This important result was verified by three findings: 1) statistically significant results also did not occur in the school grade breakdown of the responses to the question “Do you think that the time spent on

keeping your Portfolio was time well spent?" (Figure 19), 2) there was a high frequency of negative responses to the statement "A waste of time – school marks are sufficient" ($f = 78.6\%$, Table 33) and 3) when interviewed, some high-achieving learners reacted to the ELP negatively, while some low achievers took a positive attitude. Similarly to these findings, a relationship was not found between the learners' attitudes towards the ELP and the learners' beliefs about their ability to learn languages (Table 32): the learners liked or disliked the ELP regardless of their perceived ability to learn languages. This outcome again differed from the learners' general attitudes towards language learning. Positive attitudes towards the ELP taken by lower achievers could be connected with the extremely high frequency of all learners' positive responses to the statements "The tasks in the Portfolio can be learned step by step" ($f = 90.1\%$ of responses in the categories "strongly agree" and "agree", Table 34). Reasonable ELP requirements appeared to suit the lower achievers' need to have a feeling of competence and their need to attribute positive results to their abilities. Negative responses of high achievers could be caused by other reasons (these learners could find the ELP tasks too easy or too distant from common classroom practice, their learning objectives could differ and/or they could find the ELP redundant because they believe that they are aware of their language abilities).

The learners were more critical than the teachers about their increased motivation, confirming thus teachers' doubts: only 32.8% of the learners agreed that the Portfolio stimulated them "to participate more fully in the language learning process" (Table 33). At the same time, they were more positive as regards the interaction between teachers and learners, but still, only 37.1% of them maintained that the dialogue between them and their teacher(s) was improved by the ELP (Table 33).

An attempt to correlate classes with overall dominant negative attitudes towards the ELP with teachers' responses in Tables 24-29 was abandoned because the conclusions drawn from such a correlation could lack validity and reliability.

In general, learners' attitudes towards the ELP and its use were usually very positive. Learners enjoyed the reporting function of the ELP, which allowed them to experience success and to satisfy their need for achievement. They believed that ELP tasks were attainable and their interest in using the ELP was independent of their school grades and/or of their perceived ability to learn languages.

7.2.3. Teacher trainers' beliefs about ELP use and ELP seminars

The data that are discussed in this subsection were collected after the teacher trainers' introductory encounter with the ELP (see Table 13).

The teacher trainers' expectations about the ELP were altogether high. As with the teachers, the teacher trainers saw the ELP mainly as a powerful tool for increasing learners' motivation (Table 37). Nevertheless, this widespread expectation was not explicitly further specified and the particular influential qualities of the ELP were not given. The teacher trainers believed that their own motivation would also strengthen through implementation of the ELP and that through use of the ELP they would develop new approaches to teaching. They seemed to understand broader ELP goals.

Interestingly, when reflecting on an ELP impact (Table 37), the teacher trainers did not commonly refer to ELP descriptors of communicative activities, which might lead to the conclusion that their teaching objectives were in harmony with the ELP. Learners' self-assessment attracted their attention and became highly popular but its concept did not always avoid distortion. It appeared that mainly the role of self-assessment in deeply involving learners in the learning process and in making learners responsible for their work was distant from the teacher trainers' common practice and so were the complementary and planning features of self-assessment (cf. 2.4). Some teacher trainers also did not seem to pay special attention to the need for learners' effective training in autonomy (see Table 37 - the category "Learners' involvement"). Only a few teacher trainers believed that the ELP could improve learners' knowledge of the language. The idea of better classroom interaction was rare too.

Regarding in-service education and common seminars (Table 38), the teacher trainers asked mainly for information about the ELP and for descriptions of effective teaching with the ELP, i.e. for transmission of both declarative and procedural knowledge. Their requirements were usually general and they did not adequately reflect e.g. the interest in learner self-assessment shown in Table 37. Some teacher trainers wanted to learn from the experience of pilot teachers and/or in collaboration with others, however an exploratory approach to education did not seem to be prioritized.

7.2.4. Teachers' use of the ELP

Teachers' performance in the classroom and evidence on ELP use provided extremely valuable sources of data that revealed a clearer picture of the implementation of ELP pedagogy.

All observed and/or interviewed teachers reacted to the ELP favourably. The ELP undoubtedly generated their motivation for improving their approaches to teaching, turned their attention to the development of new techniques, and, exceptionally, to intentions to revise the whole process of teaching. It strongly stimulated their pedagogical creativity and encouraged their reflection (only one teacher, who joined the project later, was the exception to the rule). Nevertheless, the teachers' work with the ELP substantially varied. Similarly to the teachers' evaluation of the ELP discussed in 7.2.1, different aspects served as the teachers' focus. They were as follows: 1) development of new techniques (Teacher ID 15, 24) and use of techniques that had been hitherto neglected (Teacher ID 47), 2) first steps in the direction of learner self-assessment (Teacher ID 2, 24, 39, 47), 3) amendments to the ELP so that it better suited the teacher's intentions (Teacher ID 39), 4) dissemination of ELP pedagogy (Teacher ID 2) and 5) learner empowerment and guidance from the stage of interdependence to the stage of independence (Teacher ID 8).

The processes that the ELP stimulated seemed to exert influence on teachers' beliefs and attitudes and can be characterized as assimilation or accommodation (see 3.1.2). In the case of assimilation, greater importance was attached e.g. to revision activities. In the case of accommodation, the ELP was instrumental in introducing different ways of planning, monitoring and assessing learning. The processes were either firmly anchored to the descriptors of communicative activities, or the Dossier was the centre of attention and its connection with the descriptor activities was rather loose.

The use of the descriptors for assessment dominated. To support the process of planning, the descriptors were sometimes displayed on notice boards. Their potential effect seemed to have been exploited to the full in one class, in which the learners shared a sense of whole-class clear direction, leading subsequently to a sense of whole-class clear achievement. Although goal-orientation was encouraged in other classes too, the goals often did not coincide with the descriptors of communicative activities and were in fact separate. Of six lessons observed, two related directly to the descriptor activities. Some classes focused largely on grammar, either in specific learners' goals or in achievement assessment. In one of

theses classes a positive correlation between perceived competence and language anxiety appeared to occur, though the phenomenon might be caused by other factors, the learners' age in particular.

Although the teachers sometimes took the initiative, they began to experiment with learners' self-assessment and they seemed to enjoy this activity. Unfortunately, their initial enthusiasm sometimes seemed to slowly fade away (evidence for this might be the decrease in frequency of teachers' confirmations of learners' achievement in the ELPs in some classes). Learners usually appeared to like working with the ELP. The quantity and quality of their entries in the ELP within one class sometimes varied but it was mainly the teacher who seemed to significantly affect their general approach to ELP use. The work with the descriptors was sometimes not reflected in the Dossier and in other parts of the Language Biography. Training in learner autonomy was rare and still in its infancy, and, contrary to the idea of teacher's guidance, some learners were probably asked to work with the ELP themselves at home (cf. 7.2.1). Discrepancies between teachers' and learners' assessments appeared to be evidence of a lack of dialogue between the teachers and learners. Some older learners preferred questions about mistakes in their performance to questions about achievement and considered them more important. Some teachers were reluctant to accept the limited range of proficiency levels A1 and A2. They were not used to acknowledging basic levels of language proficiency and had a tendency to require higher skills and to make the communicative activities indicated in particular descriptors more demanding.

In general, the complex concept of ELP pedagogy did not become readily intelligible to all teachers. It was modified and/or put into practice partially, so that consistency with teachers' previous experience could be achieved. The concrete results depended heavily on teachers' beliefs and attitudes, their tried and tested teaching methods and their creativity. Although some teachers solved the problem of ELP implementation in ways that seemed to be rather distant from ELP pedagogy and some fixed on procedures that could be evaluated as misleading, all of them attempted to address the issue. The teachers who fully grasped its concept and identified with it were able to establish a genuine dialogue with the learners. By making the ELP relevant for them, they sent them a powerful message.

7.2.5. Teacher trainers' use of the ELP

Findings based on school visits in the pilot phase of the project were confirmed during the pre-dissemination phase. Teacher trainers' use of the ELP markedly varied. While one seemed to be just beginning her integration of the ELP into her common practice, another reflected deeply on the descriptors of communicative activities and their function when using textbooks, and a third welcomed the ELP as an instrument boosting her self-confidence because it confirmed that her earlier effort and activity had taken the right direction. The pre-dissemination phase did not avoid some problems (the learners were asked to distinguish their levels of language proficiency and to show explicit knowledge about the levels; owing to the teacher's ambition and worries too high a competence for low proficiency levels was required). The phase also showed that quick implementation of ELP pedagogy in the Czech school context is hardly feasible and that a gradual approach to the implementation is needed.

7.3. Instructional objectives and the ELP descriptors of communicative activities

The previous sections often commented on the use of the descriptors of communicative activities because the present study sees them as an instrument of critical importance and an absolutely essential component of the ELP. That is also the reason why section 6.3 examined the feasibility of their effective implementation. Such implementation is without doubt determined by the harmony of the descriptor activities with common teachers' practice, i.e. with the objectives that the teachers usually set and, because teaching in the Czech Republic is usually textbook-bound (cf. 6.3.2), with the objectives that underlie the textbooks in use.

