Silvie Válková
Palacký University in Olomouc, The Czech Republic
Jana Kořínková
Palacký University in Olomouc, The Czech Republic

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3481-4478

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1994-6387

Approaches to Teaching Agreement and Disagreement in Selected Coursebook Series

Abstract

The article focuses on the explicit teaching of language used to express agreement and disagreement in the popular English language coursebooks *English File* and *Navigate*. It reviews the current research on teaching various aspects of polite language and politeness-sensitive speech acts and analyses and compares the explicitly taught phrases of agreement and disagreement in the two selected coursebook series, as well as the methods of their presentation and the amount of background theoretical information provided to students and teachers to facilitate their proper usage. Differences were identified not in the inventories and language representation of the explicitly taught phrases, but mainly in the background support available for students and teachers on their usage.

Keywords: teaching politeness, politeness-sensitive speech acts, English language coursebooks, agreement, disagreement

Agreement and disagreement belong to the most common speech events and as such, they have been studied from different perspectives, for example, philosophy (Frances & Matheson, 2019), contract negotiations (Susskind, 2014), managing people (Brett & Goldberg, 2017), nonverbal audio-visual cues (Bousmalis, Mehu, & Pantic, 2009), in cross-cultural comparison (Johnson, 2006; Chang, 2009; Pattrawut, 2014; Farrokhi & Arghami, 2017) and also in foreign language teaching (Pearson, 1985; Bavarsad, Eslamirasekh, & Simin, 2015; Kurdghelashvili, 2015). The present article focuses on agreement and disagreement in foreign language teaching, specifically on how these essential speech acts are explicitly addressed in selected English language coursebook series which are popular in the Czech Republic.

Foreign language learners generally find it difficult to perform politeness-sensitive speech events (Leech, 2014, p. 186) in the language they learn; such speech events, however, belong to the competences students are supposed to master. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 108), politeness conventions and norms are an integral aspect of sociolinguistic competence. Teaching and learning sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences is challenging, especially in formal foreign language education contexts. It means being able to read situations and understand what is the right thing to say or do; it means knowing when to speak out and when to remain quiet, when to offer sympathy, when to give compliments, and also, of course, when and how to agree or disagree with others.

Since students in the Czech Republic learn English in a context where it is not spoken on an everyday basis, coursebooks remain an essential part of teaching and learning the language and their role in portraying relevant speech situations and speech events is very important. It seems to be a known fact that mistakes in grammar are generally accepted with more understanding on the part of the listener than mistakes in sociolinguistic or pragmatic competences. According to Broersma (2001), for instance, native speakers would most probably think that people making such mistakes are ill-mannered, dishonest, insincere or rude. While many polite expressions and phrases might be acquired through implicit learning by means of repeated exposure, items which are frequent and useful should be the focus of explicit teaching and learning (Kennedy, 2008).

Consequently, there is an unnegotiable need to include politeness language and strategies into any foreign language teaching and learning program. The theoretical background of politeness and the list of politeness-sensitive speech events have already been established by researchers. What has not been fully determined is the degree of correspondence between the theoretical findings and their practical application, which also includes the question to what extent commonly used coursebooks help learners develop and shape their understanding of politeness conventions in English.

Theoretical Background

Our analysis of the currently popular coursebook series has been inspired by Leech's monograph (2014). We decided to follow the set of politeness-sensitive speech events that he uses to exemplify the maxims of the General Strategy of Politeness. In Leech's view, these maxims (e.g., generosity, tact, approbation, modesty, obligation, agreement, opinion reticence, sympathy, feeling reticence)

are just variant manifestations of the same super strategy, that is, the General Strategy of Politeness.

In Leech's theory, the politeness-sensitive acts of agreement and disagreement (Leech, 2014, p. 201) represent the maxims of agreement and opinion reticence related to the General Strategy of Politeness. According to him, in responding to somebody's opinions or judgements, agreement is the preferred response; it shows consideration for the other person's opinion or judgement. This is also supported by Pearson's (1985, p. 102) research where, as a response to 1,170 occurrences of expressions of opinion, agreement was used in 137 cases while disagreement occurred in 49 cases. Disagreement is seen as a dispreferred reaction. In some cultures (e.g., in Japan or China) it may be even considered impolite to present a different opinion from that of one's superiors (e.g., lecturer–students). Thus, when people disagree, they tend to do it hesitantly, indirectly, or with mitigation (e.g., concessive agreement followed by disagreement *Yes, but...* or partial disagreement introduced by the deliberation signal *Well...*) (Pearson, 1985, p. 202). Disagreement or dispreference can be, according to Levinson (1983, p. 339), also expressed by a pause before replying or by a nonresponse.

Although the above-mentioned applies generally, there are situations when agreement would be a dispreferred reaction (e.g., *I'm getting fat*) or, on the other hand, when disagreement is accepted and highly valued (e.g., political parties' discussions or the discourse of academic debate).

