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RELATIONSHIP IN THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE WRITING
CLASSROOM

Vztah mezi vyučováním a testováním psaní v hodinách anglického jazyka

diplomová práce 00-FP-JAK-60

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Diplomová práce zahrnuje akademický výzkum a ověření teorie o vlivu a efektivnosti zařazení a využívání testování při výuce psaní v hodinách anglického jazyka. Cílem je zhodnotit, jak pravidelné užívání různých technik testování přispívá k rozvoji psaní v cizím jazyce. Student napíše práci, ve které prokáže porozumění teorii a schopnost využít ji při volbě vhodných postupů jak při výuce, tak při testování psaní a také schopnost posoudit efektivnost teorie a zvolených metodických postupů.

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PODĚKOVÁNÍ

Děkuji všem, kteří mi pomohli dokončit moji práci. Chtěla bych zvláště poděkovat paní PaedDr. Zuzaně Šaffkové, CSc. za trpělivost a vydatnou pomoc při zpracování mého projektu.

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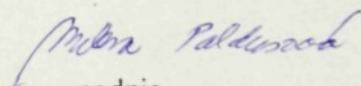
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ANOTACE

Cílem diplomové práce je ukázat, že hodnocení písemných projevů žáků v hodinách anglického jazyka musí vycházet ze soustavného strukturovaného vedení žáků k rozvoji jejich schopností a dovedností v psaní. Jako efektivní nástroj zlepšení psané komunikace v angličtině bylo zvoleno řízené psaní, které je vhodné zejména pro začátečníky. Cíle aktivit směřujících na upevnění odpovídající úrovně psaní se staly základem pro stanovení základních kritérií hodnocení práce žáků. Celkové výsledky výzkumu jednak potvrzují souvislost mezi obsahem vyučování psaní a zpětnou vazbu v hodnocení psaní, ale také ukazují na nutnost zlepšení výuky psaní na základních školách, a to nejen v hodinách anglického jazyka.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the Diploma thesis is to show that assessment of pupils' written products in the English classes must be based on a continual, structured training of their writing skills. Guided writing has been chosen as a tool to improve the pupils' written communication in the English language, which is suitable mainly for beginners. The aims and objectives of activities aiming at development of the pupils' relevant level of writing abilities became the basis for the formulation of the assessment criteria of their products. The general findings of the Diploma thesis prove the link between the content of teaching writing and evaluation of its products on one hand, and support the necessity to improve the whole system of teaching writing at basic school, that is not only in English classes.

ANOTATION

Die Diplomarbeit hat das Ziel zu zeigen, dass die Bewertung der schriftlichen Schuelerarbeiten in dem Englischunterricht von der systematischen strukturierten Leitung der Schueler zur entwicklung ihrer Schreibfaehigkeiten ausgehen muss. Als effektives Mittel fuer die Verbesserung der Schriftlichen Kommunikation wurde „das gesteuerte Schreiben“ erwaeht, das vor allem fuer die Anfaenger geeignet ist. Die Ziele der Aktivitaeten, die das Schreibniveau festigen sollen, wurden zu Basiskriterien der Bewertung der Schuelerarbeiten. Die Ergebnisse der Forschung zeigen den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Inhalt des Unterrichts von Schreiben und dem Feedback in dessen Bewertung und zeigen auch, dass es noetig ist den Schreibunterricht (nicht nur in Englisch) zu verbessern.

Title of Paper:

Teaching and Testing Relationship in the English Language writing classroom.

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CHAPTER I

I. I. INTRODUCTION

I. I. I. Writing as a way of communication

Communication is the fundamental manifestation of human behaviour. Through communication we get contact with either people or ourselves in our minds. Two basic forms of communication create the whole process of discourse: non- verbal communication, i.e. body movements, hand gestures, facial expressions, and verbal communication through spoken or written words. When we talk, we can use different shades of the tone and the pitch of our voice and accompany the words by gestures and mimic expressions in order that our message is understandable, persuasive or attractive for the listener.

The listener has also a chance to ask any questions if anything is not clear. However, the situation is different when we write. In order to be understandable, it is necessary to master the written language. First of all, we have to be able to write correct letters, then we should choose appropriate words and sentences to express our ideas. We must be careful about organization, form and cohesion of our piece of writing; about making our thoughts clear and transparent for the reader. Body language and the tone of our voice are replaced by capitalization and punctuation, correct and legible spelling of words, link between ideas, and coherence of the whole written discourse.

Despite of these difficulties, there are some advantages of writing comparing to oral communication. We are not under the time pressure, we can think about our ideas and rewrite them if we are not satisfied with them. On the other hand writing can be difficult because it is a solitary activity and there is no interaction or immediate feedback from the reader. Moreover, while a spoken error is usually forgotten, awkward written expressions remain as indications of misunderstandings or insufficient writing abilities.

Despite of all these restrictions, writing will always be an important means of conveying one's thoughts and ideas and thus it will be necessary to work on its sufficient and erudite performance.

I. I. II. Personal experience

As a pupil I started learning English after the Velvet revolution at grammar school. Our English teacher was not experienced enough as she learned the language with us. We learned new vocabulary, practised speaking, listening, reading, and also writing. In terms of writing, our teacher focused mainly on controlled writing activities like dictations, grammar tests and translations from Czech to English. Writing was the tool for checking our knowledge rather than a means to express our ideas. I remember that I did not like writing while studying at grammar school. My approach changed when I started to study at university. In our methodology classes, I found out that writing could be taught more effectively and meaningfully. I also realised that writing is a demanding process, which is an important and inseparable part of learning/teaching a foreign language. My own negative experience with writing practice at grammar school and new pieces of knowledge from methodology classes made me explore the situation with teaching writing at schools more in depth.

First of all, during my teaching practice I observed English lessons and focused on frequency of writing activities during English lessons. I noticed that in most lessons writing was used only for the purpose of copying notes from the blackboard or putting down notes to students' exercise books. Even if teachers make use of writing activities in English lessons, most of these activities narrow down to controlled exercises and tests on grammar structures or vocabulary. In some of the English lessons I observed, the teachers chose guided or free writing tasks but the topics of the writing tasks chosen from textbooks were stereotyped and did not attract students to their writing.

Such approach to teaching writing caused that students regarded writing not as an opportunity to express their opinions but as a tool to check their knowledge in the English language and a meaningless testing activity.

When I timed the writing activities during the observed lessons, only a few minutes at average were devoted to writing during an English lesson. Moreover, writing activities were mostly chosen from textbooks and lacked any prompts to make students think logically and critically.

I. I. III. Interviews with other teachers

In autumn 1999, I designed a very simple questionnaire focusing on the teachers' own opinions and experiences with teaching writing. I interviewed two teachers of English at secondary schools and they both confirmed the necessity of teaching writing in a foreign language. They both confessed that very little time is devoted to practising writing in English lessons. They also said that teachers have to be experienced enough to teach writing effectively. To my question what kinds of writing activities they use in their lessons one of them answered: tests, fill-in charts and homework. Another admitted that she occasionally had tried guided and free writing activities with intermediate students. They both choose activities from textbooks, while only one of them is able to prepare her own writing tasks. They both evaluate students' works either by marks or comments. When my supervising teacher talked about her opinions about teaching writing in English classes, she said: "Teaching writing is very demanding for both the teacher and the pupils but it is a necessary requirement for learning a foreign language. Pupils learn how to formulate their thoughts, how to develop their communicative skills in a written form."

The interview confirmed my opinion that teaching writing is underrated at schools, that the teachers do not have enough experience with teaching writing, and there is not enough time devoted for writing activities in English lessons.

I. I. IV. The role of teaching writing

Without practising writing, pupils would not be able to express their ideas. Their ability to express their thoughts is closely connected with historical and cultural traditions of the country where they live. Luria (1976) found out that people who live in culture where writing has little tradition are mostly not able to abstract their thoughts (in Temple, Meredith, Steele, 1994, p.12). Even if writing essays as a part of the Czech language has had a long tradition, students have not been actually taught how to compose, support, develop, and evaluate a decent piece of writing. Writing has become a tool for assessment of students language performance rather than a means for development of pupils' self- expression, logical reasoning as well as the language itself..

I. II. THEORY

I. II. I. Importance of writing in English classes

Teaching writing plays an important role in the English language classes and influences the process of learning. Raimes (1983) supports this assumption when she says: "Writing helps our students to learn. How? First, writing reinforces grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that we have been teaching to our students. Second, when our students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned to say, to take risks. Third, when writing, they necessarily become very involved with the new language, the effort to express ideas and the constant use of eye, head and brain is a unique way to reinforce learning..." (p. 3).

However, the lack of experience, methodological approaches as well as materials may become the basic reasons why writing is neglected and remains behind other skills at many schools. Even if writing activities are included in English lessons, they very often aim at practising spelling, grammar or vocabulary. But as Byrne (1979) says writing is "... clearly much more than production of graphic symbols...we produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in a certain ways...writing is learnt through a process of instructions..." (p. 1).

In other words teaching writing does not mean only certain grammatical forms put into a structure it is a meaningful message put on a sheet of paper that should convey pupils' thoughts and ideas. Moreover, writing is a necessary part of other tasks and activities the students are required to fulfil when their thinking abilities are required. It should not become an isolated subject that is taught for its own sake. On the other hand, from my teaching experience I know that children are interested in writing in English from the beginning of learning the language. They like writing new words down, later describing their emotions or writing simple postcards and letters. However, these writing tasks are often solitary writing experiences which lack any sequence, continuity and system.

I. II. II. Process of writing

When a teacher requires an effective piece of writing, it is not only the product that students are asked to work on, but a certain process must precede. It is of a big importance in teaching writing to put balance on both process and product. As Fulcher (1996: 46) says: "The process-writing approach helps us to understand what it is writers go through whilst they are writing, so that we can provide students with insights into what good writers do." White and Arndt (1991: 3) see writing as "... a form of problem-solving which involves such processes as generating ideas, discovering a 'voice' with which to write, planning, goal-setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written, as well as what has been written, and searching for language with which to express exact meanings." Generating ideas is the most important phase during which students clarify their opinions, associations, and gather material for their further writing. Sharing ideas with other classmates or the teacher enables students to make some changes, narrow their scope of ideas, explain possible misunderstandings and thus improve their work. The last phase evaluation is seemed as a powerful source of improving writing which stresses the students' involvement in assessment according to White and Arndt (1991). Making students look at their products on their own, helps them to realise their weaknesses and strengths, possible improvements and necessary refinement. Students thus feel responsibility for their learning.

Students have to have also certain knowledge of spoken language when they start to write in English. They must be aware of using right words, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Correct written discourse goes hand in hand with the clarity of a piece of writing. All the requirements for an effective process of writing mentioned above should become a basis for writing activities in English classes, their choice and usage. The students should realise that writing is a process which follows certain rules and that a text must be well organised in order to be clear for the reader. Raimes (1983) describes in the following diagram what the teacher and the learner have to deal with in order to achieve clear, fluent and effective written product. It is not only word choice, grammar, syntax, content, organisation and mechanics but also the writer's thinking processes, audience and purpose that influence the whole process of writing.

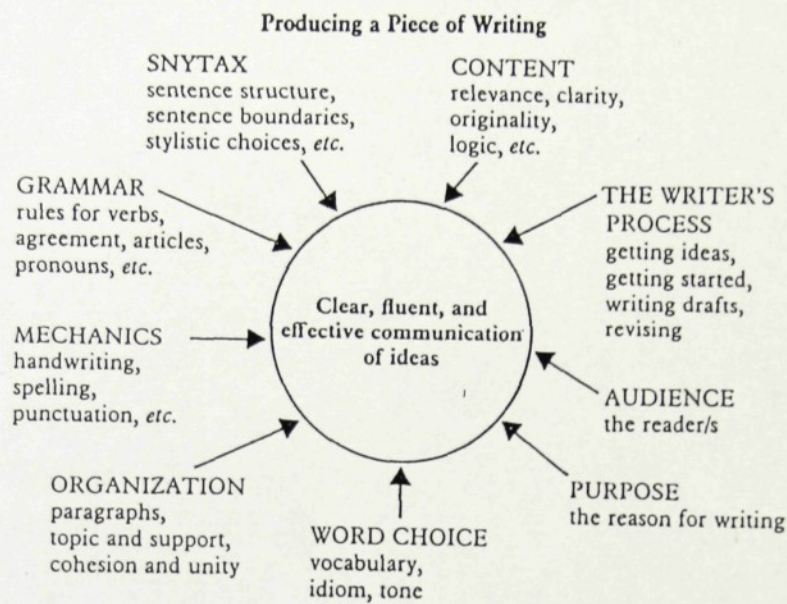


Figure 1: A diagram of writing (Pincas, 1982, p. 6)

I. II. III. Role of students' involvement

In order to achieve the students' involvement in the process of writing, the writing tasks must be attractive and meaningful for them. The students must see that there is a certain purpose in writing they are required to do. To motivate the writers to produce a well-organised and meaningful text, the teacher can use different tasks, attractive themes, audio and visual materials. Especially, the choice of material influences very much the students' involvement in writing tasks. It must respect students' level of the English language, it must reflect their interests and finally, it must be prompting enough for the students to respond effectively. As White and Arndt (1991) declare: "Material which is vague, ambiguous and open to numerous interpretations provides plenty of room for the writers to exercise their creativity, and is especially useful for stimulating divergent and original writing ..." (p. 35).

