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DISCUSSION IN ENGLISH CLASSES AS A WAY OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE FLUENCY AND THINKING SKILLS

DISKUSE V HODINÁCH ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA JAKO ZPŮSOB ROZVÍJENÍ PLYNULÉHO PROJEVU A MYŠLENÍ STUDENTŮ

DISKUSSION IM ENGLISCHUNTERRICHT ALS MITTEL FÜR DIE ENTWICKLUNG DER SPRACHLICHEN KOMPETENZ UND DES DENKENS VON STUDENTEN

Diplomová práce: 2001-FP-JAK-88

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Zadání diplomové práce:

Diplomová práce zahrnuje akademický výzkum a praktické ověření teorie zabývající se využitím diskuse v hodinách anglického jazyka.

Cílem je prokázat kladné působení diskuse na rozvoj plynulosti projevu studentů v anglickém jazyce, schopnosti logického uvažování a sociálních dovedností.

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.

Specifikou uvedeného projektu je, že cílem využití diskuse ve výuce jazyka není jen její efekt na jazykový projev žáků, ale i na takové potřeby, které budou hrát důležitou úlohu v jejich budoucím životě, jako například: schopnost vyjádření názorů a jejich podpoření, akceptování názorů druhých, vyvození závěrů, vyvarování se chyb v logice, atd.

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Na tomto místě bych ráda vyjádřila poděkování všem, kteří se svým způsobem podíleli na vzniku této diplomové práce.

Velice děkuji paní doktorce Malé za ochotu a cenné rady udělené mi při konzultacích , stejně tak za čas, který věnovala čtení částí této práce.

Nemalou zásluhu má pak na uskutečnění mého projektu také pan ředitel Základní školy Lesní v Liberci Mgr.Dvořák, který mi zde umožnil vyučovat . Dík patří rovněž paní Mgr.Gabarové, předešlé vyučující anglického jazyka v 9.C, za poskytnutí informací potřebných pro tuto práci.

A nemohu zapomenout zmínit mé rodiče, bez jejichž podpory a trpělivosti bych se neobešla.

ABSTRACT:

The diploma thesis examines the hypothesis that discussions can positively influence the improvement of students' English communicative fluency as well as their social and thinking skills. The work includes academic research and practical activities which should prove suitability of incorporation of discussion into English lessons. The practical project was tested at basic school during one school-year with 17 students of the 9th grade whose knowledge of English was pre-intermediate. Application and evaluation of the practical part showed that it is possible to incorporate discussion as a main activity focused on the improvement of speaking fluency into English lessons already at basic school; this has a positive effect on both the language and personality development of students.

ANOTACE:

Diplomová práce se zabývá ověřením hypotézy, že diskuse mohou kladně působit na zlepšení plynulosti mluvního projevu studentů v anglickém jazyce a rovněž na rozvoj jejich sociálních dovedností a myšlení. Práce zahrnuje akademický výzkum a praktické aktivity, které mají prokázat vhodnost zapojení diskuse do výuky anglického jazyka. Zpracovaný projekt byl testován během jednoho roku výuky se 17 studenty 9. ročníku základní školy, jejichž jazyková úroveň byla mírně pokročilá. Aplikace a hodnocení praktické části prokázalo, že diskusi jako hlavní aktivitu zaměřenou na rozvoj plynulosti ústního projevu lze zařadit do výuky anglického jazyka již na základní škole, přičemž má pozitivní efekt jak na jazykový tak i osobnostní vývoj studentů.

DIE ANNOTATION:

Diplom Arbeit prüft die Hypothese, dass Diskussion als Unterrichtsmethode positive Auswirkung nicht nur auf die Flüssige Sprachverwendung der englischlerenden Schülern, sondern auch auf die Entwicklung ihrer Sozialen Fertigkeiten und ihres Denkens hat. Meine Diplom Arbeit enthalt eine Wissenschaftliche Forstung und praktische Ausübung, die die Eignung der im English Unterricht eingesetzten Diskussion als Unterrichtsmethode beweisen sollen. Dieses Projekt wurde binnen einen Schuljahre mit eingesamt 17 Schillern der Neunten Klasse ausgeführt, deren Sprachstandniveau der Stufe Fortgeschrittener Anfänger entspricht. Praktische Ausübung und Bewertung dieses Projektes hat beweisen das, das man auf die Entwicklung der Flüssigen Sprachwervendung gerichtete Diskussion als Hauptunterrichtsmethode schon in den Grundschule Unterricht einsetzen kann. Dies hat eine positive Auswirkung nicht nur auf die sprachliche, sondern auch auf die Persönliche Entwicklung von Schillern.

OUTLINE

A. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, school is considered to be an institution that is responsible for teaching its students knowledge of particular subjects and, not less importantly, also for influencing the positive development of their personality. Naturally, having this in mind, teachers try to accommodate their lesson plans to fulfil these educational requirements. This thesis deals with an activity that can be of a great use for English teachers in their lessons, for it embraces both the educational and the upbringing potential. The activity is discussion. Incorporated into English lessons, at the same time **discussion** enables positive development of students' communicative fluency and their personality, to be more precise, their language, thinking and social skills.

Using discussion in English classes helps teachers **to improve their students' communicative fluency**, which actually supports the accomplishment of the main goal of teaching/learning English – communicative competence. As Celce-Murcia states: "Today, language students are considered successful if they can communicate effectively..." (1991, p.125).

To prepare students for using English effectively in real life, outside the classroom, it is desirable to focus on the improvement of their oral fluency. It means that they need to be provided with as many opportunities to practice speaking as possible in order not to feel so much stress to produce some adequate speech later, in practice. Discussion seems to be a valuable instrument for it because of its natural character as it is something people experience in reality and because of enabling teachers to imitate the demands and possible problems that are likely to appear in real circumstances. Discussion makes it easier to "bridge the gap between the rather artificial world of the classroom, with its controlled language practice, and the real world outside" (Scrivener, 1994, p.101).

Language "is not only a functional instrument, but also a form of social behaviour" (Littlewood, 1991, p.43). Consequently, it would be useful for students to be taught dealing with the language with regard to its specific social functions. **Development of students' social skills** could be achieved by using discussions. Class is a social group of different individualities, therefore there must be present some

relationships among its members leading to various kinds of social interaction. Teaching how to discuss and practising this kind of dialogue in a classroom helps students to adopt or improve specific discussion strategies which they can transfer and use for successful oral interaction in any language and any settings. Not to mention its favourable effect on the classroom environment. In this way discussion activity contributes to the "humanistic" aspect of teaching.

Not only social skills but also **thinking skills can be improved** by means of discussion, for it is a great natural vehicle how to activate students and stimulate their thinking. Since it is a task aimed at speaking, students need to involve number of thinking processes to react verbally on stimuli, to decide what to say actually. Also in this case, as well as with the discussion skills, it is advisable to teach students some techniques that could facilitate their thinking process, especially the critical thinking, so typical for discussions. Giving some care to the development of thinking skills can positively affect students' further studies; moreover, it prepares them for their life, where the necessity of solving some problems appears frequently.

The main goal of this thesis is to describe the features of discussion as a classroom activity and the way it should be prepared to enable development of students' communicative fluency, thinking and social skills. This should be examined with a practical project conducted in English lessons of the 9th grade at basic school.

NOTE: In order to make the text of this work easier to read, it is referred to a teacher as "she" and to a pupil as "he". It should not be interpreted as gender discrimination.

B. THEORY

B.1 WHAT IS DISCUSSION?

According to Encarta Dictionary (online) the origin of this term is connected with the Latin verb "discutere", which can be translated as "to dash to pieces". There can be seen some relation between this old term and the contemporary meaning of "discussion". Based on definitions from various English-English dictionaries, discussion can be defined as **a detailed consideration or examination of a subject by two or more persons in speech**, and it can be either formal or informal. (Actually, discussion appears also in written form, but this work does not deal with this kind of it.)

It would be good to clarify here that the frequent substitution (in some written resources or in everyday use by people) of the word "discussion" by the term "debate" is not completely accurate. Debate is rather a kind of discussion, a formal one, where there are two opposing sides arguing different viewpoints on a specific topic.

By didactic resources, *discussion* is characterized as a form of teaching activity. By the "activity" is meant "the most commonly used and general term for the units of which a lesson consists... however, through the years there has been remarkably little standardization of either a definition or a delineation of the set of possible language teaching activities"(Celce-Murcia, 1991, pp.50,51). In spite of Murcia's assertion, discussion is not too problematic to describe. Based on Ur (1991, p.2), its definition can be summarised as **a speaking activity of thinking out some problem or situation through verbal interchange of ideas between two or more students**. Gower (1995) puts *discussion* under the heading "Creative or Freer Communication" that covers the kind of "fluency practice, where the specific language focus is less relevant... where all the choices of language used are made" by the speakers (1995, p.101). He emphasises that there must be some opinion or information gap to be discussed. This gap as an important discussion feature can be found also in Littlewood (1991, p.22), who classifies discussion as a "functional communicative activity", as students have to practise a specific function, e.g. solve a problem.

By and large, the didactic characteristics of a discussion reflect its image typical for the world outside a school, which shows us the natural character of this activity.

B.2 DISCUSSION ENCOURAGING STUDENTS' ORAL INTERACTION

A discussion activity facilitates increase in students' motivation to take part in oral communication during English lessons via its personal topics, realistic character and purposefulness. Besides it enables students to create and practise communicative strategies and consequently improve fluency of their speech.

B.2.a MOTIVATIONAL IMPACT OF DISCUSSION

Motivation "is an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action. Or, in more technical terms, motivation refers to 'the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect.'…motivation is a key to learning…" (Brown, 1994, p.152).

It is a fact that Czech students of basic schools learn a foreign language because they have to; it is a part of the school curriculum. The only choice they may have is the decision whether to study English or German, possibly any other language. Majority of them, or their parents, choose the study of English. The reason is clear, it is a language which is spoken all around the world and knowledge of it is vital for different areas of life, e.g. profession, travelling. Nonetheless, these practical reasons do not motivate some children because they are a matter of too far future for them. "Many students bring no extrinsic motivation to the classroom. They may even have negative feelings about language learning. For them what happens in the classroom will be of vital importance in determining their attitude to the language,…"(Harmer, 1992, p.4).

In this respect, discussion is a valuable teaching activity that can positively stimulate students' motivation. Using **personal topics** for discussion, such as students' interests, needs, worries or experience, "produces a high degree of personal involvement among the participants" (Littlewood, 1991, p.38). As discussions are based on the absence of the one and only answer, students have the possibility to express their personality through the foreign language and get to know their classmates' as well. "This kind of activity increases students' motivation, since the students talk for themselves"(Gower, 1995, p.101). In addition, discussion tasks similar to **real life situations** makes the teaching process less artificial, students may have even a feeling

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that they are not studying when taking part in a discussion. Consequently, they are more stimulated to work. Moreover, discussion encourages students' need to communicate, since it is a **purposeful interaction**; they exchange some information, their opinions and find solutions when discussing some subject.

B.2.b DISCUSSION DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE FLUENCY

It would be suitable to define the term "fluency" and "accuracy" at first. "**Fluency,** significant for communicative competence, can be thought as 'the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously' " (Gower, 1995, p.100). For the students it means that they "should be able to get the message across with whatever resources and abilities they've got, regardless of grammatical and other mistakes "(ibid). Non-fluent user of a language can express himself with more difficulty than a fluent one.

"Fluency is sometimes contrasted with accuracy" (Gower, 1995, p.210). A speaker fulfils the objective of "**accuracy**" when s/he produces formally correct speech, meant grammatically.

Although fluency and accuracy are often listed as opposites of each other, "we may recognise that the distinction is not absolutely tidy, just as we recognise the existence of self-monitoring and correction in the fluent speech of many proficient language users" (Brumfit, 1984, p.52). This supports the view that "even in free activities students can be encouraged to be as accurate as possible so long as their anxiety to 'get it right' does not interfere too much with their fluency and ability to communicate"(Gower, 1995, p.100)

"**Language use** requires fluency, expression rules, a reliance on implicit knowledge and automatic performance" (Brumfit, 1984, p.51). As it is teachers' main goal to prepare their students for effective and smooth use of English in real life, similar to that one of native speakers as much as possible, it is necessary to give their students enough opportunities "to experiment, to see how far they can communicate in situations where all the choices of language used are made by the people speaking; to practise the fluent use of language they know" (Gower, 1995, p.101) in the classroom. Similarly, most of "the learners' ultimate objective is to take part in communication with others. Their motivation to learn is more likely to be sustained if they can see how their

classroom learning is related to this objective and helps them to achieve it with increasing success" (Littlewood, 1991, p.17)

"The best vehicle for fluency practice in a foreign language "(Ur, 1991, p.24) is a discussion. Also Littlewood (1991) advises to use greater proportion of this activity in lessons. By the means of a discussion students need to be creative, to rely on and operate with their so far acquired knowledge. Although it is demanding for them, at least they can "explore the full potential of their repertoire and develop strategies to compensate for its weakness" (Littlewood, 1991, p.39). Because students are able to evaluate their own performance, it is a good chance for them to realise what language they need to work on. Besides, the discussion is an excellent feedback for them, since it tests better than marks how successful they really are in reaching the goal of studying English.

To achieve the improvement of students' fluency, teachers need to follow some criteria. They cannot jump into the discussion with instant correction, then the focus of the activity would be on the form and not on the meaning. Making matters worse, students would be probably completely distracted to speak at all. There must be not only an interesting topic but also some purpose to discuss.

According to Gower (1995, p.101) it can be said that the choice of content and language during a fluency activity should be determined by the students, i.e. the speakers.

It sounds logical that before a discussion itself they should not be presented with a complete list of ideas to use, otherwise they could have no motivation to speak. Who would try if everything has been already said!

By the "choice of language determined by the students" Gower probably means that there are no language-use limits set in a free speaking activity in comparison with controlled and guided activities. However, the language demands of a discussion need to be commensurate with students' English knowledge. A careful preparation of a discussion activity by the teacher in terms of its language demands on students is very desirable to make the discussion effective. Concerning the language, Gower (1995, p.102) advises a teacher to ask these questions when planning a free speaking activity: "Are they (students) capable of doing the activity successfully? Do they have the necessary language?" To make it possible for the students to succeed in a discussion

activity the teacher should choose such a discussion that requires language structures and vocabulary the students have already studied.

B.3 DISCUSSION DELOPING STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS

This part describes the non-linguistic aim of using discussions in the classroom, which is its influence on students' social behaviour. As discussion is an oral interaction between at least two discussants, where their co-operation plays vital part, it enables them to acquire or develop specific social skills. Internalization of these then can help students in communication in their practical life.

B.3.a DISCUSSION AS A SOCIAL INTERACTION

According to Encarta Dictionary (online) the word *communication* is a derivation of the Latin word *communicare*, which means "to share". In communication people "transmit or reveal a feeling or thought by speech" (ibid), which can be applied on the activity of discussion, since it is a form of communication where the participants need to interact with each other to express and share their thoughts. Consequently, some kind of social interaction, *social* because within a group of people, takes place during a discussion.

B.3.b SOCIAL SKILLS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

"Social skills were defined as **cognitive and overt behaviours a person uses in interpersonal interactions** and can range from simple nonverbal behaviours such as eye contact and head nods to the complex verbal behaviour of offering a compromise that will meet everyone's needs"(Schumaker, Deshler, 1995, online). Basically, they are fixed strategies used for achieving effective social interaction, where there is some specific aim, such as getting some information or conducting a dialogue, etc. They are very important for people because nearly every action they do involves communication with others. Taking into account the fact that children attend school to get prepared for life, the role of social development in education cannot be ignored.

B.3.c DISCUSSION DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

Various kinds of interpersonal communication require people to master different social skills, according to the communicative aim. Discussion, a detailed consideration or examination of a subject by two or more discussants, demands from its participants specific social skills. The following summary of them is processed on the basis of a **list of social skills** in Communication and Social Skills (Lorac-Weiss, 1984, pp.188, 199).

- To co-operate / not to dominate / to encourage participation of others –
  to draw out shy or nervous discussants/ to develop supportive environment
- To listen actively to others' speech to be able to respond/ to remember what
  has been said
- To keep the task and subject of speech
- To be confident and share one's ideas or opinions with others
- To clarify points for uncertain discussants
- To try to understand others' opinions/to be empathetic
- To appreciate, accept or reject others' opinions
- To criticize opinions and ideas, not their advocates
- To be able to support own ideas/ to argue clearly/ to persuade someone
- To be flexible/ to be able to change own opinion
- To try to agree on something/ to make a decision/ to make a compromise
- To be tolerant/ to be positive/ to avoid conflicts/ to be polite
- To be able to cope with possible hostility of persons who deficit some of the social
  skills, like ability to be tolerant
- To cope with frustration when having a difficulty with vocabulary
- To use 'acceptable' vocabulary which others can understand

It seems to be necessary to add that the set of mentioned social skills cannot be interpreted only as a set of good manners to keep during some kind of social interaction. They are actually such skills that enable us to communicate successfully.

Students need to be aware about these social skills before engaging in a discussion. It is usually done by presenting them as discussion rules to them.

