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## **Making Students Responsible for Grammar Learning: A Report on a Learner-centered Technique Aimed at Accuracy**

### Abstract

Learner-centered approaches to learning and teaching alongside education for sustainable development (ESD) emphasize the education of engaged and active global citizens (UNESCO, 2017). The development of students' reflective skills and metacognitive strategies is the center of this study that aims at investigating the learner language of a group of adult learners at an upper-intermediate level. It sets out to investigate to what extent learners are able to notice and correct their errors after reflecting on their spoken production. Moreover, it seeks to examine the students' perception of their self-reflection and their attitude towards using speaking tasks for grammar learning. Comparative error analysis showed that the participants were able to amend 34.6% of total errors. These were made mainly in noun phrases (30% of total errors in Task 1 and 31% in Task 3) and verb phrases (40% of total errors in both tasks). Although no general conclusions could be drawn, the results seem to suggest that after critical, evidence-based reflection, the participants were able to notice and correct some errors, namely, in determination and the use of the past simple. The results of the survey analysis showed that all participants reported on an improved awareness of the gaps in their interlanguage, and all of them considered speaking tasks beneficial to grammar development. The study indicates that carefully planned, repeated speaking tasks might be helpful for learners' language processing, consolidation of their grammatical knowledge and the improvement of their reflection skills and metacognitive strategies.

*Keywords:* grammar, error analysis, repeated speaking tasks, learner autonomy, metacognitive strategies, learner-centered approach

## Learner-centered Approach to Teaching

“At the core of present-day thinking on language teaching lies the idea of learner-centeredness, which is broadly understood [...] as a focus on learners and learning in language and teaching, as opposed to a focus on language and instruction” (Benson, 2012, p. 30). The idea of making students actively involved in the learning process and be responsible for their own learning is not new. It started in the 1970s and 1980s (Nunan, as cited in Benson, 2012, p. 31) and was influenced by the development of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics (Ellis, as cited in Benson 2012, p. 31). Benson (2012) points out that the term learner-centered approach to teaching covers “humanistic education and communicative language teaching” (p. 31). The latter approach with its focus on learners and their communicative competence is considered a norm in the field of language teaching (Straková, 2013). Educators are well aware of the fact that learners with different learning styles, educational needs, beliefs about and attitudes towards learning grasp concepts most effectively if they are actively engaged in a learning process. Thus, teachers try to combine different methods to create favorable conditions for learning and teaching. Taking into consideration individual learning styles and also a local and broad socio-cultural context, they make an effort to select the most optimal method of teaching, usually by applying an eclectic approach. In addition to that, they make an effort to help learners develop their autonomy, which will help them function independently in real-life situations. The task is by no means easy and requires a teacher’s mastery, knowledge, experience and continuous professional development, but it is definitely worth the effort.

The significance of autonomous learners who actively participate in the learning process is also emphasized and broadly discussed by UNESCO (2017) within its agenda for sustainable education supporting and promoting learner-centered approaches that “require learners to reflect on their knowledge and learning processes to manage and monitor them” (p. 55). Alongside modern pedagogy, education for sustainable development highlights the development of knowledge and competencies that would enhance learners’ development as responsible individuals, able to make informed choices and decisions in favor of sustainable progress (UNESCO, 2017).

Teachers can encourage learners’ autonomy and the development of transferable skills also in the context of English language learning and teaching. One way of doing it is to promote the development of learners’ strategies, that is, “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). Influenced by the development in cognitive psychology, self-regulated theory and autonomy concept (Oxford, 2011,

pp. 168–169), strategy theory and research started to influence the pedagogy of language teaching in the 1990s (pp. 168–169) and they have been continuing ever since then. Although strategy theory and research are still in progress and widely debated by experts (Griffiths & Oxford, 2013), their impact on language pedagogy seems undeniable. Teachers worldwide appear to be encouraged to enhance students' strategy development (Oxford, 2017) for the achievement of learners' goals and success in language learning.

Among other strategies, metacognitive strategies play a significant role in the learner-centered method. They help learners arrange and plan their learning as well as evaluate it (Oxford, 2017; Straková, 2013). These strategies can be developed by creating opportunities and tasks to practice them. They are part of higher-order thinking skills (Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT, n.d.) that are necessary for building up critical thinking competency and for promoting learner autonomy. This paper reports on a technique promoting the development of students' metacognitive strategies in a grammar course.

It has always been the author's passion to promote deep learning, learners' self-regulation and autonomy in her teaching practice. A grammar course created an opportunity for the enhancement of self-monitoring and self-correction within the context of grammar learning and teaching. The development of these strategies as well as students' self-reflection was encouraged in the task focused on language use because such a task enabled learners to apply learnt grammar rules and concepts in a situation simulating a real-life scenario.

## **A Grammar Teaching Technique**

The role of grammar instruction in English language teaching has been extensively discussed for decades (Thornbury, 2005; Brown, 2007). Currently, researchers and teachers are aware of the significance of explicit and implicit instruction (Thornbury, 2005; Fotos & Ellis, as cited in Brown, 2007; Ellis, 2009; Oxford, 2017). Practitioners tend to select and combine various methods lying on the continuum between the explicit and implicit focus on form, taking into consideration learners' styles and broader situational and cultural contexts (Thornbury, 2005; Ellis, 2006; Oxford, 2017). Based on current research (Thornbury, 2019; Ellis, 2006) and the author's personal experience in teaching grammar to adults, the combination of explicit and implicit instruction seems to be an effective way of developing students' grammar.

An intensive grammar course with prevailing explicit instruction (both deductive and inductive) and controlled or semi-controlled practice was enriched with short communicative tasks. These were performed in class and outside it and thus provided the learners with more opportunities for productive language practice. Communicative speaking tasks enabled them to use language in a new

situation. Moreover, they created space for promoting the development of the students' metacognitive strategies.