Teachers' and teacher trainers' acceptance of the descriptors was not unproblematic. The distributions of their beliefs about a) their instructional objectives in relation to the ELP, b) textbooks in use and c) harmony between the textbooks and the ELP were always positively skewed (Tables 51, 52, 54-57) but some negative responses were expressed and they have to be taken into account. In all answers the mode was category 4 on the Likert-like scale, i.e. "mostly" and "good". The teachers' answers ranged in the evaluation of how their objectives harmonize with the ELP from category 5 ("completely") to category 3 ("partly") and in the evaluation of textbooks and their coverage of the descriptor activities

from category 5 (“excellent” and “completely”) to category 2 (“below average” and “slightly”), but the frequency of category 2 was extremely low. The teacher trainers were more positive than the teachers and in all their answers they opted for the highest category 5 more frequently. Their responses ranged in all three evaluations from category 5 (“excellent” and “completely”) to category 3 (“partly” and “average”). Category 3 was very low in frequency, especially relative to category 5 (however a difference was found in the table investigating the textbook coverage of the descriptor activities - fewer completely positive responses occurred in this evaluation).

Most favourable beliefs of teachers and teacher trainers were expressed in the evaluation of their identification with ELP communicative activities ($M = 4.12$ and 4.32 respectively, Tables 51 and 52). Less positive beliefs were expressed in the evaluation of the textbooks ($M = 3.97$ and 4.19 respectively, Tables 54 and 55) and least positive responses were given in the evaluation of the harmony between the textbooks and the descriptor activities ($M = 3.76$ and 4.02 respectively, Tables 56 and 57). In the textbook-bound environment, the last finding appears to give a clear warning about a smooth implementation of ELP pedagogy.

Significant differences allowing a deeper understanding of teachers’ beliefs were found when comparing the answers of individuals (Tables 51, 54 and 56). While twelve pilot teachers ($f = 35.3\%$) selected category 4 on all Likert-like scales and one teacher always selected category 3, all other pilot teachers’ views ($f = 21$, 61.8%) were distinct in some tables. Five teachers criticized the textbooks: the teachers’ objectives were consonant with the descriptor activities but the textbooks did not support them fully. A group of nine teachers displayed a certain reluctance to agree with ELP objectives. Five of these teachers considered their textbooks excellent (four of them were teachers working in 8-year grammar schools) but not covering the descriptor activities completely, and, similarly, four teachers (three of them unqualified) believed that their textbooks were good but that they only sometimes dealt with the descriptor activities. Conversely, two teachers found their textbooks of an average quality but usually containing the descriptor tasks. The answers of some teachers seemed to contain contradictions. Two teachers evaluated their textbooks as excellent and covering all tasks contained in the descriptors (both from basic schools), but, according to them, their own objectives did not always coincide with the descriptors.

As stated above, a majority of the teachers and teacher trainers maintained that their objectives were mostly but not completely in

harmony with the descriptor activities. When providing examples of instructional objectives (Table 53), many teacher trainers enumerated various communicative activities but they also expressed a clear need for the teaching of grammar. This statement was particularly typical for teachers and teacher trainers in 8-year grammar schools and for teachers of German.

Apart from the fact that the teachers were generally less positive than the teacher trainers, less positive beliefs were also expressed within the category of the teachers themselves by those who lacked experience and/or qualifications (see Table 54, 56). This finding points to the conclusion that teaching experience could open up possibilities for involving learners in the descriptor activities. Beliefs of teachers and teacher trainers of English seemed to be more fully compatible with the ELP than beliefs of teachers and teacher trainers of German (see Table 51, 52, 57), which could raise doubts as to the universal usefulness of ELP descriptors designed by teachers of English and it could also point to differences in the ways in which languages are taught. None of the teachers and teacher trainers from 8-year grammar schools held beliefs that were completely identical with the ELP (see Table 51, 52). This could be a proof of the intrinsic importance of grammar in this type of school and a proof that in the Czech Republic an emphasis on grammar teaching sometimes grows according to the level of prestige of the school.

Study of the teachers' and teacher trainers' evaluations of particular textbooks and of the focus of these textbooks on ELP activities (cf. Appendices 10, 11) revealed, above all, that the evaluations were extremely subjective. The evaluation of one title could fundamentally differ and the textbook could be placed in several categories. This finding cannot but lead to a logical conclusion that, in this case, teachers' beliefs, based on their experience, played a decisive role.

Teacher trainers' beliefs also varied in the descriptor activities that they identified as missing in the textbooks (see Appendices 12, 13), however, when examining the list of the descriptors identified as missing, certain patterns emerged. The descriptors that were enumerated more often usually related directly to life in the target language society (e.g. filling in a form, understanding common signs in streets, asking for basic information about public transport and buying tickets) and/or they gave specific examples of activities (e.g. understanding of instructions – e.g. on how to use a public telephone, writing a personal letter of invitation, thanks or apology). Naturally, the descriptors relating to common school activities were not listed as missing at all (e.g. recognizing the names

of the most important things in the classroom when listening to them, understanding simple instructions given by the teacher, talking about school and work at school).

Mostly, the analysis of the teachers' and teacher trainers' beliefs carried out in section 6.3 indicated that the path of introducing ELP communicative activities as lesson and course objectives does not always have to be smooth. The deep-rooted teaching and learning traditions that the teachers and teacher trainers probably followed, seemed to be successful and, in addition, they were also reflected in the syllabi of the textbooks in use. Although their authors often identified the syllabi as multi-dimensional or multi-strand, the main organizational principles were usually grammatical structures and the syllabi were synthetic. ELP communicative activities were just the opposite and they could be considered an analytic syllabus (cf. 2.8). Consequently, the teachers could perceive the ELP as an instrument that did not respect the system to which they had been accustomed and which they believed promoted language learning. Although the Common European Framework (2001) distinguishes individual components of linguistic competence, it is the unique communicative value of ELP activities and their communicative purpose that are emphasized, not the need to synthesize them. The use of communicative activities as a skeleton of the curriculum required a completely different approach to the subject matter. Teachers wanting to follow the textbook and at the same time to use the ELP had to search for particular activities, adjust or complement the textbooks and establish a new, broad and coherent framework for the activities. Such a process could become extremely demanding and arduous for some of them. Evidence for this great hindrance emerged especially in section 6.4.

7.4. Use of the ELP descriptors of communicative activities

Section 6.4 provides a detailed description of teachers' beliefs about the descriptors of communicative activities. Strong interest in the descriptors in the initial phases of the project related mainly to their reporting function (see Table 58). The teachers viewed them as an instrument checking the quality of their teaching and had a natural desire to find out whether their learners were able to comply with these "European standards" (see e.g. 6.4.1 - the report about the second seminar). Due to the definition of low levels of language proficiency provided in the ELP, they could

experience a feeling of satisfaction. However, when some of them later found that the descriptors would not solve their insecurity problems with the weighting of individual components of assessment (i.e. accuracy, fluency, complexity) and with objective assessment, their enthusiasm began to wane a little and the innovation stopped being so attractive. Accordingly, apart from the positive features of the descriptors which dominated in Teacher Questionnaire 1 (Table 58), a critical evaluation appeared in Teacher Questionnaire 2 (Table 59).

The critical attitudes were caused, among other reasons, by a use of the descriptors in a way that was not intended by their designers: an instrument developed originally as user-oriented was regarded as assessor-oriented and was used to provide accurate assessment of language proficiency. The descriptors could not accomplish this purpose. The teachers often encountered problems with level specification, pointed the problems out repeatedly and asked for a clarification of the range of learner proficiency (see 6.4.2 - the report about the fifth seminar, Table 59 and Figure 23). They did not find the descriptors precise enough and at the end of the project 66.7% of them believed that sample lists for particular levels of language proficiency were needed (Figure 23). The views of some teacher trainers were identical and therefore the range of learner's abilities had to be sometimes elaborated further during the pre-dissemination phase (see 6.4.3). The teachers considered the phrasing of some descriptors to be unclear (Figure 22) and thus amendments to the descriptors were made when redesigning the Czech ELP and submitting it to the Validation Committee.

The opinions of different teachers (and sometimes even the opinions of one teacher on various issues) conflicted. Some teachers criticized the specification of the proficiency levels for being too broad (Figure 21) and suggested that a higher number of descriptors and more specific and detailed descriptors should be provided (see 6.4.2 - e.g. the reports about the second, fourth and fifth seminars). However, at the same time, other teachers objected to the insufficient time for the incorporation of the descriptor activities into the lessons (see 6.4.2 - e.g. the reports about the fourth and fifth seminars). Teachers and teacher trainers referred to the important role of grammar and they considered it the main organizing principle of the subject matter (see 6.4.1 - the interview with the experienced teacher, 6.4.2 - the report about the fifth seminar and 6.4.3). Despite this, all teachers involved in the project comprehended the need for teaching languages for real-life language use and they

advocated this aim (see Figure 20 and 6.4.2 - the report about the third and fourth seminars).

A majority of the teachers maintained that the ELP helped them to make learning objectives clear to their learners (see Figure 20), but real use of the descriptors for planning, i.e. for a weak level of classroom negotiation (see Clark 1987, 79, in 2.4), appeared to be rare (see 6.4.1 - the report about the second seminar). In some cases, teachers' reflection, creativity, experimentation with new techniques and use of authentic materials were encouraged, but experiments with an intermediate level of negotiation and a choice of personal objectives appeared to be extremely exceptional (see 6.4.1- the report about the second and third seminars). The beliefs of teachers of English and German sometimes differed - teachers of German being more critical (see Figure 22), and so did the beliefs of qualified and unqualified teachers (unqualified teachers naturally seemed to experience more problems).

To sum up, it seems that the descriptors usually served as a checklist of learners' achievement and provided learners with tangible positive learning evidence. Fulfilment of other functions, e.g. identifying instructional objectives, was only partial. The descriptors did not appear to serve as a basis for a language teaching syllabus. Discovering whether they strengthened communicative aspects of language teaching was not an aim of this study. Teachers encountered problems when working with descriptors and they demanded more precise definitions of the particular levels of language proficiency.