The effectiveness of discussion in developing students' social skills can be accomplished mainly through group-work. For groupwork forces "a closer interaction of language with social behaviour than would otherwise be possible,...any use of language by small groups in the classroom requires language students to operate with a great deal more than language alone,...personal and social needs will be expressed and responded to, simply as a result of the presence of several human beings together for a co-operative purpose" (Brumfit, 1984, p.74). Although in the quotation from Brumfit there are mentioned "small groups", it can be deduced that also communication in bigger groups can influence students' social skills as long as they are able to be involved in it actively.

Furthermore, using discussions in the classroom can have a positive effect on the social relations among students. During discussion activities they are probably to react also with the classmates whom they do not usually speak to outside the classroom and have a chance to get to know them better. Additionally, it can be assumed that the whole teaching process can gain in quality as a result of improvement of the classroom atmosphere.

B.4 DISCUSSION DEVELOPING STUDENTS' THINKING SKILLS

The educational need to prepare students for successful adaptation to the current world calls for teaching them also how to handle information. A suitable instrument for it can be use of discussion activities in the classroom, since they enable students to work with information and to involve certain thinking skills.

B.4.a THINKING SKILLS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

Thinking skills, it is a "set of basic and advanced skills and subskills that govern a person's mental processes. These skills consist of knowledge, dispositions, and cognitive and metacognitive operations" (Cotton, 2001, online). To understand this definition it would be necessary to specify the mentioned terms.

The following definitions, except of the term "cognition", are stated in *Thinking Skills Vocabulary and Definitions* (online)

Knowledge: a body of information commonly associated with a particular content area or field of study.

Dispositions: inclinations to engage in some types of behaviour and not to engage in others.

Cognition: The mental operations involved in thinking; the biological/neurological processes of the brain that facilitate thought. (Cotton, 2001, online)

Metacognition: refers to awareness and control of one's thinking, including commitment, attitudes and attention.

Nowadays, our world has almost a surfeit of information; by means of the latest technologies it is not a problem to get needed information nearly about anything, whereas to process it seems to be for people much more difficult. Schools should take this fact into account and adapt their educational goals to it. It means that they should not only transfer specific knowledge to their students but also teach them how to cope with it. Cotton quotes Ristow, who says that "a great deal of the research currently being reported indicates that the direct teaching of creative skills can produce better, more creative thinkers"(Cotton, 2001, online). As it is described in Cotton, the direct way can be understood as a kind of instruction where the teachers concentrate on teaching and practice of a specific thinking skill, e.g. formulating hypothesis. However, there are also voices that to teach thinking skills directly is not the only way, we can "create situations whereby students learn them inferentially through being placed in circumstances which call for them to apply these skills"(ibid), which is the way this thesis is interested in because discussion is an example of such a situation. For example, a discussion activity enables students to use and improve the skills needed to solve a problem, to make decisions.

B.4.b DISCUSSION AS A TASK INVOLVING THINKING

"Classroom time spent in oral language activity, moreover, affords youngsters opportunity to think out loud" (Grant Hennings, 1978, p.20). In other words: "Language use implies thought; and **a task involving talking must also involve thinking out**" (Ur, 1991, p.13). It means that language activities develop students' language and thinking skills at the same time. Discussion, an exploration of a subject or solving a problem in speech, demands from the discussants certain thinking skills. They need to use **critical thinking** to produce some judgement, defined by Presseisen as "reflective

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and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Cotton, 2001, online) and by Alvino as "the process of determining the authenticity, accuracy, or value of something; characterized by the ability to seek reasons and alternatives, perceive the total situation, and change one's view based on evidence. Also called 'logical' thinking (Cotton, 2001, online). Ur (1991, p.13) describes *the kinds of thinking typical for discussion* "in terms of logical relationships and processes: generalization, exemplification, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, contrast, analogy, comparison, priority, cause, reason, purpose, result, inference, implication, interpretation, summary, amplification, alternativity".

In brief, discussion is a possibility to refine students' fluency and thinking skills all at once. "**Oral language time is a thinking time**" (Grant Hennings, 1978, p.21).

C. METHODOLOGY

C.1 WHEN TO START USING DISCUSSION IN LESSONS

It should be pointed out that the author of this work is interested in application of **discussion in English lessons only at basic school** because her study programme is exactly teaching English for basic schools.

It is teacher's decision to make whether to use discussion or not in her lessons, since she is the person that chooses the teaching methods and techniques. Discussion needn't be only a technique but also a fully-fledged component of the educational content. To answer the questions related to the use of discussion in English lessons teachers should take into account the information in the appropriate curriculum, the didactic principles of the sequence of occurrence of interactive speaking activities in the teaching/learning process and , of course, their students' needs and abilities.

C.1.a DISCUSSION WITHIN CURRICULUM

What is the official view on using discussion or teaching students how to discuss in English lessons at primary schools? For a teacher as a guideline can serve the Czech **curriculums** "*Základní škola*" or "*Obecná škola*" that feature subject matters, skills and abilities students should learn at primary school.

According to the content of the curriculum '*Základní škola*' discussion itself as a special sort of activity should be done with students in the first term of the ninth grade in Czech lessons within Composition. Consequently, it would be reasonable to allow students to acquire discussion skills first in their native language and only then let them discuss in English. Related to English subject matters, the word 'discussion' does not occur in the English curriculum for the 2nd phase (from the 6th to the 7th grade) and the 3rd phase (from the 6th to 9th grade), but students should be able to have a conversation and express their opinion, thoughts and information in speech (and writing). These are actually typical features for discussion, on the other hand, there is not written directly that the students should be able to discuss. Whereas in the English curriculum for classes with extended teaching of languages, where English as the first language is

taught one year longer in comparison with the normal classes, there is under the heading 'output standards' stated that a student "masters and adequately to situation uses basic means of language enabling him to have a discussion, to give reasons for his own opinion and to defend it, to persuade…" (for the Czech version see Appendix 1).

In conclusion, the curriculum 'Základní škola' recommends explicitly to teach discussion only in classes with extended teaching of English, however, it does not rule out the possibility to use it also in normal classes, since their students should be able to express their opinions and to carry on a dialogue. On the other hand, it could be understood that admittedly, students should be able to express their opinions, but they do not have to discuss them with each other.

The curriculum '**Obecná škola**' states explicitly that teachers should "teach their students to discuss, to express their own opinion, to reason"(for the Czech version see Appendix 2) ; this should be done in further phase of teaching/learning process, which is probably the 3rd phase (the eight and the ninth class).

Obviously according to the two curriculums discussion can be taught at primary school, but it would be better to get to a discussion activity step by step. For example, teachers can start teaching their students gradually how to express their opinion, how to argument it, then how to agree or disagree with other's idea, etc. On top of that, it would be worth giving thought to the question whether to teach students to discuss in English after they had a chance to learn it in their mother tongue (in Czech or Civics) or perhaps before that. It would be probably more reasonable to incline to believe that students should be taught how to discuss at first in Czech and only then in English to avoid putting them under stress.

C.1.b DISCUSSION ON A SCALE OF SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

Generally, various didactic resources advise teachers to incorporate speaking activities into their lessons in this order: at first *controlled* activities, then *guided* and finally creative or *freer* activities. "Learners need to develop from more controlled and mechanical to more free and communicative behaviours" (Celce-Murcia, 1991, p.51). In this perspective, discussion, a kind of *freer* activity, should be used in lessons only **after doing controlled and guided activities**.

On the other hand, Littlewood states that "it is also possible to reverse this sequence" (Littlewood, 1991, p.87) in order to diagnose students' weaknesses in a particular kind of communication, which can give the teacher a clue what to concentrate on in next lessons. This is definitely true. However, it seems to be useless in the case the students are beginners or the teacher knows them very well and can take a gauge of her students' language competence without making them doing tasks which could be too difficult. But also Ur says that "instead of the idea, associated with the audio-lingual school, that students should use language in more or less controlled exercises until they have mastered its structure to a high degree, and only then begin to talk freely, it is now accepted that some sort of dynamic, individual and meaningful oral practice should be included in English lessons right from the beginning" (Ur, 1991, p.2). On the other hand, most of the practical discussion ideas she states in her book are more relevant to the teaching of intermediate and advanced students, it means for classes from secondary school and above, although there are also ideas for elementary and lower-intermediate students.

As a summary it can be said that with low level students teachers should focus more on activities emphasising accuracy and with more advanced on these emphasizing fluency, such as discussions. Students need to be given bigger independence gradually to get used to it. Nevertheless, some amount of free oral activities should be present at the beginning already. In any case, the better teacher knows her class, the easier it is to judge whether they are prepared for a discussion activity or not. As Malamah-Thomas says: "If a teacher knows a class well, he or she may be able to predict student reaction to the different activities to be used in the classroom, although human reaction can sometimes be quite unpredictable and unexpected" (Malamah-Thomas, 1991, p.5). As suggested above, a teacher's ability to predict her students' performance during an activity is based on her knowledge of her class as a group of individuals and, which is very important, on her view of the structures and vocabulary the students know. She is the person that is aware of what her students have been already taught. The "unpredictable" reactions could be related, e.g. to a student's weak performance ("weak" in comparison with his usual one) influenced with his current physical or emotional condition. It is possible to explain them also in relation to the student's choice of vocabulary in free activities where a teacher cannot anticipate precisely all the

ideas her students would like to present and consequently necessary words or structures they would need to use.

C.2 INCORPORATION OF DISCUSSION INTO LESSONS
IN ORDER TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' FLUENCY

C.2.a IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION OF DISCUSSION

"Most fully-fledged discussions (as opposed to small ones that arise naturally in response to something immediate like the day's news) take a lot of preparation if the teacher is not going to dominate"(Gower, 1995, p.107). The "small" discussions can be interpreted as short discussions, short because of their length. They are probably the discussions that take place in a lesson, although they were not prepared by a teacher in advance. They are usually the result of the necessity to solve some current problem or to speak about some latest news in a school, etc.

Based on the theories of Gower, Harmer, Larson, Littlewood and Ur the following is suggested: when planning a discussion activity the teacher should carefully do some hard thinking about the task and topic, instructions, prompt materials and materials for early-finished discussants, language demands on students, his/her roles during the activity- the way of her participation, organisation of discussion, seating arrangement, time, potential problems during the activity and steps to cope with them.

Also the students can prepare themselves for discussion. For example, they can be given as homework to think out the subject of discussion in order to have sufficient time to organize their thoughts. Or they can find useful information related to the topic of discussion.

C.2.a.a TOPIC, TASK AND LANGUAGE LEVEL OF DISCUSSION

To ensure students will be involved in speaking during a discussion it is useful to choose a **topic** adequate to their interests and knowledge as well as to their language level. And above all, it is necessary to prepare a **task** to stimulate discussion.

It seems to be logical that a teacher should try to relate the topic to her students' interests and life experience because it would be probably more stimulating to speak about something one knows well. As a good source for discussion topics can serve **everyday situations or problems** students meet outside the classroom. On the other hand, Littlewood is persuaded that there is no need to base the topics only on common situations. "The teacher may also present more **unusual situations**, in order to stimulate the learner's ingenuity" (Littlewood, 1991, p.37). As a reason for it he states that language structures and functions are not bound to specific situations. It is advisable, in the case students are presented with an unfamiliar topic, to provide them with some information about it or to give them homework to gather the information by themselves. However, as teachers want to prepare their students for efficient communication in real life, it would be better to choose namely topics related to the situations that are likely to appear there. Ur copes with this ambiguity in this way: „As regards interesting subject-matter, there are two schools of thought. One claims that the closer discussion material ... to the students' own circumstances, the more interested they will be; and the other, that the more imaginative and exotic the subject, the more excited and stimulated the participants. Both theories have truth" (Ur, 1991, p.16).

The topic should be adequate for the level of students' language. They **need to have enough vocabulary** to discuss the topic. A teacher must "match the linguistic demands of an activity as closely as possible with the linguistic capabilities" of her class. (Littlewood, 1991, p.63) And according to Littlewood it is not only a matter of the complexity of the necessary language students should use, but also "the degree of independence" with which they should handle the language. But this is a little bit problematic to apply on such a free activity like discussion because the possibility to anticipate the language students will use in advance is partly limited due to the unpredictability of all the ideas they would like to present. "The meanings that learners need to express become less predictable. The teacher therefore has less chance of equipping them with the specific language items that they will need" (Littlewood, 1991, p.38). Consequently, it can happen that they will not know some vocabulary needed. However, if the teacher is sure that some vocabulary will probably appear during the discussion Gower advises (1995, p.103) "to remind students of any structures or vocabulary that might be useful" before an activity. They can be written on the board.

This seems to be suitable to use mainly with low-level students in the early stage of using a discussion in their lessons since it could help them to communicate more successfully.

Another difficulty may appear in cases that students have the tendency to express themselves in English with exactly the same words or sentences they are just having in mind in their mother-tongue. However, the situation when a student misses the right word enables him to practise the art of paraphrase, which cannot do any harm

In conclusion, a teacher should try to use such topics which are related to vocabulary that her students know yet it cannot always guarantee elimination of an occurrence of vocabulary problems. However, Litlewood(1995, p.39) states that "the teacher may sometimes place learners in a situation that makes especially heavy demands on their communicative skills, in order to compel them to explore full potential of their repertoire and develop strategies to compensate for its weaknesses".

But it is not sufficient to choose an appropriate topic and just to 'bring it up' in the classroom with words: „Let's speak about …". More important is the **reason for speaking**, the aim of a discussion. As Ur says, it is less crucial what to talk about than why to talk about it. Although she remarks that "a discussion which has no aim but to discuss the topic may, and often does, succeed, if the students are the type that enjoys arguing and are able to think in abstractions"(Ur, 1991, p.5). But how many students are like this? For most of the students there must be a gap, for a discussion usually **an opinion** gap. This gap motivates students to speak, the potential variety of opinions, solutions, etc. makes a discussion interesting. To have an interesting topic stimulates speaking too, indeed.

"The simpler **task**, the more chance it has of success. If it is too complex, valuable time will be wasted on teacher-explanations, and there is a danger that groups may lose the thread of what they are doing, or misunderstand"(Ur, 1991, p.14). This is particularly true for students at basic school. Still, the task should not be too easy; it must be hard enough to demand an effort on the students, but it needs to be clear for them that they can accomplish it.

Ur distinguishes **two kinds of task**: an 'open-ended' and 'close-ended'. By '**open-ended**' she means "tasks requiring the gathering or proposing of ideas unlimited

by one predetermined 'right' result" (Ur, 1991, p.15). Its opposite is the '**close-ended**' task which is "less likely to be effective in that moment one member of the group lights on the right answer" (ibid). Then there is no need to continue in the discussion, therefore the close-ended kind of task is not so practical to use.

C.2.a.b TYPES OF DISCUSSION TO USE

Types of discussions in the following list are divided according to the division based on the structure of discussion and are stated in Gower (1995, pp.108, 109). Gower does not explain the term "structure" but it is possible to define it as *a kind of discussion procedure*. The structures presented by Gower are, in his opinion, designed in order to make a discussion activity stimulating enough to speak.

PROBLEM –SOLVING

The students are presented with some subject, puzzle or problem and they have time to discuss possible ideas how to answer or explain it.

Gower says that "the problem can be presented with the teacher, or the problem and solution can be given to one of the students, who can answer questions (yes or no) from other students in the group". Here is an example from Gower (1995, p.108) of such a problem:

"Lat Monday Katy left for college at 8.30 as usual. She went out of the front door, closing it behind her. A few seconds later she rang the door bell. When her father opened the door Katy said 'Thank you' and then turned to go to college."

The problem lies in the absence of an explanation of why Katy came home and said 'Thank you' to her father. Students' task would be probably to think it out.

MODIFYING STATEMENTS

The students are given a list of, for example, 10 controversial statements around some topic. Groups are then asked to modify the statements so that all the members of the group agree with them. Finally, the groups can compare their statements with each other. To make it less demanding, teacher can reduce the number of the statements.

SEQUENCING STATEMENTS

The students are given a list of, for example, ten non-controversial statements related to the same topic. They are then asked, in groups, to sequence them (1-10) in order of priority to the topic. Again, to make it easier teacher can limit the number of the statements. There must be no right order to stimulate discussion.

Ur offers a variation of this type; the students can be given a set of pictures, in each picture there is one phase of an event and students need to agree on their order. Important is that there must be no only one answer to let space for discussion.

DEFENDING STATEMENTS

Each student is given one controversial topic and then should spend a few minutes preparing arguments to defend it. One of the students can be made a chairperson. All the students then have to present their arguments in turn, answer questions and defend themselves. According to Gower, this usually leads to a lively discussion. The activity can be ended with a vote to decide on the most convincing defence. It could be a good idea, if there is time, to ask students to express their own opinion about the statement they had to defend.

Harmer (1992, p.125) calls such a discussion- where students are given a controversial topics to defend and later it is put to the vote- *debate*. Because it is "highly structured and competitive, its applicability is limited in elementary schools" (Grant Hennings, 1978, p.180) and for weaker students it could be rather stressful than enjoyable. It can be recommended to use it rather with more advanced classes.

