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THE USE OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING IN EFL CLASSES

VYUŽITÍ KOOPERATIVNÍHO UČENÍ V HODINÁCH ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA

DIE VERWERTUNG DES KOOPERATIVEN LERNENS IN DEN ENGLISCHSTUNDEN

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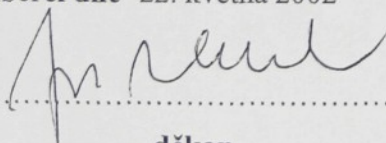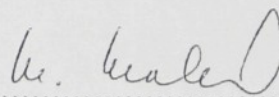
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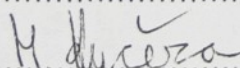...   ....
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Zadání DP

Diplomová práce zahrnuje akademický výzkum a praktické ověření teorie zabývající se kooperativním učiním.

Cílem je prokázat, že kooperativní učení je smysluplné a je vhodné ho zařadit do výuky.

Zpracování praktického projektu, analýza a interpretace výsledků v uvedené diplomové práci prokáží porozumění metodám analýzy teoretických východisek a jejich kritického zhodnocení a schopnost využití teoretických závěrů při volbě vhodných metod při výuce cizího jazyka. Posouzení efektivnosti teorie a zvolených metodických postupů v praxi dále ukáže schopnost využití evaluace jako nezbytné strategie hodnocení celého výzkumu.

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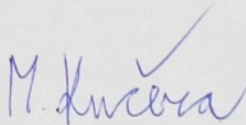
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Poděkování

Děkuji všem, bez nichž bych nikdy svoji práci nedokončil. Především bych rád poděkoval vedoucí práce PaedDr. Zuzaně Šaffkové, CSc., M.A. za mnoho užitečných rad, trpělivé čtení jednotlivých částí a milý přístup. Vedení základní školy Strž ve Dvoře Králové nad Labem děkuji, že mi umožnilo projekt realizovat. V neposlední řadě patří mé díky Lucince, rodičům a všem, kteří mě morálně podporovali.

THE USE OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING IN EFL CLASSES

Summary

The diploma thesis aims to prove that using co-operative learning in practising grammar in English language classes can motivate pupils to participate actively in language learning and thus improve their grammar knowledge and use in a meaningful way. The project was tested at elementary school (with 14 pupils of the 9th class). The practical implementation of the project was executed during 4 weeks within regular English classes. The grammar practice activities were designed according to the theory and methodology of effective grammar practising and co-operative learning. In the activities the pupils worked together in groups. They encouraged and helped each other to complete their mutual group tasks that focused on a particular grammar item. The evaluation of the project was based on the teacher's observations and reflections, pupils' comments in a questionnaire and the results of a final test.

The whole project proved that co-operative learning is beneficial to practising grammar and improving pupils' approach to learning the English language.

VYUŽITÍ KOOPERATIVNÍHO UČENÍ V HODINÁCH ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA

Resumé

Cílem diplomové práce je prokázat, že využití kooperativního způsobu vyučování při procvičování gramatiky v hodinách anglického jazyka může motivovat žáky k aktivní účasti při studiu jazyka. To vede ke zlepšení jejich znalostí a použití gramatiky smysluplným způsobem. Práce byla otestována na základní škole (v deváté třídě se čtrnácti žáky). Realizace byla provedena ve čtyřech týdnech v hodinách anglického jazyka. Aktivity na procvičování gramatiky byly navrhnuty na základě teorie a metodiky efektivního procvičování gramatiky a kooperativního učení. Žáci pracovali společně ve skupinách. Navzájem se povzbuzovali a pomáhali si, aby splnili zadané úkoly zaměřené na určitý gramatický jev. Hodnocení práce bylo založeno na pozorování a reflexi učitele, komentářích žáků v dotazníku a výsledcích závěrečného testu.

Celá práce potvrdila, že kooperativní způsob učení je výhodný pro procvičování gramatiky a zlepšení přístupu žáků k učení anglického jazyka.

DIE VERWERTUNG DES KOOPERATIVEN LERNENS IN DEN ENGLISCHSTUNDEN

Zusammenfassung

Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist zu beweisen, dass die Verwertung der kooperativen Weise des Unterrichts in den Englischstunden können die Schüler zu der aktiven Beteilung am Sprachlernen motivieren.

Das führt zum Besserung ihrer Kenntnisse und zu der sinnvollen Anwendung der Grammatik. Diese Diplomarbeit war an der Grundschule geprüft (in der neunten Klasse mit vierzehn Schülern). Die Realisation war verwirklicht in vier Wochen in Englischstunden. Grammatikaktivitäten waren an der Basis der Theorie und Methodik des effektiv Grammatikübungen und des kooperativen Lernens entwarft. Schüler arbeitete zusammen in Gruppen. Sie ermunterten und halfen einander, damit sie vergebene Grammatikaufgabe erfüllten. Die Bewertung der Arbeit war auf die Betrachtung und Reflektion des Lehrers, die Bemerkung der Schüler in der Fragebogen und die Ergebnisse des Finaltests aufgebaut.

Die ganze Arbeit bestätigt, dass das kooperative Lernen ist für Grammatikübungen und Besserung der Schülereinstellungen zum Englischsprachelernen vorteilhaft.

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Competition versus co-operation at schools

One of the present problems of elementary schools is discipline. Based on my observations in most EFL classes, there are some pupils who constantly have problems with discipline. In lessons they speak aloud during the teacher talking time commenting on what their teacher has said or hurl insults at other pupils making themselves more noticeable and distinguishable from the others. There are many reasons why they behave like this. One of them might be that they want to attract the teacher's attention or to make fun believing that this will increase their prestige among their classmates, who will, therefore, appreciate them more. Others are naughty because they are tired, unable to pay attention any longer or they do not understand something, and thus they try to cope with problems in their own way trying to slow or stop the quick pace of learning for a moment.

Consequently, the attention of the rest of the class is ceaselessly interrupted and the teacher has to spend a lot of time dealing with these discipline problems, which results in less effective learning process.

One of the general causes of these problems can be failure in a competitive character of school environment. According to Humpreys, Post and Ellis (1981) "students encounter competition in almost everyday facet of life: school, home, and on the playground. They compete with others in games, in choosing friends, in the clothes they wear, in obtaining grades, etc." (p.150). This means that children compete with the others even at school not only during breaks but also during lessons as Kasíková (1997) supports when she says that our school and the system of education is mostly competitive (p. 28).

Competition at our schools and thus in EFL classes can be perceived everywhere ranging from grading or other forms of assessment to everyday classroom activities. On one hand competition has some benefits such as easy motivation as everyone wants to win or fun as a typical feature of competitive games, but on the other hand it often causes many discipline problems.

Shrum and Glisan (1994) write that "in a class using grading on the curve or any competitive grading or incentive system, any individual's success reduces the chances that any other individual will succeed" (p. 324). Taking into account the fact that every class is heterogeneous there are always pupils who "lose." Many of the students who, according to Ellis and Whalen (1990), frequently or always "lose" begin to consider

themselves as constant failures, lose motivation and stop putting any effort into learning. Some of them try to compete with the others in other ways. Usually, they try to be successful at sport or art, others gain approval by being clowns speaking aloud during the teacher talking time or by making problems (p. 13).

When usefulness of competitive classrooms is to be judged, one may ask whether there are not other ways of interaction among pupils which would be more beneficial. According to Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) "There are three basic ways students can interact with each other as they learn. They can compete to see who is "best," they can work individualistically toward a goal without paying attention to other students, or they can work co-operatively with a vested interest in each other's learning as well as their own."

The theory chapter of the Diploma Thesis will explore all the three ways of interaction and analyse main benefits as well as disadvantages of each approach. Although fully agreeing that all three kinds are important for teaching and learning English as well as for further life, it will highlight co-operative interaction as the most useful one. Moreover, it will suggest the decrease of competition in EFL classes and stress the benefits of using co-operation instead.

1 Co-operative learning in EFL Classes

1.1 Three basic kinds of interaction

1.1.1 Competitive interaction

According to many experts (Kasíková, Johnson and Johnson, and others) and my own experience as a learner as well as a teacher, the dominant way of interaction at schools is competition. In such competitive classrooms, in which the rule "If you win, I lose; if I win, you lose" (Ellis and Whalen, 1990, p.13) is often asserted, pupils can be easily motivated to participate in the activities and thus to learn more effectively. This clear asset of competition is achieved only if certain rules are kept. Ellis and Whalen (1990), for example, suggest: All competing students should be on the same ability level; the number of winners should always be maximized (p. 13).

If these rules are not kept or if competition is used ceaselessly, it can be stressful not only for pupils who constantly "lose" but also for winners. Ellis and Whalen (1990) write that "Students who win prizes for their work often worry about whether they can continue to outshine everyone else. They fear failure and the loss of love or approval they expect it will bring. And while they're winning, they're often ostracized by the other students - labeled a brain or a nerd or a brownie" (p.13).

Competitive interaction in EFL classes may create a very bad atmosphere when pupils do not like each other; especially those who are "better at English" and who succeed much more often. They consider those "better at English" to be the cause of their failure. Since any pupils are often exposed to ridicule from classmates and reprimand from the teacher, they stop participating, if not even learning, and their English does not develop.

1.1.2 Individualistic interaction

The second kind of interaction in classrooms is working individually, which is, as Kasíková (1997) declares, the second mostly used way of interaction in our schools (p. 29). The motto for such a classroom is "we're all in this alone" (Ellis and Whalen, 1990, p. 14).

The main advantage of this interaction is, as Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) write, that pupil's score or success is not affected by the success or failure of other pupils.

Therefore, pupils have no need to dislike those who are 'better at English,' they might not be so stressed by competition and they may not try to outshine the others in, for example, being naughty. Moreover, individualistic interaction is also very beneficial for teaching and learning in EFL classes because it gives pupils an opportunity to work in their own pace and way which are suitable to them. Individualistic interaction helps shy pupils, who do not usually want to speak in front of the others, feel free to participate and, therefore, develop their English more. In addition, working individually is useful for a lot of activities, like any reading or writing exercises, tests etc.

The main disadvantage of individualistic interaction is a lack of contact with the others. However, communicative interaction among pupils is very important, especially for learning the language when pupils should speak, listen and respond in a foreign language to the others. Moreover, Ellis and Whalen (1990) cite for example Piaget who concludes that "much of our most important learning comes through our interactions with others. If students have only their own ideas, reactions, and questions to bring to a text or a worksheet or a problem, their learning is not as rich as it could be if they had access to others' ideas" (p. 14). This is supported by Vygotsky (in Johnson and Johnson, 1994, online) who says: "What children can do together today, they can do alone tomorrow." Based on these findings, one must admit that the exclusive use of individualistic interaction while learning is not very challenging, especially in EFL classes.

1.1.3 Co-operative interaction

Even if, individualistic and competitive approaches have justification in classes, according to Kasíková, Johnson and Johnson, and other experts, co-operative interaction is considered as one of the most effective methods. Co-operative classroom is defined by Ellis and Whalen (1990) as a place where "students learn that they can count on their classmates to help when they need help, listen when they have something to contribute, and celebrate their accomplishments" (p. 14). Co-operative learning then means that learners work together in small groups on such tasks that require full collaboration of the whole group and the team is successful only if every member of the team has been successful.

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a. Benefits and disadvantages of co-operative learning

Benefits of co-operative learning can be divided into two basic groups. The first one contains benefits for pupils and the second one consists of benefits for the teacher. Clarke, Wideman and Eadie (1990, p. 6-9) suggest these benefits for pupils:

1. Pupils become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses as when working co-operatively, they have enough chances to realise that there are some things with which they can help the others and with which they need help. They also can understand themselves more due to the contact with the others as they can realise "How do the others see me?" because in co-operative learning pupils are required to reflecting on what the others have done.

2. Co-operative learning offers pupils 'less tension' in classrooms where the primary resource is not the teacher but the other pupils. This gives pupils an opportunity to feel free to ask for help and not to be ashamed of showing that they do not know something because they work in co-operative groups where they are not exposed to ridicule from classmates.

3. Pupils develop more positive self-image and thus intrinsic motivation to learn. Gough (in Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 13) says that learners cannot feel important unless there is someone who recognises them as Ellis and Whalen clarify: "As children experience success and support in their groups and as other children begin to ask for and need their contributions, they come to see themselves as competent learners who are valued by their peers," which naturally leads to further intrinsic motivation to learn.

4. Moreover, pupils learn more efficiently in co-operative environment. Ellis and Whalen (1990, p. 20) point out that for effective learning, people need to employ thinking skills as much as possible, for example, thinking aloud. If people hear themselves saying things, they can clarify or reformulate them in order to make themselves clear and logical. Furthermore, Johnson and Johnson (in Ellis and Whalen, 1990, p. 20) write that "learning with the expectation that you will have to explain it to peers results in more frequent use of higher-level reasoning strategies than does learning material to pass a test. Orally explaining the material being studied results in higher achievement than does listening to the material being explained or reading it alone."