7.5. Use of learners' self-assessment

The descriptors of communicative activities, the use of which was discussed in the previous section, should help learners in their self-assessment, which is another key feature of ELP pedagogy. The results of its implementation in Czech schools are discussed in this section.

The concept of learners' assessment was usually very distant from teachers' everyday experience at the beginning of the project and knowledge of it was limited or non-existent (cf. 1.2, see Figure 24). It even appears that some teachers therefore postponed their experiments with self-assessment and some did not include it in their practice at all (see the "don't know" answers to the question concerning learners' abilities to self-assess their language competence).

Common ideas about self-assessment were subject to a major issue. It stemmed from the belief that learners' independence should be complete and instant (cf. the same finding in 7.2.1) and it thus contradicted current theories about the lengthy process leading to learner autonomy. The teachers seemed to underestimate two determining factors: a) the teacher's guidance in the process, i.e. the stage of learners' interdependence on the teacher, and, consequently, b) social interaction between the teacher, learners and their peers (cf. 2.4). Though they tried out various techniques, some of their activities did not seem to facilitate learners' autonomy. The teachers believed that self-assessment is a personal undertaking and thus learners should be involved in it on their own. Evidence for this belief could be derived from both the relatively high frequency of responses in the category "Individual assessment" but also from the reverse order of assessment activities in the category "Peer-assessment", in which peer-assessment followed individual self-assessment (see Table 64).

Another belief was based on a close connection of self-assessment with formal assessment, which could expose learners to undue pressure: an oral individual test in front of the whole class was followed by individual own assessment and grading (see Table 64 and 6.5.2 - the report about the third seminar). This technique contradicted other current arguments against a connection of these two types of assessment (LeBlanc & Painchaud 1985, 686, in 2.4). In addition, teachers' use of self-assessment sometimes appeared to lack integration of self-assessment and ELP communicative activities (see Table 64), thus lessening the impact of the ELP.

When expressing their opinions about self-assessment (Table 62), some teachers made general statements consistent with ELP pedagogy and modern trends in foreign language teaching. However, these statements did not appear to guarantee that they were also put into practice (cf. Table 64). Some teachers sensibly argued for a whole-school policy and for developing learners' self-assessing abilities before the beginning of foreign language teaching and learning (see Table 62). Self-assessment was sometimes carried out only once or twice a year (see Table 64) and thus it did not retain the feature of permeability (see 2.4). The planning feature of self-assessment was sometimes also missing.

Teachers believed that self-assessment was extremely difficult for learners and therefore they were interested in its reliability, which they sometimes doubted (Table 62). Nevertheless, they did not respond with the "no" and "don't know" answers to the question "Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?" (see Table 61). They were extremely positive five months after the beginning of the project when

responding to the question “Did you in general agree with their (i.e. the learners’) self-assessment?”, and fairly positive at its end. An explanation for these contradictions could lie in teachers’ lack of experience with learners’ self-assessment or in their intentions to respond favourably (cf. Woods 1996, 71, 72, in 3.1.1).

The learners evaluated their self-assessing abilities relatively positively at the beginning of the project but they became increasingly sceptical later on. Some classes displayed a general tendency to react cautiously and opted for “don’t know” responses, especially those of thirteen-year olds (see Table 65). On the contrary, the learners who believed that they could do some ELP activities very well had also a tendency to trust the ELP and see it as a practical instrument.

More than 75 per cent of the learners doubted their assessing abilities at the end of the project: 56.8% of the learners chose “don’t know” and 20.3% “no” answers to the question “Do you think that you can assess your skills well?” (see Figure 25). One-fifth of the learners stated that they did not know if the Portfolio helped them to assess their abilities. Similarly, more than half of the learners did not know during the project whether their teacher(s) agreed with their assessments. These findings again are indicative of a lack of classroom interaction to underpin the implementation of ELP pedagogy. Interestingly, they appear to contradict learners’ liking for the ELP and their very positive beliefs about the reporting function of the ELP presented in 7.2.2 (there was a very high frequency of positive answers to the question “Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?”). Based on this contradiction, one could form a hypothesis about learners’ consistent positive responses to repeated questions or about a distinct difference between 1) criterion-referenced assessment in the ELP that was relatively easy for the learners and 2) norm-referenced assessment in common classroom work that focused on accurate performance and that was relatively difficult for them.

All the above-mentioned issues could lead to an erroneous conclusion that the introduction of learners’ self-assessment in the ELP project in the Czech Republic completely lacked positive qualities. Such a conclusion would definitely be false, the descriptions of the seminars and techniques summarized in Table 64 offering a clear proof (cf. similar positive results in 7.2.1). The teachers went through a stage of active experimentation (see Kolb 1984, in 3.2) and exploration (see Gebhard & Oprandy 1999, 3.2) and they often enjoyed it. The process of implementation occasionally achieved a broader impact, as can be seen in Table 62,

and an intermediate level of classroom negotiation (see Clark 1987, 79, in 2.4) was exceptionally introduced too (see 6.5.2 – the report about the sixth seminar). Presentations on hands-on experience and sharing ideas about relevant methodology during the seminars were invaluable. Generally, though learners' self-assessment was a controversial issue, it appeared to become at the same time the most rewarding issue. Some teachers repeatedly confirmed in the questionnaires and in the seminars that various new ideas, methods, and techniques had been implemented, which would not have happened without the ELP and learners' self-assessment in particular.

7.6. Validity, reliability, credibility and dependability of the results

Previous sections of this chapter show that the study employed a variety of methods and gave serious consideration to triangulation, i.e. to data, methodological and time types of triangulation. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods enriched the research and enhanced its credibility (cf. Brown 2001, 231). An excessive use of questionnaires lacking the accompaniment of school visits, class observations, interviews and study of the ELPs could have led to results that would lack validity and credibility. Similarly, school visits on their own would have gathered a limited amount of information and less conducive attitudes towards the project would probably not have been traced because the teachers who invited the author of the study to their schools were usually keen supporters of the ELP. Lastly, findings revealing learners' positive attitudes towards the ELP would have led to erroneous conclusions if learners' extremely positive attitudes towards language learning in general had not been explored.

The credibility of results was also increased by open-ended questions, which in this respect appeared to surpass closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions seemed "to be more viable research tools" (Krosnick 1999, 544), and, without doubt, they provided "thicker" data. Nevertheless, some respondents seemed to display in them the tendency to give the information in which the researcher was interested (cf. Schwarz 1999) and they did not avoid educational clichés. Exceptionally, some respondents seemed to pay little attention to the project.

Interviews and class observations, as well as the increasing knowledge of the researcher, produced greater insights into teachers' and teacher

trainers' opinions and suggested new questions. These were sometimes questions that had not been considered by the respondents and that encouraged them to reflect on the project more deeply. This happened especially during telephone interviews with two experienced teachers (see 6.4.1) and during school visits in the pre-dissemination phase (see 6.2.5).

As there was not a random sample in the project, contingency tables in subsections examining learners' attitudes cannot intend to make any valid generalizations. Their aim is to provide better knowledge about the sample of learners and raise questions that might be later examined.

The General Rapporteur of the Modern Languages ELP Pilot Project Group employed in Teacher and Learner Questionnaires 3 verbatim answers of teachers and learners to open questions from previous questionnaires. These statements were negatively worded (see 6.4.2, statements about descriptors of communicative activities). They elicited responses different to the questions that were worded positively and used repeatedly in all three Council of Europe questionnaires. This discrepancy could be accounted for by a) leading features of both positive and negative questions, b) teachers' tendency to respond consistently to repeating questions, c) their tendency "out of courtesy and respect ... to endorse assertions apparently made by the researchers" (Krosnick 1999, 553) and d) "a reactivity effect" that can occur when "the subjects actually form or solidify attitudes that they did not have before filling out the questionnaire" (Brown 1988, 35). Positive questions were also likely to be less transparent than their negative counterparts. All in all the questions that used teachers' and learners' everyday language appeared to be most effective.

Teachers' general views of the ELP and teacher trainers' general expectations about the ELP were used to examine beliefs about the descriptors of communicative activities (answers to the questions "What do you like best about the Portfolio?", "What do you like least about the Portfolio?", "What do you expect from your work with the ELP?" and "What do you expect from the seminars?"). Their content validity might be doubtful but they were employed in an effort to avoid explicit endorsing of the descriptors.

"Multiple perspective negotiation", i.e. "negotiation sessions" during which "various interpretations are presented" (Guba & Lincoln 1989, in Lynch 1996, 62-63) or close collaboration with teachers when evaluating the results of the project (cf. Breen et al. 2001, in 3.1.1) could have improved the validity of the research results. This input could have been

also provided by increasing the number of individual interviews as the teachers are themselves the best source of information. Such interviews could have helped to provide explanations of contradictory results, e.g. concerning learner self-assessment.

8. General discussion

In the previous chapter, a detailed discussion of the results of the study was presented. In this concluding chapter general issues will be discussed. When there is no special need to highlight the role of the teacher trainers, both teachers and teacher trainers will be referred to as teachers here.

The study aimed at a detailed analysis of teachers' and learners' perceptions of ELP innovative pedagogy and of its introduction into their common practice. Teachers' and learners' beliefs and attitudes were chosen as a valuable tool for this analysis for two principal reasons. 1. It is the teachers, and to a certain extent also their learners, who carry the burden and shape the project, and 2. beliefs and attitudes are inseparable from human learning and the context in which they are formed.

