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Promoting Social Interaction in Lower Secondary English Classes

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ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with the issue of developing speaking skills through activities which are based on social interaction. The main aim of this paper is to find out whether the teacher provides the learners with opportunities during which they can participate in social interaction in English. The theoretical part defines the term social interaction in relation to the topic of the thesis, mentions the development of social interaction in English classes and provides examples of communicative activities. The practical part presents the outcomes and findings of the research.

KEY WORDS

social interaction, communicative competence, communicative language teaching, communicative activities

ABSTRAKT

Bakalářská práce se zabývá rozvojem řečových dovedností za pomoci učebních aktivit, které zahrnují sociální interakci v anglickém jazyce. Hlavním cílem práce je zjistit, zda učitel do své výuky zařazuje aktivity, během nichž mohou žáci procvičovat sociální interakci v angličtině. V teoretické části je definován pojem sociální interakce ve vztahu k tématu této práce, dále je zde představen rozvoj sociální interakce v hodinách anglického jazyka a také učební aktivity, které vyžadují komunikaci žáků. V praktické části jsou prezentovány výsledky výzkumu.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

sociální interakce, komunikativní kompetence, komunikační přístup k výuce anglického jazyka, komunikativní aktivity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	9
INTRODUCTION	10
THEORETICAL PART	11
1 SOCIAL INTERACTION	11
1.1 Social interaction from the perspective of social psychology	11
1.2 Social interaction within the general objectives of the basic education	12
1.3 Social interaction in ELT according to FEP BE	13
1.4 Social interaction in ELT according to CEFR	14
1.5 Comparison of FEP BE and CEFR	18
2 THE LEARNER IN THE NINTH GRADE OF BASIC SCHOOL	19
3 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN ELT	20
3.1 Introduction to the phenomenon of communicative competence	20
3.2 Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence	20
3.3 Goh and Burn's model of Second language speaking competence	21
3.4 Communicative language teaching	22
3.4.1 Communicative language teaching as the essential approach to ELT?	23
3.4.2 Current trends in CLT	25
3.5 Interaction patterns in English classes	27
4 COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES	28
4.1 Communication gap	28
4.2 Jigsaw activities	28
4.3 Role-play, simulation and discussion	29
4.4 Information-gathering activities	30
4.5 Task-completing activities	30
PRACTICAL PART	31
5 RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODOLOGY	31
5.1 Research aims	31
5.2 Research questions	32
5.3 Methodology	32
6 PARTICIPANTS OF THE RESEARCH	33
7 OUTCOMES OF COLLECTED DATA	34
7.1 Group J: Interaction patterns	34
7.2 Group J: Types of communication activities	35

7.3 Group J: Timeline of the lesson	38
7.4 Group G: Interaction patterns	38
7.5 Group G: Types of communication activities.....	39
7.6 Group G: Timeline of the lesson.....	41
8 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.....	41
8.1 Group J.....	42
8.2 Group G	44
8.3 Comparison of Group J and Group G.....	46
9 FINAL SUMMARY	48
CONCLUSION.....	49
RESUMÉ	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	54
APPENDICES	56

List of Figures

Figure 1.: The Common Language Reference Levels (CEFR 2003, 23)	15
Figure 2.: Social Interaction Activities in Group J during Average English Lesson.....	38
Figure 3.: Social Interaction Activities in Group G during Average English Lesson	41
Figure 4.: Representation of Social Interaction in Group J	44
Figure 5.: Placement of Social Interaction Activities in Group J	47
Figure 6.: Placement of Social Interaction Activities in Group G.....	47

Introduction

This bachelor thesis explores the development of speaking skills in English language teaching in relation to the use of activities which are based on social interaction. The primary purpose is to find out whether the teacher provides the learners in the 9th grade of basic school with opportunities during which they can participate in social interaction in English.

Basic education might be the highest attained level of education for some people. Consequently, the learners should be prepared for situations which require communication with others in English.

The thesis is divided into two parts: theoretical and practical. In the theoretical part, the first chapter is focused on the definition of social interaction from the perspective of social psychology, the general objectives of the basic education in the Czech Republic and also The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The second chapter briefly introduces the 9th grade learners of basic school since they play an important role in this thesis. In the third chapter, the focus is moved to the development of social interaction in English classes and therefore, the phenomenon of communicative competence, communicative language teaching and interaction patterns are introduced. The last chapter of the theoretical part is devoted to specific communicative activities in English classes which are explained and illustrated by examples.

In the practical part, the focus is firstly on the research aims and the methodology selected for data gathering. As previously noted, the main aim of this paper is to find out whether a teacher in the 9th grade provides the learners with opportunities during which they can participate in social interaction in English. The research also focuses on interaction patterns used by the teacher during the observations and activities based on social interaction in terms of their variety. Furthermore, the timeline of the lesson is analysed with regard to the length of the activities. The next chapter introduces participants of the research and background information about the school where the research takes place. Since there are two groups of learners and they differ in their level of English, each group is analysed separately at first and then a comparison of both groups is provided. At the end of the thesis, the results of the research are presented and analyzed.

Theoretical Part

1 Social interaction

Since this thesis explores classroom interaction in English classes and the term occurs frequently, it is necessary to explain the term at first and then put it into context of this paper.

1.1 Social interaction from the perspective of social psychology

Face to face meetings are considered to be a crucial aspect of human life. Such encounters shape our inner self through mutual participation. This phenomenon is referred to as social interaction. In a broader sense, social psychology is the scientific study of human social interactions and social environment (Šimíčková-Čížková 2004, 67).

According to Šimíčková-Čížková (2004, 86-90), the basic component of social interaction is verbal communication. In order to not only express our thoughts and attitudes but also receive information in a context of social environment, we need to communicate with each other. Strnadová (2011, 25-26) also agrees with this interpretation since she claims that the term social interaction is superior to the term social communication. Moreover, she conveys the idea by stating that although the terms are not on the same level, they both are significant aspects of the same process: interpersonal communication.

Similar to Šimíčková-Čížková, other authors tend to agree that verbal communication is the fundamental process of transmitting information in social environment. Having said that, they differ in further explanation of the term. Výrost, Slaměník and Sollárová (2019, 168) define the term mainly with the emphasis on ‘meaning’. Moreover, meaning of verbal communication concerns everything people talk about with each other, e.g. opinions, emotions and personal values. Whereas Nakonečný (1970) clarifies the aspects of verbal communication in a greater detail:

- 1) communicator (the person that communicates a message)
- 2) communicant (the person that receives such message)
- 3) communique (content of the message)
- 4) communication channel (method through which a communique is sent to a communicant)
- 5) psychological effect of a received communique

(quoted in Šimíčková-Čížková 2004, 91)

Although Šimíčková-Čížková (2004, 86) does not provide any specific terminology when defying the term verbal communication, she agrees with both of previous explanations by stating that verbal communication mainly includes telling something to somebody and responding to what we hear during a conversation. She conveys the idea by claiming that verbal communication is not only a social act on one side but also an individual act on the other side. Furthermore, conversation arises from the intention or initiative of one person for thoughts, ideas or feelings to be exchanged and at least one other person must participate.

In conclusion, social interaction is the umbrella term for social communication and interpersonal communication. The basic component of social interaction is verbal communication. People communicate with the intention of expressing their thoughts, values, attitudes and emotions. At least two people must participate in the process of social interaction since exchange of information is the fundamental aspect of this phenomenon.

1.2 Social interaction within the general objectives of the basic education

Let us examine social interaction in the context of this paper. In order to do so, curriculum documents that form the basis of the whole educational system in the Czech Republic must be examined. Such documents were established both on a national and school level. Moreover, basic education on the national level is defined by the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education (further only FEP BE). This document consists of ten educational areas that not only shape the whole journey of obtaining the basic education but also contribute to the development of key competences.

According to FEP BE (2017, 10), the key competences are: “a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and values which are important for the personal development of an individual and for the individual’s participation in society.” For the purposes of the basic education, the key competences were selected as follows: “learning competency, problem-solving competency, communication competency, social and personal competency, civic competency, professional competency.”

To put the notion into a context of this thesis, we need to examine the key competences regarding social interaction. Furthermore, a basic school graduate should be able to not only express his/her ideas in a logical way but also should listen to what other people say and react to it properly. In other words, he/or she participates in conversation by defending their own

opinions and respecting other people's point of view to the matter. A basic school graduate also uses his/her communication skills in order to establish relations that are fundamental for full-fledged personal life on one hand and beneficial for the society on the other one (FEP BE 2017, 11).

Social interaction may be looked at from the perspective of social and personal competency. A basic school graduate should be able to participate in a group-work and contribute in creating pleasant atmosphere when working with other classmates. He/or she is able to communicate not only in a small group but also is able to present his/her ideas to the whole classroom. Such graduate also actively cooperates with other pupils when a problem needs to be solved by offering or requesting help and also appreciates wisdom of others (FEP BE 2017, 11).

In addition, the school level of the Czech educational system is represented by the School Educational Programme (further only SEP). SEP is created by the school management of each school and it must be derived from RVP. Moreover, specific thematic areas might be defined in a greater detail (FEP BE 2017, 5).

1.3 Social interaction in ELT according to FEP BE

As stated above, FEP BE consists of ten educational areas, which are fundamental for acquiring basic education. Each category is divided into outcomes, which are expected in either first or second stage of basic education. These stages consist of two cycles that are further described in detail. One of the categories, that is relevant to this paper, is Language and Language Communication but to be more specific; foreign language. By the end of the second stage of basic education, the pupil should:

- a) request simple information and react adequately both in formal and informal situations
- b) talk about situations related to family, school life, free time and other areas that are being studied
- c) create a simple story; describe characters, places and objects from everyday life

(FEP BE 2017, 27)

Another information that is relevant to this thesis is the fact that pupils should practice vocabulary and grammar actively in order to participate in communication. Such participation helps to develop pupil's ability to express his/her thoughts and ideas (FEP BE 2017, 27).

