Sveučilište u Zagrebu

Filozofski fakultet

Odsjek za anglistiku

Katedra za metodiku

GRAMMATICALITY JUDGEMENTS ON THE USE OF *PRESENT PERFECT* IN CROATIAN EFL LEARNERS

Diplomski rad

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Zagreb, rujan 2017.

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Graduation Thesis

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Zagreb, September 2017

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Abstract

When it comes to Croatian EFL learners, the present perfect tense is one of the most problematic parts of the English grammar. There are several reasons for that: the absence of a direct grammatical equivalent to the present perfect in Croatian, various and inconsistent explanations of the present perfect found in grammar books, and the way in which the present perfect is presented and described in textbooks for EFL learners. Bearing in mind all the reasons that make this grammatical category hard to learn, it is worth investigating the way that Croatian EFL learners perceive its correct use. The aim of this paper and the study it presents is therefore to explore strategic construal, i.e. meaning construal in L2, of the present perfect tense in Croatian high school students in order to check whether they are able to go beyond the rules they were explicitly taught and recognize the schema that keeps the category of the present perfect together.

The results obtained in the study draw attention to the issue of teaching grammar as an isolated system of language, reducible to "formulas" that can be learnt by heart and are considered to be sufficient to understand the meaning of grammatical categories. Without an attempt to make students aware that language structures are semantically motivated, language acquisition comes down to nothing more than students mechanically memorizing rules and exceptions to the rules. Thus, learners need to be taught that a language structure can be described by a schematic definition that keeps all members of its category together. In this way, they will be encouraged to make their own inferences about what constitutes a particular category, going beyond the explicitly learned rules.

Key words: *present perfect, cognitive grammar, grammaticality judgements, schema*

1. INTRODUCTION

Within the English verbal system, one grammatical category stands out as a cause of much linguistic debate and discussion. It is the category of the present perfect. "The complexity of this structure, present in both its form and meaning, is reflected in an immense amount of literature which offers almost completely contradictory views and approaches on the issues related to this part of the English verbal system" (Glavaš, 2016, pp. 88-89). The present perfect is often depicted as a grammatical category used to refer to a situation or an event that happened in the past, but is relevant to the present. Most literature dealing with the present perfect connects the concept of *being relevant in the present* to the concept of *result* in its broadest sense – a result of a past action whose consequences are relevant or present at the moment of speaking (Glavaš, 2016). "Current relevance was over time grammaticalized and became a part of the inherent meaning of the perfect" (Davydova, 2011, pp. 64-65).

When it comes to Croatian EFL ("English as a Foreign Language") learners, the present perfect tense is one of the most problematic parts of the English grammar, and the reason for that lies in the fact that they conceptualize past events in such a way that all past events can be in some way relevant to the present moment (Geld & Đurđek, 2009). Furthermore, "according to their understanding of time, whether the time of event is definite or indefinite should not be in any way related to the tense used to describe it" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 363). The way in which Croatian students conceptualize past events – as always in some way relevant to the present – prevents them from realizing the time frame covered by the present perfect. Žic Fuchs (2009, p. 208) emphasizes three other reasons why Croatian learners of English have problems understanding the category of the present perfect: the absence of a direct grammatical equivalent to the present perfect in Croatian, various explanations of the present perfect that can be found in grammar books and that further obscure its meaning and, finally, the way the present perfect is presented and described in textbooks for EFL learners. An additional circumstance that possibly contributes to the fact that this grammatical category is hard to learn is that it is not used in the EFL classroom as often as the past simple. Unless it is the main topic of the lesson, the present perfect tends to be used less in the language input that students are exposed to than the past simple, and therefore they do not have the opportunity to "pick it up" spontaneously (Glavaš, 2016). As a result, their output rarely contains the target structure.

Bearing in mind all the reasons that make the grammatical category of the present perfect hard to learn and understand, it is worth investigating the way that Croatian EFL learners perceive its correct use. The aim of this paper and the study it presents is therefore to explore strategic construal, i.e. meaning construal in a second language (L2), of the present perfect tense in Croatian high school students in order to check whether they are able to go beyond the rules they were explicitly taught and recognize the schema that keeps the category of the present perfect together.

2. THE PRESENT PERFECT – A VERB TENSE OR AN ASPECT?

The issues of tense and aspect in the context of the present perfect actually reflect disagreement about the definitions of these two categories (Glavaš, 2016). In his analysis, Comrie (1976, 1985) suggests that it is particularly important to maintain the precise differentiation of tense and aspect in considering the present perfect. Comrie (1985) sees the terminological problems related to these two verbal categories – which also result from the fact that in some languages one of these categories covers the characteristics of both – as a possible reason for different and contradictory explanations of the present perfect. According to the author, "in many linguistic works, especially traditional grammars, the term tense is misleadingly used to cover both tense and aspect" (1985, pp. 6-7). Comrie (1976, p. 12) also points to the importance of the terminological distinction between *perfective* and *perfect*, stressing that *perfective* relates to a situation looked at from outside in its entirety, while *perfect* implies a past situation with present relevance.

Since English is a language in which aspect is not expressed by means of morphology (as in Croatian), distinguishing between an aspect and a verb tense becomes even more problematic (Glavaš, 2016). Žic Fuchs (2009) also sees different views of the present perfect as an important theoretical issue resulting from disagreement about the exact definitions of the two categories (with traditional grammars defining the present perfect as a tense, and the more recent ones presenting it as an aspect). Therefore, according to various authors, describing the category of the present perfect as either a tense or an aspect depends on the ways these two verbal categories are defined (Glavaš, 2016). Grammar books in which the present perfect is analysed within the context of verb *tenses* (Radden & Dirven, 2007) tend to emphasize the combination of the past and the present time as its defining characteristic, distinguishing it from all other verb tenses. Radden and Dirven (2007) define it as a complex *tense*, which involves a backward-looking stance from a viewpoint at the present moment. However, when speaking about the meaning of the present perfect, they emphasize that it has both temporal and aspectual meaning – the temporal meaning of a situation's anteriority and an aspectual meaning with respect to the inherent structure of the overall situation. On the other hand, Comrie (1976) considers the present perfect an *aspect*, although he admits that it is different from all other aspects, because it does not directly give any information about the situation itself, but rather relates the present state to a preceding situation. "More generally, the perfect indicates the continuing present relevance of a past situation" (Comrie, 1976, p.

52). Comrie (1976) sees *present relevance* as the key characteristic of the present perfect which makes it different from the usual function of aspect as giving information about the internal temporal constituency of the described situation. That is, aspect is related to the time structure of the event itself rather than its "external" temporal location, and the present perfect is more concerned with "expressing a relation between two time-points" (Comrie, 1976, p. 52) than the internal temporal constituency of the situation itself.

In addition to the categories of verb tense and aspect, some authors see the present perfect as a separate grammatical category, since it is "arguably sufficiently uniform in its semantics and morphosyntactic behaviour for it to make sense to see it as a cross-linguistically valid category" (Dahl, 1999, p. 290). In other words, since it can on the one hand be placed in the context of verb tenses, and on the other its meaning is not fully deictic but involves a certain way of viewing a situation that is already located in time, the present perfect can be considered a separate category, between tense and aspect.

Referring to various interpretations of verb tenses, Lock (1996) also emphasizes the difficulty involved in separating aspect from tense in the English language. He provides the following examples (1996, p. 161):

(1) a. They have arrived.
     b. They arrived.

Lock (1996, p. 161) describes the given forms as both referring to complete processes in the past viewed as a whole, but with the following difference: the tense selection in (1a) is a kind of "past in the present" – a process located in the past with an orientation to the present, while the tense selection in (1b) simply locates the process at a time in the past.

To sum up, theoretical discussions about the "nature" of the present perfect do not lead to a definite conclusion about whether it should be considered a verb tense or an aspect. The complexity of theoretical linguistic reflection is then clearly reflected in grammar books (Glavaš, 2016). If ascribed the characteristics of a verb tense, the present perfect should be distinguished from the rest of the verb tenses because of its partly aspectual nature. On the other hand, if we perceive it as an aspect, we should be aware of those semantic properties of the present perfect which go beyond the category of aspect. Glavaš (2016) claims that grammar books, whose main function should be to provide language learners with clear information about grammatical structures, usually choose one of the two categorizations of this complex structure without providing any explanation for their theoretical standpoints.

This results in various difficulties that learners of English as a second or foreign language face in the process of mastering the category of the present perfect and its correct use.

3. PRESENT PERFECT VS. PAST SIMPLE

The difference (or the contrast) between the present perfect and the past simple is usually the base for teaching the present perfect to EFL learners. The past simple is introduced earlier in the process of teaching verb tenses and is therefore almost without exception exploited as an explanatory base on which the understanding of the present perfect is then built.

Since they can be used to refer to the same objective situation, the preterite can be considered "the major functional competitor" of the present perfect (Davydova, 2011, p. 52). According to the author, what all uses of the present perfect have in common is the notion of current relevance. It is the semantic feature of current relevance, inherent in all perfect use types, that makes the perfect distinct from the past simple (Davydova, 2011, p. 52). As Table 1 shows, both structures are used to refer to a past event, which makes them functionally equivalent. However, they are semantically different (Davydova, 2011, p. 63).

Table 1. Semantic features of the present perfect and the past simple (Davydova, 2011, p. 63)

	referring to the past	relevance to the present	orientation to the present	orientation to the past	indefiniteness	definiteness
past simple	+	–	–	+	–	+
present perfect	+	+	+	–	+	–

Although both structures can describe the same situation in the physical world, they impose a different temporal perspective and meaning upon it (Glavaš, 2016). The past simple implies a time period that belongs to the past and ends there, while the present perfect includes a period which starts in the past but lasts until the moment of speaking (and possibly beyond it).

Michaelis also points to the importance of the relationship between the present perfect and the past simple, especially in the context of *the perfect of result* ("the resultative present perfect") (1994, p. 114). "The resultative present perfect is used to focus upon the presently accessible consequences of a past event, rather than upon the past event per se. The latter function is associated with the preterite" (Michaelis, 1994, p. 114). The author (1994, p. 115) provides the following example:

(2) I've met someone else.

This sentence implies the existence of a result, e.g. losing romantic interest in the other person, without the necessity of establishing a specific time period in the past. The time period in question starts with some unspecified moment in the past and lasts until the present moment, which also belongs to the implied time frame.

In her account of the differences between the present perfect and the past simple, Glavaš (2016) concludes the following:

1) due to its four different uses (the perfect of result, the experiential perfect, the perfect of persistent situation, the perfect of recent past (Comrie, 1976)), the present perfect is semantically much more complex than the past simple; the past simple refers to an event or events that happened within a definite time period in the past, without any connection to the moment of speaking

2) the present perfect and the past simple show significant differences in terms of compatibility with temporal adverbs

3) *relevance to the present* is the key distinctive feature distinguishing the present perfect from the past simple

4) the interpretation of both structures depends exclusively on the speaker's subjective perception of the events he/she describes.

