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Teaching British culture in a communicative way in EFL classes

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Resumé

Práce má za úkol dokázat, že výuka kultury v hodinách anglického jazyka může přispět k vývoji komunikativních schopností a kulturních znalostí studentů. Teoretický základ a metodologické principy výzkumu jsou založeny na pracech Chastaina (1988), Durochera (2007), Paige (2000), Seelyeho (1996) a Byrama (1997). Praktický projekt se skládá z pěti komunikačních aktivit využívajících především obrazové materiály a téma oslav kvůli lepšímu zapojení studentů do aktivit a zvýšení jejich motivace. Závěrečné hodnocení projektu využilo názory studentů zaznamenané v dotazníku i během závěrečné diskuze a také reflexe učitele. Aktivity byly úspěšně začleněny do hodin anglického jazyka a přispěly k pozitivním změnám v postojů studentů. Ti také projevili zlepšení svých znalostí o cílových kulturách.

Summary

This thesis is going to prove that teaching culture in EFL classes at elementary school can be used to develop students' communicative competence and also improve their knowledge of culture. The theoretical background and methodological principles of the research are provided by Chastain (1988), Durocher (2007), Paige (2000), Seelye (1996) and Byram (1997). The practical project consists of five communication activities which used especially visual aids and holidays in order to engage students in the classes and improve their motivation. The final evaluation of the project utilised student's opinions recorded during the final discussion, a questionnaire and also teacher's reflections. The activities were successfully incorporated in the EFL classes improving students' knowledge and contributed to the positive change of students' attitudes towards the target cultures.

Zusammenfassung

Die Arbeit soll prüfen, dass der Kultureinsatz im Englischunterricht bei der Entwicklung der kommunikativen Fähigkeiten und kulturellen Kenntnissen der Studenten helfen kann. Theoretische Basis und methodologische Prinzipien sind an den Arbeiten von Chastain (1988), Durocher (2007), Paige (2000) Seelye (1996) und Byram (1997) gegründet. Der praktische Entwurf wird aus fünf Kommunikationsaktivitäten zusammengesetzt, die vor allem Bildmaterialen und Thema der Feiern ausnutzen. Dieses führt zu besseren Einsatz und Erhöhung der Motivation. Die Schlussbewertung des Entwurfs hat Meinungen der Studenten benutzt, die der Autor mit dem Fragebogen erfasst

hat. Die Aktivitäten wurden erfolgreich in den Unterricht eingesetzt und haben auch positiv die Stellungen der Studenten geändert. Sie haben auch Verbesserungen deren Kenntnissen über Zielkulturen gezeigt.

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CONTENTS

1. THEORY

1.1. Introduction

During my early studies of the English language at primary and secondary school I can remember teaching techniques that led mainly to understanding English grammar and building vocabulary, but the aspects of communication in the second language were neglected. A lot of my former teachers simply reduced the whole idea of communicative competence to the basic elements of productive and receptive skills where pupils did not have to care or think about the things they perceived and nothing made them decide how to react or use the information they got.

As my studies of the English language continued, I have never stopped asking myself: Which of the expressions and phrases would I use in different situations and how should I know that? For example, a teacher forced us to always use 'shall' as an auxiliary verb in the first person, just because it was grammatically correct, even though rather obsolete and very formal in contemporary English usage. Subsequently, I started to gain much of my competence in communication by talking to British and American lecturers and perceiving the language in use in British books, movies and in the text and dialogues of computer games.

For my diploma thesis I decided to connect communication and culture, since I believe that these two aspects are closely related to each other. Therefore, this paper is going to support that teaching culture in EFL classes at elementary school can be used to develop students' communicative competence and also improve their knowledge of culture.

This diploma thesis consists of three main parts – Theory, Practice and Conclusion. The theoretical background and methodological principles of the research are provided by Chastain (1988), Durocher (2007), Paige (2000), Seelye (1996) and Byram (1997). The main purpose of the theoretical part is to state what should be taught, to what extent and also how. Numerous techniques proposed by the experts are described here and these can be divided in two. Chastain (1988) as well as Byram (1997) propose teaching especially the knowledge of culture, while Durocher (2007) and Seelye (1996) target students' feelings and attitudes.

My intention was to utilise both styles in my professional project. It was carried out at 2nd ZŠ Komenského in Mladá Boleslav and I decided to complete it in class 8.A which

had 12 students altogether. I based my first two activities of the professional project on the activity called *Behind our Eyes* (Seelye, 1996, 27 – 29). This activity dealt with the meaning of culture and also stereotypes and used visual aids (optical illusions and ambiguous pictures). The aim was to show students that we as people may perceive the same objects in different ways, which is natural.

The final three activities dealt with students' knowledge and their motivation was strengthened by the central topic – celebrations. Namely it was Boxing Day and days of patron saints of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Students were employed in pair work and group work in order to communicate, so it was up to them to pass new information and learn from each other, which was the whole point.

During the professional project I was recording necessary data for the final evaluation and conclusion. This data was taken from questionnaires, dialogue with students and also my own reflections. The criteria for evaluation were provided Seelye (1996) and his Factors Contributing to Effective or Ineffective Use of Methodologies (15 - 16).

The conclusion confirmed that culture can really be incorporated in the language classroom curriculum; moreover, properly designed and executed culture activities can be enjoyable and beneficial for developing communicational competence as well as knowledge of the target cultures.

1.2. Why Communication?

The idea of communicative language teaching is that aside from linguistic competence, the student should also know how to use the language in different settings and situations. Gumperz (1982) states the idea that students have to perceive "linguistic and related communicative conventions that speakers must have to create and sustain conversational cooperation" (209).

I have already stated, that besides live communication, in my opinion also computer games that I have played were very useful (adventures and role-playing games), even though some might say that games are not a particularly good source of knowledge. The mentioned game genres usually use a significant amount of English text and the player can choose different approaches taken by his or her character, different answers to questions and has to face the consequences that often depend on the choice of words which seemingly have the same or similar message. Therefore, I had to think about the answers,

their meaning, connect them to the actual situation in which my character was and finally make a choice. There was much to learn, such as unknown words or collocations, their meaning and also their appropriate use in different situations. Games were also very entertaining and as Krashen (1983) states: "It has been widely observed informally that if readers are genuinely interested in content, this interest can outweigh other factors to a large extent. In fact, interest in content may be the most important consideration in selecting appropriate texts" and continues "our goal is to involve students so deeply in the message that they actually "forget" it is encoded in another language" (134).

I chose an example where there is a clear difference between two utterances, even though both of them may be considered threatening. The excerpts were taken from the PC game Planescape: Torment which was novelized by Rhyss Hess (1999) who used the original dialogues from the game and added narrative.

- " 'Tis the will of the Silent King that all who pass the gates into our Nation become prisoners of his lands. Will thou submit?" (407).
- "Is your foolishness so great that you wish to test your pseudo-immortality against a true immortal? Step aside, *human*, or we shall test this claim of yours" (86).

Pragmatics can be used to analyse these sentences which Delahunty (1994) describes as "the study of the meanings of utterances in context" (48). The same author also writes about Appropriateness (Felicity) Conditions: "Promises are distinct from threats, for example, in that a promised act is one desired by the addressee, whereas a threatened act is one which the addressee would prefer not to happen" (53). The first excerpt from Planescape: Torment includes a question and even though it is not a promise, neither it is a direct threat. The second sentence of the second excerpt; however, is a direct threat expressed by means of an offer of a simple choice (step aside or die) and one can understand it well simply by reading it.

To fully understand the first excerpt, one has to catch the speaker's intended meaning. Delahunty (1994) explains: "Our metaphor is one of a conduit, or perhaps a mail service. We package our thoughts in linguistic wrappings and our hearers at the other end of the conduit unwrap them and extract the message" (54). Therefore, the listener has to 'decode' which thoughts the speaker previously 'encoded' and then he or she has to decide

upon the action. In this case, the speaker may or may not pose a threat to the listener, because he or she merely expresses the wish of the 'Silent King' and asks the listener to submit. Then the listener has to make a decision using other pieces of information as well, such as the speaker's tone of voice, body posture, previous experiences, etc. That means, using the context.

Some games were in my opinion beneficial; however, I am aware that the art of communication cannot be acquired only through such passive and unnatural way; a learner of the second language needs to be interactively involved in conversations with thinking, living human beings in order to learn how to use the language properly. Chastain (1988) states that:

> "Communication involves active cognitive conversion processes of two basic types. To produce a message the language user uses world knowledge and language knowledge to covert thoughts to language. To receive a message she uses this knowledge to convert language to thoughts" (190).

Being aware of the importance of communication skills in a language and my personal difficulties in their acquirement, I resolved to study this area of language learning. I also had to decide about the means that I would use in order to develop students' communicative competence. I chose British culture, because when one needs to develop communication skills in a language, the best thinkable setting is the original environment of the language or at least an environment that simulates it. Durocher Jr. (2007) presents the ideas of Bennett, Bennett and Allen (1999) who argue that:

> "the foreign language classroom was a logical place for teaching sensitivity to cultural difference because intercultural communication constitutes a distinct yet complementary set of skills with respect to foreign language proficiency. Without these skills, without an understanding of what it is that informs culturally characteristic behavior, individuals from different cultures will continue to misunderstand one another, even when they speak each other's languages fluently" (144).

Therefore, the diploma thesis will study the communicative competence and its development using British culture in the classroom.

1.3. Culture? What for?

When one wants to learn to communicate in a foreign country accurately, it is vital to know both the language and the culture. As Chastain (1988) advocates: "Learning culture is as universal and natural as learning language. A functional knowledge of both is necessary to interact and communicate with other people in one's cultural environment" (p. 299).

He also presents two reasons that speak for the use of culture in the classroom. First, understanding the culture brings understanding among nations, which is important in today's world. Second, students are usually interested in the background of the language they are learning; therefore, the presentation and use of the culture can increase their motivation to learn (18, 298). Cakir adds: "To communicate internationally inevitably involves communicating interculturally as well, which probably leads us to encounter factors of cultural differences" (154).

However, there are also some experts who warn against inappropriate culture teaching. In some cases students may feel alienated and negative towards the foreign culture, simply because of the teachers' wrong approach. The teacher's role is therefore crucial in culture teaching and in bridging languages and culture. (Paige et al, 2000, 20). Some authors talk about learning culture differences; however, I personally agree with those who do not stress differences among cultures, but rather "respect for diversity" (Phuntsog, 1999, 106)

Paige et al (2000) further develops the idea of teacher roles and states that "it is critically important for the teacher, within or outside of the classroom, to explicitly take on the role of culture educator and deliberately assist students with their process of cultural analysis" (22). The very same authors also present Hughes' thought (1986) that teachers should function as philosophers, geographers, historians, philologists, and literary critics (21).

1.4. Communication and Culture Combined

The idea about the combination of culture and communication has two basic reasons that were already stated: the knowledge of culture is essential for communication and appropriate presentation of culture can increase students' motivation to learn. I am persuaded that increasing the use of British cultural background would help the students learn to communicate in different model situations in accordance with British customs, role models and generally accepted habits. In the European Union, people are getting in contact with other cultures more often than ever before, because travelling is easy and fast and they need to know at least the basics of appropriate behaviour and customs in order to learn to communicate accordingly.

Therefore, this diploma thesis is to going to study the use of British culture and culture in general in a communicative way, which in my opinion should have a positive impact on students' knowledge and skills in both of these aspects, as well as increase their motivation to learn the language. My intention is to teach culture in order to improve students' intercultural communication skills and to help them develop their cultural awareness and attitudes towards the target culture.

1.5. Communication and Language

It is common knowledge that communication is the process of sharing information between at least two people. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary describes communication as: "the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information".

There are also different models of communication in language study which try to explain the process of communication and study it. Models of Communication from The Encyclopedia of Communication and Information (2001) show that: "[c]ommunication models serve to clarify the nature of communication, to provide a guide for research, and to offer a means of displaying research findings." The very same source also describes basic models of communication. The first by Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, presented his model consisting of four basic components (see Fig. 1).
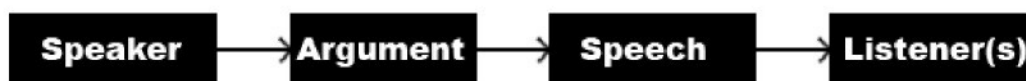
Fig. 1: Aristotle's model of communication

In this model, a speaker first creates an argument which is afterwards presented in speech to listener or listeners. One can clearly see the four stages through which the information goes from the source to the target (the components of communication), but this model does not deal with the flow of messages.

Much recent models take into account also the course of communication. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson designed a 'sawtooth' model where Person 1 sends messages to Person 2 and vice versa (see Fig. 2)
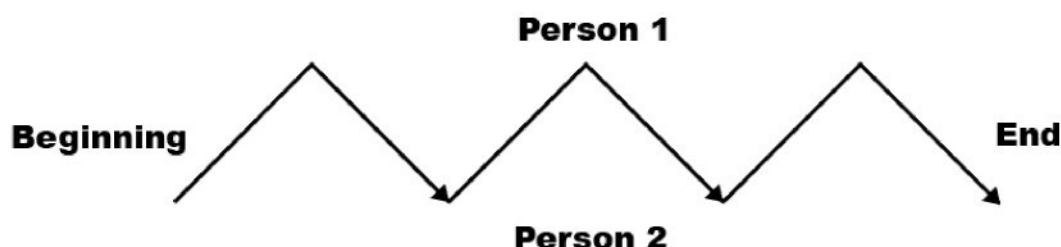
Fig. 2: 'Sawtooth' model of Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson

Language is only one of the means of communication, but for humans it is the most important, because it is able to convey our thoughts, feelings, desires, simply everything one can find words for more precisely than any other means. However, it does not mean that other forms of communication are unimportant, quite the contrary. Using different means of communication in cooperation is natural and this should also be covered during second language studies. Chastain (1988) mentions non-linguistic features and paralinguistic features. While non-linguistic features deal mainly with pauses in speech, paralinguistic features cover intonation, stress, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, etc. These features "may on occasion carry as much meaning or more than the words themselves" (276).

People use communication skills each and every day and simply knowing how to speak in a language is just one aspect of them. One also has to know how to use the language, which words to choose, when to choose them, which gestures are appropriate in

various situations, how to behave in different societies, etc. These skills come hand in hand with the ability to use a language and together they form our intercultural communicative competence. Guilherme (2000) defines this competence as "the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognise as being different from our own" (297).

