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GRAMMAR TASKS IN EFL TEXTBOOKS FOR FIFTH GRADE PUPILS IN CROATIA

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to analyse grammar tasks in five English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks for fifth grade pupils in Croatia in order to investigate whether and to what degree those textbooks vary in pupils' engagement in grammar learning. To answer this question, various aspects of grammar tasks were examined using a framework adapted from a similar study conducted on Norwegian textbooks in 2013. The results showed that most grammar tasks require low engagement from pupils because grammar tasks are mostly close-ended and pupils are asked to solve them in writing. Moreover, those tasks are usually presented in separate sentences and pupils are asked to solve them by working alone. At the same time, those tasks are the so-called *composition* tasks, which means that they are meant to be highly engaging because in such tasks pupils are asked to write their own sentences and short texts, or to finish partial sentences and answer questions. However, most composition tasks in all five analysed textbooks do not require that high engagement from pupils because of the way in which those tasks are supposed to be solved, i.e. alone and in writing. If we take into account that today the tendency is on communicative approach to language teaching in which pupils need to have the opportunity to be highly engaged in the process of language learning through negotiating for meaning in communicative interaction with other pupils, the overall conclusion is that grammar tasks in most analysed textbooks should be modified in order for students to become more engaged in the process of grammar learning.

Key words: grammar, textbooks, English as a foreign language (EFL), engagement, communicative approach to language teaching

1. Introduction

To this day, grammar remains one of the most problematic areas of grammar teaching and learning. Throughout the years, various definitions of grammar appeared and different approaches to grammar teaching emerged. There was even a time when it was thought that grammar should not be taught at all. However, the zero grammar approach never really took hold, which is evident from the contemporary textbook materials and from the current theories of second language (L2) acquisition (Ellis, 2006).

The emphasis in modern EFL classrooms is on the development of communicative competence, i.e., learners need to acquire not only the knowledge about language, but also the ability to use that knowledge appropriately in communicative events. Communicative competence encompasses various components, among which is the grammatical competence. In terms of grammar, students need to learn to produce grammatical structures accurately and use them meaningfully and appropriately in communication. Communicative teaching requires learners to be active and highly engaged in the learning process, therefore, to help learners develop communicative competence, classroom materials should contain activities which would demand that engagement from learners.

The most common teaching materials in classrooms all over the world are textbooks. Although there have been many discussions on whether textbooks are the optimum teaching aid, the number of textbooks increases each year and it is becoming more difficult for teachers to choose the textbook which best suits their learners' needs. One of the ways that can help teachers decide which textbook to choose is textbook analysis, which enables teachers to notice the strengths and weaknesses of particular textbooks.

Since grammar is one of the most important and problematic areas of foreign language learning and teaching in all non-native English speaking countries, we have decided to conduct an analysis of grammar activities in five textbooks for fifth grade pupils in Croatia in order to investigate whether and to what degree those textbooks vary in pupils' engagement in the process of grammar acquisition. To answer this question, we have examined various aspects of grammar tasks using a framework adapted from a similar study conducted on Norwegian textbooks in 2013.

First, the theoretical part on grammar teaching will be presented, and later the description and results of the study will be outlined, followed by discussion and conclusion.

2. The concept of grammar

Although there have been numerous attempts of defining and teaching grammar, this aspect of language still remains one of the most problematic areas in language teaching and learning.

Larsen-Freeman (1991) observes that the term grammar is ambiguous and that definitions of grammar abound. She also makes a distinction between prescriptive and descriptive grammar. While prescriptive grammar provides rules for correct language usage, descriptive grammar describes how speakers actually use the language. Larsen-Freeman (2001) further points out that linguists make a distinction between two types of descriptive grammar: formal and functional. In formal grammar, the stress is on the form or structure of a language and almost no attention is given to meaning, context or language use. Functional grammar, on the other hand, tries to explain “why one linguistic form is more appropriate than another in satisfying a particular communicative purpose in a particular context” (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 34).

In the 1950s, structuralism was the prevailing theory in linguistics. Structural linguists believed that “grammatical categories should not be established in terms of meaning, but rather in terms of the distribution of structures in sentences” (Fries, 1952, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 34). Apart from structuralism, the dominant theory in psychology at the time was behaviourism, which was very influential in explaining how languages are learned and which saw language as verbal behaviour based on PPP¹

However, by the 1970s, many researchers saw structuralism and behaviourism as inadequate theories of explaining language acquisition. These two theories were especially criticized by linguist Noam Chomsky who claimed that “children's minds are not blank slates to be filled by imitating language they hear in the environment” (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 15). Instead, he hypothesized that children are born with an innate ability which allows them to discover for themselves the underlying language rules on the basis of language

¹PPP is “the idea that a grammatical structure should be first presented explicitly and then practised until it is fully proceduralised” (Ellis, 2006, p. 97).

samples they are exposed to (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). Chomsky further pointed out that this innate ability contains principles that are universal to all languages. He called it universal grammar (UG) and explained that it would prevent the child from pursuing wrong hypotheses about how language might work (Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

Contrary to formalists, whose aim is to explain syntax without pragmatics (language use), functionalists stress that pragmatics takes precedence over morphology and syntax. “What is of interest to the functional grammarians is not that the rules generate sentences, but rather that the production of rule-governed sentences is the means to coherent communication” (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 36). Furthermore, functional grammar extended the explanations of grammatical structures from sentence to discourse level (Larsen-Freeman, 2001).

3. Approaches to grammar teaching

Throughout the years, all of the above mentioned theories had an influence on the development of different approaches to language teaching. To start with, in the 19th century, the **Grammar-translation method** was widely used in foreign language teaching. It was also known as the “classical method” because it was originally used in the teaching of classical languages - Latin and Greek (Larsen-Freeman, 2008). According to this approach, the purpose of learning a foreign language was to be able to read literature written in it. The focus was on acquiring grammar rules and vocabulary through translation exercises in which students would usually translate texts about some aspect of the culture of the target language community (Larsen-Freeman, 2008). The primary skills to be developed were reading and writing, therefore, the ability to communicate in the target language was not the aim of this method. The grammar was presented deductively, i.e., students were presented with grammar rules which they had to memorize and later apply to specific language examples through exercises.

However, as Larsen-Freeman (2008) observes, the grammar translation method was not very effective in teaching students how to use the target language communicatively and, because of that, the **Direct method** became popular. In this method, no translation was allowed. The purpose was to teach the students to communicate and the meaning was “conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids,

with no recourse to the students' native language" (Diller, 1978, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 23). Students were encouraged to speak as much as possible and grammar was taught inductively, i.e., students would detect the rule by themselves from the presented material and then practice it. Furthermore, in this method, vocabulary was emphasized over grammar.