5. Another advantage is, as Shrum and Glisan (1994) claim, that while learning co-operatively both low-achieving and high-achieving students benefit when they work together (p. 324). This can be achieved by tutoring, which is mainly used in co-operative learning. It means that high-achieving students can help low-achieving ones to learn,

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offering them clarifications or another help when it is needed or asking them comprehensive questions to ensure their full understanding. This means that low-achieving students clearly benefit from co-operative learning, but the fact that this can also help high-achieving students should be stressed. Shrum and Glisan (1994) point out that "... serving as a tutor requires thinking deeply about the relationships and meanings of a particular subject" (p. 324). Moreover, tutors have to think about how to simplify or paraphrase ideas to make them more understandable for low-achieving pupils, which naturally leads to adjusting their own thinking and thus effective learning.

6. Pupils become actively involved in taking responsibility for their own learning. They understand that their teacher is not in the classroom to make them learn something but only facilitate their learning, supplying them with resources, suggestions and help.

7. They develop positive attitudes towards others. As they develop co-operative skills, pupils learn values such as respect, empathy, caring for others and helpfulness. Furthermore, they do not consider the others as rivals or even enemies but as classmates with the same problems and needs, which might result in fewer occasions of insulting someone.

The second group contains benefits (suggested by Clarke, Wideman and Eadie, 1990, p. 6-9) for teachers who use co-operative learning at school.

1. The teacher's role changes in co-operative classroom as he or she does not need to supervise pupils all the time because they are motivated and encouraged by each other to work. The teacher can then use a wider variety of other roles such as observer, participant, helper, facilitator etc.

2. Pupils must concentrate all the time because as Ellis and Whalen (1990) write, "... in a group with one or two other students it is much harder to drift off without a group member noticing and pulling the wanderer back into the conversation or activity" (p. 20). Furthermore, pupils have to pay attention being aware of the fact that they can be asked to contribute any time.

3. Co-operative learning can solve some problems with noise, for pupils are, according to Ellis and Whalen (1990, p. 19), more willing to wait for their turn and they need not speak aloud in front of the whole class, which might even help to decrease discipline problems.

4. The discipline problems may decrease as naughty pupils can be admonished and encouraged to work by other members of their team rather than by the teacher. In

addition, pupils who often speak aloud in front of the whole class to entertain the others do not have so many opportunities to do that in co-operative learning because all groups work independently on their own tasks.

5. In addition, as Ellis and Whalen (1990, p. 21) maintain, "Children view teachers who use co-operative learning as more fair than teachers who do not, and they like those teachers better." Some of the causes might be that pupils see that their teacher is most of the time 'behind' giving them a chance to do their task in the way which suits them best. Moreover, in such a way the teacher allows them to work with the others so that they can help, value or recognise each other.

6. Finally, co-operative learning helps pupils improve their social skills such as listening to others, participating in, waiting for their turn, and many others because pupils need these skills to cooperate effectively. In addition, according to Johnson and Johnson (in Ellis and Whalen, 1990, p. 21) "… research on cooperative learning has demonstrated a host of other positive outcomes, including promoting students' acceptance of differences, whether those differences result from handicaps or racial or ethnic backgrounds."

However, co-operative learning has also some disadvantages. One of them is that this learning is very demanding for the teacher to design such lessons in which pupils learn co-operatively. Since pupils are supposed to work independently from the teacher, they need to be well prepared for such activities. This is mostly important when they start with co-operative learning and when they would most probably not know what to do.

Moreover, it takes a lot of time for pupils to get used to co-operative learning and to be really efficient because pupils are too accustomed to competitive interaction not only at school but everywhere (Humpreys, 1981, p. 150).

However, if the teacher is patient and willing to invest more time into preparation of the lessons both the teacher and pupils will be rewarded.

b. Co-operative learning used in EFL classes

Co-operative learning in EFL classes has also a lot of uses. One of the advantages is that co-operative interaction in EFL classes promotes communication in English among pupils because without communication co-operative learning would not be possible.

In addition, co-operative learning in EFL classes can result in the raise of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to learn English. The extrinsic motivation to work hard

during the English lesson can be perceived in the learner's commitment to the group to which they belong because the group, according to the definitions of co-operative learning, can be successful only if everyone is successful there. This means that all members of the team expect each other to be hard-working. The intrinsic motivation can be developed when pupils use communication for cooperation and, therefore, understand that without the knowledge of the language, communication is very difficult.

Moreover, in any foreign language it is difficult to express ideas and, therefore, learners tend to make mistakes such as attempts, which means that they express themselves with incorrect use of the language. In co-operative learning pupils communicate and use the language more as they do not expect that their answer will become the object of ridicule.

Finally, co-operative interaction in EFL classes improves the process of learning English not only by raising motivation and lowering stress but also by giving every learner an opportunity of immediate repetition. In addition, pupils can receive explanation, clarification or paraphrase of what has already been said, which is almost impossible during frontal teaching, when the teacher is the only resource. The example could be that if pupils sometimes come across a word that they do not understand, while learning co-operatively they have many possibilities to ask someone for the explanation of the word and, as a result, to use it. This is not as easy during frontal teaching because the teacher usually does not have enough time to explain every word which some of the pupils do not know.

Taking into account the general benefits of co-operative learning in EFL classes, this teaching and learning approach can be highly useful during presenting or practising any item of the English learning ranging from skills, vocabulary and pronunciation to structures and functions. The following passage, therefore, focuses on the description of justification of co-operative learning in practising English grammar.

c. Basic criteria for effective English grammar practice and the benefits of its combination with co-operative learning in EFL classes.

The goal of practicing English grammar is, as Thornbury writes, to help learners become precise at applying the system of grammar rules and do it automatically (1998, p. 91). Therefore, by the means of the grammar practice learners develop their accuracy and fluency of their English. Scrivener writes that learners can improve their accuracy when doing "Restricted use activities," in which they practise the form of a certain grammatical

item. Fluency can be developed when pupils participate in "Authentic use activities," in which the focus is on fluent use of the language in communication (1994, p. 133). How co-operative learning can benefit in both of these aspects will be discussed in the following part.

c.1 Benefits of co-operative learning used to improve accuracy

Thornbury (1998, p.92) mentions these characteristics of a good activity improving accuracy:

1. "The practice activity should motivate learners to want to be accurate, and they should not be so focused on what they are saying that they have no left-over attention to allocate to how they are saying it." Co-operative learning could provide even more motivation to this activity as it can lower anxiety of making mistakes and thus stress. One of the reasons is that pupils are not corrected immediately during the co-operative activity. In addition, motivation in the co-operative activity is also stimulated by the task, which is usually a problem that needs to be solved.

2. "Learners need to be familiar with the language they are trying to get right." In co-operative learning pupils can ask for help more easily any time they need it. This means that if they do not understand the meaning of the grammatical item whose form they practise, they can ask for help immediately.

3. "Monitoring for accuracy is easier and therefore more successful if there is sufficient time available to think and reflect." When learning cooperatively pupils have many opportunities for monitoring and reflection as they can discuss any problem with other members of the group immediately.

4. "Learners need unambiguous massage as to how accurate they are – this traditionally takes the form of correction." However this is important, the teacher is not able to provide every pupil with correction in traditional frontal teaching. In co-operative learning pupils can correct each other. It is very useful when pupils do it mainly if the aim of the language practice is improvement of accuracy because it helps not only the one who made the mistake but also the one who corrects it. If there is a group in which no

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pupil is able to correct the others the teacher can do it as he or she has more freedom to choose the group which really needs his or her support.

c.2 Benefits of co-operative learning used to improve fluency

The activities that develop fluency have these characteristics (Thornbury, 1998, p.93):

1. "The practice activity should encourage learners to pay attention less to the form of what they are saying (which may slow them down) and more to the meaning." In most co-operative activities the language serves as a tool to solve the problem and, therefore, pupils are more concerned about the meaning.

2. "The activity should attempt to stimulate the psychological conditions of real-life language use. That is, the learner should be producing and interpreting language under real-time constraints, and with a measure of unpredictability." As the co-operative activities are based on interaction among pupils the "real-time constraints and the measure of unpredictability" is naturally provided because each pupil is unique with their own ideas and suggestions.

3. "The activity should have a communicative purpose. That is, there should be a built-in need to interact." This requirement is actually a general precondition for an activity suitable for cooperation.

c.3 Modification of grammar activities

One of the big benefits of co-operative learning is the fact that it can be used when practising any grammar from the textbook. Therefore, the teacher can often use the textbook as an important source of the co-operative activities, although, he or she has to modify the task. This Diploma Thesis should prove that if pupils practised the grammar from the textbook in co-operative activities they would benefit more.

2 Principles of the adjustment of cooperation in EFL classes

2.1 Important conditions for co-operative learning

It is very important to understand the difference between group work and co-operative learning as these two terms are often confused with one another. It is true that co-operative learning would not exist if there was not group or pair work as cooperation cannot exist unless people work together. However, it does not mean that if pupils are working in a group, they are learning co-operatively. Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) write that: "A group of students sitting at the same table doing their own work, but free to talk with each other as they work, is not structured to be a cooperative group ..." because co-operative learning has not been provided.

Co-operative learning exists under certain conditions. Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) suggest these rules:

1. Positive interdependence
2. Face-to-face promotive interaction
3. Individual accountability and personal responsibility to achieve the group's goals
4. Frequent use of the relevant interpersonal and small-group skills
5. Group processing to improve the group's future effective work

2.1.1 Positive Interdependence

Positive interdependence exists, according to Johnson and Johnson (1994, online), "when students perceive that they are linked with group mates in such a way that they cannot succeed unless their group mates do (and vice versa) and/or that they must coordinate their efforts with the efforts of their group mates to complete a task." In other words pupils understand that they need all the other members of their team to succeed. Consequently, they are more willing to share their ideas, help when someone needs a help, make sure everyone understands and works, make compromises rather than insist on their own decisions and encourage the others to ask because without all this cooperation they could not succeed.

There are many ways of ensuring the positive interdependence (Johnson and Johnson, 1994, online):

First, the positive interdependence can be a part of the goal, when pupils are said directly that their task is to learn something and make sure that every member of the group has learned it too.

Then, pupils can be tested individually after learning something co-operatively. When all the members of the same group achieve the score of 90 percent or higher, they will all receive a few points as a bonus. In addition, the teacher can sometimes question one or two pupils from the same group about something that they have been learning and if they know the correct answers the whole group is rewarded.

Another way of ensuring positive interdependence is to remind pupils that they need each other's work to succeed. The teacher can give their pupils only limited resources, materials or information such as only a few copies with the specification of their task, which they, therefore, have to share to complete the task. The other way is that each member of the group receives only a portion of information, resource or material and they have to combine them so that they will have the complete information.

In addition, each member of the group can be given a different social role, which specifies his or her responsibilities for the effective work of the whole group. Ellis and Whalen (1999, p. 33) and Kasíková (1997, p. 79) suggest these roles:

Encourager – asks the other group members to contribute something and makes sure that those who have contributed are complimented.

Checker of understanding – often asks the others comprehensive questions about what is being learned or discussed.

Time-keeper – helps the group to finish the task on time.

Coordinator – keeps the group working on the task, leads discussions, makes the most important decisions.

Worker with information – clarifies and summarizes ideas and looks for information in materials if no one knows the right answer.

Finally, the positive interdependence can be promoted when pupils perceive their "group spirit", which means they have developed a sense of group identity (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 33). The easiest way to do this is to let the members of the team choose their group name, colour or place in the classroom where the group want to work. They

can decorate this place with posters or whatever they want. It is also very important for pupils to understand the purpose of such activities.

2.1.2 Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction

The second condition of co-operative learning is face-to-face promotive interaction. Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) define this as an interaction among "individuals encouraging and facilitating each other's efforts to complete tasks in order to reach the group's goals." In other words pupils are supposed to provide each other with help, assistance, encouragement, recognition and feedback, which helps to lower anxiety and stress.

The obvious way of facilitating face-to-face promotive interaction is to include all the above mentioned components into the co-operative activity.

2.1.3 Individual accountability and personal responsibility to achieve the group's goals

The third condition that ensures co-operative learning is the necessity to promote individual accountability and personal responsibility to achieve the group's goals. According to Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) this functions "when the performance of individual students is assessed, the results are given back to the individual and the group, and the student is held responsible by group mates for contributing his or her fair share to the group's success." This condition guarantees that no pupil seeks 'a free ride,' which means that he or she does not work and wait till the others do the work instead of them. Moreover, pupils who are 'better at English' do not do all the work without participation of the others and, therefore, the other members of the group do not need to do anything. In addition, pupils should be better prepared to do similar tasks not only when cooperating with others but also when working individually.

Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) suggest these ways to achieve individual accountability:

1. Keeping the size of the group small. The smaller the size of the group is, the greater the individual accountability may be.