MORAL ISSUES

The students are given details of a problematic situation and are asked to discuss the situation and make a decision.

Unlike Gower, there seems to be no need to separate 'moral issues' as a special type of structuring discussion, for it is actually the 'problem-solving' type. Only the *topic* is different.

DESCRIBING AND COMPARING

This is suitable for a multinational class. Each student is asked to prepare some information on something which varies from country to country. In groups the students compare the information about their countries and come to a group decision about which set of rules they think the most sensible.

But it can be modified for a class consisting of students of the same nationality; the topic can be, say, set of rules kept by students' families.

Littlewood and Ur also mention as a type of discussion 'role-play', whereas Gower has it as a special speaking activity.' Usually for role-plays it is typical that students play some role, they have different identity and during a discussion should behave according to the nature of their character not their own. This could be probably very entertaining and stimulating and for some shy or not self-confident students perhaps easier for the reason that they are not responsible for their own opinions and deeds in such an activity. However, this work is aimed at discussions that enable students to take responsibility for their own actions, opinions, etc., consequently the author of this paper is not going to work further with role-plays.

C.2.a.c ORGANIZATION OF DISCUSSION

Nowadays, in Czech schools there are usually many students in a classroom. The reality of the amount of students attending English lessons is that there are either two groups made within a class or a class is not divided at all. In the first case, which is much better, there are approximately between 10 and 15 students. In the second case there can be even more than 20 students. Consequently, teacher should decide how to organise a discussion activity in order to provide students with as many chances to speak as possible.

Gower (1995, p.109, 110) recommends and describes the following ways of organizing discussion:

TAKING TURNS

This is a kind of organization suitable for smaller classes which is based on a rule whereby no one who has already spoken can speak again until all the members of the

group have had a turn to speak. Gower (1995, p.109) says that this is a rather artificial constraint but it ensures that the discussion is not taken over by one or two students right from the start.

GROUPWORK

According to Gower (1995, p.109) it is often better to divide the class into groups so that a number of parallel discussions can take place. In this way more students get a chance to speak, although it is more difficult for teacher to monitor. A kind of monitoring can be done by a chosen member of the group who should make notes and report back on the discussion that took place in his group.

Additionally, in groupwork students can understand each other's speech better because it is clearly audiable. Moreover, they can see each other's facial expressions and gestures, which also conveys the meaning of one's speech.

The advantage of using groupwork lies not only in saved time and increased participation of students, but also in "less threatening environment"(Harmer, 1992,p.124) which is better mostly for shy students. After all, out of their lessons students are used to talking together also in groups, not with the whole class. According to Brumfit small group (including pairwork) "stimulates natural conversational settings more closely than any other mode of classroom organisation" (Brumfit, 1984, p.78).

Unfortunately, there is one disadvantage of groupwork that distracts some teachers to use it in their lessons; it is the difficulty in keeping discipline in the classroom.

PYRAMIDE TECHNIQUE

This technique, also called 'snowball technique' (Gower, 1995, p.109) is suitable for larger groups. It is based on the division of discussion into several stages. For example, the task of discussion can be to decide on the five most important qualities a good teacher must have. At first each student might list the five qualities he thinks are important. This is followed with pair discussion when two students need to agree on the list of five qualities too. Then pairs form groups of four and have to agree also on their five things – and so on until there is small number of groups for a list to be elicited from each group and put on the board, or the whole class is discussing the topic together.

Basically, current approach to organization of activities in a foreign language classroom generally prefers using groupwork and pairwork. Since the necessity of it has started to be stressed recently, teachers need to get used to it and not to be afraid to incorporate it into their lessons only because of the difficulty in monitoring students' work and maintaining classroom discipline.

C.2.b STAGES OF DISCUSSION

If we want to ensure a smooth and efficient discussion, we shall divide it according to the certain stages and consider various aspects of them.

1) MOTIVATIONAL STAGE

This is actually a **pre-activity** to motivate students to speak. It is usually some reading, listening, watching or a short lead-in talk. It can be done in lesson or in the case of reading as homework

2) INSTRUCTIONAL STAGE

At the beginning of a discussion activity teacher provides her students with instructions. It is necessary to ensure that they pay attention. The **instruction should be clear and concise** as much as possible. "With classes whose knowledge of English is not yet up to understanding such instructions without a great deal of clarification and repetition, it may be most sensible to give these *in the native language*"(Ur, 1991, p.18). In this way teacher can gain more time for the discussion itself. The instruction should consist of setting the task and also time limit for the discussion.

Within this stage the teacher should remind her students of general **discussion skills.** The students' behaviour according to these skills can be made a part of the task; it means that it can be evaluated by the students or their teacher in the feedback session as well as achievement of the task.

Any necessary materials should be distributed only after explaining instructions; otherwise the students would occupy themselves with the materials and not listening to the instructions.

"In any particular activity the teacher can make it clear to students in which areas accuracy is expected, and to what extent"(Gower, 1995, p.100). Before discussion students should be informed that it is an activity based on **fluency practice** in order to reduce the stress related to effort to speak accurately.

3) BRAINSTORMING SESSION

This stage is very important because it enables students **to think out the subject of discussion**, to brainstorm vocabulary, their ideas, opinions or solutions. Students should have enough time to prepare their arguments. The brainstorming session can be done together with a whole class or individually, it depends on the organisation of discussion.

This stage can be omitted in the case students had the brainstorming as homework or when teacher wants them to try interacting without preparation.

4) DISCUSSION ITSELF

This is the stage aimed at speaking; students interact according to the organisation of discussion. During this stage **teacher monitors the activity, provides necessary help and encouragement**. Since discussion is a fluency-based activity, the teacher should not correct students' language during their communication. "**Correction should have either no place, or a very minor place** in fluency work, for it normally distracts from the message, or may even be perceived as rude"(Brumfit, 1984, p.56). But teacher can write down students' language mistakes on a sheet of paper and comment on them in feedback session. Additionally, she can make notes of any offence against discussion skills. Recording of positive findings is advisable too, of course.

It can happen that a group or more groups can finish earlier, while others can be still absorbed in the discussion. In this case Ur advises the teacher "to **give the quickest group further work** to do until all or most of the others finish" (Ur, 1991, p.22). It would be good if the work was somehow related to the discussion, but it could be also doing homework or some reading. As mentioned above, Ur says that **it is possible to stop the last discussants** before they finish. But she emphasises that teacher should inform her students about this beforehand (within the instructional stage) to prevent students' potential protests and consequent delays.

Finally, there must be done some **conclusion** of the preceding discussion; groups can compare their solutions or the results can be written on the blackboard, just to see whether the task was achieved or not.

According to Harmer (1992) teacher should be also prepared to stop the activity when it is not working.

5) FEEDBACK SESSION

After the discussion itself there should be done a feedback session. It can follow the discussion either **immediately or it can be held in one of next lessons**. The sooner the better. Usually the feedback is held in another lesson than the discussion for the reason that the discussion was finished at the end of a lesson or the teacher needs time to listen to or watch the recordings he made during the discussion.

The main aim of the session is "**to point out any difficulties or inadequacies that emerged, and to discuss ways of remedying them**" (Littlewood, 1991, p.54). In the feedback the teacher should indicate how the students communicated, how well they used strategies to increase their fluency, e.g. incomplete sentences, paraphrase, common expressions, hesitation devices, etc. If the teacher has recorded the activity either by using a tape recorder or a video, she can play it to the students, then the analysis will be easier to do for both the students and the teacher. The students themselves can comment on their performance as well, of course. However, if the tape is too long, some students can lose concentration or they can find it boring. Or, the teacher can use for evaluation transcribed version of the discussion.

In a feedback session the teacher can mention **mistakes of accuracy** that occurred frequently during the discussion. They can be written on the board and students asked to correct them. Or alternatively, teacher can give individual students written notes related to their mistakes with suggestion that they should improve specific grammar, vocabulary, etc.

Harmer adds that in the feedback it is also necessary to **comment on the content** of the discussion, otherwise "the students will perceive the object of the exercise as being concerned only with linguistic accuracy rather than the ability to communicate efficiently – which is the main motive for this kind of activity" (Harmer, 1992, p.133).

Giving students tape scripts of their speech with some comments on the language used or notes related to their mistakes seems to be a good way of feedback. However, preparation of these must be for a full-time teacher very time-consuming, e.g. it can last several hours to listen to a taped dialogue and write down all the utterances because it is probably necessary to play it more times.

In a feedback the teacher and her students should not forget to evaluate students' behaviour during the activity. It means that they should analyse any offence against the discussion rules that appeared in order to prevent it in future discussions.

C.2.c TEACHER'S ROLES DURING DISCUSSION

When planning a discussion teacher should consider carefully what her role will be during the activity.

The following list of teacher's roles during a discussion activity is formulated according to experts' theories (Gower, Larson, Scrivener, and Ur).

DISCUSSANT?

One of the most important questions to answer is whether a teacher should take part in a discussion together with her students or not. Actually, she can, but it should not be a rule. The teacher **may be involved as a participant** rather in the whole-class discussion when its topic is somehow related to the teaching/learning process. In this case her co-communication is natural, since her opinions or ideas are necessary for the content. In other cases it would be better for her not to join the discussion, since then it is very difficult to monitor the activity, to provide students with help, etc. Moreover, there is a danger that the teacher will monopolize the discussion and turn it into a monologue. And when not into a monologue, then certainly into a dialogue only between the teacher and a student, which is, unfortunately, typical form of interaction occurring in English lessons. But in this way students' chance to learn and practise all the communication functions is limited. Consequently, they are not able, for example, to ask questions.

On the contrary, Larson (2000, p.672) suggests that students can become better discussants when they watch their teacher **model** appropriate behaviour during a

discussion. For this reason teacher's participation could be reasonable, at least at the very beginning of using discussions in the classroom.

INSTRUCTOR

The teacher instructs her students at the beginning of the activity, it is she who sets the task and organises possible grouping. Then she gives instructions during the activity for the case something is unclear or to manage the students. She can also stop the activity when needed.

MONITOR

To monitor a discussion activity can be very demanding, since it is usually held in pairwork or groupwork and a teacher cannot be everywhere. She should divide her attention among all the groups, which is also difficult to fulfil as the teacher can sometimes be too absorbed by monitoring or helping some group that she forgets it is time to move to another group.

But according to Gower (1995, p.68) a teacher should monitor discussion quietly in order not to interrupt students and not to be noticed by the class. She can stand somewhere in the back, out of sight, and should say nothing during the activity. This is probably a way to simulate real circumstances when there is no one to help you, e.g. with an unknown word. This strategy is certainly better for the students to learn to be more independent, although it can be for some students stressful. But there is a chance that they can gradually get used to it and to reduce the stress.

To the mistakes, it is beyond the teacher to record, or even notice, all the inappropriate or incorrect language that will occur. But in the case of discussion it is acceptable because it is an activity based on fluency practice.

GUIDE

As mentioned above, some experts recommend that no intervention into students' discussion should be done. In this perspective, the teacher's role of a guide does not take place here. On the other hand, other experts, such as Ur, do not avoid teacher's guidance during the discussion. According to them teacher can equip students with necessary language items or, not only during the brainstorming stage, she can ask them some questions to elicit ideas in case of necessity. Moreover, Ur (1991, p.20) says that teacher can make contribution also to the content.

ASSESSOR

After the discussion itself teacher provides feedback on the adequacy of students' performance. He evaluates their attempts to communicate from the point of view of fluency, possibly accuracy, content and behaviour.

PROMPTER

Teacher's role during a discussion is also to encourage and help students to participate in it. She can "make suggestions about how students may proceed in an activity when there is a silence or when they are confused about what to next" (Scrivener, 1994, p.241). However, silence need not be always interpreted as a student's confusion or inability to do the task. Gower raises the point that during free activities, which is also discussion, where the purpose is not to practise specific language structures, it "may be better to let students who don't wish to contribute remain silent"(Gower, 1995, p.32) as listening and reflection are also important for the way people learn a language. Still, it is worth trying to involve as many students as possible during a discussion since the activity is aimed at development of their fluency.

Brumfit goes as far as to say that teacher is also a kind of "social worker", since he concentrates on students' behaviour during discussion and comments on it in the feedback session.

C.2.d MOTHER -TONGUE OCCURENCE PREVENTION

Unwelcome occurrence of mother tongue during English lessons is something that most English teachers are unhappy about. This concerns especially monolingual classes, therefore teachers should try to find some strategies that would help them to prevent their students from speaking in their native language. When planning a discussion activity teachers must prepare very well how to stop their students using the mother tongue because there is a high chance students will 'slide' into it.

During discussion students "will increasingly find themselves attempting to say things for which they have not yet acquired the most effective or appropriate language. This does not matter in itself: there will always be gaps in the learners' repertoire..." (Littlewood, 1991, p.54). However, it causes that students have an urge to use their mother tongue. That is why students need to be taught the **strategy to paraphrase** and

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remind of it also before the discussion activity. Teacher can simply explain to the students that it is pointless to use the mother tongue and that it is essential for them to try to speak English, whatever difficulty they have.

Although with some students **presentation of advantages of trying to speak English** without using the mother tongue may not be successful. Some experts say that teacher should tell such students that as a consequence of speaking their native language they are going to use discussion no more. But to reject use of discussion forever would not be a good idea for the reason that students need to do it to improve their fluency. Teacher can solve this situation in the way that she will do only controlled and guided activities and after some time he will move back to the use of discussion.

In large classes "the teacher cannot control the language being used in all groups" (Brumfit, 1984, p.78). Brumfit and Ur offer as a solution to appoint **a 'chairman' or a 'secretary' from among the students** who will observe and note down any transgressions into native language. After the discussion he will inform the teacher, who can praise the students or groups for using English and penalise these who used their native language. Ur thinks that this can work well as a **group contest** where the occurrence of native language will lower students' eventual score. Here, it would be a good idea to place the secretaries into rival groups to guarantee the secretaries will not cheat.

Or, according to Ur (1991, p.20), the teacher may put **a tape-recorder** by a group of students that she thinks are likely to switch into native language. Knowing that their speech is being recorded should prevent the students from using their mother tongue. Ur finds this strategy 'surprisingly effective'.

Last but not least, teacher makes her job easier with leading her students to use English from the very beginning of their English study. And she should be a shining example to them, of course.

C.3 INCORPORATION OF DISCUSSION INTO LESSONS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS

C.3.a TEACHING STUDENTS DISCUSSION RULES

Successful development of students' social skills through discussion can be achieved on the condition that they will be presented with a set of discussion **rules**, which are actually the social skills that enable the discussant to communicate effectively. It would be advisable to get acquainted students with the rules before they get in touch with discussion in English lessons for the first time. And afterwards teacher should remind students of the rules before every discussion activity until they get used to behaving according to them.

As an introduction it is good to mention that there are not many recommendations, and materials at all, how to teach discussion rules in specialized literature. For teaching students how to discuss Larson suggests that teachers should **"provide direct instructions and coaching** on the particulars of interacting with others" (Larson, 2000, p.672) Larson suggests that teaching students how to discuss should be done through direct instructions and coaching. Ur also prefers direct way of teaching the rules; she says that students should be reminded of the rules by their teacher.

Larson describes one teacher's way of reminding his students of the correct behaviour during a discussion activity:" I tell them I don't care what you say as long as it's not personal, against anyone here at school, anybody in this classroom, against your teacher, and it's within good taste, you can go ahead and say it. OK? And that's kind of the ground rules. Also, you must listen to other people." (Larson, 2000, p.673). Larson adds that the teacher finds this instruction successful, however, this seems to be not very suitable to use at basic school, where the discussion activity within instruction can be something new for the students. It would be better to give them concrete rules.

The following list of discussion rules is based on the list of social skills mentioned at B.3.c.

Before a discussion the <u>teacher needs to inform students that they should try</u>:

- to co-operate
- to listen actively
- to share their ideas and opinions
- to try to understand other's opinions
- to criticize an opinion, not the person who thinks it
- to be able to change own opinion
- to be tolerant
- to use paraphrase
- to use vocabulary which other students can understand
- to help each other with needed word
- use also facial expressions or gestures

- not to dominate
- to keep the subject
- to give reasons for their opinions
- to accept or reject others' opinion

- to make a decision
- to be polite
- not to shout

The best way would be probably at first to try to elicit as many rules as possible from the students, only then to enumerate them. Even though the students have not had any experience with discussion in English lessons so far, they can be able to think out some rules, because they can transfer them from their discussion experience in their mother tongue. Or, it would be great to have a video tape with two examples of discussion, one good and one bad, and to ask students to compare them. By trying to find out why one of the discussions was effective while the other not the teacher could gradually elicit the discussion rules. But this could be done only under the condition that there was any tape like that.

Some experts say that a good way of teaching students the discussion rules is using the teacher as a model. This sounds logical, but because the aim of discussion in English lessons is to give them possibility to improve their fluency and independence, the teacher should reduce his participation as much as possible.

C.3.b ESTABLISHING CO-OPERATIVE ATMOSPHERE

In order to make the development of students' social skills through discussion possible, it is **necessary to establish an atmosphere of cooperation**, trust and friendliness. Otherwise, the interaction would be problematic, since nobody wants, as Larson (2000) says, to share his/her ideas and opinions with a person whom s/he cannot trust. Of course, it is not a matter of one lesson but a long-term process.