1.6. Relevant Types of Communication

Communication can be divided into a broad variety of types, many of which are completely irrelevant to language learning at school. Language studies of course deal with verbal, but also with non-verbal communication.

It is vital to set the specific types or fields of communication which are relevant to this paper. The choice is clear, because it is necessary to connect communication and language in order to be able to decode and encode thoughts from/into words and sentences, which means using the four basic productive (speaking and writing) and receptive (listening and reading) skills as well as non-verbal language as an integral part of live communication among people: "Communication may break down at the point of production or at the point of reception" (Chastain, 1988, 190). Considering culture, the very same author believes that it should be given as much attention as productive and receptive skills: "[l]anguage and culture are inseparably bound; therefore, complete comprehension during any type of intercultural communication depends upon the participants' awareness of the social and cultural significance of the words and expressions employed" (298).

The four basic skills – speaking, writing, listening and reading – are all important for students of English language. And as a teacher of English, I have to ask myself an important question: "What do the students need to learn a language for?" From my point of view, among other things, they need and want to be able to understand and talk with foreigners. That includes listening, speaking, using non-verbal communication as well as knowing the basics about foreign culture.

But of course, there is not only live, face to face communication involved. Generally, students have no problems using the Internet and they do so in order to entertain themselves chatting or look for information. And since there is no doubt, that the mother of all languages on the Internet is English, the learning potential is great and so should be students' interest in the language. However, the dangers of receiving distorted information

are also great, because, as we all know, the Internet is a free medium and as such it is very hard, if not impossible, to control. A very real problem related to communication could be for example the so-called *Lolspeak* which changes the spelling of English words or *Leetspeak* that uses other characters as a replacement for Latin letters. For example, one can find an utterly distorted sentence: "Dey say itz a dog eet dog werld" instead of "They say it's a dog eat dog world." Students may become influenced and confused by these modern Internet phenomena and that is certainly not beneficial for their English studies.

In spite of the dangers, the Internet has a great value not only as a resource, but nowadays also as a means of communication using multimedia equipment. One can connect a microphone and a web camera to a personal computer and have a chat with people from the entire world.

1.6.1. Non-verbal Communication

A special means of communication which can facilitate understanding of a language is communication without words. It is important to be aware of this type of communication, because it is an integral part of culture and language as well. According to Chastain (1988, 304) who presents Damen's ideas (1987), non-verbal communication embraces paralanguage, kinesics and proxemics.

- Paralanguage – pitch, rate, intensity and quality of speech
- Kinesics – individual movement and actions (foot tapping, blushes, head movements, etc.)
- Proxemics – reactions to context and environment (spatial separation)

Some also identify many other classes, like haptics (touch), oculesics (eye contact), body posture, etc.

Non-verbal communication is a skill that everybody possesses and it can be considered as a basic means of communication. However, even if smiling, hand shaking or eye contact is used in very similar ways in European countries, some gestures can carry completely different meanings. For example, in Britain it would not be polite to use raised middle finger and index finger with fingernails facing the addressed person as a gesture

which one may think stands for number two. The British use this gesture as an insult similar to the American middle finger.

Other types of non-verbal communication, which could be classed into Kinesics, are facial expressions and eye contact. Personally, in this case I do not consider them as important as gestures, because within Europe they do not differ much.

1.7. Culture

It is very hard, if not impossible, to pinpoint the exact meaning of culture. Giles and Middleton (1999) stats: "because culture is one of the key concepts in our knowledge of societies both past and present, definitions are constantly being developed and refined" (9). Therefore, I am going to sketch the development of culture in the last centuries as well as the changing opinions about the meaning of culture.

Giles and Middleton (1999, 12 - 18) analyse the evolution of culture in the 20th century and also the opinions of academics, critics and other experts. Their concern was the growing 'mass-culture' as opposed to traditional 'high culture' which was in the 19th century presented by Arnold (1869) as: "the best that has been thought and said in the world" (3). Mass-culture in the 20th century gained a strong ally – the mass media, a product of fierce technological development. Cultural critics in Britain feared mass-culture pouring from the USA carrying inferiority and intellectuals in the USA feared mass-culture which was believed to support unamerican ideologies.

Because culture was changing in the 20th century, so were the experts' views on it. Giles and Middleton (1999) present Richard Hoggart's (1957) idea that: "culture is not simply 'the best that has been thought and known' but *all* those activities, practices, artistic and intellectual processes and products that go to make up the culture of a specific group at a particular time" (18).

1.7.1. Culture Today

The view on culture is certainly developing throughout history and Giles and Middleton continue to investigate the issue further (1999). Contemporary studies stress culture in connection with meaning and language. Moreover, they state that culture itself is the key component creating social and economic relations (24).

When we say culture, each person may imagine very different things to come under this term. A factory worker will probably have a different view of it than a musician, or archaeologist. Durocher Jr. (2007) quotes Hinkel (1999): "It may not be an exaggeration to say that there are nearly as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities" (144).

However, Chastain provides us with a short definition: "culture is defined as the way people live" (1988, 302). Trivonovitch (1980) describes culture as "an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behavior of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behaviour" (550). Kramsch in her glossary (1988, 127) offers three definitions of culture:

1. Membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting.
2. The discourse community itself.
3. The system of standards itself

Kramsch (1988) in her definition mentions discourse community, but what should one imagine under these two words? Her explanation is clear: "A social group that has a broadly agreed set of common public goals and purposes in its use of spoken and written language" (127). In other words, people of the same culture also use their common language in the same way.

Because people's views on the term culture usually differ, there are many definitions and subsequently different types of classification. However, Chastain as well as other experts divide culture into two basic categories: small c culture and large C culture. Durocher (2007) also mentions different terminology for small c and large C culture: subjective and objective culture (145).

1.7.2. Small c or Large C culture?

When students become aware of their second language culture, they learn especially about small c culture. This term covers all the daily activities that people perform, our behaviour, our habits, simply everything we do on a normal day (Chastain, 1988, 303). Durocher (2007) claims that: "subjective culture consists of an invisible component

(assumptions, values and beliefs) and a visible component (behaviors)" (145). Large C culture, on the other hand, deals with a country's history or famous individuals, such as artists, scientists, politicians and leaders and it is usually explained at school (Chastain, 1988, 303).

Small c culture appears more important than large C culture, at least for second-language learners. Just as Chastain describes large C culture: "Although inherently interesting in its own right to many teachers and students, materials of this type contribute indirectly to the students' ability to function linguistically and socially in the contemporary culture" (1988, 303). At this point I concur, because I do not see any reason, why students of second language at elementary schools should learn about different aspects of large C culture rather than small c culture. If they meet an American, the topic of their conversation would hardly be the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution or their opinion of E. A. Poe's early work, if I can exaggerate a bit. They would talk about common things; things concerning small c culture or popular culture, such as food, clothing, hobbies or famous music bands. In other words, their lives. Moreover, they need to know how to communicate and behave. Other authors have similar opinions. According to Durocher (2007) "subjective culture (sometimes referred to as small c culture) receives less attention in textbooks and foreign language classes and yet is far more significant" (145). Cakir (2006) also speaks in favour of small c culture saying, that the course syllabus' topics should include clothing, eating, education, sports, meeting people, family life, etc. (159).

I, however, believe that there are a number of symbols and famous people of large C culture that are either connected with everyday life, or widely known among the public, so they in a sense are a part of small c culture too. Therefore, one simply cannot neglect them in language teaching. Stonehenge or William Shakespeare could be mentioned as examples. A teacher can easily connect these with places or people which should be familiar to his or her students. And they can use this link to remember what they have learned and penetrate even further into the foreign culture.

In conclusion, it is highly important to chose the right cultural topics, think about students' needs and most of all, take their level of education and common knowledge into consideration. Chastain (1988) advises that "[c]ulture content must be presented at a level and in a manner to which the students can attach some relationship between the information and their own background experiences" (316). Personally, I found this to be

much more complicated than I ever thought and I kept overrating students' capabilities, simply because I am not a highly experienced teacher. I had to think about every bit of culture and its suitability, when it appeared that cooperation and coordination among teachers of different subjects might be beneficial even in such basic steps of the teaching process. This cooperation is also mentioned in Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání (2005): "Záměrem je, aby učitelé při tvorbě školních vzdělávacích programů vzájemně *spolupracovali*, *propojovali* vhodná témata společná jednotlivým vzdělávacím oborům a *posilovali nadpředmětový přístup ke vzdělávání*" (19).

1.7.3. Cultural Categories

If a teacher wants to incorporate culture in his or her lessons, it is necessary to pick a topic, or category which the students will be learning about. Topics such as family, hobbies, eating, travel or clothing are used by many modern English textbooks. For example, in Project English 1 by Tom Hutchinson one can find topics such as TV, radio, family and friends, music, house, school, town, daily routines, etc. However, even if these topics are well chosen, they are covered in a very superficial manner. It is understandable, because the textbook is not aimed only at students of a particular country. More precise information could easily become obsolete and I believe that is the role of the teacher to build on given topics, to provide additional materials, information and knowledge; simply to be the resource of additional materials or make students find their own.

Providing and working with information about a foreign culture is one step, and as Chastain (1988) remarks, "both similarities and differences between cultures should be included. Comparisons and contrasts are always implied." (304). The author does neither develop, nor support his thought further, but I think, that the reasons are rather clear. Comparing aspects of a foreign culture to one's own culture helps understanding, because students are able to link the ideas and information with something they know and understand, even if their understanding of the nature of certain things may differ from the adults' point of view.

Chastain (1988) puts non-verbal communication on the same level as different categories, such as money, politics, daily routines, pets, crime, humour, etc. He also stresses that certain acquaintance with common gestures, facial expressions and tone of

voice is desirable, because students not only need to know what to say, but also how to say it (304).

1.7.3.1. Cultural Topics

Small c culture covers a large variety of themes and topics which can be mutually interconnected. One can come to a number of different topics by means of a simple brainstorming. However, the discovered topics are not of the same importance, at least for young students in elementary schools. One can see a clear difference between economy and people. The former would be hardly interesting and beneficial in the EFL classroom, yet the latter is far more suitable and important for stressing cultural differences and similarities, as well as raising cross-cultural understanding.
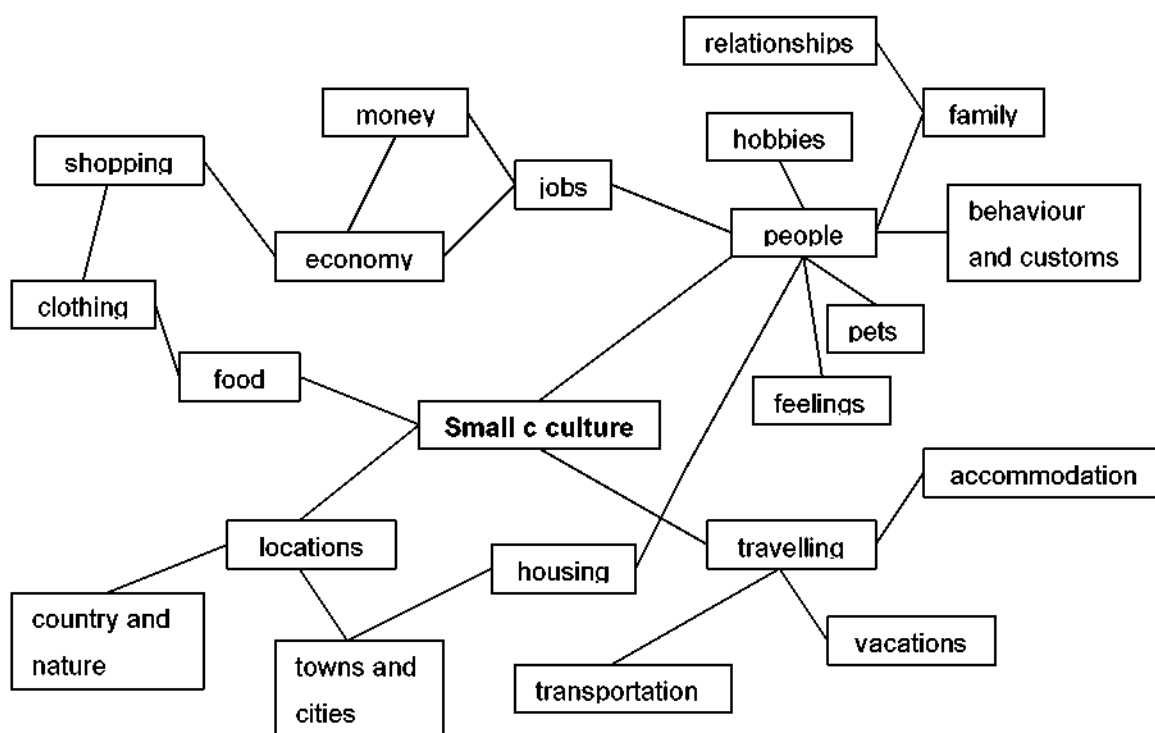

Fig. 3: Possible topics of small c culture

1.7.4. Multiculturalism and Interculturalism

Speaking about culture, I have to mention also two closely related terms: multiculturalism dealing with diverse cultures at one place and interculturalism, as

socialization of people with different cultural backgrounds. These isms are especially important when talking about Britain.

Britain, as well as France, Spain and other countries, has a long history of a colonial superpower, which affects this country even in modern days. In the 19th century it became popular to say that it is the empire on which the sun never sets and, as it is widely known, this is not true anymore. McDowall (1989) briefly describes the course of events as follows:

> "At the start of the twentieth century Britain was still the greatest world power. By the middle of the century, although still one of the "Big Three", Britain was clearly weaker than either the United States or the Soviet Union. By the end of the seventies Britain was no longer a world power at all" (159).