Another oral approach that developed alongside the Direct method was the **Audio-lingual method**. This method was influenced by structuralism and behavioural psychology. It viewed language learning as a process of habit formation, i.e., "the more often something was repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater the learning" (Larsen-Freeman, 2008). The goal was to teach the students to use the target language communicatively and, to do that, it was believed that students "needed to overlearn the target language, to learn to use it automatically without stopping to think" (Larsen-Freeman, 2008). In this method, new structures were presented through dialogues, which were later practiced through imitation and repetition. Grammar was induced from the given examples and explicit grammar rules were not provided. Oral skills received most of the attention and grammar was emphasized over vocabulary. Also, drills, such as repetition and transformation drills, were the most common activity type.

Larsen-Freeman (2008) observes that, although students did learn target languages through the application of the previously mentioned methods, the problem was that they still were not able to communicatively apply the habits they had learned in the classroom to the outside world. One of the strongest critics of language acquisition through habit formation was linguist Noam Chomsky who introduced the concept of UG. He argued that "language acquisition must be a procedure whereby people use their own thinking process, or cognition, to discover the rules of the language they are acquiring" (Larsen-Freeman, 2008). The emphasis on human cognition led to the appearance of the **Cognitive approach**. In this approach, learners were more actively responsible for their own learning and they were more engaged in making assumptions in order to discover the rules of the target language. Also, making errors meant that learners were actively testing their assumptions. The materials that were developed for this kind of teaching contained both deductive and inductive exercises. Larsen-Freeman (2008) points out that, although there was great interest in applying the Cognitive approach to language teaching, no language teaching method really developed directly from this approach. Instead, many "innovative methods" appeared, such as the Silent

way, Desuggestopedia, Community language learning and Total physical response (for more information on these methods, see Larsen Freeman, 2008).

The goal that most of the already mentioned methods wanted to achieve was for students to learn to communicate in the target language. However, in the 1970s, some educators observed that although students were able to produce correct sentences in the classroom, they could not use those sentences appropriately when communicating outside of it. Hymes (1971, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2008) stated that “it became clear that communication required that students perform certain functions as well, such as promising, inviting, and declining invitations within a social context”(p. 121). Therefore, communication required not only linguistic competence, but also communicative competence. This term was coined by Hymes and defined as the knowledge of “when to speak, when not to, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner” (Hymes, 1972, as cited in Askeland, 2013, p. 90). Bagarić and Mihaljević Djigunović (2007) further point out that “Hymes defined communicative competence not only as an inherent grammatical competence but also as the ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations, thus bringing the sociolinguistic perspective into Chomsky’s linguistic view of competence” (p. 95).

Since it first appeared, the concept of communicative competence has been redefined many times. Bagarić and Mihaljević Djigunović (2007) observe that recent research on communicative competence has mostly been based on three models of communicative competence: the model of Canale and Swain from 1980 (modified in 1983) in which they identified four components of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse competence; the model of Bachman and Palmer from 1996 in which communicative competence consisted of language knowledge and strategic competence; and the description of components of communicative language competence in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) from 2001, according to which communicative competence included sociolinguistic, pragmatic and language competence. Bagarić and Mihaljević Djigunović (2007) further stress that, although “the notion of communicative competence has been constantly changed and adapted to the context of its use”, researchers agree that “a competent language user should possess not only knowledge about language but also the ability and skill to activate that knowledge in a communicative event” (p. 100).

The notion of communicative competence influenced the development of **Communicative language teaching**. In this type of teaching, the focus is on real language use and one of the teacher's major responsibilities is to establish situations which are likely to promote communication. The grammar that the students learn follows from the function, situational context and the roles of the interlocutors (Larsen-Freeman, 2008). Therefore, in order to successfully communicate, learners need to acquire the knowledge of forms and their meanings, and the knowledge of the functions for which we use language. Also, Larsen-Freeman (2008) suggests that one of the assumptions of this type of teaching is that, by learning to communicate, students' motivation for studying foreign languages will be greater because they will feel they are learning to do something useful with the language.

Today, the aim of foreign language teaching is for students to develop communicative competence. Because it is important that students learn to produce grammatical structures accurately and learn to use them meaningfully and appropriately, Larsen-Freeman (2001) suggests that "grammar is best conceived as encompassing three dimensions: form, meaning and use" (p. 40). To accomplish this, Ellis (2006) believes that there is not just one preferred approach to grammar teaching because grammar acquisition of a foreign language is a complex process which can be assisted best by a variety of approaches.

4. Textbooks in grammar teaching

Even with the availability of many modern language teaching aids, such as CDs and DVDs with different interactive videos and animations, the popularity of textbooks does not decline and they still remain the most important teaching aid (Wisniewska, 2013). To support this claim, Wisniewska (2013) provides an example of a study conducted in Poland in 2009 in which 250 university students were asked to express their opinion on usefulness of various learning /teaching materials. The results showed that participants named specially written textbooks for language learning purposes as the most useful material for learning English. Other materials included the Internet, television programmes, newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, 55% of the participants regarded language textbooks as very useful in learning EFL and 41% found them useful. The findings of this study are further supported by claims made by many other authors and researchers, such as McGrath (2002), Cunningsworth (1995),

Williams (1983) and Krátká (2012), who all agree that textbooks remain the most popular teaching aid.

Even though textbooks are widely used in classrooms all over the world, the debate about the desirability of teaching based on textbooks continues. According to McGrath (2002), opponents of textbook based teaching claim that even the best textbooks take away the initiative from teachers. Other reasons against textbook based teaching, as proposed by Graves (2000), include the irrelevance or inappropriacy of content for the students, exclusion of important items, imbalanced variety of task-types, unmotivating or outdated activities and unrealistic proposed timetables. Furthermore, McGrath (2002) points out that the risk of using textbooks lies in the fact that teachers might rely on them too much and perceive textbooks as experts who can solve all problems, which might then result in the loss of teachers' creativity.

On the other hand, Tomlinson (2001) observes that the proponents of textbooks argue that textbooks are the most convenient form of presenting materials. He further adds that textbooks help in achieving consistency and continuation, they give learners a sense of system, cohesion and progress and they also help teachers prepare and learners revise. Furthermore, Garinger (2002, as cited in Kontozí, 2012) claims that using a textbook is one of the most effective and readily available ways to relieve some of the pressure put on teachers, lessen preparation time, provide ready-made activities and finally provide concrete samples of classroom progress through which external stakeholders can be satisfied. Also, according to Wen-Cheng (2010), textbooks provide guidance in course and activity design for novice teachers.

Whether one is for or against the textbook based teaching, the fact remains that the number of textbooks increases each year and the task of selecting the appropriate one becomes even harder. Bearing in mind the significant role that textbooks continue to have in teaching and learning, it is very important to choose one that best suits the learners' needs. Miekley (2005) suggests that even though the quality of EFL textbooks has improved dramatically in recent years, the process of selecting an appropriate textbook has not become any easier for most teachers and administrators. In order to ensure that the most appropriate textbook is chosen, textbook evaluation can be carried out, which, according to Maleki, Mollaei and Khosravi (2014), is used so that "EFL textbooks can effectively facilitate the attainment of the teaching objectives and be economically viable to teachers and students" (p.