Agreement and disagreement have already been studied in the context of various languages, language comparisons and also with respect to the degree to which the presentation of the two speech events in certain coursebooks matched that of native speaker use. The results of Pearson's (1985) analysis of native speaker data show that individual expressions of agreement or disagreement appear in six groups referring to different levels of politeness. There are three types of agreement (i.e., equal, upgraded or scaled-down). Agreement is equal if the assessment in reaction to an opinion is of the same or a similar level (e.g., *Yeah. Yeah, that's what I think*). If agreement makes the expressed opinion stronger by an intensifier or stronger evaluation, it is upgraded (e.g., *Yeah right. Well, of course. Isn't he cute. – Oh, he's adorable*). On the other hand, it is scaled-down if the degree of certainty is lower or evaluation is more moderate (e.g., *They're great. – Nice yeah*). Disagreement is also divided into three types according to the level of politeness (i.e., qualified, different or opposite). Qualified disagreement is the "*I agree but...*" type. The second part usually gives explanation by citing an exception to the previous opinion. Different disagreement assigns either different degree of certainty or different characteristics or quality (e.g., *He got this country back on its feet. – ... before you go further, the thing that got this country back on its feet was WWII*). The least polite type is opposite disagreement which, surprisingly, was also

the most frequent type of disagreement in Pearson's data (e.g., *Chinese food is good. – I don't think so*).

The results drawn from Pearson's analysis of naturally occurring data show that agreement and disagreement occur only as optional responses and the preceding context plays an important role. The most typical syntactic form of expressing agreement and disagreement is the declarative sentence. In terms of politeness, agreement contains positive interactional qualities and as such, it is polite. Disagreement contains negative qualities and it occurs less frequently when the interlocutors highly value the relationship between them.

The comparison of native speaker data and the analyzed coursebooks showed that the expressions of agreement in textbooks were mainly idiomatic (e.g., *I'd go along with you. I take your point*), which, on the other hand, did not occur in the corpus of conversation among native speakers. The performative verb *disagree* did not occur in Pearson's data at all, the verb *agree* occurred more frequently in the coursebooks than in the data. The expressions of disagreement used in the coursebooks did not occur in the data or occurred with very low frequency. Pearson (1985) stated that the native speaker intuition of the writers of the coursebooks she analyzed "does not accurately reflect what native speakers actually say in expressing agreement/disagreement" (p. 142).

Research Related to Teaching Politeness Speech Acts from Textbooks in Formal Education

General coursebook evaluation is particularly important in order to examine possible deficient points in the existing materials and thus give teachers a possibility to enhance the quality of the teaching process by employing different strategies to compensate for the deficiencies. It may give teachers necessary information when selecting the appropriate coursebook as well as familiarize them with the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen material. The history of coursebook evaluation goes back to the 1980s and there exist numerous models, methods, and approaches to coursebook evaluation (e.g., Grant, 1987; Cunningsworth, 1995; Tanner & Green, 1998; Kayapinar, 2009; Abdelwahab, 2013; Demir & Ertas, 2014). While the criteria considered for evaluation are related to various perspectives—for example, contents, skills, layout, and various practical considerations (ranging from less than twenty to more than a hundred items), pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences have not been traditionally included as a separate aspect to assess. In cases where they are reflected, then it is most probably within the local and target culture criteria. Recently, however, intercultural and socio-cultural perspectives seem to be emerging both in general coursebook evaluation (Farzaneh, Kohandani, & Nejadansari, 2014;

Azarnoosh et al., 2018) and in research articles focused on coursebook evaluation of various speech acts (see below).

Research Related to Teaching Politeness-Sensitive Speech Acts in Formal Education

Research related to teaching and learning pragmatics, sociolinguistics or politeness-sensitive speech acts has been approached from various perspectives—for example, whether and to what extent it is in fact possible; which speech acts are covered and how, either in one coursebook or a coursebook series.

The effects of pragmatics instruction in foreign language teaching were explored by Rose (2005), who concluded that many areas of pragmatics seem to be teachable and that explicit instruction tends to render better or more permanent results. Similar conclusions were reached by Alcon Soler (2005), whose research into learners' knowledge and ability to use request strategies in English showed that groups of students taught explicitly and implicitly both outperformed the control group, with the former group being at some advantage.

The effects of teaching and learning pragmatics in classrooms were also researched by Vellenga (2004) who analyzed English as a second language and English as a foreign language textbooks with respect to the use of metalanguage, explicit treatment of speech acts and also metapragmatic information, with the aim to determine the amount and also quality of pragmatic information included. She concluded that "there is a dearth of metalinguistic and metapragmatic information related to ways of speaking in textbooks" (2004) and that learning pragmatics from textbooks is highly unlikely (p. 13).

Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) conducted a pragmatics awareness activity with the aim to determine whether foreign language students can identify pragmatic infelicities and whether they can remedy them. They conclude that intermediate students develop pragmatic awareness even without any specific instruction, that is, they know what to change, however, they have some difficulties with how to change it. "This seems to indicate dual foci for instruction: content and form" (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005, p. 411). The first, according to them, is sociocultural, the second depends on the level of linguistic development and it is likely that learners can take advantage of instruction in form.

The range of speech acts and the way they are distributed in selected coursebooks were studied by Moradi, Karbalaei, and Afraz (2013). Their results show a difference between two series (1,100 different speech acts in one, 275 in the other one) indicating one of them more suitable for teaching pragmatics and communicative functions. Alemi and Irandoost (2012) focused on two speech act strategies (complaints and compliments) at different levels of the

same coursebook and concluded that although the books were rich in terms of the number of the two speech acts, the presentations strategies were rather limited. In contrast to their results, Delen and Tavil (2010) demonstrated that complaints, despite being important, were almost ignored in several series of intermediate coursebooks.