Britain's population is being changed by immigration. According to a BBC-published report *British immigration map revealed* (2001) by the Institute for Public Policy Research almost 8 percent of British population had been born overseas, which is a 2 percent increase in 10 years and the 5 top non-UK birth places are Ireland, India, Pakistan, Germany and the Caribbean Islands. Moreover, in London, immigrants comprise about one quarter of the whole population, and therefore one can speak about **multiculturalism**. Kramsch (1988) describes: "In a societal sense, [multiculturalism] indicates the coexistence of people from many different backgrounds and ethnicities, as in 'multicultural societies'" (82). The same author also states, that: "The term **intercultural** may also refer to communication between people from different ethnic, social, gendered cultures within the boundaries of the same national language" or "the meeting of two cultures or two languages across the political boundaries of nation-states" (81). However, Durocher (2007) cites Sercu (2004) who points out that: "culture no longer rests on the equivalence of nation-one culture-one language" (144). Therefore it should be clear that there is not only a single culture in Britain, nor in any other European country, since all of them have minority groups

Here we return the very definition of culture and meaning of this term. Since culture no longer equals nation, then how many cultures there can there be in a nation? Kramsch (1988), describing multiculturalism, talks about different backgrounds, which may be

applied to social status, race, religion, simply something that makes one group of people different than the other (82). But Phuntsog (1999) goes even further in his attempt to promote *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* and mentions also gender and home environment (101).

1.8. Culture at School

As I mentioned earlier, I do not believe that most teachers at Czech elementary schools teach culture, and especially small c culture, to a sufficient extent. Durocher (2007) supports the idea saying: "[S]ubjective culture (sometimes reffered to as small c culture) receives less attention in textbooks and foreign language classes and yet is far more significant [than objective/large C culture]" (145). There may be various reasons. First, teachers themselves need to be familiar with the culture they would possibly like to teach their students. Second, even if they are familiar, they still need to access appropriate information and teaching materials as well as use well-chosen teaching methods or modes of presentation. And third, teachers may not realize the importance of the presentation of culture in a systematic and organized manner and also know the dangers of neglecting this significant part of the language learning process. Allen et al. (2003) aptly remark that "the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool. And yet the pedagogy for infusing culture into the language curriculum remains elusive" (237).

The international Durham project carried out at the University of Durham between 1985 and 1988 was arranged to find out about students' knowledge of French culture and level of ethnocentrism, but it also showed interesting facts about teachers and their values. According to the research, teachers often use culture as "a pedagogic device for capturing student interest" and also "they have limited experience with the target culture" (Paige, 2000, 23). Therefore, "instruction is dominated by the textbook, which is used extensively and determines the topics as well as the sequence of instruction" (Paige, 2000, 23). The final conclusion showed that "the teaching of culture remains didactic, oriented towards the transmission of information" (Paige, 2000, 23) and that "the textbook influenced most of the internalized knowledge the students had of French culture" (Paige, 2000, 23).

If a teacher wants to incorporate culture into his or her curriculum, it is vital to know how to do it properly and what the dangers are. One cannot simply come into the classroom and start talking about a different country's cultural background without an

appropriate setting and of course without some connection with the presented language, not to mention that merely talking about culture is not enough. Chastain (1988) remarks that: "the basic decision facing the teacher is how to coordinate culture with the other material to be learned in the class" (306). Other experts also state that although the teaching of culture can be quite beneficial, it challenges teachers' abilities.

According to Allen et al. (2003), many teachers are afraid to introduce culture into the curriculum simply because they were not taught intercultural competence and they feel unsure, which is understandable. And even if they were taught intercultural competence, it is necessary to be in touch with the present culture, since it is evolving and changing rapidly (240). Yet, as it is widely known, especially for teachers, learning is a lifelong process and they should overcome the difficulties and accept the challenges.

In the following chapters I will present the basic components of culture learning as well as problems which are likely to be encountered.

1.8.1. The Extent of Culture Presentation

Many experts believe that presenting culture in the language classroom is necessary; however, their views on the appropriate extent and manner of culture presentation differ. Some argue that the language curriculum cannot provide more time and is already full. And so the question of time dedicated to culture in the classroom arises.

In my opinion, teachers should reserve at least a few minutes for presenting bits of culture-relevant information in almost every lesson and use various approaches to make their lessons interesting and enjoyable, because classroom is "a logical place for teaching sensitivity to cultural difference" (Durocher, 2007, 144). One also should not see the time dedicated for teaching culture as wasted and not beneficial to learning the target language itself, because the students will still use the language as long as teachers will not decide to present a culture topic in their mother tongue.

Chastain (1988) recommends short and concise cultural topics to be presented every day and points out that "the good thing" should not be overdone, because it would render the whole activity disserviceable. Furthermore, if the teacher wants to work with more demanding topics, he or she can do so continuously throughout the whole week or longer period. At the end of it, students may be involved in a longer activity that would take at most 15 minutes and summarize the topic by means of a consolidation exercise or some

other method. Furthermore, from time to time the teacher may decide to play a film or a record, have the students prepare a sketch, or organise and lead a discussion (306-307).

1.8.2. Motivation and Attitudes

Motivation is the force which drives students to learn and culture might be used to strengthen it. Paige et al (2000) investigate this matter as well as students' attitudes: "The introduction of little "c" culture (culture as daily life) at earlier stages of language learning was intended to address the needs of these learners, by making the lessons more interesting, and therefore motivate them to continue language study" (33).

Attitudes are closely related to motivation, but it does not mean that a motivated student automatically has to have positive attitudes towards the target language. Personally, I remember my experience of learning German which I disliked just because I hated the sound of the language and I also had some immature opinions about the Germans based on one or two encounters. However, it did not result in receiving poor marks, since I was motivated to learn in order to pass my exams well. On the other hand, it would have certainly been much easier learning, if I had had a positive attitude towards the language. And I believe that if German culture as well as cross-cultural understanding had been explained and taught to us properly, my attitude towards it and the language could have been more positive.

In connection with students' attitudes Durocher (2007, 146) presents Bennett's stages (1998) through which students pass when they learn subjective (or small c) culture. The first three stages together form **ethnocentrism**: denial, defence/reversal and minimization. Denial is seen as "disinterest in cultural difference" (Durocher, 2007, 146) and it arouses negative feelings. In the next stage students already realize the difference between cultures; however, negative aspects still prevail. "Individuals in the defense stage divide the world in to "us" and "them," and believe that "we" are superior to "them" (Durocher, 2007, 146). I believe that denial stage could be applied to describe my experience with learning German. And students in the last of the three stages, minimization, feel that "we are all basically the same" and there are no significant differences between cultures. Students in this stage should learn to "recognize their own assumptions and values" in order to recognize other cultures as well (Durocher, 2007, 147).

The next three stages, acceptance, adaptation and integration are all covered under the term **ethnorelativism**. Students in the acceptance stage have already dropped their negative attitudes towards the target culture, and they feel not threatened by it, but rather interested in it. After the student is able to overcome negative aspects towards the target culture, he or she may "become capable of modifying behavior to the norms of the target culture" (Durocher, 2007, 147). However, as Durocher (2007) continues, this behaviour is not just a plain imitation, but a genuine product of students' acceptance of the target culture's assumptions and values (147).

And the last stage of integration speaks for itself. At this stage individuals become essentially part of the target culture and "they have been sufficiently transformed by cross-cultural experiences to recreate themselves as distanced from their original ethnocentric identity" (Durocher, 2007, 147). Basically, integration is apart from denial another extreme stage and I do not believe that this stage is the aim of culture teaching at elementary schools. Kramsch's (2003) opinion regarding this matter is clear: "Our purpose in teaching culture through language is not to make our students into little French or little Germans, but in making them understand why the speakers of two different languages act and react the way they do" (32).

Paige et al (2000) also studied students' opinions about foreign language learning and came up with a few interesting thoughts. According to their findings, the more students study a language and the more they get to know it, the less they enjoy it, which is in my opinion connected with stereotypes and the loss of initial excitement. However, when directly exposed to foreign culture, for example with the help of student exchange programs, students generally become interested in the foreign language and begin to build positive attitudes towards it. "In general, study abroad appears to enhance feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem as well as positive attitudes toward language and culture learning" (Paige et al, 2000, 14). The authors also claim that younger students seem to have biases against specific cultural groups more than older students (38 – 39). I find this understandable, since students of elementary schools are mentally immature, they are still looking for themselves and tend to adopt opinions from other people instead of creating their own based on their own experiences and knowledge, simply because they lack those experiences. Just as Paige et al (2000) assert: "But because readers rarely have sufficient understanding of their own culture, they are unable to critically assess the concepts being

presented and they reduce the comparative process to a low-level comparison of facts"
(41).

The teacher has to carry this in mind and help his or her students overcome their ethnocentric stage and I have to agree with O'Dowd (2004) who clearly states that: "in order to gain declarative knowledge about the foreign culture and to develop an understanding of alternative cultural perspectives (i.e. intercultural understanding), it is necessary for learners to have the appropriate skills" (55).

1.8.3. Intercultural Communication Skills

Paige et al (2000) in their paper use a general definition of culture learning which is viewed as

> "the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general
> knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication
> and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic,
> developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner
> cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively" (4).

I am now going to focus on one of the three major prerequisites of culture learning – intercultural communication skills. Different skills are used in the whole area of language learning and perhaps the most cited are the basic productive and receptive skills. However, in culture learning there are also other skills to be acquired which are relevant to the target culture. Paige et al (2000) describes these as "generalizable in nature and transferable across cultures" (5).

The authors also offer a list of these skills (5 – 6):

- the concept of culture
- the nature of cultural adjustment and learning
- the impact of culture on communication and interaction between individuals or groups
- the stress associated with intense culture and language immersions
- coping strategies for dealing with stress
- the role of emotions in cross-cultural, cross-linguistic interactions

The listed skills deal with students' understanding of different cultures and I have to agree with O'Dowd (2004) that "writers are often quite vague about what these [culture learning] skills actually are" (55). The reason may in my opinion be related with culture and its countless definitions which are also in many cases vague.

However, O'Dowd (2004) presents also two more precise areas of cultural skills by Byram (1997) which are called "the skills of interpreting and relating" and "the skills of discovery and interaction" (57). The first set of skills allows the students to identify or analyse values and perspectives of the target culture and relate it to their own culture. The second set deals with the ability to gain new knowledge, attitudes and skills of the target culture and use these in live communication.

In other words, an intercultural speaker should be able to "recognise, understand and respect alternative perspectives" (O'Dowd, 2004, 59). That is the perspectives of a speaker from different culture.

1.8.4. The Problems and Dangers of Culture in the Classroom

The thoughts about teaching culture in the classroom that come into my mind involve also quite a few problems which should be solved. Being a teacher, I feel I have to begin with myself. One of the problems is the extent of my knowledge of the target culture. Personally, I have a great interest in British culture, but I also feel that my knowledge of it is not as vast as I want it to be. This is what some authors call the fear of not knowing enough, but there are of course also other issues. Durocher (2007, 145) explains Omaggio Hadley's (2001) three ideas about teachers' usual problems:

- Already overcrowded curriculum
- Teachers fear they do not know enough about the target culture
- Teachers do not want to deal with the target culture, because they would possibly have to deal with students' attitudes

The fear of not knowing enough, according to Chastain (1988), is justified, since language teachers need help in gaining knowledge of the second culture from experts, commercial publishers and colleges or universities (316). However, teachers should of course look for the necessary information themselves and I think that it is not convenient to

overburden the students with loads of facts, but to present a reasonable amount of information that will raise cross-cultural understanding and to teach the students the necessary culture learning skills. Chastain also adds that lack of knowledge and expertise about teaching culture may do more harm than good and in such cases it is better to teach no culture at all (316, 317). The last point is in my point of view very much agreeable, since it is much better to say nothing than to pass on to someone misleading or completely untrue information, thus enabling them to spread it even further.

The next problem is about the **students and their interest** in the target culture. Chastain (1988) advocates that: "students must be able to relate to course content" (316). This means that the teacher should present culture in a manner which is comprehensible to the students and in my opinion this is one of the biggest problems in teaching culture in general. If the students are not able to comprehend, it is highly likely that they will not develop positive attitudes to the target culture, which may also appear when the presented culture differs from what they expect. However, my experience with young people shows that they generally tend to like Western culture, because they are exposed to it every day by means of popular media. On the other hand, gaining knowledge about a culture just from TV or films is certainly not good, because of their strong bias. Also, as Cakir (2006) states: "Non-verbal aspects of target culture are sometimes picked up from TV serials, which are far from being helpful for communicative purposes or which may sometimes impart faulty conceptions" (155). Many, or I would say the absolute majority, of the films and TV series simply do not reflect reality and do not show the truth.

What the teacher should also take into account is the **amount of culture** presented in his or her classes, which is connected with the problem described as an overcrowded curriculum. Chastain (1988) generally sees culture in the classroom as very beneficial and genuinely inseparable from language, so the teacher should find the necessary time needed for a proper presentation and he or she also should start presenting culture even to beginners (298 – 299).

Here we come to yet another important matter: **the use of L1 in the classroom**. An agreeable statement is that the second language should be used whenever possible. In other words, it is not beneficial to force the students to use L2 all the time, because they unquestionably would not be able to understand and work properly. Also, as Chastain (1988) remarks: "work done entirely in the first language obviously does not lead to

second-language communication skills" (317). Therefore the teacher should ideally make use of all the L2 language skills, receptive and productive, that his or her students possess.

And finally there is the question of the **evaluation** or measurement of the shift of the student's attitudes towards the target culture and also gained knowledge. Students' knowledge of L2 in general may be tested and evaluated by various means, but should culture be a part of the assessment? I think it is clear that if culture and its knowledge is integrated in the class curriculum, then it should be also systematically tested equally to other parts of the target language – vocabulary, productive and receptive skills. The teacher may for example let his or her students evaluate a cross-cultural conflict or misunderstanding, explain the reason why the conflict emerged and maybe offer a solution.

But how can the teacher measure students' attitude towards culture? In psychology, attitudes are in Encyclopædia Britannica (2008) defined as "hypothetical constructs" that "are manifested in conscious experience, verbal reports, overt behaviour and psychological indicators". Chastain (1988) remarks that "[s]tudents arrive in class with a variety of attitudes about second-language learning" and "[o]f course, they will have positive, negative, or mixed attitudes about the language, the people who speak it, and their culture" (123). Therefore, the teacher may just ask his or her students orally, or by means of a questionnaire if they need an overview of the class' opinion; however, students may not tell the truth. A suitable time for the first questionnaire would be at the beginning of the school year. Then the teacher may after some time question the students again and search for the shift in their attitudes and evaluate the whole course. However, British and Czech culture and lifestyles are in my opinion generally not so distant, so I do not expect the students to bear much negative feelings against British culture, rather the contrary.

