

Communicative Games for Beginners

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with pupils with learning disabilities.

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1. Theoretical background

Abstract

Our pupils begin to learn a foreign language in a basic school. It is suitable to attract these beginners to learning by communicative games, because pupils like these activities. But there are children with learning disabilities in schools. The pedagogical and psychological bureau and classroom experience confirm we should use communicative games during our teaching, because these games are necessary for pupils with learning disabilities, because they reduce pupils' learning problems. We have to adapt games to learning abilities of our students and to compensate their disabilities by alternation of learning conditions to achieve better teaching results.

Byrne (1991) writes that "In the first place, your responsibility as a teacher is to create a learning environment that of any other teacher is to create the best conditions for learning" (Byrne, 1991:1).

This paper is intended to help teachers to find possibilities to improve teaching to find out what are the problems in the teaching process.

I. Theoretical background

This paper intends to demonstrate that communicative games help students to learn a foreign language. They "make" a better atmosphere in the classroom. They motivate students to speak, facilitate shy students to communicate, help to reduce the distance between teacher and learners, and between learners. Games help learners to break tension in the classroom. Children want to show their knowledge during the game. They do it by means of speaking. If children feel a possibility to win, they are fond of taking part in competition. They love to create, they have a big imagination, they love games.

It is very important to attract children to learning and speaking when they learn a foreign language. The participants of games must use the foreign language to achieve a practical aim. It means communicative games develop children's ability to understand the foreign language. Students should also take part in other activities (drawing, moving, songs, role-plays, telling stories and drama) during the learning process.

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This paper is intended to help teachers to find possibilities to improve teaching, to find solutions of some problems in the teaching process.

Teachers try to improve the atmosphere in the classroom, they want students to feel good and give them an opportunity of an active participation in games. The games need preparation. We have to prepare supporting materials, we have to choose appropriate activities. These activities are used to develop language skills, grammar, vocabulary and understanding. Wright (1991) says:

Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part and in order to do so must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information. (Wright, 1991:1)

The teacher should not interrupt pupils during the game. It is better when he only monitors them carefully and corrects as little as possible. The teacher cannot forget about feedback.

Byrne (1991) in his work argues that "In many classes, especially in state schools, there are considerable differences not only in attainment but also in language skills, aspirations, interests, background and above all, personality" (Byrne, 1991:4).

Teachers know about these problems. They know some pupils do not want to learn, they only "attend" basic school without

home preparation. Some pupils are average, some pupils are gifted, some pupils have learning disabilities.

The purpose of this paper is to select an appropriate game in compliance with the specific learning disability.

My teaching qualification is Physical training and Russian language. After November 1989 there was not an interest of pupils to learn Russian language in our school. There was not a teacher of English language in our school. I was studying English language at Grammar school from 1969 till 1973. Then I took part in a three-month preparatory course from February till June 1990. I began to teach English in 1990. Then I began to study English at Pedagogical faculty in Liberec.

I have been a teacher of English language, Physical training and Physical training of health (for pupils with disabilities of health), an educational adviser and a deputy headmaster in Basic school in Rovensko pod Troskami. I have been teaching at basic school for 14 years.

My pupils are girls and boys from the small town of Rovensko pod Troskami, and from villages around this town. They began to learn English in the 5th class. I have been teaching in the 6th and in the 8th classes this year. There are problems in the 6th class in our school. There are only 13 pupils in this English class, 5 average students, 3 weak students, 4 students with learning disabilities and only 1 student is working hard in this classroom. This paper will pay attention

to this class.

I am using the text-book Project English I for the third time, so I have more experience than when I first used it. I would like to add other kinds of games in some lessons to improve teaching English and to make the learning of pupils with learning disabilities easier.

The next sections of this paper will present a characterization of pupils in the 6th class, games and actual experiences with learning disabilities in this classroom. This paper intends to show that pupils with learning disabilities are able to master a foreign language, however the teacher must prepare appropriate conditions for them. All participants have to cooperate during the teaching. Communicative games can help students to learn English. Communicative games are necessary in the 6th class with pupils with learning disabilities.

A. Physical characterization of pupils in the 6th class

These children are 11-12-year-old. They are in a prepubescent period, when some physical changes begin. Children's movements were, till now, harmonic, but now this harmony begins to be interrupted. There is a change of proportion of separate parts of the body. All extremities grow up, but the body stays the same. We can say that these children are all hands and all legs. Their muscles are not able to grow up so quickly and they are weak. The children have problems with balance, coordination and speed of motion too (experience from previous studies and teacher's experience).

B. Psychological characterization of pupils in the 6th class

A mental disturbance is typical for this period. Children are very often noisy, they scream and have to make an effort to express and to show themselves. Boys begin to show off (before girls), girls smile (often without a reason) and speak in a whisper. Sometimes there are children, who have certainty of behaviour in known situations. They begin to be shy, they are ashamed, they pay attention to their appearance.

The relationships between girls and boys are sometimes uncomfortable, because differences in their evolution begin to appear. The girls despise the boys and the boys despise the girls, there are often quarrels between them. Relations between children and their parents begin to be released. Children begin

to be more independent and establish new contacts, they criticize their parents, they do not fulfill their duties. Sometimes they are disobedient and arrogant, it is the same at school and at home. It means that parents and teachers begin to complain of children's behaviour (experience from previous studies and teacher's experience) .

C. Learning disabilities

These psychological and physical disorders influence pupils' abilities to learn, they make them worse. A weak brain disability is a damage of a brain. Pupils with this disorder are hyperactive, they are not able to concentrate for a long time (See Appendix, p.40). Dyslexia is a disability of reading. Pupils do not understand a sense of written word, they have problems with reading and writing (See Appendix, pp.40-41). The stammering is the nerves that shows itself during the speech. It dislocates only aloud reading, but it does not dislocate reading for understanding of the context of the text. Students with learning failures are not able to master the basic subject of the curriculum (See Appendix, pp.42-43).

D. Games

Games give children an excitement and a cheerful experience. Children do not think about the sense of games. They play them because they are amused by them, they learn to

cooperate in a small team, verify their ability to organize and to lead and to be independent.

During the game, children present their positive features (honour, a sense of a collective, self - sacrifice, efficiency, tenaciousness, courage, modesty, independence, well - disciplined and enthusiasm), negative features (falsehood, selfishness, prima donna, indolence, trickery, cowardice, perfidy and a lack of discipline), they learn to control themselves, overcome defeats and observe rules. Games are an active and dynamic process. They employ and develop psychical and physical abilities (experience from previous studies and teacher's experience).

Pupils play games inside (a gym, a classroom or a club) or outside (a playground, a meadow, a town, a wood).