The research combines the Normative and the Contextual Approaches to the examination of beliefs (Barcelos 2003a, see 3.1.1). It explores whether the teachers' beliefs are in accordance with ELP pedagogy and, at the same time, it uses an "emic" perspective, recognizes a link between beliefs and experience and provides numerous data. The data stem from the fact that beliefs can be "inferred from what people say, intend and do" (Pajares 1992, 314, see 3.1.1).

The amount of data assisted the enquiry. Comparison sometimes revealed unexpected outcomes and validated the results. Some beliefs were made explicit only after the examination of new materials. The complete data made a significant difference to the project and it became clear that the combination of research methods and techniques used for the study of different groups of respondents over a longer period of time was highly beneficial. Particularly, methodological triangulation proved extremely useful. The responses to questionnaires without any other evidence could have produced unsubstantiated conclusions. This finding coincided with recent survey research (see e.g. Krosnick 1999, Schwarz 1999) that demonstrated how distorted responses to questionnaires could be. Classroom observations and interviews appeared to yield more precise and "tangible" results than the questionnaires and the research would have benefited from their increased number.

The present author's "emic" perspective caused basic problems. Although this approach is often highly evaluated, the author's responsibility for the project (in fact an "etic" perspective), combined with the limited resources available at the Ministry of Education brought their own complicating factors. As a result, the present author went through stages

that appeared to mirror the experience of some teachers: from genuine enthusiasm and unsubstantiated expectation of ease of implementation to bitter disappointment that dreams did not come true immediately. Hindsight was needed for objective evaluation and for reconciliation with the project's development. Another problem related to a lack of advance thoughtful planning for the project and for compiling the study. Important academic knowledge could not affect the project because it was gained after its accomplishment.

Though the data seem to be "thick", a number of questions were not taken into consideration and thus remained unanswered, to the detriment of the study (e.g. reasons for teachers' joining the project, deeper knowledge about teachers who continued in ELP use, deeper knowledge about teacher trainers' beliefs and attitudes). A number of other questions arose during the analysis of individual responses given in the questionnaires and during consequent attempts to discover the causes of these responses. These drawbacks could often not be overcome owing to the basic design of the study. A large sample was initially seen as desirable so that existing patterns in teachers' and learners' beliefs and attitudes could emerge and a better general overview of the Czech situation could be provided but the investigation of the whole group of teachers made the enquiry difficult. The need for closer and more systematic study of individuals was often felt and a deeper insight into the teachers' beliefs and attitudes might have been gained if the number of the teachers had been reduced. However, such a reduction did not seem possible owing to the constant work with the whole group during seminars. A study that would focus on a smaller group of teachers and would examine their use of the ELP more closely would be a natural follow-up.

Based on the specific characteristics of the project, three main groups of conclusions can be reached. The first group deals with the results of the project in general, the second group concerns teaching principles and practices and the third group focuses on teachers' beliefs.

As mentioned above, the first group of conclusions is comprised of general facts typical for the project. The majority of the teachers appeared to understand ELP pedagogy and its principles. The teachers seemed to be inspired to participate in the project through basic motives of wanting to improve the quality of their teaching (probably apart from those who might have been stimulated by the Heads of their schools), and so the beginning of the project generated high motivation. The teachers attached high value to the ELP and they believed that it could solve their problems

in teaching. During the project differences in expectations held by different groups of teachers (e.g. teachers in primary schools, teachers in 8-year grammar schools) emerged, with the exception of an increase in learners' motivation and use of European criteria for learners' assessment, which teachers prioritized throughout. Teachers in basic schools often seemed to be determined to enliven their lessons, and thus they inclined to learn new methods of teaching and try out innovative techniques. Teachers in 8-year grammar schools usually focused on building up a reputation for academic excellence in their classes and therefore they became, first and foremost, eager to assess the results of their learners in comparison with "European standards".

Teachers' common practice and anchored beliefs based on their past experience appeared to perform a decisive role in the teachers' involvement with the project or their gradual withdrawal from it. The diversity of teachers' beliefs became apparent. A few of the teachers felt reasonably satisfied with their common practice and/or they adhered to beliefs that substantially differed from ELP pedagogy; others expressed beliefs that were partially contradictory. An interaction between ELP pedagogy and the contradictory deeply rooted principles and practices tended to end in the failure of ELP principles. Woods' (1996, see 3.1.1) continuous cycle consisting of events, their interpretation and expectation then appeared to be closed for the actions based on the ELP. On the contrary, interaction with principles harmonious with the ELP generated teachers' higher motivation and intention to put innovative ideas into practice. However, when some of these ideas demanded a great deal of extra effort and did not form an integral part of the teachers' practice, the teachers felt overburdened. Unfortunately, some of them did not avoid a feeling of failure, which resulted in their condemnation of ELP pedagogy.

Teachers' problems with ELP use are very well described by two teacher trainers in their contribution to a collection of articles about ELP use in Europe (Little 2002, ed.):

...some of our fellow teachers lacked empathy for the concept, perhaps because they were too attached to stereotypical educational practices, the basic principles of which are unfortunately often in direct contrast with those underlying the ELP. A large part of this lack of understanding could be attributed to the fact that some colleagues regarded the ELP as an extra workload additional to their teaching duties (Nováková & Davidová 2002, in Little 2002, ed.).

The teachers whose zone of development was proximate to ELP pedagogy became enthusiastic ELP proponents. The proximity of this zone enabled them to take active steps forward. They readily perceived the practical significance of the ELP and were willing to invest their time and effort to make it function successfully. One of them highlighted the ELP benefits for teachers in the conclusion of her article published in *Babylonia*:

...our school continues to use the approach of the “European Language Portfolio”. Not only because it activates the interest of the pupils, but also because it leads teachers to creative work” (Hindlsová 2000).

Six pilot teachers were involved in the pre-dissemination phase in order to become teacher trainers (Teacher ID 2, 32, 34, 39, 44, 47) and another became an ELP teacher trainer in upper-secondary schools (Teacher ID 21). In the years 2000–2004 eleven articles promoting the use of the ELP were published by nine teachers in Czech and foreign professional journals (Teacher ID 2, 8, 13, 19, 41, 53, plus three teacher trainers). Two teachers cooperated in developing the ELP for learners up to the age of 11 (Teacher ID 1, 19) and one teacher successfully incorporated elements of learner assessment into new Czech textbooks of English for Years 4 and 5 (Teacher ID 2).

The conclusions contained in the second group arise from the ideas of Breen et al. (2001, see 3.1.1):

- a) Being faced with an exceptionally complex innovative construct, the teachers were selective and they appeared to apply a limited number of principles (or one major principle) that were close to the principle/s underlying their previous teaching. The majority of the teachers found such principle/s attractive and/or challenging.
- b) The principles were individualized so that they were made harmonious with teachers' practice.
- c) The individualized principles could act as a stimulus for the development of new imaginative individualized activities.
- d) Within the group of the teachers, discussion about new activities sometimes brought about a spin-off effect but the adopted practice was again adjusted and individualized.
- e) Differences between the practices of individual teachers appeared to be great.
- f) Due to various constraints (e.g. perceived pressure of the curriculum), identification with a principle could sometimes not be put into practice.

- g) The teachers' choice of principles and the development of their practices were affected by the beliefs and attitudes of the teacher trainer.
- h) The implementation (e.g. the choice of principles, the impact on practice) was heavily influenced by the particular context, but, at the same time, the context could be examined by the process and results of the implementation.

The third group of conclusions concerns teachers' beliefs. The study confirmed that the results of a project often depend on the subjective value that the participants attach to its goals (Ushioda 1996, 16). As described above, the implementation did not result in one widely held cluster of beliefs. Similarly to beliefs and attitudes concerning language teaching in general, the beliefs and attitudes concerning the ELP in particular were multifaceted and their main characteristic was variety. Despite this, some beliefs overlapped and a similar development of beliefs occurred.

The beliefs were an integral part of the Czech context and culture. Primarily, the high interest in the descriptors of communicative activities could derive from a wish to achieve results that would be equivalent to other European countries and that would "open up the country to the world". Difficulties with the introduction of self-assessment could result from the importance attached to rigid grading systems in Czech schools (cf. 1.2), and, at the same time, from a lack of teachers' knowledge about self-assessment and autonomy: the new and the previous knowledge could not be connected (cf. 3.1.1).

Teachers' communication during the seminars assisted in teacher trainer' learning. "Distributed cognitions" (Watson-Gegeo 2004, see 3.1.1) and negotiation were productive and, on the whole, teachers' sharing of ideas had a stimulating effect. In contrast, the limited number of the seminars did not guarantee a variety of experience (cf. Woods 1996), albeit vicarious experience, and it did not enable the teachers to be repeatedly confronted with new knowledge. "Engaging in theory" (Widdowson 2003, in Newby 2003, see 3.1.1) was not frequent due to a lack of relevant literature and practical arguments were difficult because of a lack of experience on which to base them. As teachers often remained lonely in their work with the ELP between the seminars, they were deprived of valuable social interaction and active collaboration, and, in extreme cases, they even had to face a hostile environment in their schools.

The teachers highlighted different ELP features and developed, tried and preferred different ways of ELP implementation, but their beliefs

and attitudes concerning ELP use fall into several basic patterns. These patterns can be categorized and seen as a continuum. The framework of the continuum was set by two extreme examples that illustrate beliefs about the functions of the ELP and about their performance in the Czech context. Based on the literature, some patterns were added within the framework to make it coherent and complete and to mark the gradations of potential responses. Though these patterns were not present in the Czech context, they concern young learners up to the age of 15 who learn languages with a textbook in a school context. The continuum is described in the following table. Its categories are classified as teacher directed and learner directed and as assessment oriented and goal oriented. (Byrne's classification (1987) of classroom interaction provided an inspiration for the design of the table.) The reporting function refers to assessment-oriented approaches and the planning function to goal-oriented approaches. The continuum does not cover options offered by ELP pedagogy; it selects those that have been believed or could realistically be believed in the given situation.