In the Czech context, the sociolinguistic dimension and polite language in selected A1–A2 and C1 popular English coursebooks were researched by Babická and Nevařil (2015, 2016). They found out that all levels of coursebooks present a number of polite phrases, but these mostly appear in tasks focused on raising awareness of polite communication with a limited space for their production and practice.

Based on the available research, pragmatics and politeness are mostly considered to be teachable, although the choice of method may influence the effect since the explicit approach seems to generate more favorable results. Concerning English language coursebooks, several researchers point out that not all speech acts are given due attention—strategies used to present them sometimes appear limited and not enough space is created for learners' practice and independent production. More information and an overview of recent research can be found in the publication *Issues in Coursebook Evaluation* (2018). The authors equip language teachers and researchers with fundamental concepts in book evaluation, including intercultural and socio-cultural perspectives in coursebooks and their evaluation, and also explain how to evaluate the authenticity of conversations in textbooks.

Research Questions and Procedure

For our analysis, we chose two currently popular coursebook series designed for young adult/adult learners of English for general purposes. These series, *English File 3rd Edition* and *Navigate*, have been used to teach students not majoring in English at the Institute of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education and at the Language Centre at the Faculty of Arts of Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Our analysis aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How extensively are the speech acts of agreement and disagreement explicitly covered in the selected coursebooks? Is the presentation of these inductive or deductive?
2. How are agreement and disagreement linguistically represented?
3. What background information is made available for students and teachers on the culture-specific politeness norms of agreement and disagreement?

Both sets of coursebooks (13 books in total) were manually searched, first registering the speech act coverage in general, then focusing specifically on explicitly taught language used to express agreement and disagreement. All relevant expressions and phrases were recorded together with their method of presentation. Corresponding teacher's books (13 books in total) were consulted to identify their overall approach to teaching functional language as well as the amount of additional background information provided to teachers on culture-specific issues of expressing agreement and disagreement in English. The obtained data were then compared between the two series of coursebooks.

General Approach to Teaching Politeness in the Selected Coursebooks

The overall analysis revealed that the majority of politeness-sensitive speech acts, as defined by Leech (2014), were covered by both coursebook series, but not equally. Apart from agreeing and disagreeing, the most frequently represented speech acts were advising, apologizing, and requesting.

Politeness in *English File*

English File comprises a series of coursebooks designed for adults and young adults who want to learn English for general purposes. The series has been in print since 2012 as an updated version of the internationally popular *New English File* series. The main aim of the course series is to provide "the right mix of language, motivation and opportunity to get students talking" (Oxford University Press, 2020). It features seven coursebooks in total: Beginner (A1), Elementary (A1–A2), Pre-Intermediate (A2–B1), Intermediate (B1–B2), Intermediate Plus (B1–B2), Upper-Intermediate (B2), Advanced (C1).

At each level, the authors formulate the main needs of the respective target group of students, which range from being sufficiently motivated to communicate by interesting and varied tasks (A1–A2 levels), through avoiding the plateau and keeping track of progress (B1–B2 levels), to expanding lexis with focus on idiomatic language and appropriate levels of formality (C1 level). Acquiring polite language is not presented as an explicit teaching goal. Rather, students seem to be expected to pick up the norms of politeness through being exposed to various communicative situations and asked to notice and reproduce certain functional language phrases, paying attention mostly to their pronunciation.

Throughout the series, functional language is presented primarily in a special section called *Practical English* (*Colloquial English* in the Upper-Intermediate and Advanced coursebooks), which concludes every second unit of each book and is designed to teach students "to survive in English in travel and social situations" (Latham-Koenig, Oxenden, & Seligson, 2012, p. 28) and in the last two books of the series to expose them to "completely unscripted authentic spoken English" (Latham-Koenig & Oxenden, 2014, p. 5). All these special sections feature videos of various everyday situations as a framework for introducing useful functional expressions and phrases. The presentation strategy is almost exclusively inductive. Students are asked to watch the videos, answer open or true/false questions, notice key social English phrases and then focus on their form while completing 'fill in the missing words' tasks. Finally, they are asked to act out parts of the presented dialogues and assess their progress in functional language using a check box (in the case of the last two books of the series, they are asked to speak on the topic explored throughout the section).

In addition, some politeness-sensitive language is occasionally introduced as a part of speaking or grammar sections of the coursebooks. In such cases, the target expressions and phrases are mostly presented deductively—they are listed in a box marked with a magnifying glass and students are asked to go through them with the teacher and then use them in discussion.

In the relevant teacher's books of the series, the information provided for teachers is almost solely procedural. Additional support is primarily offered on how to make an activity more or less demanding or which extra activities can be done with students, while information on culture-specific aspects of the English language is very rare, mostly concerning the nature of a person's accent. Only a few comments on issues regarding politeness were registered (see below).

Politeness in *Navigate*

The *Navigate* series has been in print since 2015 and its authors state they take an innovative approach to language learning founded rigorously on academic principles including research into second language acquisition. The state-of-the-art syllabus is not only based on the latest research, but also on piloting and practical teacher feedback. The *Navigate* series has been based on the Oxford 3000 (i.e., a list of 3,000 core words that have been chosen based on their frequency in the Oxford English Corpus and relevance to learners of English). The whole course is divided into six books: Beginner (A1), Elementary (A2), Pre-Intermediate (B1), Intermediate (B1+), Upper-Intermediate (B2), Advanced (C1).