Hadfield (1990) says, "A game is an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun"(Hadfield,1990:4) .

This is one of many definitions. But it is difficult to explain the term "game" exactly and realistically. All explanations are not satisfactory for all authors.

Another author, Byrne (1991), explains games this way:

Games may be defined as a form of play governed by certain rules or conventions. They are meant to be enjoyed--wherever they are played. In the language classroom, however, games are not just a diversion, a break from routine activities. They must also contribute to

language proficiency in some way by getting the learners to use language in the course of the game. (Byrne, 1991:100)

This definition is more specific. We can say that a game is a specific kind of human activity with a characteristic satisfaction for players. We can use this activity in the class.

Currier (1980) affirms about communicative games that:

...are intended to develop and practise students skills in communication, rather than specific language skills. In each case there is a non-linguistic task to be performed, which entails the use of language as a means of communicating information about the task. For this reason, the language used cannot be easily predicted or controlled, as in the case with many traditional games. (Currier, 1980:11)

We can state that communicative games are a specific type of game. Pupils can show their knowledge of language in practice during playing these games. They play without an apprehension about an exam or from a bad mark.

In our lesson plans we are going to use communicative games: they, obviously, cannot be used alone in the teaching process and have to be accompanied by other activities.

It is necessary to decide when we use the game in the lesson and to choose the game according to the proficiency level and age of our students. The teacher has to prepare the

game carefully. He divides his class into pairs, small groups or prepares a whole class activity. He should explain the game, hand out supporting material, give students a short while to study the game and to demonstrate the game with one group in front of the class. He has to monitor pupils' performance and provide feedback after the game.

We can say communicative games in our classroom are activities which develop pupils' speaking and writing abilities in communication and help some of them to reduce or to overcome their learning disabilities.

Games are used to break up a long formal teaching, change activities during the lesson. Some teachers like to start or to end a lesson with a game. Games also change the role of the teacher (they reduce his dominant role in the classroom).

Jan Amos Komensky, "the teacher of nations", wrote in his work about school as about the place of games, but some teachers forgot about it, some teachers are ashamed of playing games, or are afraid of losing their authority.

Children like games. And communicative games are especially useful for pupils with a weak brain disability and learning disorders. These games develop fluency, and spontaneous children's communication and motivate them to speak.

During the game, pupils show their knowledge

spontaneously, without pressure. Games help pupils to overcome obstacles with their tension, with their restlessness for any reason, with a fear of speaking. It means that games reduce children's learning problems.

II. Communicative Games in Our Classroom

A. Characterization of our classroom

We are going to describe our 6th class. This English class is small, there are only 13 pupils -- 7 girls and 6 boys. We know that only 1 girl is working hard, 1 boy and 4 girls are average students, 1 girl and 2 boys are weak students.

One girl has problems with dyslexia, but she is assiduous. She is able to prepare for lessons on an average level. Her family setting is good, her mother works as a teacher and both parents try to help her. The pedagogical and psychological bureau advises us to prefer an oral demonstration to writing and reading demonstrations of this girl during learning, because she can apply her knowledge during her speaking better (without dyslexic mistakes).

One average boy stammers, his family setting is bad. His parents do not help him with home preparation, do not cooperate with the bureau in overcoming his disability. Teachers try to work with him according to advice of the bureau. It is better for this boy not to read in front of all the class, to read only short and easy texts in his form and to prefer his writing

demonstrations. But there is lack of home preparation in this case!

One weak boy has a weak brain disability. He is disorderly, lazy, slapdash, unrested, and, occasionally, he provokes with his behaviour. His parents watch after his home preparation irregularly. It means that there is lack of regular home preparation. This boy is able to destroy the teacher's work. We know (from the report from the bureau) that we have to use praise and an encouragement during the teaching of this boy.

It is necessary to change tasks, to do small breaks often. This boy can stand or kneel or change his positions during his learning.

There should not be anything there to distract him in his visual angle or any toys to play with. It is necessary to pardon some of his eccentricities (he plays with his fingers or pencils). We work with him only if he is perfectly concentrated.

The last member of this class, a boy, suffers from dyslexia and weak brain disability. His results at school and home preparation are poor, his family setting is also bad. If we teach this boy, we have to combine methods for dyslectics and methods for pupils with weak brain disability.

An ideal solution is speaking during walking (or with moving), but it is impossible to teach this child only by using

this "method". Sometimes it is necessary for this boy to work in conditions which are not appropriate for him (they are appropriate for the other members of our class). The teacher should respect and pardon his learning problems.

Girls are divided into two groups in our English class. A girl with good marks helps a girl with dyslexia. These two girls are friends with an average girl. The other girls envy them their friendship.

B. Communicative games with comments

In this part of our paper we are going to show using games in lesson plans.

Games in the part of the first lesson plan.

Title: Questions with "do" and "does"-repetition

Age Level: 11-12 years

Level of English knowledge: 2nd year of learning English

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: blackboard, chalk, chart

Aim: practice of questions with "do" and "does".

We are going to use games in the first part of the first lesson.

1. Organizational part of the lesson(greetings, an attendance, a date, an aim of the lesson).
2. Checking children's homework. Pupils read a graph about

their class to show their favourite programmes in their class(they did a questionnaire about TV programmes during the last lesson, at home they prepared a graph about favourite programmes).

3. Motivation for the next part. The teacher explains that children know about favourite programmes of their classmates, but they do not know about habits of their classmates. It means they will do a class survey next time.

4. The teacher divides pupils into groups of 3--4 pupils (in each group is at least 1 pupil with learning disabilities) and groups copy a chart from the blackboard.

	drink cocoa	play table tennis	like swimming
name			
name			
name			

5. The teacher explains this activity--pupils will ask and answer questions with "do" to fill the chart in their groups.

6. Pupils practise, the teacher monitors them and modifies the chart (he chooses 1 person from each group in the new

chart).

7. The teacher praises pupils for their questions and answers (and corrects mistakes).

8. The teacher explains a new activity on the blackboard and rearranges groups (all pupils with learning disabilities will be in one group). The first group will ask the second group about a member of the second group. Then the second group will ask the third group about a member of the third group. Then the third group will ask the fourth group about the member of the fourth group. Then the fourth group will ask the first group about a member of the first group.

9. Pupils play this game and the teacher monitors them again.

10. The teacher praises children, then he reads children's wrong questions and answers and children correct mistakes.

11. Then the teacher explains the last activity. Pupils are divided into two groups (girls and boys). They can choose a question with "do" or "does" (from our two charts) and ask this question the other group. Pupils get plus point for each correct question or answer. The teacher corrects mistakes. The boy who stammers writes these corrected sentences on the blackboard.