However, it is possible to improve the classroom atmosphere also within an activity or a lesson – by means of more informal **seating arrangement**. Gower says that for the whole class discussion there is no need to change the positions of seats. Nevertheless, to arrange the seats into a circle could create more informal atmosphere and enable students to feel more relaxed. For the groupwork, "the ideal is probably to have students sit round desks café style, or to remove the desk altogether" (Gower, 1995, p.23).

To increase students' cooperation can be achieved mainly by the means of **group discussion**, since this kind of organisation is more intimate, more natural, consequently there is a better chance that also shy or not so self-confident students will participate more than, for example, in front of the whole-class. However, in small groups, there can meet and mix different kinds of personalities and mixed- ability students, which can sometimes cause problems in their interaction. On the other hand, this diversity is an excellent environment for teaching students how to co-operate not only with their best friends.

C.3.c MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

It is not sufficient just to present the discussion rules, there must be present some monitoring during the activity to discover how successfully the students keep the rules during their interaction. The findings then need to be analysed in the feedback session.

Monitoring

Students' behaviour can be carefully watched by the teacher or a 'secretary' from among the students can be appointed to write down any offence against the rules. However, it is not necessary always to do as students naturally perceive others' behaviour and should be able to comment on it later in the feedback stage.

While the teacher is monitoring the classroom she can regulate students' behaviour in order to prevent an outbreak of conflict or to stop loud disturbance caused by a group of discussants, etc.

Feedback

In the feedback session the teacher and the students should analyse the findings made through monitoring. It is necessary to mention not only negatives but also positives. If there was any offence against the discussion rules, it is advisable to establish the cause of it and ways how to stop it from happening next time. It is advisable to praise the students who kept the rules to motivate also the others.

C.4 INCORPORATION OF DISCUSSION INTO LESSONS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' THINKING SKILLS

As discussion is a consideration of some subject or solving a problem in speech, students need to involve thinking, especially the critical thinking. "Classroom oral language activity builds both language and thinking abilities. Specifically, as children recall, relate, describe, summarize, hypothesize, invent, judge, **they are refining their ability to think logically**" (Grant Hennings, 1978, p.20). Demonstrably, regular use of discussion is actually an **indirect way** of influencing students' thinking skills. However, there are some steps to take to create from a discussion activity a real instrument of development of thinking skills. These are using the brainstorming technique, the monitoring of the content of discussants' speech and the content feedback.

C.4.a USE OF BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUE

According to Grant-Hennings, but also other experts, brainstorming is an excellent technique for thinking together (p.197). Brainstorming stage is done usually after setting the task of a discussion activity. During the brainstorming session each discussant "contributes whatever words or ideas come to mind in reaction to a particular object or event" (Grant Hennings, 1978, p.197) or problem, etc. It "is a dynamic way to assist children who have trouble thinking through ideas relative to a particular topic" (Grant Hennings, 1978, p.200). This techniques influences, as well as discussion itself, both the thinking and social skills, since students need to verbalize their ideas and also

respect contributions of others. In order to help students to brainstorm, they can be asked questions, sequenced from less to more abstract. Some research "indicates that if children are asked to perform higher level, more abstract thinking operations before identifying specific examples, discussants tend not to be able to perform the task" (Grant Hennings, 1978, p.215).

The brainstorming can be aimed more concretely – students can brainstorm advantages and disadvantages of the subject of a discussion in order to decide more easily. This should help them to realize that things are not just "bad" or "good". As Grant Hennings indicates, they must learn to judge the extent of these two labels. Since this is the essence of discussion – the lack of one absolutely right or wrong answer.

After some experience of brainstorming, students can do it also individually, of course.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that students should not be given all the ideas and arguments by their teacher, although she might have the tendency to do it with good intent, to assist them. But doing students' job by the teacher is not a help at all. As some experts say, this leads only to the lack of students' initiative and no thinking on their part.

C.4.b MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

Not only the students' language and behaviour should be monitored, but also the factual content of the discussion. How to do the monitoring and feedback has been already mentioned at the points C.2.b and C.3.b. The methods to use should be the same, only with the difference that here we are interested in the quality of students' ability to process the task and given information. It is desirable to concentrate on the quality of their ideas, solutions and logical argumentation.

D. HYPO/THESIS

On the basis of the theoretical part of this work it is possible to state the following thesis: **Regular use of discussion carefully planned in terms of its task, topic, organization, stages and language demands as a main activity in English lessons with students of the 9th grade at basic school can effectively contribute to the development of their communicative fluency as well as social and thinking skills.**

E. PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

The professional project is aimed to verify the thesis of this work in practice. It can be done under the condition it is designed according to the ideas of the theoretical and methodological parts that are mentioned above. In addition, as it is very important for a teacher to know her students quite well in order to start using discussions with them at the right time and to prepare them for it gradually, it is not sufficient to realize the project during the four-week teaching practice, as it is usually done by students of pedagogical faculties, but in a longer period of time.

E.1 PLACE OF REALIZATION OF THE PROJECT

The realization of the project took place at Základní škola Lesní in Liberec throughout the school-year 2003/2004. The primary school kept the "School Curriculum Základní škola".

E.2 CHARACTERISTIC OF THE STUDENTS

The project was done with a group of students of the 9th grade. There were 17 students altogether, 11 girls and 6 boys, all were members of the same class. They had been studying English for 6 years, since the 4th grade. However, in the questionnaires related to discussion they were given, they stated different numbers of years of their English study because they included also their attendance of facultative groups.

E.3 CHARACTERISTIC OF THE TEXTBOOK

The textbook used was **Cambridge English** (level 2, 3rd book –the green one) by **Andrew Littlejohn and Diana Hicks, published by Cambridge University Press.** The textbook was chosen by the previous teacher of the class, it was continued with the textbook from the unit where the students finished at the end of the 8th term. This book is designed for mixed ability students and contains four different syllabuses: the language syllabus, an education syllabus with curriculum links, a learner involvement syllabus, a teacher support-syllabus. I appreciated the fact that the exercises are aimed to develop students' working independency, working with others and taking responsibility for their own learning. Moreover, the tasks aim to encourage the students

to use English creatively and to contribute with their own ideas and experiences. All of these seemed to be as an advantage for the project.

Most importantly, the book contains discussion activities, which was appreciated, since it indicated that the students were used to discussion. However, some of the activities cannot be fully recognized as discussions, they are rather "question-answer" activities, e.g.: *"Have you been on a plane, ferry, catamaran, hydrofoil, hovercraft, or through a long tunnel? Where did you go?"* This is called "discussion" in the Teachers' Book, but it is not an exchange of opinions or ideas, and examination of a topic as well. What is interesting, the book provides practical ideas for teachers and related to discussion it advices: "In the initial stages of the course, brief discussion can be in the mother tongue. The importance of this is that it can give the students the feeling that their ideas and contributions are valued" (Littlejohn, Hicks, 1996, p.114). However, as the students were in the half of the course, they had already gone through 16 units (a total of 30 units in the book), it was not planned to discuss with them in Czech. Brainstorming, an important technique for discussion, also often appears in the book so students were expected to know how to use it. Any way of teaching discussion skills was not found.

In the course of the school-year a view that the book was not very suitable for the ninth-grade students was reached. In fact, this opinion was also expressed by another two English teachers using the book as well. It would be better to teach according to it at secondary school. Especially some of the topics chosen because of the cross-curriculum syllabus were neither entertaining nor interesting to the students and not very practical for everyday-life communication. This led to the use of additional resources during the school-year.

E.4 INTERVIEW WITH THE STUDENTS' PREVIOUS TEACHER

The students' previous teacher was very kind and gave an interview about using discussions in the project class. She had 7 years of English teaching practice and was qualified.

As a former teacher of the project class she occasionally used discussions, but only the frontal whole-class kind exactly, usually as a pre-activity at the beginning of a new "Theme" (the textbook was divided into themes). The task was just to think out the

topic. According to her description it was done in a way the teacher asked a question and some students responded, consequently it was only the kind of discussion when the interaction is done in the direction teacher (question)-student (answer). Discussion as a main activity based on fluency practice she never used with the students and was quite pessimistic about it. Her reasons were: students' insufficient vocabulary and language structures to hold a discussion. She also did not pre-teach them any discussion rules. According to her, behaviour during discussion is similar to the one students should keep during lessons in general, and there is no reason to teach it extra. Finally, she was asked for her own way of avoiding the students speaking Czech. She did it with an instruction: "Use only English." and with providing encouragement. Any specific methods the teacher did not mention.

On the basis of this interview, it was concluded that it would be advisable to prepare an activity in order to present the students with a set of discussion rules and to provide them with some useful phrases for holding a discussion.

E.5 FIRST QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE STUDENTS

In order to find out what the students' attitudes to discussion were and what they had already learnt about them, they were given to fill in an anonymous questionnaire consisting of four questions (See Appendix 3).

All of the students were given the questionnaire in the second half of the school year, after they had learnt how to discuss in one of their Czech lessons. The **questionnaires were in Czech** in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

The first question of the question "What is a discussion?" was aimed to find out what actually the word "discussion" meant for them. Generally, it can be said that majority of them was able to define it. They specified the term mainly as an exchange of opinions or talking about some topic, conversation, one student wrote that *"It is a common thinking over some topic"*. Although all definitions could be used for defining "discussion", some of the answers were not very precise because *conversation* can be about weather, for example, and there is no need to exchange personal opinions or to solve something. To summarize it, more than one half of the students were able to describe discussion successfully.

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The second question "How should a good discussant behave?" was aimed to find out whether the students knew the discussion rules or not. The students usually mentioned only some or one of the rules that are stated in the theoretical part of this work and were thought to be important to know (See C.3.a.). They mainly mentioned "*not to interrupt other's speech*" and "*to express his opinion*". All of the mentioned rules were relevant to discussion rules except "*to speak the truth*". Before the questionnaires were given to the students, they had already spoken about discussion in their Czech lessons; therefore they were expected to enumerate more of the rules. But maybe the mistake was in the formulation of the question "How should a right discussant behave?" Instead of it, it would be better to write "Name principles of a right discussion". To make sure students would keep the discussion rules in the lessons, it was decided to present them with the discussion rules in one of following English lessons.

Question 3 "Do you agree that discussion should be a part of English lessons?" was aimed to find out whether the students wanted discussion as a part of their English lessons and their reason for it. This question was mainly important for the comparison with the second questionnaire (given to them at the end of the project).13 students wanted to discuss in English lessons. Most of them stated the advantage of improving their speaking ability. 1 student wrote: "*I don't know. It depends on the topic*". 3 students did not want to discuss in English lessons; their answers were: "*It would be difficult. / I don't enjoy it. / I don't know.*" The majority of positive answers seemed to be as an advantage for including discussions into their English lessons taking into account its motivation factor.

Question 4 "Do you enjoy having a discussion? " was aimed to find out whether the students enjoyed discussions generally. 14 students stated they enjoyed discussions; their reasons were for example:"*I can express my opinion. / I want to know others' opinions. / I want to make a fool of somebody.*" The underlined reason is an example why students need to be taught discussion skills. 2 students wrote that "*it depends on the topic*". 1 student stated that he did not enjoy discussions.

In brief, students' answers showed their predominant positive attitude to discussions.

E.6 PREPARATION OF SUITABLE CONDITIONS
FOR APPLICATION OF THE PROJECT

On the basis of the interview with the students' previous teacher, on identifying the weak speaking abilities of majority of the students during one month of teaching them and the theoretical findings related to the use of discussion in English lessons, it was decided that it would be necessary before doing the project to concentrate on:

- **establishing supportive and cooperative atmosphere in the classroom**

- **encouraging the students to use English not only within speaking activities but also for spontaneous interaction** (During the beginning phase of teaching the class it was soon realized that they were not used to use English for classroom communication, so it was necessary made them to speak English also in these cases. If it was not too complicated so that it would have been waste of time. By the way, they were also not used to be taught grammar in English, which, on the contrary, I did.)

- **providing them with enough controlled and guided oral practice** (They were surprised that I tested also their speaking ability. I used for it speaking tests, after each Theme, contained in the Teacher's Book. They told me that they had not experienced it before, although those test were part oh all revision tests in the course book.)

E.7 ACTIVITY PLANS AND REFLECTIONS

The first of the following activities was chosen to be included in this work because it is an activity aimed at presentation of discussion rules, which necessity was stated as a pre-condition for enabling discussants to communicate effectively in the theoretical part of this work. The activity and materials were designed by the author of this work because no more suitable resources were found. The next activity is a follow-up discussion that students had a chance to experience and where it was the aim to use the teacher as a model of a discussant and to remind the students of useful language structures they could use during discussions. It was also designed by the teacher. The third activity is an activity based on the content of one unit in the student's book Cambridge English for Schools 2. It was chosen to provide the students with enough practice of the vocabulary needed for the activity. The fourth activity was designed by the teacher and is presented here on the score that one of the discussion groups was taped and it was possible to make a tape-script of it.

E.7.a LESSON PLAN: COMIC STRIP – presentation of discussion rules

NOTE: Because I did not find any tape with some discussion activity, I decided to draw a comic strip of a discussion. Moreover, in order to present a set of discussion rules there are two discussions in the comic, one of them is "good" and "one" bad. The topic of them was chosen to be linked with our last topic covering *leisure activities* (Unit 21 in the course book).

Class: 9th grade   *Number of students:* 17   *Duration:* 45 minutes
Topic: Comic strips, Discussion and discussion rules
Materials: one volume of a comic strip "Čtyřlístek", 17 copies of a comic strip "What will we do on Saturday?" (See Appendix 4), 17 copies of a comic strip (See appendix 5)- source:www.esl-lounge.com
Aims: 1. to present vocabulary related to "comic strips"
　　　 2. to use the structure "In my opinion…"
　　　 3. to make clear the meaning of the word "discussion" to all the students
　　　 4. to present a set of discussion rules
　　　 5. to discuss with the students the necessity to keep the rules
　　　 6. to revise the use of "will"- for spontaneous decisions about future
Objectives: By the end of the lesson SS will be able to
　　　 1. express their opinion about comic strips
　　　 2. understand what "discussion" is
　　　 3. understand why it is important to keep some rules during discussion
　　　 4. deduce some of the discussion rules from the comic strip
　　　 5. write down the rules into their school exercise-book
　　　 6. SS will be able to understand use of "will" in the comic strip decisions

STAGE 1   **MOTIVATIONAL STAGE**   **5 min**
-T (teacher) greets SS(students) and holds a volume of a comic "Čtyřlístek", which is a comic about a group of friends, in front of her. She tries to elicit or present words as comic strip/hero/balloon. They can be written on the board then.
-T says ***In my opinion* reading comic strips is fun."** Then she asks some SS ***"What's your opinion about* comic strips?"**. Finally, T informs SS that she herself has drawn a comic strip for them.
AIM: to present the vocabulary related to comic strips, to use the structure "In my opinion…" and to motivate the students for the next activity-reading of a comic strip.

STAGE 2   **READING "What will we do on Saturday?" – a comic strip**   **10 min**
-T holds the comic strip in her hands and informs SS about the topic of the comic strip: 3 friends want to spend together Saturday; they're talking - discussing what to do on Saturday.
T writes on the blackboard: *Why are there 2 versions of their discussion?* SS are told to read the comic strip and guess why there are two versions. T gives the copies to 2 SS to distribute them: 1 copy each S. After SS read it, T asks the SS to answer. The answer is that <u>in the version A they are not able to solve the problem; it is BAD</u>. In the version <u>B they are able to solve it and consequently have a plan for the Saturday; it is GOOD.</u>

- T asks: *What is the name for the situation when 2 or more people speak about a problem?*   SS *answer:* **Discussion**
Why do they speak about it?   SS answer: *Because they need to answer it.*
                                To solve the problem.

- T writes on the BB definition of discussion:
Discussion is: when 2 or more people exchange their opinions and ideas.
                when -//- talk about some problem because they want to solve it.
- T explains the usefulness of discussion rules to the SS.
AIM: To remind SS of what discussion is (they have already done it in their Czech lesson), to show them that the way discussion is held influences its success and to motivate the students for next activity- presentation of discussion skills.

STAGE 3   **DISCUSSION RULES**   **22min**
-T tells SS to compare the bad discussion A with the good discussion B- T elicits why the comic characters cannot solve their problem in A – asks for examples of the characters' bad behaviour. SS answers should be similar to these:
They think that only their idea is the best. /The girl shouts. / They are not polite./They jump into other's speech./They don't listen to each other. /They don't explain why their idea is good. /Tommy speaks about something else.
-T explains SS that they need to know a set of discussion rules because they will try to discuss in their future English lessons. T writes on the board:
                DURING DISCUSSION IT IS

GOOD	*BAD*
speak only about the topic	criticize others for their opinion
listen to others	shout
say your opinion and ideas	dominate
explain why you think something	be aggressive and nervous
ask others what they think	jump into others' speech
say what you think about others' opinions and ideas	
be tolerant	
be ready to change your opinion	

- T discuss the rules with the SS and makes any explanation when necessary.
AIM: To present discussion rules

STAGE 4   **MAKING NOTES**   **5 min**
- SS make notes into their school exercise-books: they write the definition of discussion + the rules that are on the BB.
AIM: to help the students to remember the rules better, to prepare for discussions in future lessons – SS will have the possibility to look at the rules at home.