1.8.5. Materials

Materials are an essential element in every curriculum and for the purpose of teaching culture it is necessary to choose very carefully and verify their authenticity, because the teacher can hardly fully familiarise himself or herself with a foreign culture, ergo become integrated in it. The very basic materials concerning culture one can find are located in almost every textbook, but first, these materials are chosen by the author of the textbook. Second, they can easily become obsolete, because schools do not buy new textbooks every year. And third, the majority of modern textbooks do not really teach

British or American culture to the same extent anymore, because of their multicultural focus. However, as Paige et al (2000) say, "the main finding about today's textbooks [is that they are] still central to language educators as the main source of culture learning and, in many respects, they are still problematical" (40). The authors further develop the idea by mentioning the Durham project again by means of which the researchers learned that young students gained most of their knowledge of foreign culture from various textbooks. Moreover, the researchers claimed that most of the topics were poorly chosen, because they showed foreign culture from a tourist's view, thus offering a distorted reality.

In the original edition of Tom Hutchinson's Project English 2 (1986) I found an apt example. Issue 6's main topic is London and as such it describes many interesting places; however, mainly from a tourist's perspective. It consists of six topics: Snapshots, A Sightseeing Tour, The Fire of London, Where Shall We Go Today?, Transport and Visitors. Generally, the whole issue puts students into the position of tourists who are visiting London and it describes some of the places, buildings and other points of interest known world-wide, such as London ZOO or Madame Tussaud's (65 – 80). These topics are in my opinion closer to large C culture than to small c culture and they hardly give the students an idea of real life in London. Also, Madame Tussaud's is nowadays hardly a sole British attraction, since it has branches in other countries' cities, for example in Amsterdam, but still, this topic's main problem is that it has no practical contribution to learning small c culture.

On the other hand, The Fire of London topic that describes one of the most important events of London's history, is in my opinion well chosen, because it gives the teacher an opportunity to show some of the basic aspects of ordinary people's lives in the past. With the teacher's help, students can easily build on this topic, learn more about 17th century London as it really was and maybe also compare it to 17th century Prague.

Next, Paige et al (2000) mention another problem of textbooks in target culture presentation. Textbook authors' view of the target culture is often biased, which is understandable. However, culture is presented as low-level concepts, and as such it becomes the general truth and reality for the students and they may in conclusion fail to develop their cultural understanding and reach a higher level of cultural understanding in terms of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism (40 – 41).

O'Dowd (2004) writes about EFL textbook evaluation in the 1980s, when it was found out that they often contain "racial, gender and regional stereotyping" and also an idealized view on Britain which made the learners' home culture look bad (64).

Teachers should therefore choose their cultural topics well, bearing in mind the students' needs and the extent of harm they may do to them. Talking about famous tourist places may be incredibly entertaining, but it does not tell the students about real life in a foreign country and real people. Naturally, teachers should try hard to provide their students with up-to-date, unbiased and true information about the target culture, even though this task may be hardly achievable.

O'Dowd (2004) presents Durant's (1997) main sources for developing intercultural communicative competence. There are nine of them (69):

- interaction with members of the target culture
- recorded testimony of members of the target culture
- visits to the country
- the country's media
- data from ethnographic fieldwork
- historical and political data
- surveys and statistics
- heuristic contrasts and oppositions
- fashions and styles from the target culture.

Of course, some of these sources are hard to utilise, such as visiting the target country or interacting with members of the target culture and some sources seem not particularly interesting for young students (surveys and statistic or ethnography). Still, there are also very promising areas, such as contrasts and oppositions or fashions and styles from the target culture. O'Dowd (2004) also adds literature and other authentic texts to the list and points out that it can contribute to developing intercultural understanding (69).

1.8.5.1. Materials – The Role of Teacher

The teacher is no doubt responsible for the cultural content, for it is he or she who provides most of the materials and resources and it is, according to Paige et al (2000), "critically important for the teacher, within or outside of the classroom, to explicitly take

on the role of culture educator and deliberately assist students with their process of cultural analysis" (22). Nonetheless, the teacher himself or herself has to be prepared for this task, which is one of the arguments used by the opponents of culture in the classroom. Chastain (1988) supports this attitude to some extent and says that the lack of teachers' knowledge or expertise in teaching culture may do more harm than good. Furthermore, he prefers no culture in classroom to misinterpreted culture (317).

I believe that the teacher should take the role of a culture educator; however, he or she should be fully aware of the importance of this task and try hard to provide true, unbiased and up-to-date information. Hasty generalization and prejudice are two of the worst enemies that a teacher may encounter, of which he or she should be fully aware. On the other hand, it does not mean that talking about personal experience is out of question. On the contrary, it is a valuable source of information, even if more or less subjective. But it is the teacher who takes the part of the culture educator and one of his or her roles in language teaching is being the source.

> O'Dowd (2004) explains that "teachers need to be able to put the information from the partner class in a wider context. They can do this by providing factual information about the target culture themselves (i.e. teacher as source of information)" (370).

Chastain (1988) also argues that "[t]he primary responsibility for culture content lies with the teacher" (309) and Paige et al (2000) concur that the teacher's role in this respect is highly desirable, because "[w]ithout the teacher's active involvement, students become more rather than less ethnocentric in their attitudes towards the target culture" (22). The reason according to Paige's thought may lie in the fact that the students find themselves in one of the ethnocentric stages (see chapter 1.7.2.) of denial, defence/reversal or minimization, they also lack the necessary skills to be able to communicate interculturally and they lack the knowledge of both their and the target culture.

1.8.5.2. Materials – The Role of Learner

The teacher is responsible for teaching culture in the classroom, but it does not mean that students should benefit only from his or her work and enthusiasm. Chastain

(1988) emphasizes that "[s]tudents are capable of gaining a great deal of information on their own, with guidance" (308).

Personally, I agree, and I also find the last two words immensely important, especially these days of the "wired World". When Kenneth Chastain's piece *Developing Second Language Skills* was published, the Internet was still in its early days, but now students in almost every primary school in the Czech Republic can use it to look for information thanks to the IDOŠ project (Internet do škol). And there lies the trouble. Library resources can be considered more or less valuable and reliable, but the Internet is a free medium and as such it is uncontrollable. In consequence, students are likely to find misleading, or completely untrue information and therefore they should be properly instructed in this matter.

Teachers of the English language may start cooperating with teachers of informatics or computer science, for it is their job to instruct students how to look for pieces of information the web and how to assess and evaluate them. Searching on the web is by its nature a different task from searching in a library or using other sources of information, because there are certain unique skills involved, such as using search engines (Google, Live Search, Seznam, etc.) or so-called wildcards (regular expressions). Being a teacher of computer science myself, I put a special emphasis not only on students' ability to search for information, but also on their sorting and evaluating skills. The ability of finding information does not suffice; students need to apply a critical approach and determine, whether a particular source is reliable or not. For example, if a student finds a piece of information in Encyclopædia Britannica, it can be considered trustworthy. On the other hand, an essay without verifiable sources is not a good material to build on.

Next, it is always appropriate to look for a different source or sources to confirm the findings, because even a reputable source may be wrong. In addition, one may find a different view or views on the same topic. Still, it takes a deal of time to learn how to look for valuable information on the Internet and it also cannot substitute printed sources simply because it usually contents different information. This is the main reason why I require students to use the library or printed resources in general as well. Internet sources also may be hard, nor impossible to track, but when the students provide a satisfactory support for their materials, there should not be a problem. Moreover, the computer proficiency of contemporary children is incomparably higher than it used to be and it would be foolish to

blindly prohibit someone from using such a powerful source of information. The teacher should therefore use a personal approach in this matter.

1.8.5.3.   Other Sources of Information

Some experts recommend teachers to prepare questions for which the students find answers. For example, the teacher can ask students to find information about breakfast – what a full English breakfast consists of, how porridge is made or what kipper is. However, there is not only England on the British Isles and students may also learn about the differences among England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. But it may be very hard for students to find this detailed information and the teacher should therefore provide handouts or at least give students references or clues where to search. After the class obtains the necessary information, the teacher decides upon the next approach. He or she may ask about the difference between English and Continental breakfast, what the students are used to eating for breakfast at home, etc. Students can look for necessary information in their town library, newspapers, magazines, interviews, souvenirs or even other media such as songs, films or TV series. However, as I already stated, popular media often contain strongly biased information.

Another source of information may be the students themselves. Chastain (1988) states that "it is not uncommon for one or more students to have some information about the second culture that the teacher does not know" (309). For example, a student may be in contact with a native speaker or collect some items which are connected with the target culture. The teacher should find out about his or her students' hidden potential and exploit it. Chastain recommends a survey (1988, 309) among the students at the beginning of the year, but he does not state, whether the teacher should simply ask or hand out a questionnaire. Personally, I would simply ask the students in their mother tongue, because in this case the aim is not teaching English language, but to find out precise and true information.

Consequently, when students contribute to their lessons and bring their own thoughts and ideas, they feel useful and involved, which can greatly add to the overall quality of English lessons. Teachers may also benefit by collecting students' materials and storing them for further usage.

1.9. Methods of Teaching Culture in a Communicative Way

When the teacher knows what he or she wants to teach the students, there is a next decision to be made. An appropriate approach or technique of culture presentation has to be selected. I have already stated that the teacher's role in culture learning is crucial and I believe that so is the choice of methods. As Paige et al (2000) state "there is great variation in 'styles' or approaches to teaching about the foreign culture" (23). The aim is to choose the most appropriate to reach our goal.

As I stated earlier, my aim is to teach culture in a communicative way where students are expressing themselves, listening, coming up with their own ideas and also where they are deeply drawn into the lesson. Therefore, I have to pick not only interesting and maybe even controversial topics, but also the right methodology.

Michael Byram and his colleagues (1994) suggest using stereotypes as a theme for comparative methods. Comparison and contrast are according to the authors' research frequently used in talk about foreign culture (42). Furthermore, Byram et al (1994) stress also the connection of culture and certain grammatical/semantic structures or linguistic functions. More precisely, students can acquire knowledge about the culture with the help of false friends or learn about different words' connotations (44).

Other experts, such as Durocher (2007), present methods targeting rather students' personal opinions and feelings towards foreign cultures. These methods are aimed at ethnocentric and ethnorelativistic stages, thus the main aim is not to teach language, but sensitivity to cultural differences and develop intercultural understanding necessary for communication (149 – 150).

Intercultural learning is also the topic for Seelye's (1996) collection of activities. According to the author's introduction, the presented activities use common methodological forms, such as case study, critical incident, culture assimilator, roleplay or simulation (8).

As one can see, Byram's approach is more about knowledge of other cultures, which should arouse students' understanding. However, Durocher and Seelye work directly with students' feelings and attitudes. Personally, I see Byram's ideas as traditional, while Durocher and Seelye approaches are rather alternative. For my teaching practice I finally decided to use various techniques and work with students' feelings, as well as develop their knowledge of the target culture.

1.9.1. Techniques and Activities

Chastain (1988) suggests several techniques for culture teaching (309-313); however, not all of them are presented as communicative. Still, it is the teacher's job to arouse a debate and provoke students' interest, but some approaches are clearly more suitable for communicative teaching than other. Seelye (1996) on the other hand presents already designed activities, but most of these are very time-consuming (25 – 231). My intention now is to present some of the techniques which are relevant to communicative culture teaching and to the aim of this diploma thesis.

The first technique, or rather an activity, is called **Behind our eyes**. The aim here is to show students that we as people may perceive the same objects in different ways, which is natural. Students should realize the connection with culture, its influence on people's judgement and also that different opinions may be of equal importance and value. For this purpose the teacher uses cards with optical illusions or other pictures to illustrate the main idea and makes students think and talk about it (Seelye, 1996, 27 – 29).

A commonly used technique – **culture aside** – is viewed as a brief and sudden culture comment which maybe mostly comes from the teacher, but there is no reason why also a student could not make one, as long as it is relevant. For example, when talking about cars, a student may remember seeing the famous Mini Cooper, which is perhaps the most popular British car, and tell some more information about it. A resourceful teacher may promptly provide more information and/or tell the student to prepare a concise presentation for the next lesson, if it is within the compass of his/her abilities. The teacher also should not make the student feel like he/she is receiving a punishment. On the contrary, the task should be viewed as an opportunity which it no doubt is. However, the downside of this activity is a lack of input from other students, because there is only one truly involved (Chastain, 1988, 309).

Nevertheless, there are other means of presenting culture which may be used communicatively. **Culture capsule** is one of them. The teacher briefly explains an aspect of the target culture and then leads a discussion of the contrasts between the target culture and the culture of the first language, or perhaps the discussion should be more about the similarities, which is more positive. A sample topic may be the resemblances in eating habits. This approach is similar to culture aside, but the teacher plans the whole activity in advance. Most importantly, a well designed culture capsule activity could involve the

whole class and give the students an opportunity to communicate, present their ideas and become aware of the cultural differences by themselves (Chastain, 1988, 310).

Another technique that unquestionably involves communication is **role-play** or **mini-dramas**. This technique has, according to Cakir (2006), the power to overcome cultural fatigue and is a great opportunity for oral communication (157). However, it requires the students to be very active during the activity and the teacher has to prepare it thoroughly. Role-playing also should not be performed as simple line reading, where students only present given text, but quite the contrary. The activity should make them listen to the other or others and think about the answer, the choice of words, tone and overall attitude. It is clear that role-play is no activity for beginners and students should be proficient in the language enough (Chastain, 1988, 310 - 311).

Critical incidents and problem solving helps the students realize the differences between their culture and the target culture by deciding upon an action. The trigger is some kind of conflict or a problem that may happen in a real-life situation. The students may read about a critical incident or incidents, think about their own reactions and then discuss them with the others in groups. Finally, the teacher receives the final outcome as well as the reasons behind it and he or she can use it further in a following activity (Chastain, 1988, 311).

The students are able to realize how their own decision contrasts with the generally accepted decision of a member of the target culture and thus they improve their intercultural communicative competence. Critical incidents may also arouse emotional feelings about the target culture, which, however, may be either positive or negative depending on the stage of students' ethnocentrism (Abisambra, 2005).

Celebrating festivals may be very popular among students, since young people generally love to celebrate. Different cultures also have different festivals or at least different ways of celebrating a similar festival. This is a great opportunity for the teacher to present the differences between cultures and raise interest in the target culture. And since celebration is usually a lively activity, it is also well suited for discussing the differences among different festivals or feasts and the teacher may also create a long-term work in which students prepare for a festival and then they perform it as a culmination of their efforts (Abisambra, 2005).