Furthermore, it is apparent that social interaction, and communication in general, are important aspects of language learning and practicing specific utterances.

1.4 Social interaction in ELT according to CEFR

Common European Framework or Reference for Languages (further only CEFR) is an international standard that is being used when defining language ability (CEFR 2003, 1). The reason why this document is analyzed in this thesis is the fact that according to FEP BE, each basic school graduate should attain the A2 level of language proficiency (2017, 17). Such levels are described in CEFR.

Additionally, each level of language proficiency in CEFR consists of various competences, which need to be developed in order to reach a specific communicative goal. To be more precise “competences are the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions” (CEFR 2003, 9). These competences are further divided into general and communicative language competences. For the purposes of this paper the second example will be discussed in detail.

To begin with, “communicative language competences are those which empower a person to act using specifically linguistic means” (CEFR 2003, 9). Communicative language competences may be further divided into several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. These components include specific skills, knowledge and know-how (CEFR 2003, 13).

The way in which communicative language competences are being activated is through language activities. These activities include reception, production, interaction and mediation. Reception and production are the main pillars of interaction since these two processes alternate and could overlap during oral communication. For instance, two speakers might be participating in conversation by talking and listening to each other simultaneously. Another point is that turn-taking might be fully complied in a conversation and still, the listener is already forecasting the remaining message and thinks about a proper response. For this reason, it is important to not only practice receiving and producing specific utterances but also to take into consideration everyday life situations in which people interact (CEFR 2003, 14).

In addition, language communicative activities might be classified within domains. Such classification might be done in a diverse way, but for the purposes of language learning

we distinguish four main types: the public domain, the personal domain, the educational domain and the occupational domain. The public domain concerns everything that is related to ordinary social interaction, e.g. free-time activities. The personal domain refers to family relations and personal habits. The educational domain comprises of learning/training activities with the aim of acquiring specific knowledge or skill. And finally, the occupational domain refers to activities and relations that are connected to person's profession (CEFR 2003, 14-15).

Now we will examine what exactly "A2 level of language proficiency" means and which domains are relevant to this level. To define a specific level of language proficiency, we must describe what the whole system represents in general. As already mentioned, each level of language proficiency consists of specific competences which need to be mastered. When all these competences had been taken into consideration, the CEFR resulted in defining six levels of language proficiency. There are three types of language users: basic, independent and proficient (CEFR 2003, 23). Each of these types is then divided into two more specific subcategories:

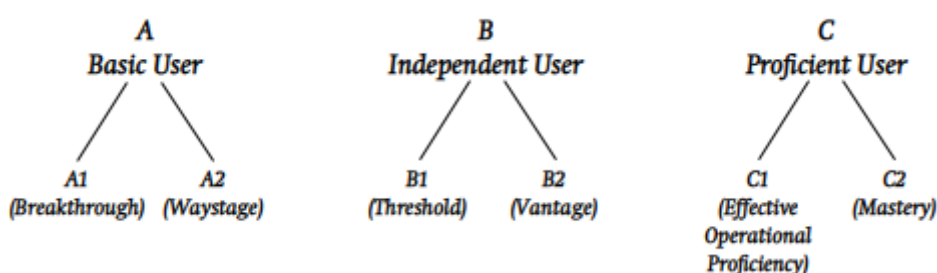


Figure 1.: The Common Language Reference Levels (CEFR 2003, 23)

As already mentioned, this paper focuses on A2 level of language proficiency but before we discuss specific abilities and skills that are relevant to this level, we must understand the usage of scales of language proficiency. The first one is called 'user-oriented' and it functions as a simple description of expected outcomes at a specific level (CEFR 2003, 37). In order to orient ourselves within this scale, CEFR provides 'can do' descriptors. Furthermore, these descriptors represent communicative strategies that are fundamental for interconnection of learner's resources (competences) and what he/she can do with them (communicative activities). In other words, 'can do' descriptors define specific areas where learner's abilities, skills and knowledge meet practical usage (CEFR 2003, 25).

According to this rather general assessment, the A2 Basic User is described as follows:

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping local

geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

(CEFR 2003, 24)

It is apparent that the description above is not very detailed because it covers all language skills at once. However, we can, without any doubt, assume that A2 learner is able to participate in social interaction since he/she can engage in communication. For the purposes of more elaborated description, we need to introduce the second scale.

It is called ‘assessor-oriented scale’ (CEFR 2003, 38). The main difference between the first scale and the second one is the fact that it focuses on the language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) separately. In other words, this scale provides a description of what a learner can do in terms of a specific language skill. Speaking skills, that are relevant to this thesis are further divided into spoken interaction and spoken production. Even though this scale is aimed on self-assessment, the descriptors are related to the topic of this thesis hence worth mentioning (CEFR 2003, 26). According to this type of assessment, the A2 Basic User is described as follows:

A2: Spoken interaction

I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can’t usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.

A2: Spoken production

I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present and most recent job.

(CEFR 2003, 26)

This scale is much more relevant to this paper because there is a specific mention of social interaction with the connection to language competences.

In order to examine A2 level of language even further, we need to introduce the last scale. It is called ‘constructor-oriented’ scale and it is by far the most detailed one. This type of scale also consists of what the learner can do but it is designed with the purpose of guiding when creating tests (CEFR 2003, 39). However, creating a test is not relevant to this thesis, the

descriptors are beneficial for illustrating A2 level speaking skills and spoken interaction in particular.

A2: Overall spoken interaction

Can interact with reasonable ease in structured situations and short conversations, provided the other person helps if necessary. Can manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort, can ask and answer questions and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations.

Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters to do with work and free time. Can handle very short social exchanges but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.

(CEFR 2003, 74)

A2: Conversation

Can establish social contact: greetings and farewells; introductions; giving thanks.

Can generally understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters directed at him/her, provided he/she can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time.

Can participate in short conversations in routine contexts on topics of interest.

Can express how he/she feels in simple terms, and express thanks.

Can handle very short social exchanges but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord, though he/she can be made to understand if the speaker will take the trouble.

Can use simple everyday polite forms of greetings and address.

Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions and apologies.

Can say what he/she likes and dislikes.

(CEFR 2003, 76)

Based on the descriptors above and the scales of language proficiency in general, we have a solid idea of what the learners are capable of when it comes to social interaction and communication in general. Although the A2 learner is not able to maintain extensive conversation due to a lack of the necessary skills, he/she is undoubtedly able of meaningful participation in communication when it concerns areas which are familiar to the learner. To be more specific, let us now have a look back to domains. With the respect to the above-mentioned descriptors, the domains that are being developed the most are the public and the personal one because these are related to common everyday life. In other words, the A2 learner is able to communicate about topics that are essential to his/her existence.

1.5 Comparison of FEP BE and CEFR

Without any doubt, it is obvious, that CEFR is much more elaborated than FEP BE since it consists of six levels of language proficiency and also provides three different points of view when assessing language ability. Moreover, we can find a specific mention of social interaction and its requirements in CEFR, which helps us to understand clearly what is expected at A2 level of language proficiency in terms of oral communication.

When analyzing FEP BE in terms of social interaction the only information that in fact includes interaction is when defining speaking abilities of a Basic school graduate “he/she quests simple information and reacts adequately both in formal and informal situations”. However, there is no distinction of what specifically this claim means and which activities and areas it concerns.

For example, CEFR mentions situations like “conversation”, “responding to invitations, suggestions and apologies”, “expressing how a pupil feels and what he/she likes and dislikes”, “asking for repetition and reformulation” etc. Moreover, CEFR also mentions areas which might be difficult for the learner e.g. “. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can’t usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself” (CEFR 2003, 26), or there is an ongoing statement that the learner can communicate about areas he/she is familiar with. In other words, CEFR provides concrete data and we immediately know what is meant by it. Formulations in FEP BE, on the other hand, are quite ambiguous since no further division is included.

Since FEP BE contains a mention that Basic school graduate should attain A2 level of language proficiency, it is very clear that there will not be any difference when examining specific abilities and requirements. However, FEP BE dedicates just a few sentences when defining oral production and communication in general.

In conclusion, the biggest difference between FEP BE and CEFR is the level of detailed description of specific requirements when defining language ability.

2 The learner in the ninth grade of basic school

Since the learner in the ninth grade plays a significant role in this paper, it is important to briefly introduce some of the main characteristics he/she might possess. Majority of the learners in the ninth grade are fifteen/sixteen years old which means that they are in a life phase called adolescence i.e. transitional period between childhood and adulthood (Vágnerová 2005, 321).

Adolescence can be further divided into two other stages: the early and the late adolescence. Moreover, at the age of fifteen/sixteen, the learners are just between those two stages (Vágnerová 2005, 323-324). During this phase of life, our personality as a whole is being developed and transformed due to many changes that are all happening at the same time. These changes are not only on a cognitive level but also biological, emotional and sometimes on a social level. Such transformation should result not only in the learner's self-acceptance but also self-improvement and desire to find their right position in the society (Vágnerová 2005, 321).

Vágnerová (2001, 61) further notes that another significant aspect of this particular age is the fact that learners are able to think abstractly and hypothetically. Until now, their only interest was in the 'here and now', they wanted to explore the world as it is. As they are getting to the second phase of adolescence, there is an important shift because suddenly, they take into consideration many of endless aspects and start to think about world and their life as it could possibly be.

The learners are also able to work with new information systematically. When there is a problem, they can think of many solutions which are relevant and then decide which one is the most suitable for the situation. Moreover, they start shaping their own opinions which are beyond their every-day life. This is only possible by experimenting with their thoughts and connecting them into one whole (Vágnerová 2001, 61-63).

It is important to note that as adolescents get more confident about their opinions, they also tend to perceive them as completely unique and immutable. When someone questions their opinions or points out that they are false, their defense mechanism is to get emotional and feisty (Vágnerová 2001, 65).

