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Pavla Tomášková

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**TEACHING ENGLISH CONVERSATION LESSONS
IN UPPER PRIMARY**

Pavla Tomášková

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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Pavla Tomášková

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the current situation of English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of primary schools in the Czech Republic. It focuses on two main areas: the content and the goals of the English conversation lesson teaching and, marginally, it deals with the organization of the lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of Upper Primary Education. The theoretical part of this work provides a detailed description of conversation including its functions and its typical features. After this, the potential goals and possible content of English conversation lessons are outlined. Apart from that this thesis reveals how conversation is depicted by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and what are the expected outcomes of pupils at the end of the 9th grade according to the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education. The second part of this thesis presents the findings of a survey conducted in primary schools around the Czech Republic by means of questionnaires and an interview. Based on the survey results it is concluded that English conversation lessons provide a unique chance for practising all four language skills, the development of a variety of competences, extending pupils' vocabulary knowledge, and incorporating engaging activities which might positively influence pupils' attitude to learning English.

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most common frustrations of learners is that they have spent years studying English, but they still cannot speak it and do not understand other English speakers. In other words, they claim that they cannot join in the natural conversation. Many learners even assess their progress in English in accordance with their accomplishments in oral communication and they value the ability to converse with others much more than the ability to read or write for example. Moreover, there is a growing need for good communication skills in English around the world. Nowadays, it is commonly accepted that knowing a language and being able to use it are two different things and that it takes a lot more to using the language for everyday communication than knowing the grammar and vocabulary. It is essential to spend time on speaking to become an efficient speaker, to spend time on writing to be able to produce written messages, to devote some time to listening to understand other speakers, and finally it is necessary to have some reading practice to be able to read articles or books in a foreign language. Similarly, in order to join in the natural conversation, learners need to practise the skills crucial for conversation. It seems that English conversation lessons can provide a unique opportunity for developing conversation and communication skills, which are particularly significant nowadays; therefore this topic was chosen to be examined in greater detail in this thesis.

The thesis examines the current state of English conversation lessons in Upper Primary education, while it focuses on the 8th and 9th grades only. The thesis aims to answer two main research questions, these are as follows: 'What is the content of English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of Upper Primary Education?' and the second is 'What are the goals of teaching English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades in Upper Primary Education?'. The first research question focusing on lesson content should clarify, among others, which topics, speech acts, and activities pupils get familiar with during conversation lessons. The second research question should reveal the objectives of conversation lessons and, hopefully, this could highlight to some extent the distinction between English conversation lessons and classic English lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of the Upper Primary Education. In addition to that, this thesis deals with the competences which can be developed during English conversation lessons. More specifically, it deals with the development of the communicative competence, which has been a major goal of the Communicative Language Teaching since the 1970s, and development of the Key

Competences as they are described in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education.

This thesis consists of five main chapters. The first chapter, the theoretical background, examines the topic of conversation as such which involves defining conversation and its purpose, and providing an overview of its typical features, conversation strategies, and approaches to English conversation teaching. After that, the potential goals of English conversation lessons are put into focus. The communicative competence and its individual components are described because it is assumed that development of the communicative competence might be one of the potential goals of the conversation lessons. Thereinafter, it is discussed how the goals of language learning are described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and how this official document describes conversation and conversation skills that should be acquired by learners to achieve a certain level of proficiency. This is followed by an overview of the Czech curricular documents and an outline of pupils expected outcomes at the end of the 9th grade of Basic Education. Apart from that, this chapter discusses the activities that might be included in English conversation lessons and deals with other matters connected with possible content of the lessons.

The following chapter of the thesis provides a description of the research methods and research tools used for carrying out the survey on English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of Upper Primary Education at schools around the Czech Republic. The survey results that encompass three main areas (organization, content, and the goals of English conversation lessons) are presented in the next chapter. Subsequently, the chapter Implications deals with the pedagogical implications and limitations of the research conducted and suggestions for further research are presented there as well. Finally, the last chapter concludes the findings of this thesis.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This part of the thesis focuses on three main areas. Firstly, it examines the conversation as such. Its characterization as well as the overview of its typical features is given. The second part discusses issues connected with potential aims of conversation lessons from several perspectives. At first, it discloses the goals of communicative language teaching, since they might reflect the conversation lessons goals due to the immense influence of communicative language teaching on the general approach to teaching. After that, two official documents of major significance not only for teaching conversation lessons are put into focus i.e. the Common European Framework of Reference on the European level and the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education on the state level. It takes a closer look at document sections dealing with the conversation skills and competences that should be acquired by pupils at the 8th and 9th grade of Upper Primary. The last part examines possible content of the conversation lessons such as the activities and materials that could be employed during the English conversation classes.

Conversation

A set of specific skills is necessary for joining in and having a successful conversation. That is so, as the conversation is an interactive process between one or more speakers which requires the cooperation of participants not only in the management of speaking turns. It usually takes place spontaneously and in real time, with little time for planning (Thornbury, 2006, p. 54). The conversation participants need to achieve a degree of automaticity in both planning and production to be able to express their thoughts fluently and accurately enough. If they pay too much attention to planning, production suffers, and the effect is a loss of fluency. And vice versa, if they pay too much attention to production, it could negatively affect the accuracy and possibly the intelligibility of the speech as well (Thornbury, 2006, p. 208). All that implies that teaching the skills necessary for successful conversation needs to be developed and practiced independently of the grammar curriculum (Thornbury, 2006, p. 208). English conversation lessons in particular may lessons provide a unique opportunity to practice such skills.

The range of possibilities on how to teach conversation lessons and develop the skills essential for natural conversation is immense. However, in order to teach the

conversation lessons effectively enough, we need to understand the essence of conversation. Hence, the first concern of this work is to take a closer look at conversation as such and reveal its functions and characteristic features.

What is conversation?

Scott Thornbury (2005) claims, that “conversation is informal talk between one or more people” (p. 52). In his book on speaking, he characterizes a casual conversation as an interpersonal, interactive and unplanned speaking event (Thornbury, 2005, p. 13). The first feature means that its main function is to establish and maintain social relationships between speakers. Sometimes, however, conversation can also serve the other function, the transactional function, in which the primary purpose is to convey information. The conversation usually takes the form of a dialogue or a discussion so it is constructed as an interactive speaking act. That can be opposed to non-interactive speech acts such as monologues (e.g. journalist’s report, university lecture or a voice-mail message). Finally, Scott Thornbury (2005) makes a distinction between planned speaking acts (e.g. public speech or business presentation) and unplanned speaking acts where conversation belongs (p. 14).

Features of Conversation

Several typical features of conversation can be observed that distinguish it from other genres. They can cover the tricks or production strategies that give at least an illusion of fluency to the speaker such as the pause fillers (uh, um) or vagueness expressions (sort of, kind of, I mean) (Thornbury, 2005, p. 7). The other features include use of appraisal language, incomplete utterances, non-standard forms, ellipsis, discourse markers, or the clarification requests to name a few (Thornbury, 2006, p. 54). However it takes more than that to characterize the conversation rules and its aspects.

Turn-taking. The basic unit of conversation is an exchange (Nolasco & Artur, 1987, p. 5). An exchange consists of two moves sometimes also called turns: an initiating move and a response. A turn is the time when a speaker is talking and a successful conversation is characterized by turn-taking, which implies that no two speakers are talking at the same time (Nolasco & Artur, 1987, p. 6). In order for conversation to work smoothly,

all participants should follow the basic rules of turn-taking. The turn-taking skills include above all recognizing the appropriate moment to get a turn, signalling the fact that you want to speak, holding the floor while you have your turn, recognizing when other speakers are signalling their wish to speak, yielding the turn, or signalling that you are listening (Thornbury, 2005, p. 9). Having learnt these skills, students should not have problems with getting into conversation, knowing when to give up their turn or with bringing the conversation to the end. The turns in conversation may be signalled both verbally and non-verbally. That is why participants should be able to recognize and use signals expressing certain intentions. Discourse markers, stressed words, falling intonation, a wide voice range, specific gestures and body language all there are the means that good speakers use to keep conversation going (Nolasco & Artur, 1987, p. 12).

Adjacency pairs. In some cases in conversation the two turns are related to each other through adjacency pairs. The first turn determines the second and we can predict that (Nolasco & Artur, 1987, p. 9). To give an example, a greeting is usually followed by a greeting, a question by an answer, a complaint by an apology or a justification, a request by an acceptance or a refusal etc. The variety of answers in adjacency pairs may differ a lot, though. Teachers should take this range of possibilities into account and think about ways of developing the appropriate second part of the adjacency pairs (Nolasco & Artur, 1987, p. 9). In conversation there certainly is a high number of correct answers as opposed to some drill activities, where usually only one variety is accepted as the correct one.