12. Winners are awarded. But they have to explain how we use questions with "do" or "does" and check the sentences on the blackboard.

This game was successful, because pupils were able to use

questions with "do" and "does". But it is necessary for the pupils to do a lot of practice with these activities to use these questions automatically.

There were not mistakes in questions with "do" (Do you drink cocoa? Do you play table tennis? Do you like swimming?). Pupils used questions with "does" in the next chart. They made mistakes (Do he plays...? Plays he...? Does he drinks...?) ,it means some children did not differentiate 2nd and 3rd person in the second and in the last activities. It means they need a lot of practice.

We can recommend these activities to other teachers, because pupils practised questions in small groups, they had a lot of possibilities to use these questions, they had possibilities to correct mistakes too.

There are some possible adaptations. For example, we can use popular names in these charts(sportsmen, singers, actors or teachers), we can choose questions, we can use questions with "do" or "does" in one chart, we can use different tenses. It depends on the level of knowledge. There were no problems with classroom management.

We began to repeat questions in the basic form, questions with "do". Pupils used them in their homework. Then questions with "does" proceeded. Weak students made mistakes. The teacher had to explain these kinds of questions once more in a concrete situation. The last activity was necessary for us to know if

pupils were able to use these questions correctly.

Children like to fill these charts, but they prefer short and easy activities. If they begin to use their mother tongue, if they begin to quarrel, the activity is lost. There is a girl in this class who is able to destroy all the activity with her behaviour. The teacher has to be near this "pest" to correct her behaviour, but then he is not able to monitor the other pupils. It is better to give this girl a special role (for example as a leader of this group, or give other work out of this group).

The teacher had to solve problems of different abilities, different levels of knowledge. Only 1 person with learning disabilities worked in each group during the first activity. The other persons had a good influence on this person. There was one group with all pupils with learning disabilities (some of them are weak students) during the second activity. This group made more mistakes than the other groups (there were weak students too), because two members were not able to ask and answer correctly, and the other members did not help them (they had problems to formulate their own questions and answers).

It means dividing into these groups was wrong.

The boy who stammers worked alone in the last activity, he wrote corrected sentences on the blackboard (the teacher dictated sentences with mistakes to him and this boy corrected them).

It was better for this boy, because he did not have to do the speaking activity in front of all the class.

During playing these games students worked in small groups to help their classmates, to have a possibility to correct their mistakes.

A part of the second lesson plan.

Title: Clothes

Age Level: 11-12 years

Level of English knowledge: 2nd year of learning English

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: pictures with clothes, magnets, board, tape recorder, text book, exercise book,

Aim: vocabulary--clothes.

1. The teacher begins his lesson with greetings, then he explains an aim of this lesson.

2. Pupils read their homework about machines (Project English I p.56/ex.5).

3. The teacher repeats children's answers about washing machine and asks them about clothes in the washing machine.

4. Pupils look at the picture of the washing line and listen to item 10(p.57).

5. Pupils close their eyes and listen to item 10 once more.

6. Pupils repeat word after word, their eyes are closed. They imitate their teacher, who varies his voice (whisper, robot

speech, shout, talk in a high pitch, jazz chants).

7. Pupils open their eyes, the teacher mouthes the words and pupils try to guess the word the teacher has said by reading from his lips.

8. The teacher fastens pictures with clothes on the magnetic board. Pupils remember these clothes and then they close their eyes. The teacher removes one picture from the board and asks about it. Pupils guess the missing picture. Then the teacher continues this way with the rest of pictures.

9. Pupils write names of clothes which they wear (girls write names of their and father's clothes, boys write names of their and mother's clothes), they can use their books. Then they read their sentences.

10. The teacher explains the next game. Music will be playing and children will walk around the classroom observing the other people's clothes. As soon as the teacher stops the music, each pupil will pair up with the nearest schoolmate and they will stand back to back, they will close their eyes and they will describe their partner's clothes. After 2 minutes the music will start again and this process will be repeated 2--3 times.

This game was not very successful, because some pupils cheated, they looked back at their partners to describe them.

The teacher tried to teach new vocabulary by using writing, listening, speaking and reading. Repeating teacher's voice was fun, the best were talk in a high pitch and jazz

chants.

There were problems when pupils had to pair up with their partners, because there were two groups (girls and boys) and children were ashamed to pair up. The teacher had to initiate them, he rearranged conditions. How? There are 7 girls and 6 boys in this classroom. Boys made a circle, they stood back to back and girls made a circle around boys. Children stood face to face. When the music was playing, circles moved in opposite directions. The music had stopped, the teacher clapped three times and pairs were in position back to back (1 girl was left, she helped the teacher to check if pupils' eyes were closed). The next time girls made an inner circle and boys stood around them. A check of pupils during descriptions of partner's clothes was necessary.

We can recommend this teaching for vocabulary, it is interesting, efficient and fun. There is a possibility of adaptation during playing this game. When pupils describe partner's clothes, they can make a dialogue:

--I suppose (I think, maybe) you are wearing blue shirt.

--That is not right. My shirt is not blue, it is striped....

Advanced students can talk about materials and fashion too.

Difficulties in pairing up were eliminated by rearranging the conditions during the game. Students who usually disturb had not time to disturb, they liked repeating teacher's words in a whisper, robot speech and shout. Passive students were

made take part in dialogues, the teacher helped them in the beginning. Problems with pupils with learning disabilities occurred only during writing and reading. The teacher tried to eliminate these problems. These children read only 1 sentence and the teacher checked their other sentences orally. The stammering boy had problems with his speech during description of his partner's clothes, but his partner accepted these problems and stammering boy tried to speak as he could.

We chose this game to eliminate problems of children with learning disabilities, because pupils worked in pairs and moved during this game. Only the stammering boy had small problems.

Games in the part of the third lesson plan.

Title: Faces (describing)

Age Level: 11--12 years

Level of English knowledge: 2nd year of learning English

Time: 20 minutes

Material: pictures with faces

Aim: practice of questions and vocabulary.

1. The teacher returns to the 2nd exercise on p.51 (Project English I) at the beginning of the lesson. Pupils choose one person and draw his or her face into their exercise books. Then they write a description of this face according to Frank's family (p.50).

2. The teacher explains ex.5/p.51, he introduces the word "whose" and divides the class into pairs.
3. Pupils do this exercise in pairs.
4. The teacher explains the next game. Each person gets a picture with a different face. Children do not know which face their classmates in pairs have. Their task is to ask their classmates about these faces and draw them. Their neighbours can answer only "Yes" or "No."
5. The teacher shows this activity with one pupil in front of their class.
6. Pupils play this game and the teacher helps them and writes notes about their mistakes.
7. When pupils are finished, they check their pictures with the partner's model.
8. The teacher elucidates pupils' mistakes.
9. Pupils try to correct these mistakes.
10. A competition (Pupils exchange their pictures and play this game once more. They try to draw faces as fast as possible).