995). Koutouzi (2012) claims that “through the evaluation of a textbook, teachers know the content of the book, its strengths and weaknesses which will facilitate them to adapt it to suit the course aims, learners’ needs and teachers’ beliefs”(p. 3). Furthermore, the increased need for materials development research has also had an influence on the appearance of materials development courses for teachers (Tomlinson, 2001).

5. Previous research

Many studies have already been conducted on different aspects of textbook evaluation, such as the evaluation of vocabulary, grammar or culture. In this particular study, we have decided to evaluate grammar activities in the chosen textbooks because this is the part of EFL learning which continues to cause great difficulties for learners. In the following sections, various previous research studies on grammar activities in textbooks will be presented, together with their respective results.

To start with, Jahangard (2007) analysed four EFL textbooks used in Iranian high schools in order to investigate why the TEFL curriculum in Iranian public high schools does not meet the expectations of neither learners/teachers nor of the specialists who were involved in the development of the curriculum. Various aspects of the four textbooks were evaluated, including grammar. The results of the grammar evaluation showed that the traditional approach to EFL grammar teaching was still deeply rooted in the Iranian high schools because grammar sections in each lesson were mostly filled with grammar drills which were aimed at providing the learners with oral practice of the intended grammatical items. The drills ranged from repetition and substitution to transformational ones. Jahangard points out that these task types were mainly utilized in the Audio-lingual method and similar approaches to EFL teaching, i.e., in traditional approaches to EFL teaching, as opposed to the communicative language teaching which is the target of modern foreign language classrooms.

In another study, Nogueira Rodrigues (2015) analysed two sixth grade EFL textbooks which are currently being used in Brazil. The aim of her study was to explore to what extent the currently favourable method of communicative approach guides and frames the curriculum content and to evaluate the textbooks’ strengths and weaknesses, which would then allow her to indicate the necessary changes for those textbooks. Among the evaluated

components was also grammar and, in terms of grammar tasks, the results showed that, in general, both textbooks assigned a great deal of attention to the form-meaning relationship in the construction of grammar activities and that grammatical items were explored in contextualized communicative events. However, one of the textbooks did so to a larger extent than the other. One of them used comics to supply the grammatical forms in a communicative context, while the other one employed different kinds of activities, such as dialogues, sentence completions and charts, where the emphasis would at times rely more on form than meaning. The overall conclusion of the study, based on the analysis of various other aspects of the two textbooks, was that, in general, the activities concerning listening, reading, writing and grammar all complied to a relatively weak version of communicative approach and that textbook writers should focus more attention on designing communicative activities which would allow students to interact, negotiate meaning and produce language in communicative contexts.

Kontozi (2012) analysed one of the textbooks for sixth grade pupils in Greece in order to find out whether the said textbook was suitable for sixth graders in terms of corresponding to learners' needs and promoting communicative language teaching. Various aspects of the textbook were analysed and among them, grammar. The results of the analysed grammar activities showed that the PPP model, which belongs to the traditional approach to grammar teaching, was not followed in the book, i.e., the rules were not presented to the pupils, but rather discovered by them. Most of the time, pupils were involved in the productive skills in order to use the new grammatical items. However, most of those tasks were not communicative in nature, i.e., they were not focused on meaning, but on form. Kontozi further observed that the authors of the analysed textbook tried to cover an extensive amount of grammatical items. This could overload pupils with input which they might not yet be able to process cognitively. She also added that it was questionable whether the teachers would be able to cover all the material in the course.

The last study we will comment upon is the one conducted by Askeland in 2013. It is also the one which is the most relevant for our study because of the similarity of topics and because the framework from Askeland's study was adapted to suit the needs of this particular study.

In her analysis of grammar tasks in three textbooks for tenth grade pupils in Norway, Askeland (2013) hypothesised that grammar tasks in those textbooks were somewhat traditional, with a strong focus on rules, even though today the emphasis is on communicative grammar teaching. In the study, she looked at various aspects of grammar tasks, such as the presence or absence of explicit description, type of work (alone/in pairs/in groups) and task type. The results indicated a need for more communicative tasks in which pupils would have the chance to combine grammar practice with language use. Some of her findings were the following: the grammar tasks in Norwegian textbooks were mostly presented in an explicit way; in the majority of tasks pupils were required to work alone and solve the tasks in writing; most grammar tasks are to be practiced in isolated sentences instead of in context; and the majority of tasks are close-ended, i.e., require a single answer, as opposed to open-ended tasks where there are various possible answers. Although the results showed that the prevalent task type was composition, which mostly involves open-ended answers and lets the pupils use the language more freely and focus on both the meaning and grammatical structures, other dominant task types included translating, filling the gaps and transforming one sentence into another by changing the grammatical structure, all of which are indicators of a more traditional approach to grammar teaching.

6. Aim

The aim of this study was to analyse grammar tasks in five EFL textbooks for fifth grade pupils in Croatia. The question that we wanted to answer was whether and to what degree the analysed textbooks vary in pupils' engagement in the process of grammar acquisition. In order to provide an answer to that question, various aspects of grammar tasks were examined, such as the presence or absence of explicit description, type of work (alone/in pairs/in groups) or the context in which grammar is presented (sentence/discourse level).

7. Materials

The materials used in this study were five EFL textbooks for fifth grade pupils in Croatia: *Dip in 5*, *New Building Bridges 5*, *Project 2*, *Spark 1* and *Way to Go 2 plus*. The textbooks were approved by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in 2014 and are currently being used in classrooms in Croatia. Also, all the analysed textbooks are used to teach English to pupils who have started learning English as their first foreign language in the first grade of primary school. A brief description of the textbooks, with focus on grammar parts, is given in the following paragraphs.

The textbook *Dip in 5*, written by Suzana Ban, was published by “Školskaknjiga” in 2013. It is comprised of six large units which are further divided into three to four smaller lessons. In every lesson, there is a separate grammar section called “Language focus” which is usually positioned somewhere in the middle of the lesson. In this section, grammar rules are first explained and exemplified, and later followed by tasks aimed at practicing the presented rules. Furthermore, there is usually one grammar task preceding the “Language focus” and, although there is a separate grammar section, a small number of grammar tasks can also be found in other places throughout the textbook. Also, at the end of the book, before the “Word list”, there is a three-page “Grammar summary” which contains the basic grammar rules covered in the textbook.

New Building Bridges 5, a textbook written by Borka Lekaj Lubina, Jasna Pavuna and Danka Singer, was published by “Profil” in 2014. With 164 pages, it is the largest of the analysed textbooks and is divided into seven large units which are further divided into four lessons respectively. In this textbook, smaller sections with grammar rules and tasks appear

several times in each lesson. In these sections, the grammar rule is first presented in a square under the title “Remember!” and, below it, there are a few tasks for practicing the presented rule. Apart from that, there are no grammar summaries, either at the end of each lesson or at the end of the book, with the exception of the irregular verbs table which can be found on the last page of the textbook.