Co-operative principle. In order for conversation to flow smoothly we should try to respect the co-operative principle, first articulated by the philosopher H.P. Grice. The principle consists of four maxims. The first is the maxim of quantity, which says that you should make your contribution just as informative as required. The second, the maxim of quality claims that you should make your contribution one that is true. According to the third maxim, the maxim of relation, you should make your contributions relevant. The last one, the maxim of manner, recommends avoiding obscurity and ambiguity (Thornbury, 2005, p. 55). The maxims, however, are often broken in everyday conversation. When this happens, the native speakers try to get at the underlying meaning, such as in this case:

A: How do you like my new dress?

B: Well, the colour is very striking.

In this case the first maxim of quantity has been violated by B and therefore A would probably seek an alternative interpretation of B's response, e.g. that B doesn't like the dress. This process is called implicature. In other words, it is possible to infer from what has been

said as well as from what has not been said (Thornbury, 2005, p. 55). It goes without saying that breaking the maxims can cause ambiguity. A lot of material written for learning and teaching English is deliberately free of such ambiguity but it would be useful to train students to be able to observe the maxims and thus be able to convey the underlying meaning of the discourse in such cases (Nolasco & Artur, 1987, p. 9).

Conversation strategies. Conversational discourse may often appear quite chaotic. According to Jeremy Harmer (2007), this is partly because the conversation is jointly constructed by many speakers (p. 276). There are, however, useful devices which help the speakers to make the construction more successful. The participants should know how to take turns and which discourse markers and conversation strategies they can use to make their intentions (Harmer, 2007, p. 276). Such intentions may include e.g. using effective conversation openings (How are you? It's nice weather, isn't it?), interrupting the other speaker (Sorry to interrupt, but...), topic shift (by the way, that reminds me) and closings (It's been nice to talk to you, I don't want to keep you from work) (Harmer, 2007, p. 344).

An essential part of any conversation is also being able to use repair strategies such as formulaic expressions (Sorry? What was that? I didn't quite catch that, etc.) in case of misunderstanding. Other strategies to indicate a lack of understanding could include repetition of information up to the point where the communication breakdown occurred, using rising intonation, or rephrasing and seeing if the speaker confirms that he has understood the rephrasing (Harmer, 2007, p. 344). Repair strategies also include the ability of paraphrasing (It's a kind of), the ability to get around the problem of not knowing certain word (You know, it's a what you call it...), and the ability to appeal for help (What's the word for something you use to play a guitar with?) (Harmer, 2007, p. 344).

Sociocultural rules. Another important thing to consider in conversation is observing more general sociocultural rules. They deal with the way how men and women address each other, whether there are any differences in discourse between people of the same age and people who are considerably older, and finally, they deal with how to perform certain common speech acts such as agreeing, inviting, promising, suggesting, etc. (Harmer, 2007, p. 276). The speech act has a certain function but sometimes it can have several functions at once. The statement 'It's freezing here' could represent a statement but in certain circumstances it could be an indirect request like 'Can you shut the window?'. This implies that it is important to lead students so that they are able to interpret the speech acts correctly and thus they are able to adjust their speech to their interlocutors and the specific situation.

Approaches to Teaching Conversation

According to Scott Thornbury, many students consider the ability to participate in conversations as one of their main goals in learning English. Nevertheless, opinions differ as to how this goal should be met (Thornbury, 2005, p. 53). Basically, there are several schools of thought each of them implementing its own distinct approach to teaching conversation lessons. One of the possible approaches suggests to break down the skills used in conversation into a number of sub-skills (such as opening and closing conversations, turn-taking, interrupting, paraphrasing, etc.) and to teach them one by one (Thornbury, 2005, p. 53). The other focuses on speech acts and different genres (such as invitations, requests, commands, excuses, thanks, congratulations, or small talk). Finally, promoters of the topic-based approach claim that the best way of learning conversation is to have conversation on a range of topics (Thornbury, 2005, p. 53). In reality, it seems that the best option is a blend of all the approaches.

The Goals of Conversation Lessons Teaching

Generally, the goals of teaching any subject result from the need and priorities of society and individuals. Nowadays, the main emphasis in foreign language teaching is put on what the learner “can do in and with the language” (Burkart, 1998, p. 13). Burkart (1998) also claims that the ability to interpret, express, and negotiate the meaning and use the language to carry out a range of tasks in a variety of contexts is stressed in contemporary methodologies (p. 7). The approach to language learning, where real communication is in focus, traces back to the 1970s and to the commencement of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Since the 1970s, the CLT has served as a major source of influence on language teaching all over the world (Richards, 2006, p. 1). Many of the principles raised by CLT are still relevant and have a considerable impact on current methodologies and on defining the goals of language learning and teaching. Owing to this immense influence, the goals of the CLT will be presented in the following part of this work.

The goals of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Since the Communicative Movement in the 1970s, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become the major approach to teaching in Europe and in the world. The movement was marked by a shift from teaching language systems such as vocabulary and grammar in isolation to teaching how these systems are used in real communication (Thornbury, 2006, p. 36). Thus the previous goal of language learning, i.e. achieving the linguistic competence, which means the ability of producing grammatically correct sentences, has been replaced by the main objective of the CLT: achieving the communicative competence (Thornbury, 2006, p. 37).

Communicative competence. The communicative competence was first introduced by Dell Hymes and the term contrasts with Chomsky's much narrower theory of 'competence', which is the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language (Burkart, 1998, p. 4). Dell Hymes held a view that there is much more to communication than the creation of well-formed sentences. He considered the importance of culture and communication by itself, so his theory was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community (Burkart, 1998, p. 4). The concept of communicative competence evolved over the years and many linguists contributed to its development, each of them defining it and its components partly different.

Components of the communicative competence. Probably the most well-known conceptualization of the communicative competence was defined by Canale and Swain in 1980 with later amendments from 1983 (Burkart, 1998, p. 4). They identified four dimensions of the communicative competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. The first component, linguistic competence, is the knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and syntax of a language. According to National Capital Language Resource Center, "the linguistic competence asks: What words do I use? How do I put them into phrases and sentences?" ("Communicative Competence", 2003). The second area, sociolinguistic competence, is the knowledge of how to use and respond to language appropriately, taking into account the setting, the topic, the function and the relationships among the people communicating. "Sociolinguistic competence asks: Which words and phrases fit this setting and this topic? How can I express a specific attitude (courtesy, authority, friendliness, respect) when I need to? How do I know what attitude another person is expressing?" ("Communicative Competence", 2003). The third component of the communicative competence, discourse competence, has been described by Burkart (1998)

as “the knowledge how to interpret the larger context and how to construct longer stretches of language so that the parts make up a coherent whole” (p. 4). “Discourse competence asks: How are words, phrases and sentences put together to create conversations, speeches, email messages, newspaper articles?” (“Communicative Competence”, 2003). And finally, the last area, strategic competence, is the knowledge of recognizing and repairing communication breakdowns and working around gaps in one’s knowledge of the language. This includes the ability to “find alternative ways of saying things when words or form fail you, and even to use nonverbal means of communication if necessary” (Burkart, 1998, p. 4). “Strategic competence asks: How do I know when I’ve misunderstood or when someone has misunderstood me? What do I say then? How can I express my ideas if I don’t know the name of something or the right verb form to use?” (“Communicative Competence”, 2003).

To sum it up, the goal of the CLT is to achieve the communicative competence, which consists of four sub-competences. Burkart (1998) characterizes the communicative competence from another point of view as an “ability to produce, in a wide variety of circumstances, grammatically correct, logically connected sentences that are appropriate to the context” (p. 5). However, this goal might not always be possible to reach owing to several reasons such as the general abilities of the students. For this reason, teachers should be realistic in their expectations and they might aim to develop the aspects of communicative competence to the highest degree possible (Burkart, 1998, p. 5).

Communicative efficiency. Jeremy Harmer comes up with an alternative goal of the CLT, i.e. achieving communicative efficiency. He says that the idea behind communicative efficiency is that learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. “They should try to avoid confusion in the message (caused by faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary), try to avoid offending communication partners (due to socially inappropriate style) and try to use strategies for recognizing and managing communication breakdowns” (as cited in Burkart, 1998, p. 5). Burkart (1998) comments on that by arguing that the learners may not become as communicatively competent as a native speaker, but in spite of that, they should always strive to be as communicatively efficient as possible. Their communicative efficiency should thus be expected to increase in the course of their study (p. 5).