3.1. The present perfect as described in English textbooks and learner grammars

When it comes to the main criteria for forming pedagogically acceptable grammar rules, i.e. descriptions of grammatical categories presented to the learner, the following are usually emphasized: simplicity and clarity, accuracy, productivity and simplicity of use, consistency and memorability (Hammerly, 1982). The rules which the learner relies on to understand a particular language structure should be easy to understand, remember and apply. Dirven (1989) warns about students often drawing wrong conclusions because of imprecise grammar rules given in the textbooks. According to Glavaš (2016), authors of pedagogical

grammar books and foreign language textbooks mostly face the problem of reconciling pedagogical requirements on the one hand with the complexity of language and its acquisition on the other. This becomes especially challenging when it comes to complex language structures such as the present perfect, the use of which cannot be formulated in a simple way without resorting to unjustified simplification of its structure and all its relevant components. Larsen-Freeman (2003) therefore claims that even best formulated grammar rules do not reflect the true nature of grammatical structures, which makes their use necessarily restricted; thus, it is important to provide students with convincing explanations and reasons behind every rule. "In presenting a grammar rule, the *why* is just as important as the *how*" (Glavaš, 2016, p. 117).

Several authors have recently analysed the ways in which the present perfect is described and presented in English textbooks and learner grammars for Croatian EFL learners. Since they are important for the context of this paper and the study it presents, it is worth noting the most important findings and conclusions resulting from their analyses.

Tea Glavaš (2016) focused on textbooks intended for adult learners of English on two language proficiency levels: pre-intermediate and intermediate. The selected textbooks can be considered prototypical examples of textbooks intended for teaching English to adult learners, used by English teachers in language schools and published by the most prominent publishers in the field of EFL learning.

3.1.1. The pre-intermediate level

One of the analysed pre-intermediate textbooks, *Face2Face Pre-intermediate Student's Book*, devotes three lessons to the present perfect: the experiential perfect is the first type to be introduced, followed by the perfect of persistent situation and "the perfect of the most recent news". This order implies that the experiential perfect, introduced through comparison with the already familiar structure of the past simple, is presented to learners as the prototypical example of the target structure (Glavaš, 2016). The following definition of the use of the present perfect is provided: "for experiences that happened some time before now. We don't know or don't say when they happened" (Redston & Cunningham, 2005, p. 29). The second part of the same lesson (Redston & Cunningham, 2005, p. 30) gives another instruction on the use of the present perfect, stating that we use it when we wish to ask about people's experiences without wanting to know when exactly these experiences happened.

Once more resorting to comparison with the past simple, the textbook offers information about the past simple being used to ask additional questions about the interlocutor's experiences. Glavaš (2016) emphasizes that the only note pointing to the concept of time frame is given in a short footnote which reminds the student that *ever* with the present perfect means "any time in life until now". However, later on in the textbook when the perfect of persistent situation is presented, the student's attention is more explicitly drawn to the concept of time frame (in the context of the adverbs *since* and *for*). The use of *since* and *for* is defined as "a period of time (how long)" for *for* and "a point in time (when something started)" for *since* (Redston & Cunningham, 2005, p. 60). A visual representation of the present perfect (a time line) is given only in a grammar appendix at the end of the textbook, and it looks as the following:
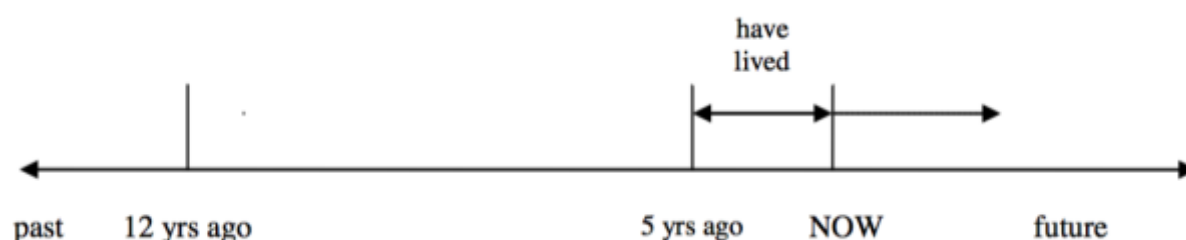

Figure 1. Visual representation of the present perfect in *Face2Face Pre-intermediate Student's Book* (Redston & Cunningham, 2005, p. 135)

The visual representation clearly indicates a time frame, with the present moment ("NOW") included. "12 years ago" and "5 years ago" represent two points in the period of time preceding the moment of speaking, introducing additional mental space within the time sphere. The arrow pointing from "NOW" onwards implies that the line continues, which means that the time frame in question has not finished yet – the time frame is the person's life. This way of illustrating the point of the present perfect certainly makes it easier for pre-intermediate English learners to understand its correct use. However, in the analysed textbook it was put only at the end as an additional piece of information, and not a necessary part of the description.

Having analysed descriptions of the present perfect and its use in four different pre-intermediate textbooks of English (*Face2Face Pre-intermediate Student's Book*, *New English File Pre-intermediate Student's Book*, *New Cutting Edge Pre-intermediate Student's Book*, *Language Leader Pre-intermediate Coursebook*), Glavaš (2016, pp. 123-124) concludes the following:

1) the present perfect is usually presented in the form of its different uses, with every type of use being defined by a separate rule

2) the present perfect is usually introduced step by step, i.e. through several lessons

3) the experiential perfect is usually the first type to be introduced, given as the prototypical use of the present perfect

4) the present perfect is mostly introduced through comparison with the already familiar structure of the past simple

5) the description of the present perfect which defines it as a verb tense usually provides no explicit reference to the time frame denoted by the present perfect; in cases where there is a reference to the time frame, the student is instructed that it is "an unfinished time"; there is no mention whatsoever of the distinction between adverbs such as *this week* or *today* and *already* or *recently*, i.e. of the former being time frames and the latter being points within an unspecified time frame that just provide additional information about it

6) when giving examples of the present perfect, special attention is paid to the adverbs *since* and *for*, where *since* is described as relating to a single point in time, while *for* implies a time period

7) the role of the verb's lexical meaning in the context of its use and the tense it is put into is usually not emphasized

8) the role of the speaker's subjective view of time in choosing to use the present perfect is not particularly emphasized

9) a visual representation of the present perfect is not a necessary part of its description.

3.1.2. The intermediate level

Unlike the pre-intermediate level, which introduces the present perfect and its various uses for the first time, the intermediate level reminds students of the main characteristics of the target structure that they should already be familiar with (Glavaš, 2016). One of the intermediate level textbooks that Glavaš analysed was *Face2Face Intermediate Student's Book*. It tackles the present perfect in a single lesson, but in three separate parts. The experiential perfect is again given as the prototypical example of the use of the target structure and is again compared to the past simple. Several uses of the present perfect are pointed out: to talk about experiences in our life up to now without saying when they happened, for something that started in the past and continues in the present, and for something that happened a short time ago, but we don't say exactly when (Redston & Cunningham, 2006, p. 21). After a short task in which students are supposed to choose temporal adverbs that can be used with the present perfect, they are also instructed that "the present perfect is used after *this is the first time*, *this is the second time*, etc." (Redston & Cunningham, 2006, p. 21).

The second part of the lesson introduces the distinction between the present perfect simple and the present perfect continuous. Students' attention is called to the distinction between state verbs and action verbs by emphasizing that the simple form of the present perfect is used to talk about a state that started in the past and continues in the present, while the continuous is used to talk about an activity that started in the past and continues in the present (Redston & Cunningham, 2006, p. 23).

The third part of the lesson offers exercises for practicing the use of the present perfect simple, present perfect continuous and past simple. However, it gives no additional information about the target structures (Glavaš, 2016). A grammar appendix at the end of the textbook provides information on the differences between *for* and *since* as well as the distinction between *been* and *gone*. A rather big section of the appendix is devoted to adverbs and time phrases used with the present perfect. The following are pointed out: *never*, *ever*, *recently*, *lately*, *before*, *this week*, *just*, *yet*, *already* (Redston & Cunningham, 2006, p. 120). Students are also informed that they may use *this week/month/year* and *this morning/this afternoon* with the present perfect if it is still that time of day. A visual representation is given in the section of the appendix pointing to the difference between the present perfect simple and continuous.

Glavaš (2016, pp. 127-128) summarizes the descriptions of the present perfect found in four different intermediate textbooks of English (*Face2Face Intermediate Student's Book*, *New English File Intermediate Student's Book*, *New Cutting Edge Intermediate Student's Book*, *Language Leader Intermediate Coursebook*) as follows:

1) the present perfect is mostly "decomposed" into its (two, three or four) different uses

2) the present perfect is usually tackled in a single lesson

3) the experiential perfect is again presented as the prototypical use of the present perfect; special attention is paid to the concept of indefiniteness

4) in addition to contrasting it with the past simple, intermediate level textbooks contrast the present perfect simple with the present perfect continuous

5) more attention is paid to the existence of a time frame; however, the distinction between the concept of time frame and temporal adverbials that do not constitute a time frame but only provide additional information about the time of the described event within the time frame is not made clear

6) noting the difference between state verbs and action verbs is the exception rather than the rule

7) no emphasis is put on the speaker's subjective role in choosing to use the present perfect to describe an event

8) the text that presents the present perfect to the student is usually not accompanied by a visual representation of the target structure.

3.1.3. Textbooks and grammar books at the secondary school level and in private language schools

The conclusions of the above analyses are in accordance with the results of an earlier examination of teaching material used in teaching English as a second language to Croatian students, conducted by Geld and Đurđek (2009). They selected those textbooks that taught grammar both implicitly and explicitly, focusing on those textbooks and grammar books that were most frequently used in Croatian classrooms (in primary schools, grammar schools and private language schools).

Their analysis has revealed that the present perfect is mainly described by a list of rules on its use. Moreover, textbooks are inconsistent in presenting the concept of time frame implied by the use of the present perfect. Although they do talk about periods of time including the present moment, the only explicit reference to the time frame can be found in the context where it represents "one's life" and is related to *ever* and *never* (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 372). Time frames implied by temporal phrases such as *today* and *this week* are not considered time frames; they are usually presented to the learner together with adverbials such as *already*, *just*, *ever*, *never*, etc. – adverbials that place an event at some point in the period leading up to the moment of speaking. As a result, students are not made aware that *today* or *this week* are time frames just like *one's life*. Furthermore, textbooks do not make a distinction between the time frame and the event/states taking place within that time frame, which, according to the authors, results from not drawing attention to the general distinction between states and events. And finally, non-prototypical examples of the use of the present perfect are completely missing, due to which students, who rely on the list of rules describing the target structure, have no opportunity to make their own inferences about what constitutes the correct use of the present perfect (beyond what they were explicitly taught).

Going back to the criteria for forming pedagogically acceptable grammar rules, one can easily notice that the rules on the use of the present perfect found in textbooks are not precise enough, which can lead to students drawing incorrect conclusions (Glavaš, 2016). Stressing that textbooks do not offer a helpful and systematic description of this complex verb tense, Geld and Đurđek (2009) advocate an approach to teaching the present perfect which is based on the concept of time frame covered by this tense. Their approach is based on cognitive grammar, which "allows learners to feel less constrained by the rules and

encourages them to make sound judgements about marginal members of the category" (of the present perfect) (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 374).