2. Giving individual tests to each student.

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3. Randomly examining students orally by calling on one student to present his or her group's work to the teacher (in the presence of the group) or to the entire class.

4. Observing each group and recording the frequency with which each member contributes to the group's work.

5. Assigning one student in each group the role of checker. The checker asks the other members of the group to explain the reason and rationale underlying group answers.

6. Making students teach what they learned to someone else.

Ellis and Whalen (1999, p. 36) add that another very effective way of ensuring individual accountability can be signatures, when all members of the group are asked to sign their product or any other document whenever they finish working. This is useful only if the teacher explains clearly and highlights what the pupil's signature represents. Pupils can be for example said: "When you sign your name, you are saying that you agree with your group's answers and that you can explain those answers if I call on you" (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 36).

2.1.4 Interpersonal and Small-Group Skills

The next essential component of co-operative learning is interpersonal and small-group skills, which in other words mean social skills. Kasíková (1997, p. 40) and Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) write that co-operative learning does not work unless pupils are skilled at the appropriate social skills because they cannot cooperate with each other if they do not know how to work with others. These skills need to be taught by the teacher because "most children (like most adults) don't have well-developed social skills," (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 40) and need to learn them in the same way as they learn to write or multiply [ibid].

There are many social skills which help pupils to work more efficiently. Ellis and Whalen (1999, p. 40) divide them into three basic kinds:

Basic Group Skills – without these skills group cannot complete anything

- getting into your group quietly and quickly
- bringing necessary materials with you
- staying with your group until the task is done
- talking in quiet voices

- listening to your partner(s)
- calling your partner(s) by name
- knowing your task

Functioning skills – enable group members to work together and learn effectively

- taking turns
- contributing your ideas
- asking for help when you need it
- encouraging others to contribute
- complimenting others' contributions
- checking for understanding

High-Order Thinking Skills – deepen group members' understanding of the material being learned and the points of view of other students.

- asking for clarification
- providing clarification
- building on another's ideas
- paraphrasing another's idea to show you understand it
- analysing your group's process
- evaluating the group's work
- criticizing the idea, not the person who presented it

It is not necessary to teach children all the skills and it is not even possible. Ellis and Whalen (1999, p. 41) write that the teacher should choose only a few skills to teach for the whole year but never more than two or three at the same time. It is beneficial to start teaching basic group skills as they are the easiest ones and when the teacher can see that pupils have mastered these basic skills he or she can start teaching functioning skills. High-order thinking skills are the most difficult ones and should be, therefore, taught only if pupils are successful in using many basic group and functioning skills.

Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) point out that pupils must not only be taught but also motivated to use these social skills if cooperative learning is to be productive. One of the possibilities is to reward each pupil with some points toward the final assessment if the teacher has seen all members of the group using the skills.

2.1.5 Group Processing

The last invaluable condition of learning co-operatively is group processing or reflection on how effectively the group has been working. Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) define group processing as "reflecting on a group session to: 1) describe what member actions were helpful and unhelpful, and 2) make decisions about what actions to continue or change."

According to these experts there are two levels of processing – small group and whole class. The purpose of small group processing is, as Johnson and Johnson (1994, online) claim, "to improve the effectiveness of the members in contributing to the collaborative efforts to achieve the group's goals."

A good way to make small group processing be effective is to give pupils enough time, usually at the end of each lesson, and a structure for processing such as "Name three things you have done well today." or "Name one thing you should improve next time."

Additionally, small group processing may be provided when the teacher asks pupils to discuss their co-operative interaction and agree to a rating. The group can choose from the following (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 51):

Super Group – We did everything we were supposed to do and we did it well.

Great Group – We did just about everything we were supposed to do, but we need to

work a little harder at _____.

Good Group – We did some things well, but we had a real problem with

_____.

Fair Group – We didn't get much done because we had such a problem with

_____.

When using the group processing strategy, it is crucially important to remind the pupils that they must have specific reasons to support their rating they choose.

Another way to facilitate small group processing is to give the group an easy questionnaire where specific social skills are mentioned. Ellis and Whalen (1999, p. 50) provide this example [see fig. 1]:

Group name:

Today we:

☺   ☹

Took turns: _____   _____

☺   ☹

Helped each other: _____   _____

Signed: _____

Fig. 1 – Group processing questionnaire

In addition, Ellis and Whalen write that the teacher "can also pass out three-by-five-inch cards to each student and ask him or her to write a card to each group member describing what that person did to help the group" (1999, p. 51). The authors point out that it is good when pupils are asked to show their cards to their teacher before they give them to that person. The teacher can check whether pupils have not written there anything negative or too general.

However small group processing is provided by pupils, whole class group processing is mostly done by the teacher. The teacher does this to make pupils feel successful, appreciated, and respected because these feelings build commitment to learning, enthusiasm about working in co-operative groups and using the appropriate social skills (Johnson and Johnson, 1994, online).

For effective whole class group procession the teacher can use a formal observation sheet to collect data about how cooperatively each group has been working which he or she can share with the whole class at the end of the lesson. Ellis and Whalen (1999, p. 51)

suggest this chart [see fig. 2 on] where the teacher writes pupils' names and adds ticks each time they use the particular skill:

Social skills

	contributing ideas ✓	encouraging others ✓	What has the pupil said?
Group A			
student A	✓✓		*"Bob, what do you think?"*
student B		✓	*"That's a great idea!"*
student C	✓✓		
Group B			
student D	✓✓✓✓	✓	
student E	✓	✓	
student F	✓	✓✓✓	*"This is really clever!"*
Group C			
student G	✓	✓✓	

Fig. 2 – Observation sheet

Finally, it is necessary to always remember that when giving feedback to pupils in front of the class, it is important to be positive as the main purpose is to celebrate their success and facilitate their motivation to work hard (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 28).

If one pupil has no or very few ticks for a social skill, it is not good to consider that situation to be the pupil's problem because it is a problem of the whole group. The authors give this example of what the teacher can say "While I was watching, Paul didn't say much. How could you help him feel comfortable contributing his ideas?" [ibid].

Both small group and whole class processing is very important for pupils because it provides an opportunity for them to see what they did well and what they should improve next time. Therefore, these kinds of processing facilitate pupils' success and motivation to work hard.

2.2 How to start with co-operative learning?

As co-operative learning is very demanding for pupils because they are not usually accustomed to this way of working, it is useful to start very slowly in small steps. Pupils need a lot of time and preparation to get used to it otherwise co-operative learning will not be effective.

Kasíková (1997, p. 73) writes that even in frontal teaching, when the teacher is the main resource of learning, it is possible to prepare pupils for cooperation. For example the teacher can often remind pupils that if they do not know anything or have not understood, they can ask their classmates. It is also very advantageous if the teacher uses "we" or thinks aloud when giving a lecture. When preparing pupils for cooperation, it is also vital to devote some time to activities which will make them believe that co-operative learning is beneficial to them. Kasíková, for example, suggests that the teacher can give pupils a few minutes after each part of his or her lecture to clarify what the teacher has been speaking about (1997, p. 73).

When preparing any activity for co-operative learning one cannot forget that each activity has both academic and cooperative task. Ellis and Whalen (1999, p. 24) write that once the teacher has decided the academic task, he or she can think about one social skill which would make cooperative accomplishment of the task easier for the pupils. Pupils can for example elicit vocabulary about food and while eliciting, they can concentrate on encouraging the others to contribute or they can call each other by name. Again pupils must understand that both tasks are of the same value to their teacher and that he or she will assess both of them.

After the teacher has decided both academic and social skills, he or she can think about how to assign pupils to groups. Ellis and Whalen point out that the most effective size of a group is four pupils but only if they have mastered working in pairs and trios (1999, p. 24). The size of the group depends on many factors such as the kind of activity, materials, children etc., but in the group there should be at least three pupils and not more than five if one wants to provide individual accountability.

When thinking about which pupils should work together, it is very important to create heterogeneous groups because as Ellis and Whalen write "it's the differences in group members that make cooperative learning effective" (1999, p. 28). In each group there should be someone who is "good at English" and willing to help, someone who

needs help, someone talkative and friendly who can encourage the others to contribute, someone who needs to be encouraged, someone naughty, etc. However, it is good to avoid putting two children together who tend to act out (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 25). In fact, the teacher does not need to assign pupils to work with those they like at all because "one purpose of co-operative learning is to help students learn to work with everybody" [ibid].

2.3 The importance of the first co-operative lesson

This passage should present some principal suggestions for initiating co-operative learning in EFL classes after pupils have been put into groups.

In order to achieve positive interdependence or their 'group spirit' the teacher may give pupils some time to find a name of their group and choose a colour and a place in the classroom where they want to work. They can make, for example, a poster that will describe each member of the group, which they will all finally sign. All these activities are important for making pupils feel commitment to their group, which will, therefore, motivate them to cooperate.

When the teacher introduces co-operative learning for the first time, it is beneficial to provide pupils with information about the interpersonal and small-group skills, which they will have to use. Pupils can, for example, be asked to brainstorm a list of rules for working together successfully, such as "use quiet voice", "help each other", "listen to each other", "get the job done", etc (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 26). Pupils can then make a poster with these rules and attach it to the wall in the classroom. This poster can later serve as a good reminder of what they are supposed to do.

Having brainstormed the list of rules for working successfully, pupils are described the importance of individual accountability and personal responsibility to achieve the group's goals. They have to understand that any co-operative learning activity has always two different tasks – the academic and the co-operative one. The academic task usually represents some grammar item that pupils have to practise. The co-operative task means the roles of students or the use of some social skills. Moreover, pupils have to know that the teacher values their success in cooperation as much as he or she values their academic achievement (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 26). At this moment it is also necessary to

explain to pupils how the teacher will assess their learning. They must know that their work will be evaluated.

The first tasks of co-operative activities must be very easy to complete as pupils need to accustom to this kind of learning. For example, they can be asked to elicit as many irregular verbs as they can and while eliciting they have to encourage each other to participate. It is important to mention that the main aim of the first co-operative activities is for students to feel success when accomplishing them, which will motivate them for further work.

Especially in first lessons pupils will have many problems with working independently from the teacher and feeling the personal responsibility to achieve the group goals. Kasíková writes that it is helpful when the teacher chooses two positions in the classroom. The first one is "active", which is usually somewhere in front of the blackboard. The teacher remains at this position when he or she gives instructions, feedback and expects questions from pupils. The second position is "passive", which is usually somewhere else such as by windows. The teacher stays there when he or she does not want to make any contact with pupils. The positions indicate to pupils whether they can ask questions or not. The teacher should also highlight that pupils can ask him or her only if no one from their group knows the answer (1997, p. 74).

After the pupils have finished their work, it is important to provide them with some time for group processing. The easiest way for the teacher to have time for group processing is to plan the lesson carefully and then pace themselves. If the teacher has eight groups of three working on a twenty-five-minute activity, he or she can expect to spend about two or three minutes observing each group and collecting data, and one or two minutes showing their data and asking pupils for their reactions. If there are more groups, the teacher can observe only some of them (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 49). As the teacher's findings in every group are generally similar the pupils who have not been observed will also benefit if the teacher shares the collected with them.

Finally, pupils must be evaluated somehow. Since both academic and social achievements are of the same value, the teacher takes into account both tasks when evaluating pupils. If the teacher decides to evaluate them with points all members of the group gain the same amount of points.

2.4 The use of co-operative learning in grammar practice

After considering the main advantages of co-operative learning, it seems to be highly profitable to include co-operative learning in the grammar practice. The use of cooperation in activities that aim at practising different grammar structures can give this part of a lesson another dimension. This dimension is given by positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, the use of social skills, etc. The following passage will try to demonstrate how the use of co-operative learning in particular grammar practice activities can promote their effectiveness.

When the teacher wants their pupils to practise any English grammatical item, he or she can use a variety of techniques. Among these Harmer (1987, p. 41-51) mentions:

1. Drills

2. Interaction activities

a. information gap activities

b. charts

3. Involving the personality activities

a. chain drills

4. Games

a. crosses and circles

b. general knowledge quizzes

c. board games

d. memory tests

e. picture dictation (Scrivener, 1994, p. 125)

f. miming an action (Scrivener, 1994, p. 125)

g. growing stories (Scrivener, 1994, p. 126)

5. Written practice activities

a. fill-in-the-gaps

b. written drills

c. jumbled sentences

d. sentence writing

e. parallel writing

In addition, the teacher can use techniques which are product oriented such as:

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6. Product oriented activities

a. posters

b. tests designing

Drills are considered as a very effective technique of accuracy development as their aim is to "give students rapid practice in using a structural item" (Harmer, 1987, p. 41). The teacher usually sets examples first and then asks pupils to use the language item according to the example. The main advantage of drills is "that the teachers can correct any mistakes that the students make and can encourage them to concentrate on difficulties at the same time" [ibid]. However, the teacher is not able to pay attention to every pupil in his or her class because there are simply too many of them. Positive interdependence as one of the basic conditions for co-operative learning requires all the members of one group to help each other and to be involved in the activity. Therefore, if a drill activity is modified for cooperation, every pupil has a chance to use the language, be corrected and thus effectively practise (learn) it.