Conversation in European Documents, European Policy

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. At present the most important document which provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks etc. across Europe is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (abbreviated CEFR) (Council of Europe [CoE], 2001, p. 1). It was issued by the Council of Europe between 1989 and 1996 to provide a method of learning, teaching and assessing which applies to all languages in Europe. CEFR describes languages of the European Union from a functional perspective. It deals particularly with what people can do with the language, in what situations they can use the language and for what purposes. CEFR describes “what language learners have to learn to do in order to use language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively” (2001, p. 1). The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. Apart from that, it defines six levels of proficiency which allows learners’ progress to be measured at each stage of learning (i.e. The Common Reference Levels) (CoE, 2001, p. 1).

Objectives of language learning and teaching in CEFR. According to CEFR, “the aims and objectives of language learning and teaching should be based on appreciation of learners and society needs and on the tasks, activities and processes that the learners need to carry out in order to satisfy those needs and on the competences and strategies they need to develop in order to do so” (CoE, 2001, p. 140). CEFR also describes the competences which participants need to acquire to participate effectively in communicative events (such as the general competences and the communicative language competences) and the abilities to put these competences into action (such as the productive, receptive and interactive strategies or non-verbal communication) (CoE, 2001, p. 108). That implies that one of the goals is also achieving the Communicative competence. However, the conception of the communicative competence as understood in CEFR slightly differs from its definition adopted by Canale and Swain.

The communicative competence in CEFR. The communicative competence in CEFR consists of three main components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic. The linguistic competences include mainly lexical, phonological, and syntactical skills and other dimensions of language as a system. It relates to the range and quality of knowledge as well as to cognitive organization and the way this knowledge is stored and its accessibility (CoE, 2001, p. 108). The sociolinguistic competences refer to the conditions of language use. This

component strictly affects all language communication between representatives of different cultures and the sensitivity to social conventions has significant influence on their successful communication (CoE, 2001, p. 118). And finally, the pragmatic competences refer to the ability to use language appropriately in different social situations. It also concerns the mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence, the identification of text types and forms, irony and parody. The pragmatic competence has a fundamental importance for interactions (CoE, 2001, p. 123).

The communicative language competences are activated during language activities which involve reception, production, interaction, or mediation (interpreting or translating) (CoE, 2001, p. 14). The receptive activities involve silent reading and following the media and the productive activities encompass mainly speaking and writing. Both the receptive and productive activities are required for interaction. Interaction is understood as a spoken or written exchange in which at least two individuals participate and the production and reception alternate and may even overlap in oral communication (CoE, 2001, p. 23). According to this definition, the conversation is viewed as a spoken interactive activity.

Conversation in CEFR. CEFR classifies conversation as a spoken interactive activity. Furthermore, it states that in activities such as the conversation “the language user acts alternately as speaker and listener with one or more interlocutors so as to construct conjointly, through the negotiation of meaning following the co-operative principle, conversational discourse” (CoE, 2001, p. 73). That implies that in order to achieve successful spoken interactive communication the learner has to manage both receptive and productive strategies and also the strategies exclusive to interaction connected with its management.

Phases of conversation. Several phases of the spoken interactive activities are distinguished, each stage requiring mastery of different interaction strategies. The first phase, the planning, involves e.g. a consideration of the communication gap between the interlocutors which influences planning the moves in the exchanges (CoE, 2001, p. 84). During the activity itself, language users adopt turn-taking strategies to obtain the discourse initiative (taking the floor) or they use different collaboration strategies to keep the exchange focused on the topic discussed or to help mutual understanding of the participants (interpersonal and ideational co-operating) (CoE, 2001, p. 84). The participants may also ask the others interlocutors for assistance in formulating something (asking for help). During the following stage, the evaluation, the interlocutors consider the fit between what they planned and what is actually happening and they monitor the extent to which the things

are going the way they want them to go (monitoring) (CoE, 2001, p. 84). In case of miscomprehension or intolerable ambiguity another requests for clarification may occur in the last phase of interactive spoken interaction (such as asking for/giving clarification or communication repair) (CoE, 2001, p. 85).

The common reference levels. CEFR provides variety of scales measuring learners' success achieved in specific skills or in mastering individual strategies. It divides learners into six levels of competence, using the 'can do' descriptors. The levels include the following stages: A1 (Breakthrough) and A2 (Waystage) for basic users, B1 (Threshold) and B2 (Vantage) for independent users, C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) and C2 (Mastery) for proficient users (CoE, 2001, p. 23). CEFR provides large variety of scales which cover e.g. the global scale, which describes generally all six levels with can do descriptors, or the self-assessment grid focusing on learner's self-evaluation of the four basic language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Other more specific scales in CEFR are focused for example on productive, receptive, and interactive activities and strategies. The grid for conversation is included in its individual section.

The grid for conversation. The illustrative scale for conversation describes learners' spoken interactive skills used in conversation on six levels ranging from A1 to C2 (see Appendix 1). However, this part of work concentrates only on A2 level, since that is the level which should be reached by pupils of the 9th grade of upper elementary (Research Institute of Education in Prague, 2007, p. 19). According to the grid, an A2 learner can say what he/she likes and dislikes. He/she can also respond to invitations, suggestions and apologies, can express how he or she feels in simple terms, and express thanks. Further, he/she can participate in short conversations on routine contexts on topic of interest and can generally understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters directed at him/her, provided he/she can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time. And, what is more, he/she can establish social contact: greetings and farewells, introductions, giving thanks etc. (CoE, 2001, p. 76).

Conversation in the Czech Curricular Documents

The system of the curricular documents in the Czech Republic. The Curricular documents in the Czech education system are developed at two levels: the national level and the school level (See Appendix 2). At the state level there are the National Educational Programme (NEP), defining the elementary education as a whole, and the Framework

Educational Programmes (FEPs). The Framework Educational Programme focuses on the norms at various stages of education i.e. pre-school education, basic education and secondary education. The school level is formed by the School Educational Programmes (SEPs) that are based on principles of appropriate Framework Educational Programme but they are developed by individual schools themselves.

The Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education. The Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (thereinafter FEP BE) strives to cover all the subjects concerning elementary education. It deals with the following matters. Firstly, it characterizes basic education e.g. it defines compulsory school attendance or the organization of basic education (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports [MEYS], 2013, p. 7). Further on, it deals with the concept and the main objectives of basic education and introduces the Key Competences (i.e. learning competences, problem-solving competences, communication competences, social and personal competences, civil competences and working competences) that should be achieved at the basic education stage (MEYS, 2013, p. 10). It also divides the content of basic education into nine Educational Areas each of them containing its characteristics, objectives and content. Those areas are the followings: Language and Language Communication, Mathematics and Its Application, Information and Communication Technologies, Humans and Their World, Humans and Society, Humans and Nature, Arts and Culture, Humans and Health, Humans and the World of Work (MEYS, 2013, p. 14). Apart from that, the FEP BE deals with cross-curricular subjects, which are the educational areas covering the following topics: Personal and Social Education, Democratic Citizenship, Education towards Thinking in European and Global Contexts, Multicultural Education, Environmental Education, and Media Education (MEYS, 2013, p. 104). The other sections of FEP BE concern matters such as teaching pupils with special educational needs and exceptionally gifted pupils, general conditions for implementing FEP BE, or the Principles for the Development of a School Educational Programme (MEYS, 2013, p. 122).

English language in FEP BE. The English conversation lessons provide a unique opportunity for developing the key competences as defined by FEP BE as well as for covering some cross-curricular subjects. The description of expected outcomes of Foreign Language is outlined in FEP BE, more specifically it is discussed in the educational area of Language and Language Communication. It states that by the end of Stage 2 of the Basic Education, which means by the end of the 9th grade, pupils are expected to achieve A2 level of proficiency according to CEFR (MEYS, 2013, p. 17). Moreover, it sets the expected

outcomes of four language skills (listening with comprehension, speaking, reading with comprehension, and writing) and introduces the subject matters which should be familiar to pupils. As regards the listening and speaking skills in particular, the pupils should for example be able to understand the content of the speech or conversation related to areas covered provided the speech is clearly and slowly articulated; they should be able to talk about their family, friends, school, free time activities and other covered topics such as culture, sport, weather, town and nature, fashion and shopping and others (MEYS, 2013, p. 25). In contrast to the former version of the FEP BE from the year 2007 (Research Institute of Education in Prague, 2007, p. 26), the current FEP BE does not describe the interactive skills that pupils should acquire (See Appendix 4). That all applies to the first foreign language. In case of another foreign language level A1 is to be achieved by the end of 9th grade (MEYS, 2013, p. 17).