4. THE BASIC PREMISES OF COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

Before presenting a cognitive account of the present perfect, it is important to outline the main assumptions of cognitive linguistics. Cognitive linguistics is a cluster of overlapping approaches to the study of language as a mental phenomenon. What unites them is a common cognitive linguistic perspective on language, which is based on three basic premises (Croft & Cruse, 2004): 1. language is not perceived as an autonomous and separate cognitive ability but as closely connected to other cognitive abilities and domains of knowledge, 2. grammar equals conceptualization, 3. knowledge of language emerges from language use. These basic premises are rooted in a belief that all cognitive mechanisms, such as perception, attention, categorization, conceptualization, memory and language use, are connected and constantly interact with each other (Lakoff, 1987). Cognitive linguists are one type of constructivists, and constructivism emerged as a reaction to the nativist approaches, which saw language as a separate cognitive domain. According to Noam Chomsky's nativist theory of language (Chomsky, 1972, 1975), language is an innate faculty and people are born with a set of rules about it (the "Universal Grammar"). The set of language learning tools, provided at birth, is referred to by Chomsky as *language acquisition device*. It accounts for children's innate ability to understand language and syntax. In other words, according to the nativist approach, language precedes experience, and this claim is what provoked the constructivist reaction. All constructivists, including cognitive linguists, share a functional-developmental, usage-based perspective on language: "structural regularities of language emerge from learners' lifetime analysis of the distributional characteristics of the language input" (Ellis, 2003, p. 2). Therefore, language is rooted in experience and cannot possibly precede it. "Linguistic experience is an integral part of the speaker's interaction with the environment, and language development is always dependent on everything that makes that interaction possible, namely, all the cognitive and affective characteristics of the speaker as well as the social and cultural setting" (Geld, 2006, p. 184). Moreover, human cognitive abilities provide insight into human language, while at the same time language offers an understanding of the cognitive processes related to the human mind (Glavaš, 2016). Hence, cognitive linguistics primarily focuses on human beings interacting with culture and the world, the social context, the human mind and the relations between language structures (Stanojević, 2013).

According to cognitive linguists, language is an extremely experiential phenomenon. Linguistic units are abstracted from usage events and constructions are assemblies of

symbolic structures (Langacker, 1987). They range from specific to schematic. A usage-based approach is thus a construction-based approach: rules are nothing more than schematic constructions. Networks of constructions are sufficient for a full description of lexicon and grammar, which form a continuum composed of elements that are all meaningful – linguistic knowledge (knowledge of meaning and form) is therefore a conceptual structure (Geld, 2006).

All aspects of conceptual structure are subject to construal, i.e. the human ability to conceive and portray the same physical reality in different ways (Langacker, 1987). Every lexical and grammatical element in the continuum (of lexicon and grammar) incorporates a particular way of constructing conceptual content. Thus, "lexical and grammatical elements are conceptual tools" (Langacker, 2001, p. 7). They convey meaning, and meaning is constructed in our minds. In other words, language offers us an inventory (lexicon + grammar) and grammar in this inventory gives the skeleton of language, which is meaningful but schematic (Geld & Đurđek, 2009). Bearing this in mind, it is important to note that language is grounded in human experience, and how an experience is framed (Fillmore, 1985) is a matter of construal.

To sum up, a cognitive linguistic approach to language is centred around meaning and meaning is identified with conceptualization. In other words, meaning, which has a central role in language, "arises from the process of conceptualizing experience" (Tuđman Vuković, 2010, p. 12). Identifying meaning with conceptualization implies that language is not perceived as a reflection of the real, objective world but rather as a reflection of the way the world is represented in the human mind (Tyler & Evans, 2003).

4.1. The present perfect tense as described in cognitive grammar

When compared to lexical structures, grammatical structures as described in cognitive grammar have more abstract meanings – their meaning is schematic and superior to the uses that stem from it (Glavaš, 2016). When speaking about time and mental spaces, it is important to note that the Western model of time lines up time units and events along a horizontal time line or time axis (Radden & Dirven, 2007). "Time as expressed by tense is a matter of viewing" (Radden & Dirven, 2007, p. 201). Tense relates to the way a situation is located in time from the speaker's viewpoint. The moment of speaking serves as deictic centre and allows the speaker to refer to three time spheres: the present time sphere, the past time sphere as the time lying behind the speaker, and the future time sphere as the time lying ahead of the

speaker (Radden & Dirven, 2007). Cognitive grammar describes the three time spheres as *deictic times*. They are usually expressed by the simple tenses: present tense, past tense and future tense. However, the authors emphasize that the speaker may also develop notions of more complex times and express them as complex tenses. In this case, the speaker adopts a viewpoint in one of the deictic times. By taking a backward-looking stance from a deictic viewpoint the speaker views anterior times (those which occurred before a deictic time), and by taking a forward-looking stance the speaker views posterior times (those which follow a deictic time). In English, anterior times are expressed by one of the perfect tenses (present perfect, past perfect and future perfect), while posterior times are expressed by various prospective forms, such as the *be going to*-form (Radden & Dirven, 2007).

According to the authors, notions of time may be coded in language lexically (e.g. *today*, *tomorrow*, *last week*) and/or grammatically by one of the tenses. The basic function of tense is to ground a situation in time. However, "tense also relates to the representation of a situation as a mental space in the speaker's and hearer's minds" (Radden & Dirven, 2007, p. 202). The three deictic times and the situations occurring at these times can serve as reference points for locating the times of further situations. Speakers shift their viewpoints to the reference point and, from there, can either look backwards or forwards. Complex times thus involve two temporal relations: a relation between speech time (the speaker's moment of speaking) and a deictic time and a relation between the deictic time as a reference time and the time of an anterior or posterior event. "Situations described by a perfect tense occurred before a deictic reference time, which leaves the possibility that they still continue at or after reference time" (Radden & Dirven, 2007, p. 205). Radden and Dirven (2007, p. 205) illustrate the three perfect tenses by providing the following examples:

(3) a. Our train *has* just left. (*present perfect*)

 b. Our train *had* left when we arrived. (*past perfect*)

 c. Our train *will have* left by the time we get there. (*future perfect*)

All three anterior situations display the same basic conceptual configuration. An event is seen as occurring before a deictic reference time: before the present in (3a), before the past in (3b), and before the future in (3c). However, the authors stress the following:

The time configuration described by the present perfect is unique among the anterior times in that it involves only one time sphere and a relation from event time to speech time... The unique status of the

present perfect is due to its present reference time: its immediacy makes the present the more prominent time – as opposed to the remoteness of non-present, i.e. past and future times.

(2007, pp. 205-206)

Moreover, the present perfect has both temporal and aspectual meaning – the temporal meaning of a situation's anteriority and an aspectual meaning with respect to the inherent structure of the overall situation (Radden & Dirven, 2007). The anterior situation is part of the overall situation. The authors underline three properties which determine the general meaning of the present perfect: focus on the present time, current relevance and indefiniteness.

The auxiliary verb *have* in the present perfect grounds the situation in the present time. The state expressed by *have* connects the present moment with the anterior situation, which is described by a past participle. "Past participles are atemporal and do not ground the situation on their own" (Radden & Dirven, 2007, p. 212). Therefore, the anterior situation is not seen as continuing through time, but is summed up so that all its component states are viewed in their accumulated form. For example, in the sentence *I have written the letter*, the whole process of letter-writing is seen from its first line to its finished form (Radden & Dirven, 2007, pp. 212-213).

The second property of the present perfect, the *current relevance* of the anterior situation, is the reason for looking back at the situation – some earlier event is looked back at because it is still somehow relevant. The authors provide the following example (2007, p. 213):

(4)   a. Dad: "I'm looking for my glasses. *Has* anybody *seen* them?"
      b. Son: "You'*ve* probably *left* them in the car."

Having seen the glasses would be a possible clue for finding them and is therefore a relevant event for the present state, expressed in the present perfect in (4a). The son provides another potentially relevant event for the present state: Dad may have left the glasses in the car, where they may still be found. This anterior situation is therefore also expressed in the present perfect in (4b). Thus, "the reasoning process with the present perfect goes from the present state of affairs back to an earlier situation, which may have caused it or may explain the present state, and from there back again to the present" (Radden & Dirven, 2007, p. 213). According to the authors, although there may be many preceding situations that could be in some way relevant for the present, only those past situations which the speaker *subjectively* views as relevant to the present moment are construed in the present perfect. This clearly

shows that language is grounded in experience and is intrinsically linked to subjective processes such as perception, conceptualization and meaning construction.

The third defining property of the present perfect, the anterior situation's *indefiniteness*, relates to another mental faculty – attention. "The indefiniteness of the anterior situation follows from focusing one's attention on its present relevance" (Radden & Dirven, 2007, p. 213). Human attention is usually only focused on one entity at a time, and in the case of the present perfect it is the present relevance of the described situation. Therefore, the exact temporal occurrence of the anterior situation stays in the background. Since the present perfect is thus characterized by an overall indefiniteness, it is incompatible with adjuncts that specify a definite setting (however, as we are going to show later in the paper, this is not entirely clear-cut). The indefiniteness of the anterior situation is especially noticeable when a mental space for an anterior situation is opened (Radden & Dirven, 2007). The authors provide the following examples (2007, p. 213):

(5) a. *Have* you ever *been* to Korea? (*indefinite*)

b. Yes, I *have been* to Korea many times. (*indefinite*)

c. Yes, I *was* at the International Cognitive Linguistics Conference in Seoul in 2005. (*definite*)

Answer (5b) refers to the indefinite mental space, while answer (5c) includes a shift to a definite event in the past and is therefore put in the past tense.

In the spirit of cognitive grammar's visual representations of language structures, Radden and Dirven give a simplified and concise visual representation of the unique meaning of the present perfect (Figure 2).
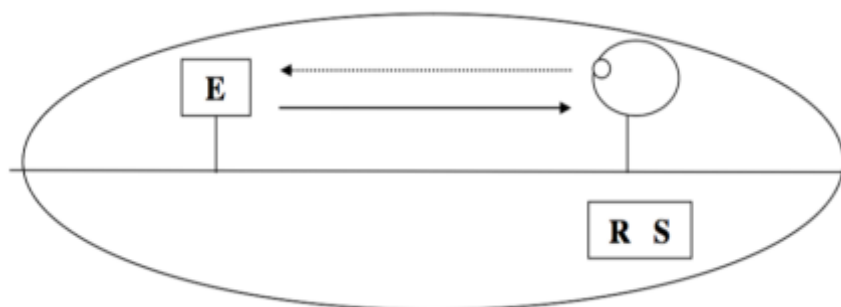

Figure 2. Visual representation (conceptualization) of the present perfect (Radden & Dirven, 2007, p. 205)

Their visual representation includes all important characteristics of the present perfect: the fact that the described situation occurred before the reference point (which in the case of the

present perfect means the present moment) as well as the present relevance of the described event (indicated by the arrows pointing from the event to the speaker and *vice versa*) (Glavaš, 2016). The illustration makes clear that the time configuration described by the present perfect includes one time sphere (indicated by the ellipse) which unites the time of the event (*E – event time*) and the time of referring to that event (*R – reference time*) (Radden & Dirven, 2007). In the case of the present perfect, reference time equals speech time (*S*). It is also important to note the viewpoint of the speaker, who looks back. As already mentioned, the reason for looking back on a situation lies precisely in its present relevance, but also in the fact that the present perfect describes an event that occurred before the reference time (Glavaš, 2016).

4.2. Categorization

Categorization as a human cognitive ability plays an important role in organizing grammatical knowledge and forming grammatical categories. "In addition to metaphor and metonymy, the process of categorization represents one of the basic cognitive abilities we use to structure our knowledge about the world and language" (Glavaš, 2016, p. 39). Our understanding of the world and everyday experience as well as our ability to use language to convey thoughts depend on our ability to categorize. Simply put, the main criterion for grouping elements together and putting them in the same category is the criterion of likeness: elements are grouped together based on what they have in common (Glavaš, 2016). Lakoff (1987) emphasizes the importance and complexity of categorization, stating that it forms the basis for our perception, thoughts, actions and speech – every time we see (perceive) something, we employ categories.