In terms of politeness, *Navigate* focuses explicitly and in detail on various aspects of speaking, such as appropriately polite language for a given situation

or tactics for holding the floor in a conversation. In lesson four of every unit, *Speaking and writing*, *Navigate* provides appropriate communication practice for work, study or social life with an emphasis on language production. The lesson also contains two language focus boxes: *Language for speaking* and *Language for writing*. The *Language for speaking* box lists useful phrases that students can use to complete a task about a particular topic.

Navigate teaches rules mainly inductively. First, learners are given a bank of examples of the rule and only then see a part of the rule and are guided to think about how to complete it. There is evidence that for appropriate rules this works as well, and perhaps better, than giving the rule first (Merifield et al., 2015, p. 24). Similarly, when teaching appropriately polite language, students are first introduced to various situations in which politeness-sensitive speech events are used and then they are guided to think about how and when particular phrases are used (e.g., they are asked to think about the level of formality of the situation, whether the agreement or disagreement is strong or weak, etc.). Afterwards, they can check their answers in the *Language for speaking* box and they are given various tasks to practice new phrases in a conversation.

Relevant teacher's books provide additional information about teaching politeness in *Smart communication boxes*. At lower levels, it is suggested that in many everyday situations people react automatically, using set expressions. This is why learners of English need to learn chunks of language including their sound patterns (stress and intonation). They should also be reminded that politeness in the UK and the USA is culturally very important. At higher levels, students learn more complex phrases with the focus on how polite (or impolite) the phrases are and what it is that makes them (im)polite. Teachers are advised to remind them that the way of uttering each phrase will have a significant impact on the message they convey (neutral or polite intonation is more effective in communication than using direct language and stronger intonation).

Results

In both coursebook series, language to express agreement and disagreement in spoken communication is explicitly taught from the lowest level and the complexity of phrases is developed from A1 to C1 levels. *Navigate*, unlike *English File*, also provides some explicit information on agreement and disagreement in written communication.

Explicit Teaching of Agreement and Disagreement in *English File*

At the A1–A2 levels (beginner and elementary coursebooks), agreement and disagreement are not treated as separate language functions. Simple ways of agreeing and disagreeing are introduced within the grammatical context (e.g., *Yes, I am/do/can/have*). Some common phrases (*Sure!*; *Great idea!*; *Me, too*; *OK.*; *No, sorry*; *No, thanks*) are included within the *Social English phrases* lists, together with other basic practical phrases to be used in situations like shopping, booking into a hotel, sightseeing, etc. Disagreement is represented by fewer phrases than agreement. No culture specific background information or explanation is provided apart from the fact that "nobody knows for sure what the origin is of the expression OK" (Latham-Koenig et al., 2015, p. 14).

At the B1–B2 levels (Pre-Intermediate to Intermediate Plus coursebooks), more phrases expressing agreement and disagreement are explicitly taught in the context of giving opinions (*I agree/don't agree*; *I'm not sure*), responding to plans and predictions (*I hope so/not*; *I think /don't think so*; *I doubt it*; *Maybe*, *etc.*), reacting to what people say (*You've got to be kidding me*; *I don't believe it! Oh, no!*), accepting and rejection suggestions (*It's a great idea*; *It's not bad, but...*) or debating a topic (*I completely agree/partly agree/completely disagree with that*). Again, no additional information or explanation is provided on how to use these expressions, apart from the model situation they are introduced in. In learning the phrases, students are repeatedly encouraged to pay attention to appropriate intonation, although it is not explained why. Students are also asked to translate the phrases to their mother tongue, which can potentially lead to discovering some awareness of culture specific norms, but also depends on the quality of translation and the teacher's monitoring and input.

The Upper-Intermediate coursebook (B2) does not supply students with any new phraseology related to agreement or disagreement, but just reminds them briefly of the useful language they have learned at the previous levels (lists of phrases in the *Useful language box*) to support speaking activities. However, at one point the book provides brief information that it is important to use friendly intonation while responding to what someone says, so as not to sound unfriendly or uninterested (Latham-Koenig, 2014, p. 5).

In the Advanced coursebook (C1), students are presented an overview of expressions for agreeing and disagreeing in the *Speaking section* of the introductory lesson. Nine basic phrases are categorized in to three types: Agreeing (*I totally agree; That's just what I think, too; Absolutely!)*, half agreeing (*I see your point, but...*; *I see what you mean, but...*; *I agree up to a point, but...*) and disagreeing (*I'm not sure I agree with you*; *I'm afraid I don't really agree*; *I don't really think you're right*). At this point, it is explained to the students that British people avoid using strong expressions of disagreement, but rather try

to soften their disagreement by half-agreeing or by using softening expressions like *I'm afraid, I'm not sure*) (Latham-Koenig, Oxenden, & Lambert, 2020, p. 5). No further supportive information is provided in the teacher's book, students are only asked to drill the phrases with focus on the appropriate intonation and sentences stress, and then use them in a discussion over the given controversial topic. No more space is devoted in the book to the explicit teaching of agreement and disagreement.