As their thinking gets more critical, the learners start to question the importance of going to school and learning new things. They suddenly feel that there is nothing revolutionary they could possibly learn on top of information they already have (Vágnerová 2001, 66).

3 Development of social interaction in ELT

According to Goh and Burns (2012, 30) the way of practicing oral skills was originally done through drills in the past. The focus was not on interacting with each other but on correct pronunciation and grammar. Nevertheless, in the 1970s and 1980s a communicative ‘revolution’ emerged and resulted in an approach called Communicative language teaching (further only CLT). The focus was not on how language was formed anymore but on what it is used for (Harmer 2015, 57). Since the focus has changed, the aim of language teaching had to be different as well. However, the concept has changed many times through the years, developing communicative competence remains the goal of language teaching.

3.1 Introduction to the phenomenon of communicative competence

The term ‘communicative competence’ was firstly introduced by the linguist Dell Hymes (1972) with the purpose to react to Noam Chomsky’s theory of competence, where the competence stands for grammatical knowledge of language. For Hymes, this view of linguistic theory was not detailed enough since Chomsky left out communicative and cultural aspect of the language. In other words, Chomsky’s model was not connected to real-life communication. Such criticism resulted in Hymes defining the term ‘communicative competence’ (CC) by himself. Hymes’s theory incorporates grammatical knowledge as well but the difference is, that it is connected to ability to participate in a speech community. Moreover, a person who acquires CC is able to use the language appropriately in various situations (Richards and Rodgers 2014, 87-88).

3.2 Canale and Swain’s model of communicative competence

In 1980, an important analysis of communicative competence was introduced by the linguists Merrill Canale and Michael Swain. Their analysis was based on Hyme’s notion, but it was enriched by four dimensions of communicative competence:

- 1) linguistic competence
- 2) sociolinguistic competence
- 3) discourse competence
- 4) strategic competence

(Canale and Swain 1980, 30-31)

For the purposes of this thesis, the mention of sociolinguistic competence is the most crucial one because communicative aspect of language teaching (social contexts, roles of relationships and purposes of interaction) is included as the integral part of language acquisition.

3.3 Goh and Burn's model of Second language speaking competence

The last model, to be mentioned in this thesis, was introduced by Christiane Goh and Anne Burns. They took into consideration the dimensions of second language competence (mentioned in the previous subchapter) and propose a model called Second language speaking competence which consists of:

- 1) knowledge of language and discourse
- 2) core speaking skills
- 3) communication strategies

(Goh and Burns 2012, 53)

Each of these components is related to the other ones and is equally important. Development of the three above-mentioned components is a prerequisite for “producing utterances and discourses that are fluent, accurate, and socially appropriate within the constraints of cognitive processing” (Goh and Burns 2012, 53). When creating the model, the authors were aware of the fact that speaking ability is a complex skill which consist of various components and each of them needs to be developed properly. They created this model in order to help other teachers to plan and deliver lessons which are done in “a balanced and comprehensive way” (Goh and Burns 2012, 49).

As for the further clarification of the three components, knowledge of language and discourse is concerned with the grammatical knowledge, sound patterns of the language (phonological knowledge), vocabulary (lexical knowledge) and communicative purposes/social contexts (discourse knowledge). The second aspect, core speaking skills, focuses on the usage of linguistic aspects appropriately in various communicative context. These include pronunciation, speech function, interaction management and discourse management. The last aspect, communication strategies, is concerned with either avoiding conversation (reduction strategies) or pursuing conversation (achievement strategies) (Goh and Burns 2012, 54-63).

The reason why this model is mentioned in a greater detail (in contrast to the previous-mentioned ones) is the fact the main aspect of this model is developing speaking (which undoubtedly includes social interaction) but the concept of it is not narrow since the authors break down all of the important aspects which lead to attaining abilities a competent second language speaker should have.

3.4 Communicative language teaching

As we have mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, communicative revolution in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in an approach called communicative language teaching which “mainly aims to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching” (Richards and Rodgers 2014, 85).

One of the main aspects of this approach is the premise that if classroom activities involve real-life communication, it promotes learning (Richards and Rodgers 2014, 90). Moreover, Harmer (2015, 57-58) conveys the idea by stating that the activities are being designed with the purpose to achieve communicative task. Such achievement is often more important than accuracy of the language use. In other words, the learners are focusing on what they are saying and the meaning of it, rather than focusing on a specific language form.

The teacher monitors the learners but does not interrupt them even if an error occurs so that they are forced to complete the task by themselves and most importantly by communicating and cooperating with each other (Harmer 2015, 57-58).

As it is briefly mentioned in the previous paragraph, the role of the learner has also shifted. In order for many communicative activities to be completed successfully, the learners must make extensive efforts to participate with other classmates. It is not only important to speak to others but also to listen what the other person has to say. For this reason, the activities in CLT aim more to group-work and pair-work tasks rather than on individual work (Richards and Rodgers 2014, 98).

When using CLT in its pure form, texts and grammar rules are not being presented to the learners explicitly because they are learning it through meaningful conversation (Richards and Rodgers 2014, 98). Harmer (2015, 57) further conveys usage of the pure of CLT by stating that “the language will take care of itself” which takes us back to the main premise of CLT – meaningful conversation promotes learning.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2014, 96), activities which incorporate interaction develop not only grammar and vocabulary, which might be accomplished through non-communicative activities as well, but also the appropriacy of the language use.

Another aspect of CLT is the fact that it does not necessarily rely on materials since the main purpose of communicative activities is participation in conversation. Although, over the years, major coursebooks had been enriched by exercises which required communication amongst the learners. Such change is crucial, but it is not sufficient enough. For this reason, it is not a rare procedure, that teachers prepare the tasks by themselves (Harmer 2015, 58).

To summarize, CLT is an approach to the second language teaching that simulates real-life situations in which people communicate with each other. These activities are designed with the purpose to develop communicative competence.

3.4.1 Communicative language teaching as the essential approach to ELT?

In the previous subchapter, we have discussed the nature and some of the beneficial aspects of CLT. However, it is important to also examine this approach, and teaching approaches in general, critically, in order to obtain comprehensive outlook into this phenomenon.

To start from a rather general perspective, relying on just one set of principles and procedures to teaching is not relevant anymore. When we are dependent on one specific approach, it actually becomes limiting and thus, inefficient (Harmer 2015, 69). Allwright (2003) proposes that the overall quality of life in the classroom is superior to persisting on instructional efficiency. Exploratory practice, as he calls it, is based on the idea that if the teacher knows his learners well, he can easily determine which procedures are suitable for them. In order to do so, the teacher must constantly try new activities with the learners, then reflect on what worked and what did not and why and take it into consideration when designing following lesson plans.

The criticism of CLT is, in fact, based on what is covered in the previous subchapter. Moreover, the claim that ‘language learning will take care of itself’ did not always happen. Richards and Rodgers (2014, 103-104) suggest that CLT promotes fossilization when used in its pure form. Learners that were exposed to learning through extensive and authentic

communication eventually developed a solid fluency, but their language accuracy was on a poor level.

Johnson (2005) conveys the idea by stating “language use is a complex cognitive skill. It consists of smaller parts of knowledge, sub-skills, and strategies, all operating simultaneously and interdependently to achieve communicative goals.” (quoted in Goh and Burns 2012, 144). Otherwise speaking, we need to focus not only on the communicative aspect of language, but also on areas which form the language as a whole. Scrivener (2011, 29) holds the same position by claiming that no language system nor area of skills exists separately. There is no point of speaking, if you are not using correct vocabulary to describe things around you and there is no point of using just vocabulary if you are not creating sentences based on the correct grammar. In other words, specific language skills cannot be overlooked, it is quite the opposite, because such skills are dependent on each other and cannot function in isolation.

Some experts have, in fact, introduced approaches to language teaching which combined practice of communication skills with the practice of language items. Littlewood (1992, 8) came up with methodological framework which was based on such principle. Firstly, pre-communication task with the focus on a specific language skill was introduced to the learners. Such activity is always controlled by the teacher and might be rather predictable, since the main focus is on accuracy. Then, structured communication task takes place, which is still a controlled activity, but it includes a level of interaction. And finally, authentic communication task is introduced, which is based on previous practice but involves free interaction of the learners.

Moreover, ‘Principled communicative approach’ which was proposed by Dörnyei (2013) is as CLT based on genuine interaction as well but the focus on form and guided practice is equally important (quoted in Harmer 2015, 59). Similar to Dörnyei, Griffiths (2011, 307) also points out that it might be beneficial to combine traditional procedures with communicative approaches, in order to achieve a lesson that is well-balanced.

Harmer (2015, 58) mentions another downfall of CLT which is based on the way language skills are being assessed. In fact, lessons started to be focused on communicative activities and even textbooks were accompanied with the communicative aspects, as we mentioned in the previous subchapter. However, the tests were not alternated and focused strictly on discrete language items. For this reason, the learners were not motivated for participating in communicative activities since it was not relevant to their grades. Nonetheless,

many popular exams have become much more communication-oriented recently, but such change did not happen globally.

All things considered, CLT might be referred to as a philosophy which stresses the incorporation of communicative nature of language, rather than a description of a method which should be strictly used during each English lesson (Harmer 2015, 58). Moreover, developing communicative competence is still considered to be the goal of language teaching.

3.4.2 Current trends in CLT

Throughout the years, a lot of methodologies and approaches were formed as extension of the CLT movement. Although each of them has its own characteristics, the goal stays the same – to develop communicative competence (Richards 2006, 27). In this chapter, we will examine two of them.

The first one to be mentioned is called Task-based learning (further only TBL). According to Nunan (2014), TBL is ‘the realization of communicative language teaching’ and he adds that the main concern of CLT is the question *why?* TBL, on the other hand, addresses the question *how?* (quoted in Harmer 2015, 60). There is no doubt that most teachers include different types of tasks in their lessons, however, TBL stresses the completion of meaningful tasks as the crucial aspect of language acquisition. Harmer (2015, 60) further explains “if students are focused on the completion of a task, they are just as likely to learn language as they are if they are focusing on language forms.”