Second very effective kind of activities suitable for connection with co-operative learning are interaction activities. In these activities pupils "work together, exchanging information in a purposeful and interesting way" (Harmer, 1987, p. 43) and, therefore, practise the grammar item more meaningfully. In order to exchange information and work together in a more effective manner pupils should be trained in such skills that make interaction really not only effective but also meaningful. These skills are waiting for their turn, listening to their partner, encouraging others to contribute or asking for clarification, etc. Therefore, the combination of the interaction activities with co-operative learning, in which the use of social skills is a basic condition, is highly beneficial to all pupils.

The involving the personality activities give pupils more freedom about doing their task, however, the practice of the grammar item is still fixed. Such activities can be effective only if pupils are willing to participate in front of the others, which is very difficult unless pupils feel recognised and respected. In co-operative learning when the face-to-face promotive interaction is triggered pupils are used to respecting and encouraging each other and they are thus interested in them. Therefore, if the personality

activities are arranged so that promotive interaction is met, than the grammar practice can become more beneficial.

Games, as another kind of practice activities, are very enjoyable for children and "especially useful for grammar work" as the winners of a game are usually those who use the target language well (Harmer, 1987, p. 47). Mainly, co-operative learning and games are similar in the fact that the success of one pupil influences the success of the others. The co-operative learning used in games can make the pupils be more disciplined and tolerant to the others (as the use of social skills and promotive interaction are kept). Therefore, the pupils will not spend the time arguing about keeping the rules of the game and concentrate more on practicing grammar. If these preconditions are met, than the co-operative learning in grammar practice can create a very effective working atmosphere.

The similarity between the written grammar practice activities and co-operative learning can be perceived in the fact that the pupils are independent from the teacher. This is important either in the classroom where asking the teacher for help would disturb the whole class, or outside, where pupils need to have someone for consultation or help. However, if pupils work in co-operative learning they are more used to be independent from the leading authority and, therefore, have fewer problems with these activities. Therefore, written grammar practice can become a very useful technique that provides a valuable means of grammar learning if it is a cooperative task.

Product orientated activities are an ideal assignment that requires creativity, organisational skills and participation of all pupils (which is similar to cooperative learning). If the task includes the knowledge of a grammar item, then the practice can become very effective.

Based on the above conclusions, it can be stated that the effectiveness of grammar practice can be achieved if the basic methodological principles of grammar practice are kept and if the main criteria of co-operative learning are in this practice respected:

- pupils are motivated (see the purpose, context) to practise the grammar

- the target language has been presented so well that most pupils understand it

- pupils are not afraid of making mistakes

- the pace of grammar practice is appropriate for all pupils

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- the target language appears in the practice enough times (therefore, all pupils have a chance to master it)

- all pupils are corrected

- pupils help and encourage each other

- pupils are able to use basic social skill, such as waiting for their turn, listening to the others

- pupils feel responsible for their work

- pupils are able to give feedback about how the group worked

This Professional Project is going to support the following thesis: <u>Using co-operative learning in practising grammar in English language classes can motivate pupils to participate actively in language learning and thus improve their grammar knowledge and use in a meaningful way</u>. This can be achieved if the pupils are prepared for co-operative activities and the teacher who prompts cooperation facilitates rather than directs the whole activity.

3 Practical implementation of co-operative learning into grammar practice

3.1 Criteria for designing effective grammar practice activities in co-operative learning

The development of the Professional Project is based on the theories of experts such as Johnson and Johnson, Kasíková, Ellis and Whalen and others who claim that the use of co-operative learning at school is beneficial to all students. According to the findings of the experts mentioned above, all students obtain better academic and social achievements if they learn cooperatively.

In EFL classes co-operative learning is beneficial because it promotes communication when the language is considered as a tool to achieve a certain aim rather than the focus of studying. Moreover, it lowers stress especially in situations when pupils can ask for and be given immediate help. Then it also brings real-life interaction and, therefore, facilitates motivation to use the language. When practising grammar in co-operative manner, pupils have an opportunity to be more successful in mastering the target language as co-operative learning is profitable to most kinds of grammar practice activities [see chapter 2.4].

This Professional Project intends to prove that the pupils who practise English grammar in co-operative manner in EFL classes, will obtain better academic achievements and will be more motivated to learn the language in the classroom.

The design of the activities tested in the Professional Project is based on the theory of co-operative learning and the methodology of effective grammar practice. Considering all the findings from this theoretical analysis, the following criteria can be stated.

1. What is the main aim of the activity? Is the focus on practising grammar or co-operative learning? This criterion is very important especially when pupils start with co-operative learning as they need some activities focused on co-operative learning to master it. The time spent on practising cooperation is not wasted because the more efficient the pupils in co-operative learning are the more successful they are in grammar practice. Therefore, the aims of the first two lessons were designed to make the pupils become familiar with the basic

principles of cooperation. The aims of the following activities were then more focused on practising grammar.

2. What is pupils' level of English? In order to learn their level of English I observed the working class for three lessons. Moreover, I asked my tutor Mrs. Čiháková to tell me her opinion about the pupils' level of English.

3. What grammar item will pupils practise? How well was the grammar item presented? Will pupils practise their accuracy or fluency? The objectives of the grammar practice activities were usually developed according to the pupils' needs and difficulties that they had in previous units of their textbook. (I often consulted the pupils' needs and difficulties with my mentor).

4. How much are pupils used to co-operative learning? In which conditions of co-operative learning have the pupils been successful? According to what criteria has the teacher divided their pupils into groups? How independent are pupils from the teacher? In order to answer these questions I used the observations sheets [see chapter 2.1.5] that my mentor filled in during the lesson and I usually completed after the lesson.

5. How much time does the teacher want to spend on the activity? Most of the English grammar practice activities were designed to be an initial or final part of the lesson (usually 15 to 20 minutes).

6. What materials can the teacher use? As the Diploma Thesis is designed to demonstrate that co-operative learning can be useful to most kinds of grammar practice activities [see chapter 2.4], which can be taken from a textbook, I usually chose the activity contained in the textbook that pupils had. Then, after questioning its usefulness according to the criteria for an effective grammar practice activity [see chapter 1.1.3.c] I decided the academic task.

7. Is it possible to change the seating arrangement?

In order to choose a productive grammar practice activity, I always had to answer the questions mentioned above. The answers served me as basic criteria for my further creation of the practice activity. According to these criteria I decided both academic and co-operative task of the activity because any activity in co-operative learning has always both these tasks (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 24).

3.2 The aim of the Professional Project and methods of evaluation

The use of the activities that comply with the criteria aimed at proving that if pupils practise English grammar in co-operative learning in EFL classes, they will be more successful in mastering the target language. I also wanted to find out whether, according to the theory, this way of learning can contribute to promotion of these benefits:

1. Pupils are more motivated to work hard not only because co-operative learning brings a new dimension into their grammar practice activities but also because pupils encourage each other to work to achieve a task.

2. Therefore, all pupils are actively involved in English grammar practice.

3. Pupils are more tolerant to the others, often use social skills and help each other.

4. Therefore, the grammar practice is less stressful for pupils as they are not so afraid of making mistakes.

5. As pupils work independently from the teacher, he or she has more time to concentrate on those who have the biggest problems.

6. Therefore, most pupils' mistakes can be corrected. Pupils can be explained why their use of the language was wrong. As a result both 'high achievers' and 'low achievers' can benefit.

7. There are fewer problems with discipline because all the pupils are involved in working on a task.

I chose three different ways to obtain and evaluate findings about achieving all benefits of grammar practice in co-operative learning mentioned above:

First, I used my observation sheets and those that my mentor filled in during the lesson to collect data about pupils' involvement in grammar practice, their use of social skills, mutual correction and help, and possible problems with discipline.

Second, pupils took a test individually at the end of my teaching. The aim of the test was to show how well pupils had mastered the grammar during their co-operative learning (I asked my tutor to comment on their results).

Then, at the end of my experiment I asked the pupils to fill in a questionnaire about their attitude towards this way of learning.

3.3 The sources of materials for grammar practice and co-operative learning

All the activities practised grammar that was taken from the textbook Project English 2 by Tom Hutchinson (1992) because one of the aims of this Diploma Thesis was to show that co-operative learning can be beneficial to any practising of grammar from a textbook. Most materials needed for evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities, such as observation sheets, group processing questionnaires, are borrowed from Ellis and Whalen (1999) and Kasíková (1997).

4 Realization of the Project

4.1 Details about pupils and their division into groups

The hypothesis of this Diploma Thesis was tested at the elementary school Strž in Dvůr Králové nad Labem. At this school I taught 15-year-old pupils of the 9th class who had studied English for 4 years. According to their classroom teacher and my mentor Mrs. Alena Čiháková the class had problems with discipline and low motivation to study. The class of 14 pupils contained of three 'high achieving' girls, five 'middle achieving' pupils and six 'low achieving' boys, from whom four had big problems with discipline.

Therefore, even if pupils were supposed to have learned all the basic tenses, most of them were not very confident of using them. Nearly all of the pupils had problems with forming negative sentences and questions; the 'low achievers' did not remember the forms of the irregular verbs and had big problems with understanding and communication in English at all.

Based on my observations, the 'low achieving' boys were not motivated to study English as their teacher constantly reminded them of their typical role of 'bad boys' who were naughty and 'very bad' at English. During the lessons some of these boys were used to shouting remarks and comments in Czech at the teacher, with which she had to deal. Consequently, the attention of the whole class was distracted and it usually took a lot of time to make pupils concentrate on their task again.

Considering all these factors I divided pupils into groups very carefully. First, I decided criteria for an effective co-operative group (most of them are based on the methodology of co-operative learning):

1. The group must be heterogeneous in skills and abilities.
2. No naughty pupils together.
3. In each group there must be at least one pupil who is confident in
   English grammar.
4. In each group there must be someone who is sociable and willing
   to help the others.
5. In each group there must be at least one pupil who is capable of
   leading the group (otherwise, the group would not start working

because no one would know what to do).

6. In the group there should not be more than five pupils.

Then, I observed the pupils during three lessons to find out the pupils' personal characteristics, such as motivation to study, tendency to be naughty, their level of English, etc. In addition, I asked their teacher to let me give the pupils a simple questionnaire about their attitudes towards English, willingness to help the others, with whom they would like to play games, with whom they would like to work in the lesson, etc. [see appendix 1 on page 61].

Finally, I made a compromise between the criteria mentioned above and my findings to create groups that were likely to succeed in practising English grammar in co-operative learning.

It was the beginning of a new school year Mrs. Čiháková gave me permission to revise and practise grammar of the last 2 or 3 units of the textbook. Therefore, I had enough opportunities of applying the grammar practice into co-operative learning during my teaching practice

In the introductory lesson, which was executed before the project, I presented co-operative learning to the pupils. Initially, the main reasons - why cooperation is useful at work - were elicited on the blackboard. In pairs the pupils were asked to elicit what benefits it would have for the pupils if they were allowed to help each other at school.

Then I explained to pupils that they would mainly work in groups, they would be working together, and they would be also assessed according to not only what they had learned or produced but also how they cooperated.

In a simplified manner, I also stressed the main principles such as that they would work independently from the teacher, they all would have to participate in order for the group to succeed, etc.

The pupils were directed into three groups according to the decision that had been made before. The pupils were given time to find a name for their groups and create a group name cards with all their signatures. These were going to be on their desks to present their group.

In order to really understand the basis of cooperation, the pupils were assigned the first 'co-operative' activity: the aim of this activity was to let pupils experience the co-operative activity and thus understand this kind of setting. Each group was given one list of unsorted important and unimportant rules for effective co-operative learning. The

members of the group had to decide mutually (each member had to agree) which of the rules were important (and put ticks to them). After the activity the teacher commented on how each group worked (cooperated) and told the members of the group what they should avoid next time.

Then the teacher discussed the meaning of some words that they will use during the lessons (such as: Cooperation – Do not ask the teacher if you have not asked the other members of your group, Noise – Be more quiet, Time – Mind the time).

4.2 Samples of lesson and activity plans used for the grammar practice in co-operative learning

4.2.1 Lesson plan for grammar practice activity: *The rules of our school*

Aim:	To practise *must*, *mustn't* and *needn't*
Objective:	The pupils will understand and be able to use *must*, *mustn't* and *needn't* in sentences.
Academic task:	The pupils will create a poster with the rules of their school.
Co-operative task:	The pupils will control whether everyone understands the meaning of *must*, *mustn't* and *needn't* and is able to use these modal verbs in a sentence. Moreover, they will help those pupils who are not confident in using these modal verbs.
Time of the activity:	15 minutes
Materials:	The textbook Project English II, Unit 7, "Hot Dog and Cool Cat", exercise 2, the list of unsorted school activities (similar to the one in the textbook), coloured pencils, sheets of white paper, group processing questionnaires.