Agreement and Disagreement in *Navigate*

The A1 level includes agreement phrases in everyday phrases (*Tea? Yes, please*) and also in response to a request (*Yes, thank you*; *Of course*; *Sure. No problem*). The reason for this is, as stated in the *Smart communication box* of the teacher's book, that disagreeing, that is, saying *no* politely is more complex. A simple *no* is considered very hard and direct (both in the UK and the USA), so teachers should rather suggest using *Sorry* to mean *No* (particularly if someone asks for your help). The A1 level also develops agreement and disagreement in connection with grammar—the usage of short answers in present and past tenses, *going to*, *would like*, etc. in spoken and written mode (e.g., when writing thank-you notes to react to invitations).

At the A2 level, agreement and disagreement are dealt with when teaching how to make suggestions, arrangements, requests, and when expressing opinions (*Yes, I'd love to*; *Yes, that's fine*; *No, I'm sorry but... I'm afraid not*). In the *Smart communication boxes* for teachers, it is again stressed that it is common to start with an apology when you give a negative reply, for example, to a request (*I'm afraid* in writing and *Sorry* in speaking). Polite intonation is emphasized too; students are advised to focus on how the intonation goes up to show they are being polite.

The B1 level teaches additional and more complex phrases with similar emphasis as at the previous level—that it is generally considered more polite to give a more detailed reason why you, for example, cannot accept something than to simply say *no.* Polite intonation is taught and practiced again. Agreement and disagreement are introduced as part of teaching how to invite, make arrangements and respond to opinions (*Sounds...!*; *Yeah, I agree*; *That's a good point*; *True, but what about...*; *I take your point but...*).

Levels B1+ and B2 focus on agreement and disagreement directly. Students are taught phrases of strong and weak agreement and disagreement. They are reminded to be polite even if they do not agree, and are informed how important intonation is. They are warned that saying *Rubbish!* is a very strong form of disagreement and that disagreeing politely in English is usually a question of being indirect (using softeners, e.g., *Actually,...*; *Well,...*, apologizing for

disagreeing, for example, *Sorry, but...*, or sounding less certain than you really are, for example, *I'm not sure about that*).

At the advanced level C1, teachers are again advised to focus on students' ability to agree and disagree politely and to lead a balanced discussion in order to reach some conclusion in formal negotiations. To manage conversations, students are given some typical phrases to agree (*I see what you mean*; *I suppose you're right*), to agree strongly (*I couldn't agree more*), to disagree (*I don't think I'm with you there*; *I don't see that at all*), and to disagree strongly (*I totally disagree with you*). While students practice the phrases, teachers are advised to comment on their effective usage. For informal negotiations, phrases like *I could go along with that*; *I'm happy with that* for agreeing and *Frankly, I'm not really happy with that* for disagreeing are introduced. Both in formal and informal negotiations, students are advised to sound tactful and supportive of their negotiating partners.

Language of Agreement and Disagreement Explicitly Introduced in *English File* and *Navigate*

Agreement

Thirty-one explicitly introduced phrases of agreement were recorded in the *English File* coursebooks and 41 in the *Navigate* coursebooks. Surprisingly, only a small proportion of these was presented in both series in an identical form. This common core of language explicitly taught to express agreement included the following phrases:
Absolutely/Absolutely!
I agree.
I completely agree.
I suppose so/I suppose...
Maybe.
No problem.
Of course/Of course!
Sure.
That's just what I thought.
That's right.
Yeah/Yeah, ...
Yes, I am/can/do/have.
Yes, of course.

The remaining 18 expressions presented in *English File* and 28 in *Navigate* were completely different or phrased partly differently. The modifications that we noticed varied in character: The *Navigate* coursebook introduces more phrases that are rather tentative (e.g., *I guess so*, *I suppose...*) and more frequently include modal verbs (e.g., *I think you could be right*; *That'd be great* as opposed to *I think you are right*; *That's great* in *English File*). The grammatical means to express more distant agreement were also used more commonly in *Navigate* (e.g., *That's just what I thought/was thinking* as opposed to *That's just what I think* in *English File*). In terms of the length of the phrases used to express agreement, *English File* teaches more shorter ones (e.g., *Yeah*; *OK.*), which, in comparison with those in *Navigate* (e.g., *Yes, please*; *Yes, thank you*; *That's fine with me*) may in some contexts sound less friendly or even curt.

In agreement with Pearson's (1985) findings, we can say that the phrases explicitly taught in the two coursebook series were mainly declarative sentences with some usage of exclamations (four in *Navigate*, six in *English File).* Although some idiomatic phrases were introduced in our coursebooks (*I could go along with that; I guess so, you've got a point there*), they were rather infrequent. This is in contrast with Pearson's data, which showed that idiomatic forms of agreement constituted the most common type in the analyzed coursebooks, where they appeared, in fact even more frequently than in conversations among native speakers.

We also decided to categorize the recorded phrases of agreement into the groups suggested by Pearson, that is, equal, upgraded, and scaled-down. The results show that both *Navigate* and *English File* make use of equal agreement (57.5% and 49% respectively) most frequently, which corresponds with Pearson, who finds this type of agreement crucial for English language learners. Our coursebooks differ, however, in the proportion of upgraded and scaled-down types. In *Navigate*, the upgraded type constituted 18% of all phrases and the scaled-down type 24.5%, while in *English File* upgraded agreement was more frequent (35%) than scaled-down (16%). These outcomes are in accordance with the already mentioned findings, that is, *Navigate* tends to teach phrases that are more tentative and distancing.