Since it is crucial to the way we structure our knowledge about the world (we categorize things, events, actions, emotions, spatial and social relations, etc.), the theory of categorization goes back as far as Aristotle. The classical Aristotelian model of categorization was a philosophical reflection on the ways knowledge was categorized, based on the formal logical assumption that categories formed in the human mind corresponded to those existing in the real world. Taylor (1995, p. 21) points to the main characteristics of the Aristotelian model: category membership is determined based on necessary and sufficient features, all features of category members are binary (a member either has or does not have the essential feature), categories have clear boundaries and are not context-dependent, and all members of

the category have equal status. Until the development of cognitive science, this approach to categorization had remained unchallenged.

Within the framework of cognitive psychology, the work of Eleanor Rosch (1975) led to new ideas about the ways humans categorize knowledge. Rosch empirically proved that some category members (the so-called prototypes) constitute better examples of the category than others. She also showed that the human abilities of perception, mental images formation, learning, memorizing and communication play an important role in the process of creating categories. In other words, categories emerge as a result of creating concepts about the world around us, which makes categorization a subjective process preceded by sensory experience (Rosch, 1975). According to Rosch, categories are formed around a prototype, which is the focal, most typical member of a category surrounded by more or less distant peripheral members. Categories have no clear or fixed boundaries – they overlap. These ideas opened the way for a new approach to the process of categorization, which explains categorization as a matter of human experience, perception and the ability to form mental images. Looking for similarities and differences, which was the basis of the classical approach to categories, remains crucial for the way cognitive scientists explain categorization; however, they elaborate the process of categorization by introducing a number of factors that affect it (Glavaš, 2016). According to Lakoff (1987, p. 9), they break with the tradition that saw meaning as based on truth and reference, merely concerning the relationship between symbols and things in the world. They also leave behind the ideas about the mind as separate from and independent of the body, emotions as having no conceptual content, grammar as a matter of pure form, and the existence of a unique and objective perception of the world around us (Lakoff, 1987, p. 9).

While Lakoff (1987) develops the *radial category* model with the central prototype and peripheral non-prototypical elements, Langacker bases his model of categorization (1987) on the idea of *schema*. Langacker (1987) defines the prototype as the most typical member of the category (and the degree of membership in the category depends on the degree of similarity to the prototype), while schema is defined as an abstract characterization fully compatible with all members of the category it describes. In order to describe complex linguistic categories, Langacker (1987, 2006) proposes the so-called network model of a complex category, based on the assumption that some concepts can acquire the status of a new prototype through metaphorical and metonymical extensions of meaning. Such concepts can then become starting points (nodes) for new extensions.

We organize linguistic categories in the same way we organize conceptual categories – categorization based on prototypes can be found in all language domains (phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical), which cognitive linguists see as another piece of evidence supporting the idea that we use our general cognitive abilities to organize language (Glavaš, 2016). Applied to the grammatical category of the present perfect, this means that it constitutes a category which includes all possible uses of the present perfect, and these uses can be more or less distant from the prototype.

4.2.1. What keeps the category of the present perfect together?

"A great deal of what has been said and written about the present perfect tense is in some way related to human tendency to work with clear-cut categories" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 364). Debates concerning the present perfect have been centred around several issues: the question of whether it should be considered a tense or an aspect, the nature of contrast between the past simple and the present perfect, with this common dichotomy being based on a semantic connection/disconnection to the present moment as well as compatibility with definite past-time adverbials and, finally, the issue of a wide range of definitions – from very broad and schematic ones to those based on exhaustive lists of functions of the present perfect (Geld & Đurđek, 2009). Most of these issues emerge from viewing categorization as based on binary features (e.g. definite time adverbials collocate with the past simple but cannot be used with the present perfect). According to the authors, categorization based on prototypes, with categories whose members are kept together by a unifying schema, is much better suited for pedagogical purposes than the categorization based on binary features, because tenses are *gradient* grammatical categories. Strict categorical judgements and sharp dichotomies should therefore be avoided in the process of teaching and learning tenses (Geld & Đurđek, 2009).

The authors stress two distinctive elements that characterize the usage of the present perfect tense: the existence of the time sphere (or the time frame) for the event described and the role of time adverbials in relation to the existing time spheres. "The strongest element in the cognitive account of the present perfect, especially in terms of its pedagogical implications in the process of second language learning and teaching, is the insistence on the basic conceptual configuration involving the time sphere" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 371). The aforementioned cognitive description of the present perfect by Radden and Dirven (2007,

p. 205) defines it as unique among the anterior times because it involves only one time sphere and a relation from event time to speech time. The basic time configuration of the present perfect (see Figure 2) can be translated into its schematic definition. By translating the above given schematic representation into learners' metalanguage, we get the following definition: "the present perfect describes an event that happened in the past, but within the time sphere (or time frame) that has not finished yet" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, pp. 371-372). Regardless of the exact context, "the present perfect always codes the time frame that has not finished yet and an event (or events) happening prior to the speech event" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 374). Accompanying adverbs, such as *today*, *this year*, *in the last year*, signal time frames. Their meaning is constructed against the conceived time frame, which, according to the authors, most textbooks and grammar books do not make clear. Time frames signalled with various adverbials of time are usually not treated as time frames or periods of time that include the present moment, but simply "listed together with adverbials that 'place an event' at some point in the period that is described as leading up to the speech event" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 372). The authors claim that the focus of many textbooks and grammar books is put on providing exhaustive lists of typical adverbs that accompany the present perfect, but what is missing are "cognitively plausible links" (2009, p. 374), which would make the use of the present perfect easier for learners to understand. Textbooks often provide non-transparent explanations of what the present perfect actually expresses. By failing to recognize the importance of the time frame, they give definitions such as "the period of time from the past to the present" when referring to states (e.g. *We have been best mates since we met*), without making a distinction between the state itself and the time frame. This causes a "cognitive chaos" in which learners identify the nature of events with the nature of states, confusing them with the notion of time period (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 373).

Bearing in mind the basic conceptual configuration of the present perfect tense, Geld and Đurđek (2009) advocate an approach to teaching the present perfect which would present it in terms of the basic schema that keeps the category together, rather than by using exhaustive lists of "typical adverbs". The basic schema keeping the category together points to two essential characteristics defining the use of the tense: "a time frame encompassing both event time and speech time, and the event(s) taking place before the speech time or the states/events coinciding with the part of the time frame leading up to the speech time" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 374). The most important pedagogical implication of such an approach lies in encouraging learners to venture into making their own judgements about the correct uses of the present perfect, leaving behind the definitions and rules they usually learn by

heart. As was shown in section 4.2, a category consists of members whose distance from the central, prototypical member differs – this means that each category, including the grammatical category of the present perfect, includes marginal members which, despite being away from its centre, still belong to that category. By strictly relying on the rules and lists of adverbs they were explicitly taught, learners may have difficulty in realizing that there are marginal uses of the tense which are still correct and acceptable. Geld and Đurđek (2009, p. 374) provide the following example:

(6) He finally went to see his granny four months ago. He's been back to see her two months later, two weeks ago, and just yesterday.

This single example suffices to demonstrate that the rules about the use of the present perfect presented in most textbooks are not enough to cover all its possible uses; namely, in this sentence the present perfect is used with adverbs usually described as "typically used with the past simple tense" – the tense that the present perfect is often contrasted with. Although examples such as (6) certainly are very rare, due to which one can consider it unnecessary to include them in a textbook, students' achievement of near-native language competence can only be expected if we provide learning conditions which offer rich and authentic language input (Geld & Đurđek, 2009). If one wishes to take as a starting point a cognitive linguistic assumption that linguistic knowledge is basically a conceptual structure, with linguistic units being abstracted from usage events, then "it is important to provide conditions in/under which these units will be abstracted" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 375). All language rules or regularities emerge from the learners' ongoing analysis of distributional characteristics of language input (Ellis, 2003). This means that learners need to be exposed to all kinds of linguistic units – from very specific to extremely schematic – in order to be able to abstract them. According to Geld and Đurđek (2009), very rare and abstract uses of the present perfect can be seen as being positioned on the schematic end of the continuum, but they still have to be present in the L2 input to ensure learners' most schematic abstractions. The authors therefore propose the following: teachers need to ensure that their language teaching material has authentic and cognitively motivated samples of language as well as schematic definitions that encourage making inferences. In this way, students will have the opportunity to "experiment" with their own judgements about what constitutes the correct use of the present perfect, going beyond the rules presented in the textbooks and/or grammar books, and recognizing the schema that keeps the category together.

5. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This section presents the research that has been done on the use and acquisition of the present perfect in EFL learners.

Studies on the acquisition of the present perfect have been conducted on learners with various first language (L1) backgrounds. A great number of studies have dealt with cross-linguistic influences, i.e. the role of L1 in the second language acquisition of the English present perfect in bilingual combinations such as English and German, English and French, English and Japanese, etc. Other studies have explored EFL learners' perception of the present perfect and its correct use as opposed to the past simple or the past perfect. Some have also dealt with the issue of "implicit" versus "explicit" knowledge, since language acquisition is a complex process which requires both the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to put this knowledge to use in real time (Roberts & Liszka, 2013).

In their study from 2013, Roberts and Liszka conducted a self-paced reading experiment designed to investigate the question of whether or not advanced French and German learners of English as L2 are sensitive to tense/aspect mismatches between a fronted temporal adverbial and the inflected verb that follows (e.g. *Last week, James has gone swimming every day*). 20 German and 20 French L2 learners of English participated in the study, together with a control group of 20 native British English speakers. All of the French learners and the majority of the German learners were studying English at university in their home countries. The two learner groups were equally able to distinguish correctly the past simple from the present perfect as measured by a traditional cloze test production task. They were also both able to assess the mismatch items as less acceptable than the match items in an off-line judgement task. Using a self-paced reading task, the authors investigated whether the learners could access this knowledge during real-time processing. It was found that despite performing similarly in the explicit tasks, the two groups processed the experimental items differently from each other in real time (online): only the French L2 learners were sensitive to the mismatch conditions in both the past simple and the present perfect contexts, whereas the German L2 learners did not show a processing cost at all for either mismatch type (Roberts & Liszka, 2013). The authors explain the differences as caused by influences from the learners' L1: only those whose L1 has grammaticized aspect (French) were sensitive to the tense/aspect violations, and thus could be argued to have implicit knowledge of English tense/aspect

distinctions, i.e. the ability to access and apply the knowledge that both groups displayed explicitly in the judgement task.