This game was successful, because pupils were able to ask questions about faces (Is it...? Has he got...?), they practised vocabulary.

Students of this age level like to draw. Only some of them can draw, but all of them drew interesting faces (1 face of a member of their family and 1 face of the picture of their classmates).

Students were a bit helpless at the beginning of the game. But then they saw with their own eyes that it was possible to draw a face according to answers to their questions, and they worked very responsibly.

We can recommend this game with some adaptations. We can change these faces a bit (these faces are smiling, frowning, crying, thinking, wondering). We can rearrange groups (not pairs but bigger groups). There were no problems with classroom management during playing this game.

At the beginning of the lesson pupils drew faces of their family to prepare for the next game. Then they worked with words (mouth, hair, eyes, teeth, ears and nose), which they used during the game too. They practised questions during this game, because pupils had often problems with questions.

Pupils liked playing this game, but there were problems with mother language. They used their mother language to solve difficult problems (for example vocabulary).

Pupils with learning disabilities worked without problems. Two boys with weak brain disability drew faces on the board, because they had a possibility to move and to walk a bit there. The stammering boy worked in a group of 3 pupils, he did not ask and answer questions, he only drew, but when he wanted (if he did not feel an anxiety or a tension), he could ask and answer questions (we know he did it!).

We chose an appropriate game for this class and it was

interesting for our class.

Games in the part of the fourth lesson plan.

Title: Fortune-teller

Age Level: 11--12 years

Level of English knowledge: 2nd year of learning English

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: sheets of paper

Aim: sentences in the future tense, spelling

Pupils will use a game in the second part of the lesson.

1. Pupils listen to ex.1/p.90 (Project English I) --only

Professor Krantz.

2. Pupils complete a chart in ex.2/p.90.

3. The teacher motivates pupils for the game, he reminds them of St. Valentine's day. He tells them they will be able to help their classmates who are in love. How? The teacher shows them his fortune-teller (See Appendix, p.48) and shows them how it works (in front of the class with one pupil).

--Who do you love?

--Jane.

--JANE (he spells and works with this teller). What number do you want?

--5

--1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (he works with his teller). What number do you want (He shows numbers in the teller)?

--6

--He opens the flap with number 6 and reads out the sentence written in future tense: "You will have 7 children."

4. The teacher explains how to make a fortune-teller and where to write names, numbers and sentences in future tense. He draws it on the board.

5. Pupils make their tellers (names and numbers are the same, sentences are different).

6. Pupils start to play this game in pairs.

7. The teacher monitors them and writes the most interesting sentences.

8. The teacher reads wrong sentences, pupils correct them, then the teacher reads the most interesting sentences and praises pupils, especially the weak ones.

This game was successful. Future tenses were written correctly in all sentences.

Pupils were ashamed at the beginning of this game. The teacher had to explain them it was only a game and they could predict future to their friends. Only two pupils knew this game in Czech and only three pupils said this game was not for them (age level).

We can recommend this game because of the level of its difficulty. There are possibilities for adaptations too. For example, boys will write boys' names and girls will write girls' names (names only from their class). Then boys will ask

girls who they love and then girls will ask boys who they love. We can play this game in groups of 3--5 pupils too. We can exchange tenses, we can use present continuous tense or past tense in sentences too.

Pupils practised sentences in future tense in the first half of this lesson, in the second half they formed these sentences themselves. We could state they used future tense without mistakes.

Pupils liked this game, they learned about their future, they could help their friends who were in love (some pupils were a bit malevolent, they prepared for example these sentences: "You will have 25 children." "You will be bald." "You will be without teeth.").

It is necessary to stop this game after certain time or to exchange tellers, otherwise, the game becomes boring.

Passive pupils were forced to cooperate in pairs. Pupils with learning disabilities had problems only during writing sentences in future tense, but the teacher was able to help them and to correct their mistakes, so that they worked without problems. The stammering boy worked in a similar way as during the third lesson.

This game is probably (age level) appropriate for younger classes.

Games in the part of the fifth lesson plan

Title: Where are my things?

Age Level: 11--12 years

Level of English knowledge: 2nd year of learning English

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: pictures of rooms with things (See Appendix, p.44)

Aim: practice of prepositions, vocabulary, questions.

In this lesson plan we will use a game to practise prepositions and questions at the beginning of the lesson.

1. Pupils read the story on p.52 (Project English I) in groups of four.

2. The teacher reads the last sentence: "Is the morning like this in your house?" He tells about problems when all members of the family hurry up. It means people cannot find their things, the flat is very untidy. In the evening this family return home and start to look for their things.

3. The teacher explains the game. In one group are a mum, a dad, a son and a daughter, each person has a picture of her or his own room. These rooms are untidy. Pupils cannot find their things in their rooms. These things are under the line in the picture (See Appendix, p.44). Pupils have to ask, for example: "Where is my toothbrush?" A person who has this thing answers: "your toothbrush is on the floor in my room."

4. The teacher shows this game in front of this class with one family, the others follow.

5. The teacher explains to students they will use prepositions.

- The teacher says sentences with prepositions (For example pupil "A" is sitting behind pupil "B". Student "C" is sitting under the table. Student "D" is standing near the window. Student "E" is lying on the floor....) and students demonstrate these situations. Then the teacher divides students into groups of 4.
6. The teacher explains this game once more and students start to play this game.
7. The teacher becomes a member of one group instead of the stammering boy, but he plays this game only in the first part of this game. The stammering boy only listens to the game and then he exchanges the teacher and plays according to his possibilities.
8. The teacher helps students during the game, he monitors them too.
9. Pupils had finished playing, the teacher praised pupils who had found all their things.
10. The teacher reads children's mistakes and children try to correct them.

We can say this game was successful, pupils practised questions and prepositions too. Students played the game with pleasure-- as members of the family.

We can recommend this game with this adaptation. The teacher does not divide the class, he only says: "Dads are boys "A", "B" and "C". Dads find mums themselves. Then mums find sons themselves and sons find sisters themselves. It means the

class is divided into families and prepared to play.

There was a small problem with classroom management, because some pupils had aversion to cooperate with some classmates. The teacher had to solve this problem during dividing into groups. We can solve this problem with our adaptation.

The teacher began to motivate his pupils during the first part of this lesson. He then explained the game and prepared prepositions for this game. It was necessary to practise prepositions to play this game fluently.