Content of the Conversation Lessons

The keystones of conversation lessons are communicative activities which reflect the real world. Scott Thornbury (2006) identifies some outstanding features of such activities. One of such attributes is their purposefulness, which means that students should be “motivated by a communicative goal such as getting information, making a request, giving instructions and not only by the need to display the correct use of language for its sake” (p. 36). Furthermore, to achieve this purpose, speakers need to interact which means that there is as much need to listen as to speak. Thus the activities are reciprocal (Thornbury, 2006, p. 36). The tasks also call for negotiation since during the real world tasks speakers are often forced to use conversation strategies such as repair strategies, asking for help, or interrupting the other speakers (Thornbury, 2006, p. 36). Thornbury (2006) identifies even other features of such tasks: their unpredictability and heterogeneity (p. 36). The first means that neither the process, nor the outcome, nor the language used, is entirely predictable. The latter says that “participants can use any communicative means at their disposal. In other words, they are not restricted to the use of pre-specified grammar item” (Thornbury, 2006, p. 36).

Classification of the Activities

Fluency and accuracy activities. The variety of activities and tasks used in conversation lessons is very wide and so is their classification as well. But most authors of teaching materials concur that the activities can be divided into two main groups: activities focusing on fluency and activities focusing on accuracy. Activities focusing on fluency reflect the natural use of language and they require the use of communication strategies (Richards, 2006, p. 14). Per contra, the aim of activities oriented on accuracy is to promote formation of grammatically correct language. Such activities reflect classroom use of language and the language is sometimes practiced out of context (Richards, 2006, p. 14). In spite of that, those tasks surely have their well-founded place in conversation lessons.

Pre-communicative and communicative activities. Another classification of activities, which could be used in conversation classes, is proposed by William Littlewood (1981). He categorizes pre-communicative and communicative activities. In pre-communicative activities, “the teacher isolates specific elements of knowledge or skill which compose the communicative competence and provides the learners with opportunities to practice them separately” (p. 84). That can include different types of activities such as drill or question-and-answer practice. “The aim of pre-communicative activities is to provide learners with a fluent command of linguistic forms without the need to use them for communicative purposes” (Littlewood, 1981, p. 84). In communicative activities, the learner has to activate and integrate his pre-communicative knowledge and skills and students are thus provided with a “whole-task practice” (Littlewood, 1981, p. 85). Two subcategories are distinguished within this category: functional communication activities and social integration activities. The first mentioned require students to use the language to overcome an information gap or to solve a problem. The latter require the learner to pay additional attention to the context and the people involved. So in social integration activities, the learners should produce a speech that is socially appropriate to specific situations and relationships (Littlewood, 1981, p. 86).

Types of Activities

Information-gap activities. The information-gap activities have significant place in conversation lessons. Similarly to real communication where people normally communicate to get information they do not possess, these activities are based on the principle that each

learner has a different piece of information. In order to solve the specific tasks, learners have to share their knowledge and communicate in order to obtain information they need (Richards, 2006, p. 19). An example of this activity might be the following one: students get into pairs two different pictures A and B. Their task is not to look at each other's picture but to describe their pictures so that they would find out the differences.

Jigsaw activities. These activities are also based on the information-gap principle. Usually, the class is divided into groups and each group has a different part of the information. The class has to put the pieces of information together to solve the task. In this process, meaningful communication between the groups as well as individual students takes place. The jigsaw activities are believed to improve cooperation and mutual acceptance within the group or class because each participant is equally important as he or she possesses a part of the task solution (Klippel, 1984, p. 40). An example of a jigsaw activity can be the following: Each student gets one section of the story. Students go around the class and have to decide where in the story their section belongs. The task for the class is to put the entire story together.

Simulation or role-playing. In these activities students imagine themselves in a situation which could occur outside the classroom. Students adopt a specific role in that situation and they improvise a scene or exchange according to information or cues given (e.g. ticket inspector and the passenger without a valid ticket).

Opinion-sharing activities. Opinion-sharing activities involve the students in comparison of their values, beliefs, and opinions. For example they are asked to rank the qualities of a life partner according to their importance from the most to the less important (Richards, 2006, p. 20).

Information gathering activities. Students gather information about a particular topic e.g. computer games, television programs, hobbies, leisure-time occupation, culture, attitudes to school or university or job, spending or eating habits etc. Students are asked to conduct surveys or interviews to get the information from their classmates and afterwards they can analyze the results (Richards, 2006, p. 20).

Questioning activities. All the questioning activities centre around questioning. These activities may be used as soon as students are able to produce yes/no questions and they can take many forms. They can include activities such as 'Find someone who...' or 'What would you do if...' where students go around the classroom and ask each other the questions. This category can also include some simple games based on questioning such as a game 'Guess who am I' in which students get a slip of paper with their 'new identity' and

the others are supposed to ask yes/no answers to find out who their classmate is (Klippel, 1984, p. 51).

Debates. The debates can take many forms. The conventional class debates, however, have limitations in variety of interesting subjects for the learners and a relative lack of participation in case it is a full-class debate (Ur, 1981, p. 106). An example of unconventional debate could be the 'balloon debate' where some famous people are imagined to be in a basket of the balloon which is gradually deflating. One after another they have to be thrown out from the basket to keep the balloon airborne and ultimately only one person survives. The debate has to decide which person is the most worth surviving (Ur, 1981, p. 106). Other ideas for discussion could be choosing a candidate for some award from the list of candidates given. Another variety is to choose the least undeserving candidates (e.g. choosing the criminals who will be granted pardon).

Communication games. Communication games are often very popular with learners in conversation lessons. They encompass games of various types, from very simple games to more sophisticated ones. An example of a communication game is the 'Alibi' game where there are two suspected people of a crime who claim that they were together when the crime was committed. Those two people leave the classroom and have a couple of minutes to discuss all the details of what they did during that time. In the meantime, the other classmates, the detectives, prepare questions for interrogation. When they are ready with a battery of questions they send for the first suspect and interrogate him or her. After that the second suspected is questioned. If all the answers concur the suspects win and they are claimed to be innocent and vice versa (Hladík, 2013, p. 76).

Drama, drama games. Drama can be characterized as a form of role-playing, but it usually involves slightly more imagination and movement. Similarly to role-playing, students imagine themselves being another character occurring in a specific situation. However, Scrivener (1994) warns that success or failure of drama depends crucially on many factors such as the attitude of teacher and the other students towards drama and also on certain degree of mutual trust, acceptance, and respect (p. 69). He suggests several drama activities that include e.g. acting play scripts, where students act short sketches and scenes, preparing improvised drama, dubbing puppets, or making a picture. Making a picture involves students to form a frozen tableau of certain scene. The class is usually divided into two halves. The first one leaves the classroom and the other stays in the classroom and make the tableau of certain scene e.g. in the airport. When the pupils of the first half come back to the class they have to guess what the scene is. According to

Scrivener (1994), “it is sometimes the shyest students who are most able to seize the potential” (p. 69), which is very surprising and which can be taken into account when considering inclusion of drama games into conversation lessons.

Pair and Group Work

Most of the activities during conversation lessons are carried out in pairs or in small groups. It is argued that by doing so the learners get a chance to produce greater amount of language than they would in teacher-fronted activities (Richards, 2006, p. 20). Thus the learners also have considerable opportunity to develop fluency, one of the most important features of natural conversation. And what is more, work in smaller groups is likely to increase students’ motivation level. William Littlewood (1981) believes that the objective of students is being able to take part in conversation rather than mastering the language system (p. 17). Consequently, the activities that reflect this conception, and thus make sense to learners, positively influence their motivation level (Littlewood, 1981, p.17).

Materials Used in Conversation Lessons

A good deal of materials from plenty of sources may be used in conversation lessons, and taking into account the high number of accessible materials on the language websites, the possibilities are almost inexhaustible. However, there has been very interesting and extensive discussion about the usage of authentic materials in the lessons. The promoters of authentic materials argued for using them as a basis of language learning. They pointed out that authentic materials provide valuable exposure to real language, support a more creative approach to teaching, relate more closely to learners’ needs, and also provide cultural information about the target language (Richards, 2006, p. 21). On the other hand, the critics of the push for authentic materials claimed that they often contain difficult and irrelevant language and that they are a burden for teachers. Furthermore, they believed that the created materials may even be more motivating for learners and their big advantage is that they are generally built around a graded syllabus. What is more, the contemporary textbooks and other teaching materials are designed to look like authentic materials such as magazine articles. Sometimes they are in fact adapted from authentic

sources (Richards, 2006, p. 21). The opinion of Widdowson might summarize the discussion. He says that “it is not important if classroom materials themselves are derived from authentic texts or other forms of input, as long as the learning processes they facilitate is authentic” (as cited in Richards, 2006, p. 21).