J. Ureel (2011) conducted a study into the effects of explicit form-focused instruction (FFI) on the acquisition of the past/present perfect distinction by Dutch-speaking EFL learners. The 88 participating EFL learners were students who had all enrolled in a three-year translation programme in Antwerp. The EFL target structures under investigation in the various experimental sessions were the past and the present perfect when used to locate bygone situations in standard, formal present-day English (Ureel, 2011). The four tense-related outcome measures that were used in the pretest consisted of grammaticality judgements, selected response, constrained constructed response and translation. For the grammaticality judgement task the participants were asked to evaluate the grammaticality of a finite verb form (either a past or a present perfect verb form) which appeared in bold in a linguistic context after the text had appeared on-screen for 40 seconds. One finite verb form per text appeared in bold and for that specific verb form the participants were asked to select whether the verb form was grammatically correct or not. After completing all the sessions of the pretest, the participants received an on-screen theory session, during which they were given theoretical information about the problem of choosing between the past and the present perfect to locate bygone situations. A week after that, an unannounced immediate posttest took place. The setup of the posttest was identical with the setup of the pretest. However, the posttest consisted of twelve items that the participants had already encountered in the pretest and twelve items which were new to them. Analyses of the data revealed a small increase from pretest to posttest performance. However, since there were no data from a no-treatment control group, it is impossible to say whether the small performance increases obtained in the treatment groups were caused by the fact that participants in all the groups had received any treatment tackling the target structures in question (Ureel, 2011).

In the context of Croatian research into the acquisition of the present perfect in EFL learners, two studies should be mentioned. Geld and Đurđek (2009) conducted research on strategic construal (meaning construal in L2) of the present perfect in 175 3rd and 4th year students of the English language and literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. All the participants were proficient speakers of English. The authors' intention was to draw attention to the missing cognitively motivated links in the existing descriptions of the present perfect that students rely on (in textbooks and grammar books). The aim of the study was to show that even proficient learners face difficulties in going beyond the explicitly learned rules in making inferences about the correct use of the present

perfect. The participants were presented with nine sentences produced or selected by native speaker of English as "good" examples of the present perfect tense. Seven of these included prototypical uses of the present perfect (distractors), while the remaining two were examples of non-prototypical uses and as such were directly relevant for the research (e.g. *We have, several days ago, warned the government about this particular problem*) (Geld & Đurđek, 2009). The participants were asked to read the sentences in the questionnaire and explain why the underlined tenses were used in each particular example. They offered various explanations for the non-prototypical examples of the present perfect. Some wrote that they would not use such constructions, others considered them to be ungrammatical, referring to the incompatibility of *several days ago* with the present perfect tense. However, there were also those who showed the ability to recognize the schema that keeps the category of the present perfect (and all its non-prototypical uses) together, but the number of such students was quite low. Geld and Đurđek therefore conclude that Croatian learners of English throughout their education face inconsistent lists of rules and adverbials that are used with the present perfect as well as imprecise schematic definitions of the target structure. Moreover, they are not made aware that grammar contributes to meaning construal, due to which they feel insecure when it comes to making grammaticality judgements about the meaning of language structures they have never been presented with before (Geld & Đurđek, 2009).

Glavaš (2016) conducted a study into the relationship between the schematicity of a grammatical representation and its learnability in the case of the present perfect tense within the EFL learning context among adult learners. Furthermore, the study was set out to explore the effect of the level of language proficiency on the success of learnability based on a schematic representation. The hypothesis of the study was that the schematicity of a grammatical representation will have a significantly beneficial effect on the level of learnability due to its conceptual uniformity. The research was conducted on 149 participants whose first language was Croatian and was conducted in the form of a quasi-experiment on two levels of language proficiency: A2 (65 participants) and B1 (84 participants). Teaching based on cognitive grammar was conducted in the experimental groups, while teaching in the control groups was based on the textbook. Learners' initial language knowledge was tested by means of a written test and orally, and the statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference in learner knowledge in experimental and control groups on both language levels. Learners' knowledge of the present perfect was measured immediately after the teaching session and five weeks afterwards. The analysis of the results revealed that the learners in experimental groups demonstrated statistically significant better knowledge of the

present perfect both immediately after and five weeks after the teaching session than their colleagues in the control groups. The results also showed that the teaching based on a schematic uniform definition of the present perfect levelled out the difference in knowledge between the experimental groups of A2 and B1 level of language proficiency, while the same was not observed among the control groups. Glavaš therefore concludes that the schematicity of a grammatical representation can have a significantly positive effect on its learnability, both on the lower level of language proficiency as well as on the higher level of language knowledge. A schematic representation results in conceptual clarity, making it easier for learners to understand the meaning behind a complex structure such as the present perfect, especially when it comes to learners whose L1 does not have an equivalent verb tense to cover the time span implied by the present perfect (Glavaš, 2016).

6. PRESENT STUDY

6.1. Aim of the study

The study aimed at exploring strategic construal (meaning construal in L2) (Geld, 2006; Geld & Đurđek, 2009; Glavaš, 2016) of the present perfect in Croatian grammar school EFL learners. More precisely, the aim of the study was to find out how Croatian EFL learners perceived the correct use of the present perfect tense and how much their perception was influenced by the way in which this tense is usually tackled in English textbooks used in Croatian schools (based on previous analyses and conclusions centred around this issue (Geld & Đurđek, 2009; Glavaš, 2016)). The second aim of this research was to see whether there were any differences in the way that Croatian EFL learners conceptualized the present perfect tense between first graders and third graders, i.e. to check whether those learners who had had more schooling and exposure to the rules used to describe the present perfect and its use would more evidently reflect what they had explicitly been taught about this complex tense than the younger students. The starting assumption was that the third graders would more strictly rely on the lists of rules and adverbs they associated with the correct use of the target structure, while the first graders would show more inclination to try to guess and make their own inferences about what constituted the category of the present perfect (beyond what had been presented in the textbooks).

6.2. Sample

A total of 49 Croatian grammar school learners participated in the study, of which 26 were first graders and 23 third graders. For each grade one random class was selected. All the participants in the study were L1 Croatian speakers and all of them except one student (with German as L2) learned English as their second language. They all had the same number of English classes a week (four), and they had all been having compulsory English classes since the first grade. Both classes had been taught English by the same teacher since the beginning of their high school education. Classes taught by the same English teacher were selected to ensure that the instruction on the use of the present perfect that the learners had been exposed to was provided by the same teacher. Different grades were selected to check if the learners' perception of the present perfect changed with the number of years they spent learning English in a formal context. The average number of years the first graders had been learning

English was 8.5, while in the case of the third graders it was 11.3. The first and the third graders were selected because the English teacher willing to participate in the study was teaching precisely those grades at the time of conducting the study. All the participants willing to participate did so voluntarily. None of the students declined to participate in the study.

6.3. Procedure and instrument

Before conducting the study, a written request and description of the study, as well as the instrument (the questionnaire), were submitted to the school's principal, from whom we obtained the approval to carry out the study. The participants were informed that their answers would only be used as anonymous and only for the purposes of this study. They were kindly asked to confirm their consent to participate in the study by signing at the end of the questionnaire.

We used nine sentences containing the present perfect tense. The sentences were based on instruments used in the studies conducted by Glavaš (2016) and Geld and Đurđek (2009), who worked with sentences produced or selected by native speakers of English as "good" examples of the present perfect. The sentences used in the present study were slightly modified. Two of these were directly relevant for the research and the rest served as distractors. The distractors were examples of prototypical uses of the present perfect and one sentence containing the past simple collocating with adverbials signalling definite time (*Monday*, *Tuesday* and *Wednesday*). We asked the participants to read the sentences in the questionnaire and explain (in either English or Croatian) why the underlined tenses were used in each particular example. Example (7) represents one of the prototypical uses they were asked to explain:

(7) Sandra Perković has won a number of medals.

Examples (8) and (9) represent the two non-prototypical uses of the target structure, and, as such, the focus of attention in the study:

(8) We have, two days ago, warned his parents about his problematic behaviour.

(9) I visited my uncle after a long time finally four years ago and since then I have been there to see him six months ago, last week and again today.

6.4. Results and discussion

Figure 3 shows the results obtained for example (8) by testing the first graders. Out of 26 participants, as much as 15% of them gave answers that do not make sense or are totally uninformative, for example: "because of quantity", "It happened in the past", or "We warned them". 27% of the participants explained the use of the present perfect tense in the sentence by referring to an unfinished action that started in the past. More specifically, they gave answers such as: "They warned the parents and will keep warning them", "They already warned the parents, but there is a possibility that they will warn them again", "They can still warn his parents", "It happened two days ago and can still happen again", etc. Only one participant referred to indefiniteness as the defining characteristic of the present perfect, providing the following answer: "The time is not defined (it is inserted with commas)." This participant clearly perceived the non-restrictive clause as adding something that is not of central importance to the meaning of the sentence, and therefore referred to the indefiniteness of the anterior situation – normally taught to students as characterizing this tense – as the rationale behind the use of the present perfect in this particular example.
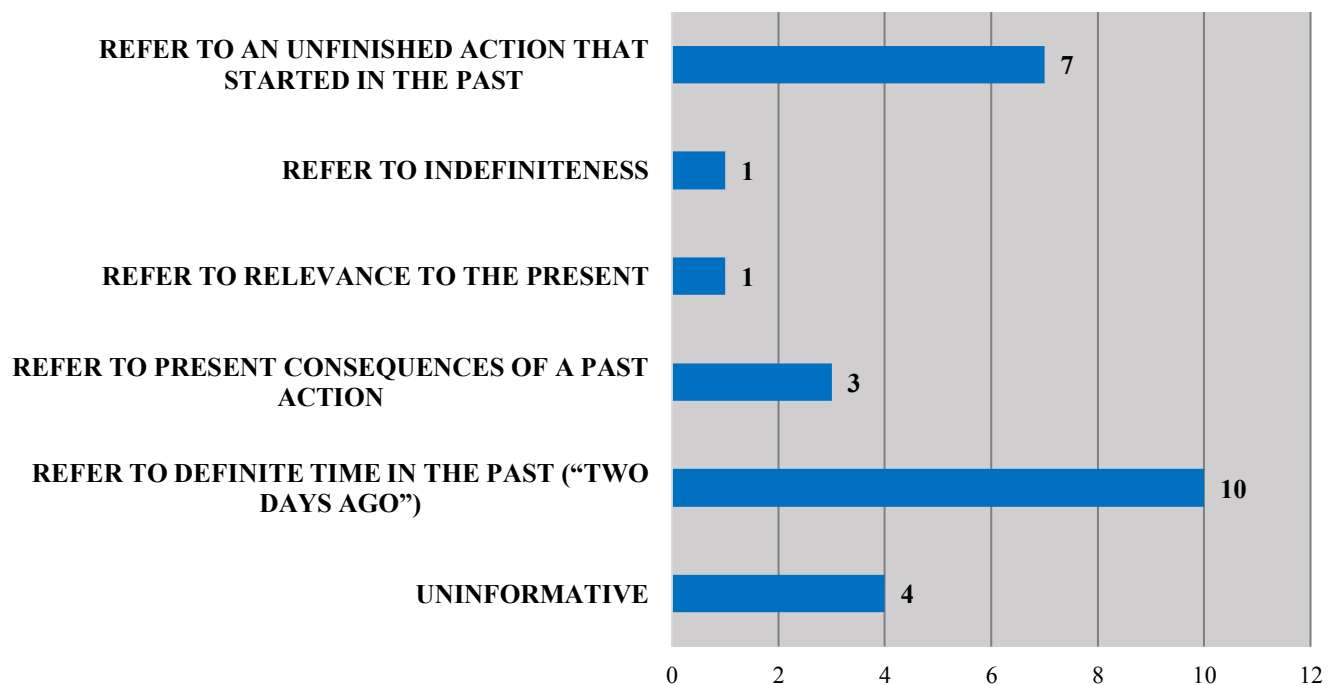

Figure 3. Answers obtained for the non-prototypical usage of the present perfect (first graders)

Another participant tried to explain the sentence by referring to a past situation with present relevance, giving the following answer: "It means his behaviour is still problematic and we have 'two days ago' in the sentence." This answer again implies an awareness of some of the defining characteristics of the present perfect tense, i.e. properties that define its general meaning (focus on the present time, current relevance and indefiniteness). However, it also refers to definite time in the past ("two days ago"), which violates the principle of the anterior situation's indefiniteness.