STAGE 5   **FINISHING THE LESSON**   **3 min**
T asks 2 or 3 students about their plans for Saturday. T sets homework: to fill in a comic strip and distributes the sheets with the comic strip
AIM: To revise will and set homework

LESSON PLAN 1: REFLECTION

STAGE 1

The aim of this stage was to motivate the students to be keen on reading the comic strip in the next stage, to present some vocabulary related to comic strips and to use the structure "in my opinion".

In order to grip the students' attention I was holding the comic strip "Čtyřlístek", which is a well-known comic strip among the children in the Czech Republic. Another reason for using this specific comic strip was the link between its heroes and the heroes of the comic strip "What will we do on Saturday?" used in the next stage; both the comics are about a group of friends. When I showed the comic strip, a few students spontaneously shouted or said the name of it. Some students grinned. I guess that it was caused by the fact that "Čtyřlístek" is for younger readers, not for ninth-class students. Nevertheless, in my opinion, it was not a problem because I did not want my students to read it- it was in Czech. I asked them about the name of such magazines with picture stories with balloons. To make clear what "balloons" are I also pointed to the balloons in the comic strip and used the word "bubble" to describe it. I added one more example "Superman" to make clear what kind of magazines I meant. Instead of the compound "comic strip" they knew the American equivalent "comics", so I wrote on the blackboard "comic strip BrE= comics AmE". (The symbols used for the distinction between two kinds of English were nothing new to my students. We had already dealt with vocabulary differences between British and American English and the students also knew the abbreviations from dictionaries sometimes used in our lessons.) ". According to students' reactions I had the feeling that they liked more the American variant. This I find quite natural since it is an international word, which is used also in Czech language. I did not persuade the students to use only the British form, it was not so important. I added under the "comic strip BrE= comics AmE" the word "balloon"with its correct pronunciation and "hero".

Because of the running time I asked just 3 students about their opinion on comic strips. I insisted on using the structure "In my opinion" by the students (they had already studied it). They found them "good" and "interesting". One girl had no concrete opinion about them. Here, it could be a good idea to give chance to practice the structure to the whole class; they could ask each other "What's your opinion about comic strips?" Then

the teacher could ask some individuals, e.g. "What's Martin's opinion about comic strips?" and the students should answer. However, it would probably take too much time, and then it would be impossible to keep the timing of the lesson plan.

The information that I myself had drawn a comic strip for them raised their interest. They were curious to see it. One student asked me whether I could draw. I answered him that, in my opinion, it is not always important. I realized that it was a good question to discuss but it did not match my plan.

STAGE 2

This stage was aimed to remind the students of "discussion" and to specify the term more clearly because in the first questionnaires some of them were not able to do it.

It was important for me to have students' full attention because of the instruction; this was secured with the distribution of materials after the instructional stage. Students' reaction on the comic strip was positive; they were laughing at my drawing abilities, which I did not mind because I had expected that. I was also glad that they reflected with a smile the fact that the names of the characters of the strip rhymed.

To the suitability of the language used in this strip: I had tried to prepare the dialogues as much simple as possible and according to the vocabulary and grammar that the students knew. For example, the use of "will" I had practised with them a lot. However, there appeared some questions about the meaning of "each of them" and "agree". I explained them and wrote them on the board. Some students finished the reading a little bit earlier; consequently they had more time to think about their answer to the question set before the reading. I was glad that they had no problems to recognize that A was bad and B was good. Even though some students answered spontaneously in Czech, I was happy for their contribution because it was a signal that they gave a thought to the question and worked. I just wrote on the board "solve a problem" and said that in the version A "They did not solve the problem" and in B "They solved the problem." to express students' answers in English. Moreover, in view of the clear difference between the two versions the comic strip proved to be designed well.

The following questions "What is the name for the situation when 2 or more people speak about a problem?" and "Why do they speak about it?" were answered by the students successfully.

The definition of discussion written on the board was translated into Czech by one good student to make sure that all the students understood it. Finally, I explained the necessity of keeping some rules during a discussion to the students and that it can help them in their future life to communicate successfully. This was done in order to emphasise the practicality of learning such rules.

STAGE 3

The aim of this stage was introducing the set of discussion rules. I had spent a lot of time thinking about the way of presenting it. At last I had decided to design two opposite discussions as a comic strip(not having any taped examples of real discussions at my disposal) in order to elicit the good and bad behaviour from the students according to the pictures and the text in the balloons.

I told the students to concentrate on the character's behaviour in the discussion B. It is true that several good students cooperated actively. They were able to find the examples in the balloons and explained in English what was wrong. Some students just read the sentences, but it was clear that they recognized it. In summary, the students were able to indicate the bad behaviour of the characters, but it lasted quite long as it was necessary to help them more than I expected. That was caused by the fact that I wanted them to formulate it in English. Of course, I helped them with necessary vocabulary. I did not correct them, maximally I something repeated correctly. I was more interested in their answers and their ability to express themselves in English. Important was that the students tried to think and answer. It is necessary to add that not all the students actively participated during the activity. Maybe it was caused by the fact that they needed to concentrate a lot and to think.

The next step was to write the prepared set of the typical features of good and bad behaviour during a discussion on the board in order to provide the students with some clear rules to keep during a discussion. I tried to formulate the words as simple as possible and with the vocabulary the students should understand. However, some students asked for the meaning of the words "others". After discussion the good and bad behaviours according to the script, students had no problem to understand the rules and why to keep them. Only the word "dominate" (one of the "bad" features) was not too much clear, and therefore I explained it. It would have been better to write there:

dominate= speak only you. As I started writing the rules, some of the students thought that they should write too. I had to tell the students not to do it because I wanted them to concentrate.

STAGE 4

While students were writing the notes into their exercise-book or on a piece of paper (It was nearly every lesson that some student did not have his exercise-book), I used the time to made some notes about the previous parts of the lesson.

STAGE 5

There was not much time left, therefore I asked only one student about his plans for the weekend. I set the homework. The students were excited about the idea to fill in a comic strip. This homework was chosen because of its link to the topic of the lesson.

CONCLUSION

As this work is interested in using discussion in English classes, it was suitable to present the students with a set of discussion rules enabling discussants to communicate effectively and to develop their social skills. The rules were elaborated according to the theoretical part and presented in a way that proved to be challenging and interesting for the majority of students.

It can be concluded that it was possible to elicit the rules from the students, although it was quite demanding both for me and the students, as I wanted to do it in English. It can be said that students were able to find out why the discussions in the comic strips were effective and why not. It was probably caused also by the fact that the students had been already acquainted with discussion in Czech lessons. The precise definitions of the rules were given by me because it would be too difficult for the students to formulate them.

The presentation of the rules should help the students to discuss well in the future lessons and also in their everyday life.

E.7.b LESSON PLAN 2: SHREK – discussion

NOTE: This lesson was conducted after the presentation of discussion rules the lesson before.

I decided to use the well-known movie Shrek because the students had a chance to watch it last year with their previous teacher. Moreover, the tape was still at school, so I had an easy access to it.

Class: 9th grade *Number of students:* 17 *Duration:* 45 minutes
Topic: Discussion, the movie Shrek, Ugly and Pretty people,
Materials: 8 sets of discussion rules -cut to pieces (See Appendix 6), a video tape with the movie Shrek, worksheets "Shrek" (See Appendix 7),
Aims: 1. to revise the discussion rules (presented last lesson)
    2. to remind students the vocabulary related to the movie Shrek
    3. to remind students of the strategy to paraphrase
    4. to show the SS how to discuss
    5. to improve students' fluency
    7. to improve students' social and thinking skills
Objectives: By the end of the lesson SS
    1. will be able to divide the discussion rules into GOOD and BAD
    2. will be able to describe the plot of the movie Shrek and its main characters
    3. will try to use paraphrase in case of difficulty during the discussion
    4. will be able to discuss with the teacher
    5. will be able to discuss "Are you ugly if you are overweight?"
    6. will revise and write down a summary of some useful phrases for having a discussion

STAGE 1 REVISION OF THE DISCUSSION RULES – competition 5 min
-T greets the classroom and informs SS about the topic of the lesson. T and SS summarise the last lesson.
-SS are in pairs. T instructs the students. Their task is to divide the descriptions into "GOOD" and "BAD". It is a competition. After the 1st group (with correct division) is finished, they read the rules. Other SS check it with their answers. T informs SS that they will use the rules this lesson.
AIM: to revise last lesson-discussion rules

STAGE 2 THE MOVIE SHREK – watching a part of it 8 min
Before playing the part of the movie (just the scene where the hex put on her is broken but, to everybody's amazement, she changes into the "ugly form", which is in comparison to other fairy-tales where all the cursed princesses change into beauties unusual) T asks students to sit in a circle.
-T presents vocabulary: plot, ogre, donkey, enchanted princess. T asks SS what movie they can see an ogre, a donkey and an enchanted princess. *It's in Shrek.* T informs SS that they are going to watch a short part of the movie Shrek. T asks some SS to summarise the plot of the movie Shrek- what it is about.

- T plays the short sequence (app. 2 minutes) and asks the SS what was unusual about the scene. *The change of the princess.*
AIM: to remind students the vocabulary related to the movie Shrek and to motivate them for the following discussion

STAGES 3 WHY ARE THE UGLY PEOPLE IN THIS MOVIE FAT? – a discussion 25min
-T informs the students that she has read an interesting message on the Internet related to the movie Shrek and she wants the SS to look at it. -T instructs SS. -T distributes the worksheet "Shrek".- SS have time to read it. -T checks understanding of the questions.
- SS have time to think about it and to make some notes to the questions. T instructs SS that she will ask them about their opinion. T helps with needed vocabulary.
- Before the following discussion T informs SS- they should try to speak English and to explain the word they do not know. Important is fluency, not accuracy.
- T starts a discussion about the answer to the message with: *Let's talk about the answer to the message.* T discusses the question with the SS – the discussion is done in the direction T-S, S-S. T tries to incorporate, where appropriate, these structures into the discussion: *What's your opinion? What/Why do you think…? Do you think…? Do you really think so…? That's very interesting. What do you mean? Can you explain it? In my opinion…, I think that…,I' ll agree/don't/can't agree with you/it.*
AIM: to improve students' fluency, social and thinking skills

STAGE 4   EVALUATION OF THE LESSON   7min
AIM: to provide students with a feedback

LESSON PLAN 2 – REFLECTION
STAGE 1

In the classroom there was competitive atmosphere, which led to cooperation between the students in pairs. I was walking along the desks and observing students' work. I had to urge one pair of students not to open their exercise-book. I think that they wanted to mischief in order to win the competition. I was glad that it was clear what group finished as the first because then there were no arguments between groups. I praised the winners in front of the whole class and let them to read the rules. Others had a chance to check their answers. I asked them if they had any big problems with the devision. They answered "No".

STAGE 2

I wanted the students to make a circle in order to see better and also because of the discussion.

I wanted to present some of the vocabulary in order to make it possible for the students to be able to describe the main plot of the movie. To my surprise, only "enchanted" and "plot" was necessary to explain. Other words were explained by some students. They probably remembered that because they had the movie in English at home. My students were very excited about my idea to play them the movie Shrek.

I informed them that I was going to play them only a short sequence of it in order to remind them of one scene. However, some students started persuading me to play the whole movie. I did not react to it because they asked in Czech. It was interesting that they were able to repeat their wish again, this time in English. This was certainly positive, but I told them that it did not match my plan to watch the whole film. Moreover, they had already seen it.

The difference between the change of the princess' physical appearance in Shrek and the changes of princesses in other tales was possible to elicit with a help of some questions. I introduced them also the word "appearance", the pronunciation was a little bit problematic. I let them repeat it after me as a class and I also asked some individuals. I wanted to speak about this in order to make a link with the message that I was going to present them in the next activity as a basis for our discussion.

STAGE 3

The information that I found an interesting message in an internet discussion raised students' curiosity, which was my aim. I explained them I wanted them to read it too and to think how they would answer the questions in the message. Then I distributed the copies. I was very interested in students' reaction to the worksheet. I think that they liked the picture. I let the text of the message in the form it was on the Internet in order to keep its authenticity. Unfortunately, I could see on the faces of a few students that they did not comprehend everything. Maybe it would have been better to write there the explanations of possibly difficult words (I had tried to predict them.) in Czech and not to explain them with English definitions. Because it was very important to understand the text and its author's questions, I decided to ask one good student to translate the text into Czech. He was able to do it, but I helped him with the word "ingrained" and "skinny".

Now the students had some time to think about the answer to the questions and make some notes. I explained them that it was useful for them to prepare some ideas before we would start discussing them. I could see that not everybody was writing some notes, so I asked them what the problem was. They answered that they were thinking, one students said: "Občas si nic nemyslim.". But I was not sure whether they knew what to do, that is why I repeated the questions again. I was ready to help the students with any needed word and they really asked me for some, e.g. character, soul, it depends, self-confidence. I wrote the words on the board with Czech translation. Some girls started writing sentences, which I was not very lucky since I wanted them to discuss and not to read. I allowed the students to use their dictionaries.

Before the discussion I instructed the students to try speaking only English. I gave them practical arguments for it, such as the need to communicate English abroad, where no one understands Czech. I reminded them of the art of paraphrase. I gave them an example to show that it is possible to explain the needed word in other words. I also stressed that I was not going to concentrate on their mistakes because I was interested in their opinions. Then I started to discuss the questions with the students. I called individuals to communicate with me. Some of the students I called were trying to response in English with much effort. No one spoke only in completely correct sentences but I did not correct them. Some students did not try to speak English very much. They answered me spontaneously in Czech. Saying a sentence "I don't understand" was not very effective since the students knew very well that in reality I could. So I asked them to translate it into English at least. Then they had to try and could see that they were able to express themselves. It was only the matter of will. One student, the class-joker, even said: 'Budem se bavit v čeština." I did not react to it; it was probably a kind of provocation. It can be concluded from the fact that he personally tried to speak English when he was asked.

To the use of the expressions that I had prepared to incorporate into our discussion in order to be a model for the students: the expressions were chosen according to the analyses of the textbook. All of them the students had already practised during the course in their textbook, therefore the students understood me during our discussion. Just one girl did not understand "What do you mean?" but she was helped by her

classmate with a translation of it. Some individuals were able to use the structures like "I agree./I don't agree" to express their opinion. Mostly they used "I think/don't think". One-word answers and incomplete utterances were also appreciated by me.

To the students' answers to the question "Why are the ugly people in this movie fat?"- there appeared interesting ideas, e.g." The lord in Shrek was skinny and also ugly./The Shrek has bad teeth, smells bad and has ugly breath. And he is green." So, the students' opinions led to a conclusion that the author of the message was not right. The next conclusion of the discussion was that the character is also important and that ugly does not automatically mean fat.

STAGE 4

I praised the students that tried to cooperate and express themselves in English. I commented on the language used and summarised the new vocabulary. I highlighted the importance of paraphrase again. I appreciated their good ideas. To the behaviour, students themselves indicated that one student jumped into other's speech. I added that some students did not listen to other's opinions after saying their own. Students' feedback was done in Czech because of the little time left. They thought that it was quite demanding. Some students mentioned that they had good opportunity to use the language for speaking and to see how well they could express themselves. One student said that it was boring because it was in English. In his opinion it would be better in Czech.

CONCLUSION

The *topic* was chosen in order to contribute to the "humanistic" aspect of teaching, which was achieved according to the conclusion of students' opinions at the end of the discussion. I wanted also to motivate the students to speak with choosing a popular movie as a base for the discussion, however, this had also a disadvantage- some students wanted to watch the movie, not only a two-minute sequence. The topic was interesting for majority of the students. But the level of vocabulary to express all their ideas about the topic I was not able to judge perfectly. It was necessary to provide them with some vocabulary items. On the other hand, they had a chance to learn them. It confirmed that one cannot predict all the students' ideas.

But very important for the activity was the *task*, the reason for speaking. I tried to design it clear, enough challenging, but not too difficult. To make the communication less artificial, I brought a real message from an internet discussion to be answered. There was a weak point related to the way of setting the task. As it was necessary to let one student translate it, I lost some time which could have been used for the discussion. However, it was more sensible to translate it because of students' comprehension. The task was open-ended, there was no predetermined correct answer, it was a motivating factor for the students to express their opinions, but an improvement could be suggested. Next time, it would be good to visit the computer-classroom and to write the answer to the author. This would be needed to done in order to employ the few students that were not so keen on participating.

Connected to the *type of discussion*, it was problem-solving. I presented them the problem through the questions included in the text of the internet message. This unusual way of presenting the problem was quite interesting for the students. But there appeared a problem that some students did not understand everything. It had to be translated. Then, it was necessary to give them some time to think, to brainstorm some ideas, before speaking. During the course of the lesson the students had clearer ideas and suggestions; it showed that the speech is connected with *thinking*. The problem what to answer to the author of the message was solved. I could realize that the students stated clear and logical reasons for their opinions, although they did not express them in completely correct sentences.