The teacher divided pupils with learning disabilities into different groups to eliminate their learning problems in one group with a lot of these pupils. These students had problems only during reading names of things that were found. The better students helped them (they corrected reading mistakes). Then pupils with learning disabilities worked independently of the better students.

There was a working atmosphere during playing this game, there were leaders in each group, who controlled work in groups. Passive students took part in this game without problems.

It was very interesting, when the teacher took part in this game. It was a big motivation for students to work with their teacher in one family during this game. But he was not able to monitor the other pupils during this game.

The stammering boy tried to participate in playing this game according to his possibilities, to communicate in a small group. His classmates in this group were tolerant.

We chose this game, because it is based on oral work and only a small part is based on reading. This game was appropriate for our pupils with learning disabilities (a lot of speaking and a possible help of leaders in all groups).

III. Summary of Classroom Experience

A. Disadvantages of using games in our classroom

Some disadvantages discovered during teaching 5 parts of our lessons.

The teacher could not hear every word of students, he organized and supervised group work, went round, helped and monitored as many groups as possible. He could not check all the groups all the time.

The students sometimes used their native language during the game (if they were excited, were not under teacher's check, did not find an adequate word in English). It was necessary to explain to them: "Do not speak Czech, please. " We had to add more rules during playing the games: "You must speak English or your group misses a turn (or a point)."

Some students swindled during the game. The teacher had to choose 1 student as a teacher's assistant who helped the teacher to check that the others did not swindle.

There was also a lot of noise during the game in the classroom. It looked very undisciplined (but only for some teachers), without checking and control. But it was a good working atmosphere.

There were also problems with forming groups. It was impossible to find students with the same level of knowledge and abilities. Some students were lazy, some students were shy. We mixed these students into groups. Good students could influence weak students and these worked harder. There was an aversion by our students during playing games (some students did not want to cooperate with their classmates). The teacher had to rearrange groups to avoid this aversion in groups.

We chose a game which was not probably useful for our 11-12 year-old students in one case (Fortune-teller). This game would have been useful for younger students, but it was a bit boring for our students. It means the teacher has to choose a game more carefully.

B. Advantages of using games in our classroom

We recognized some advantages of communicative games during teaching 5 parts of our lesson plans in our classroom too.

We can say communicative games motivated pupils to talk, even shy and lazy students took part in playing games. They knew they learned something useful, they trained to speak and

develop basic skills in speaking. It depended on the teacher's decision in choosing the game. If he chose an appropriate game, pupils knew what to say, how to say it, when and where to say it (a real life situation).

The teacher monitored students and took notes, students were not interrupted during the game (only when mistakes were evident, the teacher stopped this activity and explained once more this game with its rules and called children's attention to avoiding these mistakes). Errors were corrected after the game.

Communicative games encouraged students' cooperation. All types of students (shy, lazy, with learning disabilities, good and bad) cooperated owing to a big motivation during playing games.

We divided the class into small groups (3--4 pupils or pairs). There were a leader and a pupil with learning disability in each group. The leader (a good student--if it was possible) helped the other members of this group (especially a student with learning disability) and made them work harder.

Pupils tried to show their ambitions to be the best, to be the first during the competition. Children love to compete, love to win. And their prize can be small--for example only the applause.

We used all skills during teaching vocabulary. It was interesting and more effective to remember new words.

The teacher could help pupils with learning disabilities (he gave them easier or different tasks), pupils in small groups accepted problems of their classmates.

Pupils with weak brain disability had a possibility to move during the game.

The teacher had time to explain an activity once more when pupils did not understand.

A boy who was stammering worked in a small group, he lost the anxiety about speaking (sometimes and only a bit), there was a possibility to suppress stammering.

The teacher became a member of one group in the last activity, it was more attractive for the students to work with him as with a member of family. But it was rare when the teacher took part in playing the game, because he could not check the others.

It means there were many advantages of using communicative games in language lessons, these games were a useful part of language lessons.

IV. Conclusion

In this work we have shown communicative games which can be used in teaching English for children with learning disabilities in the 6th class.

We have presented them from both theoretical and practical points of view.

The theoretical part has shown us physical and psychological characterizations of pupils in age level 11--12 years, some learning disabilities of these pupils and games.

The practical part has presented a concrete situation in 6th English class in Rovensko pod Troskami and 5 parts of lesson plans using communicative games. This part has confirmed assumptions of the theoretical part about using communicative games.

The biggest problem of using games in teaching these pupils has been to select an appropriate game according to their disabilities and according to the abilities of other pupils, and then coordination of these requirements into one unit. It has not been possible to comply with all disabilities in all games. We have been forced to make some concessions to compensate for learning disabilities (easier or different tasks, an assistance of the leader, of a teacher or of his assistant). It is useful to establish a card-index with these games. We have used only 5 games, it is a sufficient number of games to show some ways of using them. We have used advice from pedagogical and psychological bureaus too.

Communicative games really help students to learn a foreign language (big motivation, working atmosphere, competing, facilitating of obstacles, breaking tension), attract students to learning and speaking (students have achieved the practical aim better), it means games create

better conditions for learning.

Thanks to these conditions the teacher has improved his teaching which has become useful and meaningful (real life situations, imagination) for pupils.

We use communicative games for these reasons in our classroom: to attract students to learning English, to improve their ability to communicate and especially to ease or overcome learning disabilities of our pupils (there were pupils with weak brain disability, dyslexia, stammering and learning failures).

But games must not lose their pedagogical value, any game should be prepared well, pre-game activity is important for the game to be successful, after-game activity shows the teacher if the aim was reached.

Non-verbal games have been omitted, because they would have probably increased a possibility of using native language, while communicative games have encouraged children to speak in the second language.

The teacher has known his students and has adapted the activity to their age level, knowledge, abilities and conditions in the classroom.

We suppose pupils with learning disabilities can get tasks in which we can expect their disabilities will be shown. We have to modify some conditions (dividing into groups, easier or different tasks), then these students feel as equivalent

partners in our classroom, they take part with pleasure in any activity during our lesson.

Using games has been useful in teaching our children who are not able to sit and listen to their teacher during the whole lesson.

According to summary of our classroom experience we can say we should use communicative games during our teaching, because they are necessary in the 6th class with pupils with learning disabilities.

We hope teachers who have read this paper have understood that using appropriate games is one of the best ways to teach English to 11--12 year- old pupils with learning disabilities and that they will use some of the principles written in this work during their teaching.

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Appendix

A weak brain disability

It is a minute damage of a cerebral tissue. This damage could arise before childbirth, during childbirth or after the child is born.