From my own experience as a student and a teacher trainer, I know that the most common purpose of writing tasks in teaching English is to practise and test grammar structures and forms, i.e. using the future tense in predictions, practising past tenses in narration, incorporating 'there is', 'there are' in descriptions, etc., which does not support students' positive attitudes towards writing. Not only the discouraging purpose of writing activities but also unattractive topics selected for writing tasks can cause writers' disinterest. Meaningful tasks, life-like situations, provoking problems and open cases can become challenging sources for the students. The effectiveness of a writing task can be also strengthened by appropriate and variable material. For example, using visual materials like pictures, videotapes or OHP "... clearly have a great potential as an aid to developing writing skills and can provide both context and stimulation for a variety of activities..." (Byrne, 1979: 81). If students see the sense of the activity, if they are eager to work and participate, then the final result of their efforts is much better.

I. II. IV. Assessment of writing

The teacher can assess a piece of writing only after it is evident that the students practised successfully the activity which is going to be evaluated. The students should become more confident with the writing assignments so that they would consider assessment as a kind of help leading to improvement. Any kind of evaluation, assessment and testing should become a source of progress rather than the mere picture of the students' errors.

Why is assessment so important and unspeakable part of the teaching/learning process? Heaton (1990) states the following advantages and reasons why we assess students :

- **to check progress:**

Both the teacher and students can see the consciousness of students' reaching steps in learning advice. According to the students' course of advancement the teacher can change or modify his or her ways of teaching.

- **to encourage students**

It is good for students' to know about their strengths and weaknesses to continue in their further work. If they are aware of their progress they are prompted to their writing.

- to reveal learning difficulties

Assessment is not a means to punish students for their mistakes but it should help them in their progress of writing. If any learning difficulties appear, it is a signal for the teacher to change his or her strategies.

I. II. V. What is assessment ?

The word “assessment“ is often replaced by “judgement“, “evaluation“, or “testing“. “More appropriately, the term includes all available methods of obtaining information regarding what the students are learning and how effective the teaching is.“ (Making the grade, 1987: 2) According to this definition, any kind of assessment that is based on aims and objectives of the course can become a tool of improvement. Evaluation helps the teacher find out about students’ achievement in learning, and thus modify his or her teaching accordingly. The following diagram supports the idea of the link between evaluation and progress.

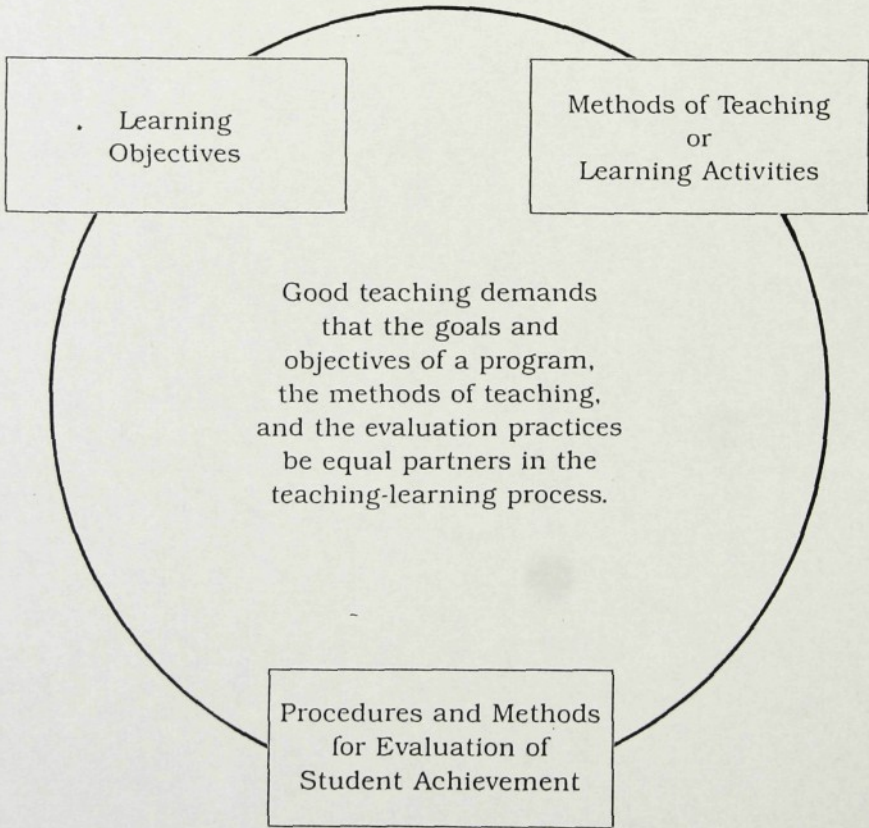


Figure 2: Making the grade (1987: 28)

The process of assessment is based on two principles (Making the grade 1987: 28) :

1. **Evaluation is a systematic process.** It is not casual, unplanned, unstructured endeavour, it is a process in which teachers and students learn about their respective achievements and about the possible need for change if growth is to take place.
2. **Evaluation is conducted within the context of the objectives identified for the program, course, unit or lesson.** The objectives may be for an individual, group or class. Only with clearly defined and stated objectives is it possible to judge the extent of progress. These objectives should be fully understood by students before teaching and evaluation take place (summarised from Making the grade, 1987: 9).

Generally, there are two basic purposes of assessment. The first aims are at the quality of students' learning. Such assessment provides learners with information about what they know, how much they understand and how well they can use what they have learned. Students' conscious realisation of their own progress contributes to the development of their cognitive skills as a necessary precondition for effective learning. When students are more aware of their process of learning, the barrier between the target knowledge and the path toward it is broken. Moreover, when they can perceive their own progress, they are motivated toward gaining more. This **formative assessment** can be used through all year to "...improve instruction and learning, rather than merely to rank or grade students" (Making the grade, 1987: 9).

The second purpose of assessment aims at students' achievement in language performance. This performance assessment provides a basis for approval or disapproval on students' achievements. This also differ from the previous type of assessment. in that it usually focuses on the end product rather than particular stage of the learning process. This **summative assessment** thus defines students' achievement and measures effectiveness of the program. It is used at the end of an activity, a unit or a program.

The process of assessing, no matter what kind of assessment is touched, embodies "a sequence of operations:

- **defining requirements or objectives of assessment;**
- **collecting evidence;**
- **matching evidence to requirements or objectives;**
- **making judgements based on this matching activity** "(Fletcher, 1995: 26).

I. III. METHODOLOGY

I. III. I. Guided writing

In the process of learning/teaching writing, the learners' previous experience with writing must be taken into consideration. Even if the students who are involved in the present project have achieved intermediate level in English language, they are still beginners in terms of their writing abilities. Therefore, they must be guided gradually from rather controlled activities towards free, less guided tasks.

There are a lot of techniques to practise writing. The division of writing activities in teaching English into controlled, guided, and free writing is well known. Raimes (1983, p. 12-14) suggests the following kinds of writing strategies: practical (like filling forms, questionnaires, interviews, letters, lists, daily notes, instructions), controlled (controlled compositions, questions and answers, sentence combinations, parallel writing and guided compositions), and free writing. Pincas (1982) also classifies writing activities and mentions controlled, guided and free writing strategies. She states that: "Guided writing stands as a bridge between controlled and free writing. It includes any writing for which students are given assistance such as a model to follow, a plan or outline to expand from, a partly-written version with indications of how to complete it, or pictures that show a new subject to write about in the same way as something that has been read" (p. 102). Guided writing makes a final stage for preparing students to free writing, which "... should be preceded by some familiarisation and controlled exercises..." Pincas (1982, p. 102).

In order to achieve correct and meaningful piece of writing, guided activities must be based on the appropriate use of grammar structures and vocabulary that can be practised in controlled exercises. Each piece of writing demands different grammar structure; for example past simple for narration or 'there is - there are' structures for description. Not only grammar but also vocabulary takes an active part in the process of writing. Sufficient practice in grammar and vocabulary must become an accompanying component of the whole process of writing.

I. III. II. Types of guided writing

Generally, guided activities are useful and helpful tools in teaching/ learning writing. They can be modified according to the aims and objectives of a lesson or an activity.

The basic types of guided exercises that Pincas (1982, pp. 103- 109) classifies are: **completion, reproduction, compression and transformation.**

Completion is a kind of activity during which the students are to fill in some missing information. In teaching writing completion can be applied, for example, in practising description, or narration. In order to describe a place or a situation vividly, students can be provided with a descriptive paragraph that must be completed by appropriate descriptive adjectives. Completion of sentence fragments can be used in narration, etc.

Guided writing by **reproduction** is flexible for all kinds of writing tasks. It is based on either exact or free reproduction of a piece of text by the means of matching, copying, or multiple-choice questions. In analysing causes and effects of a particular event, students can match all the sources of a particular situation to the following effect.

Compression is based on two important skills referring to understanding written discourse and its further reformulating. It can embark either simple techniques like underlining or more complex strategies, like outlining and summarising. Compression can be used in any kind of writing task when clear structure, logical link and coherence is required. Finally, the most demanding means of guided writing is transformation, like matching, comparing, multiple-choice questions or more difficult assignments of transformation when students are to paraphrase certain features in a different context.

All the above classified strategies require alteration and modification of activities according to the level of students' performance of the English language, their previous experience and knowledge of writing and aims of the whole process of teaching writing.

I. III. III. Evaluation of guided writing activities used in textbooks

When I was teaching, during my teaching practice, I worked with the textbooks Project English 2, Oxford, 1987 and Hotline - starter, Oxford, 1991. In both textbooks there are final writing projects after each unit. In Project English the author presents the most demanding writing task called "Your magazine" and in Hotline there is a final "Project" which lead

students to practising writing. There are also a lot of guided writing activities in all units in both textbooks. However, first of all, the amount is not scanty enough to lead students gradually to acquiring such writing abilities that would lead to the improvement of writing in English on a proper level. Secondly, I also did not find many interesting and motivating elements in these activities. The writing activities usually link the theme of the lesson, for example, "my family", "my home", "holiday" and so on, and thus cannot be motivating enough for the students' effort to their writing. The students find the themes boring because they work with them throughout the unit. For example, in Hotline, unit 12 the main topic- "the news"- occurs in reading, listening, speaking and writing activities.

It is not only motivation but also the aims of the activities in the textbooks which do not support students in producing an effective piece of writing. The tasks are focused on grammar structures, for example, imperative of verbs; vocabulary, for example, clothes or family. The students thus consider writing tasks as grammar or vocabulary practice rather than challenging prompts for expressing their ideas. Moreover, they do not support students' creative thinking. Although the activities in the textbook have their own purposes, they cannot substitute the whole process of acquiring writing skills.

I. IV. HYPOTHESIS THESIS

From the study of theory and methodology and from my own experience it is possible to state the following thesis: When teachers want to test students' performance in writing in the English language, the criteria of their assessment must correspond with the aims and objectives of the writing course. The course should embark effective methods of teaching writing based on the process approach that can help students acquire appropriate writing skills, thinking abilities and a positive approach to writing in general. The writing skills continually developed and systematically trained can be afterwards tested on the basis of relevant assessment.

CHAPTER II

II. I. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

II. I. I. Professional experience from observation

At schools there is a very little time devoted to writing as well as to testing writing. Testing writing is often under-estimated area which is narrowed down mainly to grammatical error correction. However, students should get a valuable feedback that would encourage them in their further work. Nevertheless, teachers use testing as a tool for checking students' knowledge of vocabulary, grammar etc. From my experience, as I could observe from English lessons, pupils are not systematically trained in writing and thus any kind of assessment cannot fulfil its aim. Therefore, in my professional project, I focused on an appropriate practice of writing, at least within the scope of my research. The aims and objectives of my teaching became the basis for my assessment.

II. I. II. Basis for the project design

In my professional project I decided to employ the writing activities that were based on the conclusions from the theory and methodology consulted in the previous chapter and on my practical experiences from teaching practice. My effort was to prepare such activities which would provide students with appropriate stimuli for motivation and which would be suitable for their level of English. The theory and practice referring to writing persuaded me to choose guided writing as the most suitable strategy for my project. Guided writing stands as a connecting link between controlled and free writing and it is a good way to learn writing especially for writers-beginners.

To attract students' interests to produce a good piece of writing, the task must be motivated enough. How can it be achieved? The themes and topics should be unusual, interesting, cheerful and close to pupils. Not only the own theme of writing task but also the way to present writing influences students' work. Visual materials like pictures, using OHP or video are good prompts to students' thinking. Thus, for the activities I used in professional project, I tried to apply as many strategies named above as possible.