12% of the first graders provided answers referring to present consequences of a past action. More specifically, they wrote: "We have warned them about it and it has consequences in the present: they are doing or will do something about his behaviour", or "a past action which has consequences in the present". These answers imply the perfect of result, which draws attention to present consequences of a past event (Michaelis, 1994). They also point to the perceived connection between the concept of *being relevant in the present* and the concept of *result* in its broadest sense – a result of a past action whose consequences are relevant or present at the moment of speaking (Glavaš, 2016).

As much as 38% of the first graders tried to explain the use of the present perfect by referring to definite time in the past ("two days ago"), which stands in contrast to the abovementioned answers that refer to the rules usually associated with the correct use of the target structure; namely, the concept of definiteness is in no way related to the present perfect, and is mentioned in textbooks only when comparing the present perfect to the past simple (in the sense of binary features: indefinite vs. definite). Since the present perfect is characterized by an overall indefiniteness, it is normally taught to students as incompatible with adjuncts that specify a definite setting. However, most of the first graders in the study provided answers such as: "because we know when it exactly happened", "We are talking about how we warned his parents in the past, and stating that it was done two days ago", "They warned them in a particular time (two days ago)", "We know the exact time when the warning took place", etc. It seems that the non-restrictive clause signalling definite time in the past caught the students' attention as the most prominent part of the sentence, crucial for its meaning. That made them ignore one of the basic properties of the present perfect presented in English textbooks and learner grammars – its incompatibility with adverbials signalling definite time in the past, and they referred precisely to the definite time in the past ("two days ago") as the basis for its use.

Figure 4 shows the results obtained for example (8) by testing the third graders. As much as 22% of the participants did not give any explanation at all. 17% of the participants

gave answers that are uninformative, for example: "I don't know", "Because we use Present Perfect with 'two days ago'", "It happened and ended two days ago, it happened before and isn't anything new", or "Two days ago they warned them about something from the past, we are talking about a past action now". 9% of the subjects referred to the recent past as the rationale behind the use of the present perfect. They gave answers such as: "talking about recent events", or "an action set in the recent past". They obviously relied on "two days ago", perceiving it as a time marker indicating the recent past and therefore providing a basis for the use of the present perfect, although it signals a definite time in the past and is thus normally used with the past simple tense.
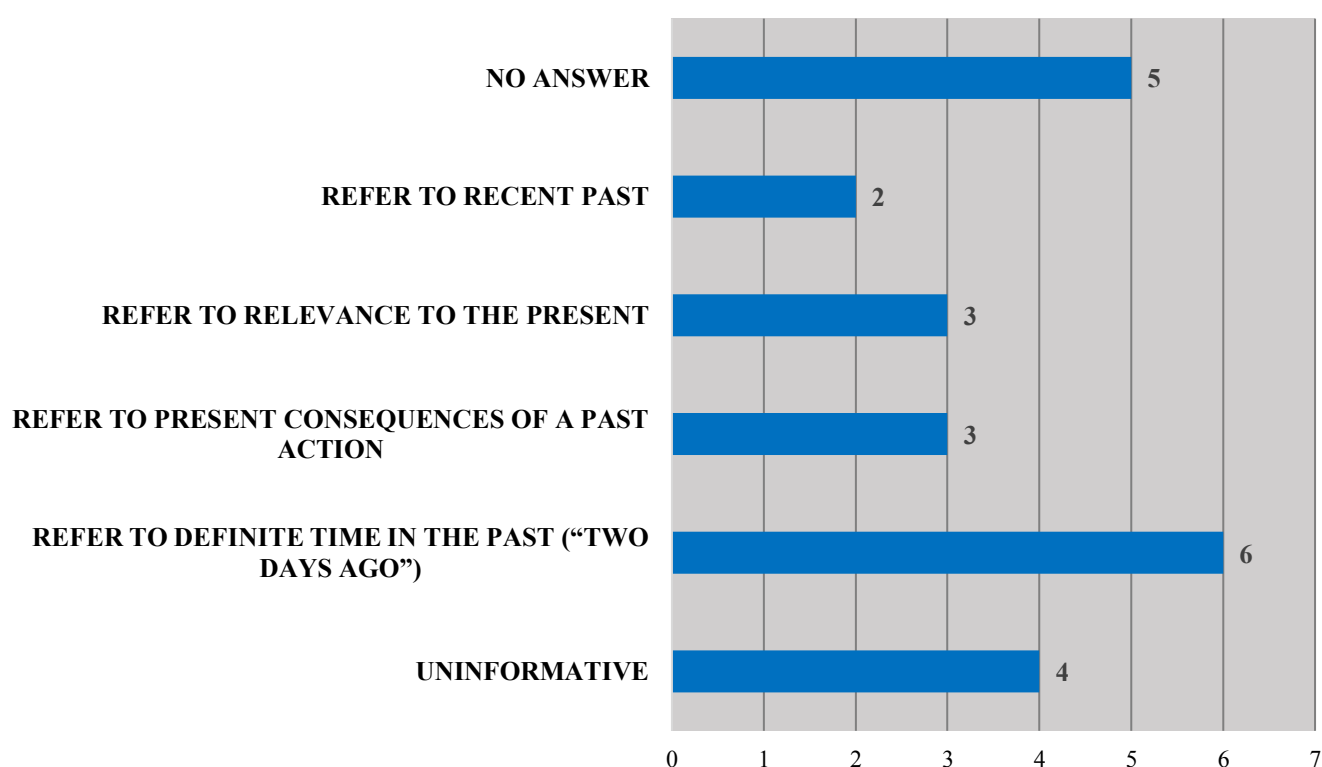

Figure 4. Answers obtained for the non-prototypical usage of the present perfect (third graders)

13% of the third graders tried to explain the sentence by referring to present relevance of a past situation. They provided the following answers: "We warned them two days ago, but the warning is still valid", "Because that warning still stands", and "It happened in the past, but it is still important". The same number of subjects (13%) referred to present consequences of a past action. More specifically, they provided answers such as: "They did that in the past and it is affecting the present situation", and "The action happened in the recent past and probably has consequences in the present". These answers are obviously based on guessing

and relying on the explicitly learned rules on the use of the present perfect, because the sentence itself does not say anything about present consequences of the warning.

Interestingly, the greatest number of the third graders, as much as 26%, tried to explain the use of the present perfect in this sentence by referring to definite time in the past ("two days ago"), similar to what was found in the first group. Although they must have been explicitly taught about the incompatibility of adverbials signalling definite time in the past with the present perfect tense, most of them gave answers such as: "It is said exactly when this happened", "The action took place at a definite time in the past", or "have warned is used because of 'two days ago'".

The above described results may be interpreted in two ways. First, the students showed that they had learned the rules they had been explicitly taught and were mostly able to apply them even in a context of a non-prototypical use of the target structure. Most of the categories their answers were classified into reflect the lists of rules usually associated with the correct use of the present perfect, found in English textbooks. However, the relatively large number of students in both groups who referred to definite time in the past as the explanation for the use of the present perfect indicates that, when faced with language structures they have never encountered before, they resort to explicitly learned rules about other structures (the past simple) as well, making wrong inferences. As discussed in section 3, in the process of teaching and learning, the present perfect is usually introduced through comparison with the past simple. These two tenses are explicitly contrasted on the basis of their main semantic features (concisely presented by Davydova, 2011). Much emphasis is put on the distinction between definiteness (the past simple) and indefiniteness (the present perfect). However, it seems that the students participating in this study ignored the basic distinction and – in the absence of a more appropriate explanation – resorted to any explicit rule they could associate with the sentence at hand, expanding the rule most naturally associated with another tense. They were probably aware that there was something wrong with associating the present perfect with "two days ago", but they perhaps considered the sentence to be too non-prototypical to be explained by the rules normally connected with the target structure. Instead of questioning the grammaticality of the present perfect collocating with a definite past-time adverbial, they relied on the very adverbial to explain the use of the present perfect as if it was a prototypical combination. It could also be argued that this results from (and provides evidence for) the fact that Croatian learners of English throughout their education face inconsistent lists of rules and adverbials that refer to different aspects of the

present perfect tense, which then leads to students easily getting confused and mixing up the rules learned in the process of learning various English tenses.

None of the participants tried to venture into making their own inferences, i.e. judgements that are not related to any explicitly learned rule. None of the students mentioned anything about the time frame in which the adverbial ("two days ago") only introduces additional mental space. Out of 49 students, only one emphasized that the adverbial "is inserted with commas" as an additional piece of information, but still there was no mention of the time frame. A considerable number of the first graders (27%) also showed an inclination to explain the use of the present perfect by referring to an unfinished action that started in the past, which was not the case in the older group. However, regardless of the level of proficiency (age), all participants failed to recognize the schema that keeps the category of the target structure together, while most of them (regardless of age) made unexpected inferences based on explicitly learned rules.

Figure 5 shows the results obtained for example (9) in the first group. 8% of the first graders did not provide any explanation at all. The same number of subjects (8%) gave answers that do not make any sense or are uninformative. They wrote explanations such as: "quantity", or "because since then he has been there six times".
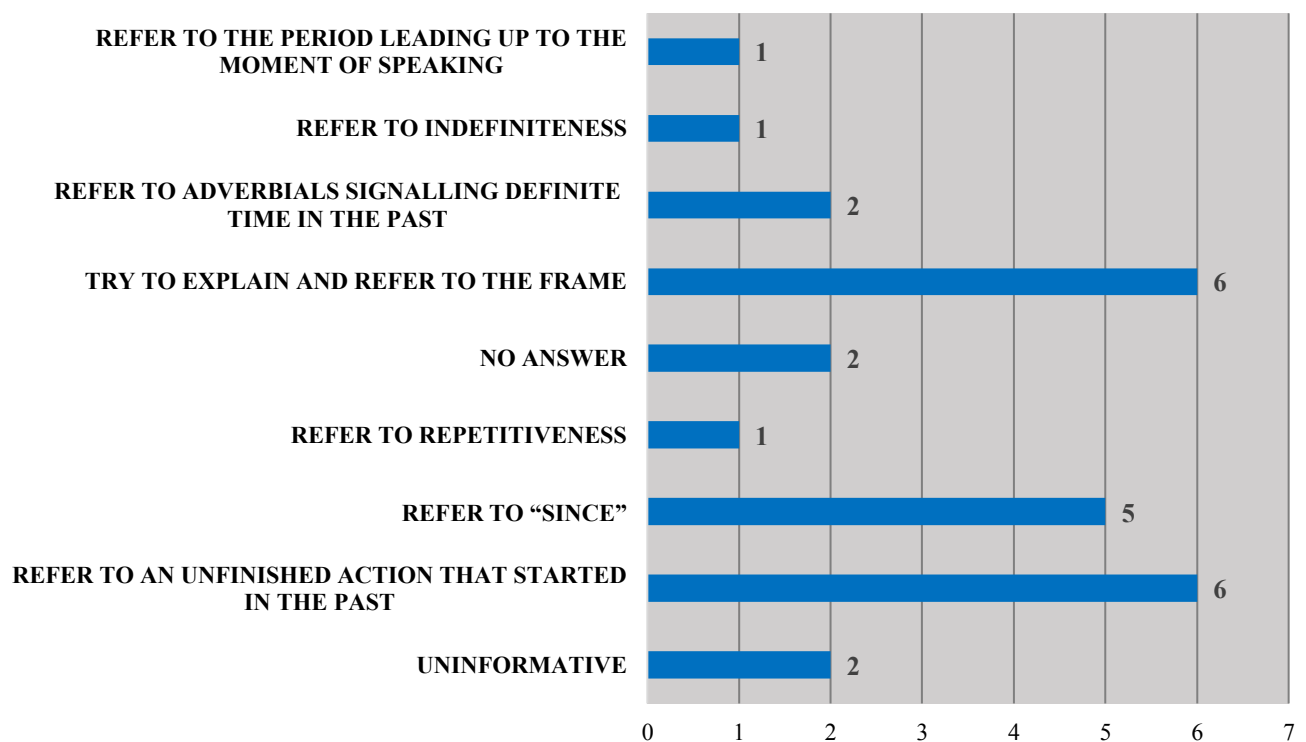

Figure 5. Answers obtained for the non-prototypical usage of the present perfect (first graders)

Only one participant tried to explain the sentence by referring to the period leading up to the moment of speaking, providing the following answer: "I have been there three times SO FAR." This kind of explanation reflects the student's awareness of the period preceding the present moment, and the fact that the period starts with "four years ago" and continues up to now. However, it does not explicitly say anything about the period not being finished, i.e. including the present moment and continuing beyond "now", so it is not clear whether the participant implied a time sphere that has not finished yet.