There are two crucial issues concerning the table that have to be tackled. Firstly and most importantly, the last subcategory in learner-directed approaches should not be considered the only "right" and desirable category. The ELP allows methodological flexibility, i.e. specific "affordance" (Gibson 1979, in van Lier 2000, see 3.1.1) for each teacher who wants to become involved with it. All different approaches to its use should be acknowledged. As emphasized in section 2.4, the process through which the learners move towards autonomy is gradual, lengthy and difficult. The subcategories preceding the last one (beginning with the third subcategory in the teacher-directed approaches) are natural and necessary stages of the teacher's influence and learner development. Secondly, though the reporting function of the ELP is usually emphasized and the Czech project showed that teachers' beliefs about the importance of assessment-oriented activities were strong, the present author placed goal-oriented approaches as a point of departure in the firm belief that that is their natural position.

Teachers' beliefs about introducing ELP pedagogy in the modes described in the teacher-directed category of Table 68 were common in the Czech project, the assessment-oriented approaches being especially popular. The first extreme example in the teacher-directed category appeared to be adopted in the Czech context too but this approach was usually doomed to failure and the second was rather distant from ELP pedagogy. Still, beliefs about these approaches are genuine and they

TABLE 68. Teachers’ beliefs about approaches to working with the ELP

	GOAL ORIENTED	ASSESSMENT ORIENTED
TEACHER -DIRECTED	The teacher explains the purpose of the ELP to the learners and encourages them to work with it at home on their own.	
	At the beginning of the new school year / new term the teacher tells the learners what will be taught. She enumerates the most typical relevant objectives from the ELP.	At the end of the term the teacher asks the learners to bring their ELPs to the class. She checks what has been filled in and points out what else could be completed. Some learners perform what they have learned in front of the class. The teacher evaluates it.
	The teacher tells the learners what ELP activities they will learn during the term and she asks the learners to mark the activities in their ELPs or to display them on the classroom walls / rewrite them into their exercise books. She encourages the learners to monitor their progress. When beginning a new unit / a new section in the textbook, she tells the learners what specific ELP task they will focus on.	When the majority of the learners have learned an activity / several activities described in the ELP, the teacher reminds the learners to record their achievements at home. The learners bring their ELPs to the class about once in two months. The teacher checks their homework and helps them to realize what else could be completed. The descriptors of communicative activities are used to revise the subject matter.
	When beginning a new unit / a new section in the textbook, the teacher encourages the learners to look through it and deduce what they will learn. She helps the learners to specify the ELP objective that they will focus on.	The teacher helps the learners during lessons to monitor the ELP activities in which they are engaged and when several activities have been mastered, she invites the learners to bring their ELPs to the class. The descriptors of communicative activities are used to revise the subject matter. The teacher discusses achievements both with the whole class and with individuals and helps them to complete their records of individual achievements.

TABLE 68. continues on the following page

TABLE 68. continued from the previous page

LEARNER-DIRECTED	<p>The teacher clarifies and exemplifies the level of achievement of specific ELP objectives and continuously encourages the learners to express what they have learned and what still needs to be done.</p>	<p>The teacher incorporates the ELP into lessons in such way that the learners are aware of their work on specific ELP tasks. The teacher encourages them to decide for themselves when the majority of them have accomplished the tasks. The learners then work in pairs / groups and check and evaluate each other's performances. Based on the peer-assessment, they update their records in the ELPs. The teacher guides them individually in order to make their self-assessment more objective.</p>
	<p>The teacher helps the learners so that they themselves set two or three objectives based on ELP descriptors. The learners consider what they should do to meet the objective.</p>	<p>When trying to meet objectives established in the ELP, the learners make groups according to the tasks that they find demanding. The teacher provides individuals with / helps individuals to find / relevant practice exercises, monitors their work and guides them to identify learning problems and to explore ways of dealing with them.</p>
	<p>The learners themselves set two or three ELP objectives that they would like to accomplish. The teacher encourages them to establish criteria for their successful accomplishment.</p>	<p>Some of the learners prepare exercises for their classmates to help them to accomplish the specific tasks and to show that they themselves have succeeded in them. The learners choose a peer with whom they would like to perform the tasks and check if the established criteria have been met or they choose a peer with whom they would like to practice the activities.</p>

have to be taken into account when discussing ways of ELP use. The subcategories that follow the second subcategory in the teacher-directed approaches comprise a weak level of classroom negotiation and this level gradually develops into an intermediate level described in the last subcategories of the learner-directed approaches (cf. Clark 1987, in 2.4). A strong level of negotiation did not appear realistic in the Czech textbook-bound context. Interestingly, the first subcategories of the table are defined by the factor of time, i.e. the frequency of learners' classroom

work with the ELP, whereas further on the continuous development of ELP pedagogy is evident in the teachers' focus on quality. Ideally, teacher's beliefs about their work with the whole class will be enriched by a sensitivity to the needs of the individual learners.

Teachers participating in the project demonstrated various competences, which are summarized in the following table. As there was a considerable variety in their acquisition, it should be taken into account that 1) they represent a general summary, 2) they cannot be applied to the whole group of the teachers, 3) all competences cannot be applied to each individual and 4) the levels of their development differed.

TABLE 69. Competences of Czech teachers as ELP users

TEACHER'S COMPETENCES IN ELP USE
1) Has the firm intention of teaching the language through its maximum use.
1) Has the ability to develop new teaching procedures and be creative.
2) Has basic knowledge about the aim of the project and its European dimension.
3) Has a clear concept of the ELP, its division into three parts and their aims.
4) Shows knowledge of the six levels of language proficiency, ELP descriptors of communicative activities and their use.
5) Shows basic knowledge about training for learner self-assessment and learner autonomy.
6) Has the ability to discuss learning and teaching procedures and results with learners.

Table 70 shows examples of effective activities that were included in the repertoires of Czech teachers, but just as in Table 69, generalization about their extensive use should not be made. The table addresses the issue of interrelationship between teaching objectives, content and methodology (Clark 1987, 6). It begins with the content of teaching and proceeds with teaching methods.

The descriptors in both tables (Tables 69 and 70) document positive results of the Czech project. In addition, they show how interrelated ELP pedagogy is with modern approaches to teaching. More than half of the descriptors in Table 69 and half in Table 70 could be defined as general

TABLE 70. Activities of Czech teachers as ELP users

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES WHEN USING THE ELP	
Combining work with the ELP and the textbook	<p>Can compare a textbook with scales of language proficiency and descriptors of communicative activities and recognize which of these activities are practised in the textbook</p> <p>Can supplement the textbook with activities that are not practised in it or substitute these activities</p>
Helping learners to use the ELP	<p>Can encourage learners to collect samples of their work in the Dossier</p> <p>Can help learners to choose an objective in the Language Biography and monitor its achievement</p> <p>Can make a link between the learners' work in The Passport, The Language Biography and the Dossier</p>
Helping learners to assess their work	<p>Can express learning objectives as "can do" real-life objectives and help learners to know them</p> <p>Can use activities in which learners check and assess their achievements in pairs or groups</p> <p>Can hold a constructive dialogue with learners which helps them to find their strengths and weaknesses</p>
Helping learners to make progress	<p>Can advise individuals on specific ways to improve</p> <p>Can encourage learners to find their individual ways to improve</p>

descriptors that refer to current effective language teaching and effective education in general and they could be independent of the ELP. This is logical because the ELP is a natural product of recent development in language teaching and it reflects contemporary social needs.

Many teachers appeared to acquire the majority of competences enumerated in Table 69 and they seemed to be deeply engaged in some activities listed in Table 70. The reporting function of the ELP became very attractive to the teachers and learners and thus an influence of the Council of Europe scales of language proficiency and consequently an influence of the ELP on language teaching and learning appear to be realistic. To stimulate ELP use and to solve difficulties that the teachers encountered when using the scales and introducing learner self-assessment, proper ELP-oriented education would be needed because effective work with the ELP is determined by the existence of an effective process of

learning to use it. Apart from the characteristics of education that were touched on in this study (above all teachers' close collaboration both during and between the seminars), the following features should be typical for it: teachers' greater participation in preparation of the seminars, use of videos with learners' performances and use of tables from the CEF that were neglected in the project (mainly tables of communicative competences and qualitative aspects of spoken language use). These tables could prove to be extremely helpful because they respect language as system and thus they respond to teachers' demands (cf. 2.3.1 and 2.8). Teachers' close collaboration could foster the processes of theorizing experiential knowledge and practicalizing received knowledge (Tsui 2003, see 3.2). It could also stimulate the cycle of teachers' learning, i.e. "concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation" (Kolb 1984, 42, see 3.2). Lastly, it could help teachers in problem solving (mainly in divergent thinking, monitoring and evaluation and in reducing threats of fixation on traditional stereotypes; see Sternberg 2002, in 3.2).