Project 2 is a textbook written by Tom Hutchinson and published by “Oxford” in 2014. It is comprised of six large thematic units which are further divided into four smaller lessons. In each lesson, there is a separate grammar section titled simply “Grammar” which always comes after the “Vocabulary” and “Comprehension” sections. In all grammar sections, pupils are first supposed to finish the grammar rule by filling in the gaps or by explaining something about the rule. This is followed by several tasks aimed at practicing the presented grammar. Just like in *New Building Bridges 5*, there is no grammar summary after each lesson or at the end of the textbook.

The textbook *Spark 1*, written by Virginia Evans and Jenny Dooley, was published by “Express publishing” in 2013. It consists of six large thematic units, each of which contains a separate grammar section titled “Grammar” which is positioned in the middle of the unit. The grammar section takes up precisely two pages in each unit, with the exception of unit 5 where there are six grammar pages. In every grammar section, first the new rule is presented in a square and then it is practiced in the subsequent tasks. Also, at the end of the textbook, just before the “Word list”, there is a “Self-check” page with grammar tasks for each of the six units which pupils can solve and grade their own progress.

The last analysed textbook was *Way to Go 2 plus*, written by Višnja Anić and published by “Školska knjiga” in 2013. This textbook has five large units which are further divided into four or five smaller lessons. In this textbook, grammar rules appear a couple of times in each lesson in squares titled “Remember”. Grammar tasks, aimed at practicing the presented rule, both precede and follow the “Remember” section. Also, a few pages before the end of each unit, there is a section called “Time for a roundup” in which, apart from vocabulary tasks, there are also grammar tasks aimed at practicing grammar rules presented throughout the unit. Furthermore, at the end of each unit, there is a grammar summary.

8. Procedure

All five textbooks in this study were analysed using a framework which was adapted from a similar study done by Eilén Askeland in 2013. Categories *explicit description* and *task type* were modified to fit this study, while the categories *work*, *medium*, *context* and *open/close* remained unchanged. Additionally, we have included the category *task content* because it filtered itself out as an important category for the purpose of this study. Many analysed grammar tasks contained sub-tasks labelled either with numbers (1, 2, 3, 4...) or with letters (a, b, c, d...) and, in such cases, each sub-task was counted separately. The explanation and exemplification of each of the categories can be found below.

Category 1. *Explicit description* refers to the existence or absence of the explicit description of grammar. If the explicit description is *supplied*, an example of the target structure is given (either in a phrase or in a sentence, or the target structure is highlighted), such as in the Example 1 below.

Make the sentences negative.

1. We travelled by boat.

We didn't travel by boat.

2. We stayed in an apartment.

3. Dad wanted to go to the beach every day.

4. We played tennis every afternoon.

Example 1. Explicit description – supplied (Project 2, task 6, p. 35)

On the contrary, if the explicit description is *not provided*, there is no example of the target structure, as can be seen in the Example 2 below.

Complete the sentences with adverbs of frequency.

1. I walk to school.

2. My friend watches TV in the afternoon

3. My parents go to the cinema.

4. I meet my friends after school.

Example 2. Explicit description – not provided (Spark, task 11, p. 49)

Category 2. *Work* describes whether pupils are supposed to work *alone*, *in pairs* or *in groups* in order to solve a certain task. Also, there is the fourth sub-category *both* for cases where pupils are first instructed to work alone and then to work in pairs or groups. Example 3 illustrates the sub-category *both* where pupils are first instructed to work alone and then to work with a partner.

What do you and your family usually do in the evening? What are you and the members of your family doing now? Write true sentences. Tell your partner.

Example 3. Work – both (Spark, task 12, p. 77)

Category 3. *Medium* refers to the way in which pupils are supposed to perform a task, *orally* or *in writing*. The sub-category *both* refers to those tasks in which pupils are required to use a combination of speaking and writing in order to solve them, as can be seen in Example 4. Also, the sub-category *unclear* refers to those tasks for which it was difficult to determine the way in which the tasks are supposed to be carried out.

Draw your ideal bedroom. In three minutes write a few sentences about it. Compare your room with your partner's. What is similar/different? Tell the class.

My ideal bedroom has got ... There's a ... in my bedroom. ... My bedroom is cool!

Example 4. Medium – both (Spark, task 8, p. 39)

Category 4. *Context* describes whether the tasks are supposed to be carried out at a *sentence* or at a *discourse level*. At a sentence level, the pupils are required to work with grammar in single sentences (Example 5) and at a discourse level the pupils are required to work with grammar in context, such as in a text (Example 6). In the category of *context*, we have also included another sub-category, *other*, which means that the grammatical items might be practiced, for example, on single words.

Compare the sentences with the comparative form.

1. The house looks nicer (nice).
2. The cows are _____ (clean).
3. The dog is _____ happy).

Example 5. Context – sentence level (New Building Bridges 5, task H, p. 94)

Find the negative of these sentences in the text and complete them.

1. On Thursdays I go home at 3.30.

On Thursdays ...

2. She goes to high school.

She ...

Example 6. Context – discourse level (Project 2, task 7a, p. 9)

Category 5. *Task type* refers to the different types of tasks which can be found in textbooks. *Ordering* requires pupils to write sentences from scrambled words or to put events in the correct order. *Multiple choice* asks pupils to choose the correct answer from several given options. In *gap filling* tasks pupils have to fill in the gaps with given words or with the correct form of the word given in brackets. *Matching* refers to tasks in which pupils have to match two complimentary parts. In *transforming* tasks, pupils have to change a word into another (Example 7). *Reformulation* tasks ask pupils to paraphrase a word or a sentence using a different construction. In *composition* tasks, pupils are asked to answer questions, form dialogues, finish partial sentences or make their own sentences and short texts (Example 8). In *translation* tasks, pupils have to translate words, phrases or sentences from English into Croatian or vice versa (Example 9). *Explanation* tasks ask pupils to explain a certain grammatical rule or structure (Example 10). *Correction* refers to tasks in which pupils have to correct grammatical errors in sentences or in texts. Finally, the category *other* describes those tasks which cannot be placed into any of the above explained categories.

What is the comparative? Be careful how you write it!

long - _____	dirty - _____
dangerous - _____	hot - _____
boring - _____	tall - _____

Example 7. Task Type – transforming (Dip in 5, task 5, p. 54)

Write down 5 things you didn't do yesterday.

Example 8. Task Type – composition (Dip in 5, task 2, p. 123)

Translate.

I can speak English.

Can you make a cake?

Can I go out?

Example 9. Task Type – translation (Dip in 5, task 5, p. 45)

Read the table. How do we form the interrogative form of the <i>present continuous</i> ?	
Interrogative	Short answers
Am I reading?	Yes, I am./No, I'm not.
Are you reading?	Yes, you are./No, you aren't.
Is he/she/it reading?	Yes, he/she/it is./No, he/she/it isn't.
Are we/you/they reading?	Yes, we/you/they are. No, we/you/they aren't.