To conclude this chapter, it was divided into several sections, which dealt with the topic of conversation and potential goals and content of English conversation lessons. In the first section, conversation was described as an interpersonal, interactive, and unplanned speaking event, whose main functions are to establish social relationships between speakers and to convey information. It was revealed that conversation has several typical features, which distinguish it from other genres, and that there are many strategies and rules that should be observed by speakers to keep conversation going such as turn-taking, conversation strategies, sociocultural rules and the co-operative principle. After this, the following three approaches to teaching conversation lessons were mentioned: the first, which suggests to break down the skills used in conversation into a number of sub-skills and to teach them one by one; the second, focusing on different genres and speech acts; and the last, according to which the best way of learning conversation is to have conversation on a range of topics. In reality, a blend of all the approaches is used the most often. After that, the potential goals of English conversation lessons were discussed. The communicative competence and its individual components were described because it is assumed that the development of the communicative competence might be one of the underlying goals of conversation lessons. Next, it was revealed how the goals of language learning are described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and how this official document describes conversation and conversation skills that should be acquired by learners to achieve a certain level of proficiency. This was followed by an overview of the Czech curricular documents and an outline of outcomes expected from pupils at the end of the 9th grade of Basic Education. Apart from that, this chapter discussed the activities that could be included in English conversation and it also covered other matters connected with English conversation teaching such as the organizational forms or materials used in English conversation lessons. The following chapter, methods, will discuss the research methodology used for carrying out the survey focused on the organization, content and goals of English conversation lessons which was executed at Primary Schools around the Czech Republic in the 8th and 9th grades.

III. METHODS

This chapter will provide a description of research methods used for carrying out the survey on English conversation lessons in the 8th and the 9th grades of Upper Primary Education. Firstly, two basic research questions are specified and after that they are examined more closely. This is followed by a description of research methods and research tools used for conducting the survey. It is explained why a combination of two research methods was implemented and each of the methods is described separately.

Research Questions

The aim of this work is to answer two basic questions concerning English conversation lessons in Upper Primary Education. The first research question asks: What is the content of English conversation lessons in the 8th and the 9th grades of Upper Primary Education? The second question focuses on the objectives of conversation lessons. It strives to answer the following research question: What are the goals of teaching English conversation lessons in the 8th and the 9th grade in Upper Primary Education? Apart from that, the research is marginally dealing with the organization of classes.

The first research question focusing on lesson content should clarify which topics, speech acts, and activities pupils get familiar with during conversation lessons. At first, however, the research examines materials used by teachers for preparation of conversation lessons since the sources have substantial impact on the lessons as well. The other research question should reveal the objectives of conversation lessons both as they are described in individual School Educational Programmes and how they are interpreted by teachers. Hopefully, that could highlight to some extent the distinction between English conversation lessons and classic English lessons. The secondary aim of this part of the survey is to find out whether the objective of Communicative Language Teaching, i.e. achieving the communicative competence, is considered as being highly important by teachers. Presumably, developing the communicative competence is one of the underlying goals of language teaching, thus the survey is trying to show which components of the communicative competence are developed the most during conversation lessons.

Research Tools

A combination of two research tools was used to conduct the survey: a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire, a type of quantitative method, was used to receive a larger number of responses from teachers at different schools around the Czech Republic. The questionnaire was designed in Google Docs Questionnaire and it consisted of twenty four questions. Since it was sent mainly to Czech teachers, the questionnaire was designed in Czech language (see Appendix 4). In one case, the questionnaire was sent in English (see Appendix 5). The questionnaire concerned the following matters connected with English conversation lessons in the 8th and the 9th grades of Upper Primary Education: the organization of conversation lessons, materials used by teachers for lesson preparation, topics, activities and speech acts covered in the lessons and the way of assessing pupils. Finally, it examined the aims of conversation lessons including the teachers view on the Communicative Language Teaching and its objective.

The questionnaires were distributed to 48 teachers altogether at schools where English conversation is taught at the beginning of February 2014 by e-mail. The difficulty of this process lay in the fact that not all school websites provide information on whether English conversation lessons are taught or not or eventually in which grade. In some cases, however, the information was complete, and thus it was possible to contact the teachers directly. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases, it appeared necessary to contact the head teachers first and ask them about the contact details for teachers to send them the questionnaire but the head teachers often did not reply. The statistics is the following: 43 schools were contacted during the research and 27 replies were received. Within this group 11 answers were negative, which means that the head teachers replied that English conversation lessons are not taught in their schools, and 16 head teachers sent me one or more contact details of their English language teachers. In the end, 48 teachers altogether were contacted by e-mail and 25 questionnaires were completed.

The interview was conducted with a teacher of English conversation lessons at the 14th Elementary School in Pilsen in order to get additional information that could be quite troublesome to obtain in questionnaires. The semi structured interview (see Appendix 6), which was carried out in English, took 60 minutes and concerned similar questions as the questionnaire did, but everything was reviewed in greater detail. In addition to that, there was a chance to go through the typical features of conversation such as turn-taking, adjacency pairs, conversation strategies, paraphrasing etc. and discuss if such factors, which

influence the natural conversation, are somehow considered during conversation lessons. The responses of the teacher interviewed were taken down in the blank questionnaire (see Appendix 6).

To summarize the content of the survey, it examined three main areas. Firstly, it focused on the lesson organization while it was investigated whether the lessons are mostly optional or compulsory, what the number of lessons per week is, and where the lessons take place. After that, the content of English conversation lessons was researched. At the beginning, the materials used by teachers for preparation of English conversation lessons were examined, including the use of authentic materials. Next, the topics, speech acts, and activities pupils get familiar with were covered while the survey also aimed to find out the most popular type of activities. Then, it was examined whether teachers intentionally make any distinction between fluency and accuracy activities or not. This was followed by a research on the proportion of organizational forms and types of pupils' assessment used in conversation lessons. The third main area dealt with the objectives of English conversation teaching and the expected outcomes of English conversation lessons as they are stated both in the Framework Educational Programme and in the individual School Educational Programmes. Furthermore, the survey dealt with the development of the Key Competences, which are stated by the Framework Educational Programme, and development of the Communicative competence, the underlying goal of the Communicative Language Teaching. To support the questionnaire results, an interview was conducted with a teacher of English conversation lesson. The interview focused on the same three main areas as the questionnaire did and on one additional, i.e. conversation as such in English conversation lessons.

To sum up the content of this chapter, it provided a description of the research methodology. At the beginning the two main research questions were restated and it was explained what the survey aimed to cover. After that, it was described how the research tools (i.e. the questionnaire and interview) were used to carry out the survey and this information was completed by the statistics about number of schools and teachers contacted and number of answers received. At the end of this chapter the content of the survey was summarized; its results and findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

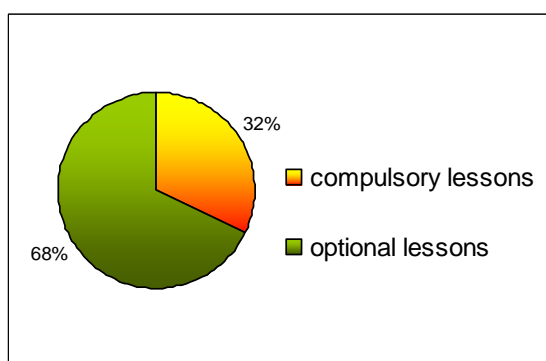
IV RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

This chapter, which deals with the survey results, consists of two main parts. The results based on the questionnaires are presented in the first part in the following sections: organization of English conversation lessons, the content of English conversation lessons, and, finally, the goals of English conversation lesson teaching. The survey results are mostly recorded in graphs, and afterwards they are interpreted and commented on. They are presented either for the 8th and 9th grade separately or, in few cases, together for both grades. The second part of this chapter reviews the interview results and reveals some interesting findings about English conversation lessons.

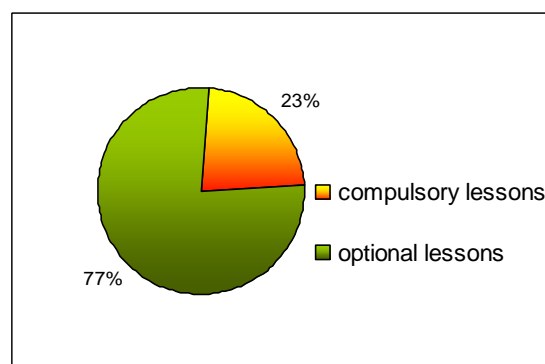
Organization of English Conversation Lessons

Three main areas focusing on the organization of English conversation lessons were examined: the lessons status (if they are optional or compulsory), the number of lessons per week and the venues where they take place.