Short speaking tasks were designed to induce the linguistic forms attended to in class, and they were done during the lessons. However, one major speaking activity, a repeated task, was performed outside class. It was selected because of being cognitively less demanding and enabling learners to focus more on the structures used (Bygate, 1998; Thornbury, 2005; Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2012). The students did not need to go over the formulation process again (Levelt, 1995). The students' output served as input since they reflected on their production and noticed appropriate and inappropriate use of grammatical forms. This conscious attention to the input activating the students' explicit knowledge of grammar made them compare their performance with their interlanguage (Truman, 2008). The cognitive comparison helped them notice the gaps in their performance, and they were encouraged to make necessary modifications to it. Needless to say, learners can notice only those mistakes that are "within their ability" (Truman, 2008, p. 265); and their ability to self-correct is determined by their knowledge and ability to self-monitor and self-regulate their learning (Truman, 2008).

During the repeated speaking task, self-monitoring and self-reflection were encouraged. Reflection enabled the learners to think about their previous experiences and search for insights about themselves, "their behaviours, values or knowledge gained" (Desjarlais & Smith, n.d., p. 3). It also helped them become more aware of their interlanguage and the gaps in it.

To account for the mistakes beyond the learner's knowledge (Truman, 2008), individualized feedback was provided to the students by their instructor. The analysis of the students' language made it possible for the instructor to identify students' errors and focus on the most problematic areas more effectively. It also enabled the instructor to suggest treatment tailored to a particular student's needs. Being inspired to incorporate this kind of task into grammar lessons by the Cambridge Assessment English webinar (Cambridge English, 2018), I was interested in investigating to what extent the students are able to correct and self-assess their oral production in terms of accuracy. Moreover, I sought to examine the students' perception of self-reflection and their opinion on using speaking tasks for grammar development.

## **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to find out to what extent the students were able to self-correct their oral production in terms of accuracy. It also examined the learners' perception of self-reflection and their opinion on using speaking tasks for grammar development.

Based on the primary and secondary aim, the following research questions were formulated:

- Question 1: To what extent are students able to self-correct errors in their oral production?
- Question 2: What is the students' perception of self-reflection and self-correction?
- Question 3: What is the students' attitude towards speaking tasks used for grammar development?

## **Methodology**

To answer the research questions, qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. A method of error analysis (Ellis & Burkhuizen, 2005) was used to address the primary research question. It was employed to identify and categorize the students' errors in a repeated speaking task.

The repeated speaking task consisted of three parts. Part 1 (Task 1) was a short student's talk that was recorded and submitted following the instructions specified in the procedure section. The second part (Task 2) was a short reflection task in which the students were asked to listen to their talks, evaluate them in terms of accuracy as well as other aspect of speaking skills they themselves considered important and to set personal goals for the improvement of their talks. The students' reflective tasks were also recorded and submitted. The last part (Task 3) was a recording of an improved talk. Task 3 differed from Task 1 in that it included the students' improvements of their talks.

The identified and categorized errors in Task 1 and Task 3 were quantified and compared. The comparative analysis was used to determine the percentage of the errors the students were able to notice and self-correct.

Following the procedure proposed by Corder (1975) and elaborated by Ellis and Burkhuizen (2005), several steps were taken to analyze learner language. First, the recorded talks Task 1 (the first narrative) and Task 3 (an improved narrative) were transcribed. An AS-unit (Analysis of Speech Unit) proposed by Foster et al. (2000) was used as a basic unit for analyzing students' output. Foster et al. (2000, p. 365) define an AS-unit "as a single speaker's utterance consisting of an independent clause or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with either." Then students' errors were identified and reconstructed, and a record of them was kept. In the third stage, they were categorized based on linguistic and surface structure taxonomy proposed by Ellis and Burkhuizen (2005). The linguistic description of errors was based on grammatical categories elaborated by Quirk et al. (1985). The surface structure taxonomy comprised the following categories: omission, selection, addition, and misordering (Corder, 1975). It is based on the four kinds of errors that learners

tend to make when producing target forms (Ellis & Burkhuizen, 2005). They may add an unnecessary form, omit a certain element, select an inappropriate form or put words into incorrect order (Ellis & Burkhuizen, 2005).

Although it is beyond the scope of grammar, the category of a mispronounced word was also used to identify pronunciation inaccuracies. These were included in the analysis due to their significance for comprehensibility of the students' short talks and due to the fact that students themselves regarded them to be of great importance.

Table 1 shows a sample account of an error identified in the excerpt from the narrative produced by S8:

- 2 |Since there are not direct flights from Slovakia :: we had to fly from Vienna to Amsterdam and from there to St. Petersburg. |  
 3 |On the way back to Amsterdam after spending 11 days there :: beautiful city by the way, :: there was a terrible storm|

Table 1

*A Sample Record of an Error*

Error	Reconstruction	Surface structure description	Linguistic description
...beautiful city...	...a beautiful city ...	omission	noun phrase: determiners, the indefinite article – a

To measure the length of learners' narratives, the number of words and AS-units was calculated using MS word functions and a manual calculation. The results and findings of the qualitative and quantitative error analysis are presented, interpreted and discussed in the respective sections of this paper.

A non-standardized questionnaire was employed to tackle the secondary research questions. To examine the students' perception of speaking tasks used for consolidating their grammar, an anonymous end-of-the term survey was conducted at the last lesson. The survey consisted of 14 questions, the first five of which aimed at the general evaluation of the course and the remaining nine focused on the assessment of the technique employed at grammar lessons, namely, the use of a repeated speaking task promoting self-reflection and self-monitoring (see Appendix 1). Questions 6 and 7 paid attention to the usefulness of the speaking tasks for improving grammar. Questions 8–11 investigated students' perception of reflection, and questions 12–14 concentrated on students' opinions on using productive skills for developing their grammar. All nine questions in the second part of the survey were closed ones. Questions 7, 11, 12, and 14 required respondents to choose from Likert-scale items while questions 8, 9, 10, and 13 were yes/no questions. Question 6 was a yes/no question requiring a short explanation. The results of the quantitative analysis

of the survey are presented in graphs and discussed in the section below. For the purpose of this study, only the selected items were analyzed.