Considering the age of the students (they were 14 and 15 years old), their knowledge of the English language, and their experience with writing (they were beginners in writing tasks), I decided to practice the following types of writing: description and narration. In order to encourage the students in tasks, activities were based on asking and answering questions, completing charts, guessing, and solving problems. In order to make students use their imagination and creativity, I chose such themes which I considered provoking enough for them. I also tried to support students' eagerness by changing classroom management. Thus, the students worked individually, in pairs or in groups.

All the activities were based on guided writing. In these guided writing activities I concentrated on form, content and grammar as the basic requirements for effective writing. When I was preparing the activities, I used several sources to design the tasks. I used methodology books as guides for achieving the aims of my lessons (lesson 1,3). The textbook Project English II., the textbook The Writing Program and a set of colored pictures for OHP. These sources helped me find interesting topics for the students' writing (lessons 1,2,3,4). The topics of the activities, except of lesson 4, were not related to the themes of the lessons that the students were working on. However, they linked the topics, grammar structures and vocabulary already known for the students. This way I wanted to avoid confusion and insecurity caused by new items referring to grammar or vocabulary.

Finally, the students' pieces of writing became a good basis for my further evaluation. In order to judge their products, I designed a set of criteria that helped me to look at their writing as objectively as possible. Since I had only four lessons to practice writing I focused only on content, form and structure. Moreover, the objectivity of the criteria was achieved by the fact that they reflected the aims of the writing tasks. The criteria encompasses the appropriate content (narration and description), correct grammar structures, and a basic structure of an effective piece of writing.

II. I. III. Description of the students

I examined all of my writing activities at eight-year grammar school in Turnov during September and October 1999. I applied them in two classes - the 8th and the 9th grades. They were both mixed ability classes.

In the 8th grade there were seventeen students - ten girls and seven boys. In the 8th class the students had been learning English for five years. They had English lessons three

times a week. They used the textbook Project English 2. They had completed Unit 4 when I started to teach them. I would define their knowledge as intermediate. They covered the present simple, the present progressive, the past simple, the past progressive, the present perfect and the future simple and progressive tenses. I started to teach them Unit 5 and covered the passive voice with them. Most of the students did not have any problems with understanding. They sometimes made a mistake in pronunciation or in spelling but they were able to communicate very well. There were two very talkative but hard-working students who incited other students to participate and co-operate both among each other and with the teacher.

In the 9th grade there were sixteen students, nine girls and seven boys. They had been learning English for two years; they had three lessons a week. They used the textbook Hotline starter. They had completed Unit 8 when I started to teach them. They covered the past simple, the present simple and the future simple tenses, the comparatives, the superlatives, modal verbs. During my teaching practice I started with Unit 9 and covered the present progressive tense and vocabulary referring to clothes. Comparing them to the previous class, about a half of these pupils made quite a lot of mistakes during their communication at English lessons. Although there were two students who were very studious and wanted to be the best at English, the rest of the class did not co-operated very much. There were also two girls who did not have any problems with their English but who were not willing to co-operate in each lesson. However, in general, the children in this class were friendly, energetic, enthusiastic and eager to learn.

I. II. REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICE - LESSONS 1- 4

II. II. I. Lesson 1

Date: 17/ 10 1999

Number of pupils in the class: 16

Theme: Description – guided writing

Title: Unusual animals

1. General lesson theme / objectives:

In this lesson I wanted the students to write a description of an animal based on a picture taken from an exercise in the textbook The Writing Program, Cleveland, 1989. I wrote my own description of the picture and gave it to the students so that they had a general idea about this type of writing. I wanted the students to become familiar with content, form and style of description.

I opened the lesson with a short discussion. I gave each student a picture of an extinct animal. Then we talked about the picture. I asked a variety of questions about the animal and the students answered. I gave a description of an animal to the students and explained new vocabulary. After this we practised descriptive adjectives referring to the five human senses. The students were supposed to use as many descriptive adjectives as possible in their descriptive paragraph. Finally, we discussed the use of verbs of senses and articles in front of nouns. I let students elicit the basic rules since this activity was a revision for them. This revision should have led students to using correct grammar structures in their writing.

2. Thesis focus

In this lesson I wanted to practise writing and make the students become familiar with the basic preconditions of an effective description. As an example I used a picture from the textbook The Writing Program which was provoking enough for a descriptive paragraph. This picture should have helped the students to elicit ideas about description in general. Further vocabulary practise should have ensured a better use of language - the use of more vivid and precise expressions. Appropriate structure, form and style became the basic preconditions for

the students' writing as well as general criteria for my further evaluation. In fact, only after a proper practice of this type of writing, I could evaluate and correct their products.

3. Anticipated teaching problems / solutions

I thought that the students would not know some of the words from the sample description. I knew they definitely did not understand words like: "rough", "curiously", "outgrowths" etc. That is why I wanted to explain these words in English first to make students guess their meanings from the context as well as from the picture. In case they would not be able to guess a particular expression, I explained the word in Czech.

4. Lesson aims

- a. to present new vocabulary
- b. to practise reading and speaking
- c. to revise and practise descriptive adjectives
- d. to make students familiar with strategies of effective descriptive writing

5. Materials

- two pictures from the textbook The Writing Program
- descriptive model paragraph
- questions about the animal prepared in advance
- blackboard

6. Lesson summary

Stage 1 - Discussion about the pictures

- students are given a picture of an extinct animal (a stegosaurus) to look at (see appendix 1 A)
- teacher initiates a discussion about the picture with the students
- teacher writes suggestions on the blackboard
 - "What can you see in the picture?"
 - "How does it look like?"
 - "What may you feel if you touched the animal?"

“What may you smell if you were near the animal?”

“What may you hear if the animal were alive?”

“What may you feel if you met the animal?”

- students give their suggestions in English or ask teacher about some words that they do not know, teacher translates or lets them look up the words in the dictionary

- teacher writes their suggestions on the blackboard into the chart under the words of human senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, feeling) in five columns

i.e. : “ I can see a big ugly animal...”

“ I can hear the animal snorting...”

- teacher draws a chart with five columns including the words “seeing“, “hearing“, “feeling“, “smelling“, “touching“ (see appendix 1 B)

- students have to fill in their own descriptive expressions into each column

- teacher helps students with unknown words, translate them from Czech to English, adds her own ideas and writes them under the particular label:

i.e. : “snorting“, “wet“, “scared“, “warm breath“, “small“, “stale air“

- teacher reminds the students of the structure, style and content of description

aims:

- a. to present basic points about effective and interesting ways of describing an object
- b. to present new vocabulary
- c. to elicit students' ideas in the process of describing an animal
- d. to prompt students to extend their descriptive expressions with a supplementary chart with cues for their writing

Stage 2 - Reading

- teacher gives a sheet of paper with a descriptive paragraph to students (see appendix 1 C)

- students read the paragraph silently, ask about unknown words-

- teacher explains unknown words, writes them on the blackboard

i.e. : “curiously“, “spines“, “chops“, “extinct“

- teacher pronounces the words, writes them on the blackboard, students repeat them

- teacher asks about the descriptive expressions in the text:

“Which words helped you to remember the animal?”

- students answer

- teacher asks about the descriptive expressions according to the human senses :

“Which words help you :

- see its legs“?
- smell the animal“?
- touch its skin“?
- feel his strength ?“

- students answer using the expressions from the text

- teacher asks about further details of the description:

“How do you think its legs smell?“

“How do you think the animal feels?“

“How do you think the man and the woman feel?“

-students give their ideas

-teacher helps to translate unknown words

-teacher emphasises the structure of the paragraph:

“What does the first sentence tell you ?“

“What do the following sentences show?“

aims:

- a. to present a model descriptive paragraph
- b. to make students elicit associations in connection with the picture
- c. to prepare students for further writing
- d. to practise reading

Stage 3 - Grammar part

- teacher asks about verbs that are usually used with the verbs of human senses within a **sentence**
- students answer using the text: modal verb can
- teacher writes an example on the blackboard :
 - “can hear“
- teacher elicits from students the basic rules of the use of articles in front of singular and plural nouns
- teacher gives examples from the text:
 - “ a big brown animal“ and “the animal“

- “small black eyes“ and “ the eyes“

aim:

a. to revise the rules of using modal verbs with human senses and articles in front of nouns

Stage 4 - Writing a description

- teacher gives students another picture of a similar extinct animal (see appendix 1 D) and asks students to write a short description of six sentences
- students write descriptive paragraphs
- teacher gives advice if there are any problems
- teacher chooses two paragraphs and reads them loud for the whole class
- teacher collects students' work

aim:

- a. to have the students produce a description of an animal, using the correct grammar structures (suitable articles in front of nouns)

7.Reflection

Stage 1

I started the lesson with giving a picture to the students that helped them to describe the animal's shape and colour. The students were surprised they would work with something else than their exercise books. They liked the picture and started to make jokes about the animal. I asked them to look at the picture and say if they liked the animal, if they knew it and if they could say something about it. They considered this task funny because they started to make up theories like: i.e. ... “it comes from the universe“... or ... “it must be a dinosaurs“... or ... “look at the woman with a broom“... They were eager to say more- so I let them use Czech and helped them with translation. We described the animal orally but after several suggestions they were stuck. So I helped them with questions in which I focused on human senses. The senses, like seeing, feeling, hearing, touching and smelling, prompted students to look at the animal from different points of view. Then I wanted the students to imagine that they were in the same situation as the man or the woman in the picture. They

were surprised when I asked about their experience with big animals, especially when I asked about the smell of the legs. They answered in Czech i.e. "They smell like a dung-water." We also revised the verbs of senses like i.e. "to smell", "to feel", "to touch" . The students repeated them and wrote them down. I supported them to use Czech expressions if they did not know some English words and I helped them with translation. I explained that it was very important to describe the picture in details so that the reader could imagine it. They should have realised that a description is more than a simple record of the picture.

After that I put all the descriptive adjectives they suggested on the blackboard i.e. "nice", "sad", "scared", "big", "old"... Working with simple adjectives warmed them up for another stage. I drew a chart on the blackboard, put the five human senses in it (seeing, hearing, feeling, touching, smelling) and divided these adjectives into five columns. Moreover, I added other descriptive adjectives like: i.e. "skinny", "fat", "hairy"... and explained the meaning of the words to the students. Since they needed these new words for the further writing, we practised pronunciation and spelling of these words. Even if I knew that they would not remember all of them, I believed that at least the words they would use in their descriptions might remain in their minds.

The fact that students succeeded in the description of the animal, in which they could use funny and even weird expressions, motivated students to continue with the further activity.

Stage 2

When I gave them the description, they started to read it curiously but did not understand everything. At first I could see that they were scared to ask about unknown words but I encouraged them by asking questions. Moreover, I had prepared Czech translations of the unknown words like i.e. : "extinct" and put them below the paragraph. I pronounced the key words for them. This was very helpful and saved me to write the words on the blackboard. I started to ask my questions and they did not understand at first what they are supposed to do. I repeated my question two times and spoke clearly and loudly. This helped. They started to scan the text and answered correctly. Only two weak boys had no idea what to do so my mentor helped them during the lesson.

Another reaction appeared when I asked the question about smelly legs. They could not stop laughing and started to look up special words like i.e.: "pongy", "stench"... We had troubles with the expressions of the animal's and people's feelings. I motivated them saying that they should imagine they were in the animal's skin or on the man's or the woman's place. They answered spontaneously i.e. "scared", "strong"... I helped them to translate

words like i.e. “furious“, “ready to hit“, “pushed in the corner“... I did not want them to write those words down not to keep them too occupied with new vocabulary but some of the girls did write them anyway. The initial uncertainty to find answers to the teacher’s questions may have been caused by the lack of reading activities which would make the students analyse a written text. It is difficult for the students who are not often exposed to creative thinking to find different associations and meanings in a piece of writing. However, after several prompts, students were able to express their ideas spontaneously since imagination and fancy are natural part of a child’s world.

Stage 3

It was quite simple for the students to recognise that a modal verb “can“ is used in connection with words of senses. I wrote an example on the blackboard and they copied it. However, they often forgot using the modal verb in their writing. Even if they had already studied this grammar item, more effective and focused practise would have been needed. We also spoke about articles in front of adjectives preceding nouns in singular and plural forms and I found out that they were not sure about the rules. I wrote examples on the blackboard to let them elicit the rules. They recognised that an article is put in front of adjectives followed by a singular noun i.e. : “a big brown animal“ and no article is put in front of adjectives followed by a plural noun i.e. : “small black eyes“...

Even if we did not spend too much time on practising using modal verbs in front of the verbs of human senses (see, hear, touch, smell, feel) and articles followed by nouns I considered this short revision important. First of all they would use the similar structures in their writing, and moreover, appropriate grammar was one of the preconditions for an effective writing, which I was also going to evaluate in their final products.