1.10.   Hypothesis

This paper's and subsequent project's aim is to support the following thesis: Teaching culture in EFL classes at elementary school can be used to develop students' communicative competence and also improve their knowledge of culture. My intention is to show that appropriate culture presentation in EFL classes can be beneficial for students. Also, students will have the opportunity to communicate in order to learn more about the target culture, its aspects and people.

The main theme for the practical part of this diploma thesis is holidays and celebrations; however, the initial activities will target culture itself in a broader sense. As a result, students will come across various activities, they will use communication skills and it is likely that they will also learn new elements of culture.

1.11.   The Following Parts of the Paper

Next, I am going to write about the practical implementation of the communicative use of culture in EFL classes and its outcome as well as my experiences.

The second chapter deals with the practice, which covers the methodology including used teaching methods, activity plans and reflections on the lessons.

The last chapter concerns itself with the final evaluation and critical assessment of the effort.

2. PRACTICE

2.1. Fundamental Questions

I based my practical teaching on the above-mentioned theories by Chastain, Paige, Seelye, Byram and other experts. Their thoughts concern the use of culture in the classroom at elementary schools, the growth of students' cultural awareness and improvement of their communication skills. Chastain (1988) recommends concise activities to be frequently presented in the class (p.306). I am going to follow his suggestion, and use activities which are not designed to consume the whole lesson.

The main themes of the practical part are culture and communication. These two topics are closely related, because people communicate according to rules and principles which are given by the cultural background. And knowing these principles and getting acquainted with foreign culture is therefore important for students. However, there are a few fundamental questions to answer and I hope that the results of the practical part will provide the answers.

1. Can culture-based activities really be a part of the curriculum?
2. Will the students enjoy the types of activities they will do?
3. Will the pupils view on the target culture change, possibly improve?

I am well aware that teaching culture requires a long time if there should be any "measurable" results, so I do not expect the students to develop their intercultural communicative competence, nor change their view on the target culture rapidly. My aim is to determine, whether the activities dealing with culture and communication will be appreciated and whether it will be possible to include these activities into each lesson.

2.2. Preparation Before the Practice

At first I had to prepare for my teaching, which meant studying the methodology of culture presentation and also gathering the necessary materials I was going to use during the teaching practice at school. The methodology was well presented in books and other texts, but when I wanted to gain suitable materials, I was basically on my own. However, there are at least some experts' recommendations that I could follow.

From my several months stay in London and the Scottish Highlands I brought materials, many of which concern famous tourist places and attractions. And as I learned, tourists' view on a country offers a distorted reality, but it depends more on the chosen methodology and activities, or how the materials are used in the classroom. Next thing what I also gained from my visits of the British Isles was my own experience regarding the people I met and the places I visited. Although this experience obviously cannot allow me to say that I know the British well, I still find it invaluable.

Other used materials were British newspapers and magazines, and finally also the Internet that I used for two purposes. First, the Internet allowed me to communicate easily with my friends from England and Scotland. Second, it functioned as a source of information. However, I am fully aware of the problems related to the fact that the Internet is a free medium loaded with unverified or untrue information, but there are also many renowned servers such as BBC Homepage or Encyclopædia Britannica. Also, I consider myself highly experienced in web searching and I know about the need to verify information found on the web.

2.2.1. The School

The next step was to decide on the teaching style, which depended on the students' knowledge of language and also their age. Therefore I asked the headmaster of 2nd elementary school Komenského in Mladá Boleslav where my continuous teaching practice took place to have a chance to teach high classes. The headmaster agreed, and I was allowed to teach two 8th grade classes (8.A and 8.B) and one 6th class. The school is also well renowned for its focus on foreign languages, so I could expect that the students will know the language well enough in order to be able to learn about various cultural topics. In year 2005 the school also started to organise educational excursions to England (Brighton) where they study English for several days. Moreover, they are accommodated in English families and make trips, which may be a major experience. Sadly, these trips started just after my continuous practice ended, so I could not make any use of it.

Still, I needed to do some research at the school, so I had visited it before my practice started, consulted my ideas with the teacher and also observed the students in order to get to know them and find out about their skills. During the observations I watched not only students' language proficiency, but also the teacher's style of language presentation

and habits. Students are used to their teacher and I did not want to bring unnecessary changes into the classroom, because it was not my intention to fight the student, but to work with them.

The practice involved teaching three different classes. For my purpose I chose class 8.A because of two reasons. First, the teacher herself recommended this class to me and second, the total range counted 11 lessons and that was enough in order to familiarise with the students and then to realize my plan. Also it was convenient that there are only 12 students in the class.

2.2.2. The Introductory Lessons

At first, I felt that it is vital to know what the students know about the target culture, how they perceive it and what their attitude towards it is. I decided to start slow, first by asking them orally in the class and then they were given a questionnaire as the first homework. When talking with students, I used L1, because in this case the aim was not to teach English, but to gain as much precise information as possible. Students' answers were rather reserved, maybe because they were cautious about their new teacher. Still, some of them tried to actively present their knowledge and expressed their wish to learn more, especially about popular culture. This gave me a hint that I should exploit their interests to make my lessons more entertaining.

The aim of the anonymous questionnaire was to find out about students' opinions about Britain and its culture for my further purposes. Also, there were a few questions about students' general knowledge of the target culture (see appendix 1). As I mentioned, the questionnaire was anonymous, because it included mostly personal questions; however, I still asked the students to be honest about their answers and explained them what I mean by the target culture, because each student may have different view on this term.

Students were also assured that results will have no impact on their personal evaluation whatsoever. The questionnaire was given to classes 8.A and 8.B. Finally, I asked the classes to fill in the questionnaire also the names of their favourite British popular artists, if they had any.

2.2.3. The Results of the Initial Questionnaire

The outcome of the questionnaire was not too much surprising, because the students' answers were mainly neutral. I found out that the students do not overrate, nor underrate their knowledge of the target culture and they generally show interest in learning more, even though according to their opinion knowing culture is not as important as knowing language.

Only few of them visited Britain, but still the majority thought that people in there are rather the same as in the Czech Republic and many of them answered that they could not tell. The last question about famous British singers or bands brought a few funny answers. Some of the students mentioned American personalities and one of them wrote about a singer who is not even from an English speaking country. In this case language equaled nation, which is of course a wrong assumption. However, it is only a result of lack of knowledge.

The good thing is that the students showed their interest in the target culture, which gave me a purpose and motivated me. I could also use their answers to determine the extent of their knowledge of the target culture, at least in general features. Then I could finally approach the activities.

2.3. Activity Plans

2.3.1. The Goals

My initial decision was to create six activities that would follow each other in six lessons. At first, I decided to show the students that each person even of the same cultural background perceives reality in a different way and people of different cultures may differ in their opinions even more. For this purpose I decided to use Seeyle's (1996) book Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning. There are several activities dealing with the question: "How do we give culturally naive individuals a sense of culture's consequence?" (25).

Otherwise the goals were very similar. The rest of the activities were all designed to raise students' awareness of the target culture as well as intercultural communicative competence through various activities mainly about holidays and celebrations. Therefore, students could also improve their cultural knowledge. Very soon I found out that the activities will not be as short as I expected them to be, and I had to make a few of the

lessons completely culture-free in order to fulfil the original teaching plan which the school teacher required. As a result, the former number of 6 culture activities was reduced to 5.

However, the good thing was that I also taught computer science in the very same class, so I could use some more time for my culture teaching purposes. The main students' objective in this sense was usually searching for information they were required to find for their homework. Therefore they were learning how to use search engines on the Internet and the tasks were meaningful. I decided to exploit this possibility a bit for the purpose of the last activity which took two lessons to finish. It was a small project about patron saints. In the first of the two lessons students were introduced to the project, then under my supervision they were looking for information on the Internet and in the last stage they presented their findings to the class.

2.3.2. Activity Plan 1 – Culture

School: 2nd ZŠ Komenského, Mladá Boleslav
Class: 8.A
Activity: 1st
Date: 27th September 2004
Time: 15 - 20 minutes
Topic: The meaning of culture

AIMS

- Illustrate and discuss the meaning of culture.

- Show the Ss how different people may perceive reality in different ways and that our very own eyes may not show us the truth.

- Explain the importance of accepting culturally different behaviours and target Ss' denial stage.

OBJECTIVES

- Ss learn what culture is, i.e. what the different definitions of this term are.

- Ss realize that different people have different views on reality and see the problem of perception and misperception.

- Ss practise reasoning skills, or more precisely matching skills.

- Ss practise social skills (communication).

MATERIAL

Handouts with optical illusions and ambiguous pictures (see appendix 2)

STEPS

Warm up – 3 minutes

> T writes CULTURE on the blackboard.

> T asks Ss about the meaning of the word according to their opinion and tells them to write their ideas on the blackboard. Ss may think about the meaning in pairs. T finishes the list if necessary and stresses important words (people, values, assumptions).

> T makes sure Ss know the meaning of the important words and promises to deal with them in the further part of the activity.

Eliciting - 7 minutes

> T distributes the handouts with illusions and ambiguous pictures.

> T tells Ss to look at the 1st picture. T asks Ss whether they see black dots or white dots in the picture.

> Ss answer. There are in fact only white dots, but we see some of them as black dots.

> T asks Ss about the 2nd picture: Are the horizontal lines straight or bent. (T uses gestures to support Ss' understanding)

> Ss answer. The lines are straight, but they appear bent, because of the black squares.

> T asks about the 3rd picture: Which of the middle circles is bigger?

> Ss answer. Both are the same, but the left seems bigger because of the size of the other circles.

> T asks about the three ambiguous pictures (picture 4 – 6): What the Ss see in them.

> Picture 4 can be either a saxophonist (musician) or a woman's face.

> Picture 5 is an old man (possibly a Scotsman because of his hat) or a young lady.

> Picture 6 may be a face or the word "Liar".

Follow-up – 7 minutes

> T asks Ss about the main theme of the pictures. What do they have in common and what

are they about?

> Ss come with ideas: different people see different things, eyes can lie. T leads them to discuss and decide upon the central theme, a keynote.

> T connects the keynote with the main topic of the activity – culture. Ss realize the main idea that cultural background can affect people's perception of reality and that different views may be equal.

Homework

> T asks each student to think of or invent a Czech proverb/citation (or Czech translation of foreign proverbs/citations) which suits the main idea. Ss can ask their parents or use other sources, such as library or the Internet. T provides an example: Every coin and every man has two sides (Každá mince a každý člověk mají dvě strany).

REFLECTION

My first stage is based on activity *Behind our Eyes* which targets students' ethnocentric stage of denial (Seelye, 1996, 27-29). This activity is designed to show students that there may be not only one truth and that different people may perceive different things. For these purposes it uses optical illusions and ambiguous pictures.

Students already knew that we will deal with cultural issues in the lessons, so they were not surprised when the topic finally appeared. When I asked them about the meaning of the word culture, I did not get any elaborate definitions (which I expected) rather than single words like music, theatre, arts, etc. Students' ideas were mainly about high culture, so I finished the list with other aspects of culture: people, their behaviour, values and manners. Some students seemed a bit amazed, but generally they understood the point. Perhaps they expected that the word culture equals rather noble aspects like theatre or classical music.

The next part of the activity went well and according to the plan. Students were interested in the pictures, even though one of them wanted to show me, that he was already familiar with the term. They also had no problem identifying the illusions, sometimes with the help of rulers (picture 2 and 3), but there were also some other points of view, so students started to argue among themselves, and they slipped into L1.

I let them speak in L1, because the point of the activity is also about people's opinions, which I wanted them to realize. But I also wanted to keep the pace of the lesson, so students were not allowed to argue for long. Also, in this case (pictures 1 – 3) the truth was only one. However, the next three pictures are ambiguous and one can see in them two different things. Still, most of the students were able to see both meanings and they were eager to show it also to the others, who saw only one side of the coin. But I wanted not to lose control over the class, so I called single students to explain, what we can see in the pictures. After we finished with the handouts, I asked an open question about the general idea of the pictures. Students replied that the pictures showed something that did not exist, played tricks with their eyes, etc. That was a nice point, from which I could elicit from students' experience and knowledge about the keynote which can wrap the whole activity up. We agreed on a very simple sentence: **Eyes can lie** and fulfilled my second aim.

The final step to complete the main part of the activity was to connect the keynote with previously stated aspects of small c culture – people and their values, beliefs and behaviour. I wanted the students to realize the connection by themselves, which they in my opinion did, but their reactions were not descriptive enough. I took no chances and explained that different people may have different ideas and positions which may be equally valid. Finally, I asked students to write down their homework, reminded them of our keynote and also provided them with an example – a Lebanese proverb: Každá mince a každý člověk mají dvě strany.

I also asked students about their opinions about this activity in order to retrieve some data for the final evaluation.

CONNECTION WITH THE THESIS STATEMENT

The goal of this activity was to show students that what we perceive may not be necessarily true and that different people can have different, yet equal opinions and this goal was in my opinion met. Graphics materials were used to lead students to the final conclusion, when they had to use their reasoning skills. I very much appreciated that the pictures made some students argue and even though they communicated in L1, it supported the idea of different people's perceptions, which can strengthen intercultural understanding and it also helps to overcome the stage of denial.

Communicative and cooperative skills in L2 were not represented very much, but that also was not the main point of the activity. Finally, we managed to make a conclusion and connect it with small c culture. At this point I was satisfied that I made students think about the whole message and their homework was designed in order to make them think about it also after school.

HOMEWORK

Most students wrote simple variations on the theme of the previous lesson, for example: "Oči nemusí vidět pravdu" or "Co člověk to názor". However, some students managed to find fitting citations on the Internet.

Každý národ vidí nedostatky jiných a všichni mají pravdu.

Arthur Schopenhauer

K tomu, aby člověk dobře viděl, nestačí mít jen otevřené oči. K tomu je třeba mít otevřené i srdce.

Paul Cézane

2.3.3. Activity Plan 2 – Stereotypes

School: 2nd ZŠ Komenského, Mladá Boleslav
Class: 8.A
Activity: 2nd
Date: 30th September 2004
Time: 30 minutes
Topic: Cultural stereotypes vs. reality

AIMS

- Explain the term stereotype and connect it with culture.

- Present stereotypes about British culture and people.

- Connect stereotypes about British culture with those about Czech culture.

- Create discussion about stereotypes and reality.

OBJECTIVES

- Ss learn about the term stereotype in connection with culture and cultural differences.