Disagreement

Thirty-one explicitly introduced phrases of disagreement were recorded in the *English File* series and 36 in the *Navigate* series. The common core of language explicitly taught to express disagreement included only the following six phrases:
I agree up to a point, but...
I don't/can't agree.

I don't think…
I totally disagree.
No, thanks.
You can't be serious!

In comparison with agreement, the difference between the number of phrases explicitly introduced in *English File* and *Navigate* is not so high. The number of common phrases, however, is lower than in the case of agreement (six common phrases for disagreement, 13 for agreement). What is surprising is the fact that the number of phrases taught to express disagreement in both coursebooks is not significantly lower than the number of phrases for agreement, despite the fact that disagreement is considered a dispreferred reaction.

Similarly to the expressions of agreement, *Navigate* introduces more tentative phrases for disagreement (*I'm afraid I can't*…) or partial disagreement phrases (*Yes, but*…; *I take your point, but*…). The phrases presented in *Navigate* also include more modal verbs (*I can't agree* vs. *I don't agree*) as well as softeners (like *actually* or *well*) to make the phrases sound less certain than the speaker really may be. The phrases presented to students in *English File* tend to be shorter and they usually do not include giving reasons for disagreement, which is, on the other hand, considered important in *Navigate*, where a simple *no* is understood as very hard and direct. This is also the reason why some phrases for disagreement taught by *Navigate* are preceded by an apology (*Sorry, but*…), while in *English File* we did not find such a formulation of disagreement.

As with the expressions of agreement, the phrases explicitly taught for disagreement were mainly declarative sentences with some examples of exclamations (two out of 36 in *Navigate*, six out of 31 in *English File*). Whereas Pearson (1985) reported zero occurrence of the performative verb *disagree* in the data of native speakers, in our corpus of phrases this verb appeared in five different phrases.

When trying to categorize the phrases for disagreement into the groups identified in Pearson's research, we found out that it was not as easy as with the phrases of agreement, which were distinguished by the type of modification (upgraded or scaled-down). The categories of disagreement are based on a larger context, that is, qualified disagreement (*Yes, but*… type) gives some explanation, usually by citing an exception; different disagreement assigns different degrees of certainty, characteristics or quality. Without a larger context, it was not possible to categorize the isolated phrases we recorded into the two aforementioned groups; therefore, we were only able to identify the phrases that clearly express the opposite type of disagreement, that is, such phrases that stand in opposition to the assessment made by the prior speaker. Although this is the least polite form of disagreement, in Pearson's data, it appeared to be the most frequent type in native speaker communication. In our corpus, this

type of phrase constituted 61% of disagreement phrases in *Navigate* and 65% in *English File*, which supports Pearson's findings.

Conclusions

Two language coursebooks, *English File* and *Navigate*, frequently used for teaching English to young adults and adults in the Czech Republic, were analyzed and compared with regard to the explicitly taught language of agreement and disagreement. It was found that the coursebooks take a partially different approach to teaching politeness, including agreement and disagreement, with a potential effect on the development of students' pragmatic competence. Differences were identified mainly in the areas of language representation and in the amount of background theoretical information provided for both teachers and students, so that the various agreement and disagreement phrases are able not only to be memorized, but also used appropriately in relevant situations.

Our first question inquired into the extent of expressive coverage of the speech acts of agreement and into the methods of their presentation. We found out that although both coursebook series explicitly presented a certain number of phrases used for these purposes at all levels, only *Navigate* at one point explicitly teaches agreement and disagreement in written communication. Most expressions and phrases of agreement and disagreement are presented in the context of more general language functions such as giving opinions, responding to plans and predictions, accepting and rejecting suggestions and invitations, or debating a topic. Agreement and disagreement as a separate topic is included in the coursebooks B1+ and B2 in the *Navigate* series and in the C1 coursebook in the *English File* series. As for the methods of presentation, *English File* introduces phrases expressing agreement and disagreement deductively in the form of language boxes, if part of the *Speaking* sections, and inductively as part of video sequences, if part of the *Practical/Colloquial English* sections. In the presentation, students are almost always reminded to notice and copy the appropriate intonation and to translate the phrases into their mother tongue, which is of questionable benefit, because the translations do not have to be pragmatically accurate. In *Navigate*, their presentation is predominantly inductive and tends to be accompanied by pragmatic information that includes not only reminders to use friendly intonation but also information about sociolinguistic appropriateness. Students see the usage of various phrases in different situations and they are expected to notice when and how those phrases are used. The *Language for speaking box* then provides them with answers before they practice the given phrases in a conversation. In the

Smart communication boxes, teachers can find additional information about the cultural importance of politeness, level of formality, etc.

Our second question concerned the variety of the explicitly taught language for agreement and disagreement. In agreement with previous research, this language was mostly represented primarily by simple declarative sentences and occasionally by exclamations. The common core of phrases introduced in exactly the same form in both coursebook series is relatively small (13 phrases for agreement and only six phrases for disagreement). *English File* introduces less variety of phrases, especially to express agreement. The phrases taught in *Navigate* are not only more numerous, but they also seem to be more varied—expressing subtler, less direct forms of response for agreement or disagreement.