It is necessary to explain my choice of *organisation* of the activity, at this very beginning of using discussions in the classroom, I decided not to choose the organisation into groups, although I was aware of many advantages of its use, in order to provide the students with a model of a good discussant in the terms of language and social rules and because their were used to it with their previous teacher. Firstly, I think that it was suitable as the students listened to me and consequently were able to use the same structures that they could hear from me. Secondly, that they had also chance to observe my correct behaviour during the discussion, which can influence their future discussions in their English lessons and outside school as well.

To the language: I made it clear to the students that fluency was expected from them and I was not going to concentrate on the mistakes. Since it was a fluency-activity,

I provided them with encouragement and did not correct them. This had a positive effect on the majority of the students in a way that they were not stressed about the way they spoke. But it does not mean that they were not thinking about the correct form of their utterances. In the feedback session I commented on some wrong language uses and summarised the new vocabulary that appeared during the course of the activity.

I was not able to avoid *occurrence of Czech* during the discussion completely. It is true that there were individuals that tended to use Czech more than others. Moreover, they jumped into other's English speech. These students were usually passive in most of the lessons so I was not surprised. My explanation of the necessity to speak English in order to prepare for their later real communication abroad proved not to be very helpful in their cases. But to reject the use of discussion only because of these few students would be no solution how to improve students' fluency.

To the *discussion rules*; even though the students were reminded of them at the beginning of the lesson, some rules were broken. The problems were following: jumping into other's speech, not listening to other's opinion and laughing at other's idea. It was commented on it in the feedback in order to limit the occurrence of the lapses in next discussions.

E.7.c LESSON PLAN 3: Multinationals- Good or Bad?

NOTE: In order to secure that this time more students would be involved and to make sure that they would have enough vocabulary to discuss without my help, I decided to prepare a discussion activity on the basis of the student's book. They had studied vocabulary related to international trade and products.

Class: 9th grade   *Number of students:* 17   *Duration:* 45 minutes
Topic: Multinationals and Money
Materials: Cambridge- Student's Book Two (Littlejohn,A.,Hicks D.), Class Cassette,
                pieces of paper with questions about the procedure of the discussion
                "Multinationals" for students (See Appendix 9)
Aims: 1. to revise the last-lesson vocabulary: products, import and export
        2. to present 'new' vocabulary: logo, multinationals, global village, wage, head
           office, local, national, education, condition.
        3. to prepare students for the discussion
        4. to remind students of the discussion rules
.   5. to remind students of the strategy to paraphrase

6. to improve students' fluency
7. to improve students' social and thinking skills
8. to pre-teach some vocabulary from the song "Big money": leave on your own, surrounded, brighten up
9. to improve students' listening skills
10. to get feedback from the students after the discussion

Objectives: By the end of the lesson SS
1. will read the answers in their homework
2. will be able to match the products to the logos
4. will be able to understand the new vocabulary
5. will be able to divide the points of view into "Good" and "Bad"
6. will be able to discuss whether multinationals are good or bad
8. will listen to the song "Big money"
9. SS will understand the lyrics of the song "Big money"
10. SS will write down their comments to the discussion

STAGE 1   HOMEWORK   3min
T checks last-lesson homework- Vocabulary p.106/4.1
AIM: to revise the last-lesson vocabulary

STAGE 2   COMPANIES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD   5min
-T announces the topic of the lesson: Multinationals and Money
-SS open their books, p.107, they look at the pictures in activity 5.1 and answer what a "logo" is. They match the logos to the correct picture. Then individual SS answer-
1C, 2A, 3D, 4E, 5B, 6F- They should say what products the companies make.
-The SS read the definition of "multinationals". T gives them correct pronunciation, they repeat.
-SS think of some more multinationals
AIM: to teach the word "multinational" and "logo"

STAGE 3   SOME POINTS OF VIEW   10min
- T explains what a point of view is=opinion.
- SS read the instruction p.107/5.2, they use 3 different -colour pens to underline the words that they understand completely/they can guess the meaning/they do not understand
-SS work in pairs in order to help each other with the unknown meanings; if no one in the pair knows a word-they ask the T for help. T observes SS's work and checks if all SS understand the words: logo, multinationals, global village, wage, head office, local, national, education, condition. SS practice their pronunciation.
AIM: to present new vocabulary and to provide SS with sufficient info about multinationals

STAGE 4   Multinationals- Good or Bad   20min
- T instructs SS that they will discuss whether multinationals are good or bad and that the sentences in 5.2 will help them to decide.

-SS look at the exercise p.107/5.3- their task is to divide the sentences from 5.2 – Which sentences say multinationals are good/bad? T instructs SS to write to each of the sentences good/bad. (It will help them to orientate better - in the following discussion). In the meantime T writes on board:

A: *I think / My point of view is* that multinationals are good/bad *because* ....
B: *I agree /don't agree with you. But* they ....

- T points out the structures on the board. SS can use them in the discussion.
-T instructs SS to discuss the question. T reminds them to try to speak English, to paraphrase if possible and to remember the discussion rules;
-SS discuss in pairs. They try to use the good/bad sentences to discuss it- their task is to share the same point of view
- After the SS share the same point of view-they make groups of four and discuss it again, they can take their textbooks if they move. They should share the same point of view.
- 1S of each group presents the point of view of his group and gives reasons for it. All SS listen to the group- presentation.
- T adds his point of view, together with her reason for it.
- T evaluates SS discussion
- SS write their comments to the discussion
AIM: to provide SS with some language basis for the discussion, to improve their fluency, thinking and social skills.

STAGE 5   SING A SONG! BIG MONEY   7min
- T asks SS: What is "big money" for you. Some SS answer how much it is.
- T informs them they are going to listen to a song "Big Money", SS open their book p.156, T pre-teaches: leave on your own, surrounded, brighten up
- T plays the song, SS follow the lyric in their textbook
AIM: to finish the lesson, to improve SS' listening skills

LESSON PLAN 3: REFLECTION

STAGE 1

I wanted to check their homework quickly. I asked some students to read the correct answers. Of course, there were again some students without homework but I had no time to deal with it in this lesson.

STAGE 2

Students were able to understand the words "logo" and "multinational", they also knew the Czech word used for it. They could match the products with logos easily. They also brainstormed more logos. They practised pronunciation of "multinationals". This stage was quite entertaining for them.

STAGE 3

I elicited the meaning of "point of view". I could see that some students did not underline the words but they immediately asked me for the meaning. I told them to underline it, it was for them- at home they could look at it. This stage was important to do carefully in order to be sure that the students would be able to divide the sentences into "good" and "bad" features of multinationals in the next stage.

STAGE 4

After students divided the sentences, they were discussing in pairs. I noticed that some students were able to say why they thought the multinationals were good- with the help of sentences in the book. But I could see on faces of some students that they did not enjoy it too much. When they were finished, they turned to their neighbours to make groups.

I could see that all the groups were talking, but I did not hear whether it was in Czech or English. I decided to walk through the rows of desks and observe students' work. As I came to one group of good students, I realized that they were trying to speak English. I made notes related to their mistakes after I left the group because I did not want to see it and stress them. The activity was aimed at fluency, not accuracy. They were able to make sentences based on the structures on board and also added their own utterances. So, I left them and went to the other corner of the class to a group of students which I expected not to discuss in English. They looked that they were too amused. As soon as I came to their desk, they stopped talking. They told me they were finished. I asked them for their shared point of view, they answered "Good". To make sure they really discussed it, I asked them for their reasons. This was not so quick. I think that they just prepared the word "good". I spent there some time forcing them to work.. Then I was walking through the class again, listening to the groups and encouraging the students to speak English. I had the feeling that some As I could expected there were two groups finished earlier, I let them join together for a discussion.

Because the groups had different views of points, I let the class to vote for "good" or "bad". The final result was "good", which surprised me. On the other hand, logos and their products are quite popular among students generally, which could be reason for it.

The feedback was done at first by students, then I evaluated their work, I appreciated those students who made a lot of effort to speak, but I also talked to the more lazy ones.

STAGE 5

This stage was not done. It would have been good to finish the lesson with something relaxing, but I decided to spend the rest of the time on the necessary feedback. And I wanted the students to write their comments.

CONCLUSION

The choice of the *topic* showed to be crucial for involving the students in the discussion. This time I tried to use a topic from the student's book for the reason that students studied the vocabulary and could be prepared for the discussion in terms of the necessary information and language demands well. According to work of some students, mainly girls, I succeeded in matching the language demands of the activity with their level, the example sentences helped the students who wanted to participate. However, there were some students that did not have a vivid discussion in a group. Although I could notice that there was some talk present in their group, it was probably in Czech. I had to be present at the group and ask them for their point of view to make them speak English. It can be concluded, according to my observation that this topic was not very enjoyable for all the students, it was not too close to their interests; they will not probably talk about multinationals in their private life. On the other hand, the matter of "multinationals" is quite hot topic in society and it was included in the book because of cross-curriculum links. However, the sort of good students tried to discuss it.

The *task* was open-ended; there was no clear answer to the question. It helped me to motivate some students to solve "the problem"- to decide whether the multinationals are good or bad. Since their final answers were in the same proportion, I used the chance to vote. More than half voted for "good". My opinion was different, but I expressed it in a polite way and I fully appreciated their opinion to show tolerance.

Choosing a suitable way of *organizing a discussion* was also important. I wanted the students to provide them with as many chances to speak as possible, consequently I decided for the pyramid technique. This technique helped the responsible students to talk about their ideas in pairs at first; they could also help each other with necessary

vocabulary. Then they were asked to make groups of four and finally to present the ideas in front of the whole class. In the final vote all the students participated, it was not difficult for them to put their hands up. I could realize the disadvantage of pair work and groupwork. It was not so easy to control the use of mother-tongue by some students.

The *stages of discussion*: The brainstorming was actually the exercise, where the students were *thinking* about the sentences in order to divide them into good and bad, which gave them a basis for their decision, they had to evaluate the information in their book. During the discussion itself I wrote some students' mistakes, there appeared some pronunciation problems, missing words in students' sentences: e.g. "No, no right.", "Foreigners bad", or I could here "No money are in the country", "Czech people haven't best jobs". Or they produced sentences with wrong word order. I let all the students to finish their discussions. Two groups were finished earlier so I told them to discuss together. Because they moved across the classroom, there was noise. It would have been better to give them to write their decision and arguments into their school exercise-book. In the *feedback* session I distributed between the students papers with questions to get more information from them. I could see that this was a good step. Most of them were willing to answer. It can be said that some students enjoyed the discussion- they found no problems, understood and liked nearly everything. Other students found it difficult, e.g. because of sentence construction or it was boring for them. It is visible that the structures on the board could not help the students to express everything. But also incomplete sentences can be accepted in a discussion, important is their clear meaning. One student wrote "I can't speak English." They also wrote that some student jumped into other's speech, some students did not speak too much. I commented on the students' arguments to emphasise that I was concerned in their opinions, and on their behaviour. I highlighted that some students forgot to give automatically reasons for their opinions, for example the group of boys-they just told me "good". Another problem were the pairs or groups where the individuals did not cooperate too much. The lack of interaction caused that some individuals could not get a response and improve their *social skills* too much. But there were also students who helped each other with a needed word and it consequently influenced positively their social-skills development. I wrote on the board some utterances that the students made

and asked the class to correct it. But I emphasised that it is not so bad that they made mistakes when they tried to speak.

My *role* during the activity was sometimes "a discussant", I had not intended to be involved in the speaking as a participant, only at the end, but it was necessary to join some groups to provide them with help and encourage them to speak. As it can be read in the theory, a teacher can stand out of the sight and say nothing during the activity. Thinking about the level of my student and their discussion experiences, I did not keep this completely. The activity proved that it is better to guide the students, because they need to help with an unknown word for example and to encourage. However, I was thinking about the student's ability to express the word in other words, to paraphrase. In these cases, I did not provide the help. But some individuals found it annoying.

I did not succeed in *mother-tongue occurrence prevention*. I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible in mono-lingual classes, especially when the students are working in groups and the teacher cannot control them. Although the students were aware of the strategy of paraphrase and we had practised it in the previous lessons (actually there is always a chance in a lesson to practice it since every time some student does not know some word), some students, as mentioned above, had the tendency to speak in pairs or groups immediately in Czech.

E.7.d ACTIVITY PLAN: Which school should we choose?

NOTE: Last lesson we studied some facts about Britain and we also compared England and the USA. And we had revised modals. After the discussion there was planned "Three regions in Britain"- fluency practice-reading and writing workbook Cambridge-Unit 25.

Class: 9th grade   *Number of students:* 17   *Duration:* 30 minutes
Topic: Intensive English Course
Materials: 17 copies of the worksheet "Which school should we choose?" (See Appendix 11)
Designed by the T .
(inspired by a worksheet www .esl.about.com/library/lessons/ blschoolchoice .htm)

Aims: 1. to raise students' motivation to study English
        2. to review the vocabulary for expressing opinions, disagreeing
        3. to present: If it were up to me

4. to improve students' fluency
5. to improve students' social skills
6. to improve students' thinking skills
6. to provide them with the feedback on their discussion
Objectives: By the end of the lesson SS
1. will be able to answer why it is good to study English
2. will be able to make a decision what school is the best in their opinion
3. will be able to discuss and choose the best school

STAGE 1 warm-up   5min
T introduces the topic-It is summer soon. Many young students usually go abroad to study at an intensive English course. T asks students whether they would like to do it too. T asks them why it is good to study English. What are people's learning goals?
AIM: To motivate the students to study English and to motivate them for the next stage.

STAGE 2 language work   5min
-T announces that she found some offers of language intensive courses abroad. T informs SS the SS that they are going to read the offers, choose the best school and discuss it in groups.
-T reviews the useful language for expressing one's opinion and disagreement in the way that she says it in Czech-SS tries to translate SS should be able to know: I think that ..., I don't think that, In my opinion..., My idea is better, because...., My reasons are..., I agree..., I agree only with something. T aks some students to write the sentences on the board.
- T presents "If it were up to me", gives example use-writes it on the board
AIM: To help the students with the following discussion

STAGE 3 Intensive course- reading the offers   8min
- T instructs SS to read the info about the schools, each S should choose the best one,
-T tells SS to concentrate on the language instruction / teachers/housing/food/ country/free tome/price/. SS should underline what they like in the offers in order to help them to decide.
-T distributes the copies, SS reads it and underline.
AIM: To improve SS thinking skills through evaluating the info

STAGE 4   discussion   10min
- T reminds the SS to keep the discussion rules-mainly these-give reasons for your opinions, listen to other's opinion and react to it.
- SS make groups of 3 or 4 and discuss what the best school is, T monitors
! T chooses 3 SS to be recorded (In order to test the effectiveness of using a tape recorder for limiting the mother-tongue occurrence in students' discussion and to get some material for language feedback. For the tape script See Appendix 12)
- after the SS finish their discussions they present their decision and reasons for it in front of the whole class
- whole class discussion
AIM: To improve students' fluency, social and thinking skills

Both the T and SS comment on students 'performance.
AIM: to find out what needs to be improved.

5min

ACTIVITY PLAN 4: REFLECTION

STAGE 1

We had a nice discussion about the reasons for studying English. Students showed that they were aware of the necessity to study it. They expressed their desire to go abroad and spend there even more time than only one summer. This stage helped me to warm-up the students and make a link between this and next activity.

STAGE 2

This stage was planned in order to revise some useful structures for having a discussion. I asked individuals to translate the sentences into English. In order to be sure that also very weak students would be able to participate in the following discussion-I let them to write the sentences on the board. I presented them a new structure "If it were up to me." I wrote on the board "If it were up to me I would like to go to Italy." I let the SS to repeat it.

STAGE 3

This stage was aimed to provide the students with possibility to process the info about the courses in order to choose the best one. They could underline the features in the offers that they found interesting. I think that this was a good way of enabling SS to choose the best school but there was a little problem with vocabulary. I explained them the meaning of the word "instruction"-lessons. But I realized, and also during the discussion, that some words were for most of them new- as "Scuba-Snorkel Safari, dormitory, Masters Degree". Some individuals also did not know the word "included".

STAGE 4

Students formed the groups according to their wish, I did not divide them. I just asked 3 girls sitting in front of my table to allow me to record them. I had to persuade them for a while but I emphasised that I only wanted to do it to be able to hear their whole discussion. I explained them that I had to monitor the class and this made it impossible for me to listen to a continuous discussion.

I was monitoring the work of the groups, sometimes helped with a needed word. The students were trying to talk. I think that it was caused also by the fact that there were written the phrases on the board. Also the weak students were able to participate in the discussion. But still the phrases did not avoid the mother-tongue occurrence. But I was happy that they tried to speak. I made some notes related to the language they used for the later feedback session.

After the students finished, they presented their decisions in front of the whole class. When some group was presenting their opinion, some students from other groups reacted to it. Finally, the students concluded that the best was Hawaiian Paradise Learning.

