

Teachers' Development

Distinguishing the present and future tenses in Czech as a mother tongue may seem to be simple and is not even thought about by most people. None the less, having finished studies many years ago in combination with not very well developed sense for a language may result in considerably serious difficulties when learning a foreign language. Some methods of helping in overcoming such obstructions in communication in a foreign language exist.

A rule of determining whether the verb is in the present or future tense, for example "maluji" and "namaluji", is provided in Czech grammar textbooks. Identifying whether the verb is perfective or imperfective is considered to be the foremost method of solving the dilemma. Forming the past, present and future tense with imperfective verbs is possible, where the future is formed by means of "will". Constructing the present tense with perfective verb is impossible and the future form cannot be produced through the use of "will".

Although working well, the rule mentioned above cannot be applied in a real communication owing to its demandingness concerning the amount of time needed for realizing all the necessary aspects.

People having the problem with recognizing the tenses may be helped by applying the word "právě" as a distinguisher of the present. However, this word matches also with the past tense, which may cause another problems.

Another useful word that may be used to help in identifying the correct tense is "zítra". Difficulty arises when "zítra" is applied for example in a sentence "Hraji tenis." The sentence is mentioned as a general statement expressing regularity or the ability of someone who can play the game. Using the word "zítra" in this case indicates that the verb is in the future tense, which is incorrect.

The difficulty with using the word "zítra" as means of distinguishing the tense of a verb is caused by two different aspects of the Czech language. The correct grammatical future form of the verb "hrát" is "budu hrát". Nevertheless, present forms of verbs are often used in non-standard Czech to express the future and it is grammatically also correct.

No quick, easy and at the same time perfect rule for distinguishing the correct tense in common everyday communication seems to be available. A certain level of sense for a language and experience are required and probably necessary to master this skill and patient practising may be considered the only method of developing and strengthening the proficiency needed.