Compulsory/Optional Lessons



Graph 1: The proportion of compulsory and optional English conversation lessons in 8th grade

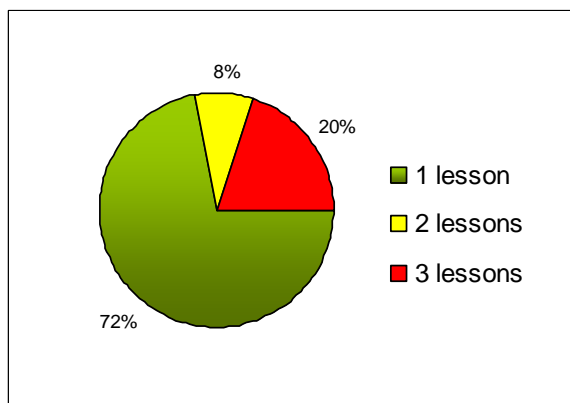


Graph 2: The proportion of compulsory and optional English conversation lessons in 9th grade

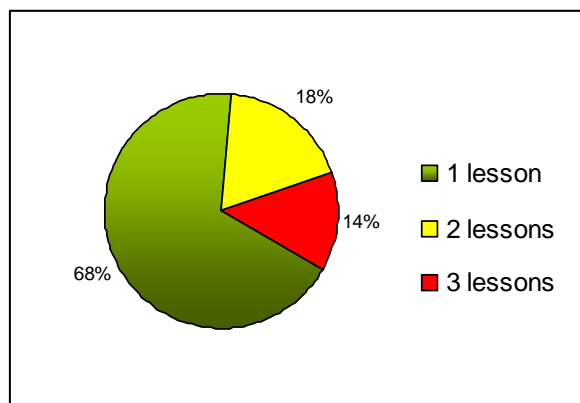
As is evident from the graphs above, the survey showed that the percentage of optional lessons is substantially greater than the percentage of compulsory English conversation lessons in both grades. In the 8th grade the percentage of optional lessons was 68% and in 9th grade it was even 77%. This finding might suggest that English conversation

lessons are not considered to be of high importance at schools and that pupils can make a choice between more subjects. This might imply that if they choose English conversation lessons they probably have some reasons for that such as a positive attitude to English language or they aim to improve their language skills.

Number of Lessons per Week



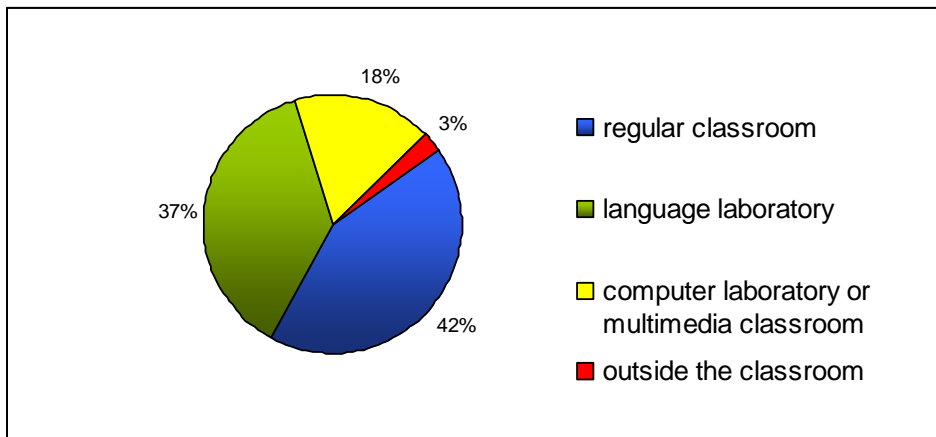
Graph 3: Number of lessons per week in the 8th grade



Graph 4: Number of lessons per week in the 9th grade

Graph 3 and Graph 4 show that the most common number of English conversation lessons per week in both grades is only one lesson (in about 70% cases). However, it seems quite interesting that there are 3 lessons per week in 20% cases in the 8th grade, which is a higher percentage than that of the two lessons per week (8%). In the 9th grade, two lessons per week already occur more frequently than 3 lessons per week. The figures in the graph create the impression that there is not much space for English conversation lessons in the school curriculum and thus, in about 70% of cases, they serve only as a complementary subject. On the other hand, seeing the figure 20% for three lessons per week in the 8th grade and 14% in the 9th grade, it conveys the impression that in some schools the benefits the lessons give to pupils are recognized. It looks as if there was a correlation between the status of lessons (compulsory or optional subject) and the number of lessons per week, unfortunately that cannot be confirmed because of the data processing in Google Docs Questionnaires programme, where only the final figures were shown and the individual answers did not appear.

Places where English Conversation Lessons are Held



Graph 5: The proportion of places where English conversation lessons take place

The respondents claimed that the lessons usually take place in regular classrooms (42%) or in language laboratories (37%), computer laboratories or multimedia classrooms are used in 18% and only 3% of respondents stated that the lessons are occasionally taught outside the classroom as well. The figures recorded in Graph 5 might suggest that no special classroom is required for English conversation lessons but sometimes it is useful to take advantage of some special equipment provided by language or computer laboratories such as IT technology.

Additionally, the survey revealed one particularly interesting factor that influenced the organization of English conversation lessons. In some schools conversation lessons have been cancelled or their number reduced since the school year 2013/2014 owing to the introduction of another compulsory foreign language from the 8th grade onwards. The respondents perceived this change mostly negatively. Some argued that one foreign language for certain pupils is extremely demanding and the introduction of another compulsory foreign language is very unreasonable since the requirements go beyond those pupils' capabilities. Some teachers complained that, owing to this change, conversation lessons remained in their school only in the 6th and 7th grade but, according to their opinion, conversation lessons should be taught in every grade, preferably as a compulsory subject. In short, it seems that there is not enough space for providing a sufficient number of English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of Upper Primary Education.

The Content of English Conversation Lessons

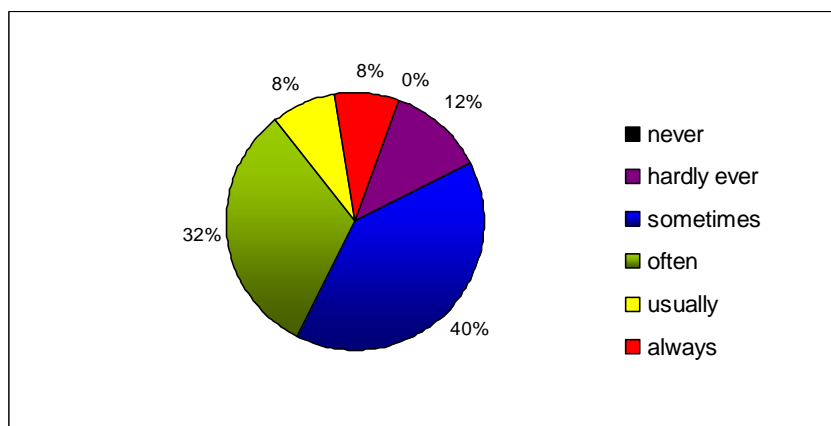
Materials Used for English Conversation Lessons

The survey disclosed two major findings about issues connected with the preparation of conversation lessons. First and foremost, about 60% respondents said that the preparation of English conversation lessons is more time-consuming than the preparation of standard lessons. Secondly, an impressive variety of materials and sources is used in the lessons. Almost every respondent indicated the usage of different teaching materials, only a few of the basic ones were repeated. However, all the respondents concurred in the fact that they need to use a combination of different teaching materials ranging from textbooks, language magazines, a high number of websites, and their own materials.

Textbooks, magazines, websites. Several textbooks seem to be suitable for English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades. They are the following ones all but the last one published by Oxford University Press: *Talk Time 1*, *Talk Time 2*, *Project 3* (3rd edition), *Oxford Word Skills Basic*, and *Basic Vocabulary in Use* and *Let's Talk* (published by Cambridge University Press). Two other books are exploited by respondents as a source of inspiration for games and activities, i.e. *Fun ESL Role-Plays and Skits for Children* by Shelley Ann Vernon and a Czech textbook *Anglická konverzace pro 2. stupeň ZŠ* by Marie Zahálková. Regarding magazines, the respondents mentioned *R + R*, *Hello*, *Click*, *Friendship*, *UFIN*, *Gate* and also the Tuesday edition of *Metro* to be used as a source of teaching materials. As a matter of interest, it seems that the website www.helpforenglish.cz is an undisputed leader in its field. Other favourite websites include: www.usingenglish.com, www.englishclub.com, www.mes-english.com, www.dailyesl.com, www.englishexercises.com, www.maryglasgowplus.com, www.BusyTeacher.org, www.britishcouncil.org, projectbritain.com, www.eleaston.com, www.youtube.com, and many others.