Example 10. Task Type – explanation (Spark 1, task 7, p. 77)

Category 6. *Open/close* describes the number of possible correct answers in a task. If the task is *close-ended*, there is usually only one correct answer (there can sometimes be two

possible correct answers). However, if the task is *open-ended*, there are various possible correct answers, as can be seen in Example 11.

What can the children on our planet do? Write down as many things as you can. Use a dictionary if you want. Start with: *Some children can (do, play, make...)*
Some children can play the piano. Some can write stories. Some can play table-tennis...

Example 11. Open-ended task (Way to Go 2 plus, p. 37)

Finally, category 7. *Task content* describes whether or not the content of a grammar task is related to the topic of the unit in which the grammar task is found. If a task is classified as *related* (Example 12), it means that it is connected to the topic of the unit, and if it is classified as *unrelated*, it means that the content of the task has nothing to do with the topic of the unit in which it can be found. Furthermore, the sub-category *related – free form* (Example 13) describes those tasks which are related to the topic of the unit, but which require pupils to personalize a task, such as to connect the topic to themselves, their friends or family. Also, the sub-category *unrelated – free form*, describes those tasks which are not related to the topic of the unit, but which also require pupils to personalize a task.

How much do you remember about the club members? Write: **can** or **can't**.
1. Sam _____ write stories. He wants to be a writer.
2. Zack _____ do all the maths test.
3. Ella _____ change how she looks so other children _____ recognise her.

Example 12. Task content – related (New Building Bridges 5, task D, p. 17)

What about you? What did you do last Monday or Tuesday? Or some other day? Can you write about it?
What about your family? What did they do last weekend? Can you write at least three sentences?

Example 13. Task content – related-free form (Way to Go 2 plus, tasks 2 and 3, p. 87)

9. Results

In the following sections, the results of the study will be presented. First, we will briefly discuss the number of grammar tasks in each of the analysed textbooks and comment on the language in which the instructions for grammar tasks are given. Later, the results for each of the seven analysed categories, which were described in the previous section, will be presented.

9.1 Number of grammar tasks

The table below shows the relation among the number of grammar tasks, other tasks and overall tasks. The last column shows the percentage of grammar tasks in each textbook. The results show that grammar tasks occupy, more or less, one third of all tasks in the five analysed textbooks. However, textbooks differ in the number of grammar tasks. The most noticeable difference is the one between *Project 2* which has the largest number of them (171) and *Way to Go 2 plus* which has the smallest number of grammar tasks (98). Since we did not analyse the workbooks that accompany the textbooks, we can only hypothesise that one of the reasons behind such a difference in the quantity of grammar tasks might lie in the fact that *Way to Go 2 plus* workbook contains more grammar tasks than the *Project 2* workbook.

Table 1. Number of tasks

Textbook	Grammar tasks	Other tasks	All tasks	Percentage
<i>Din in 5</i>	118	224	342	34.5
<i>New Building Bridges 5</i>	114	261	375	30.4
<i>Project 2</i>	171	302	473	36.2
<i>Spark 1</i>	155	335	490	31.6
<i>Way to Go 2 plus</i>	98	210	308	31.8

9.2 Instructional language

The instructional language in all grammar tasks in the five analysed textbooks is English. Moreover, during the analysis, we did not come across any non-grammar task with instructions in Croatian. In general, Croatian language can be found only in a few vocabulary tasks in *Spark 1* and *Dip in 5*.

9.3 Explicit description

For the category *explicit description*, the results showed that the authors of *Dip in 5*, *New Building Bridges 5* and *Way to Go 2 plus* greatly preferred not providing explicit instruction in grammar tasks, while the authors of *Project 2* and *Spark 1* preferred providing grammar tasks with explicit instruction. It can also be observed that, in the three textbooks where the explicit instruction is mostly not provided, there is a big difference between the number of tasks with provided and not provided explicit instruction, i.e., not provided explicit instruction can be found in more than 67% of grammar tasks in all three textbooks. However, in the two textbooks where the provided explicit instruction is prevalent, there is a smaller difference between the number of tasks with provided and not provided explicit instruction, i.e., the provided explicit instruction can be found in 58 % (*Project 2*) and 53 % (*Spark 1*) of grammar tasks.

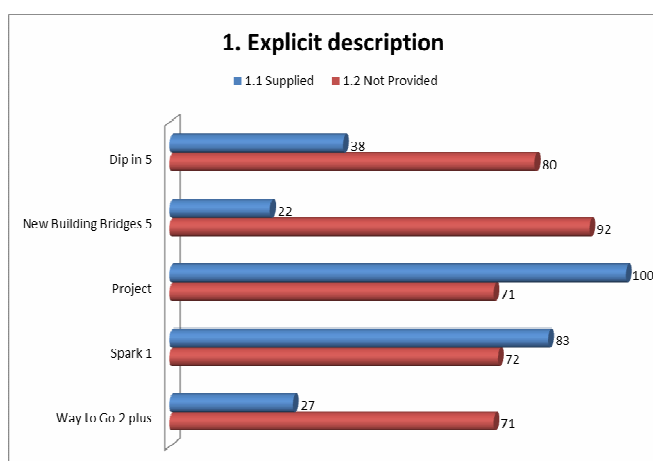


Figure 1. The results for the category *Explicit description*

9.4 Work

In the category *work* all five textbooks demonstrated similar results. In all five of them, pupils are, to a large extent, instructed to work alone. The sub-category *in pairs* was the second most numerous, with the exception of the textbook *Way to Go 2 plus* where the second most numerous sub-category was *both*. Further, the sub-category *in groups* does not even appear in *Spark 1* and *Way to Go 2 plus*, while in the other three textbooks it only appears in a few tasks. Finally, the sub-category *both* appears in all but one textbook (*Project 2*), however, this sub-category can also be found only in a very small number of tasks.

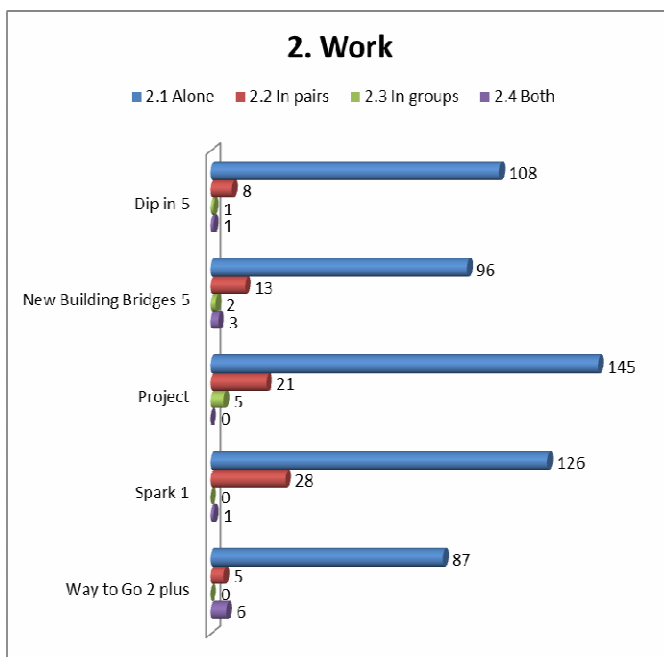


Figure 2. The results for the category Work

9.5 Medium

In all textbooks, the prevalent medium for solving the tasks was *writing*. The sub-category *oral* was the second most common medium in three of the analysed textbooks, while in the other two (*Way to Go 2 plus* and *New Building Bridges 5*) the second most common medium was the sub-category *unclear*. We decided to include the sub-category *unclear* in our analysis because there were tasks which could not be classified as either *oral* or *written* due to the fact that the instruction was not clear enough. The last sub-category, *both*, can be found in all but one textbook (*Project 2*). However, in the four textbooks where this sub-category is present, there are only a few tasks which can be classified as such, i.e., in which pupils first have to work alone and then in pairs or groups.