Note: The activity was executed as a follow up activity after the pupils read the story 'Hot Dog at the doctor' (the task for reading was to complete the chart with *must, mustn't* and *needn't* according to the text). The previous activity was a revision of the grammar that the pupils had studied last year. The teacher linked this activity with the previous one in the way that he spoke about the fact that not only Hot Dog but also anyone had to keep some rules. People had to keep rules everywhere: at hospital, at work and also at school. This activity was prepared to make the pupils revise the grammar in a meaningful context.

a. Stages of the activity:

a) Introduction: The teacher told the pupils about some 'curious' rules of schools in other countries (such as: Do you know that in England pupils must wear uniforms at school? In North Korea pupils must have military training at school). Then the teacher asked about some rules of the pupils' school (several rules were elicited on the blackboard). The pupils formed the groups (since the first lesson the pupils had always formed the same group).

b) Course of the activity: The teacher explained the activity to the pupils to create a poster with specific rules for their school (one poster was shown as an example to the pupils). The poster had to contain three columns: activities that the pupils must, mustn't and needn't do in their school (the lines had to be in different colours).

Each member of a group was asked to choose a different coloured pen or pencil, which he or she would use when writing on the poster. Then the groups were given lists of unsorted school activities [see appendix 2 on page 62] (only one list to each group).

In his or her turn, each member of a group had to choose three activities from the list (one that the pupils must, one that they mustn't and one that they needn't do in their school) and say his or her choices aloud. (Some pupils were asked to give examples). If the other members of the group agreed with the pupil's suggestions (it was enough to nod), the pupil wrote the sentences into the appropriate columns on their poster (he or she used their chosen coloured pen or pencil). The co-operative groups were reminded that the teacher would accept their posters only if all members of the groups worked on their

poster. The pupils were also encouraged not to forget about a headline and decorative pictures.

Their co-operative task was to help each other understand the activities on the given list, listen to the pupils suggesting the rules, tell the pupils whether they were right or wrong and explain the meaning to those pupils who were not still confident in using the modal verbs.

After the pupils finished work, the teacher collected their posters (the posters were attached to the walls next lesson). As each member of a group used a different coloured pencil, it was visible on the poster whether all pupils worked.

Some pupils were asked to say one rule they liked and one rule they did not like in their school. The groups were asked to reflect on how they worked in the group, to fill in and sign a questionnaire (similar to the one on p. 15 in the Theory chapter). This was an opportunity for the group members to express their opinions about how each of them helped or did not help the others.

c) Conclusion of the activity: Finally, the teacher commented on their posters and shared the collected data (the teacher used the simple observation sheet, see p. 16 in the Theory chapter, to help him) about how well the pupils completed both academic and co-operative tasks. When commenting on their cooperation, the teacher praised the groups who had helped some of their members with understanding of the modal verbs. He also praised the pupils who tried to encourage the others to work.

b. Reflection:

a) The 'curious' rules obviously attracted the pupils' attention because most of the pupils made eye contact with the teacher (some pupils even commented on the rules, asked for more details). As the pupils became interested and thus motivated, most of them were willing to elicit the specific rules for their school.

b) Therefore, the pupils paid attention to the teacher's instructions. The teacher passed some sheets of paper for the posters. The pupils started working. When reading the list with the unsorted activities, all three groups had the list with activities in the middle of their desks in order for the other members to see it. While the others were reading the list with activities, in each group there was someone who wrote a headline and marked three columns on the poster. All pupils in the groups helped each other

understand the activities on the list. The pupils cooperated because of the character of the activity (they could not create the poster without the participation of the others).

First, nobody wanted to start presenting their ideas. In two groups there was a pupil who tried encouraging someone else to start (they called them by their names e.g. "Mirku, will you start?"). In the first group the encouraging pupil was successful. In the second one the encourager was not, and started by herself. Then there were no problems about who would present their ideas any more as the pupils saw that no one laughed at anyone. Most pupils did not want to start due to the fact that they were still not used to expressing their ideas in front of the others. They may have also expected some ridicule from their classmates.

Most pupils seemed to be involved in the activity and paid attention from the beginning to the end (even though there were still two or three boys who were naughty). One of the reasons was the pace of their work, which was very smooth. The other reason was that the pupils who presented their ideas usually looked into the eyes of all other members and waited for their nod and thus everybody had to follow the activity with attention. Sometimes I even heard the pupils asking whether they were right ("Am I right?") when not many members nodded.

Once I heard some pupils explain the meaning of *must*, *mustn't* and *needn't* to one 'very weak' member of their group who obviously had not understood it before. The 'weak' pupil was a boy who was usually very naughty. When it was his turn, he refused to choose those three activities. When they asked him why, he answered arrogantly that he did not know what to do. Then he admitted that he did not understand the activities on the list. Then he asked about some words and finally about the meaning of the modal verbs. Finally, with the help of the others he chose three activities and wrote them on the poster (he still behaved very arrogantly). I think that he behaved in this way because he was afraid to admit that he did not understand the modal verbs (in his second turn he behaved normally). One of the reasons why the other members of the group helped the boy was that they knew that their poster would have never been accepted if the boy had refused to work.

All the groups had no difficulties when practising the modal verbs as most of the pupils understood them while they had been reading the text in which the verbs were introduced. Therefore, the pupils finished the posters on time. There were no problems with noise as the groups worked very quietly.

When doing the group reflection, there was someone in each group who decided to fill in the questionnaire, however, the problem was that the pupil did not discuss it with the others, which was the purpose of the task. The others just signed it without any interest. Only in one group the pupil asked the others whether they agreed with her. The pupil's attitude to the questionnaire was negative because the teacher had not obviously explained the usefulness of the questionnaire enough to the pupils.

My mentor's comments:

According to Mrs. Čiháková all pupils worked hard in their turn (the idea with the coloured pencils to ensure the involvement of all pupils - individual accountability - was very clever), however, not all pupils paid attention all the time. There were a few pupils who did the work in their turn and then did not pay attention or were even naughty till it was their turn again. This problem could be later partially 'eliminated' when the pupils become more used to cooperating. They would not consider these moments as an opportunity for them to have a rest but to be somehow helpful to the others.

All pupils practised the modal verbs. The pupils were usually able to help each other with explaining the unknown words. My mentor even heard pupils correcting each other's pronunciation of some words. The correction was not always done in a friendly way (sometimes it was even followed by ridicule).

Even if there were a few pupils who did not say the whole sentences when presenting their ideas, most pupils did and had no problems with the meaning and use of the practised verbs.

c. Conclusion:

From the point of view of grammar practice, nearly all pupils did not have any problems with the meaning and use of the practised verbs. They were able to use these verbs in a meaningful context. Even the 'low achievers' succeeded because they had an opportunity to be given help any time.

All pupils practised the target language as the individual accountability was provided. Partly because of the coloured pencils (the pupils knew it would be visible whether they all worked or not) but mainly because the members of the group encouraged each other as they were eager to finish the poster on time.

Most pupils paid attention continually as they were expected by the other members of their groups to decide whether the suggestions of the speaking pupil were right or not

and give him or her some feedback. Therefore, almost all pupils were involved in mastering the modal verbs all the time even if it was not their turn.

From the point of view of co-operative learning, it can be concluded that there were some very nice examples of cooperation. First, of all some pupils tried to encourage the others to start working. Then the pupils helped each other understand the list of unsorted activities. Finally, they made the mutual agreement on the activities for the poster.

Based on the number of occasions, it was not difficult for the pupils to help each other, however, some of the pupils still needed to understand that the help can be useful only if it is given gently without any ridicule.

4.2.2 Lesson plan for grammar practice activity: *Riddles*

Aim: To practise the meaning and use of *could* and *couldn't*

Objective: The pupils will be able to form statements with *could* and *couldn't* to express ability in the past.

Academic task: The pupils will prepare riddles for the others. Then they will tell the riddles to the class. The pupils will also try to solve each other's riddles.

Co-operative task: The pupils will help each other write down a riddle. Then they will ask each other to read his or her riddle and they will check whether the riddles are possible to solve correctly.

Time of the activity: 20 minutes.

Materials: The textbook Project English II, Unit 7, "My Broken Arm", a poster with 15 injured men.

Note: The activity was executed as a follow up activity after the pupils did the exercise "My Broken Arm" on page 88 - in

this exercise the pupils were asked to put things (that a boy with a broken arm *could* and *couldn't* do) in a list. The activity served as a revision of the meaning of *could* and *couldn't*. The activity that the teacher incorporated into the lesson had both thematic (the activity was again about injuries) and language (it practised *could* and *couldn't*) links and served as a revision. The teacher linked the activities with eliciting the means of transport in which most people got injured or killed per year – by car.

a. Stages of the activity:

a) Introduction: The teacher asked the pupils: "Do you know that this day last year there were 10 car accidents?" Then the teacher continued: "Fortunately, no one was killed. But guess how many people were injured?" The teacher let the pupils suggest some numbers to check whether they understood. Then the teacher said the number, attached the poster with 15 injured men [see appendix 3 on page 63] to the blackboard and explained that each of the men had different injuries. The teacher discussed with the pupils what happened to some of the men to make sure that the pupils understood the pictures.

b) Course of the activity: The teacher explained the activity to the pupils. The idea was that in the groups they would first prepare the riddles about the men (each pupil had to choose only one man and say what the man *could* and *couldn't* do). The teacher described two of the men such as "The man could jump and watch TV. He couldn't run. He could draw but he couldn't sign his name (BOB)." and let the pupils guess (as an example). The pupils were asked to help each other write the riddles down. Then the pupils told the riddles to the other group members who were asked to listen carefully and check whether the riddles were possible to solve correctly (whether there were not more than one man who would fit the description). Having checked the riddles, the groups in turns told their riddles (each member of the group read his or her created riddle) to the other groups. These had to guess the names of the described men (if any pupil knew the answer, he or she raised; the first correct name was counted as a point). At the end the group with most points would be the winner.

Some examples of pupils' riddles:

1. The man could do everything but he couldn't see (Gary).

2. The man could sit. He could watch TV. He couldn't speak but he could drink (William).

3. The man couldn't read books. He couldn't play the guitar but he could use a calculator (Howard).

c) Conclusion of the activity: The group who won were congratulated. The teacher praised the pupils for their clever riddles and mentioned some of the pupils whose riddles he liked most (he had an opportunity to make even some 'weak' pupils feel success).

b. Reflection:

a) Nearly all pupils were interested in the story, which was presented as a real event. Moreover, they were amused by the pictures (because the pictures were humorous) and thus the pupils liked the activity from the beginning (and wanted to know what their task was).

b) When the teacher told the pupils the riddle they tried hard to be the first who would solve it. The small competition, in which the pupils tried to solve the teacher's riddles, was not only amusing but also very challenging. Consequently, they tried hard to write down their own riddles. Most pupils had no problems with writing the riddles as the grammar used in the riddles had already been presented and practised in the previous activity called 'My Broken Arm'.

At the beginning some pupils tried to put their hands up or shout at me for help with English and did not ask the other members. I started frowning and pointed at the word 'COOPERATION' on the blackboard, which was the signal they had been familiar with. When they saw my reaction, they understood and asked the other members of the group.

The pupils who initially had some problems with thinking of their riddles were finally also able to use *could* and *couldn't* in sentences because the other members of their group helped them. This mutual assistance may have challenged them to try hard to write down the riddles.

Finally, the pupils had no difficulties in asking for help as well as helping each other (they did it very frequently). One of the reasons was that the help was not so

complicated (usually the pupils reminded one or two words which the others could not recall at the moment) and thus anyone could help. Even the 'low achievers' could help the others with some vocabulary, which was very good as the ability to do so can raise motivation to study English more (to be able to help again). Moreover, the ability to help can raise satisfaction that the pupil knew something that the other pupils did not know and was able to help with it.

When checking the riddles, no groups had problems with the decision who would start telling his or her riddle. I think that this was because the pupils were simply eager to see whether the others would be able to solve the riddle correctly.

While telling the riddles, most pupils read them from their exercise books. However, there were a few pupils who were able to tell the riddles without reading. All pupils did not finally have any problems with *could* and *couldn't*, although some of the pupils did not feel relaxed when reading in front of the whole class. This could be improved if the pupils were not afraid of making mistakes, which can be achieved through cooperation. One of the reasons can be that the pupils will have an opportunity to see that every pupil makes mistakes and thus it is normal to make mistakes. Another reason can be that the pupils will see that the other classmates tolerate them and do not want to laugh at their failure. Since the pupils practised properly the modal verbs in context in the previous task and they were also supported by the other pupils, they were finally able to use *could* and *couldn't* without any serious problems.

When the pupils were guessing the riddles, nearly all of them paid attention (even the pupils from the group that was in charge of telling a riddle at that moment because they wanted to see how quickly the pupils from the other groups would solve it).