All issues that have been discussed in this chapter so far are to a great extent related to the feasibility of ELP implementation. Regarding this issue, adoption factors (Richards 2001, see 2.6) have to be considered, i.e. advantages of the project, its compatibility with the given context, complication, comprehensibility, practicality, clear presentation and piloting. The factors closely correspond to Pintrich, Marx and Boyle's four conditions (1993, see 3.1.1) that have to be met to reach accommodation to a new concept and that are as follows: dissatisfaction with common practice and the intelligibility, plausibility and fruitfulness of the new concept. Unfortunately, several of these factors did not operate absolutely efficiently in the Czech context. The innovation was not entirely compatible with the existing context and it sounded a bit complicated and less practical to some teachers (cf. Widdowson 1990, see 2.6). The teachers' "journey of discovery and rediscovery" (Gephard and Oprandy 1999, 4, see 3.2) did not always seem easy. In addition, there were teachers who appeared to think that ELP pedagogy did not offer decisive great advantages and that it did not prove extremely fruitful. As such teachers were not wholly exceptional, effective and immediate implementation of ELP pedagogy becomes hardly feasible in the current Czech context. If the ELP was imposed on all teachers as a duty, the need for teachers' readiness for change would not be respected.

The process of ELP implementation could highly benefit from changes in the national curricula for languages that are currently being introduced

in the Czech Republic. The curricula should closely follow the Common European Framework of Reference, which means that officially stated teaching and learning aims should achieve perfect harmony with the ELP. The new document could gradually foster teachers' work towards ELP pedagogy and with the help of the ELP the new curriculum could also become sufficiently explicit and easily comprehensible to learners. Last but not least, publishing houses that operate in the Czech context (including British publishers) have generally recognized the potential of the ELP and attempted to facilitate this innovation in their products, which can greatly accelerate the implementation of ELP pedagogy too.

Before completing the study, an effort to deal with some of the problems that are discussed in it was made at an international level. Teachers' difficulties in clearly distinguishing between the levels of language proficiency were experienced in other countries, too, and therefore an initiative was launched by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe to standardize language exams and to produce helpful teaching materials (cf. 2.3.2). A need for descriptors of communicative activities that would prove adequate for young learners has also been commonly shared and has been addressed as have feelings of uncertainty about learner self-assessment. The recognition of the crucial role played by teacher education (Schärer 2004) led to a series of initiatives, e.g. workshops run by the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz.

The work on the present study posed several controversial questions that remain unanswered and are enumerated below. Although some of them could be valid for a broader context, the present author does not intend to make generalizations.

1. For how long should projects with a philosophy and practice on a substantially "higher" level than the common practice in a specific country be piloted in the country? And to what extent can the difference between plans and reality be anticipated?

2. What should be preferred and what would produce better results? Highly professional, educationally inspiring and extremely attractive portfolios, though for some teachers these might seem overwhelming, or grossly simplified portfolios that would be broadly accessible?

3. Should teachers from the whole country participate in an ELP educational programme but possibly face up the reality that they will miss social interaction on the ELP in their region? Or should a group of local teachers collaborate and support each other, which would, however, neglect implementation in other parts of the country?

4. How long should teacher education last?

The study describes teaching and learning in a certain context and the present author is aware that “a purely objective description is not possible, because the social world is always already interpreted” (Mason 1996, 109). The enquiry depended greatly on the project and its procedure and so its full replication is hardly feasible. The project was carried out in its unique way and it reflects a specific situation at a specific time. Due to the researcher’s status in the project, the enquiry sometimes integrated ethnographic methodology, but the principal research method was a case study - an “instance in action” (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis 1976, in Nunan 1992, 75). Its implications are therefore mainly practical. Despite its low external validity, the study did “shed light on general and generalizable concerns” (Anderson 1990, 166) in the Czech context and these concerns should be dealt with. Among them an encouragement of classroom interaction appears to be the major factor that could lead to an improvement in the project practice in the future (cf. Kohonen’s concept of “visibility” in language learning, 2001, see 2.7). Instead of a narrow focus on the ELP and its parts and functions, the focus of teacher education should shift to “can do” tasks and learner self-assessment.

The transferability of the research questions appears to be more feasible than the transferability of the research results. The first group of questions explores the relationship between learners’ interest in the ELP and a) their interest in language learning in general, b) their school results, c) their age and d) their gender. The second group examines a) the functions of the descriptors of communicative activities in teaching and learning and b) the suitability of descriptors for teaching young beginners other languages than English. Finally, the third group focuses on a) the repertoire of teachers’ activities used for the development of learner autonomy and learner self-assessment and b) the relationship between teacher assessment and learner self-assessment.

The findings of the study indicated the importance of cooperation between teachers: they took upon themselves a challenging task and wanted to get to grips with it. Sharing ideas during seminars was extremely motivating and many teachers asked for the seminars to continue. It seemed obvious that the project would have immensely benefited from more of such cooperation and that a substantially longer period spent in collaboration would be needed to optimize the conditions for successful implementation of ELP pedagogy in the Czech Republic.

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APPENDIX 1: Self-assessment grid of language proficiency

		UNDERSTANDING				
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.

SPEAKING

<p style="text-align: center;">Spoken Interaction</p>	<p>I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.</p>	<p>I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.</p>	<p>I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).</p>	<p>I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.</p>	<p>I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.</p>	<p>I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Spoken Production</p>	<p>I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.</p>	<p>I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.</p>	<p>I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.</p>	<p>I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</p>	<p>I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.</p>	<p>I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.</p>

<p>WRITING</p>	<p>I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.</p>	<p>I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.</p>	<p>I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.</p>	<p>I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.</p>	<p>I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what the salient issues, I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.</p>	<p>I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries of professional or literary works.</p>
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APPENDIX 2: Common language exams and their reference levels

Proficiency level					
Language	A 2	B 1	B 2	C 1	C 2
English	Cambridge Key English Test (KET)	Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET)	Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE)	Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)	Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
French		Diplôme d'étude en langue française – 1 (DELF)	Diplôme d'étude en langue française – 2 (DELF)	Diplôme approfondi de langue française (DALF)	Diplôme de hautes études
German	Grundbaustein Grundstufe (G)	Zertifikat Deutsch (ZD)	Zertifikat für den Beruf (ZDfB)	Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP) Prüfung Wirtschaftsdeutsch International (PWD) Mittelstufe (M)	Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP) Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS) Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom (GDS) Diplom Wirtschaftssprache Deutsch (DWD)
Italian		Certificato d'Italiano come Lingua Straniera (CILS): Livello 1	Certificato d'Italiano come Lingua Straniera (CILS): Livello 2	Certificato d'Italiano come Lingua Straniera (CILS): Livello 3	Certificato d'Italiano come Lingua Straniera (CILS): Livello 4
Russian	Русский язык Базовый уровень (ТБУ)	Русский язык Первый сертификационный уровень (ТРКИ 1)	Русский язык Второй сертификационный уровень (ТРКИ 2)	Русский язык Третий сертификационный уровень (ТРКИ 3)	Русский язык Четвертый сертификационный уровень (ТРКИ 4)
Spanish		Certificado de Español como Lengua Extranjera (CIE): Inicial	Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE): Básico		Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE): Superior

APPENDIX 3: Teacher and Learner Questionnaires 1 + Summaries

Summaries - Teacher Questionnaire 1

	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
A 1T Is the Portfolio useful in assessing the language competence of your learners?	37	80.4	4	8.7	5	10.9
B 1T Does the Portfolio help you make the learning objectives clear to your learners?	35	76.1	3	6.5	8	17.4
C 1T Does the Portfolio help you involve your learners actively in the learning process?	46	100	0	0	0	0
D 1T Are the learners able to assess themselves with the help of the Portfolio?	22	47.8	4	8.7	20	43.5
E 1T Does the Portfolio help develop sensitivity concerning the cultural diversity of Europe?	24	52.2	3	6.5	19	41.3
F 1T Do other teachers in your school also use a Language Portfolio?	21	45.6	25	54.3	-	-

Summaries - Learner Questionnaire 1

	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
A 1L Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?	625	85.6	15	2.0	90	12.3
B 1L Does the Portfolio help you understand the learning objectives?	513	70.3	36	4.9	181	24.8
C 1L Does the Portfolio help you assess your language skills?	549	75.2	24	3.3	157	21.5
D 1L Do you find it useful to compare the teacher's assessment of your language competence with your own assessment?	469	64.2	54	7.4	207	28.4
E 1L Should building up a Portfolio be part of regular class work?	548	75.1	58	7.9	124	17.0
F 1L Do you like having a Language Portfolio?	655	89.7	17	2.3	58	7.9

APPENDIX 4: Teacher and Learner Questionnaires 2 + Summaries

Summaries - Teacher Questionnaire 2

	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
A 2T Does the Portfolio help you involve learners actively in class?	46	93,9	2	4,1	1	2,0
B 2T Does the Portfolio help you make learning objectives clear?	38	77,6	5	10,2	6	12,2
C 2T Does the Portfolio help you understand your learners' potential?	38	77,6	4	8,2	7	14,3
D 2T Does the Portfolio help develop self-reliant language learners?	45	91,8	1	2,0	3	6,1
E 2T Are learners able to handle the language portfolio?	37	75,5	2	4,1	10	20,4
F 2T Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?	26	53,1	11	22,4	12	24,5
G 2T Did you agree in general with their self-assessment?	45	91,8	0	0,0	4	8,2
H 2T Did you find it worthwhile to work with the language portfolio?	46	93,9	0	0,0	3	6,1
I 2T Do your colleagues also use the language portfolio?	27	55,1	22	44,9	0	0,0