## **Participants**

The participants of the study were first-year undergraduates undertaking an English language teacher-training program. The study group was multinational with Slovak and Ukrainian students and one Polish participant. Nineteen students in the group had different linguistic backgrounds and various language levels (ranging from a lower to higher upper-intermediate level).

The talks of two students were excluded from the analysis because one student's repeated task was completely different, and the other learner was a student with special educational needs. Seventeen samples of learner language were analyzed. However, 18 learners submitted the questionnaire.

## **Procedure**

The study was carried out at a higher education institution during one term. As a compulsory part of their study program, the students took a grammar course. They had a ninety-minute class once a week. During 13 weeks, they received explicit instruction that was combined with short speaking tasks. The practice of target language structures proceeded from traditional, controlled exercises to free productive tasks. Doing the tasks, the students had the opportunity to test their hypotheses about language structures (Ellis, 2004). Mini speaking tasks were performed in class, except for one task that was done outside of class. The tasks in class were monitored and corrective feedback was provided to the students depending on the teacher's capacity. The repeated speaking task performed at home was an extensive task consisting of several stages. It was done outside of class to engage the students in the process of reflection and self-evaluation without the instructor's intervention. At the very beginning of the course, the students and the teacher agreed on the components of a speaking performance that they considered crucial for successful communication. Among them, the following components were identified: accuracy (grammar and vocabulary), pronunciation, and organization.

The repeated speaking task was administered in Moodle, an educational platform widely used at a given institution. The task itself consisted of three parts. Firstly, the students were asked to tell an anecdote that was either invented or true. They could choose from a list of topics or they could come up with their own story. The speaking task targeted the usage of past tenses. The instructions included a simple story plan to be elaborated on by the learners.

The first stage was set in the third week of the course and the learners had a week to submit the story. They were instructed to plan a short talk (maximum two minutes), record it using their mobile phones and upload it to Moodle. During the planning stage, they could make notes but they were asked not to write down the whole sentences. Nonetheless, it was beyond the researcher's control how they fulfilled the task.

After a two-week break, they moved through stages 2 and 3. In the second stage, they were asked to listen to their story, reflect on it and make notes about how it went. They were supposed to focus mainly on the accuracy in their output as well as on any other components of the speaking production they chose to focus on. After that, they were asked to set their personal goals for improvement. Their reflection was also recorded and uploaded to Moodle. In the final stage of the task, the learners were instructed to record their improved talks paying attention to accuracy and the selected component of the speaking production. The second and third stages were completed in the course of two weeks.

The submitted assignments were listened to, and the students were provided with explicit feedback on inaccuracies that occurred in their improved talk as well as on the completion of their personal goals. In addition to that, the analysis of students' language performance in terms of errors was carried out. The analysis with individualized feedback served pedagogical purposes and was meant to help students raise awareness of their interlanguage. Self-reflection helped learners critically evaluate their short speeches based on evidence (provided by audio recordings) and gave them opportunities to get to know their strengths and weaknesses in speaking English. It also made them responsible for their learning and empowered them to set their own personal goals for improving their speaking performance.

The samples of learner language were produced by upper-intermediate learners of English not sharing the same first language. They had the form of an oral planned narrative. The two samples are referred to as Task 1 and Task 3 in this paper. Task 1 was performed first and Task 3, an improved talk, was performed after the students' reflection (Task 2).

## **Results of the Error Analysis**

The following part of the paper describes the results of the error analysis. It begins with looking at the measures of length, and it goes on to present the analysis results based on the surface structure and linguistic description.

As Table 2 shows, the length of the students' talks varied. The two narratives produced by two different speakers (S15 and S8) contained 24 AS-units. The shortest narrative comprised 5 AS-units, and it was produced by one speaker (S16). On average, the learners' spoken turns consisted of 14 AS-units



and 221 words in Task 1. While in Task 3, they were more concise (on average 13 AS-units and 213 words). In the first task, 44% of total AS-units were erroneous, while in the repeated task 40% contained errors. It seems that the learners' conscious effort to attend to inaccuracies in their talks and to think about their own speaking performance relying on the clear evidence of their speech (in the reflection task) as well as reduced pressure of a repeated task helped them improve their accuracy only to a small extent.

Table 2

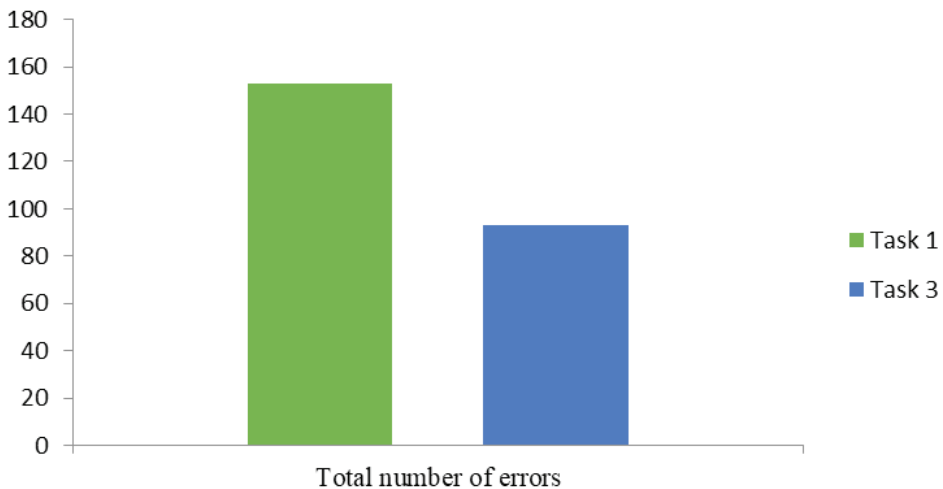
*Task 1 and Task 3 – Number of AS-Units*

ID	Words T 1	AS-units T 1	AS-units with errors T 1	Words T 3	AS-units T 3	AS-units with errors T3
Total	3217	221	98	3156	213	86
Average	201	14	6	197	13	5

The total number of errors identified and reconstructed in Task 1 and 3 is displayed in Figure 1. As can be seen from it, the number of identified errors has fallen by almost 40%. The reduction might have been caused by a combination of factors. Doing the repeated task, the students slightly reformulated their narratives and made them shorter. Moreover, they were able to notice and to correct some of their inaccuracies.