Another participant referred to indefiniteness, explaining the use of the present perfect as follows: "We do not know the exact date on which the person visited his/her uncle." This explanation was obviously influenced by the explicitly learned rule about the present perfect being used when talking about actions/events that happened at an unspecified time in the past; namely, example (9) actually does include time markers specifying several points in the past at which the visits took place ("four years ago", "six months ago", "last week" and "today"). However, in the context of this sentence they only introduce additional mental space within an unfinished time sphere.

8% of the participants tried to explain the use of the present perfect by relying on the adverbials signalling definite time in the past. They gave answers such as: "It is said what has happened until the moment of speaking and we know exactly when all of it happened", and "because we know how many times and when it happened". This again implies that, in the absence of a more suitable explanation, the students relied on the rules typically used to define the past simple tense (definiteness), simply expanding them to explain the non-prototypical sentence at hand.

23% of the first graders showed an awareness of the time frame implied by the use of the present perfect. They provided answers such as: "I have visited him several times until now and I will keep visiting him", "an action that started four years ago and continues today", "From that moment I started seeing him more often", etc. These answers suggest that the students are able to abstract the basic schema of the category of the present perfect and recognize that the example is not incorrect, but simply non-prototypical. They are aware of the time frame that started "four years ago", includes the moment of speaking and continues beyond it.

Only one student tried to explain the use of the present perfect in the sentence by referring to repetitiveness, providing the following explanation: "The first part of the sentence is finished, we use the past simple there, while the second part repeats itself (six months ago, last week, today)." This answer suggests that the student is aware of the possibility that the

action may happen again, i.e. that the time frame implied by the use of the present perfect is "open" (as opposed to the past simple, which implies a "closed" period).

As much as 23% of the students in this group tried to explain the sentence by referring to an unfinished action that started in the past. They provided answers such as: "This action may happen again in the future", "She visited him and will visit him again", "It happened in the past and still continues", "It's used because it can still happen", etc. Another 19% mainly focused on the word "since". They wrote: "We notice SINCE", "Because 'since' always goes with that tense", "We know exactly when the action happened and we have 'since', which goes with the present perfect", etc. Their answers reflect the influence of the explicitly taught and learned lists of rules and adverbs associated with the correct use of the present perfect. Even when faced with a non-prototypical example unlike anything they have encountered before, the students rely on the "safe rules" they use to make sense of the target structure, not daring to make their own judgements or experiment with the sentence they are asked to explain.

Figure 6 shows the results obtained for example (9) in the second group (third graders). As much as 17% of the participants in this group did not provide any explanation at all, which is more than twice as much as in the first group.
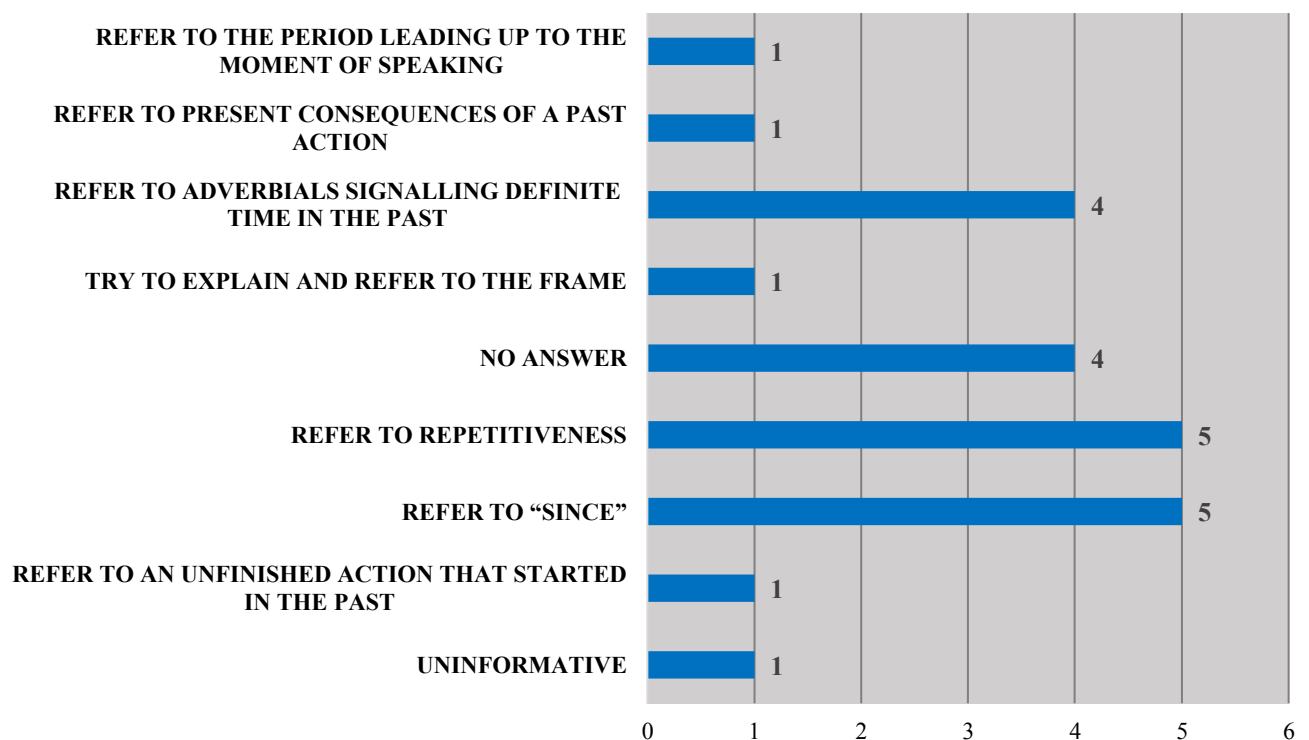

Figure 6. Answers obtained for the non-prototypical usage of the present perfect (third graders)

One answer was totally uninformative: "Present Perfect is used because 'since then' is a phrase used to describe something that happened after some event in the past." Only one participant emphasized the period leading up to the moment of speaking as the basis for the use of the present perfect: "talking about past events that have occurred so far." Another participant emphasized present consequences of a past event in order to explain the given sentence, simply stating the following: "It is affecting the present." The sentence itself indicates nothing about any kind of consequences of the visits paid to the uncle, but the student most probably relied on anything he/she could associate with the correct use of the present perfect in order to explain the non-prototypical example in question.

17% of the third graders referred to the adverbials signalling definite time in the past to explain the non-prototypical use of the present perfect, providing answers such as: "It is said exactly when this was happening", "because of 'since', 'six months ago', 'last week', 'again today'", or "the time at which the action happened in the past is specified (six months ago, last week, today)". As the percentage of subjects who gave such explanations (17%) suggests, this group of participants showed even more inclination to apply the rules learned in the context of the past simple to an unfamiliar context of the present perfect than the younger group (8%). Bearing in mind that the third graders had had more exposure to the rules and formal instruction on English tenses than the younger students, it seems surprising that they could draw such inferences, connecting the present perfect tense with definite past-time adverbials that textbooks present as not welcome in cases of the present perfect. It was assumed that they would show more awareness of the distinctions usually emphasized in the context of comparing the two tenses in English textbooks and grammar books. However, according to the obtained answers, they noticed nothing peculiar in a sentence containing both the present perfect and adverbials signalling definite time in the past, explaining the non-prototypical use simply by listing the aforementioned time markers. This again points to the problem of inconsistent lists of rules and adverbials that are used to teach the present perfect tense (as opposed to the past simple) to Croatian learners of English without making them recognize and understand the basic schema that characterizes the present perfect and makes it unique among all the tenses.

Out of 23 third graders, only one student tried to explain the use of the present perfect by referring to the time frame implied by the target structure, giving the following explanation: "It is said that the person has been visiting the uncle starting from four years ago, and he/she still visits him." This answer clearly implies the basic schema that keeps the category of the present perfect together: "the present perfect always codes the time frame that

has not finished yet and an event (or events) happening prior to the speech event" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 374).

As much as 22% of the students in this group emphasized the repetitiveness of action as the rationale behind the usage of the present perfect, giving answers such as: "because he has visited a couple of times", "because it is an action that keeps repeating itself", or "an action in the past that has repeated up to the present".

A single student referred to an unfinished action that started in the past: "because I keep visiting him." The percentage of students who emphasized the importance of the action being unfinished was considerably larger in the first group. It is worth noting that the situation was similar in the case of example (8): 27% of the first graders referred to an unfinished action that started in the past, while none of the third graders mentioned it as relevant for the use of the present perfect. These results lead to the conclusion that the first graders might have greater awareness of the "openness" of the time frame suggested by the present perfect, even in contexts as non-prototypical as those they were presented with, where the tense they usually associate with indefiniteness is combined with definite past-time adverbials. The results supporting this kind of conclusion are the percentages of students who tried to refer to the time frame to explain the non-prototypical sentence in example (9): 23% of the first graders vs. 4% of the third graders.

However, similar to what was found in the previous group, as much as 22% of the third graders tried to explain the sentence by referring to "since". They provided answers such as: "it is used with 'since'", "We use the present perfect because of the conjunction since", etc. The number of students who wrote such explanations was quite large in both groups, but that was only to be expected. In English textbooks "since" is presented as one of the main clues indicating that the situation should be described using the present perfect tense.