My mentor's comments:

Mrs Čiháková liked the fact that all pupils were involved in the activity even though some of them sometimes disturbed the others. However, she said that it is usually difficult to maintain 'perfect' discipline, as the 'naughty' boys tend to make problems all the time.

However, one problem occurred during solving the riddles, the same pupils were usually able to mention correct answers. However, I believe that this did not affect the involvement of the pupils in the grammar practice much because the pupils did not give up and tried hard to solve every riddle till the end of the activity. Next time it would be

good to tell the pupils that each member of the group can solve not more than two riddles (in order to give a chance even to those who need more time to solve the riddles).

c. Conclusion:

From the point of view of grammar practice it can be concluded that the activity was very successful because all pupils not only prepared the riddles in which they practised *could* and *couldn't* but also paid attention even when all the others presented their riddles. Therefore, the pupils practised the use as well as the meaning of *could* and *couldn't* very effectively because they heard many examples.

The activity also helped the 'weak' pupils not only acquire *could* and *couldn't*, a lot of English (there were many verbs used in the riddles) but also motivate them to study more. Mostly because the 'low achievers' could see that nearly all pupils asked for help and nobody considered asking for help embarrassing (sometimes even the 'low achievers' could help with the vocabulary). That is why I believe that next time the 'weak' pupils will be less afraid of asking for help and thus learn more effectively.

From the point of view of co-operative learning, it can be concluded that the pupils were willing and able to help each other. No pupil considered help as a problem or a thing of which they should be ashamed.

One of the things that contributed to smooth cooperation was the character of the activity (or solving the riddles) that was really challenging and, therefore, motivating for the pupils. Consequently, as the pupils worked hard to write down their riddles, they did not have time to think about whether they were afraid to ask the others for help or not. Later, as they saw that asking for help was a common matter they became not ashamed of asking for help.

Finally, the pupils were willing to check each other's riddles in their groups, as they were really interested in what riddles the others had prepared.

4.2.3 Lesson plan for grammar practice activity: *Grammar Game*

Aim: To practise *have to* and *don't have to*

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Objective:	The pupils will be able to use *have to* and *don't have to* to express inescapable obligations that refer to external authority.
Academic task:	The pupils will elicit as many obligations and lacks of necessity for their chosen characters as possible. Then they will use these statements in a grammar game.
Co-operative task:	The members of each group will help each other prepare and write down the statements about their chosen character (obligations or lacks of necessity).
Time of the activity:	20 minutes.
Materials:	The textbook Project English II, Unit 6, "Transport", five sets of 3 pieces of a different colour, five dices, five board games.
Note:	The activity was executed as a follow up activity after revising the language corner on page 77 (the pupils had to complete the corner according to the examples in the text "Transport"). The aim of the following activity was to practise the grammar in a meaningful context. The teacher linked the activities by telling the pupils that they had read about ordinary people but then that they were going to speak about some people who were extraordinary.

a. Stages of the activity:

a) Introduction: The teacher told the pupils: 'Now you are going to play a game!' Then the teacher let each group choose one of these three characters: the Queen of England, a prisoner, a soldier. It was important that all three groups chose a different character.

The pupils were shown the board game [see appendix 4 on page 64]. The teacher explained to the pupils that they would play a game in new groups in which only one

pupil from each former group would be (therefore, their preparation for the game was very important).

The pupils' task was to get their pieces from the start to the end as quickly as possible. The first player who reached the end was the winner. At the end of the game the winners were counted. The former group with most winners would be the winning group.

On the board of the game there was a line of smiling and frowning faces. In his or her turn the player had to throw a dice and according to the number on the dice move to the appropriate square with the face. If the face was smiling the player had to say one sentence in which he or she used *don't have to* to express a lack of necessity. If the face was frowning the player had to say one sentence in which he or she used *have to* to express obligation. In both cases the sentence had to be about the character that the pupil's former group chose at the beginning. The teacher asked some of the pupils to say some sentences as an example such as 'She has to wear a crown.' or 'He has to eat what they give him.' or 'He doesn't have to cook any food.' If the player's sentence was appropriate for his or her chosen character (the other players were there to decide whether it was or was not appropriate) the player stayed on that new square. Otherwise, the player had to return to the square on which he or she had stayed before.

Before the game, the former groups were given some time to prepare as many statements with obligations or lacks of necessity as possible. It was important for all the pupils to suggest as many sentences with *have to* and *don't have to* as possible and write down all the suggestions that have been said in the group (to have plenty of examples that they could later use in the game).

b) The course of the activity: The pupils were given 10 minutes to prepare the statements (which they could later use in the game). The teacher observed the pupils and collected data about how effectively they cooperated. Then the pupils made new groups (the teacher told the pupils where to go). It was important that in the new group there was only one pupil from each former group. Therefore, in one of the groups there had to be only two pupils.

Each group got one board game, three pieces of different colours and a dice. The pupils were asked to write on the board which character they had. Then they chose their pieces and put them on the start. After that the teacher told the pupils that there was a small change. They had to imagine that they themselves were the characters. Consequently, the pupils spoke about themselves and not about a third person. Some pupils were asked to say some of the statements such as 'I have to wear a crown' or 'I

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have to eat what they give me'. The teacher did this to decrease the number of occasions when the pupils read what they had written in their exercise books without thinking and thus to provide them with more chances to speak.

The pupils started playing in turns. The teacher observed the pupils to collect data about any mistakes and be able to help those groups who had problems. If any group finished earlier they were asked to think of their own new character and try the game again.

c) Conclusion of the activity: The pupils returned to their former groups. The winners were counted and the winning group was congratulated. The teacher commented on the most frequent mistakes that he heard and praised the groups who cooperated very well at the beginning of the activity. Then the teacher collected the pieces and the dices.

b. Reflection:

When eliciting the ideas the pupils worked hard because they knew that they did not have much time and understood that the preparation was important and useful. Even if the 'naughty' pupils did not usually contribute to eliciting, this time they were involved in writing down the ideas of the others into their exercise books in order to use them later in the game. I think that they did it because they saw in it an opportunity for them not to work hard when playing the game as they would have all the statements written. Even if it was true that they really wrote down the statements only because they did not want to work then, it was good that they at least wanted to play the game and be winners in order to make their former group win.

All the 'low achievers' had a chance to write down all the suggestions because the other members always made sure that the others wrote everything down. The other members did it because they knew that they needed even the 'low achievers' to win the game, which was possible for them as they were allowed to have all the sentences prepared. Even though the 'low achievers' did not suggest many ideas, they wrote down many sentences into their exercise books. Therefore, they had enough opportunities to become familiar with the use of *have to* and *don't have to.* Moreover, they could use these sentences later as examples when studying how to use this grammar.

When playing the game, not many pupils had problems with changing the statements. Some of the pupils did not need to think of any new statements because they had plenty of examples written in their exercise books. Those pupils who did not have enough examples had to say some new statements (they usually did not have problems

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with the grammar as they had many examples in their exercise books) but they could not quickly think of any new ideas.

The 'naughty' pupils started to behave very badly in the new groups because their best friends accompanied them and did not want to play. This is a very serious problem and it is not easy to solve it but I hope that the 'naughty' pupils would start to behave differently if they were regularly trained in co-operative learning. They might realize that cooperation can provide them with very interesting activities and that the others do not care about their behaviour and thus they aren't the centre of attention.

My mentor's comments:

The class teacher commented that two of the boys were very naughty when playing the game and did not want to work. On the other hand, even these two pupils had many examples of sentences in which *have to* or *don't have to* was correctly used in their exercise books.

She also appreciated that nearly all pupils practised the grammar very effectively (even the 'low achievers' did and they experienced success).

Mrs. Čiháková considered the decision to change the pupils' task very useful because, otherwise, many pupils would have just read the sentences without thinking about what they were saying.

c. Conclusion:

From the point of view of grammar practice it can be concluded that the activity was considerably successful because all pupils wrote many examples of sentences that included correct usage of *have to* and *don't have to*. The examples could be later used as a good source for studying.

In addition, when playing the game, the pupils not only mechanically practised the use of *have to* and *don't have to* but they also had to understand the context in which each modal verb occurred as they decided whether the player deserved to stay on the new square.

The 'low achievers' did not face any problems when playing the game. Some of them even won and thus experienced success that must have motivated them for further studying. They dealt with the grammar very well because they were given many examples of how to use *have to* and *don't have to* (in the former groups) before.

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From the point of view of co-operative learning we can say that the former groups cooperated very effectively as the pupils always made sure that the 'low achievers' wrote the statements down.

The other members did it because they understood that they all needed to succeed in order to win the whole game. Therefore, positive interdependence was provided.

The 'naughty' pupils were not naughty when they were in their former groups. This indicates that they were either motivated with the game or did not want to disturb the other members of their group and consequently make them lose the game. This might also indicate that they again became more used to co-operative learning (the idea that it is always better to help each other than to do something bad to them).

4.2.4 Lesson plan for grammar practice activity: *Can you give Pete some advice?*

Aim: To practise *will have to* in a new context

Objective: The pupils will be able to give advice (they will have no difficulties in using *will have to* to express an inescapable necessity in the future).

Academic task: The pupils will suggest what Pete will have to do (each pupil will prepare more suggestions for one situation). Finally, the pupils will present their ideas in front of the class.

Co-operative task: The pupils will help each other prepare the advice for Pete (inescapable necessity). Moreover, they will tell their suggestions to each other in the group. The group will decide together which two pieces of advice are the best (the funniest or most useful) for each given situation.

Time of the activity: 15 minutes.

Materials: The textbook Project English II, Unit 7, "Wheels of Fortune", one picture introducing Pete and five pictures of

him in different situations [see appendix 5 on page 65] – all six pictures were in format A3.

Note: The activity was executed as a follow up activity after revising the language corner on page 87 (the pupils were allowed to consult their exercise books or read the text "wheels of fortune" to complete the language corner). Then the teacher discussed the meaning of *will have to* with the pupils. The pupils were asked to discuss in pairs what the players would have to do if the arrow pointed to some of the challenging activities (exercise 3 on page 87). Then the teacher asked the pupils' opinions about what they would advice to someone who had to ride on a bull and who was afraid of animals.

a. Stages of the activity:

a) Introduction: The teacher told the pupils that sometimes people get into terrible situations in which they do not know what to do. The teacher gave this example: 'Someone has stolen all your money' and asked the pupils to add more suggestions. Then the teacher told the pupils that in the lesson they would give advice to a man called Pete who was in trouble. A picture introducing Pete [see appendix 5 on page 65] was shown to the pupils and they were asked to say something about him (the picture expresses that Pete is poor, likes his car, has got a small house and a wife who is pregnant). Then the teacher showed the pictures with situations to the pupils and attached the pictures to the blackboard. The pupils were asked to describe what they saw (what had just happened).

Finally, the teacher told the pupils that their task was to prepare advice for Pete (what Pete will have to do) in the groups. Every pupil had to choose one situation (none of the two members of the same group were allowed to have the same situation) and prepare as many pieces of advice for Pete as possible. The pupils were encouraged to help each other prepare the suggestions. Having prepared at least four pieces of advice for each situation, the pupils had to tell their suggestions to the other members who chose two which were the best (the funniest or most useful).

c) Conclusion of the activity: The teacher chose one of the pictures with situations and asked the pupils who chose that situation to give their advice. Then the teacher chose

another picture. This was repeated till the pupils had spoken about all five pictures. Therefore, all pupils had an opportunity to speak.

Finally, the teacher commented on which suggestions were very funny, praised the pupils who helped each other and told the pupils how he liked their work in the groups. He also chose one of the groups who, according to him, worked most effectively when deciding on which suggestions were the best.

b. Reflection:

The pupils liked the pictures and the story of poor Pete. Consequently, they were willing to think of the advice for him (most of them tried to think of something funny that would match the funny story). I think that even the fact that they could have been creative when they were encouraged to think of something funny was for some pupils very motivating. The pupils did not have any problems with the grammar, as it was a kind of drill (only one structure) in context.

As the grammar that the pupils had to practise was very easy, nearly all pupils were able to think of their own suggestions and did not need much help from the others. When they needed the help, they were not ashamed to ask for it. The pupils usually only helped each other recall or use the right vocabulary. Therefore, even the 'low achievers' had an opportunity to help someone, which must have been very motivating for them.

I am persuaded that the pupils had no problems with asking for and giving help because they finally became used to co-operative activities and stopped competing with each other. As a result, the pupils were willing to help each other and did not laugh at anyone who made mistakes.

Three 'naughty' pupils did not work hard when thinking of their advice for Pete (all of them did not think of more than two suggestions, which were very simple such as "Pete will have to swim"), however, their suggestions were usually correct too. Moreover, the 'naughty' pupils did not disturb the others either when the groups were working or when the pupils were presenting their ideas in front of the class. I think that they did not shout any Czech remarks at the others because they were quite interested in the story about Pete. In addition, I believe that another reason was the fact that their desire to attract the other classmates' attention elicited no response.