The most striking difference between the two coursebook series was identified in the amount of background information provided for students and teachers on the culture-specific politeness norms of agreement and disagreement. In *English File*, such information was extremely rare, as if the authors of the series took it for granted that all teachers using the coursebooks were sufficiently able to explain the appropriate context of usage of the individual phrases. This is hardly the case, especially where the phrases are introduced deductively, without the context of a communicative situation. In contrast, *Navigate* provides teachers in *Smart communication boxes* with additional information about the cultural importance of politeness, level of formality and other relevant information from the very basic level A1, explaining, for example, the intricacies of disagreement right at the beginning of students' communication endeavors (saying *no* in English is more complex, it is usually accompanied by an apology or explanation). Polite intonation is not only mentioned but also fully explained at all levels, with the aim to teach students that sounding polite, tactful, and supportive is very important.

Out of the two analyzed coursebook series, *Navigate*, claiming an innovative approach to supporting English language learning in young adults and adults, clearly seems to be a better choice for acquiring appropriate politeness strategies (including those to express agreement and disagreement), which is perceived as an important goal of English language teaching. Of course, any coursebook is only a tool and the resulting pragmatic competence of students also depends on their teacher's personal input and on the nature/amount of practice and authentic language input both in and outside the English lessons. Further research should be concerned with identifying to what extent the usage of a particular coursebook is reflected in the actual student pragmatic competence.

References

Abdelwahab, M. M. (2013). Developing an English language textbook evaluative checklist. *IOSR Journal of Research and Method in Education, 1*(3), 55–70.

Alcon Soler, E. (2005). Does instruction work for learning pragmatics in the EFL context? *An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics*, *33*(3), 417–435.

Alemi, M., & Irandoostm R. (2012). A textbook evaluation of speech acts: The case of English result series. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature, 1*(6), 199–209.

Azarnoosh, M., Zeraatpishe, M., Faravani, A., & Kargozari, H. R. (Eds.). (2018). *Issues in Coursebook Evaluation*. Brill Sense.

Babická, B., & Nevařil, J. (2016). Learning politeness in a foreign language—The case of speaking activities in English coursebooks at the advanced level. *Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studies*, *3*(1), 92–102.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Griffin, R. (2005). L2 pragmatic awareness: Evidence from the ESL classroom. *System, 33*, 401–415.

Bavarsad, S. S., Eslamirasekh, A., & Simin, S. (2015). A cross-cultural study of disagreement strategies to suggestions between Persian EFL learners and American native English speakers. *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning, 4*(4), 93–105.

Bousmalis, K., Mehu, M., & Pantic, M. (2009, September). *Spotting agreement and disagreement: A survey of nonverbal audiovisual cues and tools*. Paper presented at IEEE International Conference on Affective Computing and Intelligent Interaction. https//doi.org/10.1109/ACII.2009.5349477

Brett, J., & Goldberg, S. B. (2017). How to handle a disagreement on your team. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2017/07/how-to-handle-a-disagreement-on-your-team

Broersma, D. (2001). "You're so white, so fat, and so hairy!": Developing sociolinguistic competence in a second language. In L. J. Dickerson (Ed.), *Helping Learners Develop Second Language Proficiency* (pp. 200–205). Mission Training International.

Chang, Y. F. (2009). How to say no: An analysis of cross-cultural difference and pragmatic transfer. *Language Sciences, 31*(4), 477–493.

Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook.* Heinemann.

Delen, B., & Tavil, Z. M. (2010). Evaluation of four coursebooks in terms of three speech acts: Requests, refusals and complaints. *Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences, 9*, 692–697.

Demir, Y., & Ertaş, A. (2014). A suggested eclectic checklist for ELT coursebook evaluation. *The Reading Matrix, 14*(2), 243–252.

Farzaneh, N., Kohandani, M., & Nejadansari, D. (2014). A textbook evaluation of socio-cultural context in Top Notch series. *Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences, 98*, 472–481.

Farrokhi, F., & Arghami, M. (2017). A contrastive study of the use of politeness strategies in disagreement among characters with different power relations in English and Farsi novels. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 7*, 657–669.

Frances, B., & Jonathan, M. (2019). Disagreement. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/disagreement

Grant, N. (1987). *Making the most of your textbook*. Heinemann.

Johnson, F. (2006) Agreement and disagreement: A cross-cultural comparison. *BISAL, 1*, 41–67.

Kennedy, G. (2008). Phraseology and language pedagogy associated with English verbs in the British National Corpus. In F. Meunier & S. Granger (Eds.), *Phraseology in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*, (pp. 21–41). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kurdghelashvili, T. (2015). Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies in an EFL Classroom in Georgia. *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering, 9*, 306–309.

Leech, G. (2014). *The pragmatics of politeness.* Oxford University Press.

Moradi, A., Karbalaei, A., & Afraz, S. (2013). A textbook evaluation of speech acts and language functions in high school English textbooks (I, II and III) and Interchange series, Books I, II, and III). *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences, 2*(2), 323–335.

Nevařil, J., & Babická, B. (2015). The sociolinguistic dimension in ELT coursebooks. In C. Haase, N. Orlova, & J. C. Head (Eds.), *ELT: New Horizons in Theory and Application* (pp. 15–30). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Oxford University Press. (2020). *English File*, 3rd ed. Retrieved from https://elt.oup.com/catalogue/items/global/adult_courses/english_file_third_edition/?cc=cz&selLanguage=cs&mode=hub

Pattrawut, C. (2014). A cross-cultural pragmatic study: Politeness strategies and realizations of the strategies used to perform student-lecturer multiple disagreements by native speakers of Thai and English. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, 4*(1), 147–158. https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2014.v4n1p147

Pearson, E. (1985). Agreement and disagreement: A study of speech acts in discourse and ESL/EFL materials. (M.A. thesis). University of Hawaii at Manoa. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10125/38616

Rose, K. R. (2005). On the effects of instruction in Second Language Pragmatics. *System, 33*, 385–399.