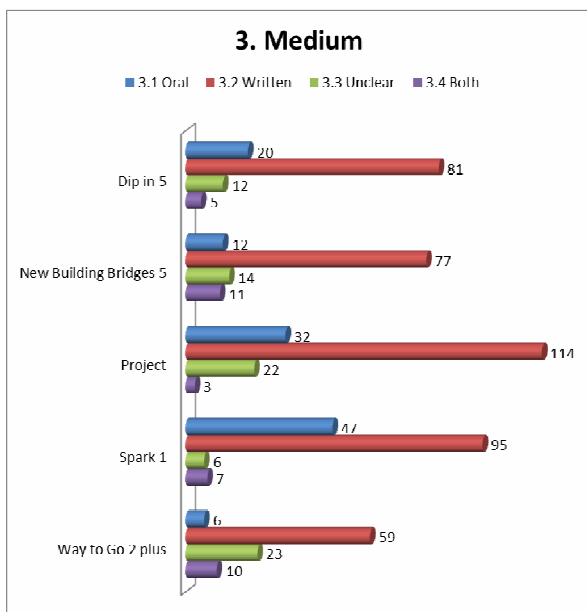


Figure 3. The results for the category Medium

9.6 Context

In all textbooks, the grammar is, to a large extent, practiced in separate sentences. The sub-category *discourselevel* appeared as the second most common context for practicing grammar in three textbooks (*New Building Bridges 5*, *Project 2* and *Way to Go 2 plus*), while in *Dip in 5* and *Spark 1* the second most common context for practicing grammar is classified as *other*.

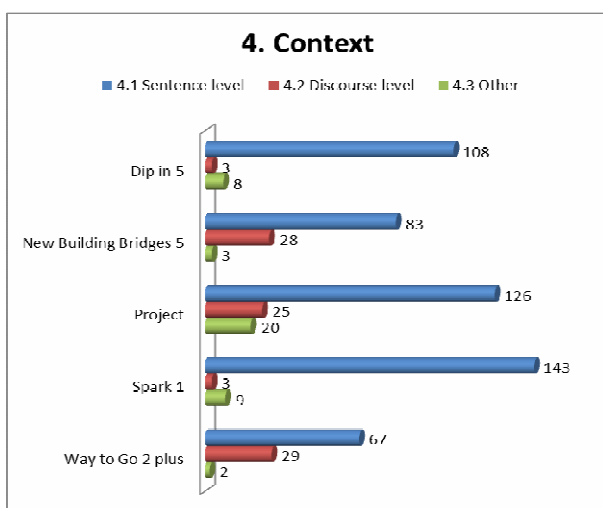


Figure 4. The results for the category Context

9.7 Task type

There were two task types which stood out in all textbooks: *composition*, in which pupils had to answer questions, finish sentences or write their own sentences and short compositions; and *gap filling*, in which pupils were usually asked to fill the gap with only one word. In the following paragraphs, a brief description of the results for each textbook is given.

In *Dip in 5*, *gap filling* was the most common task type, closely followed by *composition*. *Multiple choice*, *matching* and *translation* were the next most common task type, whereas there were no *reformulation* or *correction* task types.

Gap filling and *composition* were also the most frequent task types in *New Building Bridges 5*, followed by *matching* and *multiple choice*. There were, however, no *translation*, *explanation* or *transformation* task types.

In *Project 2*, the majority of tasks were of *composition* type, with *gap filling* being the second most numerous task type. In this textbook, all task types except one (*reformulation*) were present. It should also be mentioned that the number of *transforming* and *explanation* task types also stood out among the results.

The results for *Spark 1* showed that this was the only textbook in which all task types from the framework we used could be found. The most frequent task types were again *composition* (52) and *gap filling* (51). This was followed by *translation* and *explanation* task types. Furthermore, *Spark 1* contained the largest number of *translation* tasks out of all analysed textbooks.

Finally, the textbook *Way to Go 2 plus* showed to be the least diverse in task types. The most frequent task type was again *composition*, followed by *matching*, *gap filling* and *multiple choice*. Apart from these four task types, the results showed that there were two tasks per each of the three following sub-categories: *ordering*, *correction* and *other*. Furthermore, there were no tasks which could be put under the sub-categories of *transforming*, *reformulation*, *translation* or *explanation*.