Some of the 'naughty' pupils were even eager to read their advice. This surprised me most because those pupils 'never wanted to do anything' before. This happened

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because they were either interested in the activity or not afraid of any ridicule from the 'higher achievers'.

My mentor's comments:

The pupils obviously liked the pictures and the story about Pete because they worked hard when thinking of their advice for him. All pupils practised *will have to*, although, not all pupils were involved in practising all the time, as some of them did not pay attention in some moments. The 'naughty' pupils did not pay attention much when the others presented their ideas (either in the groups or in front of the class). However, some of the 'naughty' pupils were even eager to tell their suggestions because they believed that they were funny.

c. Conclusion:

From the point of view of grammar practice it can be concluded that the activity was very effective because all pupils practised *will have to* in a meaningful way (to give some advice). None of the pupils had finally any problems with the advice. Their suggestions were not only grammatically correct but some of them were also very inventive and funny.

Most pupils paid attention all the time because they were really interested in what the others had thought of. Therefore, they had a very good opportunity to become familiar with this language item.

Even some of the 'naughty' pupils were motivated by the activity or became used to co-operative learning so much that they were willing to read their suggestions in front of the class.

From the point of view of co-operative learning the pupils did not face any problems when asking for help or helping each other. Therefore, it can be said that they slowly accepted the conditions and rules for co-operative learning and realized its advantages for learning in general.

Another reason why I believe that the pupils became used to cooperation is the fact that not only the teacher but also the pupils contributed to evaluation.

Finally, the fact that the 'naughty' pupils did not disturb the others, tried to work (prepared at least two suggestions), or were eager to present their ideas can also be

considered as proof that even the pupils who have some discipline problems are able to cooperate.

4.2.5 Lesson plan for grammar practice activity: *The Class Guinness Book of Records*

Aim: To practise numbers and dates

To practise affirmatives and questions in the past simple tense

Objective: The pupils will be able to form questions and affirmatives in the past simple tense, and become more confident in pronouncing numbers and dates.

Academic task: Based on a class survey, the pupils will fill in a "record chart."

Co-operative task: The pupils will help each other think of their own fictitious records. The pupils will cooperate to suggest possible questions for the interview and to write down these questions in correct forms.

Time of the activity: 20 minutes.

Materials: The textbook Project English II, Unit 7, "Record Breakers", exercise 2b and the chart

Note: The activity was executed as a follow up activity after reading the text "Record Breakers" for specific information (the task for reading was to complete the chart below). Then the pupils were asked to match the questions to their answers in exercise 2a). The aim of the activities was to practise dates and numbers and the meaning of some questions. The exercise 2b that required the pupils to interview the other record breakers, was modified into the

following activity. The activity had both thematic (it was about record breaking) and language (the same grammar was to be practised in a different context) link to the previous activity.

a. Stages of the activity:

a) Introduction: The teacher asked the pupils in which book they could find any information about all records and whether they had already seen the book. Did they know any records? The pupils discussed the prize that the record breakers can win and whether they would want to try breaking a record too. Then the teacher elicited possible fields in which the pupils could break any records such as eating hamburgers, watching films, playing computer games, riding the bicycle, etc.

b) Course of the activity: The teacher explained the activity to the pupils, which was to create The Class Guinness Book of Records, and showed them the plan:

1. In co-operative groups the pupils will think of their own fictitious records that they have broken (similar to the text in the textbook).
2. The pupils will help each other to write their records down.
3. The pupils will help each other to prepare questions for a survey (some examples of the questions are in the textbook) and check the form of the questions. Are the questions correct? At the end of this phase all members of the groups must be prepared to interview their classmates about their records.
4. The pupils will form new groups (every new group consists of one pupil from each co-operative group).
5. Each pupil will interview one pupil who has not spoken about his or her record. All pupils will be required to collect notes about the records of all the others in the group.
6. The pupils will return to their former groups.

c) Conclusion of the activity: Some pupils were chosen to tell the class about either their records or the records of the others (in English). All pupils were asked to show their completed charts to the teacher.

The teacher gave the pupils feedback about how they worked (I tried hard to mention the names and particular examples of how well they completed the tasks).

Finally, the teacher explained to the pupils their homework: they were to create the Class Guinness Book of Records (each pupil had to write a part of the book; he or she would write there the entries about the records they had heard and written; at school they would complete the book; the teacher showed an example of one page of the book).

b. Reflection:

1. Each pupil in the group thought of their own fictitious record that they broke. They were able to discuss the records because they had already practised the words and expressions in the previous activity. Also the beginning of the lesson (reading) provided them with examples and motivated them to work on the theme. Even if all pupils had some ideas about records, some pupils could not express the records in English because they could not recall any vocabulary.

2. The pupils had no difficulties in helping each other because they had become familiar with one of the main ideas of cooperation - help is very important and should be given whenever it is needed. Sometimes I heard a discussion about an English word that should have been used. This discussion usually ended in consulting the dictionary. When none of the members was able to help, I did it. No pupil laughed at the other's mistakes.

3. The pupils were required to help each other to prepare questions for the survey, such as 'What record did you break?', 'What did you do for your record?' or 'When did you start?' (some suggestions of questions were in the textbook). The pupils usually tried to write down some questions and asked someone from their group to check the structure of the questions. Consequently, their questions were finally correct in the form. When preparing and correcting the questions, not all pupils were active. Usually there were two or three pupils in each group who worked and the others were just naughty.

While observing the pupils, I realised that there were about three pupils in the groups who always started pretending that they were working when they thought I was observing them. Finally, the active members tried to make the passive members write down some of the questions. Surprisingly, many 'naughty' and 'passive' pupils started to cooperate and tried to formulate the questions.

While working, there were two moments when the class became very noisy. In both cases it was enough to knock on the blackboard and point at the word 'NOISE'. This was a sign on which we had agreed when speaking about the importance of using the quiet voice while cooperating. The character of the activity required discussion and, therefore, there was some noise.

I am persuaded that the cooperation was achieved because the pupils had already become used to co-operative learning in the previous lessons.

4. Forming new groups was not difficult for the pupils since each pupil was directed to a new group.

5. In the new groups everyone interviewed one pupil who had not spoken about his or her record. Consequently, at the end of this phase all pupils had interviewed someone and spoken about their records. When interviewing, all pupils had to take notes (fill in a chart, see appendix 6 on page 66) about the records in order to be able to create the book of records after returning to their former group.

After the pupils made the new groups, the 'bad' boys started to be very naughty as their best friends accompanied them again. They were not able to ask questions at all and spoke Czech all the time. It might have been caused by the fact that the activity was too long for them to concentrate or that they still tended to attract the attention of their friends. On the other hand, even the 'low achievers' were able to ask and respond in English and their use of English was considerably good regarding their level of English.

I believe that the 'low achievers' had good results, as they had enough opportunities to prepare the records and questions in advance (they could have asked the other members for help) and were not so afraid of making mistakes (as they did not expect any ridicule).

6. The pupils returned to their former groups. Some of them were chosen to tell in English the class about either their records or the others' records. Most pupils were able to complete this task (their notes helped them).

When working, the pupils were observed by the teacher who collected data about how successful they were in using the language and in cooperating.

The Record book was submitted next lesson (only one group was not able to complete their work as a book because two 'naughty' pupils did not bring their homework). As the pupils had an opportunity to be creative, there was one group whose book looked very nice (even the cover was decorated with many pictures) [see appendix 7 on page 67]. The other group did not devote much time to decorating their book, however, there were not many mistakes in the book.

My mentor's comments:

The activity seemed a little bit chaotic to her, especially when the pupils were changing their groups, which took a lot of time. However, the pupils knew what they were asked to do in every part of the activity (it was good that the activity plan was visible for them during the activity). The class was sometimes very noisy and some pupils were naughty (mostly when they were asked to interview each other).

On the other hand, nearly all pupils practised the questions and affirmatives in the past simple tense as well as dates and numbers. In addition Mrs. Čiháková was surprised about how well the 'low and medium achievers' were able to use the language when interviewing the others (most pupils' questions included the auxiliary 'did', which the pupils usually tended to omit before). She admitted that if compared with their usual achievements, most pupils were really successful today.

c. Conclusion:

From the point of view of grammar practice it can be concluded that while interviewing each other about their records, even the 'low achievers' were able to ask simple questions in English and respond to them. Most questions were correct in their form (there were no problems with the first auxiliary or the question word). The answers were usually very short but correct. However there very many cases when the interviewers did not understand the date. It might have been caused by the fact that it was too quick for them and the pupils were still afraid or ashamed of asking for repetition. The pupils who were speaking about their records usually had no problems with pronouncing the numbers and dates. I am persuaded that this was because they had an opportunity to prepare the records (and numbers and dates) in advance. Therefore, the grammar practice was really successful.

From the point of view of cooperation, it is possible to say that many pupils were able to offer help to the others (not only with English, because I even heard pupils offering a dictionary or a pen).

The pupils were very tolerant to the mistakes of the others (no one laughed at anyone). Moreover, they were able to correct each other (they corrected many mistakes, even if, not all of them). These pupils who were corrected listened carefully and did not express any anger or embarrassment. This can be considered very important for pupils' attitude towards practising English.

At the beginning of the activity some pupils had problems with independence from the teacher (they wanted to ask the teacher about English and they did not ask the other members). However, finally almost all of them were able to work on their own.

5 The Conclusion Based on the Evaluation of the Project

5.1 Brief theoretical summary

The experts such as Kasíková, Johnson and Johnson, Ellis and Whalen and others claim that pupils obtain higher academic and social achievements if they learn cooperatively at school. This is caused by the fact that the pupils can: "count on their classmates to help when they need help, listen when they have something to contribute, and celebrate their accomplishments" (Ellis and Whalen, 1999, p. 14).

Co-operative learning is even more beneficial in language classes because it promotes communication when pupils need the language as a tool for working rather than the aim of the activity. Moreover, co-operative learning lowers stress because pupils are encouraged to help each other (therefore, even the 'low achievers' have a chance to ask for help and then succeed), which is very motivating.

This can be achieved only if pupils are well prepared for cooperation and if the co-operative activities are properly and meaningfully incorporated into the English lesson. This was the aim of the professional project of this diploma thesis. It focused on using co-operative activities for practising grammar and aimed at answering these research questions:

1. Can co-operative activities help pupils become less independent from the teacher when working?

2. Can co-operative learning involve the pupils in English language learning?

3. Can co-operative activities promote active learning/practising of a particular grammar item?

4. Can co-operative activities improve relationships among pupils?

5.2 Benefits of co-operative learning

Based on my own reflections and observations that my mentor did, it can be concluded that nearly all pupils were actively involved in the co-operative activities. One of the reasons was that the pupils encouraged the passive pupils to participate, helped the

'low achievers' when they needed help and thus no one was 'left behind'. Another reason was that the 'naughty' pupils realised that their tries of attracting attention of the others elicited no response and, therefore, they nearly stopped disturbing the other members and some of them started to concentrate on the task. This supported the idea that co-operative learning can motivate pupils to participate actively in language learning.

Based on the pupils' evaluation that was executed in a questionnaire [see appendix 9 on page 70], it can be summarized that the pupils were <u>willing to participate</u> because they considered the occasions when they managed to help someone or when the other members appreciated them very rewarding. Thus they slowly got used to positive interdependence and started to become more aware of using some social skills.

In addition, many pupils participated because they considered the activity very challenging as the teacher mostly stayed 'behind' and let the pupils choose the way (and the pace) that they liked to complete the task. Furthermore, they mentioned that they appreciated that not only the teacher but also the <u>pupils could evaluate</u> their work. Consequently, the pupils felt more responsible for completing their work. The positive interdependence, as the main feature of co-operative learning, proved to be very effective as it also facilitated the pupils' motivation to participate.

5.3 Benefits of practising grammar via co-operative learning

Based on my own experience, reflections and comments of the class teacher, it can be concluded that co-operative learning was also beneficial for the grammar practice. One of the benefits was the fact that since the pupils worked together (the 'low achievers' had an opportunity to ask for help the other members of the group), the teacher could concentrate on observing and collecting data about the commonest mistakes, in what areas the pupils had most problems, etc. The teacher could later use the data when preparing next lessons. In addition, he could also help those pupils who had some difficulties with the practised grammar and really needed his help. The change of the teacher's role in co-operative learning was at the beginning new for the pupils – they felt confused because they were used to asking the teacher for help – but later on they were able to become independent from the teacher. This character of grammar practice made the pupils work together on their mutual tasks, which resulted in the fact that the pupils better understood the grammar.

Based on the analysis of the results of the test that the pupils took after the co-operative lessons [see appendix 8 on page 68], it can be stated that the pupils on average achieved 65% in the final test. Even if the results do not show any significant improvement, they prove that the class as a whole (including weak pupils) succeeded in this kind task.

Not so excellent results of the test can be explained by the fact that pupils could not spend more time on practising a particular grammar item within the scope of the project. The work on grammar should have been followed by subsequent activities that would have strengthened their knowledge of the grammar.