According to report by Matejcek (1979) the damage can display in these peculiarities:

- uneven evolution
- mobility and unrest are intensified
- lack of concentration
- precipitancy of reactions and impulsivity
- striking vicissitudes of spirit and mental efficiency
- lack of physical skills
- imperfect perception and imperfect imagination

(Matejcek,1979:1).

If we want to help these children, we have to cooperate with a psychologist, a paediatrist, a neurologist and a family during the upbringing and education of these pupils.

The weak brain disability is often combined with dyslexia, with dysgraphia or with dysortographia.

Dyslexia

It is a specific evolutionary disorder of learning, it is a disability to read. Pupils are not able to understand a sense of the written word.

We can divide causes of this disorder into three groups:

- 1)consequence of a weak brain disorder
- 2)hereditary foundation
- 3)combination of preceding groups (knowledge from early studies).

According to report by Rainerova (1981) children who want to read, need the unison of these functions:

- visual difference of forms
- auditory difference of sounds and syllables
- visual and auditory memories
- sense of rhythm
- orientation in time and in space
- abilities to fuse single components into function units
- perfect perception and perfect imagination

(Rainerova,1981:1).

Some of these functions are absent in some pupils,or these functions are immature, weak. In this case we talk about dyslexia (disorder of reading). Dyslexia is usually united with other disorders (dysgraphia - a disorder of writing, dysortographia -a disorder of ortography).

There is an assistant for dealings with dyslectics in our school. She works with children with disorders individually. She works with them outside of lessons (from 1 to 4 classes). There is a more complicated situation in the 5th--8th classes. In these classes the assistant does not work. Children go for ambulatory treatment to the bureau of dyslectics.

The stammering

It is the nerves that shows itself during the speaking. It dislocates only reading aloud, but it does not dislocate reading for understanding of the contents of the text.

Students with learning failures

There are students with learning failures in our school. Some pupils are not able to cope with requirements in their class. It means that they are not able to master the basic subject of the curriculum.

Some pupils get "behind" in school, go to school to have a rest, do not prepare at home. They achieve less than their learning possibilities are.

It is necessary to take care of children with learning disabilities during all of their school special workplace (a pedagogical and psychological bureau or a special pedagogical centre in the school system, psychiatric or neurological workplace in the health service system) elaborates a diagnosis of a specific evolutionary disorder of learning of the child. The teacher uses such forms and kinds of examinations which really evaluate child's abilities and which are not depreciated with learning disabilities.

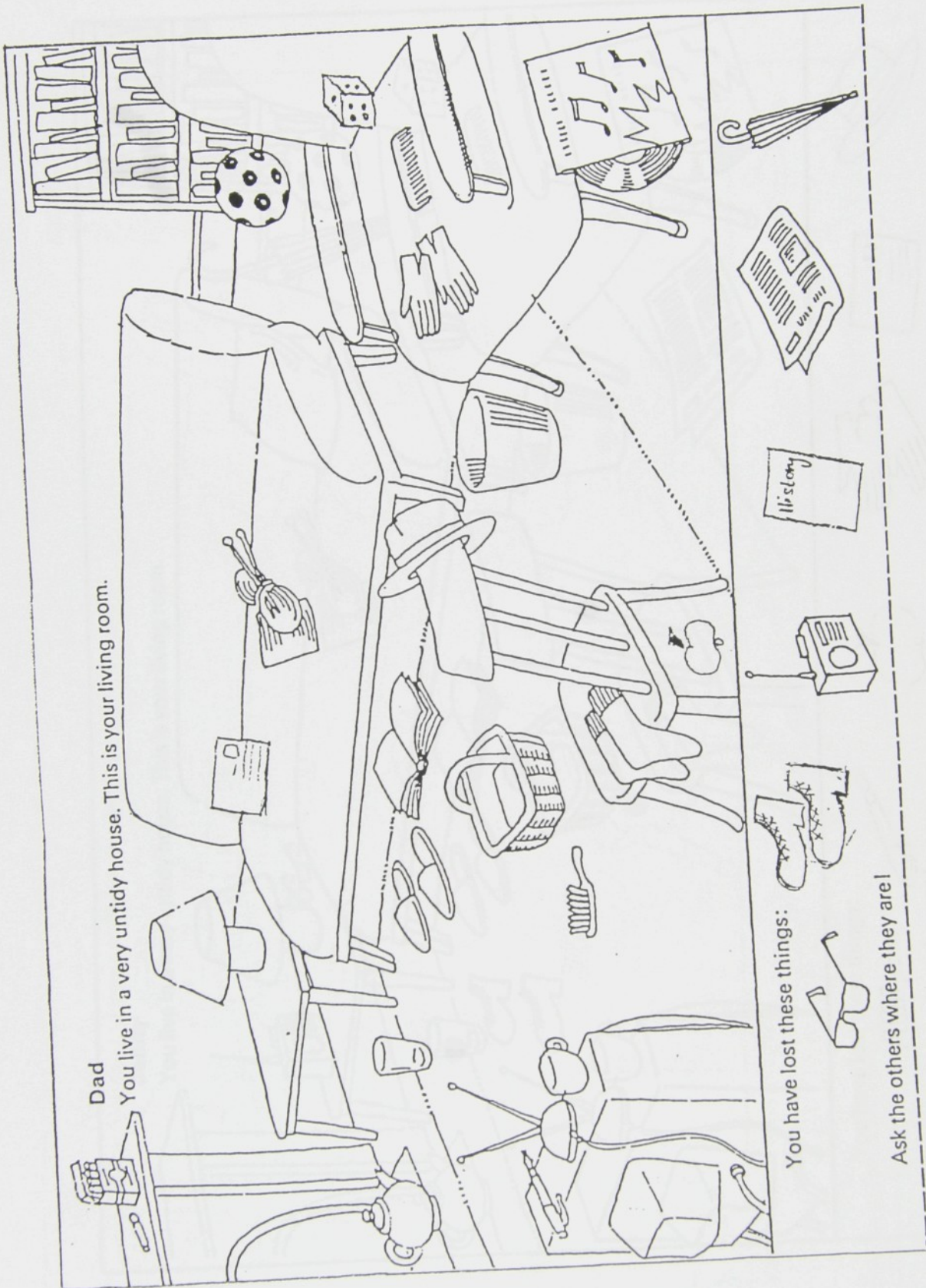
Pupils write controlled works and dictations after preceding preparation. If it is necessary, the child with a disorder will not get tasks which it cannot adequately work