Figure 1.

*Total Number of Errors*

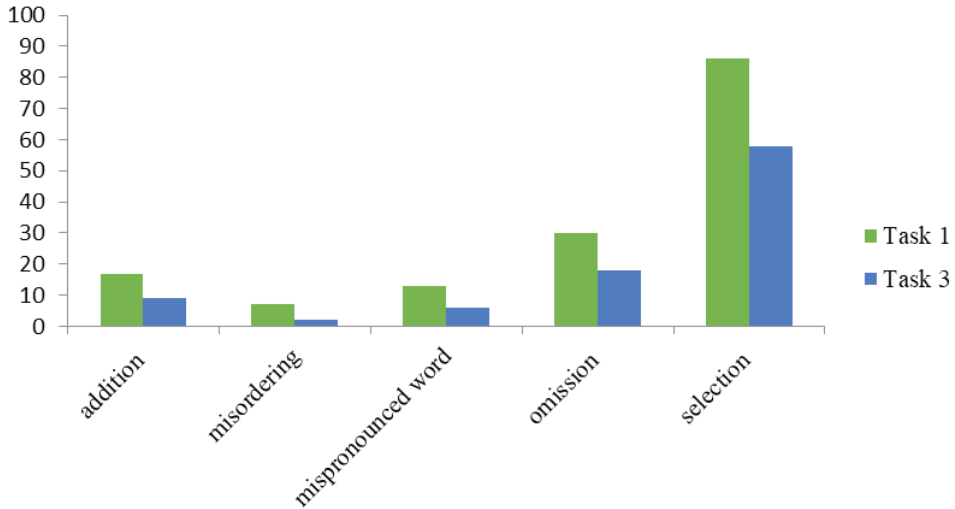


As far as error categories are concerned, as given above, errors were analyzed according to the surface structure and linguistic description. During the process of coding, a wider context of errors was taken into consideration, which

helped the researcher reconstruct utterances. An account of errors identified according to the surface structure and their breakdown is shown in Figure 2 which compares Task 1 and Task 3.

Figure 2.

*Surface Structure Description of Errors*



It can be seen from the data in the graph that students most frequently modified a target form by selecting an inappropriate structure. This type of error accounts for 56.2% of total errors in Task 1 and 62.4% of total errors in Task 3. On the other hand, they seemed to have the least difficulty with appropriate word order. Such a classification of errors is superficial and does not reveal much about the nature of errors (Corder, 1975); however, a more detailed linguistic description of errors revealed the problematic areas discussed in the section below.

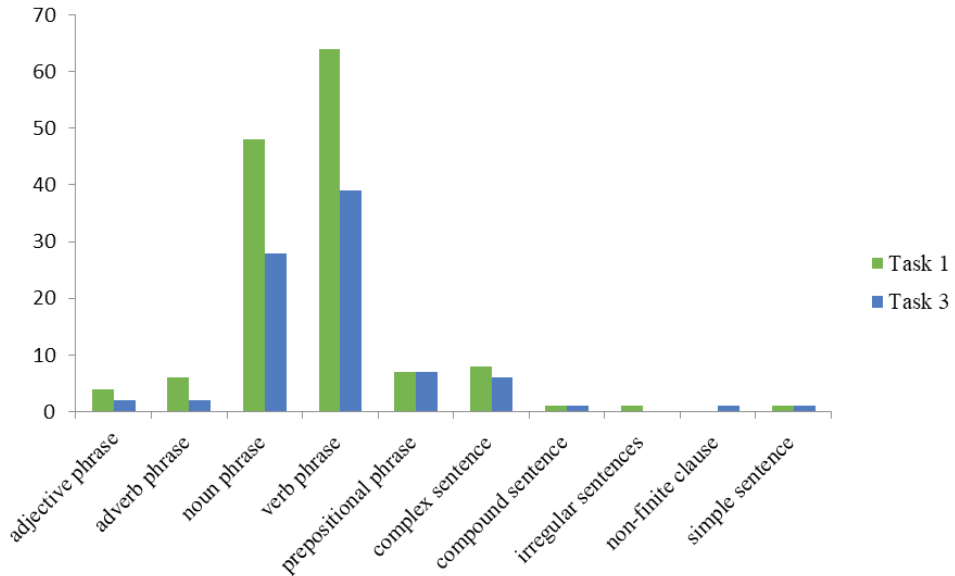
Within the context of the narrative, the following broad categories of errors were identified: an adjective phrase, an adverb phrase, a noun phrase, a verb phrase, a prepositional phrase; a simple, complex, compound sentence; a non-finite clause and irregular sentences. These categories were further broken down according to grammatical categories that learners failed to produce appropriately. Due to the complexity of errors made, certain broader categories will be dealt with separately and more detailed attention will be paid to the most frequent errors.

Figure 3 compares the frequency of errors in Task 1 and Task 3 according to the linguistic description. It can be seen from the graph below that erroneous noun phrases and verb phrases were the most frequent in both tasks. Inaccurate verb phrases accounted for over 40% of total errors in Task 1 and 3 and inaccurate noun phrases accounted for over 30% of total errors in Task 1 and 31% in Task 3. Another area that seemed problematic for the students was

related to complex sentences and wrongly used prepositions. Given the nature of the speaking task, it seems natural that students made errors in noun and verb phrases bearing the main meaning of utterances.