Summaries - Learner Questionnaire 2

	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
A 2L Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?	657	88,0	13	1,7	77	10,3
B 2L Has the Portfolio helped you to see progress in learning?	495	66,3	83	11,1	169	22,6
C 2L Did the Portfolio help you to self-assess your competence?	497	66,5	63	8,4	187	25,0
D 2L Did your teacher(s) agree with your self-assessment?	339	45,4	15	2,0	393	52,6
E 2L Should the Portfolio be part of regular class work?	580	77,6	57	7,6	110	14,7
F 2L Do you like your Language Portfolio?	690	92,4	23	3,1	34	4,6
G 2L Has the Portfolio helped you to learn better?	304	40,7	180	24,1	263	35,2

APPENDIX 5: Teacher and Learner Questionnaires 3 + Summaries

Summaries - Teacher Questionnaire 3

	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
A 3T Is the ELP useful in assessing the language competence of your learners?	44	91.7	1	2.1	3	6.3
B 3T Is the ELP useful in clarifying learning objectives with your learners?	43	89.6	2	4.2	3	6.3
C 3T Does the ELP help you understand your learners' potential?	32	66.7	6	12.5	10	20.8
D 3T Is the ELP useful in developing learner autonomy?	39	81.3	2	4.2	7	14.6
E 3T Are learners able to handle the language portfolio?	39	81.3	2	4.2	7	14.6
F 3T Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?	33	68.8	10	20.8	5	10.4
G 3T Did you in general agree with their self-assessment?	39	81.3	6	12.5	3	6.3
H 3T Do you find the ELP is a useful tool for the learners?	45	93.8	0	0	3	6.3
I 2T Do you find the ELP is a useful tool for you as teacher?	45	93.8	0	0	3	6.3
J 3T Do you feel the ELP should be widely introduced in schools?	27	56.3	3	6.3	18	37.5

Summaries - Teacher Questionnaire 3

	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1 TA The levels in the Common Framework are so broad that they do not allow my learners to appreciate their progress.	15	31.3	18	37.5	15	31.3
2 TA The ELP help to clearly show the objectives and the progress made.	31	64.6	6	12.5	11	22.9
3 TA Maintaining the ELP is useful it allows auto-reflection.	48	100	0	0	0	0

4 TA The ELP helps me and my students to reflect on the language and on how and why we learn it.	43	89.6	1	2.1	4	8.3
5 TA The official status of the ELP needs to be clarified.	31	64.6	2	4.2	15	31.3
6 TA The self-assessment grid is not always clear.	27	56.3	11	22.9	10	20.8
7 TA The descriptors used in the check lists are not always clear.	31	64.6	13	27.1	4	8.3
8 TA I hope more detailed sample lists for the different levels will become available.	32	66.7	6	12.5	10	20.8
9 TA My learners found it difficult to say whether they would be able to understand a video or a lecture.	15	31.3	17	35.4	16	33.3
10 TA Our teachers and learners reported that the ELP enhances motivation.	41	85.4	3	6.3	4	8.3
11 TA Self-assessment is the most critical part because it is not a common tradition.	44	91.7	4	8.3	0	0
12 TA I learnt a lot about my students, their motivation and their potential.	38	79.2	2	4.2	8	16.7
13 TA I needed more time to prepare my lessons.	28	58.3	18	37.5	2	4.2
14 TA I needed initially more time to prepare my lessons.	32	66.7	13	27.1	3	6.3
15 TA I needed time for myself to cope with a new experience.	42	87.5	4	8.3	2	4.2
16 TA My students do not see the need for a ELP – it does not add anything.	5	10.4	33	68.8	10	20.8
17 TA My initial reservation has changed.	5	10.4	33	68.8	10	20.8
18 TA Somehow the ELP does not seem to reflect the general development of my learners. What might be OK at the age of 10 might be inappropriate at 20.	20	41.7	20	41.7	8	16.7

Summaries - Learner Questionnaire 3

	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
A 3L Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?	621	88.6	15	2.1	65	9.3
B 3L Does the Portfolio help you see progress in learning?	487	69.5	67	9.6	147	21.0
C 3L Does the Portfolio help you assess your competence?	487	69.5	66	9.4	148	21.1
D 3L Does the Portfolio stimulate you to participate more fully in the language learning process?	230	32.8	263	37.5	208	29.7
E 3L Do you feel the Portfolio puts more responsibility on you as learner?	293	41.8	198	28.2	210	30.0
F 3L Do you like added responsibility for your own learning?	470	67.0	67	9.6	164	23.4
G 3L Do you think the time spent on keeping your Portfolio was time well spent?	538	76.7	34	4.9	129	18.4
H 3L Do you think all learners should be encouraged to keep a Language Portfolio?	578	82.5	40	5.7	83	11.8

Summaries - Learner Questionnaire 3

	Agree		Disagree		Don't know	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1 LA I find the ELP useful, it helps to know what one still needs to learn.	542	77.3	55	7.8	104	14.8
2 LA The ELP helps to reflect on language learning.	429	61.2	85	12.1	187	26.7
3 LA The ELP is useful to evaluate where one stands.	534	76.2	53	7.6	114	16.3
4 LA The ELP takes up too much time.	116	16.5	489	69.8	96	13.7
5 LA A waste of time – school marks are sufficient.	46	6.6	551	78.6	104	14.8
6 LA I like to compare my language competence on a European Scale.	400	57.1	88	12.6	213	30.4
7 LA The ELP should be connected with teaching and the work in class.	515	73.5	63	9.0	123	17.5
8 LA The ELP should be brought up to date once a month.	280	39.9	243	34.7	178	25.4
9 LA The ELP makes sense if used regularly.	453	64.6	101	14.4	147	21.0
10 LA The ELP improves the dialogue between me and my teacher(s).	260	37.1	132	18.8	309	44.1

APPENDIX 6: Teacher Questionnaire A

Name:

	Yes	No
Will you continue in your work with the Portfolio?		
Would you like to introduce the Portfolio in other classes?		
Have you used some approaches from the Portfolio in other classes too?		
Do you need more copies of the Portfolio? If yes, how many?		
Will you recommend that learners buy the Portfolio? (a provisional estimated price is about 100,- Czech crowns)		
Should in-service education be organized for the teachers who would like to begin use of the Portfolio in their classes?		
Would you like to become a teacher trainer helping a group of teachers to begin their work with the Portfolio?		
Should in-service education be organized for teacher trainers helping new groups of teachers to work with the Portfolio?		
If there was such in-service education, could you participate in it?		
Are other teachers in your school interested in work with the Portfolio?		
Could you organize a local exhibition concerning the Portfolio?		
Could you write an article about your experience with the Portfolio for the journals "Foreign Languages" or "The Teachers' Journal"?		

Would you like to organize some other activities facilitating the Language Portfolio? If yes, what are they?

.....

Did you have the opportunity to become a qualified teacher of a language?

Yes No

If yes, in which year?..... At what faculty?

How many years have you been teaching a foreign language?

Do you attend some language or methodology courses? Yes - No

If yes, what are they?

.....

Have you organized in-service teacher education? Yes - No

If yes, what and where was it?

.....

What was your objective when working with the Portfolio?

.....

How do you evaluate your work with the Portfolio so far?

.....

What are you proud of in your work with the Portfolio?

.....

What did not turn out well?.....

.....

Has your attitude towards the Portfolio changed during the piloting? If yes, how?

.....

What is your opinion on self-assessment?

.....

What had a major influence on your opinion on self-assessment?

.....

Did you guide the learners to self-assessment? If yes, how?

.....

What advice would you give to colleagues who would like to start working with the Portfolio?

.....

.....

Has the Portfolio somehow changed your work? If yes, how? If not, why not?

.....

.....

Do teachers need in-service teacher education focusing on ELP use? If yes, what should such education be like?

.....

.....

Does the Czech version of the Portfolio need some changes? If yes, what changes?

.....

Thank you very much for your help in filling in the questionnaire.

APPENDIX 7: Teacher Questionnaire B

Questionnaire for teachers piloting the Language Portfolio – June 2000

Dear Ms, Dear Sir,

I would like to ask you if you could fill in the following questionnaire that should help research on outcomes of piloting the Language Portfolio in the Czech Republic. Your responses will be kept confidential and they will be used exclusively for research purposes. The research should help in teacher education and in the introduction of the Language Portfolio in the Czech Republic. Thank you.

Prague 20/6/2000

Radka Perclová

Name : School:

A. In your opinion, how important are the following activities in foreign language lessons?

Circle the number that best corresponds with your opinion.

	Absolutely unimportant				Very important		
1. Conversation practice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Explanation to class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Grammar practice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Drills, memorizing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Vocabulary development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Pronunciation practice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Error correction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Language games	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Drama activities, role-play	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Using songs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Using pictures, real objects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Using film, video	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Listening, using cassettes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Communication tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Reading books and magazines	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Writing stories, descriptions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Student self-correction of errors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Pair work and group work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Based on Nunan, D. (1988) *The Learner-Centred Curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 88 – 93.

B. Would you write *two PRINCIPLES* that underlie your teaching and that you see absolute necessities *when teaching a foreign language*?

- 1
 2

B. In your opinion, how important are the following qualities and activities of foreign language teachers?

Circle the number that best corresponds with your opinion.

	Absolutely unimportant				Very important		
1. Knowledge of the language system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Good pronunciation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Experience of living in a foreign country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Further education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Classroom performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Cooperation with other language teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Length of time as a teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Creating own materials	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Careful planning of lessons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Same L1 as students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Ability to evaluate own work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Personal qualities (interested in learners etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Publications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Knowledge of learning theories	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Wide vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Ability to encourage learners' interest in learning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Learners' preparation for exams	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Positive attitude to the profession	1	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
19. Ability to evaluate textbooks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Looking for new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Based on McDonough, J. & Shaw, C. (1993) *Materials and Methods in ELT*. Blackwell, p. 297

APPENDIX 8: Teacher Questionnaire C

Questionnaire for teachers piloting the Language Portfolio – June 2001

Dear Ms, Dear Sir,

I would like to ask you if you could fill in the following questionnaire that should help research on outcomes of piloting the Language Portfolio in the Czech Republic. Your responses will be kept confidential and they will be used exclusively for research purposes. The research should help in teacher education and in the introduction of the Language Portfolio in the Czech Republic. Thank you.