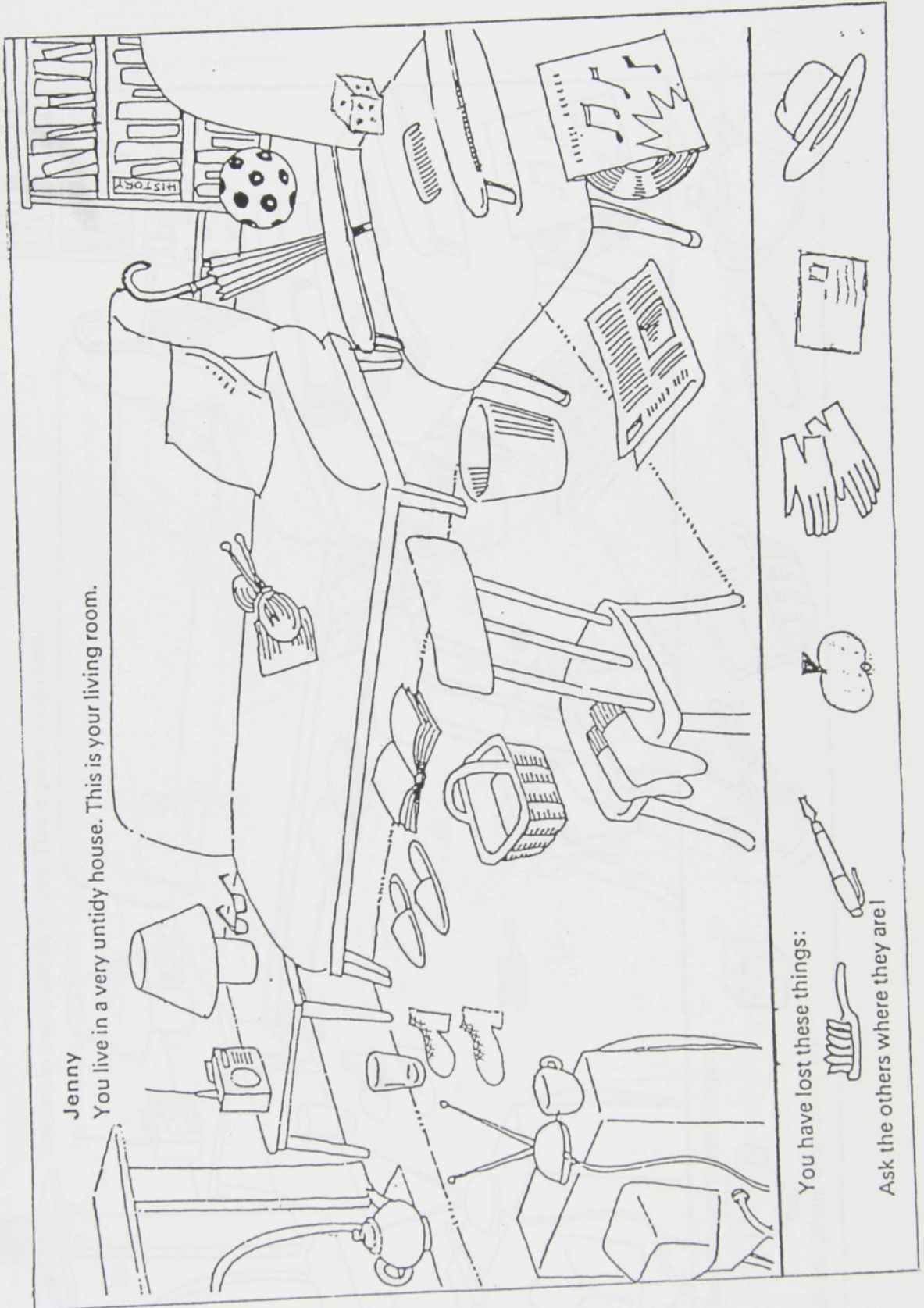
out and cannot present an achievement that expresses its possibilities. It is, for example, a classical reading in front of all the class(for dyslectics) or a lot of writing and re-writing(for dysgraphics and dysortographics).

Pupils with disorders (dyslexia and dysgraphia) can be valued in their reports verbally (with an agreement of their parents) from mother language and from foreign language.

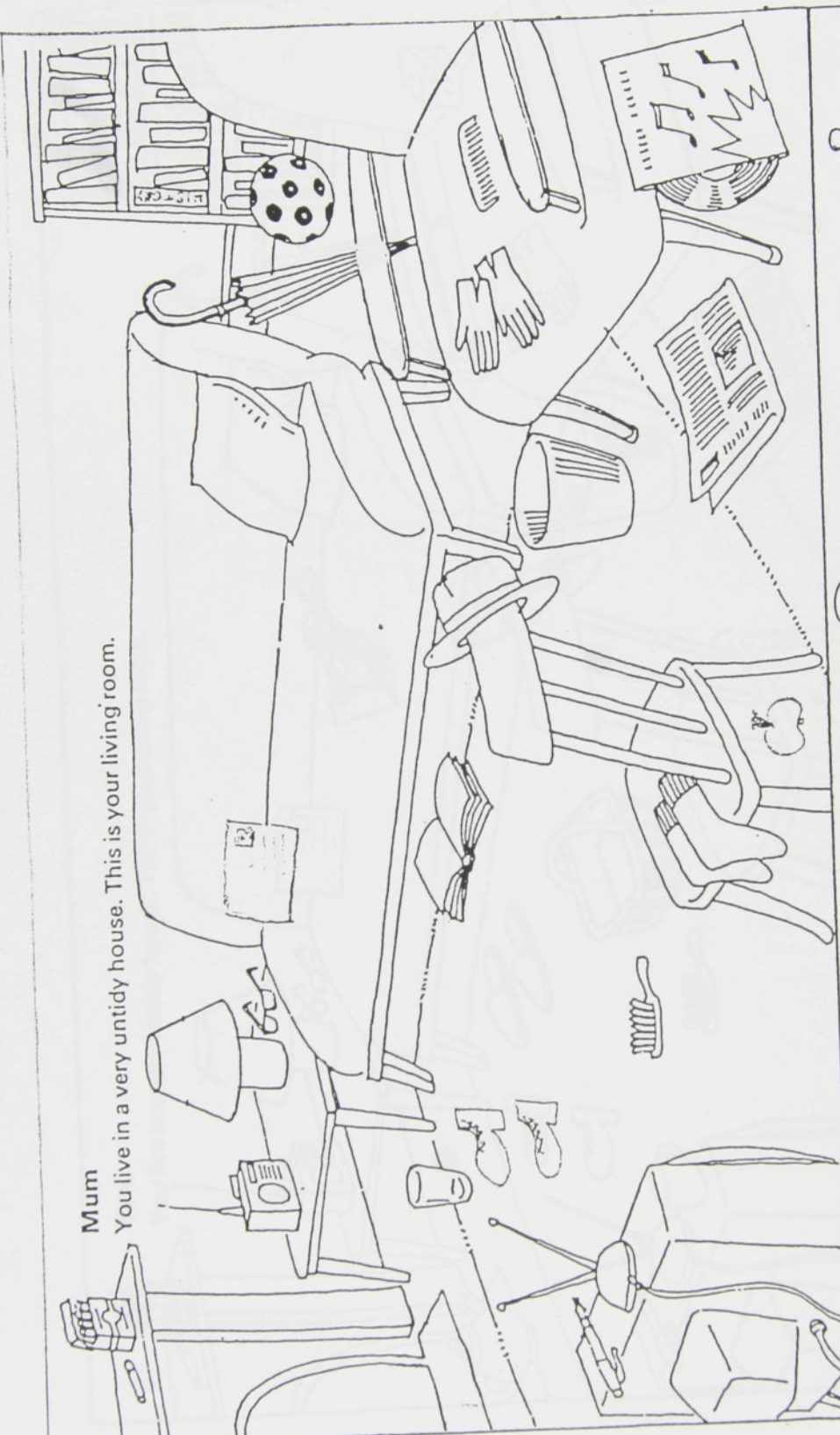
This work with these pupils is toilsome and long, but we can see results of this work. Children are able to master the subject matter of the curriculum. They are able to prepare for their next occupation.