In one interpretation of TBL, students are not given any feedback until they have completed the task successfully, which is an example of the fact that the learners have a great control over their learning (Harmer 2015, 61). But this interpretation is a little bit simplified.

Willis (2012) proposes three basic stages of TBL. The first one is called the pre-task. In this stage the teacher introduces the topic to the class and might point out some useful grammar structure or vocabulary or to play a recording of native speakers dealing with the same task. This stage, in other words, helps the learners to refresh their memory of a specific knowledge or to gain a confidence before working by themselves.

The second stage, called the task cycle, requires an active participation of the students. They can be either divided into small groups or pairs and the teacher does not interrupt them

during the task. When the task is completed, the learners plan how they will deliver a report to the rest of the class about how it went.

In the third stage, called language focus, the learners present their findings about the task and can collaboratively discuss any aspect with the whole class. They can mention whether they faced any difficulties when completing the task or whether the task was easy for them. When the students finish the discussion, the teacher may highlight some specific features which caused troubles to the learners and provide ‘offline correction’ (quoted in Harmer 2015, 61).

However, it is important to mention that attempting to define the term ‘task’ in the relation to this methodology might be a little bit problematic (Harmer 2015, 62). Samuda and Bygate (2009, 69) say that “a task is a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning through process or product or both”. Even this definition might be perceived as not specific enough and could benefit from linking it to different activity types (Harmer 2015, 62).

Ultimately, involving students in meaningful tasks during which they can interact with each other is effective for language processing (Harmer 2015, 62).

Second approach to be mentioned, is known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (further only CLIL). This approach is also based on CLT principles as it puts a great focus on involving the students in meaningful communication (Richards and Rodgers 2014, 117). CLIL originated in Europe as a reaction to the globalization and the requirement of knowledge-based economy and bilingual society (Richards and Rodgers 2014, 118).

The main feature of CLIL is the fact that it is a content-oriented approach which means that content is selected the first and then the teachers select the specific language around it which helps the learners to understand, think and talk about the content (Harmer 2015, 8). Richards and Rodgers (2014, 118) further add “people learn a second language more successfully when they use the language as a means of understanding content, rather than as an end in itself”. Moreover, Baladová and Sladkovská (2009) emphasize that the correct interpretation of this approach is gaining new knowledge during a lesson which is not primarily focused on language through a second language.

According to Baladová and Sladkovská (2009), CLIL is suitable for both cycles of basic education. Especially for subjects like physics, chemistry, biology and geography. They further

note that in the beginnings of incorporating CLIL into a syllabus, the learners should have regular second language classes and a separate CLIL lesson in order to get used to the approach.

It is also important to note that CLIL puts the teachers into a new, rather demanding, role. It is a common procedure that teachers have to cooperate with other teachers (who specialize in the above-mentioned subjects) in order to design a lesson plan that both reflects the language and the content. The teachers also have to educate themselves about the topic properly at first so that they can convey the information to the learners confidently and as clearly as possible (Richards and Rodgers 2014, 128).

Critics of CLT are concerned about the fact that using second language during subjects that are typically being taught in mother language, adds an extra barrier to the subject matter that is presented to the learners. Especially when the teachers themselves are not comfortable with their own level of the second language (Harmer 2015, 9).

In conclusion, if we are able to find a balance between a lesson that is planned in a proper manner and is also well-taught, the outcome might be very impressive (Harmer 2015, 9).

3.5 Interaction patterns in English classes

When exploring classroom interaction, we can define four basic types of student grouping:

- 1) whole class working together with the teacher
- 2) whole class moving around and mixing together as individuals (a 'mingle')
- 3) small groups (three to eight people)
- 4) pairs

(Scrivener 2011, 58)

Each of these types is equally important. Moreover, the use of various types of student grouping enables students to try communicating in different situations which, in fact, is the most efficient way of learning (Scrivener 2011, 59).

Richards (2006, 20) elaborates the idea by stating that completing activities in pairs or small groups motivates the learners to speak in general and they are also likely to produce an

increased amount of language which would not be possible during teacher-fronted activities. Hearing the language used by other peers in the classroom can also be beneficial for the learners because they can learn from one another since each of them has slightly different vocabulary, uses different figures of speech etc.

4 Communicative activities

In this chapter, the focus is on specific activities which enable the learners to communicate with each other orally. According to Goh and Burns (2012, 202), due to this participation, the learners practice various core speaking skills etc. pronunciation, interaction management, speech function and discourse organization and use communication strategies to convey their ideas.

4.1 Communication gap

Firstly, we need to explain the term ‘communication gap’. Goh and Burns (2012, 203) claim that communication gap is the main pillar of communication in first place because when we participate in a conversation, we do not have the same information as the other person which forces us to maintain the conversation. In other words, we are being forced to close the gap that is between us and the other participant of the conversation.

To apply this to a classroom speaking activity, each student is given a different set of information and the task is to communicate with each other (in pairs or small groups) and complete the task collaboratively. Richards (2006, 18) provides an example of such activity; the learners work in pairs and each of them is given a picture. These pictures are almost the same but have slight differences. The learners have to sit back to back, ask questions or describe their picture in order to find out how many differences there are between their pictures.

4.2 Jigsaw activities

As reported by Richards (2006, 19), such activities also originate from the communication gap principle. The general procedure during jigsaw activities usually involves the class being divided into two groups and each group has a different piece of information that is crucial for completing the activity. In order to complete the task, the learners have to fit the pieces together which can only be done by meaningful communication and whole-class

collaboration. However, dividing the class into two groups is not the only way of carrying out this type of activity.

To illustrate, the teacher divides a story into sections (the number of sections is equal to a number of the learners in the class) and each learner is given one of the sections. Their task is to move around the classroom, communicate with each other and determine where in the story their section belongs (Richards 2006, 19).

4.3 Role-play, simulation and discussion

Secondly, we will cover three communicative activities that are very common in terms of usage in English classes. All of these share similar characteristics, but the level of control is what makes them different.

- 1) Role-play – in this type of activity, the learners pretend to be someone else and put themselves into staged situation (Wingate 1993, 42). The learners receive information ('role cards') about their characters e.g. gender, job, interests and also guidance through the situation e.g. 'buy a train ticket to Brighton' (Scrivener 2011, 155-156). According to Wingate (1993, 43), incorporating role-play into a lesson is beneficial because if the learners make an error, they do not feel responsible for it since they are pretending to be someone else.

As they become more confident about talking to others and making less mistakes, they are ready for the next activity (Wingate 1993, 42):

- 2) Simulation – in this type of activity, the learners are themselves but exposed to an activity that is staged (Wingate 1993, 42). When it comes to simulation, the most important aspect is creating a situation, 'world' even, that is complex and imitates a real-life situation. Each detail is useful to the learners because if they have enough knowledge about the topic, it will be easier for them to imagine themselves in such situation and speak without fear. Scrivener (2011, 159) further notes that for these purposes, newspaper articles, memos and other printed or recorded information about the background is usually used.

In simulation, the learners will get used to talking for themselves, but they are not talking 'from the heart' yet. When their talking becomes more fluent and the learners are comfortable

with expressing and standing for their opinion, the following type of activity is suitable for them (Wingate 1993, 42):

- 3) Discussion – in this type of activity, the learners are themselves and say what they want based on their personal opinions (Wingate 1993, 42). Harmer (2015, 389-391) states that discussions may vary from the level of formality and the number of students that are participating together. He further divides discussion into two subcategories that are relevant to this paper:
 - i. Buzz groups – this type of activity is usually short and informal and serves with the purpose to help the students form their opinions and prepare them for the following task that is much more complex.
 - ii. Reaching a consensus – during this type of activity, the learners are asked to reach a decision together. They might be asked to rank specific items from the best to the worst or to choose between various options. For example, the learners are given a scenario and also possible endings of the story and their task is to agree how the story should end.

4.4 Information-gathering activities

Questionnaire/Interview – this type of activity is efficient because by being pre-planned, both the questioner and the respondent have something to share with each other. The set of questions is designed with the purpose to practice specific language patterns that are related to the topic of the lesson. The questionnaire can either be prepared by the teacher or taken from a textbook, or the learners can create their own. Letting the learners to design their own questions is also another beneficial aspect of this activity since they are practicing grammar patterns, spelling etc. (Harmer 2015, 392).

4.5 Task-completing activities

These activities might include games, puzzles, map-reading or other kinds of classroom tasks which are based on learners' language resources to carry out the task successfully (Richards 2006, 19). In this subchapter, we will further focus on the benefits of incorporating games into English lessons.

According to Mulvahill (2019), including communication games when designing lesson plans presuppose development of learner's communication skills. During such activities, the learners are being forced to participate together by talking and listening to each other. It is also an effective tool for getting to know each other and building trust amongst them as a community.

As reported by Hadfield (1999, 8), games can be further categorized either as linguistic or communicative games. Linguistic games are based on language accuracy whereas communicative games aim at fluency and successful completion of the task which can only be done by listening and interacting with other peers in the classroom. She further adds "games should be regarded as an integral part of the language syllabus, not as an amusing activity for Friday afternoon or for the end of term".

Since this paper focuses on oral interaction in the classroom, the following example incorporates a game which is based on communication. This game is called Lost tribes. The teacher introduces the game by stating that there are four tribes in the classroom and every learner belongs to one of them. The learners are given a card with information about their tribe (where they live, what they eat and what activity is significant for them). Their task is to move around the classroom, ask questions and find other members of their tribes. When the tribe is formed, the learners sit down together and make up names for each member. Each group then presents their names and lifestyle of the tribe to the whole class (Hadfield 1999, 31).