STAGE 5

I asked the students to evaluate their work orally in Czech and made notes. I also evaluated their work; I praised the students that tried to talk. I would divide the problems into the following three categories:

- language: to form questions to concentrate and the other's speech and to prepare quickly the answer/ mother-tongue occurrence/ not giving the reasons during the groupwork
- content: one student did not like any of the schools
- discussion rules: to force another member of the group to speak

There were also positives mentioned: some students expressed that it was interesting for them and they enjoyed it. Some students also said that they had no major problems with vocabulary. They tried to keep the discussion rules.

CONCLUSION

It would have been better to use offers with simpler vocabulary in order not to waste time by explanations of their meaning. Moreover, some students had problems to pronounce the words.

Students formed groups with their friends; this secured a cooperative atmosphere in the classroom.

I was not very successful in the choice of the topic; I wanted to make it practical, close to a real life situation. But, as one student rightly commented, my students would

probably discuss the choice of a suitable intensive English course with Czechs, consequently not in English. This fact made the discussion itself a little bit artificial.

The recording of students showed to be effective in a way that they tried to speak English probably more than they would have done without being recorded. But the mother-tongue occurrence was not totally limited. Another advantage of the recording was the information about the students' performance that I could obtain from it. But, it was very demanding to make the tape script of the discussion; I had to listen to it many times. Moreover, the recorded speech misses the features of communication as facial expressions, movements; consequently it is not possible to imagine sometimes the meaning of the students' utterances. The tape-script helped me to indicate students' weaknesses, e.g. wrong reading of numbers, missing article before superlative, inability to form a question "What you don't agree with?". To conclude it, this method can be useful to force the students to speak English because they know that you are going to listen to it. On the other hand, it is time-consuming for the teacher to make the tape script.

The feedback was very important both for me and the student in a way to state what language needed to be further developed in the next lessons. I was going to prepare some activities to revise the formation of questions again.

This discussion activity showed that the students were able to express and share their opinions quite fluently, but to try to give reasons in order to persuade someone else was more difficult for them. It would have been better to provide them with more guided practice next time.

F. COMPARISON OF THE FIRST AND SECOND QUESTIONNAIRES

At the end of the year the students' were given the same questionnaires (See Appendix 10) to provide me with some additional feedback on the use of discussions in their English lessons. Their comparison helped me to state the following:

The first question "What is a discussion?" was aimed to find out what actually the word "discussion" meant for them. The comparison showed that some of the answers were more elaborated, e.g. "It is a conversation of a group of people who express their opinions and give arguments for them.", "A conversation between people who discuss something, the talk and share their opinions and thoughts". On the other hand, some

definitions were brief, e.g. "Talking". But I came to the conclusion that it is not necessary to ask this question because the students' ability to define the term precisely is not so important for conducting discussions.

The second question "How should a good discussant behave?" was aimed to find out whether the students knew the discussion rules or not. I could see some nice examples in the students' answers: "*should be ready to change his opinion*", "*should speak about the topic*", "*should try to agree on something*", "*If others indicate that they do not understand him, he should try to say it in English again*". But sometimes also appeared "*To behave well*" -what it meant for the students is not possible to judge. It would have been better to tell them to enumerate at least 5 rules for example. Then I would imagine how well they knew it. To summarise the answers, they were more precise than in the first questionnaires.

Question 3 "Do you agree that discussion should be a part of English lessons?" was aimed to find out whether the students wanted discussion as a part of their English lessons and their reason for it. It was seen that the students' predominant positive attitude was even higher; their reasons were connected to the need to practice conversation and their fluency, they find it also entertaining. This was a very positive feedback for me. Only 2 students wrote "No". One student stated that he did not enjoy it even in Czech. The second one mentioned that "*we can't study what we should know*". I expected some students who were a little bit passive during the discussions to write "No" at the 3rd question. But it did not happen. Maybe it can be explained in the way that these passive students, who were not too interested in learning English as well as other subjects , wanted to keep the discussion activities within the lessons for the reason that they found it more interesting than studying grammar.

Or, there can be another solution; the students knew that I was testing my diploma project and wanted to make me happy with their answers.

Question 4 "Do you enjoy having a discussion? " was aimed to find out whether the students enjoyed discussions generally. It would sound logical if all the students who wanted discussions in English had written "YES" also here. But 3 students did not answer positively. It showed that they wanted to have discussion in English, although they did not enjoy discussions generally.

G. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

<u>MY POINT OF VIEW</u>

The use of discussions as a main activity with the 9th class proved to be realistic, the students were usually able to express their opinions and ideas and to share them with others; it was a little bit worse with persuading others. Their communicative fluency was not very high but I could recognize that they had continuous tendency to get used to discussion and majority of the students understood its advantage as a perfect chance to practice speaking English..

The use of discussions in my English lessons was sometimes more or less successful and I am aware that I have to work on my further professional improvement.. Firstly, I have to improve my planning in terms of matching the linguistic demands of discussion activities to the language level of all my students and not only to the best ones. Secondly, I have to accept the fact that total mother-tongue occurrence during discussions in monolingual classes is not possible and not to be stressed because of it.

According to the conclusions based on both positive and negative findings of detailed activity reflections, it can be stated the following:

- It is important to match the topic with students' English knowledge, personal experience and interests in order to make it possible and interesting for them to speak about the topic.

- Also the task plays an essential role in discussion activities. It helps to stimulate students' will to speak- it should give the purpose to the discussion, to provide the students with some reason to speak. The best is when the task is open-ended, which means that there is not only one clear solution of some problem or the one and only answer to a discussion-question.

- The most effective organisation of discussion is through pair work and groupwork. The advantage of using these ways of grouping lies in the higher number of possibilities for students to speak. They can also help each other with needed words and improve their ability to cooperate. Even though that it is more difficult for the teacher to monitor her students' work, it can be recommended to use it. It is probable that students can get used to it after some time.

- In order not to distract students from speaking in English during a discussion activity, it is advisable to announce in advance that the activity is aimed at fluency and they are not expected to produce completely accurate speech. But then the teacher cannot correct students' mistakes during their discussion. She can comment on the mistakes in the feedback session and they usually want it.

- Teacher may be involved as a participant in the whole-class discussion; it is a good chance to provide her students with an ideal model of a discussant. This is appropriate mainly in the early stages of using discussions in the lessons, even the students want it.

- During pair or group discussions in the early stages of using discussions the teacher should play the role of a guide-she can equip her students with unknown vocabulary or ask some questions to help the students with their ideas.

- It is advisable to present some discussion rules to the students. They should keep them during discussions because it helps them to communicate better. There is a pre-condition-there must be some feedback present after the communication, it is not enough just to know the rules, the teacher or the students themselves should say whether someone broke a rule during having a discussion. Then the social skills can be developed as students try to keep the rules.

- Discussions enable students to improve their thinking skills thanks to the need to process the given information and ideas in order to form their opinions. It was proved that the thinking skills can be learned inferentially; this can be concluded on my observation of students' communication, either with classmates or with me personally, where it was visible that , for example, sharing their ideas with others continually improved their arguments, although it was sometimes done also in Czech.

THE STUDENTS' POINT OF VIEW

Based on the students' evaluation of the activities and the comparison of their questionnaires, it can be only summarized that majority of the students expressed their wish to have discussion as a part of their English lessons. This attitude was influenced mainly by their desire to use their acquired English knowledge in oral interaction, to see how able they can express themselves and to improve their fluency.

H. CONCLUSION

Based on my own teaching, students' feedback and analyses of the project activities, it can be concluded that it is advisable to incorporate discussion as a main activity into English lessons in the 9th grade at basic school, although it seems to be difficult to conduct it frequently. Firstly, it is more advisable to use bigger amount of controlled and guided speaking activities to provide students with enough practice before letting them to communicate freely. Secondly, because there is too much English teaching to be done according to the curriculum during the school-year, it is not possible to use discussion too often for the reason that it usually takes the whole lesson.

But despite the fact that it is time consuming, it is worth trying to include discussion aimed at fluency development into the lessons at least on some regular base. It was proved that majority of the students were able to express their opinions and to share their ideas. The advantage of use of discussions lies in students' chance to test their communicative competence before trying it in the real world outside.

Results of my investigation proved that a very important feature of discussion in terms of enabling and stimulating students to express themselves and consequently improve their fluency is the choice of interesting and stimulating topic, reasonable task and language level of a discussion activity adequate to students' knowledge. Students' involvement in discussion activities can also refine their thinking and social skills, which confirmed my thesis.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

UČEBNÍ OSNOVY ZÁKLADNÍ ŠKOLY PŘEDMĚTU CIZÍ JAZYK PRO TŘÍDY S ROZŠÍŘENÝM VYUČOVÁNÍM JAZYKŮ

Schválilo Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy České republiky dne 30. srpna 1996 čj. 23591/96-21, s platností od 1.9.1996.

První cizí jazyk

Výstupní požadavky pro 9.ročník

5.1.2. Ústní vyjadřování

V rozsahu produktivně osvojených jazykových prostředků žák

– umí pohotově, jazykově správně a přirozeně reagovat na postupně se rozvíjející běžné životní situace; ovládá i základní kompenzační strategie potřebné pro překonávání jazykových potíží při komunikaci (např. opisy, parafráze),

– **ovládá a adekvátně situaci používá základní jazykové prostředky umožňující diskutovat, zdůvodňovat a obhajovat vlastní názor, přesvědčovat**, vést interview,

– umí reprodukovat a shrnout obsah vyslechnutého cizojazyčného projevu nebo přečteného cizojazyčného textu v cizím i mateřském jazyce s důrazem na porozumění a kulturu vyjadřování,

– je schopen souvisle pohovořit a přednést krátký referát na dané i zvolené téma, včetně témat týkajících se reálií zemí oblasti studovaného jazyka, reálií ČR, event. i reálií dalších zemí (s příp. použitím poznámek v bodech nebo osnovy), umí reagovat na dotazy k danému tématu.

– zná zpaměti několik básní nebo úryvků z prózy, reprodukuje je se správnou výslovností, popř. zná několik písní.

Appendix 1: Curriculum "Základní škola"- an extract from the *output standards* for classes with extended teaching of languages

Schválilo MŠMT pod čj. 12035/97- 20, s platností od 1.9.1997.

D Rámcové pojetí výuky

Ústní vyjadřování rozvíjí vyučující zpočátku imitativními cvičeními, od nichž přechází k mikrodialogům memorovaným a posléze obměňovaným, které prokládá říkankami, písničkami, hrami a dalším aktivizujícím materiálem. Učitel dbá na to, aby žáci měli co nejvíce příležitostí sami souvisle hovořit; využívá především párových forem práce. Dbá na přesnost vyjadřování z hlediska splnění komunikativního záměru a na pohotovost reagování, neopomíjí nácvik schopnosti formulovat nejen odpovědi, ale i otázky, vést a stimulovat dialog, žádat informace. Řízený projev, který plní funkci nácviku, vhodně kombinuje s projevem volným, rozsah volného projevu stupňuje. **V pokročilejší fázi učí vyučující žáky diskutovat, vyjádřit vlastní názor, předkládat argumenty,** přednést krátký referát apod. V hojné míře stimuluje projev žáků vizuálními, audiovizuálními či auditivními pomůckami a vytvářením přirozených situací,. Od počáteční fáze výuky vytváří vyučující takové situace, aby žáci „měli co říci", „uměli to říci" a „nebáli se a chtěli hovořit", neboť bez této aktivní účasti ústní vyjadřování rozvíjet nelze.

Appendix 2: Curriculum "Obecná škola"- an extract from the *general conception of English teaching*

Věk: *14* ♟ (♟)

AJ se učím ..*8*. rokem.

Prosím o pravdivé vyplnění tohoto dotazníku, který bych ráda využila pro mou diplomovou práci.

Děkuji za spolupráci.
Šárka Opatová

....

1. Co je to diskuse?

Výměna nákorů

2. Jak by se měl chovat správný účastník diskuse?

Měl by vyslechnout všechny názory a neměl by bejt na tvrdej na určitýho člověka kterej je proti jízim názorm.

3. Souhlasíš, aby součástí výuky anglického jazyka byla i diskuse?
(Odpověď zakroužkuj.)

ANO ◯ NE *podle toho o čem by se diskutovalo*

Proč?

4. Baví tě diskutovat? (Odpověď zakroužkuj.) (ANO) NE
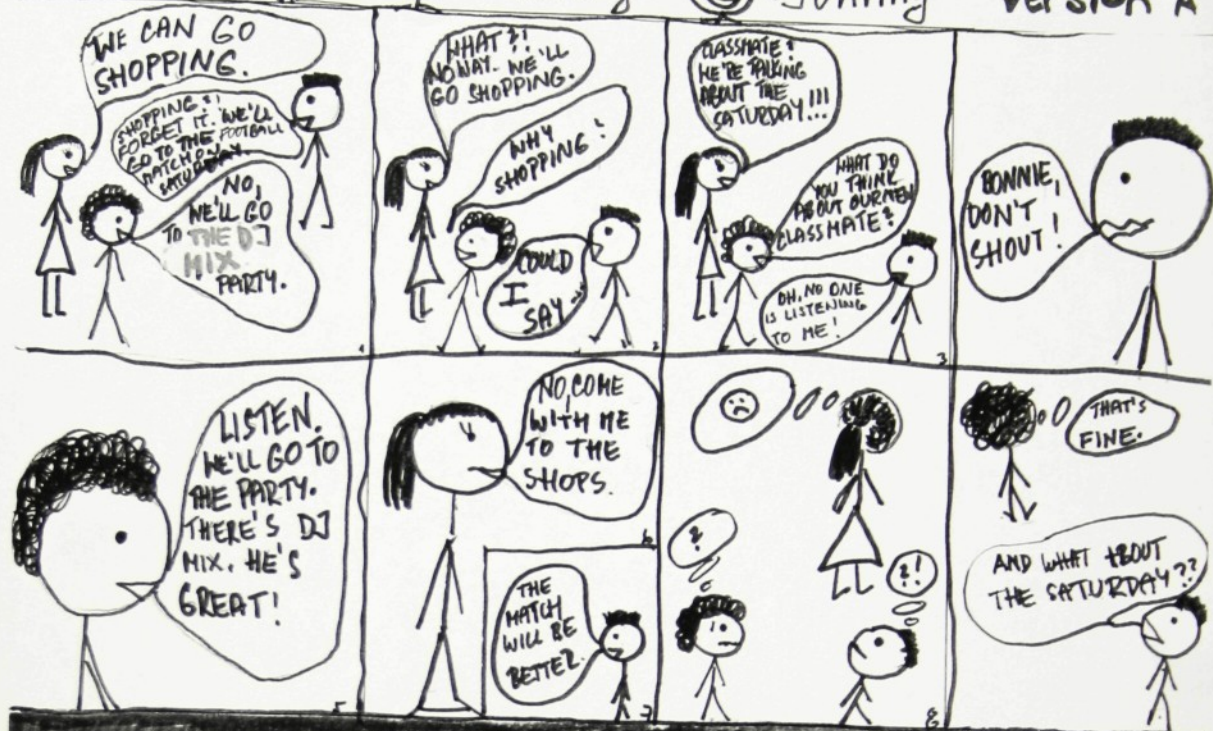
Proč?

mě baví poslouchat lidi co si mislí a diskuze je zajímavá

Appendix 3: 1st QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDENTS
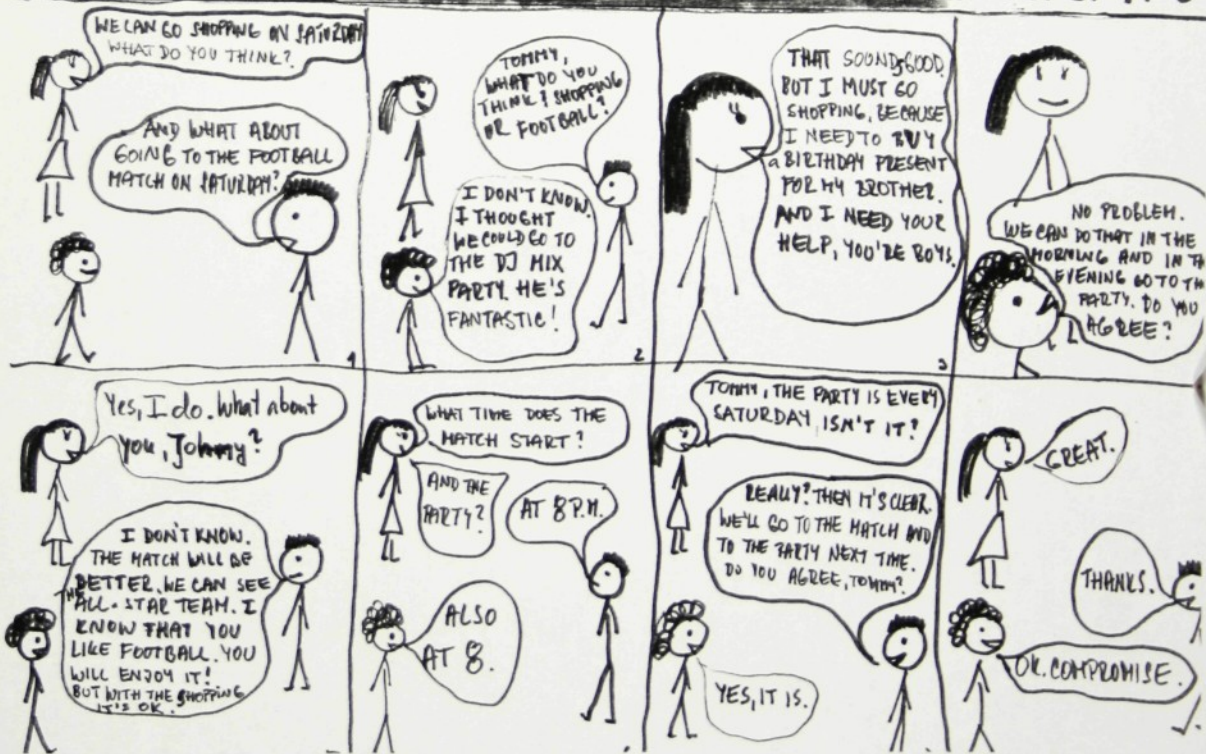
Appendix 4: "What will we do on Saturday?" – a comic strip