- Ss show their knowledge of British and Czech stereotypes.

- Ss recognize similar stereotypes about the British and the Czech.

- Ss discuss and realize the danger of stereotypes and prejudice.

STEPS

<u>Warm up</u> – 2 minutes

> T reminds Ss of the last cultural activity and resumes the topic: CULTURE

> T shows Ss two incomplete sentences written on the board which T prepared before the activity started: _____ can't drive. _____ don't help at home.

> T asks Ss to fill in the gaps "women" or "men" and write on the blackboard themselves. The other Ss can agree or object.

<u>Short discussion</u> – 4 minutes

> T asks Ss to translate and whether they think these assumptions are true and why.

> T leads the discussion questioning the arguing students if necessary: Can you say that all women can't drive and all men don't help at home? How do you know? Are these ideas fair to men/women?

> Ss should come to the conclusion that these sentences are not true – they are **stereotypes**.

<u>Pairwork</u> – 8 minutes

> T distributes handouts (see appendix 3) with stereotypes about nations and together with Ss fills in the first sentence to provide an example.

> Ss to work in pairs and fill in the gaps. However, Ss may not be sure, what they should fill in, because of their lack of knowledge. Because of this they are told to deduce answers according to what they already know. Also, T stresses there may be more than one answer.

> T observes Ss' work and dialogues and provides help if necessary.

> Towards the end of this stage T writes on the blackboard numbers from 2 to 7.

<u>Conclusion</u> – 15 minutes

> T asks Ss to come to the blackboard and write one of the sentence they finished (and of course, if they finished it). More Ss write at a time to keep the pace of the lesson.

> T with the whole class goes through the sentences. Ss may come with different ideas and agree/disagree with the sentences.

> T asks about the Czech stereotypes (possibly 'like football', 'are musicians') – are there any more?. Are they true? (rather not); Do Ss like the stereotypes? (some of them – the nice ones); Do they think that foreigners would feel the same as them? (maybe).

> T reminds the Ss about the main topic of the last culture activity (Eyes can lie) as well as their previous HW and asks them to write circa three or four sentences (also as a HW) about stereotypes in their lives. In other words, their own experience with stereotypes. T also hands out an example:

> My experience

> One day I was walking in a park with my skateboard in hand. An old man saw me and started shouting at me. He called me a small bastard who destroys the streets and does not care about others. That was so unfair!

REFLECTION

This activity was designed to further develop the previous stage and help students to use its main idea when judging different cultures. Students learn about common stereotypes about different cultures, work with them, find similarities with their own culture and ideally realise the danger of stereotypical and hasty judgement.

Between the first and the second activity was one culture-free lesson, because students needed to engage in the normal curriculum. When I introduced another cultural activity in the following lesson, I could see that they became a bit excited about it, perhaps because they enjoyed the previous activity or perhaps because of the sudden change. Still, they immediately understood what they should fill in the two sentences on the blackboard and I chose a boy and a girl to do the task. Of course, the boy finished the sentence "Woman can't drive" and the girl wrote "Men don't help at home". I noticed the mistake in the first sentence and asked the boy to correct it, which he did. A short discussion led to a

simple outcome. The boys generally did not like the negative statement about men and the girls said that women can drive, so we came to a conclusion that these statements are untrue and even insulting. This was my point at this stage – to make students realize that general stereotypes may be untrue and therefore even harmful.

Afterwards I distributed the handouts and introduced them as some more sentences – stereotypes – but now about different nations in order to connect the main idea from the previous stage with the target cultures. We finished the first sentence together to provide an example and also to strengthen the meaning of the term stereotype. Afterwards, students worked in pairs discussing and filling in the sentences. Five minutes was enough for them to finish the task that was full of chatter, arguments and also one or two question appeared (the meaning of musician). After that I asked a few students to come to the blackboard and write each sentence next to its number (2 – 7).

The initial questionnaire showed what students themselves had thought about their knowledge of Britain and its parts. Many of them claimed to know the important information (location, major cities, etc.) and I was eager to find out, whether they also knew the common stereotypes about the people of Britain. I had thought about it before and my conclusion was that some of the statements should be well known also to young Czech learners, but otherwise they would just guess. In result, students knew about the common stereotypes: the English are gentlemen, the Scots are misers and the Czechs are musicians. English gentleman is a collocation and there are well-known sayings about the Czechs (Co čech to muzikant) and the Scottish (Skot si pro pětník koleno nechá vrtat). Fewer students knew that the Irish are often seen as drunkards and together with the Scots they are supposed to hate the English (at this point I praised students for their knowledge). But only one guessed that the English are considered a nation with bad teeth, which I admit is not widely known stereotype. When I asked about Czech stereotypes, students added a few more: the Czechs like beer/are lazy/cannot fight/are an ice hockey nation, so they came up especially with neutral or negative stereotypes.

I asked students, whether they liked the stereotypes or not. Their reaction could be anticipated – they did not like the negative stereotypes and understood that other people in different countries can feel the same in this sense. The point was made – stereotypes based on hasty judgement do not reflect the reality and they can be insulting to the target group.

Finally I assigned homework and explained precisely in Czech what I wanted them to write – a short story about their (or their friend's or family member's) experience with stereotypes and judging with the eyes. And just before the lesson finished I had asked students about their opinions about this activity. The reason is the same as in the first time.

CONNECTION WITH THE THESIS STATEMENT

The second activity was meant to be more concrete and communicative than the first one. I used common stereotypes about different cultures and the aim was to make students realize that judging a whole nation according to a few rooted opinions is not right and prepare them for further activities. This idea is based on Durocher's research (2007, 149 – 150) which uses Bennett, Bennett and Allen's (1999) developmental model targeting students' personal opinions and feelings towards foreign cultures. This activity as well as the previous one deals with students' denial and defence stages, because, as Durocher states: "[D]enial and defense issues [are to] be targeted in elementary-level language classes" (149).

The message and urge to express one's opinion was strengthened using Czech stereotypes, most of which students did not like. Therefore they actively participated, communicated their ideas and compared different cultures, but at the same time some of them seemed uninterested. I asked the school teacher about these individuals afterwards and she told me that they are rather shy or simply do not want to participate much, so perhaps I should try harder to engage them in the class next time. In general I was satisfied with the outcome of the activity and looked forward to seeing the homework.

In this lesson I also used Culture aside technique, when a student came with the stereotype that the Czechs like beer. I explained that so it is said about the British, but one find many types of beer, or ale in Britain, whereas we as Czechs drink mostly lagers. But I did not want to develop this 'alcoholic topic' further.

HOMEWORK

The aim of the homework was to practice students' writing skills and they also had to think about the topic of the last cultural activity. Some of them wrote about an injustice which happened to them. They were accused of something without any apparent reason (or so it seemed to them), like in the example I gave them.

Students also liked the expression "it is so unfair" which they used a lot. The others wrote about different experiences, sometimes with their parents' hatred to a certain group of people. In general, there were mistakes in spelling, wrong prepositions, tenses, etc. But I was still satisfied, because students succeeded in passing the message to me.

2.3.4. Activity Plan 3 – Boxing Day

School: 2nd ZŠ Komenského, Mladá Boleslav
Class: 8.A
Activity: 3rd
Date: 4th October 2004
Time: 27 minutes
Topic: Boxing Day

AIMS

- Introduce Boxing Day as an aspect of English culture.

- Practise Ss' listening skills.

- Make Ss communicate with each other to find out information about Boxing Day.

- Make Ss realize how the people in Britain spend the 26th of December.

OBJECTIVES

- Ss learn about Boxing Day – what it is, when it is celebrated, etc.

- Ss practise their listening skills – listening for gist.

- Ss practise their conversation skills to find out precise information about the topic.

- Ss compare their way of spending the 26th of December with the English way.

STEPS

Warm up/pre-listening – 2 minutes

> T writes "Boxing Day" on the blackboard and sticks three pictures on it – a boxer, a gift and paper boxes (see appendix 4). T asks what Ss see on the pictures.

> Ss give their ideas.

> T asks Ss what they think Boxing Day is about. Ss choose from the three pictures, T writes number of Ss next to each picture and tells them that they will soon find out.

<u>Listening for gist</u> – 5 minutes

> T tells Ss to listen to the recording and try to find out what Boxing Day really is.

> T plays the tape while Ss listen (see appendix 4).

> Ss answer and T says that those who chose the picture of the present were right. T also asks what Boxing Day was about in the past (the day when the rich gave money or food to the poor).

> T asks Ss to guess: What do the people do on Boxing Day nowadays? Ss answer and T writes down the answers for himself to remember.

<u>Conversation - Pairwork</u> – 15 minutes

> T sets up the next stage: Ss work in pairs, one of them chooses to be English and the other Czech. T distributes handouts for "the Czech" and "the English" (see appendix 4). Ss are not allowed to show their handout to their partners in the conversation.

> T explains the setting and the task. "The Czech" heard about Boxing Day and they want to learn more about it. "The English" provide the information. T reminds that Ss should speak in English and make proper questions and answers. T tells them to look at the tasks and examples on the handouts. T checks whether Ss understand the instructions.

> Ss work, T observes their work and provides help if necessary. They may have problems with some of the vocabulary, perhaps turkey.

<u>Conclusion</u> – 5 minutes

> After Ss finish, the class checks the correct answers. One St asks, another St answers. The others agree or disagree. Then they provide answers from the 2nd part and write them on the blackboard.

> Finally T asks about similarities of the 26th of December in Britain and the Czech Republic. Ss learn that the people in both countries basically do the same on that day.

REFLECTION

This activity deals with students' knowledge about the target culture and also uses comparisons and contrasts with Czech culture, which is recommended by Chastain (1988, 304) and also Byram et al. (1994, 42).

I found it was quite difficult to implement in the class, especially the main part with conversation in pairs. However, students cooperated and finally came to a conclusion, even though some of them were a bit confused, so the main goal was reached. In my opinion, students were confused because they accustomed to activities like this. In the introductory part I think I caught their interest well, because there were different opinions about the main theme of the lesson – Boxing Day. Most of the students chose the picture of boxer, perhaps because that was the easiest explanation (boxing as punching, not boxing as wrapping into a box).

Still, students wanted to learn the true answer, so they listened to the tape carefully and they understood the main message that on Boxing Day people gave small boxes with presents or money to the poor. I told one girl to write the general definition on the blackboard, just after we agreed on it and just before the next stage I asked students for their opinions: What do people in Britain do on Boxing Day now? Some talked about giving presents and some about normal activities like watching TV, playing games, etc. These were in fact the correct answers I originally got from the native speakers, even though these answers seem a bit stereotypical. On the other hand it is impossible to find one true answer that suits everybody.

In the next part, students had to decide who in each pair will be English and who Czech. I wanted to let them decide, which some of them were not capable of. In that case I had to do it myself in order to keep the pace of the activity. The setting of the following task and also instructions were a bit complicated for students and I wanted to make absolutely sure they understood well. Therefore, I slipped into L1 for a time and explained them everything thoroughly and then we did the first example together.

Students started working; I observed, listened and provided help when they asked for it. Some students failed to form proper questions; they reduced the whole idea to the point of finding the right information, but at least they communicated and were able to correct themselves when I told them to ask questions in English, not in Czech. Then we checked the answers, which was easy, because students understood each other well. As for the open questions for "the Czechs", I could see that when students guessed about typical contemporary practice of Boxing Day, they thought mainly about what they themselves usually do. In other words, students used their culture to describe the other culture. In my

opinion they did so because of lack of knowledge, so they simply used the experience they possessed.

CONNECTION WITH THE THESIS STATEMENT

The third activity employed a theme which is very specific. Boxing Day is originally English holiday and throughout the time it spread over the British Isles and a few other countries, but the Czech people do not celebrate it and do not know about it. Therefore, I saw it as a suitable theme to use and build upon.

Considering the teaching method, I used mainly Byram's (1994) style that incorporates comparison and contrast in talk about foreign cultures (42). Comparison of different things also aroused discussions in which students became greatly involved, which serves the purpose of communication.

Students also learned about the tradition in the past and compared its present form with their own experience of what they usually do on that day. Doing this they learned that people in Britain generally do the same as people in the Czech Republic, even though we do not celebrate the same tradition. Still, I found a minute to remind students that this may not be necessarily true. Not everybody in both countries sits at home, plays games or watches TV. Some students concurred and said they usually go skiing, see their grandparents, etc. Here I used students' interest in the topic and they acted as an information resource.

HOMEWORK

In this lesson students received homework which was not related to the Boxing Day activity.

2.3.5. Activity Plan 4 – Patron Saints / Part 1

School: 2nd ZŠ Komenského, Mladá Boleslav
Class: 8.A
Activity: 4th
Date: 7th October 2004
Time: 26 minutes
Topic: Patron saints / part 1

AIMS

- Remind Ss of Svatý Václav and his role in Czech nation – patron saint.
- Introduce patron saints of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.
- Prepare Ss for their small project about a foreign patron saint.
- Present an example of the project's outcome for students' understanding.

OBJECTIVES

- Ss learn that other countries also have their own patron saints, but these patrons can be well known also elsewhere.
- Ss match each of the presented patrons with their country.
- Ss in small groups start preparing their own small project about the patrons.
- Ss practise reading skills.

STEPS

Warm up – 5 minutes

> T tells Ss about the main theme – celebrations and writes "patron saint" on the blackboard

> T asks Ss about the meaning of the two words and uses Svatý Václav to explain.

> T tells a St to write England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland on the blackboard and show Ss four cards with flags.

> Ss take the flags and assign them to each country.

> T shows Ss cards with names of four saints and symbols (see appendix 5).

> Ss assing each name to a country according to the signs. Ss write the names on the blackboard.

Small project – set up – 12 minutes

> T divides the class into four groups of three.

> T explains the main idea of their next project.

> Ss will do a small project about the four patron saints. One for each group. T announces that now they will answer some questions and the fastest can choose the patron they want.

> T asks questions about Boxing Day (Ss should know the answers from previous lessons). The fastest Ss answer and choose their patrons. T gives them a card with the patron's name.

> Ss are given handouts with instructions and questions (see appendix). T tells them to look at it, read it and explains further. Ss can ask if they are not sure.

<u>Working with the example</u> - 8 minutes

> T tells Ss to read the example from their handouts aloud.

> Ss read and translate the short text.

> Then T asks what happens on 26th of December in England. Ss answer: Boxing day.