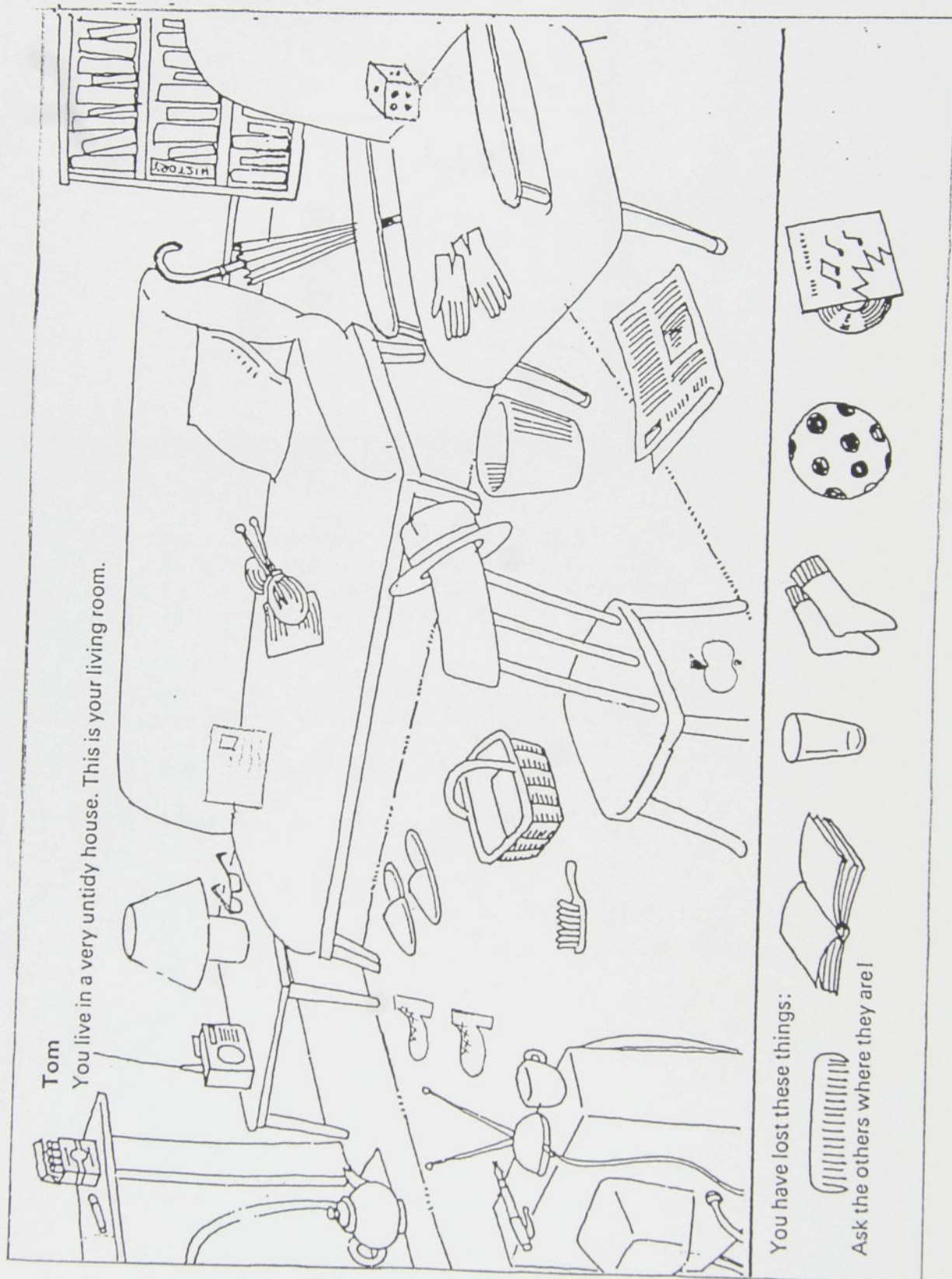
Mum
You live in a very untidy house. This is your living room.

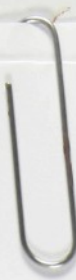


You have lost these things:



Ask the others where they are!





HELEEN	GEORG	MICKEY	JANE
LYDIA	JOHN	DAVID	KATY

Communicative Games for Beginners
Jan Rakouš

The aim of the project is to prove that communicative games are useful for pupils with specific learning disabilities and can help them reduce their learning problems. The focus is on a small group of 13 pupils 11-12 years old. Four of them suffer from learning disabilities.

In part I the author states physical and psychological characteristics of this age group. He also tackles the area of the main kinds of learning disabilities and gives lots of reasons in favour of games.

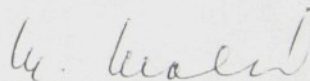
In part 2 the author presents 5 different communicative activities. It is always clear which lesson in Project English I they extend. Each participant of the game is given a role he or she can manage. /e.g. A boy who stammers does not have to speak, but writes sentences on the blackboard./ Since it is a mixed ability class, in each activity the teacher treats each pupil individually bearing in mind his or her learning problems.

The activities are amusing, interesting, for each of them the writer offers several adaptations. He also comments on his own classroom experience. The only drawback is that the author does not state the source the activities are taken from.

The writer sometimes uses non-existing words /e.g. pediatriist p.40/ or inappropriate expressions.

In spite of that the project is of value.

It is worth a pass.



PhDr. Marcela Malá

29.6.1999