The results obtained for example (9) suggest the following: most of the students in both groups referred to the clues typically associated with the correct use of the present perfect – the period leading up to the moment of speaking, indefiniteness, compatibility with "since", an unfinished action that started in the past, present consequences of a past action – applying explanations based on such clues to the unfamiliar (non-prototypical) context in which the target structure appeared (even when the sentence itself did not include the clues they referred to). Moreover, their answers reflect the explicitly learned rules not only on the use of the present perfect but those relating to the past simple as well. This points to a lack of true understanding of what the category of the present perfect really implies. In an attempt to explain language structures they have never encountered before, students mix up some of the

basic semantic features distinguishing the present perfect from the past simple tense, relying on any "safe rules" they consider applicable to the sentence in question. Furthermore, the number of students who did not provide any explanation at all (especially in the older group) suggests that learners feel confused when asked to account for and make grammaticality judgements about marginal, non-prototypical members of the grammatical category they are familiar with and have explicit knowledge of (in the form of learned rules). Younger students proved to be more inclined to make guesses and experiment with the sentence rather than skipping it. They showed a higher level of awareness of the existence of the time frame implied by the present perfect, providing explanations that point to an unfinished time sphere that started in the past, includes the moment of speaking and goes beyond it.

In general, the results only partly support the findings presented by Geld and Đurđek (2009). They reflect what the authors concluded and emphasized after conducting research with Croatian EFL learners in a similar context: "what grammar books give is mostly the prototypical, and the manner they describe the category is often rather misleading" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 380). The imprecise definitions of the present perfect found in many English textbooks and (even academic) grammars used by students of various levels of proficiency do not take into consideration the very essence of the target structure. The essence of the present perfect lies in the reference point in the present, i.e. the event being viewed from the present moment, where the present moment is always included (Geld & Đurđek, 2009). Schematic definitions such as "an action in the period leading up to the present" (Eastwood, 1994, p. 86) do not make students aware of the fact that the time frame suggested by the use of the present perfect always includes both the events preceding the present moment and the speech event (the moment of speaking) itself. Some of the answers obtained in the present study reflect the imprecision of definitions presented to Croatian learners, for example: "I have been there three times SO FAR", or "talking about past events that have occurred so far". None of these answers make clear whether the present moment belongs to the same time frame that encompasses the events preceding the speech event, and they say nothing about the period not being finished yet, that is, continuing beyond the present moment.

The starting assumption, that the ways in which the students perceived the correct use of the present perfect would be influenced by the way this tense is usually presented in English textbooks, has not been fully confirmed – none of the 49 participants wrote anything about the examples being non-prototypical or "wrong", i.e. violating the rules on the correct use of the target structure that they had been presented with throughout their education. The non-prototypical examples, containing adverbials usually presented in textbooks as not

welcome in cases of the present perfect, were intended to make the students question the correctness of the language structures they were supposed to explain. It was assumed that they would consider them to be incorrect. However, they cited all possible clues they could associate with the present perfect, no matter how justified they were in the context they were asked to explain. In other words, the students *were* affected by the lists of explicitly learned rules, but in the sense that they "blindly" followed the learned rules in order to expand them and account for the unfamiliar, non-prototypical examples. On the other hand, what was unanticipated was the frequency of answers referring to "clues" that could in no way be associated with the typical use of the target structure, and, as such, surely had not been taught to students as relevant for the use of the present perfect; namely, contrary to the assumptions, none of the participants pointed out the definite past-time adverbials as inappropriate in the context of the present perfect.

It might be worth noting that some of the students nevertheless clearly demonstrated that they were aware of the compatibility of definite past-time adverbials with the *past simple*, as opposed to the *present perfect*; namely, as previously mentioned, one of the sentences that served as distractors in the questionnaire contained the past simple collocating with adverbials signalling definite time: *I went to see my mum and dad on Monday, I was at my grandmother's house on Tuesday and visited my sister on Wednesday*. In order to explain the use of the past simple in this sentence, a number of students (in both groups) referred to "exact" or "definite" time in the past. Their explanations were undoubtedly based on explicit knowledge of the rules determining the context in which the past simple tense should be used. They provided answers such as: "We know when it all happened so we don't use present perfect", "we know exactly when those actions happened and they have no impact on the present", "we know on which days the person went to visit which person", "it is over, it is not connected to the present", etc. These answers, along with others obtained for this example, suggest that students indeed are familiar with and aware of the basic semantic features distinguishing the two tenses. They showed that they were able to tell the difference between *definite* and *indefinite*, *finished* and *unfinished*, unconnected to the present and still relevant. To account for the use of the past simple, they inverted the rules typically associated with the present perfect. Bearing this in mind, it seems even more surprising that a total of 45% of the students in the sample referred to definite time in the past as the rationale behind the two non-prototypical uses of the present perfect. It could thus be argued that the (inconsistent) way in which Croatian EFL learners learn the rules they are presented with in the process of learning English tenses eventually leads to confusion and uncertainty about what the tenses truly mean.

As a result, even older and more proficient students are unable to understand the basic meaning of a grammatical category they are asked to explain. They limit their inferences and judgements to what seems to be "safe" and familiar, in any way connected to what they had read in the textbook. Both younger and older participants in the study were found to rely on such "strategies", but the first graders nevertheless showed more tendency to grasp the true meaning of the category of the present perfect and define it in terms of a time sphere that started in the past and has not finished yet.

7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

In the process of second/foreign language teaching, complex and abstract grammatical structures such as the present perfect have to be explicitly addressed in order to ensure the development of the learner's interlanguage and grammatical accuracy. Most researchers working in the field of SLA (second language acquisition) agree that those grammatical elements which are less salient in language input have to be taught explicitly (Glavaš, 2016). The question then arises as to which approach to take when teaching the semantically complex grammatical category of the present perfect tense.

Cognitive grammar sees grammatical elements as symbolic units characterized by a maximal level of schematicity (Langacker, 1987). Every grammatical element in language has its meaning – grammar gives the skeleton of language, it is schematic but always meaningful. According to Geld and Đurđek (2009, p. 371), "the strongest element in the cognitive account of the present perfect, especially in terms of its pedagogical implications in the process of second language learning and teaching, is the insistence on the basic conceptual configuration involving the time sphere". In other words, the process of teaching the present perfect to EFL learners has to take into account the basic conceptual structure, i.e. the idea of a schema that keeps the grammatical category of the present perfect together. The traditional approach to teaching language (grammatical structures and tenses), based on memorizing isolated lists of rules and adverbials, cannot account for the fact that language structures are cognitively motivated and have meaning – they make perfect sense and are not arbitrary. Accordingly, they should not be taught as such.

The results obtained in our study draw attention to the (still present) issue of teaching grammar as an isolated system of language, reducible to "formulas" that can be learnt by heart and are considered to be sufficient to understand the meaning of grammatical categories. Croatian students of English apply "formulas" they were explicitly taught to explain the use of the present perfect, and in doing so clearly demonstrate that the learned lists of rules can be misleading and result in wrong conclusions. On the other hand, the students showed an awareness of the defining characteristics that make the present perfect distinctive and distinguishable from the tense it is usually compared to – the past simple. They recognize that there is a time sphere entailed by the present perfect, and that it encompasses both the present moment and the past events. However, the focus they put on connecting the isolated rules (normally associated with the typical usage of the target structure or the past simple) with the

non-prototypical uses prevents them from realizing the unifying definition of the present perfect, which can be applied to all its different uses. Without an attempt to make students aware that language structures are semantically motivated, language acquisition comes down to nothing more than students mechanically memorizing rules and exceptions to the rules (Glavaš, 2016). "Learners need to be encouraged to learn and appreciate the language in terms of what it represents: a unique tool that reflects and builds our construal of reality" (Geld & Đurđek, 2009, p. 381). Therefore, as Geld and Đurđek conclude, English teachers need to be willing to re-examine the language and grammatical structures they teach. They need to acknowledge and make students aware that in the construction of meaning there are subtle contributions of not only lexical but also *grammatical* elements. Both types of elements represent conceptual tools (Langacker, 2001) we use to convey meaning that is constructed in our minds. Students therefore need to be taught that language is much more than a set of abstract rules. Rules are important, and they need to be used in the classroom to present students with complex language structures such as the present perfect, but the instruction should not stop there. In order to create learning conditions that will provide students with the opportunity to develop near-native language proficiency, learners need to be taught that language is cognitively motivated and that a language structure can be described by a schematic definition that keeps all members of its category together. In this way, they will be encouraged to make their own inferences about what constitutes a particular category, using the L2 inventory (both lexicon and grammar) to construct meaning. "Linguistic structures are conceptual tools for imposing particular ways of viewing a situation" (Langacker, 2001, p. 7), and it is the duty of the teacher to share this with the learners.

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Sažetak

Kada je riječ o hrvatskim učenicima engleskoga kao stranoga jezika, *present perfect* predstavlja jedno od najproblematičnijih područja engleske gramatike. Postoji nekoliko razloga zašto je tomu tako: izostanak izravnog gramatičkog ekvivalenta *present perfecta* u hrvatskome jeziku, različita i nedosljedna tumačenja *present perfecta* koja nude gramatički priručnici te način na koji je *present perfect* predstavljen i opisan u udžbenicima za učenje engleskoga kao stranoga jezika. Imajući u vidu sve razloge zbog kojih je ovu gramatičku kategoriju teško usvojiti, vrijedi istražiti način na koji hrvatski učenici engleskoga kao stranoga jezika percipiraju njezinu točnu uporabu. Cilj je ovoga rada i istraživanja koje iznosi stoga istražiti strateško konstruiranje značenja (tj. konstruiranje značenja u kontekstu učenja str
anog jezika) *present perfecta* kod hrvatskih srednjoškolskih učenika kako bi se provjerilo jesu li u stanju nadići pravila kojima su bili izravno poučavani te prepoznati shemu koja povezuje kategoriju *present perfecta*.

Rezultati dobiveni istraživanjem skreću pozornost na problem poučavanja gramatike kao izoliranog jezičnog sustava, svedivog na „formule" koje je moguće naučiti napamet, a koje su smatrane dovoljnima za razumijevanje značenja gramatičkih kategorija. Bez pokušaja da se učenicima ukaže na semantičku motiviranost jezičnih struktura, usvajanje se jezika svodi na puko učeničko memoriranje pravila i iznimaka. Stoga, učenike treba poučiti da se jezična struktura može opisati shematskom definicijom koja povezuje sve članove određene gramatičke kategorije. Na taj će se način učenici poticati na samostalno donošenje zaključaka o tome što čini pojedinu kategoriju, nadilazeći pri tome pravila kojima su izravno bili poučavani.

Ključne riječi: *present perfect*, kognitivna gramatika, procjene gramatičnosti, shema

APPENDIX

Testing Present Perfect

Broj godina: ____

Materinski jezik: _____

Prvi strani jezik: _____

Svi strani jezici koje učite ili ste učili: _____

Broj godina učenja engleskog jezika: ____

Read the sentences in the questionnaire and explain why the underlined tenses are used in each particular example. Write your answers in <u>English or Croatian</u>.

1. She <u>has been</u> here since last night.

    _____

    _____

2. Sandra Perković <u>has won</u> a number of medals.

    _____

    _____

3. I <u>have visited</u> New York three times.

    _____

    _____

4. We <u>have</u>, two days ago, <u>warned</u> his parents about his problematic behaviour.

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5. They <u>have published</u> a new article on global warming every week.

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6. I <u>went</u> to see my mum and dad on Monday, I <u>was</u> at my grandmother's house on Tuesday and <u>visited</u> my sister on Wednesday.

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7. They <u>have been</u> to the cinema twice this month.

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8. I visited my uncle after a long time finally four years ago and since then I <u>have been</u> there to see him six months ago, last week and again today.

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9. This is the first time we <u>have found</u> a hotel room in this crowded city.

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