Practical part

5 Research aims and methodology

5.1 Research aims

The aim of the empirical part of the thesis is to find out whether ninth-grade students are being prepared for social interaction. In other words, to find out if the teacher gives the learners opportunities during which they can practice interacting with each other in English.

The reason ninth-grade students are selected as a subject of the research, is the fact that basic education might be the highest attained level of education for some people. Therefore, it is important to be sure that students are prepared for situations in which they must communicate

with others in English – even if it is a matter of a few words (at the airport, shopping etc.). In other words, they need to know how to use the vocabulary and grammar that is presented to them in real-life situations.

5.2 Research questions

- 1) Does the teacher provide the learners with opportunities during which they can participate in social interaction in English?
- 2) What interaction patterns does/does not the teacher use during his/her English lessons?
- 3) What activities which incorporate social interaction in English occurred during the lessons?
- 4) How much time is dedicated to activities which incorporate social interaction in English during the lesson on average?
- 5) What is the average length of one activity which incorporates social interaction in English?

5.3 Methodology

The inquiry chosen for the practical part is Quantitative research since the key concern is to find out how often social interaction appears in the observed lessons. In other words, the research is oriented on the outcome not on the process. (Mackey and Gass 2016, 4).

The technique chosen for gathering quantitative data for the practical part of the thesis is observation. As Mackey and Gass (2016, 227) note “when collecting data, using observational techniques, researchers aim to provide careful description of learner’s activities without unduly influencing the events in which the learners are engaged”. The type chosen for this research is non-participant observation since the researcher is not a member of the group that is being observed. In other words, the observer is not participating in activities with other group members (Mackey and Gass 2016, 228).

Moreover, the research tool used for the purposes of the practical part is observation sheet which is based on interaction patterns (see chapter 3.5) and filled with the knowledge of various communicative activities (see chapter 4). The reason why the observation sheet is divided into four parts (based on classroom interaction patterns) is the fact that at the first sight

it is apparent which type of interaction pattern is represented the most or the least. Timeline of the lesson is included in order to show how much time of the lesson is dedicated to communicative activities.

Before the actual observations were done, a pilot testing was carried out on a video provided by the supervisor of this thesis in order to test, revise and finalize the materials. The video, which serves as an educational material for future English teachers and includes genuine English lesson, was filmed in May of 2014 in the 9th grade of a grammar school.

Several changes had to be made after completing the observation sheet. The biggest difference is the fact, that specific speaking activities had to be removed from the sheet because it turned out that it was actually limiting since some activities appeared more than once in the piloting video. Also, a chart 'Lesson plan' was removed as well since it is not a subject of interest of this research and it was replaced by 'Overall aim of the lesson' in order to briefly illustrate what happened during the specific lesson.

After the observation sheet was revised, second pilot testing was carried out on another video which was also provided by the supervisor of this paper and any other issues occurred.

6 Participants of the research

As already mentioned, the scope of interest of this thesis are learners in the 9th grade of basic school. The school chosen for this research is of a medium size and situated in a town with approximately ninety thousand inhabitants in east Bohemia.

At this school, learners in the 9th grade have three English lessons per week but since each student has to choose one subject from two compulsory options (either extra English lesson or graphics) the class had to be divided into two groups. The first one, called Group G, has three English lessons per week and the second one, called Group J, has four English lessons per week.

When I consulted this division with the teacher whose lesson I was observing, she told me that Group G has a lower level of English and that is why they are using a lower level of a textbook as well in comparison with the Group J. After hearing this fact, I have decided that I will examine these two groups separately in order to see if there are any differences in terms of incorporating social interaction into their classes and whether the average length of activities differs.

I have spent two weeks at this school and by the end of my data collection, a total of fourteen English lessons had been observed.

7 Outcomes of collected data

As previously stated, the collected data is presented at first separately with the since the class is divided into two groups.

7.1 Group J: Interaction patterns

During the two weeks, I have observed eight lessons and a total of nineteen activities which were based on social interaction in English. The interaction pattern which occurred in majority of those activities (eleven times) was ‘Whole class working together with the teacher’. The learners were sitting by their desks and the teacher was either standing in front of them or she was moving around the classroom in order to get closer to the person she was currently speaking with. During those activities, the teacher interviewed the learners and was trying to get as much information as possible. When she asked a question, she was not just satisfied with one-sentence answer and always wanted the learner to elaborate the answer.

The teacher was connecting people’s answers which helped her to engage as many learners as possible. She also relied on the fact that she knows the learners well and when some of the learner mentioned for example a specific type of free-time activity, she knew exactly who also has some kind of connection to this topic as well. In other words, the questions were being asked fluently and in a logical order.

Another type of an interaction pattern which was the second most frequent was pair-work which occurred four times. Based on my observations, it is possible to conclude that the learners enjoyed interacting in pairs a lot because the teacher had to stop them many times since they were talking for too long. The learners were able to explain their opinions by giving specific examples and it was obvious that they listened what the other person said by giving follow-up questions.

Group-work occurred two times during my observations. This type of activity was a little bit chaotic because the learners were talking over each other and by the end of the task, they were not able to report the answers of their peers since they were not listening to each

other. The teacher also noticed that the learners were not participating correctly, so she gave them a reprimand as a warning, but nothing has changed, so she stopped the activity earlier.

‘Mingle’, an activity during which the learners move around the classroom and mix together as individuals, appeared also two times. Majority of the learners seemed to be enjoying this type of activity since they were willing to move around the classroom, ask and answer questions with an extensive amount of specific details about the topic.

7.2 Group J: Types of communication activities

As stated above, the teacher frequently asks the learners questions in order to make them talk. From the nineteen activities I have observed, eleven of them could be classified as interview. Eight of the interviews were carried out while the learners were sitting by their desks and the teacher was moving around the classroom. The teacher was asking questions with the intention to navigate the learners in a specific direction. For example, the ongoing theme of the lessons was describing people’s personality and they were a lot of time talking about qualities different people should have (parents, friends, teachers etc.). The teacher apparently knew which answers could be assigned to the specific person and her questions were designed with the purpose to help the learners. There was not enough time to interview all of the learners, but I observed that she was trying to include everyone in this type of activity. As already mentioned, she knows the learners well which helps her with connecting answers of the learners. Other topics concerned the holidays, musical instruments and part-time jobs.

Since the interview was represented the most during the classes I have observed, I have decided to include an example of such activity¹:

T: How did you spend your holidays?

L1: I was drawing pictures a nevim jak říct “šití”.

T: Sewing.

L1: Okay, I was drawing pictures and sewing.

T: That’s interesting. What did you sew?

L1: A t-shirt.

T: A t-shirt! Nice. Who was it for?

L1: For myself.

¹ T stands for ‘Teacher’ and L stands for ‘Learner’

T: And who taught you how to sew?

L1: My grandma.

T: Is there anyone else who can sew?

L2: A little bit.

In my view, this example sufficiently illustrates the way the teacher led the interview. She asked a lot of follow-up questions and attempted including other people in the conversation.

In two cases, the interview was carried out in pairs. In both of these activities the learners were given cards with questions prepared in advance. Their task was to interview their partner and remember the questions. I have noticed that each partner had a different set of questions. When the activity was done, the learners were presenting their findings to the whole classroom.

Finally, the interview was once carried out while the learners were moving around the classroom and mixing as individuals. They received several sets of cards with questions in Czech and their task was to translate them into English and interview as many people as possible.

Discussion appeared six times during my presence in the classroom. The learners were either again sitting by their desks working with the teacher or they were working in groups or pairs. When the learners were working with the teacher (three times), they were expressing their opinions and giving examples and the teacher was moderating the activity. In my opinion, the learners would not be able to discuss the topic only by themselves. That is why I think it was beneficial for everybody that she was making sure that they are taking turns when speaking. Sometimes she decided who is going to speak next, or she helped them with a word or grammar they were not sure about. During this type of seating, it was also much easier to come to a clear conclusion.

Group discussion occurred two times. In the first case, their task was to discuss part-time jobs which were listed in a textbook and decide which of these is the best option for them. During the second activity, the learners were given a dice with interaction topics and their task was to roll the dice and discuss the particular topic in detail.

If I could compare these two discussions, the first one was carried out in a smoother way, although the teacher had to moderate some of the groups. The second activity was a bit chaotic because the dice fell on the floor a lot of times which resulted in learners' misbehavior since they were trying to find the dice and the rest of the group switched into Czech because they had nothing to talk about.

Discussion in pairs appeared once and the task was to decide what makes a good person (in general or specific types of people e.g. parent and teacher). From my perspective, the learners enjoyed this activity because afterwards, their task was to present their opinions to the classroom which resulted in a detailed discussion.

Communication gap occurred once. Each learner was given a card with some information and their task was to move around the classroom, ask questions and find their partner. Based on my observation, some of the learners did not like this activity because they were disappointed when they asked 2-3 people and still did not know who their partner was. In other words, they lost their motivation in asking other people and were just walking around and waiting. On the other side, the majority of the classroom actually enjoyed this activity which could be concluded because of their enthusiastic way of asking questions and joy when they found their partner.

Finally, role-play appeared also once. The learners were working in pairs and they were pretending they have a particular job and their partner had to guess it correctly. They were using descriptive words and naming specific situations in order to help their partner with the guessing. The clues were sometimes too easy and straightforward e.g. "I cure pets", but the learners seem to be enjoying this activity and they were willing to take turns when the job was revealed.

7.3 Group J: Timeline of the lesson

As previously mentioned, I have observed a total of nineteen classroom activities which were aimed at spoken interaction. I have also recorded when each of these activities occurred and how much time they took.

Based on my observation sheets, I can say that average length of one spoken interaction activity was six minutes².

Moreover, every English lesson I have observed includes fourteen to fifteen minutes of activities which incorporate social interaction on average.