Figure 3.

*Breakdown of Errors According to Linguistic Description*



If we now turn to errors in noun phrases, we can see from Table 3 that students made the most errors in determination in both Tasks.

Table 3

*Linguistic Description of Errors – Noun Phrases*

Linguistic description of errors – noun phrase	Task 1	Task 3
Noun phrase: determiner (which)	1	
Noun phrase: determiners, the definite article – the	17	8
Noun phrase: determiners, the indefinite article – a	12	8
Noun phrase: determiners, the indefinite article – an		1
Noun phrase: determiners, the zero article	7	4
Noun phrase: determiner (possessive)		1
Noun phrase: head (noun)	5	3
Noun phrase: head (pronoun)	3	2
Noun phrase: modifier (adjective)	2	1
Noun phrase: postmodifier	1	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>28</b>

A more detailed account of errors (Table 3A) revealed that the participants either omitted articles (the definite or the indefinite one), or they selected an inappropriate one. In four cases, they added the definite or indefinite article in a noun phrase where the zero one should have been used. The comparison of Task 1 and Task 3 indicates that the number of errors in Task 3 decreased. The account of corrected errors showed that the learners were able to identify and to correct some wrong usage of articles.

Table 3A

*Errors in Noun Phrases – A Detailed Account*

Linguistic description of errors – noun phrase	Task 1	Task 3
<b>Noun phrase: determiner (which)</b>	<b>1</b>	
selection	1	
<b>Noun phrase: determiners, the definite article – the</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>
omission	15	7
selection	2	1
<b>Noun phrase: determiners, the indefinite article – a</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>
omission	11	7
selection	1	1
<b>Noun phrase: determiners, the indefinite article – an</b>		<b>1</b>
selection		1
<b>Noun phrase: determiners, the zero article</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
addition	4	1
omission		1
selection	3	2

Concerning verb phrases, the types of errors are shown in Table 4. Among the most common errors were errors in tense usage, more precisely in the past simple. There were some incorrect past perfect forms too, but these were much less frequent. The second area that appeared to be problematic was the use of inappropriate verbs to express a particular idea. This means that the learners used an appropriate verb form of an inappropriate verb, or they failed to express their idea fully by omitting the object of a transitive verb. Among other errors were faulty uses of infinitives, non-finite verb phrases, modal verbs, and phrasal verbs.

Table 4

*Linguistic Description of Errors – Verb Phrases*

Verb phrase	Task 1	Task 3
Verb phrase: tense, future seen from the past	1	
Verb phrase: infinitive	1	1
Verb phrase: non-finite verb form, infinitive	1	
Verb phrase: non-finite verb form, infinitive (transitive verb)	1	2
Verb phrase: non-finite verb form, negative infinitive	1	
Verb phrase: non-finite, infinitive	1	1
Verb phrase: non-finite, the -ing participle	1	
Verb phrase: non-finite, compound, the past participle	1	1
Verb phrase: past simple, modal verb (ability)	1	2
Verb phrase: past simple, modal verb (duty)	1	
Verb phrase: past simple, regular verb	4	2
Verb phrase: phrasal verb	2	
Verb phrase: tense, past perfect, irregular verb	1	
Verb phrase: tense, past perfect, regular verb	1	1
Verb phrase: tense, past simple, irregular verb	15	14
Verb phrase: tense, past simple, modal verb	1	
Verb phrase: tense, past simple, regular verb	16	7
Verb phrase: tense, present simple	2	1
Verb phrase: transitive verb	3	3
Verb phrase: irregular verb	9	4
Total	64	39

The last category to be dealt with in this paper is errors that learners made when producing complex sentences. The errors are summarized in Table 5. The data below show that errors related to indirect questions and speech were the most frequent ones. These were followed by adverbial if-clauses (conditional clauses) as well as clauses of purpose and wh-clauses.

Table 5

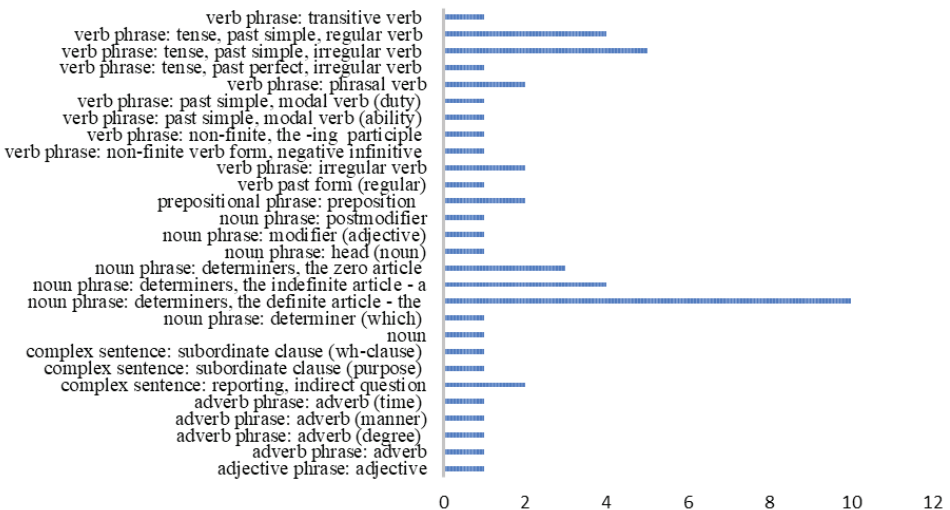
*Linguistic Description – Errors in Complex Sentences*

Linguistic description	Task 1	Task 3
Complex sentence: adverbial if-clauses, present tense	1	1
Complex sentence: pseudo-cleft sentence	1	
Complex sentence: reporting, indirect question	4	2
Complex sentence: reporting, indirect speech, backshifting		1
Complex sentence: subordinate clause (purpose)	1	1
Complex sentence: subordinate clause (wh-clause)	1	
Complex sentence: subordinator (condition)		1

Comparing Task 1 and Task 3, data seem to suggest that the students were able to notice and amend some of their own errors. Table 6 shows the account of the errors corrected in the repeated task. In total, the participants self-corrected 53 faulty forms (34.6 % of total errors in Task 1). They seemed to be well aware of the determination of noun phrases as their self-corrected use of articles accounted for 34% of total corrected errors. They were also able to modify some faulty verb phrases. More precisely, they noticed and modified inappropriately used tenses, namely, the past simple tense. Total corrected verb phrases accounted for 20.8% of total corrected errors.