Appendix 5: Homework- Activity 1 – a comic strip to be filled

✂
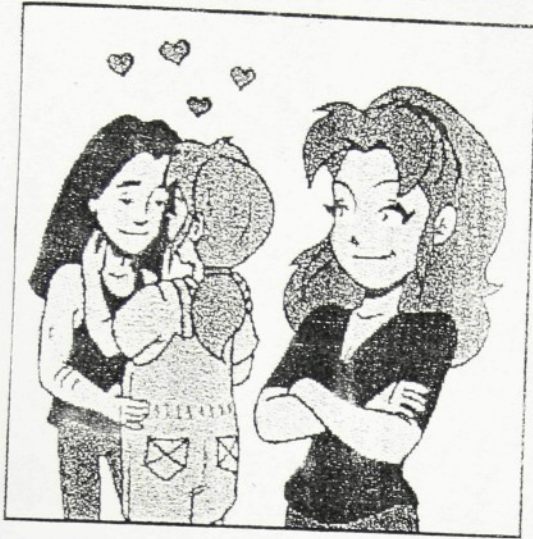
LISTEN TO OTHERS

SPEAK ONLY ABOUT THE TOPIC

SAY YOUR OPINION AND IDEAS

EXPLAIN WHY YOU THINK SOMETHING

ASK OTHERS WHAT THEY THINK

SAY WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT OTHERS' OPINIONS AND IDEAS

BE TOLERANT

BE READY TO CHANGE YOUR OPINION-

CHOOSE THE BEST OPINION OR IDEA

CRITICIZE OTHERS FOR THEIR OPINION

SHOUT

DOMINATE=SPEAK ONLY YOU

BE AGRESSIVE AND NERVOUS

JUMP INTO OTHER'S SPEECH

Appendix 6: Features typical for "good" or "bad" discussion

Ŝhrek

The following text is a part of a discussion about the movie 'Shrek' on the Internet. Its author asks several questions. Please, read them.

Posted by: jen, jen572@hotmail.com

Hmm, I have a few questions… ☺
How come the "ugly" people in this movie are **FAT**? Why can't they be skinny and ugly?
Does ugliness have *ANYTHING* to do with fatness?? If you are fat, do you automatically become ugly?
Is that it? Is that what kids get ingrained in their minds? That if you are overweight you are ugly too?
Also, of someone is skinny does it mean that he/she is automatically good looking? Is that the case?

How would you answer his questions? Is he right or not?
Here, you can make some notes:

---

skinny ['skiny   ] – very thin (*You should eat more, you're too skinny.*)
ugly ['ʌɡli   ] – very unattractive (of people, animals or things)
ingrained [in'greind] – fixed very much (of an idea; it is difficult to change it)
overweight [,əuvə'weit] – too heavy or fat (*I'm ten kilos overweight.*)
Is that the case? = Is it true?
       [keis]

Appendix 7: Worksheet "SHREK" – Lesson plan 2

Napiš tvé připomínky k předcházející diskusi, např: Co se Ti líbilo, nelíbilo, Měl/la jsi nějaké konkrétní problémy? Udělal/a bys něco jinak?

Bylo to celkem dobrý, jenomže máme tak špatný základy že nemáme z čeho čerpat. Takže máme problémy s plynulou angličtinou. Ale myslím, že je to pro nás užitečný, jelikož si to můžem skusit. Možná, kdybychom měli větší slovní zásoba šlo by nám to líp.

Napiš tvé připomínky k předcházející diskusi, např: Co se Ti líbilo, nelíbilo. Měl/la jsi nějaké konkrétní problémy? Udělal/a bys něco jinak?

Líbila se mi to, protože se naučíme nový slovíčkám a frázim. Diskuse je pro nás teď asi nejlepším řešením jak se naučit mluvit a odstranit obavy. Když vím oč jde úlohy, tak to už pak nějak obejdu. Nic bych neměnila.

Napiš tvé připomínky k předcházející diskusi, např: Co se Ti líbilo, nelíbilo. Měl/la jsi nějaké konkrétní problémy? Udělal/a bys něco jinak?

Já s mnoha věci souhlasím, i když nějaké byli proti mému názoru. Konkrétní problém jsem neměla. Myslím, že tyto diskuse jsou dobré, procvičujeme si jazyk, i když nám to moc nejde, protože nemáme moc velkou slovní zásoba. Tyto diskuse mají nás posouvat dál.

Napiš tvé připomínky k předcházející diskusi, např: Co se Ti líbilo, nelíbilo. Měl/la jsi nějaké konkrétní problémy? Udělal/a bys něco jinak?

Když neumím anglicky jak se mi může zlepšit plynulost mluvení. a když děláme o něčem diskusy musím to napřed vědět co říct úloby. Problém je v tom, že prostě někteří nespolupracují a to je nějaký problém diskuse ale v tom, že anglicky neumím dobře.

Appendix 9: Multinationals-Good or Bad? - Feedback from the students

5 Across the world

5.1 Companies from across the world

Do you know these logos?
Can you match them to
the correct picture?
What country do the
companies come from?

NIKE

4

D

B

E

3 **VW**

5 **PEPSI**

C

F

A

1 **Levi's**

2 **McDonald's**

6 **SONY.**
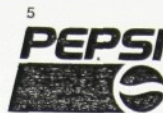
Companies that work in many different countries are called 'multinationals'. Often, multinationals have their head offices in Europe, North America or Japan and their factories in other countries. Can you think of the names of any more multinationals?

5.2 Some points of view

Some people think that multinationals are good for the countries where they have their factories. Other people think that they are bad.

Read these sentences. How much do you understand?
Underline in <u>red</u> the sentences you understand completely.
Underline in <u>blue</u> the sentences where you can guess the meaning.
Underline in <u>green</u> the sentences you don't understand.

D
Multinationals bring a lot of jobs to the country.

F
Multinationals give the best jobs to foreigners.

G
Multinationals do not pay high wages to local people.

C
The multinationals bring education to local people.

E
Multinationals send the money that they make to their own country.

A
The local people sometimes work in dangerous conditions.

B
The multinationals bring a lot of money to the country.

H
Multinationals make us part of a 'global village'.

K
Local factories can make things for the multinational companies.

J
The multinational companies make things which people want to buy.

I
The multinational companies build new roads, airports or railways.

L
The multinationals have modern technology.

Say it clearly!

/ʃ/ national, education, condition

Work with a partner and compare your colours. Help each other understand the difficult sentences. Look in your dictionary, or ask your teacher if you need help!

5.3 Good or bad?

Which sentences in Exercise 5.2 say multinationals are good?
Which say they are bad? Make two lists.

Good   Bad

6 Sing a song! Big money

Listen to 'Big money' and sing it with your class.
The words are on page 156.

Unit 23 Big money

Money! You've got big money!

They will never leave you on your own.
Money! Lock your door and disconnect the phone.

Driving in a limousine or riding on a bus,
It only takes one person to begin to make a fuss,
Soon you are surrounded, they won't let you get away,
They all want a slice of it now they know you've got …

Big money! Money!

You've got big money!
Careful who you try to call a friend.
Money! It will only fool you in the end.

Walking on a beach or sitting in a car,
It only takes one person to tell others who you are,
Soon you are surrounded, they won't let you get away,
They all want a slice of it now they know you've got …

Big money! Money!
You've got big money!
I know it will only drive me crazy.
Money! You may think that I am really lazy.

My pockets are so empty, I just dream my life away.
A friend or two is all I need to brighten up my day.
I'm free to come, I'm free to go and people are so kind.
They smile at me because they know that I have got no time for …

Money! Money!

Appendix 8: Multinationals – Good or Bad ? -Lesson plan 3

Věk: 15

AJ se učím .6. rokem.

Prosím o pravdivé vyplnění tohoto dotazníku, který bych ráda využila pro mou diplomovou práci.

Děkuji za spolupráci.
Šárka Opatová

....

1. Co je to diskuse?

Rozhovor 2 a více lidí, kdy se jeden snaží přesvědčit ostatní, že jeho názor na věc je nejlepší

2. Jak by se měl chovat správný účastník diskuse?

neskákat do řeči, mluvit k tématu, říkat „pro" a „proti", reagovat na názory ostatních, nekřičet,

3. Souhlasíš, aby součástí výuky anglického jazyka byla i diskuse?
(Odpověď zakroužkuj.)

(ANO)   NE

Proč?

Protože i diskuse patří do života.

4. Baví tě diskutovat? (Odpověď zakroužkuj.)   (ANO)   NE

Proč?   Je to dobrý způsob jak zjistit názory ostatních na věc.

Appendix 10: The second questionnaires for the students

WHICH SCHOOL SHOULD WE CHOOSE ?

- **Y**ou and your friends would like to study together at *an intensive English course*.
- **R**ead the following offers of 3 language courses.
- *Compare* the offers (language instruction/teachers/housing/food/country/free time/price).
- Which course, in your opinion, is the best ?
- Do your friends like it too? *Talk* to them and *choose the best course for your group*.

---

1 BRITISH BEST

- In central London, England
- 14 days – 12 days of instruction
- Language instruction 6 hours a day, Monday through Saturday
- Teachers qualified with TEFL Certificate
- Housing with a British family – with breakfast
- 4 trips: Tate Gallery, Concert in Royal Albert Hall, The Countryside around London, Cats (Musical)
- Price: $ 1,500

2 HAWAIIAN PARADISE LEARNING

- In a park on Oahu island 60 miles from Honolulu
- 14 days – 10 days of instruction
- Language instruction 4 hours a day, Monday through Friday
- English native speaking teachers
- Housing in a bungalow 5 minute walk from the beach – with breakfast and dinner
- Beach party, Scuba-Snorkel Safari, Windsurfing included
- Price: $1,700

3 ENGLISH PROGRAM AT UNIVERSITY OF WHATCHAMACALLIT

- In a small town of Paluka in Wyoming, USA
- 14 days – 12 days of instruction
- Language instruction 5 hours a day, Monday through Saturday
- Teachers with Master's Degree
- Dormitory style housing – with breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Nature walks, meet American students party (a party to make introductions between US students and international students), cinema tickets at weekend included
- Price: $1,400

Appendix 11: "Which school should we choose?"- ACTIVITY PLAN 4

Tape script of the discussion 'WHICH SCHOOL SHOULD WE CHOOSE?'

Discussants: 3 students (girls)   (They are marked as A, B, C in the script)
Length of the recorded discussion: 17 minutes
Occurrence of Czech is written in italics.

A: What about... eh... Hawai Paradise Learning?
B to C: *tady* **(B probably shows the offer of the school on her copy.)**
B: Hawai, yes, Hawai is perfect place. (Laughing.)
A (probably to C) *Co takhle ... tady ta škola, chápeš?*
B: Eh...do you know the price?
A: Eh... she have beach party, scuba- snorkel safari, windsurfing. *Já nevim, jak se to čte.*
C: Yes, it is very good.
B: And English Program? At university of Whatcha...macallit. ...three...third school
   ...yes, but I'm speaking about this.
C: Oh,yes, language instruction ...I find very...eh,is very good.
B: I think the Hawaiian Paradise learning is best...for us.
C: Why?
B: Because...look. It's five-minute walk to the beach. It's near. Breakfast, beach party.
A: Yeah, I agree.
B: Great.
A: ...*to říkala's*
B: I say that.
A: I say that, yes.
C: Have you got...Can you swim?
B: What? I don't understand. Can you repeat it?
C: Sorry.
B: OK. Have you got any other idea, Andrea?
C: No...but British Best...if you want...super, British family.
A: Eh, I my op..eh
B: In my opinion.
A: In my opinion, Hawai is perfect.
(Unintelligible speech)
B: Andrea, listen. Why ...do you think the British is the best?
C: I don't know but ...because England, London, the school, it is very good.
B: But look, Hawai Paradise learning.
C: Yes.
B: I think there is _ (unintelligible word) in Hawai.
C: Hawai is Pearl Harbour. It's very good. (Laughing.)
A: What?
C: *Ne, dobrý*
B: There are sun...
A, C: Yes.
B: Beach.
A, C: Yes.
B: Hot weather.
A: Yes.
B: And boys.
C: Yes, good, good idea.
B: Yes, ok. (Laughing.)

Appendix 12: Tape script of the discussion "Which school should we choose?", part 1

C: I agree with you.

B: Repeat it. (Laughing.)

C: *Ja s tim sice nesouhlasim, ale něco sem musela říc* (She said it very quietly.)

B: Carry on. … Eva?

A: What about…

B: But on third school in USA there is… are teachers with Master Degree. Do we need teachers with Master Degree? I think no…not so important for us. …What we want to *naučit*…

A: Learn.

B: To learn? Speak English …only speak in English.

A, C: Yes

B: No any Master Degree teachers. Not.

A: No.

C: But there is demority style housing.

B: Dormitory.

C: Sorry.

B: Yes, but I don't want some dormitory style housing…..housing is bungalow 5 minute walk from   the beach.

A: But…eh…lunches…eh,eh…it British Best eh…one thousand and eh…

B: Five hundred.

A: Five hundred and one thousand and forty hundred eh… in Hawai one thousand and seventy .

C: Seven hundred.

A: Seven hundred.

B: On Hawai. Yes. The weather, the perfect weather for us and …here are …to me we are going to Hawai paradise…. So.

C: Yes, Hawai is good.

A: Fine.

B: Andrea, say something else, not yes, it's good / no...but. (Laughing.)

C: Sorry. (Laughing.)

B: Ok.

C: I agree only with something.

B: And with you don't agree _ (unintelligible word) Go away! …Speak English with us. (Meant for a   classmate of another group who interrupted them when looking for his pen. At least, it was his excuse he told me.)

C: Repeat, please.

B: With you don't agree with something?

A: *S čím nesouhlasíš?*

C: Eh. There…

B: *Co chceš říct?*

C: *Počkej, já se vyžvejknu.* (Laughing.) Eh…teplo.

B: Weather. Hot weather.

C: Yes, there are hot weather and uh, *dusno*.

B: *Není.*

C: *Je.*

B: Isn't. No in Hawai. …No. Yes. I'm sorry. It's my mistake.

C: Hot.

B: Andrea.

C: I'd like to visit England.

B: Ok, we're going to England and we are going to Hawai Paradise Learning.

(C probably shows her disagreement.)

B: And why? Have you got any reasons for British Best?

C: British Best.

Appendix 12: Tape script of the discussion "Which school should we choose?", part 2

A: Not British Best. Hawai is perfect.

B: British Best. There are no culture but Hawai Paradise Learning.

C: *Brečím.* I'm crying.

B: Speak. (Laughing.)

B: (Unintelligible utterance.) Have you got any reasons for British Best? *Máš důvody pro to, abysme jely do British Bestu?*

C: New British family, new friends.

B: But in Hawai we come to new friends too.

A: Yes. ...And language instruction?

B: I don't need any, any, any degree or something else. Only I want is fluency English. It's my main goal....We need to agree on one school. So what?... What is our decision?

A: What?

B: What is our decision? We are going to British Best, Hawai Paradise Learning or English program at University of bla,bla,bla?

C: *Teď se bude hlasovat* (Laughing.)

B: Andrejka, speak, please.

A: If it were up to me...Hawai, Hawai Paradise learning.

B: You chose Hawai Paradise learning. Me too. And Andrea?

C: Yes.

B: OK. (Laughing.)

C: I agree only with something but...

B: And with ...you don't agree? With what?...Hawai is the best program.

C: Has hot weather.

B: But in British Best, it's in England, in London, it's raining very often. Do you like...do you like raining? Rainy weather? *Co to plácám?*

C: I like, *když prší.*

A: What? Don't ...you don't like sun, eh...hot, beach, eh...party?

C: Yes! But don't like, I don't like_ _ (Unintelligible utterance.)

B: But in England all the year it's here ...here 10 days and _ days (Unintelligible word.)2 weeks...only 2 weeks, no all year.

C: Yes. Hawai is a good idea.

B: Yes. So, any, no British Best and no English Program at University.

A, C: No.

B: No.

A: Hawai.

B: Only Hawai.

A: It's best. Fine.

Appendix 12: Tape script of the discussion "Which school should we choose?", part 3