Stage 4

I consider this stage as a very successful one. The students liked a different picture of another extinct animal a lot. I asked them to write down similar description about six sentences long at least. When I said that they could name the animal and the island using their imagination, they were quite enthusiastic. I reminded them of using the verb “can“ with verbs of senses and correct use of articles. They started to write but unfortunately we ran out of time so I had to ask them to finish their paragraphs in the following English lesson. The insufficiency in timing of the lesson proved that I should have planned two lessons for the

activity. However the students were motivated because they knew how to describe an animal and they wrote lively, interesting paragraphs.

I collected their work, and I found out that they made occasional mistakes like, i.e. : “It looks sadly...” or “It is wearing green hairs...” or “in the left side ...” They remembered the use of articles in right positions. Some of them did not use the structures we practised like: “I can see...” or “I can smell...” – they simply wrote only “Its hairs are long...” or “Its legs stinks as ...” etc. There were also a few spelling mistakes like i.e.: “peacefully” instead of “peaceful” but I did not consider wrong spelling as a big mistake. On the whole they understood the content of description. I think the description of the first picture helped them a lot and the most important thing was that they liked the topic and enjoyed writing about it. They produced very nice descriptions even with pictures, too. I could also find very unusual words like i.e. “muzzling”... or ... “carnivorous”..., which showed they were not lazy to use dictionaries (see appendix 1 E) .

8. Conclusion.

I found this lesson successful on the whole. I motivated the students by the use of an interesting topic and a different task than the activities they had been used to. The unusual pictures of extinct animals, I used, helped them to use their five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, touching) and describe the picture as much in detail as possible. Some of them even drew a picture of the animal next to their writing. The contents of the descriptions were also interesting. The students used different names for the animal. They also looked up for special words in the dictionary. The logical linking of the descriptive expressions of the animal enabled the reader to imagine the animal clearly. It was very practical to revise the use of modal verbs followed by the verbs of senses and articles followed by nouns because they made few mistakes.

The activities, which I made up for the model description appeared very helpful for the following writing. The only insufficiency was timing. The students did not have enough time for their own writing and reading their paragraphs. Luckily, I could finish the activity in the following English lesson, which they appreciated because they were interested in others students’ paragraphs.

7. Evaluation of students' writing

The main aim of the writing activity was to train students in the basic strategies that would help them to produce a vivid and logical description of a picture. First of all the students became familiar with the content of the description of the picture. They were able to describe the unusual animal orally using their five senses. I found out that the students used many of the descriptive adjectives we used in the discussion about the animal. Some of the students even looked up some words. They described the picture in details focusing on different points of views.

Then I stressed the structure of the description by working with the model descriptive paragraph of the animal. I only emphasised that they should introduce the animal in the first sentence while we were reading the model paragraph. I did not insist on precise introduction, body, and conclusion in their descriptions because I wanted to practise the structure of paragraph in the following lesson. The structure of the students' writings was logical and smooth. They mostly started with introducing the animal, saying its name and then describing its shape, colour, smell and strength.

Finally, referring to the language of the students' descriptions, I wanted them to use correct grammar structures. Evaluating the grammar part, I found out that it was useful to talk about modal verbs and articles because the students made few mistakes only. I found some grammatical mistakes and also few spelling mistakes like i.e.: "es" instead of "as". I did not consider that as a big mistake. The students used a lot of interesting words in their writing. They named the animal i. e. "Emanuel" , "Pinky" or "Yahov" and they also looked up special words in the dictionary, i.e. "pong", "palm" or "chaotic".

I talked to the students about their work after they read their paragraphs during the lesson. I praised their effort by giving small "plus". I stressed logical structure and use of their imagination. Moreover, I wrote brief comments to their paragraphs and we discussed their success as well as possible imperfections. Since I considered the previous training writing insufficient for the students appropriate grasp of writing skills, I decided not to mark students' writing. My oral and written comments should have motivate students towards further writing.

II. II. II. Lesson 2

Date : 20/ 10 / 1999

Number of pupils in the class: 16

Theme: Description of a place

Title: What is missing in the room

1. General lesson theme / objective

In this lesson I wanted the students to write a description of a room where a robbery happened. The description was based on a picture from a set of folios by McDonald publishing co. 1978. The students should have imagined that they were policemen and that they were writing a report for the police. I wanted to involve the students in the topic and provide a meaningful context. They should have described the room as precisely as possible and the things that had been found in the room. As a model for the description of a room I used a description of a room which I had recorded on the tape. That should have helped them to get an idea of description of a place. We revised prepositions of place briefly so that the students would be able to use them correctly in their descriptions. Then the students got a picture of a robbed room and we discussed the position of the things in the room as a rough clue for their writing. The detailed preparation should have trained the students in the strategy to produce an effective description of a place.

2. Thesis focus

I wanted to let children to realise how to describe a place according to positions of things. The context of the robbery should have helped them to focus on as many details as possible. To support their imagination in their descriptions, we focused on different positions of things as well as directions. We also briefly practised grammar items necessary for the description of a place.

An effective and detailed description should have served as a basis for investigating a robbery. The students' vivid observations, proper use of language and correct grammar structures became the basic criteria for my subsequent evaluation of their writing.

3. Anticipated teaching problems / solutions

Since I was afraid that the students would not be able to use correctly the structure "there is , there are", I decided to insert a short question- answer exchange during which I wanted to revise these structures.

4. Lesson aims

- a. to revise prepositions of place
- b. to practise listening
- c. to practise speaking
- d. to introduce basic principles of description of place
- e. to get students write a descriptive paragraph of a room in a picture

5. Materials

- a tape with a description of a room, a transcript of the listening
- a chart with directions
- a picture of a robbed room
- blackboard

6. Lesson summary

Stage 1- Revision of prepositions of place during the game "Robots"

- teacher explains the rules of the game to students
- students pretend robots and must do everything that teacher says
- teacher gives instructions:

i.e.: „Stand up!“

„Go to the left wall of the class!“

„Touch the bottom of your desk!“

„Put your left hand on the back of your head!“

„Stand at front of the blackboard!“

„Put your pen on the right side of your desk!“

- students follow teacher's instructions

aims: a. to warm up the students before listening and writing

b. to revise prepositions of place

Stage 2- Listening

- teacher asks students what they can find in their classroom and in what positions the objects are

-students answer

i.e. „There are pictures on the right wall.“

„ There is a blackboard at front.“

- teacher gives students a sheet of paper with a chart with four columns (at front, at back, on the right, on the left) to students (see figure 3), and explains to students that they will hear a description of a room.

Figure 3

| ON THE LEFT | ON THE RIGHT | AT FRONT | AT BACK |
|-------------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| LAMP | WINDOW | ARMCHAIR | CLOCK |
| PICTURES | LADDER | DETECTIVE | CHIMNEY |

Final form of a “direction chart”

- students have to fill in the columns with an appropriate word according to the position of the object they will hear (see Appendix 2 A - transcription of the listening)
- students study the chart, listen to the tape for the first time and fill in the chart
- teacher asks students to discuss their answers in pairs after the first listening

teacher plays the tape for the second time

- students check their answers in groups of four
- teacher elicits students’ ideas, writes them on the blackboard, discusses the right answers with students

aims:

- a. to practise listening for details
- b. to present a model paragraph for this type of writing
- c. to make students to be aware of the connection of the transcription of the listening and the chart
- d. to prepare students for further writing

Stage 3- Speaking

- teacher gives students a picture of a robbed room (see Appendix 2 B)
- teacher presents new words, writes them on the blackboard and uses them in several sentences
- i.e. „investigate“, „robbery“, „missing“
- students repeat new words
- teacher asks students about the picture:
 - „What can you see in the picture?“
 - „What do you think happened?“
 - „What is missing?“
 - „How did the crime happen?“
- students give their suggestions
- teacher helps with unknown words, writes students' ideas on the blackboard

aims:

- a. to practise speaking
- b. to present new words
- c. to introduce the topic of the descriptive paragraph, to make students imagine what happened in the picture in connection with position of the objects in the picture
- d. to prepare students for further writing

Stage 4 – Writing

- teacher asks students to write about positions of at least 8 objects in the room
- teacher suggests that students should describe the robbed room as if they are policemen and have to write a report for the police
- teacher gives an example and writes the sentence on the blackboard
 - i.e. „ There is an clock on the floor. The clock is in front of the chimney.“
- two students read their descriptions loudly

aim:

- a. to have the students produce a description of a room, using the correct grammar structures (suitable prepositions and the structure “there is, there are“)

7.Reflection:

Stage 1

I started the lesson with a short game called "Robots". I knew that the students had played the game before with their teacher, therefore I did not have to explain the game in details. I only said to the students that they should imagine they were robots and that they had to listen to my instructions. They were ashamed at the beginning, so they moved like ordinary people and were able only to change their positions. I had to encourage them by calling: „Robots number five are alive !“ They started to smile and move stiff. I could see that my instructions were very easy for them because nearly none of them had any trouble with understanding. I only had to remind the meaning of the words „front“ and „back“ by putting my hand at the front and at the back of the teacher's desk. They understood immediately and followed my instructions. I gave them ten instructions and since I could see that they were interested in performing robots I added four more instructions like: "Go to the back of the class!" "Stand up on your chair!", "Point to the left wall!", "Point to the ceiling!". Finally, all the students were involved in the activity, but I could see that the two weakest boys were still shy. They waited till the others moved and then they followed them. I tried to test them by giving my demands only to the two boys and they reacted more slowly but well. This exercise warmed up the students and got them ready to other activities.

Stage 2

I also wanted to prepare the students for the listening activity by asking them about certain objects in their class: "Tell me where is the teacher's desk?" The students answered: "The teacher's desk is in front of the blackboard." I also had to remind them that they could use the structure "there is, there are". Then they repeated the sentence again: "There is the teacher's desk in front of the blackboard." I asked about the position of the blackboard, the students' desks, the door, the plants etc. The students answered mostly correctly, I only helped one girl to translate the word „middle“. She used the right preposition „in“.

When the pupils got a chart with the prepositional expressions, most of them knew what to do without any explanation. I asked one girl to explain the task they were supposed to do. She answered correctly that they had to fill in the chart with the right objects in the room. Then students were able to fill in the whole chart after the first listening. However, when they discussed their answers with the rest of the class, their suggestions were different as I found out while monitoring their work. I played the tape again and let the pupils share their ideas in

groups of four. They tried to copy the right answers from each other so I stressed that it was not necessary to have all the answers right. In order to check the answers of all students, I copied the chart on the blackboard and let the students write their suggestions down. This helped them to sort out all the information and all of them paid attention. Seven pupils had right answers, two of them mixed the position of the table and the chair in the described room. They corrected themselves when I read the transcript as a clue. I also wanted to find out if the listening was difficult for them. Five of them said it was, the rest said that it was easy. The activity, in which the students should have refreshed the expressions of directions, place and positions, helped me to proceed to the speaking activity.

Stage 3

I recognised that the students liked the picture on the folio because they had not used OHP in their English lessons before (see appendix 2 A). All the class could watch the situation on the wall which helped me to control the pupils well whether they worked or not. They paid attention very well. I introduced the picture saying that a robbery happened in the room and the detective was investigating what was missing. They started to call the detective “ Sherlock Holmes “ and also described his clothes as they did it in the previous lesson. I wrote the new words “ investigate “ , “ missing “ and “ robbery “ on the blackboard, explained their meaning in English, pronounced them and used them in different context. The pupils guessed the meaning without any problems and repeated the words. It was not necessary to write the questions about the picture on the blackboard because all of them were able to answer. I did not expect that I would have to help them with the words like: “ lamp “, “ ladder “, “ steal “ and “ chimney “, which caused some trouble. It was my fault because I did not realise that they would not know the words. I should have presented and wrote these words on the blackboard before. On the other hand, I was pleasantly surprised by their great ideas. One boy suggested: i.e. : “ It was not actually a robbery that happened in the room but there was a man who was stealing money from the safe and he was murdered by another robber. They both climbed down the ladder fighting and suddenly one of them pushed the other one off the ladder. So one of them is dead and the other one lost his glove in the room and escaped. “ The other boy found out that: “ The murder happened at one o'clock as the clock showed “, which was very clever of him. The students seemed to be involved so I started with the writing part.

Stage 4

The students started to write the description of the picture (see appendix 2 A) individually. They should have written eight sentences at least. The students' descriptive paragraphs of the room were quite good. Some of them did not write as many sentences as I expected but some of them added further information like: "The detective is wearing brown gloves and a green cap." or "There is a safe above the chimney with a candle" (see appendix 2 C) All of the paragraphs fulfilled my demands on the detailed description of the objects in the room according to their placement. The students used simple words, they did not use dictionaries. I considered this useful because the students used the words that they knew. After everybody finished their writing, two students read their paragraphs loudly and I collected their writing afterwards. I found some minor mistakes like: "cimney" instead of "chimney" or "in the floor" instead of "on the floor" or "at the bottom side" instead of "at the bottom". One girl also did not know how to say „a bear fur“ so she used word „an animal“. I was very pleased when I saw the work of the weakest pupil of the class which was without any mistake. He seemed to enjoy the activity as much as the rest of the students. All of them asked me to do something similar in the following lesson.