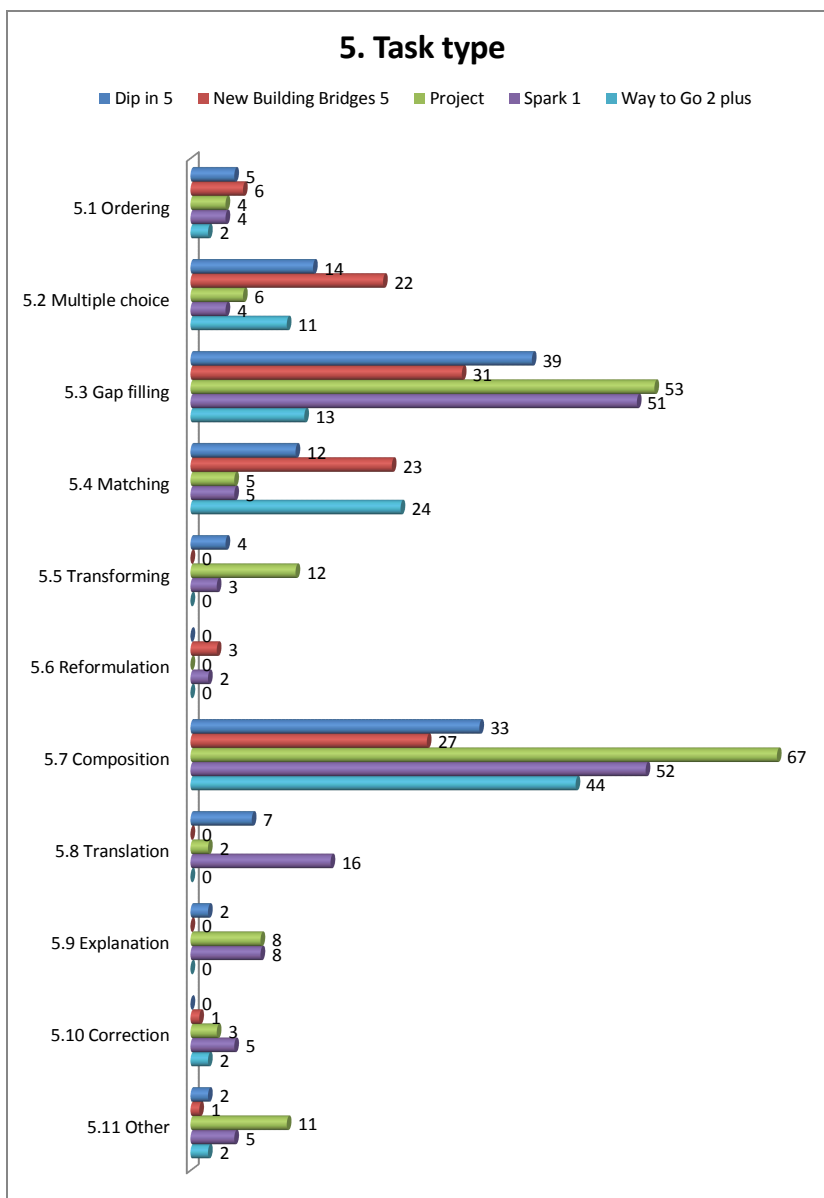


Figure 5. The results for the category Task type

9.8 Open/close

The *open/close* category produced similar results for all analysed textbooks. Most grammar tasks in all textbooks are of *close-ended* type and there is a big difference between the number of *open-ended* and *close-ended* tasks. *Open-ended* tasks occupy only between 8 % and 18 % of all grammar tasks in all but one textbook (in *Way to Go 2 plus* there is one quarter of *open-ended* tasks).

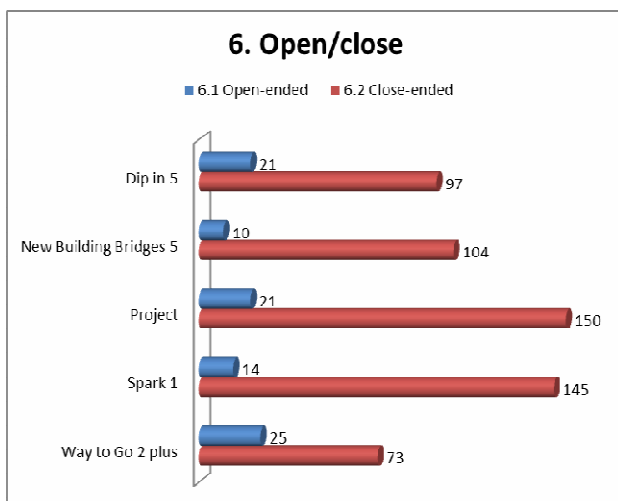


Figure 6. The results for the category Open/close

9.9 Task content

The results of the analysis for this category showed that a great majority of grammar tasks could be classified as *related*, which means that grammar tasks deal with the content presented in that particular lesson. According to the results, the sub-category *related-free form* was the second most common in all except one textbook (*Spark 1*). In *Spark 1*, the sub-category *unrelated* was the second most numerous sub-category. Moreover, *Spark 1* and *Dip in 5* were the only two textbooks where this category appeared. Finally, the sub-category *unrelated-free form* appeared only in *Spark 1*.

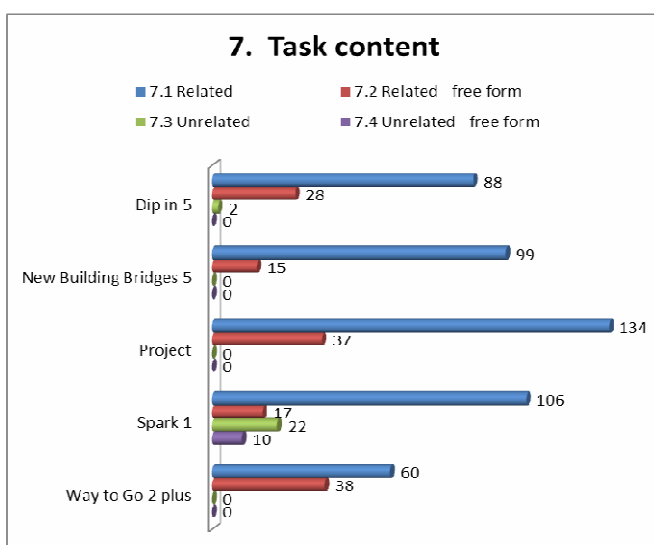


Figure 7. The results for the category Task content

10. Discussion

Based on the results of our analysis, certain observations can be made regarding our research question: Do textbooks vary in the degree of students' engagement in the process of grammar acquisition? In the following sections, each of the analysed categories will be discussed with regard to that question.

To start with, the results for the category *Explicit description* showed that *Dip in 5*, *New Building Bridges 5* and *Way to Go 2 plus* mostly did not provide explicit description of grammar tasks, whereas in *Project 2* and *Spark 1* grammar instruction was presented explicitly in the majority of tasks. The presence or absence of explicit instruction is related to deductive and inductive way of teaching. When teachers use deductive method of teaching, they first present the rules explicitly and then the learners practice and apply those new rules in various tasks. In the inductive way of teaching, however, learners are expected to abstract the rule on their own from the presented material.

Both ways of teaching have their advantages and disadvantages. For example, through deductive teaching, grammar rules can be presented in a clear and quick way, but this type of teaching might not be equally suited for young and adult learners because young learners may not be able to understand the grammar terminology. Inductive teaching, on the other hand, encourages learners to be more active in the learning process, rather than simply being passive recipients. However, inductive teaching can also be time-consuming, or the presented materials may lead the students to wrong conclusions about the specific rule (Puji Widodo, 2006).

If we apply this to our study, it can be concluded that, in the three textbooks in which the explicit description is mostly not provided, pupils are more engaged in the process of grammar learning because they are required to think more about grammar rules before actually applying them. In contrast to this, in the two textbooks where explicit instruction is prevalent, pupils are less engaged because grammar rules are first presented to them, and later practiced and applied.

Although the absence of explicit description might be an indication of a higher pupils' engagement in grammar acquisition, we cannot know how each teacher actually chooses to present the grammar, i.e., whether they choose to follow the textbook or not. Askeland (2013)

observed that teachers could opt for the explicit grammar instruction even in those tasks where explicit instruction is not provided in textbooks.