Tanner, R., & Green, C. (1998). *Tasks for teacher education*. Longman.

Vellenga, H. E. (2004). Learning pragmatics from ESL & EFL textbooks: How likely? *TESL-EJ, 8*(2). Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1068091.pdf

Susskind, L. (2014). *Good for you, Great for me: Finding the trading zone and winning at win-win negotiation*. Public Affairs.

Coursebooks

Appleby, R., Adkins, J., Griggs, K., Tomlinson, J., & Wyatt, R. (2015). *Navigate B1+ Intermediate teacher's guide.* Oxford University Press.

Appleby, R., Walker, S., & Wyatt, R. (2016). *Navigate C1 Advanced teacher's guide.* Oxford University Press.

Bartram, M., & Pickering, K. (2016). *Navigate C1 Advanced coursebook*. Oxford University Press.

Dummet, P., & Hughes, J. (2016). *Navigate A1 Beginner coursebook*. Oxford University Press.

Dummet, P., Hughes, J., & Wood, K. (2015). *Navigate A2 Elementary coursebook*. Oxford University Press.

Krantz, C., Roberts, R., Griggs, K., & Lambrick, G. (2016). *Navigate B2 Upper-intermediate teacher's guide*. Oxford University Press.

Krantz, C., & Norton, J. (2015). *Navigate B1 Pre-Intermediate coursebook*. Oxford University Press.

Krantz, C., & Roberts, R. (2016). *Navigate B2 Upper-intermediate coursebook*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., & Oxenden, C. (2013). *English file: Intermediate: Student's book with DVD-ROM*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., & Oxenden, C. (2014). *English File: Upper-intermediate student's book*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., & Oxenden, C. (2015). *English File: Beginner student's book*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., & Oxenden, C. (2019). *English File: Pre-intermediate student's book*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., & Boyle, M. (2015). *English File: Intermediate plus student's book: With test and assessment CD-ROM*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., & Lambert, J. (2015). *English File: Advanced student's book*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., Lambert, J., Lowy, A., & García, B. M. (2015). *English File: Advanced teacher's book*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., Lambert, J., & García, B. M. (2015). *English File: Intermediate plus teacher's book*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., Lowy, A., García, B. M., & Boston, P. (2013). *English File: Intermediate teacher's book with test and assessment CD-ROM*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., Lowy, A., & García, B. M. (2014). *English File: Upper-Intermediate teacher's book*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., Lowy, A., & García, B. M. (2015). *English File: Beginner teacher's book*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., & Seligson, P. (2012). *English File: Elementary student's book. Third edition*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., & Seligson, P. (2012). *English File: Elementary teacher's book: With test and assessment CD-ROM*. Oxford University Press.

Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., Seligson, P., & Hudson, J. (2019). *English File: Pre-intermediate teacher's book*. Oxford University Press.

Meldrum, N., Aish, F., Lambrick, G., Smith, W. J., & Wyatt, R. (2015). *Navigate A2 Elementary Teacher's guide.* Oxford University Press.

Merifield, S., Homes, L., Walker, S., & Wyatt, R. (2015). *Navigate B1 Pre-intermediate teacher's guide*. Oxford University Press.

Merifield, S., & Rézmüves, Z. (2016). *Navigate A1 Beginner teacher's guide*. Oxford University Press.

Roberts, R., Buchanan, H., & Pathare, E. (2015). *Navigate B1+ Intermediate coursebook*. Oxford University Press.

Silvie Válková, Jana Kořínková

Ansätze zum Unterrichten von Zustimmung und Ablehnung in ausgewählten Kursbuchreihen

Z u s a m m e n f a s s u n g

Der Artikel konzentriert sich auf die explizite Vermittlung von Sprachformen zum Ausdruck der Zustimmung bzw. Ablehnung in den populären Englisch-Kursbuchreihen *English File* und *Navigate*. Dabei wird ein Überblick über die aktuelle Forschung zum Unterrichten verschiedener Aspekte der Höflichkeitskompetenz und höflichkeitssensibler Sprechakte geschaffen. Des Weiteren werden die explizit vermittelten Ausdrücke der Zustimmung und Ablehnung in den beiden gewählten Kursbuchreihen sowie die Methoden ihrer Präsentation und der Umfang der theoretischen Hintergrundinformationen, die Schülern und Lehrern zur Verfügung gestellt werden, um ihre richtige Verwendung zu erleichtern, analysiert und miteinander verglichen. Unterschiede wurden nicht in Bezug auf den Inhalt und die sprachliche Repräsentation der explizit vermittelten Ausdrücke festgestellt, sondern vor allem hinsichtlich der Hintergrundunterstützung, die Schülern und Lehrern zur Verfügung steht.

Schlüsselwörter: Unterrichten von Höflichkeitskompetenz, höflichkeitssensible Sprechakte, Englisch-Kursbücher, Zustimmung, Ablehnung