Conclusion

In this lesson I wanted the students to write a descriptive paragraph. This time I focused the students' attention to description of objects in a room. I motivated them first by playing a game which warmed them up and got them ready to concentrate on the listening task. They also liked the picture with "Sherlock Holmes" so much that they added some information about him. I could read in one student's work that : "There is a detective in the picture. It is not Sherlock Holmes but Jan Nowak. He is wearing a brown coat and he has got pistols in his trousers." Although the students were supposed to define eight things at least, they covered about six or seven but added some detailed information about the objects or described the man in the picture. Their descriptions showed that it was useful to revise prepositions. They made a few mistakes in prepositions i.e. : "in left" instead of "on the left". On the other hand they used other prepositions we had not revised like: "under", "below", "above". When I played the tape with a description of my room, they made a clear connection between the columns of the chart with different parts of the room and the positions of the furniture, which I could notice during monitoring their works. I also wanted to support their imagination about the robbery that had happened. I asked different questions about the

robbery and they gave their suggestions like: "It was a murder not a robbery, the detective is a murder and the dead body lies under the bear fur."

Everybody understood the form of writing each pupil described the room from four sides (on the right, on the left, at the back, at the front), some of them described the objects in details like: "There is a lamp on the left side, the lamp is on the table, there are flowers on it." I liked their systematic description from four sides so that the others could easily imagine the room. Some of the students probably used their small dictionaries to look up the unknown words because they did not ask me, i.e.: "magnifying glass". The pupils behaved much more natural and spontaneously than in the previous lesson. I think that they reacted better because they had experienced writing of description in the previous lesson. They understood my tasks and were able to finish their writing in time, they did not have to finish it at home or in the following lesson, which supported the necessity to practise writing systematically and continually.

5. Evaluation of students' writing

The situation of robbery in the picture helped me to motivate the students. The model paragraph helped the description to become meaningful to the pupils. The colours and the detective in the picture were also prompting enough for them. All the students spoke about the picture and moreover they were eager to add their own comments like i.e.: "There must be a dead man below the open window. He is the criminal."

Even if I knew that the students practised the prepositional expressions in the previous lessons with their English teacher I wanted to be sure that they knew the use of them. I prepared activities included visual, aural and oral inputs. When I evaluated their paragraphs, I found only occasional spelling mistakes like i.e.: "at bak" instead of "at back". Almost all the pupils used the right prepositions in the prepositional expressions. I only found two mistakes like i.e.: "in the left" instead of "on the left" and "behind" instead of "below".

The chart and the practice with directions should have helped the students with the content of the description. They described the positions nearly of all the objects in the room and also of the detective in details i.e.: "At front there is a bear fur." or "The detective is wearing a brown cap and brown gloves." That proved their good preparation. The pupils realised that in description of place all the possible directions should be taken into the count. In my evaluation of students' paragraphs I checked whether they used as many directions and positions as possible. I considered the fact that they added the description of

the detective as a positive moment since they were able to link their previous experience with personal description.

This was the second lesson of writing and I could see that the students were more involved in all the activities and that they had improved much in their descriptions. They said they liked the picture more because they could see it better on the OHP. They were also more interested in the situation of the robbery because it encouraged their imagination. They suggested the course of the crime when we spoke about the picture i.e. : "There was a young jealous man who wanted to steal the letters he wrote to a married woman. He did it because the married woman was threatening the man that she showed the letters to the man's mother. She wanted to get the money from him. So he decided to steal the letters."

To sum up, the students' paragraphs showed that they were more sure with content, which was vivid, clear and systematic. Clear organization of the students' works showed that they were familiar with form. Appropriate structures that refer to description proved that the pupils were sure with grammar part. The students read some of their paragraphs in the class. They appreciated this because they could introduce their works to others. Then we discussed their mistakes and further refinement. I did not mark their works but gave them 'a plus' as the supervising teacher suggested.

II. II. III. Lesson 3

Date: 22/ 10/ 1999

Number of pupils in the class: 17

Theme: Narration-guided writing

Title: Fable

1. General lesson theme / objectives:

In this lesson I wanted the students to write a narration - a fable about an animal. I used a fable accompanied by pictures from the textbook The Writing Program, Cleveland, 1989 so that the students had an opportunity to read an example of narration. I wanted them to become familiar with content, form and style of narration.

In order to introduce the lesson, I explained to the students the word "fable" by a brief account of the story "The Fox and Crow". We discussed what they knew about fables in general and we added more examples. This stage should have motivated students for completing the pictures with the fable. Then the students should have put the pictures in the right order in groups. We discussed the order with the students and I asked them questions about the story used from the textbook The Writing Program, Cleveland, 1989. I explained to them the unknown words from the fable and form of narration (introduction, body, conclusion and chronological order). Students were to elicit the basic structure of the fable. Then I asked the students to put each picture to introduction, body or conclusion. We discussed the use of past simple in narration, which should have been a revision of past forms of verbs. The whole lesson should have led the students to producing a piece of narrative writing. In their writing they should have showed understanding of the basic requirements for effective narration.

2. Thesis focus

The aim of the lesson was to practise writing and give the students an idea about the basic rules of narration. As a model I used a fable with pictures which should have encouraged them to elicit rules of narration in general. The context of the fable about a frog should have supported the students' imagination and provoked them to their further writing. The revision of past simple in narration should have ensured the right use of language - right forms of verbs in the past tense. We also discussed the effective content

of all parts of fable so that the pupils realised how to write attractive and telling narration. In my subsequent evaluation of students' writing, I focused on judgement of structure, content and language of their stories.

3. Anticipated teaching problems/ solutions

I was not sure about students' knowledge of using past tense in narration so I decided to revise it briefly. I also thought that they did know not some of the words from the fable like: "enormous", "breath", and "croak" so I presented the words for them.

4. Lesson aims

- a. to practise reading
- b. to practise speaking
- c. to introduce and practise introduction, body, and conclusion in narration
- d. to get students write a fable which teaches a lesson

5. Materials

- the story from the textbook The Writing Program, p. 86-93
- questions about the fable used in the textbook The Writing Program, p.94
- a list of proverbs prepared in advance
- a blackboard, blue tack

6. Lesson summary

Stage 1- Reading

- teacher starts the lesson by telling a fable about a fox and a crow
- students guess what kind of story it is

- teacher presents the word "fable", writes the word on the blackboard
- teacher asks students what they know about fable generally and if they remember another one
- students answer
- teacher points out that animals often act like people in fables
- students are given eight pictures with parts of a fable
- teacher tells the students that they will be reading a fable called "The Exploding Frog" in groups (see appendix 3 A)
- teacher asks students to read the story and put the pictures in the right order
- students give their suggestions in group
- teacher checks the right order with pupils
- students ask about unknown words
- teacher explains the words

aims:

- a. to introduce fable
- b. to practise reading
- c. to present unknown words
- d. to support students' imagination for their further writing

Stage 2- Discussion about the fable

- teacher asks questions about the fable from the textbook The Writing program :

"Who is the main hero of the fable?"

"Which animal came to the pond?"

"What did other frogs think about the ox?"

"What did the old Mr. Frog say?"

"What did he do?"

“What happened to him in the end?”

“Why?”

“What lesson did we learn in this fable?”

- students answer
- teacher discusses the answers with students
- teacher asks students to name another fable
- students give their suggestions
- teacher helps students with expressing their ideas

aims:

- a. to make students elicit their ideas about fable in general
- b. to discuss the content of the fable
- c. to motivate students for their further writing

Stage 3 - Introducing the form of narration

a.

- after the discussion about the fable “The Exploding Frog” students still work with the story in groups
- teacher introduces three parts of narration: “introduction”, “body”, “conclusion”, and writes these words on the blackboard
- teacher explains that introduction shows how the story starts
- teacher asks students to choose the parts of the fable which introduce the plot of the story
- students stick the pictures below the word “introduction” on the blackboard
- teacher checks their suggestions
- students read the introduction of the fable loudly

- then teacher says that body of narration shows how the story continues, there is a gradation of the plot, a solution is coming
- teacher asks students to decide for the parts of the fable referring to the body of the fable
- students stick the pictures below the word "body" on the blackboard
- teacher checks their suggestions
- students read the body of the fable loudly
- teacher explains that conclusion ends a story, there is a result of the plot, reminds that the fable teaches a lesson in this part
- teacher asks students to choose the parts of the fable which conclude the narration
- students stick the pictures below the word "end" on the blackboard
- teacher checks students' ideas
- students read the conclusion of the fable loudly

b.

- teacher asks students to find some verbs in the text and asks what tense it is
- students give their suggestions
- teacher checks their answers, reminds to pupils that past simple tense is used in narration

aims:

- a. to present the structure of narration
- b. to make students be aware of the parts of the narration in a certain text
- c. to warm up students and motivate them for their own narration
- d. to revise the use of past simple in narration

Stage 4 - A fable teaches a lesson

-teacher asks students questions about the fable:

“What was the frog like?”

“How did he behave?”

“Do people behave like the frog?”

“What happened to Mr. Frog in the end and why?”

-students answer

-teacher asks students:

“What lesson did the fable teach?”

-students answer

-teacher reminds students that fable teaches a lesson

-teacher asks students about fables that they know and lessons which they teach

-students give their ideas

-teacher writes their suggestions on the blackboard

-teacher mentions other fables from the textbook The Writing Program, teacher's book, p.50 that teach a lesson which the students were familiar with:

“The Hare and the Turtle teaches us that a slow steady person can often win a race against a quick but lazy person.”

“The Lion and the Mouse teaches us that the weak and the clever can sometimes help the strong.”

“The Boy Who Cried Wolf teaches us that, if we fool people over and over again, after a while they will not believe us.”

-students get a list of proverbs with their Czech equivalents (see appendix 3 B)

-teacher reads the proverbs to the students and explains their meaning, discusses the proverbs with them

aims:

- a. to practise speaking
- b. to provoke students to their writing
- c. to present proverbs as prompts for their own writing

Stage 5- Writing a fable

-teacher asks students to write a fable in pairs

-teacher specifies the requirements for an effective narration

teacher reminds the content of fable

-in fable animals act like people

-fable teaches a lesson

teacher repeats that the form of fable should have three parts:

-introduction

-body

-conclusion

teacher reminds of using past simple tense in narration

-teacher gives a limit of ten sentences

-students write a story in pairs

-teacher collects their works, evaluates them and reads the best stories in the following English lesson

aims:

- a. to have students produce a fable that teaches a lesson, use the correct grammar structure and keep the form of narration (introduction, body, conclusion)
- b. to evaluate students' stories and comment on them

7. Reflection

Stage 1

I opened the third lesson with telling a story about a fox and a crow. I wanted to encourage the students to realise the word “fable“. I knew they learned about fables in their literature lessons. So I told them the story very clearly in simple words so that they could understand. To help them with understanding, I wrote the title of the story on the blackboard and drew a simple picture of a crow in a tree holding a piece of cheese and a fox below the tree. This helped the students better understand the story, moreover, they knew it in Czech. In addition, they were able to finish the story on their own when I helped them with translation of some words like: “dropped“ or “crowing“. They also immediately knew that we talked about a fable but they did know the word in English. I helped them with the translation, wrote the word “fable“ on the blackboard, pronounced the word and let them repeat it. I also asked about some authors of fables they knew but they could not remember any. When I reminded them of Aesop, they answered: “Oh, I know now!“ They suggested other fables like i.e.: “The Lion and the Mouse“ or “The Hare and the Turtle“ and said that a fable teaches a lesson. I reminded them in a fable that animals act like people. This introduction helped to both introducing the topic and motivating the students for their further completing the fable.

After that I divided the pupils into groups of four and gave them eight mixed pictures. I said to them to read the story and try to put the pictures in the right order. I said to them to do this task as quickly as possible. The pupils were motivated not only by a competition-like task, but they were also interested in pictures so they supported each other by saying sentences like: “Come on, hurry up, quickly!“ etc. All the four groups of the pupils were able to complete the story together without any trouble. Ordering the pictures helped me demonstrate chronology of events in narration about which we wanted to talk later on.

Stage 2

The students obviously liked the story because they laughed all the time, they suggested that the frog could also drink water instead of breathing. They answered all my questions correctly. I only helped them with the translation of some words like, i.e. :

“proud“ or “peacock“ when they wanted to express the frog’s behaviour. I did not write the unknown words like i.e.: “enormous“, “breathe“, “explode“ on the blackboard because I did not consider them important. Moreover, I did not want to preoccupy them with too many new words.

When I asked the students to tell another fable I did not realise it would be so difficult for them. I relied on their knowledge of this genre from their literature lessons, but only one girl remembered one fable. She told us the fable “The Turtle and the Rabbit“. I did not have to help her because the other pupils were interested in her narrating and they themselves helped her with expressing some ideas. They were so eager to finish the story that they tended to speak in Czech more than in English. It was caused by the students’ big involvement in the story. They wanted to tell the story but they often were not able to express their ideas immediately in English. I let them use Czech language and helped them with translation. After the two stages, I was sure that the students were both familiar with the content of the fables and motivated enough for the writing task.