> T explains that some famous people are well-known in many countries.

> T asks students to think about a few examples of Czech people which are known in other countries.

> Ss answer. If they do not know, T provides hints if Ss do not know (J.A.K. – Czech teacher, B.S. – Czech composer, etc.).

<u>Homework</u> – 1 minute

> T tells Ss that they will work on the project during the next lesson of Informatics, so they do not have to do anything yet. And in the next English lesson they will present the results.

REFLECTION

The main aim of this activity was to prepare students for their final small project about patron saints of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. I decided to use this topic because it can be easily connected with Czech culture and it also can be used to describe some differences and similarities among all the mentioned countries.

I also planned to connect English lessons with one lesson of informatics, which is in a way recommended in Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání (2005, 19). The only difference was that there were not two teachers and two subjects, but one teacher and two subjects.

At first, students were given their tasks and also an example, because I wanted to make sure they understood well what to do. Also they had to be provided with a model in order to see what their final product should look like. In the first stage I was wondering whether students will determine the meaning of 'patron saint'. The term itself was unknown to them, but in spite of that they managed to determine the meaning, because

patron is spelled the same in Czech and saint was not an unknown word. Still, I used Svatý Václav as an example to strengthen understanding.

Students were then asked to write England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland on the blackboard. One of them misspelled Wales (Wailes), but the others corrected him. That means they paid attention. Their next task was to determine which saint belongs to which country. I used stereotypical pictures of the countries' citizens and it worked. As I expected, students hesitated between Ireland and Wales, but then one of them realized that the Irish are considered to have red hair (this is also why I decided to print the pictures in colour). Then I asked students about the picture with rugby players and why they thought I had chosen it. Students quite correctly answered that rugby is popular in Wales, which is a logical response. Here I chose to provide students with more information about the origin of rugby using culture aside technique.

The purpose of the next stage was to set up a small project. Students learned about their role in the project. The first step was to divide the class into four groups of three, which I did myself in order to control the pace of the lesson and the students' work as well. Afterwards I revealed the main task – small project about the patron saints. The next step was to assign a saint to each group by means of a small competition. Students were answering questions about Boxing Day and the fastest group could choose one. There was one simple reason – to avoid arguments among the groups. After that I distributed the handouts and explained the task further.

At this point I realized my lack of experience with this kind of activity set up. My intention was to make the task as clear as possible, but I felt that I cannot anticipate students' reactions and possible problems. Therefore, I had to check their understanding all the time, and it slowed the pace of the activity. The provided example of the project outcome was in my opinion the most useful. Students could see what they were supposed to create and they also understood how. Still, they were confused about the source of information for their projects, which I promised to explain later. In the next step students worked with the example and translated it. The text about Svatý Václav also contains a connection between the Czech and the English culture. Students learned about it and realized that Svatý Václav is not famous only in the Czech Republic.

My intention was to develop this topic further, so I asked students about other famous Czechs who became well known also in several countries. In this case I had to

laugh to myself, because I completely forgot about popular culture and students reminded me of it when they named Czech football players or other sportsmen.

The very last stage was homework, or rather schoolwork. Students finally learned where they would get the information for their projects, which was a bit surprising for them, but they were also glad, because it meant no homework this time. My main aim – to set up the project – was reached and we could proceed to the next stage which took place during the class of Informatics.

CONNECTION WITH THE THESIS STATEMENT

The idea for the last two activities comes from Abisambra's suggestions for use of festival celebrations. This topic can be used for a long-term work and is well suited for discussing the differences or similarities among various cultures (2005).

In this lesson students learned about patron saints of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland as another cultural aspect which may be considered either objective or subjective culture depending on the point of view. As a connection I used Svatý Václav – the patron saint of Czech Republic who is also known in England. Moreover, students were also reminded of the previous activity about Boxing Day, because this is when the English celebrate Svatý Václav who in a legend goes out to give money to the poor. Students thought about Czech personalities who were well known in other countries. However, the main goal of this activity was to set up a small project about the four patron saints in which students would search for information and use it to create a short presentation.

Students generally learned about the similarities and differences among the presented cultures. There are different patron saints – people of the past, but some of them are known and celebrated in more cultures, as well as contemporary personalities.

SCHOOLWORK – THE MIDDLE STAGE

The small project continued during the informatics lesson. Each group could use up to two computers, because first, they had to cooperate and second, it was easier for me to control their work and help them. From the previous lessons of Informatics students already knew the fundamentals of searching for information on the Internet and it was up to them whether they wanted to search Czech or English pages. I had already known what the resources on the Internet are, so I recommended them to search in English. Also,

considering the final outcome of the project, English sources were much more convenient, because both the questions and the final outcome were in English. And of course, students were permitted to use dictionaries.

I set the time limit to 25 minutes and gave students a few hints. First, when searching, it is good to use keywords. Second, it is not necessary to read the whole text. One can simply use fulltext search also with the help of keywords. And third, information should be verified also from other sources, or at least one should use reliable sources and here I told them to write down also the sources for each piece of information, because I wanted to be in control.

Students began working and I could observe as they split the work among them. Typically, one was searching the web, one was working with their handout noting what they found and one was using a dictionary. Sadly, there was one student missing, but the other two from her group managed to do their job well. Students cooperated, and with my help they managed to find all the necessary information in about 20 - 22 minutes. Basically, students did all the work, but I judged whether the outcome is good (true) or not. A few times I also encouraged students to find more information, especially concerning the open questions.

In the second half of the lesson students were putting together their presentation texts. I could observe that one of them did the writing, while the other two or one cooperated. Again, some used dictionary and some also looked for additional information on the web. In the end just one group failed to finish their work, so it was up to them to come with the final product till the next lesson. Generally, I was glad to observe that students really used the given time, because the task had a meaning for them. Moreover, we connected English with Informatics. My intention also was to control their work and provide help, but students did not need it as much as I had feared.

Before students went home I reminded them to remember how to draw the flags, prepare unknown words from their presentations plus their Czech translations. I put these instructions into 3 points to make it clear: First, prepare the presentation text. Second, learn how to draw the flags. And third, prepare the unknown words.

2.3.6. Activity Plan 5 – Patron Saints / Part 2

School: 2nd ZŠ Komenského, Mladá Boleslav
Class: 8.A
Activity: 5th
Date: 11th October 2004
Time: 45 minutes
Topic: Patron saints / part 2

AIMS

- Lead the Ss' presentations.

- Use handouts for Ss to write down the presented information.

- Make students communicate among themselves.

- Make students evaluate their classmates' work.

OBJECTIVES

- Ss present their projects about patron saints.

- Ss communicate new information to the others who listen and fill in their handouts.

- Ss practise their speaking and listening skills.

- Ss evaluate their work.

STEPS

Warm up – 7 minutes

> T asks the groups whether they are prepared to give their presentations

> Ss should be prepared to give their presentations

> T reminds Ss what they will do – write unknown vocabulary from their texts on the blackboard, draw a flag on the blackboard and read their presentations. The others will listen and fill in the handouts they will receive.

> T asks one St from each group to come to the blackboard, write the name of their patron saint and below that also the prepared vocabulary. The other Ss copy the vocabulary into their exercise books. T continuously checks the vocabulary on the blackboard and corrects it if necessary.

Presentations – 35 minutes

> T distributes the handouts (see appendix) and together with Ss checks the first set of the

questions. Ss should easily understand with the help of vocabulary on the blackboard. Ss are also told that the rectangle on the right side is for the flags.

> Two Ss from the 1st group come to the blackboard. One of them draws the flag while the other reads the presentation. The class listen, write answers to the questions in their handouts and then they also copy the flag.

> T asks the other three groups to evaluate the presentation using 1 to 5 points explaining that 5 points means they liked it the most. Ss are given a short time limit to decide. T notes the overall result into his notepad.

> To check the Ss' answers, T takes a small ball and gives it to one Ss. The Ss is told to read the first question and throw the ball to another Ss who will answer. The rest of Ss agree or disagree. If the respondent is wrong, then the Ss who corrects him or her gets the ball and reads the next question.

> The next round begins – two Ss from the second group come to the blackboard and the cycle repeats three times more.

Conclusion and HW – 3 minutes

> T praises Ss' work and tells them how they evaluated each group. The best group receive a small prize from the T.

> T finally gives Ss the final questionnaire and asks them to fill it at home.

REFLECTION

The final activity was obviously very time-demanding, so I decided to use the whole lesson. The main objective was to present students' projects and evaluate them, which was fulfilled. The first possible problem regarded students' readiness and I decided to ask them directly before the lesson started. I also had a quick glance at the presentation of the group which had failed to finish it in the Informatics class, just to make sure they did not write any nonsense, but it was acceptable.

The actual lesson began and in the initial stage I repeated the main three instructions (vocabulary, flag and presentation) and chose 4 students (1 from each group) to come to the blackboard. Their task was to write the name of the patron saints and appropriate vocabulary. In this stage it was important to watch the spelling and also the correct

meaning of the translated words. There were only few mistakes, but I had to wipe off the blackboard some duplicates in order to keep the blackboard well arranged.

In the next stage students were giving their presentations while the others listened and answered the questions in their handouts. After we finished the first round, the lesson had a smooth pace, but the first round brought a few complications. For the first time in the lesson students had to evaluate their peers' work and also understand the "ball game". Therefore, these activities had to be explained first and it inevitably slowed the lesson down.

Next, students in groups had to decide who would give the presentation and who would draw the flag. Of course, speaking in front of the class is a much greater task than drawing on the blackboard, so I had to make the choice myself in order to avoid conflicts. All the students had to be involved in the activity, so those who had written the vocabulary on the blackboard in the previous part of the activity were left out. This way all three students from each group played their part.

The second round was much smoother than the first and in the last two rounds everybody knew what to do. As I see it, students understood well, because it was them who did the whole presentation and also the questions in handouts were similar, so reading one set of the questions basically meant reading them all. In the end I was satisfied with students' work, even though there were some mistakes in the presentations, but this is normal. Students managed to answer the questions, because when they did not understand what the speaker had just said, they were not afraid to ask him to repeat it.

Finally I praised their projects and gave the group with the most points small prizes – chocolate bars. Then I asked them to fill in the final questionnaire at home as their homework.

CONNECTION WITH THE THESIS STATEMENT

Students further developed and finally finished the main theme of the last lesson's activity: patron saints of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. This theme filled the whole lesson in which students presented a short text about each of the patron saints, an appropriate national flag and also new vocabulary to the others. These presentations were a basis for the following activities. That means they communicated information about a

cultural topic, listened to presentations, also answered questions, corrected and evaluated their work.

During the presentations there was a live atmosphere, because somebody was still on their feet. Students were also asking the speakers to repeat the information they failed to hear, so there was a live and spontaneous communication among them. However, I could not afford to lose the control over the activity, so I had to hold their temper. The goal was reached. Students learned about yet another aspect of the target culture and they successfully communicated with each other.

HOMEWORK – THE FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The last homework was the final questionnaire. Its purpose was to find out how students liked the activities and I used it for my final evaluation.

2.4. Evaluation after the Activities

After the final lesson I met students once again and we had a discussion. Students returned the final questionnaires and I asked them what they liked or disliked about the cultural activities.

Some students enjoyed the activities, because they employed interesting topics and some students appreciated that they did not do the usual work. Generally, students showed interest in cultural topics, even though there were a few of them who did not care much and did not contribute to the discussion. I asked them specifically what they would like to do during the English classes, but their response was blurred and inconclusive, so I continued and asked the class what they did not like or what could have been better. I realized that the responses targeted rather my style of teaching than the activities we did. Students felt that the pace of the lessons was too quick sometimes, that is because we had a lot to do and sometimes they also had problems understanding my instructions, which I am well aware of. However, I was pleased that they had nothing against the activities, rather the contrary.

My next job was to collect all the necessary material for the next evaluation including my observations and notes. The evaluation has to relate the gained information with the thesis statement of this paper in order to determine whether this statement was or was not confirmed. The final conclusions from these findings are to be drawn in the final chapter.

3. CONCLUSION

The thesis statement of this paper claims that teaching culture in EFL classes at elementary school can be used to develop students' communicative competence and also improve their knowledge of culture. By learning the target culture or cultures students may also support their cultural awareness. The activities were designed to follow this statement and prove the assumptions.

The intention was to catch students' interest and make the lessons lively and communicative with the help of interesting topics, visual aids, controversial themes and encourage students to become involved in the activities as much as possible. Also, the topic of holidays of the final three activities was chosen in accordance with the thesis statement and one of its main points – culture. Moreover, I also tried to design the activities in order to present culture from the basic explanation of the term to more complex tasks.

My practical teaching was based mainly on theories and approaches by Chastain (1988), Paige (2000), Seelye (1996), and Byram (1997). At first the activities dealt with students' feelings and attitudes towards foreign cultures and then I added also the aspect of knowledge.

There are three factors to be considered in order to make conclusions: evaluation of the final questionnaire, discussion with students which was also mentioned in the previous chapter and teacher's reflections. This information is used to support the diploma thesis as well as the three questions mentioned in chapter 2.1.

Final evaluation of the professional project

After the fifth activity students received the final questionnaire as their homework. Their task was to answer how they liked or disliked the activities, evaluate my teaching style and state whether they felt they had learned new information and gained new insights into the target culture or cultures. Not all the pieces of information from this questionnaire were suitable for the thesis statement verification and some were just for my personal research.

The first two activities were designed to target students' denial stage of ethnocentrism and improve their feelings towards different cultures. A positive shift in students' attitudes and feelings towards a foreign culture is one of the aspects for

consideration; however, according to Durocher's research (2007) it is certainly not easy to assess, because valid examination of students' attitudes and teacher's instructions requires a dedicated psychometric instrument and a computer programme (149 - 150). More importantly it would require many more activities designed for the desired purpose.

I decided to evaluate the activities using students' opinions, my own reflections and Seelye's (1996) "Factors Contributing to Effective Use of Methodologies" as well as "Factors Contributing to Ineffective Use of Methodologies" (15 - 16). Seelye states numerous factors to be considered during evaluation of activities in intercultural communication classrooms which I'm going to use in the following paragraphs.

First, *clear application to the real life*. The first two activities dealt with students' feelings about different cultures and the final three activities on the other hand taught them how people in Britain celebrate Boxing Day and the days of patron saints of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Feelings and celebrations are important aspects of subjective culture according to Durocher (2007, 145) and Chastain (1988, 304) and subjective culture is directly connected with real life, so the link is clear.