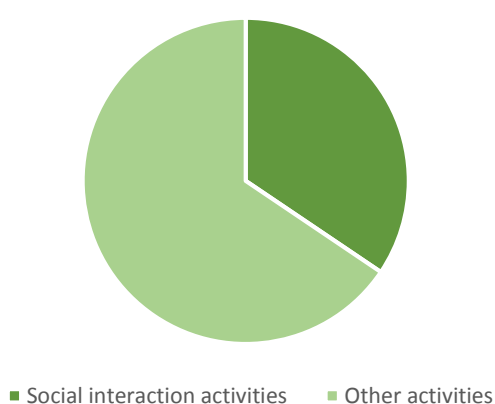


Figure 2.: Social Interaction Activities in Group J during Average English Lesson

7.4 Group G: Interaction patterns

In this group, I have observed six English lessons. During those lessons fourteen activities were based on social interaction. The interaction pattern which occurred in majority of the cases (thirteen times) was ‘Whole class working together with the teacher’. Once again, the teacher was asking a lot of follow-up questions and tried to include everyone in the conversation. However, spoken interaction was much difficult for this group since they were using a lot of Czech words and some of them did not react at all in many cases. When some of them did not respond, the teacher asked at least two times again in English and then she translated the question into Czech which sometimes worked, and the learner said the answer also in Czech and the teacher helped him/her with the correct translation. However, in some

² 19 spoken interaction activities took a total of 116 minutes. Average length of one activity is 116/19

cases the learner was still quiet, so she moved to another person in the classroom. Moreover, she did not pressure them into talking and when some of them was not participating in conversation, even when she tried to help as I mentioned earlier, she only said “It’s ok, maybe next time.”

Another interaction pattern, I have observed, was group-work and it appeared once. Based on my observation, some learners perceived this type of activity as their opportunity to relax since some of them were not talking in English but still seemed like they did not mind this type of seating.

To conclude, I have not observed any other interaction pattern e.g. pair-work and ‘mingle’.

7.5 Group G: Types of communication activities

As already mentioned, while collecting the data for my research, I have observed fourteen activities which incorporated social interaction. Eight of these could be classified as interview. This type of activity was only carried out while the learners were sitting by their desks and the teacher led the conversation. Almost all cases involved a book they were reading and listening at the same time.

Before the actual reading/listening took place, the teacher interviewed the learners about the previous chapter e.g. what they remember, what they think happens next and their overall opinion on the story. When the recording ended, she interviewed them once again, and she was asking questions about the chapter in order to find out whether they fully understood the plot. In other words, they were retelling the whole story again and mostly everyone was included in this activity.

As in the previous group, I have also decided to include an example of an interview the teacher led when the recording ended:

T: So, what happened next?

L1: They need coconuts...?

T: Okay. That is true, but why?

L1: To drink.

T: Fine. How did they get the coconuts?

L1: Šplhali po stromech.

T: They climbed the tree. Please repeat it after me.

L1: They climbed the tree.

T: And was Timothy able to climb the tree?

L1: -

L2: No, he is too old.

The example illustrates how the teacher led the interview. She asked follow-up questions in order to get as many information as possible. It also shows that the learner was not certain about the answers and the teacher tried to help him with the correct words.

The rest of the interviews involved the holidays, weekends and questions from a textbook.

The remaining activities could be classified as discussion which occurred six times. Some of these discussions involved the book once again but the difference between the interview was the fact that the learners were interacting with each other and expressing their opinions on the story which usually occurred after the reading/listening not when they were summarizing the previous chapter. In my opinion, this was a natural shift because when the recording ended, their need to express their emotions and compare their opinions was much stronger. The teacher was moderating the discussion by making sure that the learners did not talk over each other and that everyone was included in the discussion.

In one case, the discussion was carried out as a group-work. The learners received a dice with conversation topics and their task was to roll the dice and discuss it in detail. The topics were related to everyday life and free-time activities. I have noticed that some of the learners switched into Czech and when the teacher approached them, it was difficult for them find the correct words in English, so the teacher tried to help them.

7.6 Group G: Timeline of the lesson

As already mentioned, I have observed a total of fourteen classroom activities which incorporated social interaction. As in the Group J, I have recorded when each of these activities occurred during the lesson and how much time they took.

Based on my research, I can say that the average length of one spoken interaction activity was four to five minutes³.

Furthermore, every English lesson I have observed includes ten minutes of activities which incorporated social interaction on average.

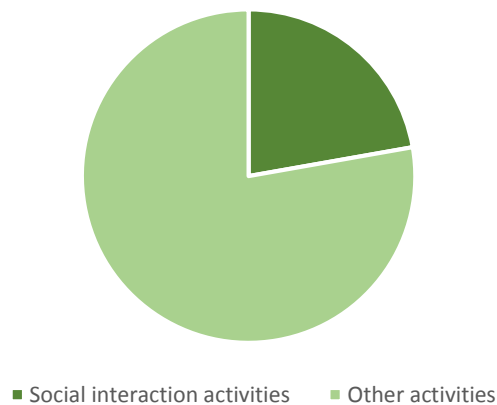


Figure 3.: Social Interaction Activities in Group G during Average English Lesson

8 Interpretation of findings

In the previous chapter, I have described the results of my observation in detail. Now, it is time to connect the collected data from practical part with information from theoretical part. As mentioned earlier, I will firstly analyze each group separately and then compare them with each other.

³ 14 spoken interaction activities took a total of 64 minutes. Average length of one activity is 4,5 minutes

8.1 Group J

Firstly, I will comment on this group in terms of incorporating various interaction patterns during their English lessons. What I found positive is the fact that each of the interaction pattern was represented during my observations because as mention in subchapter 3.5, using various interaction patterns is beneficial for the learners since they are able to communicate in different types of situations.

However, from the nineteen activities which were based on social interaction, eleven of them were carried out while the whole class was working together with the teacher. In my view, this type of interaction pattern was quite overused.

Based on my observations, I can say that the learners were able to work in pairs or in small groups without facing major problems. As noted in subchapter 3.5, such grouping not only motivates the learners to speak in general but also hearing the language used by their peers could possibly enrich their vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation. Therefore, I believe that some of the activities could be modified.

For instance, the learners could discuss the particular topic either in pairs or small groups, the teacher would move around the classroom and monitor the learners and when the discussions would be over, the learners could present their ideas and arguments to the whole classroom and the teacher might work with the data in the following activity or make some kind of conclusion with the whole class.

As for the variety of communication activities, I have observed interview, discussion, communication gap and role-play during my observations. However, interview and discussion appeared in majority of the cases. In my view, the learners enjoyed communication gap and role-play the most.

This is only speculation, since I have not interviewed the learners nor did I observed each group in detail, but the learners liked activities where there was something a little bit unusual for them e.g. ‘imagine that you can choose any job in the world’ or when each of them had different information about the topic and had to cooperate with other classmates in order to complete the task. In other words, if their task was to pretend that they are someone else, their will to communicate with each other was much stronger in comparison with activities where their task was to answer questions about their real self.

Additionally, I think that the teacher should incorporate these types of activities e.g. role-play, simulation and communication gap (mentioned in chapter 4) much more often. For example, the theme which occurred in many of their classes was part-time jobs. They were working with the textbook and reading about various types of part-time jobs, then they discussed which of these would be the most suitable for them and why.

Moreover, what I think could be very beneficial is implementing a TBL technique proposed by Willis (2012) in subchapter 3.4.2. In the first stage (pre-task), the teacher would introduce the task to the learners and point out vocabulary related to part-time jobs or some useful grammar e.g. 'I would prefer ___ over ____.' then, in the second stage (task cycle), the learners would create a situation involving a job that was previously mentioned. Each member of the group or pair would have their role in the story. Moreover, each pair or group would present their situations to other classmates. Every student might write down their opinions on the performance. The teacher would monitor the learners by paying attention to possible mistakes and positive aspects as well. And finally, in the third stage (the language focus), the learners could discuss their notes or general opinions about the activity and the teacher provides "offline correction".

During my observations in this group, the learners were two times given a set of questions and their task was to interview their classmates about the topic. Based on subchapter 4.4, I would modify this activity by letting the learners create their own questions. Due to this change, the learners would practice specific grammar patterns, vocabulary and spelling as well.

Communicative activities can also be classified within domains (subchapter 1.4), in this group, I have observed the public one since discussions about free-time occurred many times, the personal one because they discussed personal habits, interests and family and finally the occupational one because the ongoing theme was related to jobs/part-time jobs.

As for the average time (six minutes) dedicated to one communicative activity, I am able to conclude that it is sufficient since the activities were connected to other tasks e.g. working with the textbook, listening, reading and therefore were placed naturally to the lesson.

The following example is based on my observations and serves as an illustration of my previous point:

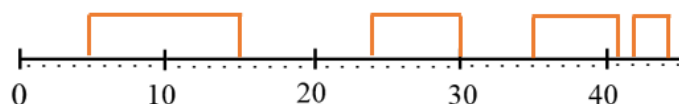


Figure 4.: Representation of Social Interaction in Group J

As noted in subchapter 3.4.1, language is a complex skill and each aspect of it should be equally developed. Moreover, this is why I believe that the average time (fourteen to fifteen minutes) devoted to social interaction during each lesson is also sufficient since I have observed that the teacher paid attention to various aspects of language.

8.2 Group G

I have observed six lessons in this group and fourteen activities were based on social interaction. As for the variety of interaction patterns, only two of them appeared during my observations. Furthermore, thirteen activities were carried out while the whole class was working together with the teacher and one activity was done in groups. In my opinion, the first interaction pattern is once again very overused.

I am aware that the learners have a lower level of English in comparison with the Group J and therefore speaking is much more difficult for them. However, in my view, their unwillingness to talk might originate from the fact that they are speaking in front the whole class and the teacher in majority of the activities. Talking to their peers might be less stressful and easier for the learners, this is why I think that some of the activities should be modified with the intention to create different opportunities for the learners in order to communicate with each other.