Stage 3

In this stage, I wanted to prepare the students for their writing in terms of the form of narration. While I was introducing three basic parts of a story (introduction, body, conclusion), I could see that the pupils were confused and their faces looked serious. My explanation was simply difficult for them. I wrote these words on the blackboard and explained each word in English by giving simple examples from a fairy-tale to make it clear. I used an expression “Once upon a time...” for the term “introduction“, “The prince fell in love with the princess“ for the term “body“ and “They lived happily together till death“ for the term “conclusion“. I could hear that they started to tell each other what the words on the blackboard meant in Czech. It showed that my examples were right and clear but they still had problems with the words “introduction“, “conclusion“ and “body“ so I used synonyms.

I realised that I did not have to use these three new words at the beginning. I could have only talked about “beginning“, “story“ and “end“ of a narration. It would have been much easier for them.

As I knew that the pupils had already talked about narration with their English teacher, I elicited from them the tense which is used in narration. At the beginning they were not able to answer but when I showed them a few verbs in the text they all answered correctly.

Stage 4

I prepared a special activity during which we would focus on a morale of a fable. I considered it important for the students since the morale could become a topic for their writing. They found very easily the lesson which the fable "The Exploding Frog" taught and read it loudly. When we discussed the lesson, the students added their own experiences from their lives. Their stories created more relaxing atmosphere in the class. They also remembered other fables when I read other examples of lessons which fables teach.

I found the list of proverbs with their meanings I gave to the students very useful because it prompted them to choose a topic for their stories. I forgot to present the word "proverb", which was a big mistake, but luckily the pupils asked about the word so we could use it later on. In this stage, the students were provided with enough stimuli to think about their own fables and produce meaningful and interesting narration.

Stage 5

Although the students' writings of a fable were very good, they were not happy about writing a story at first. They admitted that it would be too difficult for them. I encouraged them to make pairs and think about one of the proverbs in the list they got, which should have become a topic for their stories. This decision was very helpful since the students could help each other. They decided quite quickly for some proverbs. They worked in eight pairs and one girl worked individually. When I asked about characteristics of a fable, only one boy remembered that animals act like people in fables. I also had to remind the students of everything that we had learned so far. I asked questions like: "Which verb tense is used in a fable?", "Do we learn anything from a fable?" and "How does a fable start?" After my questions the class was able to answer: "A fable teaches a lesson." "A fable should have introduction, body and conclusion." "We should use verbs in the past tense." I considered the short revision important

because I wanted the pupils to produce effective and logical narration. I set a limit of ten sentences at least. After this all the students did exactly what they were asked to do. They worked in pairs so they could help each other. We did not have enough time in the lesson, so we finished the stories in the following English lesson.

I collected all the stories and corrected them. Their class teacher asked me to mark their products. The children had almost no problems with using the past tense, I only found a few spelling mistakes, i.e.: "rabit" instead of "rabbit". We discussed their writing in the following English lesson, and I read the best fables loudly.

8. Conclusion

The aims of this lesson were fulfilled. I prepared students for the writing task by presenting and practising narration. I obtained appropriate products from the students and evaluated them. The speaking and reading exercises helped the students both understand the form of narration and become involved in the task.

9. Evaluation of students' writing

The main aim of this lesson was to train students in the basic strategies that would help them to produce a vivid and logical narration. In my subsequent evaluation, I focused on the content of the students' fables. They were not only able to imitate the model narration but they also wrote their own stories using their experiences and imagination. I noticed that some students used the proverbs that we discussed in class, however, some of them made up their own lessons like, i.e. : "When I need something, I must do it on my own." (see appendix 3 C) Some of the students used very cruel ideas in their works, i.e. a chicken was hungry and decided to kill a pig but could not cut its head till it measured it properly. The lesson taught in this fable was "Look before you leap." (see appendix 3 E) These children fulfilled the aims of their tasks but their imagination may have been limited by too many stimuli from TV, films, media, etc. The students need more practise not only in writing but they should be also exposed to activities that would prompt their fantasy and imagination.

Then I focused on the structure of narration which we were practising during working with the model narrative paragraph (see appendix 3 A). The introduction-body-

conclusion structure was really kept in all the students' fables. They started with introducing the animal in the first sentence like, i.e.: "Once upon a time..." or "One day a small squirrel..." (see appendix 3 D), then they continued with developing their own plots and ended with conclusions like, i.e.: "The wolf and the squirrel became best friends." or "The fox picked it up and ran away." A fixed structure made their stories logical and coherent. Even if their stories were not complicated, the fixed structure should have demonstrated the frame for narration that the students might be able to use in their future, more developed writing.

In terms of language of the students' narration, I only focused on the appropriate use of the past simple tense in their fables. Only one pupil out of the whole class did not use the past simple tense (see appendix 3 E). I found a few grammatical mistakes like: "... much nuts..." instead of "...many nuts..." or "I want get a race with you..." instead of "I would like to have a race with you..." or "...a turtle came by to visit..." instead of "...a turtle came to see the rabbit...". I knew that their fables could not be without any mistakes. But the fact that they worked on their narration by themselves and were able to make up a lot of interesting paragraphs was more important than the accuracy of their products. I was pleased to see that they also used correctly the pronoun "it" for an animal in their stories. Moreover, some of them added pictures to their fables.

I evaluated their paragraphs at home and wrote down some notes for them so that we could discuss possible refinement. As we discussed their paragraphs in the lesson later on, they asked me only about some unclear grammar constructions. In the discussion I focused mainly on praising their progress, stressing right use of chronological order and appreciating their imagination and ideas. The discussion served as a rather positive feedback on their writing rather than a criticism of their insufficiencies. After that we read their narration and voted for the best fable. I marked all their stories excellent as their class teacher suggested and appreciated their effort.

II. II. IV. LESSON 4

Date: 24/ 10/ 1999

Number of pupils in the class: 17

Theme: Report on an event - guided writing

Title: Hot Dog and Cool Cat

1. General lesson theme / objectives:

In this lesson I wanted the students to write a report on a present situation in which they should show their understanding of writing a narration. The story was based on the picture from the textbook Project English 2, Oxford, 1986.

The lesson was introduced by a short game that focused on revising the forms of irregular verbs. Then they discussed the pictures of the story, suggested their own commentaries for the pictures and wrote their reporting paragraphs. The students were to produce properly organised, logical reports based on appropriate order and correct use of the present perfect tense.

2. Thesis focus

The aim of the lesson was to make students understand the basic rules of a clear account of the string of an event. In my evaluation I focused on the structure, content and language of their stories, to check whether the preparation was effective enough.

3. Anticipated teaching problems / solutions

As I required the students to use present perfect tense in their account reports, I thought that they would not be sure about the forms of irregular verbs so I prepared an exercise practising them.

4. Lesson aims

- a. to practise grammar- irregular verbs
- b. to practise speaking
- c. to get students to write a story based on pictures

5. Materials

- set of cards with irregular verbs (take, find, do, leave, break, run, steal, talk, fly)
- pictures from the textbook Project English 2, p. 54
- a blackboard, blue tack

6. Lesson summary

Stage 1 – Revision of grammar

- teacher starts the lesson by giving a set of cards with forms of irregular verbs (take, find, do leave break, run, steal, talk, fly) to students in groups
- students look for right forms of the verbs and put them in the right column
- this activity is a competition, students try to do it as quickly as possible
- teacher checks students' ideas and then draws a chart on the blackboard (see appendix 4 A)
- students stick cards with forms of verbs in the chart
- teacher monitors their work

aims:

- a. to practise irregular verbs
- b. to prepare students for their writing
- c. to warm students up in a competition

Stage 2 - Speaking

- teacher asks students to open their textbook Project English 2, p. 54 and look at the pictures in exercise 3 a (see appendix 4 B)

- teacher asks students:

“Who are the characters of the story?”

“Where are they?”

“Can you guess what has happened to them ?”

- students give their ideas
- teacher checks their answers
- teacher divides students into groups of three
- teacher gives tasks to students and writes them on the blackboard:

“Say what has happened in each picture.”

“Take a role and discuss what you would say if you were a T V announcer, Cool Cat, or Computer and try to perform the dialogues in the story.”

- students discuss their suggestions and rehearse their dialogues
- teacher asks two groups to perform their stories and gives them feedback

aims:

- a. to practise speaking
- b. to introduce the topic of students' further writing
- c. to make students produce a simple dialogues as a base for their further paragraphs

Stage 3 - Writing a story

- teacher asks students to write an account based on the pictures in the textbook Project English 2, p. 54, and advises them to use the dialogues which they made up in their groups as the basis for their writing
- teacher asks to write their reports individually or in pairs, using present perfect for events that have just happened and present progressive to show actions
- teacher reminds that sentences of a report should be in the right order according to pictures of the story
- students write their narration and read them loudly
- teacher evaluates their writing

aims:

- a. to have students produce a story based on pictures
- b. to evaluate students' works and comment on them

7. Reflection

Stage 1

I started the lesson with revising grammar in the form of a short competition. Although the students practised the present perfect and irregular verbs in the previous lesson, I wanted to review this tense before the students would start to write. I prepared cards with irregular verbs for them and divided them into groups. This exercise, in which the students had to find the right forms of irregular verbs and put them beside, was a competition because I knew that they would be more eager to work. The students knew the verbs very well because all four groups worked them out nearly at the same

time. So I asked them to take off one card of a single verb and give it to me. The students mixed the cards again and tried to put them in the right order. If there was a card missing they said the missing form loudly. Both activities proved that the students were familiar with irregular verbs.

The pupils were happy to stand up and stick the cards on the blackboard in the chart. They discussed their suggestions loudly, gave advice each other, and encouraged themselves in their groups. They made only two mistakes: they put the past participle “taken” instead of the past simple “took” and “flown” instead of “flew”.

Stage 2

It was difficult to get the students back to their seats after the lively discussion about the cards. They were not happy that they would have to work with their books when I asked them to open them. One of the pupils remarked: “Not again!” They answered my questions well but without any interest. Some of them even disturbed the discussion by talking. They may have expected an interesting activity, but my command indicated a common, textbook – based activity. However, as I said that they should form groups of three and take a role of characters from the pictures, their attitudes changed. They talked about possible dialogues in the story. I noticed that there were certain differences among the groups – there were two weak and two strong groups of students. I rearranged the groups because I wanted them to be equal. I hoped that they would help each other. As they started to work I noticed that they used neither of the tenses they should have to. I had to remind them of it. They might have concentrated on the roles more than on the language. Some of them had trouble to make up their speech in the dialogue but I heard their colleagues helping them. In the end they performed quite good stories. By both activities I wanted the students to realise the structure of a report which should lead to logical succession of events.

Stage 3

When the students were asked to write the story down in pairs, some of them decided to write individually, so I did not force them to make pairs. They mostly made notes during the previous preparation of the story so they had a rough draft for their stories. I reminded them again of the use of the present perfect and the present progressive and also the structure of narrative writing which we talked about in the previous lesson. They asked me if they should have described the pictures in the order

set in the textbook or if they could mix their order. I insisted on the order of the book because I considered the writing difficult and the picture in the book should have helped them. They finished their paragraphs in time, so I collected the paragraphs and let two students read their stories loudly. I evaluated the stories and discussed possible questions in the following lesson because we ran out of time.

8. Conclusion

This lesson was not as successful as the three previous ones. The aim of this lesson was to encourage students to write a story based on pictures. I relied on the students' knowledge about the structure of narration that we had practised the previous lesson. However, although I reminded them of the structure again, their paragraphs showed they forgot it. Even though they revised irregular verbs and prepared the story in groups, they made a lot of grammatical mistakes. Moreover, some of them copied the narration after each other!

I also did not give any limit of sentences, which I should have done, but I only asked them to describe all eight pictures. However, not all of them did it. After the discussion about their works with their English teacher, I changed my previous purpose to mark their paragraphs. I think that the lesson was not effective because the students had never used the present perfect tense in their writing before. They may have used the present perfect constructions in isolated sentences or on occasions of grammar practice but could not apply them in a meaningful written (or oral) utterance. Also, they were confused by describing logical succession of events in the pictures and could not use their imagination much. The pictures may have limited their fantasy.

9. Evaluation of students' writing

One of the aims of this lesson was to provoke the students to write a report based on the pictures in their textbook. In my evaluation I focused on the content of the students' reports. Most of the students just briefly described the action in the pictures using the same words and sentences that they had used in their speaking. About three quarters of the class fulfilled the limit and described all eight pictures. I found a name of the plane in one of the stories – “a red-yellow plane” (see appendix 4 C) and also the title of the story “Starting Cool Cat” (see appendix 4 D). In my instructions I did not require either a title or a name of the plane so I appreciated their invention. Moreover, I found some unknown words which showed the students' willingness to make their

writing more interesting, i.e. : “slamed“ (see appendix 4 C). In general, I found out that the students copied the content of the story from their previous activity – speaking. Although they were beginners, the sentences were linked logically and I considered their works as good initial practice.