Prague 20/6/2000

Radka Perclová

Name : School:

1. Please give the name of the main textbook that you used last year with the learners who piloted the Portfolio:

Please circle the letter that best corresponds with your opinion.

2. How do you evaluate this textbook?

It is a) excellent b) good c) average d) below average e) very bad

3. Does the textbook match the Portfolio, i.e. the activities in the “bubbles”?

a) completely b) mostly c) partly d) slightly e) not at all

4. Are the activities used in the Portfolio, i.e. in the “bubbles”, in harmony with the objectives you would like to achieve in teaching?

a) completely b) mostly c) partly d) slightly e) not at all

5. Did the learners achieve the same progress in all activities (listening, reading, speaking – dialogues and monologues, writing)? a) yes b) no (If you answered “no”, please answer the two following questions.)

6. What activities caused the biggest troubles?

a) listening b) reading c) speaking - dialogues d) monologues
e) writing

7. What activities were the easiest?

- a) listening
- b) reading
- c) speaking - dialogues
- d) monologues
- e) writing

8. Do you have the same experience with the difficulty of teaching language activities with learners who did not use the Portfolio? a) yes b) no
If you answered “no”, what is your experience?

.....

9. Did you use the Portfolio this year?

- a) yes, systematically (how often?) b) sometimes
- c) no
- d) I could not use it because

10. Can the use of the Portfolio improve teaching and learning of languages in the Czech Republic?

- a) definitely
- b) probably yes
- c) I don't know
- d) probably no
- e) not at all

How do you evaluate the work with the Portfolio now with the benefit of hindsight? What was its greatest benefit / What are its biggest drawbacks?

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX 9: Learner Questionnaire A

Please tick the answer which expresses your opinion in the best way.

Using the Portfolio is:

- a) useful and interesting
- b) useful but boring
- c) interesting but useless
- d) useless and boring

Learning a foreign language is:

- a) useful and interesting
- b) useful but boring
- c) interesting but useless
- d) useless and boring

..... is:
(write the language
that you learn)

- a) very difficult
- b) difficult
- c) neither difficult nor easy
- d) easy
- e) very easy

If you learn another language, write a similar sentence about this language:

..... is

Please read all the following sentences and then put a tick in the column that best expresses your opinions:	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't know	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. I learn languages easily.					
2. The most important thing is to learn words.					
3. It is important to practise the foreign language a lot.					
4. I am afraid of speaking to foreigners.					
5. The most important thing is to learn grammar.					
6. The most important thing is to translate sentences from Czech.					
7. The tasks in the Portfolio can be learned step by step.					
8. I can do some Portfolio tasks very well.					
9. It is easy to find in the Portfolio what I can and I can't do.					

Thank you for your work in the European project and for the care you took in filling in the questionnaires.

APPENDIX 10: Teachers' evaluation of the textbooks in comparison to the textbook coverage of the descriptor activities

<i>Q2 – The textbook in use is</i>	<i>Q3 – The textbook follows the descriptor activities</i>			
	Completely	Mostly	Partly	Slightly
Excellent	Cambridge English for Schools Wer? Wie? Was?	Chatterbox Hotline Criss Cross Sprechen Sie Deutsch? Themen		
Good		Tip Top Chatterbox (<i>f</i> = 2) Project English (<i>f</i> = 2) Project (<i>f</i> = 2) Discoveries Flying Start (<i>f</i> = 2) Angličtina pro ZŠ Němčina pro 4.-9. roč. ZŠ (<i>f</i> = 2) Heute haben wir Deutsch Ping Pong Sowieso	Project English (<i>f</i> = 2) Go! Heute haben wir Deutsch Das Deutschemobil	
Average		Project English Project	Chatterbox Das Deutschemobil (<i>f</i> = 2) Tip Top	
Below average				Tip Top

APPENDIX 11: Teacher trainers' evaluation of the textbooks in comparison to the textbook coverage of the descriptor activities

<i>Q2 – The textbook in use is</i>	<i>Q3 – The textbook follows the descriptor activities</i>			
	Completely	Mostly	Partly	Slightly
Excellent	Project English Project Flying Start Open Doors	Chatterbox Project (<i>f</i> = 3) Cambridge English for Schools Go! Wer? Wie? Was?		
Good		Project English (<i>f</i> = 4) Project (<i>f</i> = 3) Cambridge English for Schools (<i>f</i> = 2) Open Doors Ping Pong (<i>f</i> = 2) Start mit Max Heute haben wir Deutsch (<i>f</i> = 3) Sowieso Wer? Wie? Was? Němčina pro jazykové školy Bravo	Angličtina pro ZŠ	
Average		Project English Heute haben wir Deutsch	Wer? Wie? Was? Heute haben wir Deutsch	
Below average				

APPENDIX 12: Teacher trainers' identification of the descriptors that were not contained in the textbooks

<i>Communicative activities + no. of the descriptors in the ELP</i>	<i>The descriptors of communicative activities lacking in the textbooks</i>	<i>f</i>
	Level A1 (total of the descriptors = 23)	
	<i>Total of the respondents = 21</i>	
Listening 5		0
Reading 4	I can recognize familiar names, words and phrases in very short, simple texts.	2
	I can find basic information such as where a film is on and when it starts.	6
Spoken Interaction 7	I can ask somebody how they are and answer similar questions.	2
	I can ask for something and respond to somebody's requests.	1
	I can ask for things in a shop making gestures to help me.	1
	I can ask questions about where people live, whom they know and what things they have and answer such questions. (a note was made by both respondents – unclear formulation)	2
Spoken Production 3	I can describe where I live.	1
Writing 4	I can fill in a form (my name, address, age).	6
	I can write a short greeting, for example in a birthday card.	6
	Everything is there to a certain extent	2
	Everything is included	4
	<i>Total 9 (39.13%)</i>	27
	Level A2 (total of the descriptors = 36)	
	<i>Total of the respondents = 18</i>	
Listening 4	I can recognize what people are talking about when they speak slowly and carefully.	2
	I can understand the important information in short recordings about everyday matters.	2
	I can follow simple directions.	1

Reading 6	I can understand short, simple personal letters.	4
	I can understand common signs (for example in streets and railway stations).	6
	I can find simple information on menus and in information leaflets.	1
	I can understand simple instructions, such as on how to use a public telephone.	14
Spoken Interaction 15	I can address people in a polite way.	2
	I can make and accept apologies.	2
	I can say what I want and ask about the price in places like shops and post offices. (the expression “post offices” was underlined by both respondents)	2
	I can ask for basic information about public transport and buy tickets.	6
	I can ask people questions about what they do at work or at school and in their free time, and answer such questions.	2
	I can express how I feel in a simple way.	4
	I can participate in a short conversation on a topic that interests me.	2
	I can express agreement and disagreement with others.	4
	I can ask questions about past activities and answer such questions.	2
	I can describe what I did in the past.	2
Spoken Production 7		
Writing 4	I can write a short personal letter of invitation, thanks or apology. (the expression “apology” was underlined by two respondents)	6
	I can write a short description of an event.	3
	I can link sentences with expressions like “and”, “but” and “because”. (the expression “because” was underlined by all respondents)	4
	Total 20 (55.55%)	71
	Level B1 (total of the descriptors = 36) <i>Total of the respondents = 7</i>	
Listening 6	I can understand the main points of many radio or TV programmes if people speak relatively slowly and clearly.	1
	I can understand simple technical instructions.	4
Reading 7	I can recognize the important points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar subjects.	1

Spoken Interaction 9	I can express feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness and interest and I can respond to similar feelings expressed by others.	3
	I can express my opinions and ask for opinions. (a note was made by both respondents – “learners do not learn to ask for opinions of other people”)	2
	I can express my thoughts about literature, music, films and art. (a note was made by two respondents – “only about music and films”)	4
	I can make brief comments on the views of others.	4
	I can discuss a problem.	1
Spoken Production 7	I can describe dreams, hopes and ambitions.	2
	I can talk about the plot of a book or film and give my opinions. (a note was made by both respondents – “only about a film”)	2
	I can briefly explain and give reasons for my opinions and plans.	1
	I can prepare a presentation on a familiar topic and explain the main points.	4
Writing 7	I can describe the plot of a book or a film. (a note was made by two respondents – “only of a film”)	4
	I can write personal letters about abstract or cultural topics such as literature, music and films. (a note was made by two respondents – only about pop music and films)	4
Total 14 (38.89%)		37

APPENDIX 13: Distribution of the teacher trainers' opinions on the descriptor activities that were not included in the textbooks

<i>No. of missing descriptors</i>	<i>Level A1</i> No. of respondents (total 21)	<i>Level A2</i> No. of respondents (total 18)	<i>Level B1</i> No. of respondents (total 7)
0	8	1	-
1	5	4	-
2	4	-	-
3	3	5	2
4	-	-	1
5	1	4	2
6	-	-	1
7	-	2	-
8	-	-	-
9	-	2	-
10	-	-	-
11	-	-	1
Total	27	71	37
Range	6	10	9
Low-high	0-5	0-9	3-11

Joensuun yliopisto
Kasvatustieteellisiä julkaisuja
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