Authentic Materials

All respondents claimed that they use authentic materials, only the frequency how often they do so differed. They were asked to indicate the frequency on a six-point scale (never, hardly ever, sometimes, often, usually, and always) and the results are recorded in the Graph 6 below.



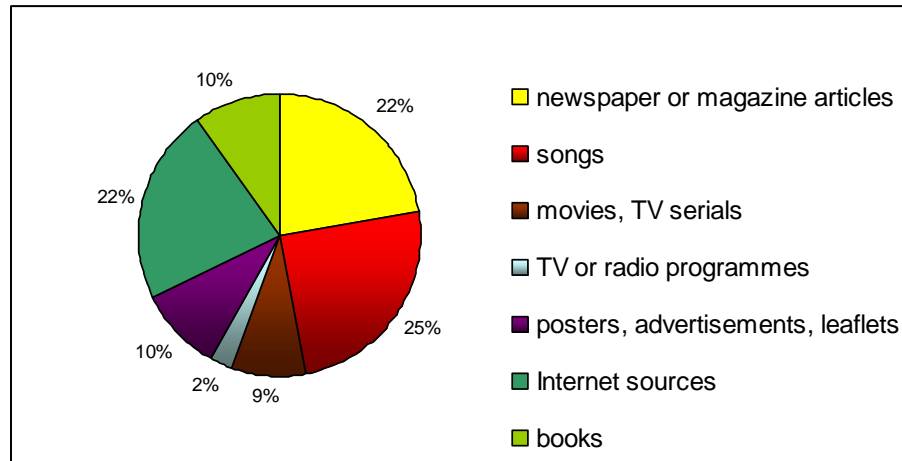
Graph 6: Frequency of usage of authentic materials

As is visible from the graph, the average tendency represented by answers ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ prevails (72% altogether). Taking into consideration the advantages and disadvantages of such materials, which are discussed in the part below, the number seems quite reasonable. Nevertheless, the figures representing the responses for ‘usually’ and ‘always’ (both 8%) are surprisingly high.

Advantages and disadvantages of using authentic materials. As was shown in the theoretical part, it is without doubt that authentic materials have certain advantages as well as disadvantages. The survey examined this subject and, in fact, it confirmed what has been stated in the theoretical part. According to the respondents, the key advantage of authentic materials is the pupils’ exposure to real language and a higher level of their motivation. The respondents also mentioned the benefits of cultural background information included in authentic materials and the benefits of a direct contact with English speaking countries’ lifestyle and institutions. Besides, according to the respondents, pupils have a chance to have a real picture of their understanding of the genuine language. Last but not least, pupils get used to dealing with unknown words and language constructions which help them to develop strategies for working out the meaning from the context and they remind themselves that it is not necessary to know every single word to get the basic idea. Thus they should not be dismayed when confronted with unknown words in real life. On the other hand, authentic materials show every sign of being highly time-consuming in their preparation for classroom use. Since they often contain difficult and sometimes also irrelevant language constructions, teachers tend to adapt them slightly and thus they de facto lose some of their authenticity. Other disadvantages mentioned by teachers

encompassed the troubles with estimating the appropriate level of difficulty for the pupils, the loss of material up-to-dateness, and the fact that authentic material is not suitable for every lesson.

Types of authentic materials used. The survey also identified the most popular types of authentic materials, which are recorded in the Graph 7 below.

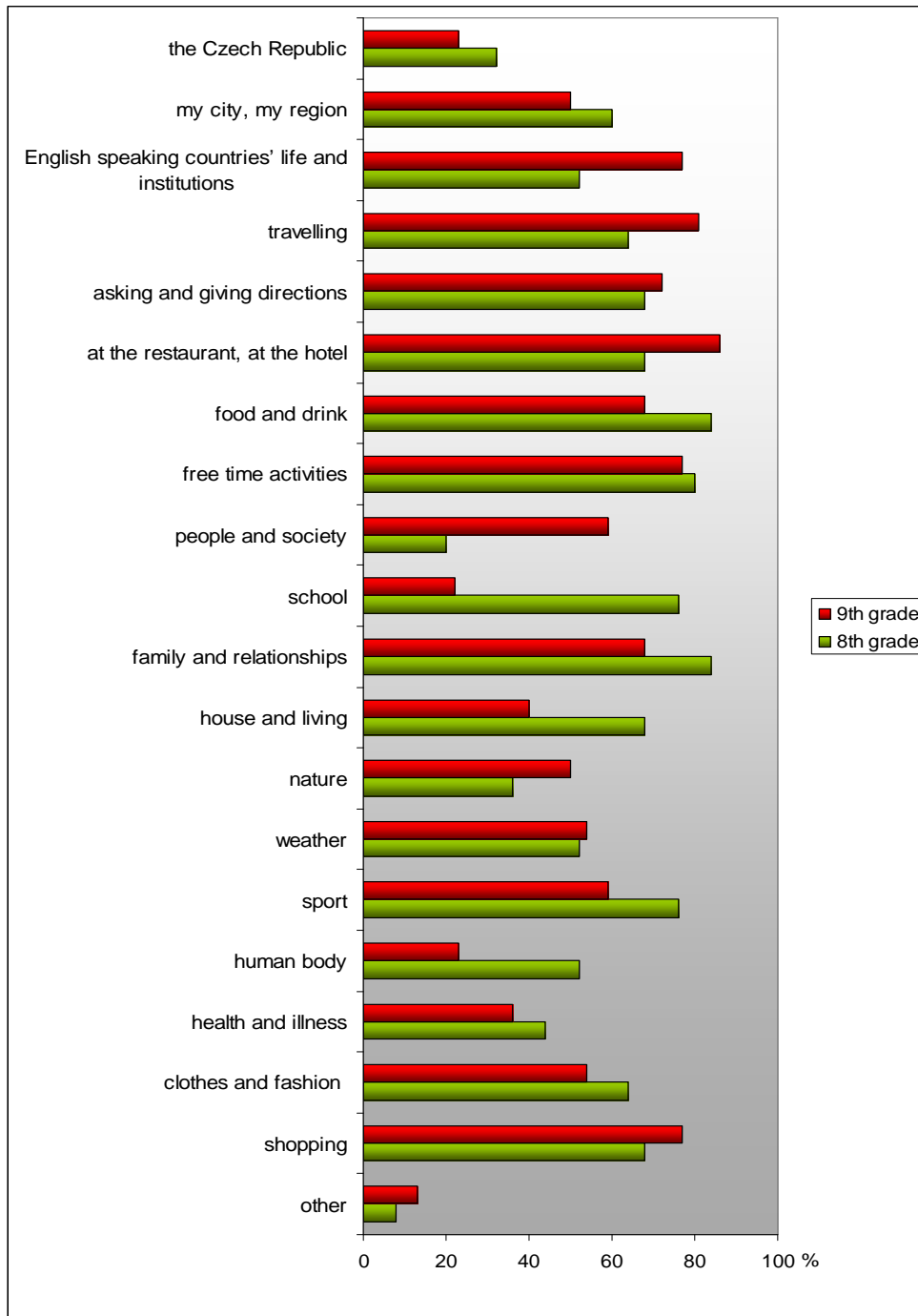


Graph 7: The types of authentic materials used

The survey showed that songs, newspaper or magazine articles and other internet sources are the most commonly used authentic materials. They are followed by the category of posters, advertisements, leaflets together with the category of books, with movies and television serials coming in last. Television and radio programmes are used only exceptionally.

Topics Covered in English Conversation Lessons

The following part of the survey dealt with the topics covered in the 8th and 9th grades. Graph 8 shows which topics are discussed in each grade and, additionally, it provides comparison between both grades.