I must admit that referring to the language, I found a lot of grammatical mistakes in the students’ narration in comparison with their other works in the three previous lessons. I considered practising irregular verbs satisfying, but I also should have prepared an exercise for practising the present perfect in a meaningful context. I noticed that some students did not use these tenses correctly – i.e.: “... announcer has announce...” instead of “...announcer has announced...” and “... his mouth has smile...” instead of “...his mouth has smiled...” (see appendix 4 C). I also found some spelling mistakes like i.e. : “frightend“ instead of “frightened“ (see appendix 4 D). On the other hand I did not found any mistakes in using and forming the present progressive tense.

Finally, I evaluated the form of the stories. I did not find any clear beginnings and effective ends in their works. They only described the action according to the pictures. I thought they would remember the structure of narrative paragraph from the previous lesson so I did not emphasise it enough. The activity itself was not prompting enough because the students were asked to describe the events in the picture, which did not allow them to use their imagination. It might have been effective in the initial stages of practising the present perfect tense. I could see that the students needed to work on writing tasks systematically and regularly in their English lessons.

I discussed and commented on the pupils’ works in the following English lesson. I let two students read their best stories loudly. After a discussion with their teacher, I did not mark their paragraphs, but I only appreciated their effort orally.

CHAPTER III.

III. I. CONCLUSION

The aim of this Diploma Thesis was to support the claim that before teacher can assess students' pieces of writing he or she must be sure that appropriate practice of writing preceded. Not only the way to assess students' writing skills but also the way to teach writing are the most important factors which influence students' attitude to writing and finally, their products. Assessment of these products should be, therefore, based on aims and objectives applied to the process of teaching/learning writing.

III. I. I. Guided writing

Although pupils at schools often consider writing as a tool for testing their knowledge, I tried to make up such writing activities which would be enough interesting and prompting for the students so that they would learn some of the basic writing skills without any fear of constant examination of their failures. The analysis of the lessons allowed me to conclude that if pupils are involved in writing tasks, and if they are systematically and effectively guided towards producing a meaningful piece of writing, then they are able to realise their own progress either by the teacher's evaluation or by the process itself.

The first crucial precondition to start teaching writing is an appropriate stimulus. The effectivity of the activities presented in this project was supported by interesting and unusual themes of the writing tasks, i.e. activity 1- unusual animals, activity 2- a robbed room, activity 3- a fable. Not only the themes were interesting for the students, but also the material used in the activities became good prompts for the students. The coloured pictures, like i.e. activity 1- Stegosaurus, or activity 2- A robbed room, helped them to support their eagerness to writing. Moreover, different types of activities, i.e. individual work or pair-work enabled to prepare the pupils for their further writing. Thus, attractive themes, lively activities and variability of tasks become crucial for students' involvement.

As the most effective way for practising writing I considered guided writing. Raimes (1983, p. 103) acknowledges such a guided composition as "...an extension of controlled composition. It is less controlled... it gives students some but not all of the

content and form of the sentences they will use...Students are given first sentence, a last sentence, an outline to fill out, a series of questions to respond to, or information to include in their piece of writing“. This kind of task, when students follow a certain model, proved to be effective in the presented activities. Why? The students felt secure because they had a certain framework but it also gave them enough space for their creativity. Appropriate practice by the means of guided activities then could become a bridge to free writing.

Even if the students were motivated and led to produce an appropriate piece of writing, I found out, that after four lessons of practising guided writing activities children were still not prepared enough to work independently on their own products. They were not able to write without following the given model, they also made mistakes in grammar structures. The knowledge of the students' vocabulary was not sufficient enough for them to be able to work without help from the teacher. Some students used their imagination and creativity in their writings, but a lot of students still followed the given structure. I did not consider these findings as the students' failure, but I realised how difficult it is for pupils to use their own opinions in a meaningful, logical and attractive written products.

The four lessons presented in this diploma thesis served as an introduction to teaching/learning writing, and could not sufficiently substitute the long procedure of understanding and acquiring writing skills.

On the other hand guided writing tasks helped pupils keep certain form of their written discourse and their products were decent and appropriate.

On the whole, I must admit that all the activities 1- 4 were motivated enough for the students so that they were interested in producing a piece of writing. Pictures, interesting topics and audio materials supported their creative thinking. In lessons 1-2 students practised description in guided activities (activity 1- description of an unusual animal, activity 2- description of a room), and during lessons 3- 4 pupils practiced narration in guided activities (see activity 3- fable, activity 4- report). In order to provoke pupils' curiosity and ambitions, I incorporated such features as problem solving questions about the unusual animal (see activity 1- stage 1), about the robbery (see activity 2- stage 3), about the fable (see activity 3- stage 2) and about the event (see activity 4- stage 1). Then I also offered the students different types of activities like a warming- up game (see activity 2- stage 1), a listening to the description of a room (see

activity 2- stage 2), putting pictures in the right order(see activity 3- stage 1) and putting cards with irregular words in the right order (see activity 4- stage 1).

Having summarised the previous features, it can be said that teaching writing is a long process that demands a lot of practice, continuity and system. Guided writing proved to be an effective tool to start with such a process.

III. I. II. Assessment

Although, "Assessment, in the sense of documentation of strengths and needs, is important for children as well as for adults...both teacher and child need a sense of the child's progress and what the child is accomplishing in writing." (Hudelson, 1989, p. 90- 91), it is generally known that students at schools are often stressed out from any kind of assessment. However, there are many ways of assessing writing suggested in the professional literature that can be both summative for the teacher and formative for the learners, and that can become for the learners a positive tool of learning rather than a certain threat. The first requirement of any effective evaluation of students' writing is the design and use of criteria. For the purpose of the diploma thesis project, three basic criteria of assessment were determined:

a. structure

As the students were inexperienced writers, they should have become familiar with a basic paragraph pattern: intro- body- conclusion. The most appropriate pattern for writers- beginners to practise this structure was description and narration. In description, which "gives an account of the features of things, people, and concepts" (Pincas, 1982, p. 63) a writer gives a picture of a certain thing or person while observing or imagining it. The model, which is going to be described, helps students "draw" the picture from a variety views. Narration "presents a sequence of events" (Pincas 1982, p. 63), which makes a certain frame for students to follow. Moreover, students can think of something they have experienced if they lack imagination. Both description and narration applied in this project proved to be appropriate patterns for the initial phase of teaching writing..

b. content

The models should have helped students to see that there is a certain link between the sentences in paragraphs. Even if description and narration are not difficult in terms of their structure, they must have logical and interesting plot to catch the reader's attention. The models should have showed students not only the interest of the paragraphs but also different view on topic. This should have made students realised that paragraphs must "tell" something to reader.

Although some of the students wrote interesting and logical narration or description (see appendix 1E, 2C, 3C, 3D, 3E, 4D and 4E), the rest of them were still not able to use their imagination. Moreover, they copied the model.

c. style

The style of descriptions and narration referred to the use of correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary. Therefore students practised grammar structures and revised vocabulary. Even they made a few mistakes in their paragraphs, the sentences were clear and logical linked.

The span of the project did not allow me to focus more on coherence and support to express students' ideas.

The project confirmed that guided writing was suitable for demonstration structure, content and style of description and narration. Focusing on structure students were able to write logical and well structured sentences and so their writings were meaningful. On the other hand, the assessment showed that there was a lack of enough practice of writing tasks. Some students still were not able to use their creativity and think up interesting ideas. The versions of their paragraphs were alike. This proves the fact that the more practice in writing pupils do, the more coherent, structured and interesting their final products are.

The assessment of content of the students' products showed that they were influenced by the models, but they tried hard to use their imagination, which is natural for their age. In this case, other accompanying activities focusing on developing writers' creativity could be helpful here. Raimes (1983, p. 13) also confirms that "When students complain, as they often do, about how difficult is to write in second language,

they are talking not only about the difficulty of “finding” the right words and using the correct grammar but about the difficulty of finding and expressing ideas in a new language.” Writing requires constant development of thinking skills, improvement of writing abilities and advancement of creativity.

The evaluation of the writings showed that if students are familiar with evidence and their preparation is effective, they can easily apply the style in their works. The pupils used grammar structures that were practiced in their writings, they also applied suitable vocabulary (see activity 2- Reflection- stage 4) .

The students were appropriately prepared for using grammar structures for description and narration. They followed structure there is / there are and positions in place (on left, on right) in description (see activity 2, stage 1); in narration they practiced the use of the past tense (see activity 3, 4), and present perfect tense (see activity 4- stage 1). I found more grammatical mistakes in activities 3- 4- narration, which proved insufficient preparation of the grammar part. The students were able to use appropriate vocabulary in their paragraphs and add some new words.

III. I. III. Relationship of writing and assessment

Assessment should be a tool of students' progress. As Hudelson (1989, p. 79) says, “...there is a genuine need to examine how children progress, how they grow intellectually, how and what they learned.” Moreover, she mentions the necessity of students' consciousness about their progress: “In order for children to develop confidence as writers, they need evidence of what they have learned and what they need to work on” (p. 190). However, as the professional project showed, no method of assessment is valuable if it is not preceded by appropriate practice.

The four activities that I tested during my teaching practice proved that appropriate teaching methods of writing influence the teaching/learning process of writing and the students' approach to writing task. Thus the writing skills can be evaluated according to the given aims and objectives. Assessment of writings in activities 1- 3 showed the effectiveness of methods. The preparation and motivation to writing led the students to producing interesting, logical paragraphs. On the other hand, in the activity 4 I found many mistakes in the form and style, which may have been

caused by lack of practice. Disinterest of the students in the topic caused negative influence on their works.

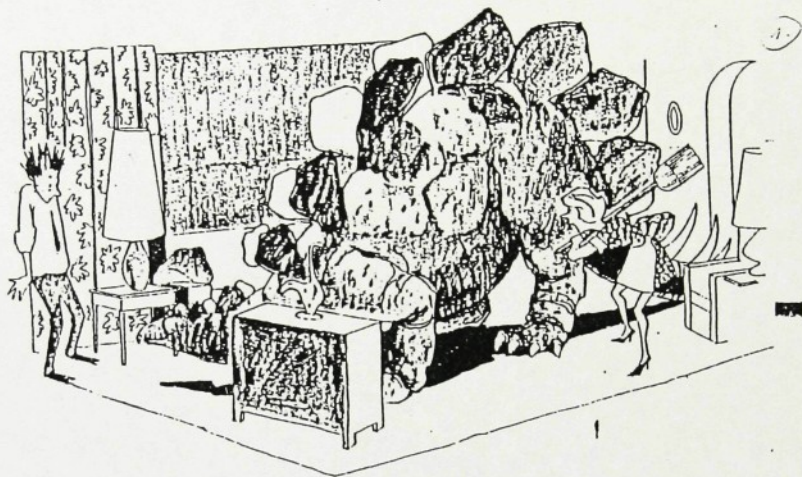
Before I started to work on my project I thought of more detailed and thorough assessment of students' writing. I planned to use written comments on the students' writing that would help them to refine their paragraphs. The first lessons, however, showed that it would be necessary to focus more on practising writing at the expense of time devoted to the assessment procedures. The assessment would have lost its sense without appropriate practice. On the other hand, the detailed practice created sufficient basis for the further evaluation. In future, other strategies of assessment should be applied so that evaluation really would function as a source of improvement of students' writing.

On the whole, the stimulating tasks and motivational prompts helped to establish positive atmosphere for teaching writing. In addition, the attitude of the students' to writing had changed during practising the activities. They realised that writing can be an amusing activity that can bring interesting products that display their efforts, ideas and abilities.

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III.III. APPENDIX



Appendix 1 B

Five- senses chart

| SEEING | HEARING | TOUCHING | SMELLING | FEELING |
|-------------|--------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| UGLY FACE | SNORTING ANIMAL | WET SKIN | SMELLY LEGS | SCARED MAN |
| SMALL WOMAN | BREATH | SLIMY SKIN | FRAGRANT PARFUME | SAD ANIMAL |

Appendix 1 C

Model descriptive paragraph written by the author :

I can see a big brown animal about a size of a room standing in the middle of the living room. It looks quite peacefull and curious. There is a man in front of the animal and a woman behind him. A woman is trying to hit the animal. She looks brave. The skin of the animal is dry, rough and hard. The outgroowths on the back are very sharp. Its strong legs withg long nails must be heavy and they look dirty. It has small black eyes and a long tail with sharp spines. The eyes are blinking. Its chops full of narrow teeth are big enough to eat that poor scared man in front of him.

Key words:

curious- zvědavý, brave- statečný, rough- hrubý, outgrowths- výrůstky, spines- ostny, chops- tlama, extinct- vyhynulý



Neuhäuserová

Description:

I can see a big green animal, ~~about~~ It is sitting on a yellow island ^{a stone}. It is looking angry and hungry. He is waiting for his food.