Table 6

*Overview of Corrected Errors in Task 3 According to Linguistic Description*

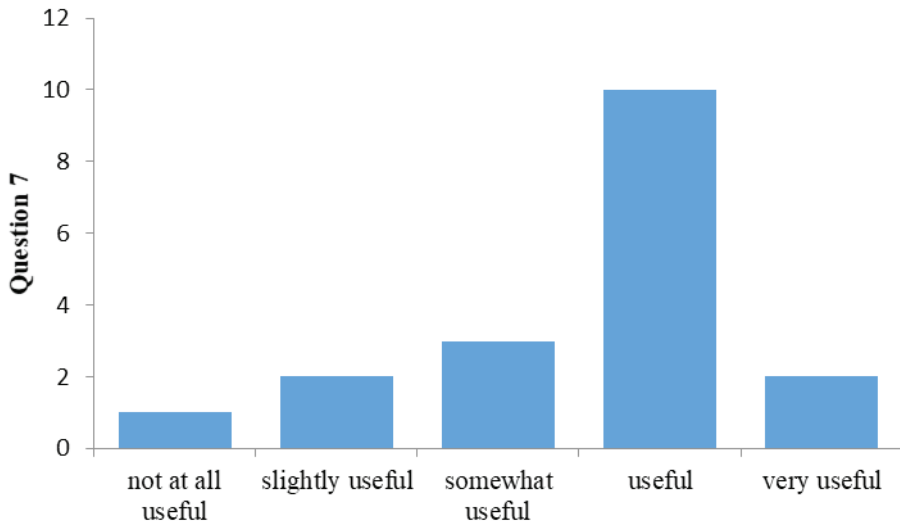


## Results of the Quantitative Analysis of Students' Perception of Speaking

The results of the survey analysis showed that only 83% of the participants considered the speaking tasks helpful for improving their grammar. Three participants did not think that the tasks could be beneficial to their grammar. As Figure 4 illustrates, over half of the learners considered the speaking tasks to be either useful (56%) or very useful (11%). One participant thought they were not useful at all, and two participants considered them to be only slightly useful. Seventeen percent of the learners took a neutral stance.

Figure 4.

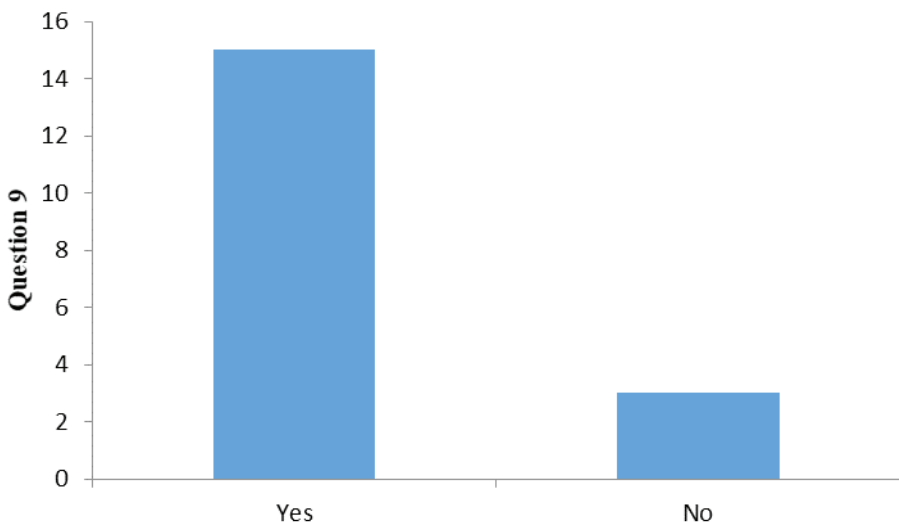
*Question 7 To what extent do you think the speaking tasks were useful?*



In terms of students' opinions on self-reflection, Figure 5 displays that the majority of them (83%) thought self-reflection helped them become more aware of the language structures they used. Seventeen percent did not consider it to be the case.

Figure 5.

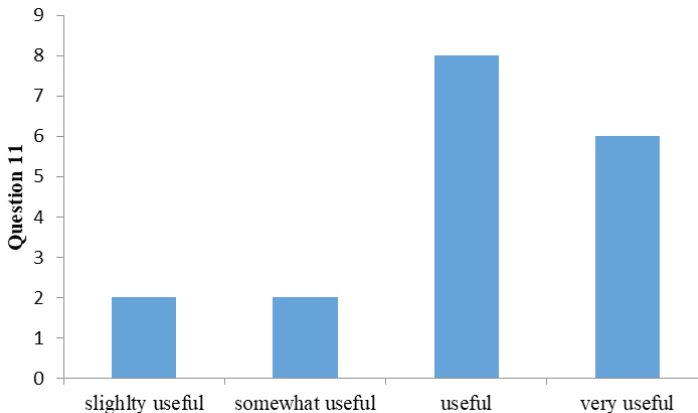
*Question 9 Did the reflection on your speaking performance help you become more aware of the grammar structures you use?*



Nevertheless, all the participants thought that self-reflection made them more aware of the grammar mistakes they make. As Figure 6 displays, the majority of them (77%) considered the reflection to be either useful (44%) or very useful (33%). Eleven percent of the participants believed that it was only slightly useful, and 11% took a neutral stance.

Figure 6.