The results of categories *Work* and *Medium* will be discussed together because *individual* or *pair/group work* is strongly related to the way in which tasks are supposed to be performed – *orally* or *in writing*. In written tasks, pupils are usually instructed to work alone, whereas in oral tasks, they are usually instructed to work in pairs or, rarely, in groups. In all five textbooks, the vast majority of tasks are supposed to be done in writing and alone. Through such tasks pupils might develop good grammar skills to perform well in writing. However, in order to learn how to use grammar appropriately and meaningfully, learners should be provided with more oral tasks in which they would be given the opportunity to communicate more. Also, learners should be given more opportunities to work in pairs or groups because it is through interaction with others that learners can practice grammar in authentic-like contexts. Such tasks, which require pupils to work together and communicate, are more engaging than the ones in which they are asked to work alone and to, for example, fill in a gap. In written tasks, pupils have more time to think about the correct solution, while in oral communication pupils immediately have to decide which structure to use and, at the same time, they also have to stay focused on the overall meaning that they want to express.

For the category *Context*, the results showed that in the majority of tasks grammar is dealt with at a *sentence level*. Askeland (2013) observes that it can sometimes be useful to work with grammar in single sentences because, in this way, a stronger focus on a specific feature is given and this feature can be easily analysed. However, the promoters of communicative approach to grammar teaching stress that grammar should not be dealt with in isolated sentences because this rarely happens in authentic communication. Instead, textbooks should include tasks at a *discourse level* in which, as Askeland (2013) suggests, pupils would be able to practice grammar with a focus on both the message and the context. Therefore, it can be concluded that pupils' engagement is greater in tasks in which they have to deal with grammar at a discourse level because in such tasks they need to pay attention to grammar, message and context. As opposed to this, when grammar is dealt with in separate sentences, pupils' main focus is on applying the grammar rule correctly, for example, in gap-filling tasks where pupils "only" need to choose the correct answer, i.e., they are less engaged because their focus on the message and context is much lower when compared with discourse based tasks.

The results for the category *Task type* showed that all textbooks have a large number of *composition* tasks (in *Project 2*, *Way to Go 2 plus* and *Spark 1* the *composition* tasks were the most numerous, while in *Dip in 5* and *New Building Bridges* this task type came in a close second, right behind *gap-filling* tasks). In composition tasks, pupils are asked to answer questions, complete partial sentences or write their own sentences or short texts, therefore, in such tasks students are much more engaged than in, for example, *matching*, *multiple choice*, or *gap filling* tasks, in which they “only” have to match or choose the correct answer(s). Furthermore, in composition tasks pupils have to use their imagination to solve them and, therefore, pupils are being more active than in tasks in which they have to, for example, fill in the gap with the correct word or choose the correct answer.

To continue, the category *Open/close* showed that all five textbooks, to a large extent, contained tasks which are *close-ended*. In close ended tasks, there is usually one correct answer, while in *open-ended* tasks there are more possible answers. Askeland (2013) observes that open-ended tasks provide better opportunities for language use and that the pupils are potentially more active during such activities. Also, open-ended tasks usually require that pupils use their imagination more compared to close-ended ones. Therefore, pupils are more engaged while solving open-ended than close-ended tasks. Based on the results for this category, it can be observed that all textbooks should include a much more balanced number of open and close-ended tasks so that the pupils might be more engaged in the process of grammar acquisition.

Finally, the results for the category *Task content* showed that, in all textbooks, grammar tasks were almost exclusively *related* to the topic of each lesson. In order to evaluate the pupils’ engagement for this category, we included the sub-category *related-free form* in which the tasks are related to the topic of the unit, but which also require pupils to personalize a task, such as to connect the topic to themselves, their friends or family. The greater the number of such personalized tasks, the greater the pupils’ engagement. In *Way to Go 2 plus*, this sub-category accounted for almost 40 % of all tasks, while in the other four analysed textbooks this sub-category accounted for 11 % - 24 % of all tasks. Therefore, the students’ engagement is the highest in *Way to Go 2 plus*. However, in our opinion, the number of such personalized tasks should be even higher (especially in *Spark 1*) because such tasks allow pupils to meaningfully connect grammatical items to their personal experiences and

preferences, and this, in turn, provides them with greater motivation to solve a certain grammar task and to acquire grammar items more quickly.

11. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyse grammar tasks in five EFL textbooks for fifth grade pupils in Croatia in order to investigate whether and to what degree those textbooks vary in pupils' engagement in the process of grammar acquisition.

The results showed that the most common task type in *Dip in 5*, *New Building Bridges 5* and *Way to Go 2 plus* was composition, which indicates that those three textbooks require more engagement from pupils than *Project 2* and *Spark 1*, although composition task type was the second most common task type in those two textbooks. Also, most textbooks do not contain explicit grammar instruction and in all textbooks grammar tasks are highly related to the topic of the lesson in which they can be found. This again indicates a higher pupils' engagement because, if pupils can relate grammatical items to their personal interests and preferences, they will be more motivated to acquire grammar.

However, when we look at how grammar tasks should be solved, there is a tendency in all textbooks that pupils should work alone to solve them. Moreover, pupils are mostly asked to solve the tasks in writing and to work with grammar in separate sentences. All of this indicates that pupils do not have to be highly engaged when solving grammar tasks. Therefore, although the prevalent task type (composition) should require a higher pupils' engagement, the way in which those composition tasks should be carried out indicates a much lower degree of pupils' engagement.

To conclude, our hope is that this study can help the teachers decide which textbook could best suit their fifth grade pupils' needs. However, further research on other aspects of the analysed textbooks should also be carried out in order to give teachers more insight into everything that those textbooks could offer.

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SAŽETAK

U ovom radu analizirani su gramatički zadaci u udžbenicima engleskog jezika za učenike petih razreda u svrhu istraživanja razine angažiranosti učenika u procesu usvajanja gramatike. Kako bi se došlo do odgovora na postavljeno pitanje, analizirani su razni aspekti gramatičkih zadataka poput vrste zadataka, načina izvođenja zadataka i konteksta u kojem se gramatika vježba. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da se u većini gramatičkih zadataka od učenika traži premala angažiranost pri njihovom rješavanju. Analizirani udžbenici trebali bi sadržavati više zadataka u kojima bi učenici bili angažiraniji jer bi kroz veću angažiranost učenici dobili više prilika za vježbanje i korištenje gramatike u svrhu usvajanja komunikacijske kompetencije, a upravo je to cilj sveprisutnog komunikacijskog pristupa u podučavanju stranih jezika.

Ključne riječi: gramatika, udžbenici, angažiranost, komunikacijski pristup u podučavanju stranih jezika

Appendix

The framework for the analysis

1. Explicit description	1.1 Supplied 1.2 Not provided
2. Work	2.1 Alone 2.2 In pairs 2.3 In groups 2.4 Both
3. Medium	3.1 Oral 3.2 Written 3.3 Unclear 3.4 Both
4. Context	4.1 Sentence level 4.2 Discourse level 4.3 Other
5. Task type	5.1 Ordering 5.2 Multiple choice 5.3 Gap filling 5.4 Matching 5.5 Transforming 5.6 Reformulation 5.7 Composition 5.8 Translation 5.9 Explanation 5.10 Correction 5.11 Other
6. Open/close	6.1 Open-ended 6.2 Close-ended
7.Task content	7.1 Related 7.2 Related – free form 7.3 Unrelated 7.4 Unrelated – free form