Moreover, the co-operative character of activities should have been complemented by other types of activities such as individualistic ones. According to the experts mentioned above co-operative learning should be combined with the individualistic/competitive approach, however, it should not substitute them completely. Unfortunately, the scope of the research did not allow this combination.

Based on the pupils' evaluation, it can be concluded, on the other hand, that the pupils were really involved in the grammar practice as they considered this means of practice very interesting and enjoyable (because the activities were 'never the same'). The grammar practice was always included in a meaningful task and often accompanied by visual prompts. Therefore, even though fulfilling the task required from the pupils repeating the same grammar structure, using the structure correctly and listening attentively to their mates' ideas, like in a drill, the tasks were meaningful and enjoyable.

Moreover, the pupils were more willing to participate in co-operative grammar practice activities as they were not so afraid of making mistakes because no pupils laughed at them when they made a mistake. They together worked on identification of the mistakes as well as the correction of them.

Furthermore, the 'low achieving' pupils believed that they could also succeed in mastering the grammar and many of those pupils who did not initially participate in the activities changed their attitudes at the end of the project.

Although the pupils did not achieve any radical improvement of their academic results in the test, they were willing to discuss the correct answers *in their former groups* next lesson and thus realise what should be improved. Most pupils were disappointed with their performance and wanted to try the test again in order to prove that they

understood the practised grammar well. This signifies that they did not lose the motivation to learn the grammar after the test and were eager to continue practising grammar in co-operative activities.

The whole project proved that co-operative learning was beneficial to practising grammar and improving pupils' approach to learning the English language.

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7 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for creating the groups

Your name: ....

1. Write two names of pupils with whom you would like to work at school. Why?

a) ....

b) ....

2. Write two names of pupils with whom you would like to spend holiday. Why?

a) ....

b) ....

3. Write two names of pupils you would like to sit next to. Why?

a) ....

b) ....

4. What mark in English do you think you deserve?   1 2 3 4 5

5. Are you all good friends in your class?   😊 😐 😦

6. Can you imagine helping someone with studying?   😊 😦
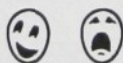
7. Do you like studying English?   😊 😦   **Why?** ....
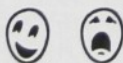
Appendix 2 – The list of unsorted activities

throw things out of windows	use mobile phones during the lesson
draw on walls	be rude
be polite	walk the teacher's dog
greet the teachers	follow teacher's instructions
stand on chairs	stand up at the beginning of the lesson
raise hands before sneezing	sleep
smoke	damage anything
come to school on time	carry a weapon
wear a uniform	play cards
bring animals to the classroom	steal anything
do homework immediately after the lesson	listen to the teacher
	shout at the teacher
give money to the headmaster	pay attention
use calculators when counting	eat or drink during the lesson
pour water on the floor	sing during the lesson (if it is not the task)
put chairs up at the end of the day	
close windows when taking a test	drink alcoholic drinks
help cooks prepare lunch	apologise for forgetting something
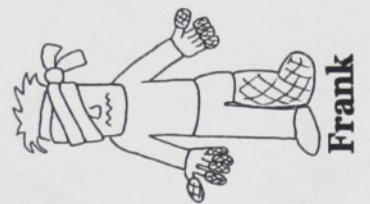
Frank
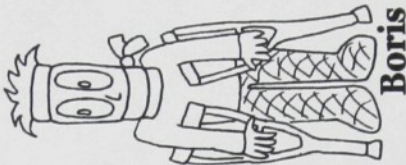
Boris

Howard
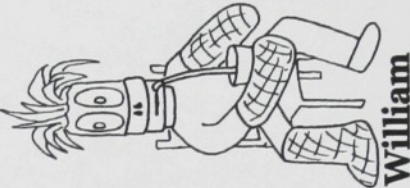
William
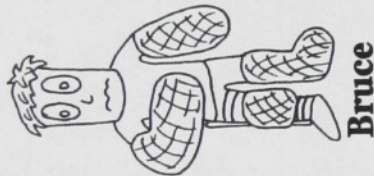
Bruce
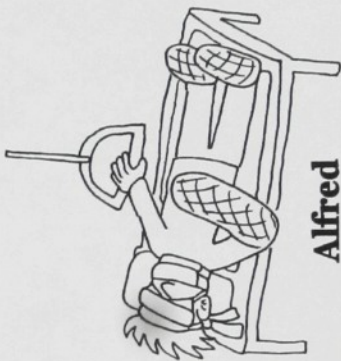
Dick

Alfred

Gary
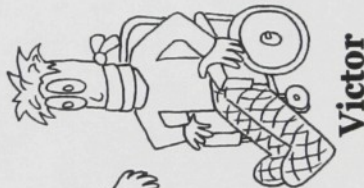
Victor
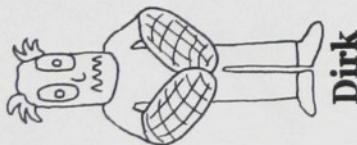
Dirk

Nigel

Bob
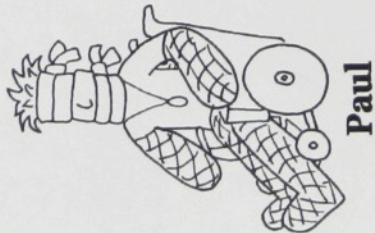
Paul
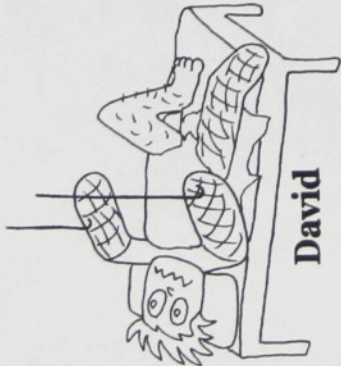
David

Luke

A PRISONER

THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND

A SOLDIER

What do they have to do?

START

GO FORWARD THREE SPACES

GO BACK TWO SPACES

GO FORWARD THREE SPACES

GO BACK ONE SPACE

MISS A TURN

GO BACK TWO SPACES

MISS A TURN

FINISH

GO BACK THREE SPACES

Appendix 5 - Can you give Pete some advice?

The picture introducing Pete

Situation 1

Situation 2

Situation 3

Situation 4

Situation 5

questions			
Who?			
What?			
When?			
details			
details			
details			
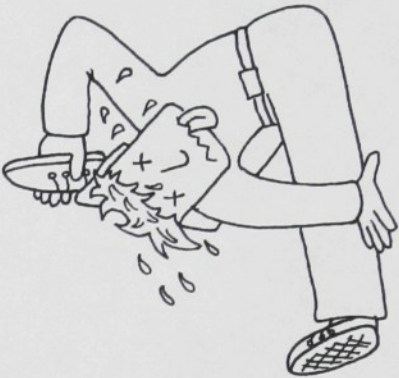
Record breakers

THE CLASS GUINNESS BOOK
OF
RECORDS

9.B

2003

Test

Your name: _Ališka Horáčová_
-☺-

1. Bob is very fat. What did a doctor tell him? Complete the instructions with *must, mustn't, needn't*.

1. You _____mustn't_____ be lazy.
2. You _____must_____ exercise.
3. You _____needn't_____ have a shower three times a day.
4. You _____must_____ eat vegetables.
5. You _____needn't_____ speak French.
6. You _____mustn't_____ eat a lot of chocolate.

5/5
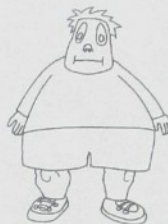
2. Read this story. Then complete the conversation by filling in the questions.

Pete Green left his home in London on 27th September 1994 and walked round England. It took 200 days. He reached London again on 14th April 1995. He broke the record because he was the first man who did it with his eyes closed.

A: _____ *What's your name* _____ ?
B: Pete Green.
A: _____where are you from?_____ ?
B: I'm from London.
A: _____what did you to do?_____ ?
B: I walked round England and I had my eyes closed.
A: _____Was it difficult?_____ ?
B: Yes, it was very difficult.
A: _____when did you started?_____ ?
B: I started on 27th September 1994.
A: _____when did you finish?_____ ?
B: On 14th April 1995.
A: _____How Long did the journey take?_____ ?
B: It took 200 days.

5/12

3. Jane had a car accident this day a year ago. She broke her right leg. Write what she *could* and *couldn't* do (at least 6 sentences). Use these clues to help you:

run   ride a bike
read a book   eat with a spoon
play football   clean her teeth
watch TV   climb trees

Example: *She couldn't climb trees.*

She couldn't run.
She could read a book.
She couldn't play football.
She could watch TV.
She couldn't ride a bike.
She could eat with a spoon.
She could clean her teeth.
She couldn't climb trees.

7/6

4. Tom is a pupil. Write what he *has to* and *doesn't have to* do. Use these clues to help you:
  cook, study, work, get up, go, stand up

Tom doesn't have to cook dinner. Tom has to study. Tom doesn't have to work.
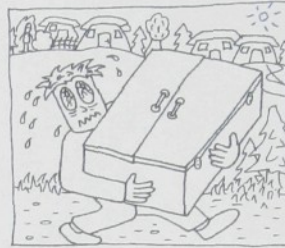
Tom has to get up. Tom has to go to school. Tom has to stand up.

Tom doesn't have to get up at 4 o'clock.

8/10

5. Put these sentences into the future tense and add *tomorrow*.

1. Lucy and Martin must go shopping.
2. I can play football.
3. Bob must study English.
4. He can't run. .
5. Pete doesn't have to buy a new house.
6. We must work at home.

Lucy and Martin will have to go shopping tomorrow.
I will be able to play football tomorrow.
Bob will have to study English tomorrow.
He won't be able to run tomorrow.
Pete will not have to buy a new house tomorrow.
We will have to work at home tomorrow

4/10

29/43

2-

Appendix 9 - The final questionnaire (filled in by two pupils who were initially very
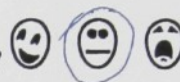naughty)

The final questionnaire:

1. Would you like to continue working in your group (cooperating)? 🙂 😐 😧
   Why? _BYLA TO SRANDA, NEBYL JSEM V TOM SÁM._

2. Would you change your group if you could? 🙂 😐 😧
   Why? _ŠLO NÁM TO DOBŘE A TAK NENÍ TŘEBA NIC MĚNIT._

3. Did the others help you if you needed help? 🙂 😐 😧
   If yes, who helped most often? _VŠICHNI_

4. Did the others laugh at you when you made a mistake? 🙂 😐 😧
   ZE ZAČÁTKU JO (PAK UŽ NE)

5. Did anyone praise you when you did something well? 🙂 😐 😧

6. Circle the things that are good when practising grammar in co-operative learning.

   enough time   someone to ask for help
   chance of creativity   independence from the teacher
   chance of having a rest   encouragement from the others
   team work   more friends to speak to

   ....

7. Did you like the grammar practice activities? 🙂 😐 😧
   Why? _OBRÁZKY, ŽE SME TO MOHLI DĚLAT SPOLU._

8. Was the grammar practice boring? 🙂 😐 😧
   Why? _VŽDYCKY TO BYLO JINÝ._

9. Write any comments you want (about co-operative learning).
   URČITĚ BY JSME TAKHLE MĚLI POKRAČOVAT DÁL, PROTOŽE
   TO JE ZÁBAVA A HROZNĚ MOC SE TOHO MŮŽEME NAUČIT.
   NEŠKUSÍTE PŘEMLUVIT NAŠÍ PANÍ UČITELKU ABY
   V TÉ KOOPERACI POKRAČOVALA?
   .... THANK YOU
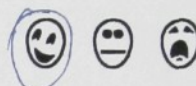   _BYLO TO VÁŽNĚ DOBRÝ..._

The final questionnaire:

1. Would you like to continue working in your group (cooperating)? 😃 😐 😧
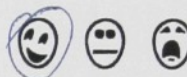   Why? *Ch___ bejt ___ žlutama*

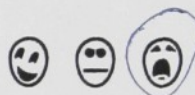2. Would you change your group if you could? 😃 😐 😧
   Why? *Chtěl bych bejt ___ žamosem*

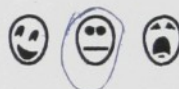3. Did the others help you if you needed help? 😃 😐 😧
   If yes, who helped most often? *Teresa*

4. Did the others laugh at you when you made a mistake? 😃 😐 😧

5. Did anyone praise you when you did something well? 😃 😐 😧

6. Circle the things that are good when practising grammar in co-operative learning.

enough time	someone to ask for help
chance of creativity	independence from the teacher
chance of having a rest	encouragement from the others
team work	more friends to speak to

7. Did you like the grammar practice activities? 😃 😐 😧
   Why? *Angličtina je brasná*
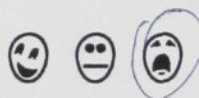
8. Was the grammar practice boring? 😃 😐 😧
   Why? ....

9. Write any comments you want (about co-operative learning).
   ....
   ....
   ....
   ....

   THANK YOU