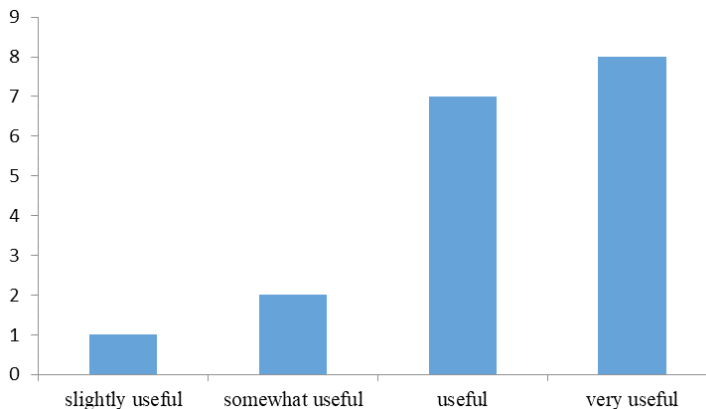
*Question 9 To what extent do you think the reflection task was useful?*



As for the students' opinion on using productive skills for developing grammar, all the learners believed that they were beneficial. As can be seen from Figure 7, 83% regarded them to be useful or very useful. Eleven percent of the learners thought they were somewhat useful, and one participant considered them slightly useful.

Figure 7.

*Question 14 To what extent are speaking and writing tasks useful in developing your grammar?*





## Discussion

As Ellis and Burkhuizen (2005) highlight, samples of learner language are influenced by many factors, namely, the learner, language, and production. Being aware of the multinational character of the group of learners whose samples of language were collected and analyzed, no general conclusions could be drawn. The error analysis served mainly pedagogic purposes and aimed at the identification of structures mastered by the students.

The study was designed to determine to what extent the students were able to self-correct their oral production in terms of accuracy. It also investigated the learners' perception of self-correction and their opinion on the use of speaking tasks for grammar development.

Although the overall results and findings were not encouraging, the study showed that the learners were able to amend 34.6% of the total errors they made in Task 1. Within their ability (Truman, 2008), they were able to activate the explicit knowledge of some grammar rules and to deal with problems with determination and narrative tenses. Nonetheless, more practice and language use are required before their explicit knowledge becomes fully automatized.

In addition to that, the participants were provided with the opportunity to reflect on the accuracy of their speaking performance and assess it. The reflection task played a crucial role in the whole process as it helped the students gain insights into their speaking skills. Furthermore, it enabled them to think about the content as well as the structure and form of their talk relying on the evidence provided by audio recordings. This experience in self-monitoring and self-correction facilitated the development of the students' metacognitive strategies. The students' selection of a speech component they wanted to improve affected their engagement, created a sense of ownership of their learning process and made them responsible for their goal setting. Such active involvement of the students in the learning process, activation of their higher-order thinking skills and the shift of responsibility created a unique opportunity for the promotion of the students' autonomy. Autonomous, self-directed and critically thinking learners might apply their skills not only to their grammar and language competence development but also to other areas of their lives. It is believed that more training and experience in developing learner autonomy might enhance the education of actively engaged and responsible citizens of our global world.

With respect to the questions related to the students' perception of reflection and self-correction and their attitude towards speaking tasks used for grammar development, the results seem to be ambiguous. Although all of the participants seem to believe that productive tasks are beneficial to the improvement of their grammar, one of them does not consider speaking tasks to be useful at all. Further research might shed more light and bring more clarity to this issue. More discussions with students and more experience in self-monitoring and self-

evaluating might also help students gain more confidence in these strategies. In addition, improved grammar knowledge could develop the students' ability to track their mistakes and to deal with them. One of the most encouraging results was that all the participants reported on the improved awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in English language production. This is a crucial step on the journey of improvement. Although it is just a small step, regular engagement in a reflective cycle might lead to improved achievement as well as the development of critical thinking that can be applied to other contexts. However, regular practice in a reflection and self-evaluation process is necessary (Straková & Cimermanová, 2018, p. 4).

The results of the analysis also seem to indicate that some students need more practice before mastering narrative tenses. There is also a need for further practice regarding the use of articles in English. And last but not least, more attention should be paid to more complex language structures. Different causes of errors, whether they are developmental processes or L1 interference or other ones (Ellis & Burkhuizen, 2005), and their various levels of significance made the author more confident in the inclusion of productive speaking tasks in grammar lessons. The analysis has also given the author some insight into the learner language of Slovak and Ukrainian students.

Speaking tasks intended to help learners notice the gaps in their interlanguage and to promote learner autonomy were also meant to develop their English grammar competence. It appears that the tasks together with provided feedback and students' own reflection might have an effect on the learners' grammar. The number of corrected errors seems to suggest that not all learners were able to recognize and correct their errors. The more form-focused instruction and practice is required. Nevertheless, speaking tasks including self-reflection will be used by the researcher to provide more opportunities for students' output and more experience in reflective practice.

## **Limitations**

The major limitation of the study was the size and the multilingual character of the group, which did not allow for drawing general conclusions. The students came from various linguistic backgrounds and did not share the same L1. This affected their performance because, as current research (Thornbury, 2019; Ortega, 2015) argues, mother tongue affects learners' second language acquisition, and some mistakes tend to be typical for speakers of specific languages. Another weakness of the study is that it was conducted in a mixed-ability class, which might have affected the results of the error analysis. Furthermore, the study should have paid more attention to the causes of errors and their evaluation. Finally, the employment of other methods aimed at investigating

students' attitudes towards speaking tasks and their perception of reflection for grammar development could reveal students' deeper beliefs and reasons for their responses.