Second, *learning was cooperative; people taught each other*. My reflections show that students were cooperating when determining the meaning of pictures (activity 1), provided their own ideas and presented them to the others (activity 2) and worked in pairs and groups with Boxing Day and patron saints topics (activities 3, 4 and 5). Therefore, students used their own experience, knowledge and freshly acquired information to teach each other. Post-activities (games, cross-checking) were employed in order to make sure that the pieces of information were passed successfully.

Third, *participants became involved and were used as resources*. The activities were designed to make students think about the main topics and act as resources especially in pair work and group work (activities 3, 4 and 5) when they presented their findings to the others. Students also provided their knowledge regarding Czech culture. However, it was heavily controlled by the teacher, because I respected Chastain's opinion (1988) that students acting as a resource should have guidance (308). The teacher in the second activity also used the technique called Culture aside (see chapter 1.9.1.) making sudden culture comments, which is also recommended by Chastain (1988, 309).

Fourth, *participants became aware of their own values*. Especially the first two activities dealt with people's values and behaviour in general. In the first activity students

learned that different people may have different opinions, ergo values, and the second homework made students think about various stereotypes among cultures and experience with unfair behaviour. Therefore, students were expressing themselves according to their values.

Fifth, *experience was fun*. This aspect was up to students to evaluate. The activities used a lot of visual aids and topics which were chosen to be fun. Students were of the opinion that the activities were unusual, entertaining and especially not stereotypical. However, some also mentioned weirdness of the first two activities. I am not completely sure whether they meant the actual activities or the presented cultures. Both may be possible and as Durocher (2007) states: ""bizarre" or "weird" are understood as manifestations of denial and defense" (149). My personal belief is that those particular students meant the activities, because the presented cultures are close to Czech culture.

Finally, there are questions of *poor pacing* and *understanding the exercise instructions*. These are of course factors contributing to ineffective use of methodologies. Students sometimes felt that the pace was too quick for them and they did not understand some instructions. My reflections show that I was struggling to keep the pace of the activities, but perhaps it was overdone. And giving instructions was always a challenge for me, which I am aware of.

Research questions and the thesis statement

The previous paragraphs clearly show the appropriateness of culture-based activities as a part of the curriculum. Culture can be used as an appropriate topic for activities in ELT classrooms and it can be enjoyable for students. Moreover, students successfully communicated with the teacher and among themselves in order to gain new knowledge. On the other hand, measurement of shift in students' feelings towards the presented cultures could not be concluded satisfactorily, at least not according to Durocher's research (2007, 149 – 150).

However, Seelye's (1996) book *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning* was used as the main source for designing my first two activities which targeted exactly students' feelings and the very same book was also used for the main evaluation which successfully supported the diploma thesis. Therefore, it may be concluded that the first two

activities from the professional project can be suitable also for positive development of students' attitudes towards the target cultures, even though would require a longer research.

Therefore, this professional project may be followed by a long-term research of teaching styles and activities designed to improve students' feelings towards foreign cultures. It would require a full integration into the EFL curriculum, stable teaching background and elaborate methods of evaluation, but I believe that the outcome would provide valuable data.

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Appendix 1

Zakroužkuj vhodné odpovědi, případně odpověz do řádku

1. Jak hodnotíš svůj vztah k Velké Británii a její kultuře?

a) Mám rád tuto zemi, zajímá mě a chtěl bych se o ní dozvědět víc.

b) Příliš mě nezajímá, ale nijak mi nevadí. Rád se dozvím více.

c) Nezajímá mě a nemám potřebu se o ní dozvídat více.

d) Nemám tuto zemi a její kulturu rád.

2. Jak moc si myslíš, že víš o Velké Británii, jejích lidech a zvycích?

a) Znám tuto zemi dobře a živě se o ni zajímám.

b) Vím o ní dle mého názoru dost, ale mám mezery.

c) Asi stejně jako o dalších zemích.

d) Nemyslím si, že o Velké Británii vím mnoho.

3. Byl/byla jsi už někdy ve Velké Británii? Případně jak dlouho a kde?

a) Ano: _____

b) Ne

4. Jak si uvědomuješ rozdíly mezi částmi Velké Británie? (Anglie, Wales, Skotsko, Severní Irsko)

a) Dobře znám rozdíly mezi nimi i v kultuře a historii.

b) Znám základní informace jako polohu, důležitá města, atp.

c) Vím, že existují.

d) Beru Velkou Británii jako celek a nijak ji nerozlišuji.

5. Myslíš si, že jsou velké rozdíly mezi lidmi v České republice a Velké Británii?

a) Ano, lidé se chovají odlišně.

b) Ne, jsou vesměs stejní.

c) Nevím, nemůžu to dobře posoudit.

6. Je pro tebe důležité umět dobře komunikovat s britským rodilým mluvčím?

a) Je to velmi důležité, abych dokázal říci přesně to, co chci.

b) Důležité je hlavně umět se nějak domluvit.

c) Není to pro mě důležité a myslím, že to nebudu moc potřebovat.

**7.** Myslíš si, že učit se cizí kulturu je důležité stejně jako se učit její jazyk?

a) Ano, je to stejně důležité.

b) Znát kulturu je dobré, ale není tak důležitá jako jazyk.

c) Ne, učit se jazyk mi stačí.

**8.** Jak moc se dozvídáš o britské kultuře (nebo kultuře jiné anglicky mluvící země) v hodinách anglického jazyka?

a) Téměř každou hodinu se dozvím něco nového.

b) Občas nám učitel/učitelka vylíčí nějaké téma, co není v učebnici.

c) Pouze to, co je popsáno v učebnici.

d) Kulturní témata se vůbec neprobírají.

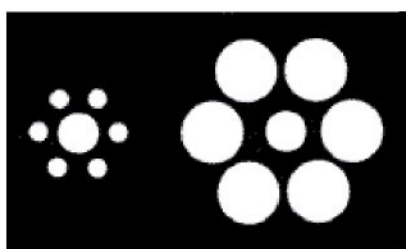• Máš rád nějakého britského zpěváka, skupinu nebo jiné umělce? Jaké?

Appendix 2
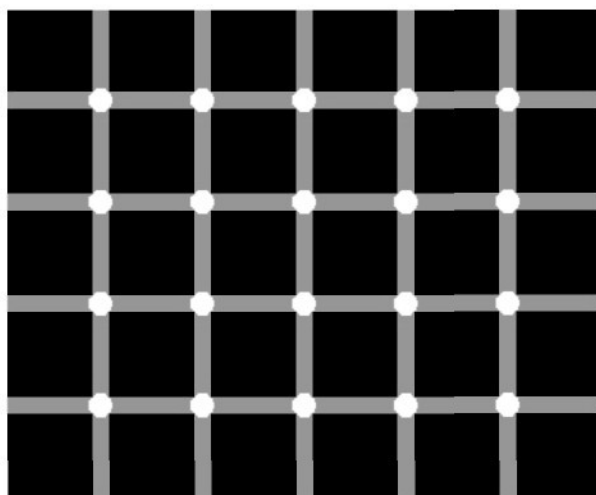
Picture 1
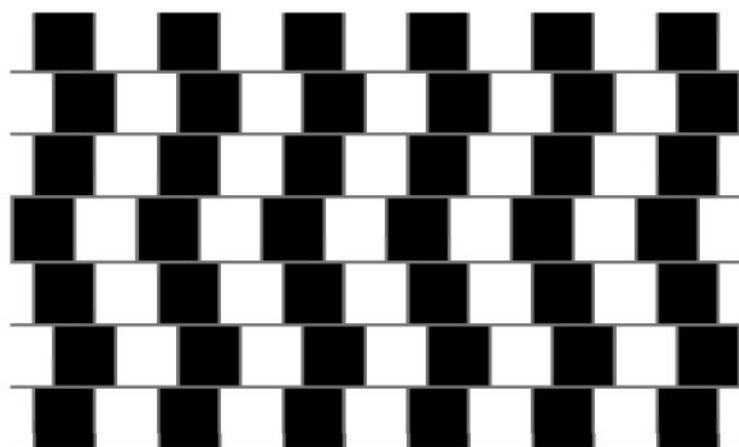
Picture 2

Picture 3

Picture 4

Picture 5

Picture 6

Appendix 3

Cultural stereotypes

Fill in: Czech, English, Irish, Scots or Welsh

The _____ are gentlemen.

The _____ are drunk all the time.

The _____ like football.

The _____ hate the English.

The _____ have bad teeth.

The _____ like money very much.

The _____ are musicians.

Key for the teacher:

The English are gentlemen, have bad teeth, like football

The Irish are drunk all the time, hate the English

The Scots like money, hate the English

The Welsh are musicians

The Czech are musicians, like football, are drunk all the time

Appendix 4

Boxing Day (pictures)

Boxing Day (listening - transcript)

Reporter> Nicola, you're from England.

Nicola> Yes, I am.

R> OK. Now in England you have something called "Boxing Day"

N> Yes, we do.

R> So, we don't have that in America. What is Boxing Day?

N> Well, Boxing Day is always on the 26th of December, the Day after Christmas Day, and it was originally called Boxing Day because it was the Day in England when the very rich people in Victorian times gave presents to their servants, the Day after Christmas, and usually it would be something like money, or food but they would give it to them in a small box, and so on December the 26th, servants would receive their boxes, the Christmas boxes, and that's why it was called Boxing Day.

Boxing Day (handouts)

For the "Czech"

Task 1: Ask your partner and choose or write the correct answers. There may be more than one   correct   answer.

Example 1: *When is Boxing Day?*

Boxing Day is:

1. on the 28th of November
2. on the 26th of December
3. on the 15th of September

In the past on Boxing Day people:

1. gave presents to their friends
2. gave money and food to the poor
3. gave money and food to the rich

Today on Boxing Day people:

1. give small gifts to others
2. sit at home with family and play games
3. go to the church

On Boxing Day people eat:

_____

Task 2: Now answer your partner's questions.

Example 2: *No, we don't have Boxing Day.*

For the "English"

Task 1: Use the information below to answer your partner's questions

Example 1: *Boxing Day is on the 26th of December*

Boxing Day is an English holiday and it is always on the 26th of December. In the past the rich people usually gave small boxes with money and food to the poor on Boxing Day. But now they mainly sit at home with their family, play games and give small gifts to others. They also eat turkey or turkey sandwiches.

Task 2: Ask your partner about the 26th of December in the Czech Republic:

Do they also have Boxing Day? _____

What do they do on this Day? _____

What do they eat? _____

What do they drink? _____

Appendix 5

Saint Andrew

Saint Patrick

Saint David

Saint George

Saint Patrick

Make a short presentation (2 minutes max) about Saint Patrick. Find answers to these questions and prepare a short text. Use the text below as an example.

- When and where was Saint Patrick born?
- What did Saint Patrick do? He was a priest/builder/farmer.
- What is he famous for? He killed all dragons/snakes/bears in Ireland.
- When is Saint Patrick's Day celebrated?
- What do the people Wales do on Saint Patrick's Day?

Also learn how to draw the flag of Ireland and write down unknown vocabulary + translation.

Saint George

Make a short presentation (2 minutes max) about Saint George. Find answers to these questions and prepare a short text. Use the text below as an example.

- When was Saint George born?
- Who was Saint George? He was a farmer/Roman soldier/fisherman
- What did he kill to save a girl? He killed a whale/tiger/dragon
- When is Saint George's Day celebrated in England?
- How do the people in England celebrate Saint George's Day?

Also learn how to draw the flag of England and write down unknown vocabulary + translation.

Saint David

Make a short presentation (2 minutes max) about Saint David. Find answers to these questions and prepare a short text. Use the text below as an example.

- When and where was Saint David born?
- Who was he? He was a soldier/bishop/builder.
- When is Saint David's Day celebrated?
- What do the people in Wales wear on Saint David's Day and what do they do?

Also learn how to draw the flag of Wales and write down unknown vocabulary + translation.

Saint Andrew

Make a short presentation (2 minutes max) about Saint Andrew. Find answers to these questions and prepare a short text. Use also text below as an example.

- When was Saint Andrew born?
- Who was Saint Andrew? He was a soldier/fisherman/priest.
- How did he die? He was crucified/murdered/died in a war.
- When is Saint Andrew's Day celebrated?
- How do the people in Scotland celebrate Saint Andrew's Day?

Also learn how to draw the flag of Scotland and write down unknown vocabulary + translation.

Example:

Svatý Václav

Svatý Václav was a duke of Bohemia in the 10th century. He was born in 921. He grew up in Bohemia and also in England. He was murdered by his own brother. Today he is the main patron saint of the Czech Republic and it is said that he waits with a big army in Blaník to help his country in danger. Svatý Václav's Day is on the 28th of September.

England also celebrates Svatý Václav. People sing *Good King Wenceslas* on 26th of December. This carol is about a king who goes around the country and gives money to the poor farmers.

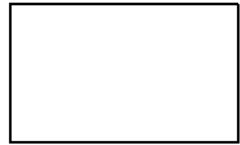Vocabulary: duke – [dju:k] – kníže, celebrate – [selibreit] – slavit, carol – [kærəl] – koleda

Appendix 6
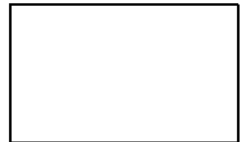
Saint Patrick – patron saint of Ireland

- When and where was Saint Patrick born?
- What did Saint Patrick do? He was a priest/builder/farmer.
- What is he famous for? He killed all dragons/snakes/bears in Ireland.
- When is Saint Patrick's day celebrated?
- What do the people do on Saint Patrick's day?

Saint George – patron saint of England

- When was Saint George born?
- Who was Saint George? He was a farmer/Roman soldier/fisherman
- What did he kill to save a girl? He killed a whale/tiger/dragon
- When is Saint George's day celebrated in England?
- How do the people in England celebrate Saint George's day?

Saint David – patron saint of Wales

- When and where was Saint David born?
- Who was he? He was a soldier/bishop/builder.
- When is Saint David's day celebrated?
- What do the people in Wales wear on Saint David's day?

Saint Andrew – patron saint of Scotland

- When was Saint Andrew born?
- Who was Saint Andrew? He was a soldier/fisherman/priest.
- How did he die? He was crucified/murdered/died in a war.
- When is Saint Andrew's day celebrated?
- How do the people in Scotland celebrate Saint Andrew's day?