As mentioned in subchapters 3.4 and 3.5, completing activities in pairs or small groups motivates the learners to speak and they are also able to produce a larger amount of language. Therefore, the teacher could probably start incorporating short discussions in pairs during which the learners could talk about their weekend or topics which are related to the aim of the lesson and after that they could present their answers to the whole class. The main reason of not

communicating was, in my opinion, the uncertainty about a particular word or grammar item and such 'preparation' could help them with expressing their ideas and forming opinions and also with overcoming shyness of speaking.

Moreover, there are ten learners in this groups so it might not be difficult for the teacher to monitor them while working in pairs or small groups.

To comment on the variety of communication activities, I have observed only interview and discussion which is not very sufficient. As previously mentioned, the main topic which occurred in majority of speaking activities I have observed involved the book.

Although I think that it is beneficial to connect the reading/listening activity with speaking as well, it is also important to mention that the rest of the activities were kind of random and did not involve genuine conversation topics. As noted in subchapter 3.4, activities which are based on real-life situations promote learning, thus what I missed in this group is adding 'the extra depth' to the activities.

To connect the information from theoretical part with the data from practical part more specifically, I will select previously mentioned activities (chapter 4) and apply them accordingly to this group.

Since the learners are used to working with books and stories, Jigsaw variation (subchapter 4.2) might be suitable for them. Each learner would be given a section of the story and their task would be to move around the classroom, communicate with each other and decide where in the story their section belong. In order for the learners to not get overwhelmed, the story should probably be short and easy to grasp when using this technique for the first time. Another positive aspect of this activity is the fact that the learners would be exposed to another interaction pattern; mingle.

Additionally, the teacher interviewed the learners about general topics like free-time and holidays by herself in all cases. This could be easily changed if the learners would interviewed their peers by themselves and they could even write down their own questions and note the answers. As stated in subchapter 4.4, letting the learners design their own questions is beneficial because they can also practice grammar patterns and spelling.

Lastly, my overall impression of this group was that it lacked energy. As I have mentioned, a lot of times the learners were quiet and seemed to be afraid of making a mistake, which might be only a speculation. Therefore, I think that incorporating quick games might be

beneficial for creating more pleasant environment in the classroom (mentioned in subchapter 4.5) since the learners would get used to being ‘silly’ in front of their peers and still practicing some grammar structure or vocabulary.

In regard to domains (subchapter 1.4), the two domains I have encountered are the public, since several activities aimed at free-time activities and the personal domain because the learners were discussing their personal habits (likes, dislikes).

To comment on the timeline of the lesson, one communicative activity took four to five minutes on average and I think that it reflects the fact that speaking was challenging to this group and majority of the learners faced difficulties when completing communication-oriented tasks. Moreover, the teacher ended some of the activities earlier since the learners were not participating.

The average time (10 minutes) dedicated to activities based on social interaction during each lesson is also connected to what I have covered in the previous paragraph. Although I did not come across any specific mention of the time that should be devoted to development of speaking, authors in subchapters 3.3 and 3.4.1 agree that English lessons should be delivered in a balanced way and no language skill should be overlooked.

Based on my presence in the classroom, I am able to confirm that the lessons focused on various language skills, but it was not sufficiently connected in many cases. Therefore, I believe that if the teacher incorporated wider variety of interaction patterns or included modifications to some of the activities, the portion of time dedicated to social interaction would be bigger.

8.3 Comparison of Group J and Group G

Communicative activities in Group J included every interaction pattern mentioned in subchapter 3.5. On the other hand, in Group G only two of them were represented during my observations. Moreover, the teacher used a wider variety of communicative activities in Group J in comparison with the Group G. The average length and portion of time dedicated to activities which were based on social interaction is also bigger in Group J.

Also, the activities in Group J were more oriented on topics which are related to real-life situations and the learners were also more active and willingly participated during the lessons.

This is only a speculation, but I believe that the reason the atmosphere in Group J was more pleasant is the fact that this group is used to communicating and participating with each other. Certainly, the reason of this also originates in a higher level of English which the Group J has and thus, speaking is easier for them.

When analyzing the timeline of the lessons of both groups, I have noticed that they also differ in types of placements where social interaction occurs. Moreover, in Group J, I have observed three lessons where spoken interaction appeared only in the first half of the lesson and the rest of it was dedicated to other tasks.

During the rest of the lessons, spoken interaction activities were included in both of the parts of the lesson which is illustrated in the following picture:

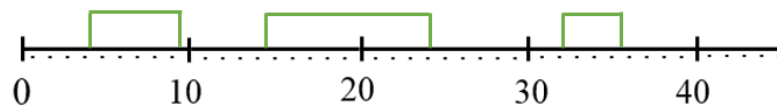


Figure 5.: Placement of Social Interaction Activities in Group J

Contrariwise, in Group G, social interaction activities appeared in both of the parts of the lesson two times. During the rest of the lessons, spoken interaction activities were included in the first part of the lesson which can be seen in the following example:

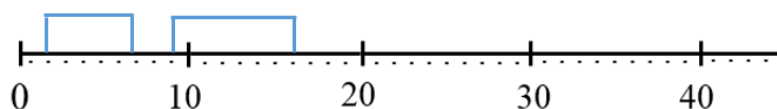


Figure 6.: Placement of Social Interaction Activities in Group G

Taking into consideration information mentioned in the previous subchapters, this difference illustrates the fact that social interaction activities in Group J were connected to other tasks of the lesson more frequently and the fact that social interaction in Group G involved the discussions about the book (which happened always in the beginning of the lesson) in majority of the cases.

9 Final Summary

To summarize the findings of the practical part, it is also important to mention the limitations of the research. Moreover, it is not possible to apply the results globally on all the teachers in the Czech Republic nor can I conclude that each lesson of the teacher I have observed is the same as during my presence in the classroom. I have spent two weeks in the school and therefore, my conclusions are based on a relatively short period of time.

Nevertheless, based on my research, I am able to confirm that the teacher gave the learners opportunities during which they could participate in social interaction in English. However, there was not a wide variety of communicative activities since interview and discussion appeared in the majority of the cases.

Moreover, interview and discussion are undoubtedly beneficial for the learners but the vast majority of them was carried out while the learners were sitting by their desks and the teacher led the conversation by herself. Engaging the learners in various interaction patterns provides the learners with different kinds of opportunities e.g. increased amount of language production, hearing and learning pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar patterns by their peers.

There were also significant differences between the two observed groups. The teacher used a wider variety of interaction patterns and communicative activities in the Group J and the activities were also longer in terms of their length.

Furthermore, activities based on social interaction were also placed in different parts of the lesson in the two groups. In the Group J, the activities were in majority of the cases placed in the both parts of the lesson and were also connected to other tasks e.g. working with the textbook, listening, reading.

Conversely, in the Group G, majority of the communicative activities appeared in the first half of the lesson and were directly connected to the book they were working with.

It is also important to note that I have not observed each group in a great detail, nor did I interviewed the learners, so I do not know what exactly was happening during the tasks or what their opinion on the activities was.

Conclusion

This thesis dealt with development of speaking skills in English language teaching through incorporating activities which are based on social interaction. The bachelor paper was divided into two parts: theoretical and practical.

The main aim of this thesis was to find out, whether the teacher in the 9th grade provides the learners with opportunities during which they could participate in social interaction in English. Involving the learners in activities which are based on interaction is beneficial because it not only helps to develop grammar and vocabulary but also the appropriacy of the language use. Moreover, such activities should be designed in a way which imitates real-life situations because meaningful conversation significantly promotes learning.

Furthermore, including various types of student grouping enables the learners to try communicating in different situations and completing activities in pairs or small groups with their peers motivates the learners to speak in general. They are also likely to produce an increased amount of language which would not be possible during teacher-fronted activities. The students are also able to learn from each other when being exposed to different types of interaction patterns.

The research has shown that the teacher provided such opportunities during the lessons however, there was not a wide variety of communicative activities. Majority of the activities was carried out while the learners were sitting by their desks and the teacher led the conversation by herself. In some cases, the learner did not cooperate with the teacher and it is only a speculation, but it might be because of shyness or uncertainty about the word or grammar pattern. Therefore, including situations during which the learners would discuss the topic with their peers beforehand might eliminate the previously mentioned issues.

There were also substantial differences between the two observed groups. The teacher used a wider range of interaction patterns in the group where the learners had a higher level of English and also, the communicative activities were more elaborated in this group.

Furthermore, activities based on social interaction were placed in different parts of the lesson in the two groups. In the previously mentioned group, the activities were in majority of the cases placed in the both parts of the lesson and were also connected to other tasks. Contrariwise, in the group with a lower level of English, majority of the communicative

activities appeared in the first half of the lesson and were directly connected to the book they were working with.

As we have discussed the results of the research, it is also crucial to mention that conclusions of this thesis are drawn on a relatively short period of time. Therefore, it is not possible to say that every teacher in the Czech Republic teaches the lessons as the observed teachers nor can be concluded that the observed teacher leads the lessons in the same way throughout the whole school year.

Moreover, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the research did not examine what exactly happened during the activities and how the learners perceived them in terms of difficulty or enjoyability in general. Such issues might be subject of a follow-up study.

RESUMÉ

Základní vzdělání je pro velkou skupinu lidí nejvyšším dosaženým vzděláním. Pokud tedy vezmeme tuto skutečnost v úvahu z pohledu výuky anglického jazyka, je důležité, aby žáci ze základních škol odcházeli připraveni na mluvenou komunikaci. Běžným situacím, jako je například komunikace na letišti, nakupování v cizině nebo návštěva doktora nemluvicím našim jazykem se totiž tato skupina lidí pravděpodobně nevyhne a je tedy podstatné, aby byli schopni komunikovat alespoň na základní úrovni.