## Conclusion

In summary, these findings seem to indicate that learners are able to recognize and correct some of the errors they make. More precisely, they are able to deal with the errors within the scope of their explicit knowledge. A student's retrieval of a particular grammar rule and its application to a new situation consolidates his or her knowledge and enhances its automatization. In the study, the learners were able to correct the errors related to determination, which operates differently in the students' L1 languages and the ones in the past simple tense. The results of the study cannot be generalized, however. They appear to show that repeated speaking tasks with reflection and feedback combined with explicit grammar instruction facilitate learners' awareness of their language as well as appropriate structural forms. Moreover, it is the teacher's belief that such practices could be beneficial for individual language processing and consolidation of the learners' grammatical knowledge as well as reflective skills and metacognitive strategies. Furthermore, the students' examination of recorded speech provided a perfect opportunity for gaining insight into their own interlanguage. It also enabled them to get to know themselves as foreign language speakers. Their engagement in setting goals for improvement made them active participants in the learning process, and the experience they gained strengthened their ability for self-reflection, which is a significant component of key competencies necessary for life. It is believed that with appropriate training, students will be able to transfer the required skills and strategies to other areas of their lives, which might help them become engaged and active global citizens. Thus, reflective tasks will be implemented in grammar teaching practice by the researcher. Further research could cast more light on the area of learner accuracy development and the role of reflection in it, but it is beyond the scope of this paper.

## Appendix 1

**End-of-Term Questionnaire Practical Grammar Date:**

Dear Student,

I would like to thank you for your participation in our seminars. Thank you for all your input and your presence. I am interested in your opinion about this course as well as your attitude towards the speaking tasks. Please answer the questions below, so that I can assess this course. This is an anonymous survey. Your feedback is highly appreciated.

**1. Do you think this course helped you improve your grammar?**

Yes. Explain why.

No. Explain why not.

**2. What do you do to improve your grammar? Write your answers below:****3. Do you think grammar exercises can help you improve your grammar (accuracy)?**

Yes. Explain why.

No. Explain why not.

**4. What approach to grammar presentation do you prefer? Indicate your preference below:**

1. Inductive approach (students discover (induce) the grammar rules themselves, based on the examples of new language);

2. Deductive approach (a teacher explains rules, and then we practise new language structures);

3. The combination of both approaches;

4. Other. Specify.

**5. Would you like to suggest any changes for this course? Please write your ideas below:****6. During the course, you were asked to do three speaking tasks. Do you think speaking tasks can help you improve your grammar?**

1. Yes. Explain why.

2. No. Explain why not.

**7. To what extent do you think the speaking tasks were useful?**

1. Not at all useful 2. Slightly useful 3. Somewhat useful 4. Useful 5. Very useful

**8. Was it easy to listen to your spoken performance and evaluate it in terms of grammatical structures?**

1. Yes.

2. No.

**9. Did the reflection on your speaking performance help you become more aware of the grammar structures you use?**

1. Yes.

2. No.

**10. Did the reflection on your speaking performance help you become more aware of the grammar mistakes you tend to make?**

1. Yes.

2. No.

**11. To what extent do you think the reflection task was useful?**

1. Not at all useful 2. Slightly useful 3. Somewhat useful 4. Useful 5. Very useful

**12. To what extent do you think you improved your speaking performance in terms of grammar structures in your repeated task?**

1. Not at all 2. Slightly 3. Moderately 4. Very 5. Extremely

**13. Do you think that speaking and writing tasks are useful in developing your grammar?**

1. Yes.

2. No.

**14. To what extent are they useful?**

1. Not at all useful 2. Slightly useful 3. Somewhat useful 4. Useful 5. Very useful

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## **Lernende für das Grammatiklernen verantwortlich machen: Ein Bericht über eine lernerzentrierte Technik, die auf Fehlerfreiheit abzielt**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Lernerzentrierte Ansätze für das Lernen und Lehren im Rahmen der Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung (BNE) betonen die Rolle der Bildung von engagierten und aktiven Weltbürgern (UNESCO, 2017). Die Entwicklung von Reflexionsfähigkeiten und metakognitiven Strategien bei den Lernenden steht im Mittelpunkt der vorliegenden Studie, deren Ziel ist es, die Lernaltersprache einer Gruppe erwachsener Lernender der oberen Mittelstufe zu analysieren. Dabei soll untersucht werden, inwieweit die Lernenden in der Lage sind, ihre Fehler zu bemerken und zu korrigieren, nachdem sie über ihre Sprachproduktion reflektiert haben. Darüber hinaus wird versucht zu erforschen, wie die Lernenden ihre Selbstreflexion wahrnehmen und welche Einstellung sie zum Einsatz von Sprechaufgaben beim Grammatiklernen haben. Die vergleichende Fehleranalyse ergab, dass die Teilnehmer 34,6 % aller Fehler korrigieren konnten. Diese betrafen hauptsächlich Nominalphrasen (30 % aller Fehler in Aufgabe 1 und 31 % in Aufgabe 3) und Verbalphrasen (40 % aller Fehler in den beiden Aufgaben). Obwohl keine allgemeinen Schlussfolgerungen gezogen werden konnten, scheinen die Ergebnisse darauf hinzudeuten, dass die Studienteilnehmer nach einer kritischen, evidenzbasierten Reflexion imstande waren, einige Fehler zu bemerken und zu korrigieren, insbesondere hinsichtlich der Bestimmung und Verwendung von Simple Past. Die Ergebnisse der

Umfrageanalyse zeigen, dass alle Studienteilnehmer über ein verbessertes Bewusstsein für Mängel in ihrer Interimssprache berichteten sowie dass sie Sprechaufgaben für förderlich in Bezug auf die Grammatikentwicklung hielten. Aus der Studie geht hervor, dass sorgfältig geplante, wiederholte Sprechaufgaben für Sprachproduktion der Lernenden, Konsolidierung ihres grammatikalischen Wissens sowie für Verbesserung ihrer Reflexionsfähigkeiten und metakognitiven Strategien hilfreich sein können.

*Schlüsselwörter:* Grammatik, Fehleranalyse, wiederholte Sprechaufgaben, Lernerautonomie, metakognitive Strategien, lernerzentrierter Ansatz