The animal is green and very hairy. He has very sharp teeth. His hand looks as fin.

Behind him is palm ~~that~~ is eating ~~meat~~. carnivorous. Water is very warm and his card. ^{is} ~~swim~~. He's waiting for.



YAHOO !!!

I can see a lovely monster. It's name is Yahoo! It's green, it's hairy, it has yellow teeth. It eats fish. It's sitting on very small island. I can smell pong. It's skin is dry.

Veronika Hendrychová

Appendix 2 A

Transcript of the listening activity:

A description of a room

I can see a room. The room is quite big, decorated with sunflowers. At front there is a detective and an armchair. At back I can see a chimney, a brown clock and a small blue table. There is fire in the chimney. The clock is broken, it shows one o' clock . There is also money on the floor. On the left side there is a coffee table, a lamp and some pictures on the wall. On the coffee table there is a white cloth. There are flowers painted on the lamp. On the right side there is an open window with yellow curtains. I can see a ladder behind the window. Something strange happened there.

A picture of a robbed room



Appendix 2 C

Descriptions of the students

There are pictures on the left side. The pictures are at the wall. There is a table on the left side. The table is ~~under~~ the lamp. There is an armchair on the right side. The armchair is at the floor. There is a window on the right side.

A detective is wearing a brown coat. He is wearing ^{yellow} gloves, a green cap. He is wearing a sweater. (In his hands are gloves.)

There is a lamp on the table P. Tulach.
under the pictures.

There is a chair near the window with curtains.

There is a safe above the chimney and a candle.

There is a ^{floor} ~~box~~ on the ~~bottom~~ and there ~~is~~ is a lot of money, too.

The detective is tall and old.

He's wearing a brown coat and a crown, ~~all~~ hat. He's wearing a green cap and gloves.

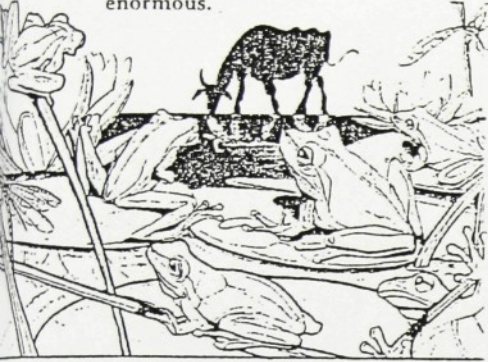
P. Tulach

Appendix 3 A

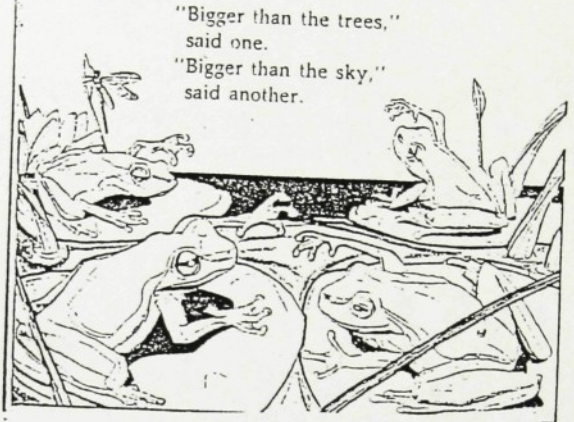
from The Exploding Frog

by Mary O'Toole
illustrated by Mark Jackson

An ox came to drink
at the pond.
The frogs thought the ox was
enormous.



When the ox left,
the frogs talked about
how big the ox was.



"Bigger than the trees,"
said one.
"Bigger than the sky,"
said another.

So old Mr. Frog
took a deep breath
and doubled his size.



"Why do you think
the ox is so big?" old Mr. Frog asked.
"I can make myself
bigger than an ox."



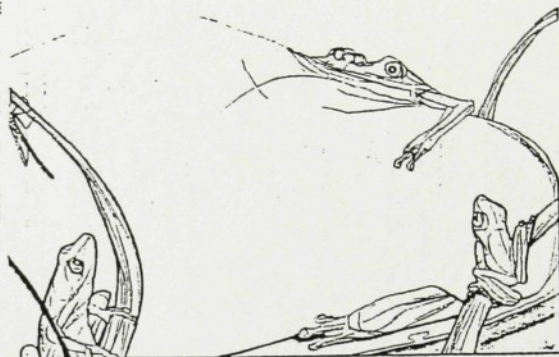
"Now am I as big as the ox?"
asked old Mr. Frog.
"No, you're not that big,"
croaked the other frogs.

So old Mr. Frog
took another deep breath
and doubled his size again.



Old Mr. Frog
took a third deep breath.

He grew bigger
and
bigger...



"Now am I as big as
the ox?" he asked.

"No, you're still not that big,"
croaked the other frogs.

Suddenly, old Mr. Frog exploded.



"He was almost as big as
an ox," said one frog sadly.



Lesson: Don't act more important
than you really are.

Appendix 3 B

A fable teaches a lesson. What lesson will you choose to teach in your fable?

1. A friend in need is a friend indeed. V nouzi poznáš přítele.
2. First come first served. Kdo dřív přijde, ten dřív mele.
3. Look before you leap. Dvakrát měř, jednou řež.
4. Learn to walk before you run. Žádný učený z nebe nespadl.
5. Lies have short legs. Lež má krátké nohy.
6. Old love will not be forgotten. Stará láska nerezaví.
7. Love makes the world go round. Láska hory přenáší.

Premature 3c

JOY

Kaderima Pubsakova

Robin, a rabbit had a terrible headache. His wife had her hands full of work because of her very large family, so Robin decided to go to the city and get some aspirin for himself. Just as he was leaving a turtle came by to visit.

TURTLE: "Good morning, Robin. How are you?"

ROBIN: "I have such a headache that I feel better not see myself."

TURTLE: "You should take a tablet."

ROBIN: "I am just on my way to the city."

TURTLE: "Do you know what? I will get it for you and you can stay home."

ROBIN: "That is very kind of you, thank you." A month passed and the turtle still hadn't returned. "Where can he be?" wondered Robin, "I can't stand this pain."

After one year, when he had given up all hope that he would ever see the turtle again, he spotted her on the opposite side. Three days later she finally arrived.

ROBIN: "Dear turtle, you have no idea how glad I see you - the pain is terrible. Give me the pill right away."

←

TURTLE: "I am sorry, Robin, I haven't brought you the pill yet. I just came to ask you which kind of aspirin you wanted - ANACIN or BAYER'S?"

LESSON: When I need anything, I must do it alone.

Appendix 3 D

Students' writings:

J. Burdova'

FABLE

One day a small squirrel went to the village for a muds. On the way met an old and hungry wolf. "Give me ^{some} muds," said the wolf. "I haven't much muds," said the squirrel and went go out. Next week the squirrel went to the village again. Suddenly the squirrel fell in a swamp. The wolf went around and the squirrel shouted: "Help, help, help!" The wolf pulled out the squirrel from the swamp. "Thank you, wolf, I ~~have~~ will give 5 sacks of muds for you," said the squirrel. The wolf and the squirrel became best friends.

WARNING: a friend in need is a friend indeed!!!!

Appendix 3 E

Students' writings:

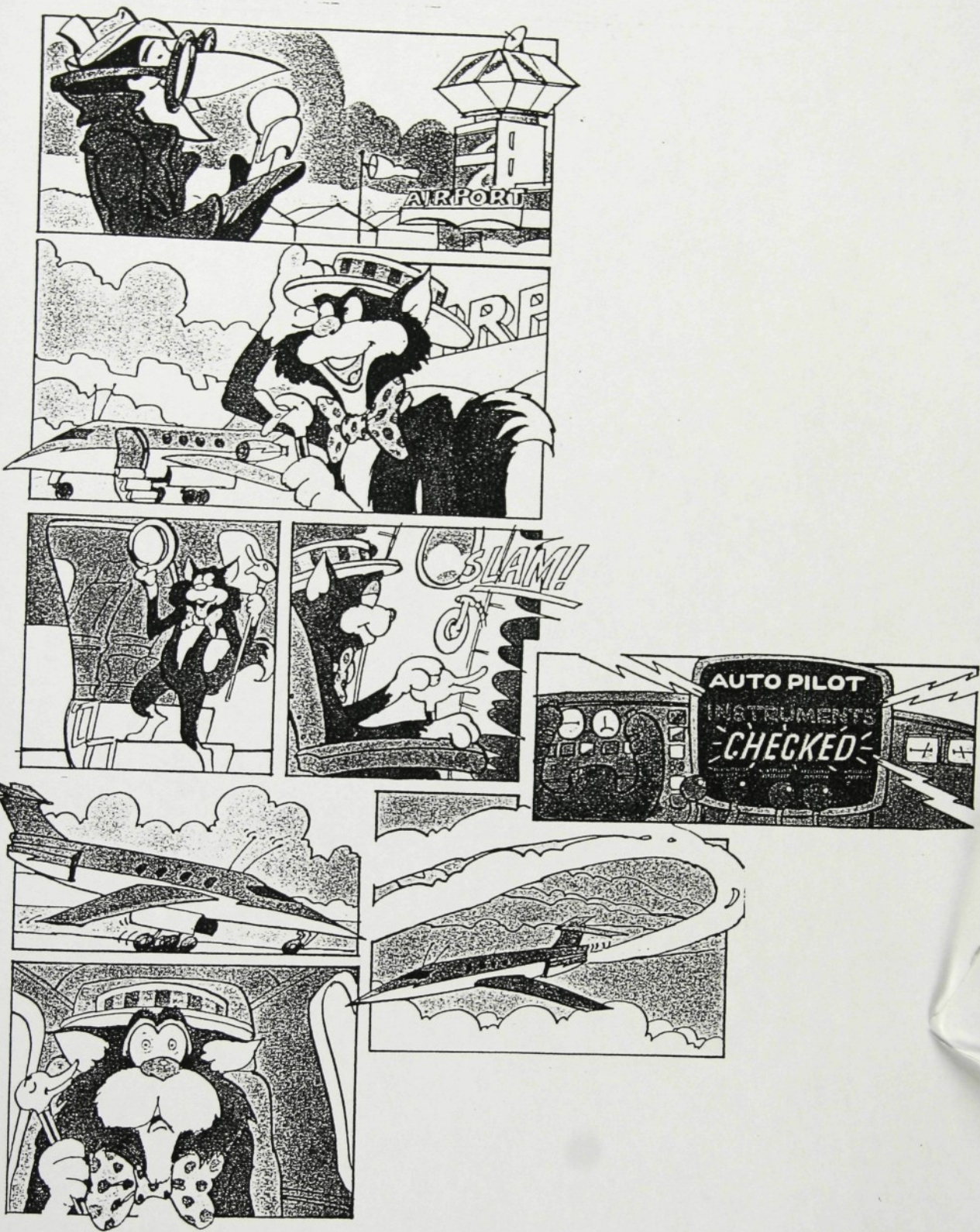
One day a chicken decided to have a lunch.
Chicken go to the pigsty with the file. On a way
to pigsty stepped. Chicken came to the pigsty and
get ready. Chicken is hungry. The pigsty are two
pigs. Chicken take file and cut-off pig's head, but
it's wrong slash. Chicken was a sad.
Ha, ha, ho, ho - second pig is ~~here~~ here. Chicken take
a metre and measure pig's head and cut-off it.
Chicken eaten pig's head and ^{was} very nice.
Look before you leap.

ADAM NEWMAN

Appendix 4 A

A chart with irregular verbs

| INFINITIVE | PAST TENSE | PAST PARTICIPLE |
|------------|------------|-----------------|
| TAKE | | |
| | DID | |
| | | LEFT |
| FIND | | |
| BREAK | | |
| | RAN | |
| | | STOLEN |
| | TOLD | |
| | | FLOWN |



START L COOL CAT

Pulšáková
Kateřina
+ Křížová
Petra

Announcer (bird) has looked the
airport and has announce take off
plane (what's called: red-yellow plane).
Cool Cat has run to plane and he
has entrance into the plane. His
mouth has smile and he has very happy.
Cool Cat has sat on the chair
and he slammed the door.

The plane has taken off and on
the instrument board discover:

AUTO PILOT

INSTRUMENTS

"CHECKED"

Cool Cat has startled and he has
talked "I very soon / early dead."

Frčová, Jindrova'

1. The bird is staying at the airport.
He is speaking about a robot plane.
2. Cool cat is coming to the airport.
He is happy, because he has a robot plane.
3. Cool cat is coming ^{into} ~~into~~ the plane.
He is laughing.
4. The door is closing.
Cool cat is sitting on the seat.
5. He is checking autopilot instruments.
Robot plane doesn't need pilot.
6. The plane is taking off.
7. The plane is flying.
8. Cool cat is frightened.
He is afraid.

Buridora, Talora'

Mr Raven is a reporter.

He has come to the airport.

Cool Cat will fly a plane at nine o'clock.

Cool Cat is getting on the plane.

Door is closing.

The plane is starting and flying away.

(The) Cool Cat will return, about!!!