Tato bakalářská práce je rozdělena do dvou částí: teoretické a praktické. Hlavním cíle práce je zjistit, zda učitel v deváté třídě na základní škole zařazuje do své výuky učební aktivity, během nichž se mohou žáci zapojit do sociální interakce v anglickém jazyce. Dále se výzkum zabývá tím, jaké interakční vzorce učitel používá/nepoužívá a také tím, jaká je pestrost aktivit, které vyžadují slovní interakci. V neposlední řadě výzkum zkoumá, kolik minut je průměrně sociální interakci věnováno během jedné učební hodiny a také průměrnou délku jedné aktivity.

První kapitola se věnuje definování pojmu sociální interakce a je tak učiněno z několika úhlů pohledu. Nejprve je tento pojem definován z pohledu sociální psychologie. V širším slova smyslu se jedná o vědní disciplínu, která se zabývá sociální interakcí a také prostředím, ve kterém se lidé pohybují. Dále je sociální interakce představena z hlediska obecných cílů základního vzdělání v 9. třídě s oporou v dokumentu Rámcový vzdělávací program. V této kapitole je zmíněna charakteristika žáka z pohledu jeho dovedností a schopností, které by měl mít osvojené na konci základního vzdělání. Popsané očekávané výstupy jsou postavené a zároveň propojené s dokumentem Společný evropský referenční rámec, další podkapitola se tak věnuje právě jemu. SEFR detailně popisuje úroveň jazykové zdatnosti a popisuje žáka 9. ročníku jako mírně pokročilého. Dále je zde na základě tří různých pohledů na jazykovou zdatnost popsáno, co přesně by žák 9. ročníku měl zvládat ve vztahu k mluvenému projevu.

Žák 9. třídy na základní škole zaujímá podstatnou roli v této práci. Cílem druhé kapitoly je tak představit podrobněji zmíněného žáka. Věk žáka posledního ročníku základní školy se pohybuje mezi 15-16 lety. Právě v tomto věku jsou žáci na pomezí rané a pozdní adolescence, a prochází mnoha změnami – od tělesných až po emoční. V tomto období se také mění způsob myšlení žáka a je tak schopen přemýšlet nejen abstraktně, ale i hypoteticky. Taková změna vede k utváření názorů, hodnot a také celé osobnosti. Je také potřeba zmínit, že ač je žák schopen přemýšlet nad skutečnostmi z několika pohledů úhlů a experimentování s různými hypotézami, bývá také velmi utvrzený o správnosti svého názoru a nerad připouští

možnou chybu. Mimoto se žákovo myšlení stává čím dal více kritické, a začíná tak zpochybňovat důležitost docházení do školy a učení se novým věcem, protože nabyl dojmu, že vše podstatné si již osvojil.

Třetí kapitola se zabývá možnostmi rozvoje sociální interakce v hodinách angličtiny. Nejprve je představena komunikativní kompetence, tedy cíl výuky cizího jazyka. Důraz je nejprve kladen na definování tohoto pojmu a následně na vývoj, jakým komunikativní kompetence prošla v průběhu let až po současnost. Poslední zmíněný model mluvní kompetence od autorek Gohové a Burnsové se z hlediska relevantnosti k této práci jeví jako nejvhodnější, jelikož je přímo zaměřen na rozvoj mluvení v anglickém jazyce.

Čtvrtá kapitola je věnována učebním aktivitám, které žáky podněcují k ústní komunikaci v anglickém jazyce. Během těchto aktivit si žáci mohou vyzkoušet různé druhy situací, které vyžadují aktivní zapojení a také jejich znalost slovíček, gramatiky ale i kognitivní myšlení. Jsou zde zmíněné aktivity jako je například diskuze, dotazník nebo simulace. Další podkapitola rozebírá důležitost didaktických her, které jsou vhodné k vytváření dobré atmosféry ve třídě, protože mohou být pojaté zábavnou formou, ale zároveň vyžadují spolupráci žáků a procvičování nabytých znalostí.

Počínaje pátou kapitolou se již přesouváme do praktické části této práce. Nejprve jsou zde představeny výše zmíněné cíle výzkumu a také zvolená metoda pro sběr potřebných dat. Jelikož bylo potřeba zjistit, jak často a zda vůbec se aktivity založené na sociální interakci v hodinách angličtiny objevují, zvolená forma sběru dat je pozorování. Pro tyto účely byl vytvořen pozorovací list, který shrnuje informace z teoretické části a je navržen tak, aby zodpověděl na otázky položené v praktické části.

V šesté kapitole jsou blíže představeni účastníci výzkumu a také prostředí, kam jsem dva týdny docházela na pozorování. Pro potřeby výzkumu byly pozorovány dvě skupiny žáků 9. ročníků. Jelikož je jedna z těchto skupin více zaměřena na technické předměty, úroveň anglického jazyka je tedy v této skupině nižší. Z tohoto důvodu jsou tyto skupiny hodnoceny nejprve odděleně a poté následuje porovnání obou skupin dohromady.

Výzkum ukázal, že učitel žákům poskytuje příležitosti, během nichž mohou slovně komunikovat v anglickém jazyce, ale zvolené aktivity postrádaly pestrost jak z hlediska jejich uskutečnění, tak z hlediska zvolených interakčních vzorců.

Objevily se také zásadní rozdíly mezi pozorovanými skupinami. Ve skupině žáků, kteří měli vyšší úroveň anglického jazyka byly zvolené mluvní aktivity více propojené s ostatními dovednostmi (poslech, čtení, práce s učebnicí). Aktivity byly také delší po časové stránce a celkově bylo mluvené komunikaci věnováno více času v porovnání s druhou skupinou. Ve druhé skupině byly tyto aktivity převážně propojené s aktivitou, během níž žáci četli a zároveň poslouchali nahrávku kapitoly jedné knihy. Nejprve tedy učitelka s žáky shrnula předchozí děj knihy a poté se zabývala názory žáků na současnou kapitolu.

Na základě hodnot zaznamenaných na časové ose v pozorovacím listu bylo také zjištěno, že aktivity, které zahrnovaly sociální interakci, se objevovaly ve zmíněných skupinách na různých místech vyučovací hodiny. Pokud se jednalo o skupinu s vyšší úrovní anglického jazyka, tyto aktivity byly ve většině případů rozprostřeny v obou polovinách vyučovací hodiny a byla mezi nimi určitá prodleva. Naopak ve druhé skupině se aktivity, které vyžadovaly slovní komunikaci, objevovaly nejčastěji v první polovině hodiny a velmi často hned za sebou.

Toto zjištění se tak dá považovat za ilustraci té skutečnosti, že ve skupině žáků s vyšší úrovní angličtiny, byly aktivity více propojované s aktivitami, které se zaměřovaly na rozvoj jiných dovedností a naopak, že ve druhé skupině mluvená komunikace zahrnovala ve většině případů aktivitu s knihou, která se vždy objevila na začátku hodiny.

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Appendices

Appendix A Original Observation Sheet	57
Appendix B Revised Observation Sheet Used during the Research	58
Appendix C Example of a Lesson in Group J	59
Appendix D Example of a Lesson in Group G	60

Appendix A Original Observation Sheet

Classroom interaction observation sheet

Date:

Class:

Time:

No. of students:

Whole class working together with the teacher

Description of the activity	Time

Whole class moving around and mixing together

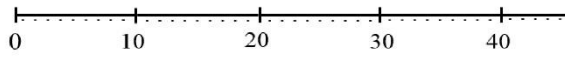
Description of the activity	Time

Group-work

Type of activity	Description	Time
Role-play		
Simulation		
Discussion		
Information gap		
Story completion		
Jigsaw		
Reporting		

Pair-work

Type of activity	Description	Time
Role-play		
Simulation		
Discussion		
Information gap		
Interview		
Jigsaw		
Questionnaire		



Timeline of the lesson

Lesson plan

Activity	Description of the activity	Time

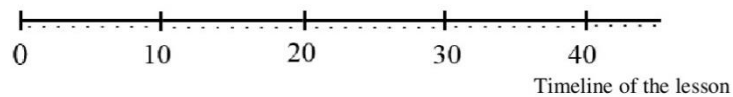
Appendix B Revised Observation Sheet Used during the Research

Classroom interaction activities

Date: _____ Class: _____ Time: _____ No. of students: _____

Overall aim of the lesson: _____

Whole class working together with the teacher			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
Whole class moving around and mixing together as individuals			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
Group-work			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
Pair-work			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length



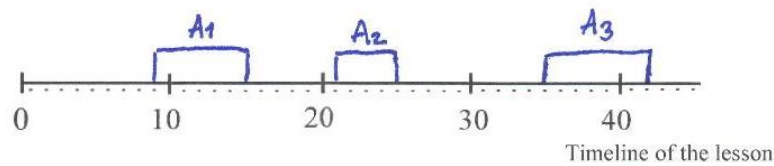
Appendix C Example of a Lesson in Group J

Classroom interaction activities

Date: 24.2.2020 Class: 9.B (J) Time: 11:50-12:35 No. of students: 15

Overall aim of the lesson: describing personalities + types of part-time jobs

Whole class working together with the teacher			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
1	interview	T interviews Ls - which qualities a specific person should have (shop assistant, parent, friend)	6 min
2	interview	T interviews Ls - have you ever done any part-time job? (if yes, which one, did you like it?)	4 min
Whole class moving around and mixing together as individuals			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
Group-work			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
3	discussion	Ls have to discuss which part-time job they would choose from a list in a textbook. WHY	7 min
Pair-work			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length



Appendix D Example of a Lesson in Group G

Classroom interaction activities

Date: 28.2.2020 Class: 9.B (G) Time: 10:55-11:40 No. of students: 9
 Overall aim of the lesson: was not mentioned

Whole class working together with the teacher			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
1	interview	T interviews the Ls → what they remember from the previous chapter of a book + predictions	3min
2	discussion	discussing what happened in today's chapter → the last chapter → opinions on the ending	4min
Whole class moving around and mixing together as individuals			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
Group-work			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length
Pair-work			
No. of the activity	Type of activity	Description	Activity length