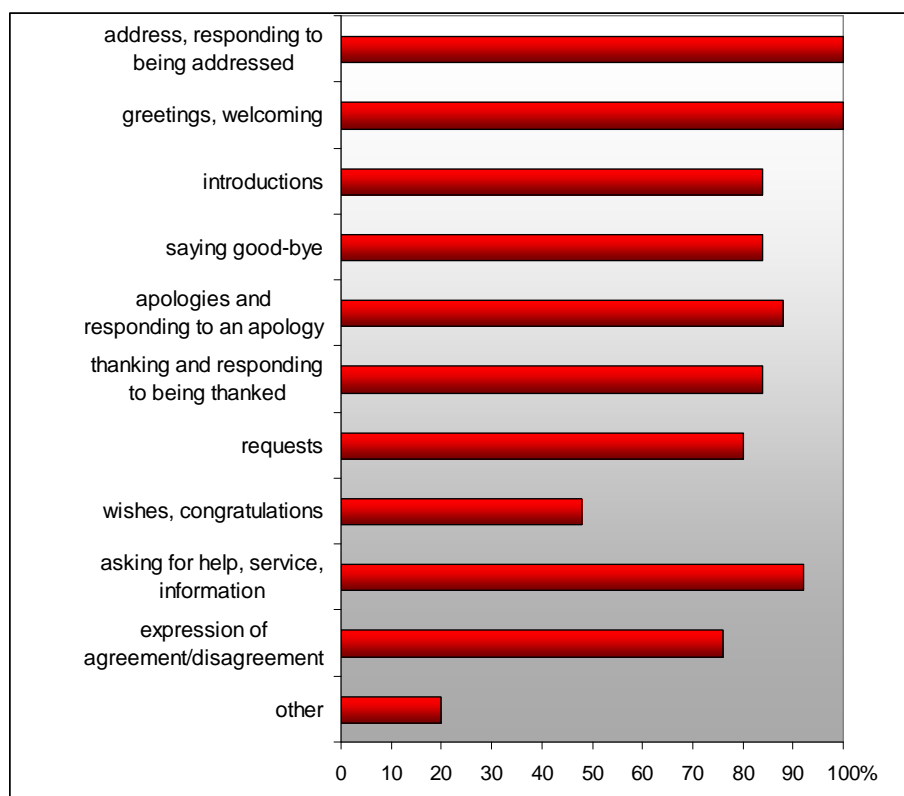
Graph 8: The topics discussed in English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grade

The graph reveals that some topics are generally more preferred than others. Common topics in English conversation lessons seem to be 'at the restaurant' or 'at the hotel', 'travelling', 'food and drink', 'free time activities', and 'family and relationship'. However, some topics occur less frequently such as 'the Czech Republic', 'people and society', 'human body' and 'health and illnesses'. The differences between the 8th and 9th grades are not radical; however, specific topics tend to be discussed in a certain grade more often. The graph shows the tendency that topics like 'school', 'house and living', 'sport', and 'food

and drink' are more likely to be discussed in the 8th grade, but, conversely, 'English speaking countries' life and institutions', 'travelling', and 'people and society' prevail in the 9th grade.

Speech Acts Covered in English Conversation Lessons

As was discussed in the theoretical part of this work, the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education states the speech acts that pupils should be familiar with; all of them are recorded in the graph below together with the percentage of respondents who claimed to cover them in English conversation lessons.

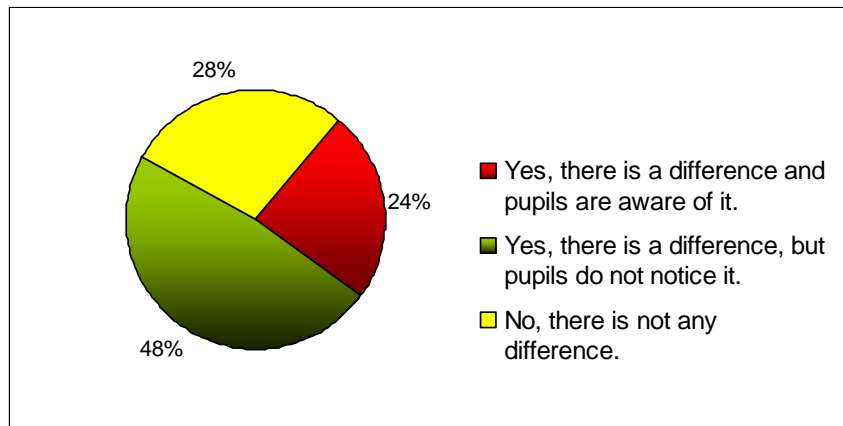


Graph 9: Speech acts

The results of the survey focusing on speech acts seem to be favourable, since pupils practice almost all of the speech acts during English conversation lessons. The only exception is made in the category 'wishes and congratulations' as this speech act is practiced only in 50% of cases.

Fluency and Accuracy Activities

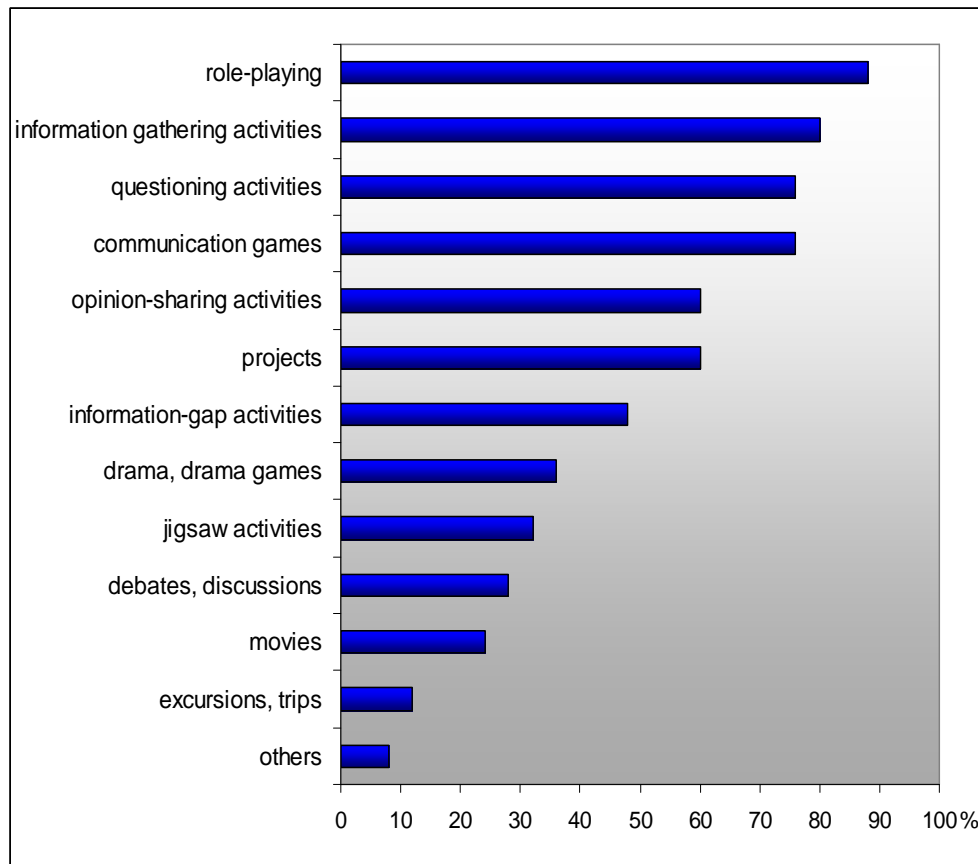
Respondents were asked to answer several questions concerning the activities used in their English conversation lessons. The first question focused on fluency and accuracy activities and teachers were to answer whether they intentionally make any difference between them and possibly whether pupils are aware of such a difference or not.



Graph 10: Fluency and accuracy activities

As is evident from the Graph 10 above, about half of the respondents answered that they differentiate between fluency and accuracy activities but pupils are usually not aware of it. Approximately the same proportion of respondents claimed that they either do not distinguish the activities or they do so and pupils are aware of the difference. The figures can be interpreted in the other way and it can be observed that 72% of respondents altogether make a difference between fluency and accuracy activities, no matter if pupils know about it or not.

Types of Activities

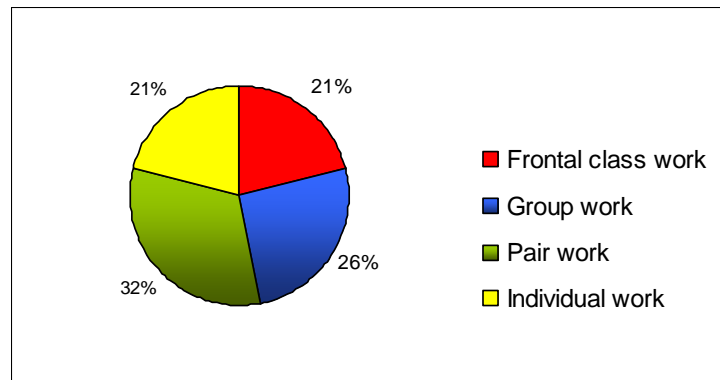


Graph 11: Types of activities used in English conversation lessons

The results of the survey, presented in the Graph 11 above, suggest that the most frequently used activity in English conversation lessons is role-playing (used by 88% of respondents), one of the most popular communicative activities. The second place is occupied by information gathering activities (80%) which are followed by questioning activities (76%) and communication games (76%). After that, projects, opinion sharing and information gap activities follow. It might come as a surprise that, however infrequently, excursions and trips make up a part of English conversation classes.

Thus, we can see that the ranking is led by three communicative activities i.e. role-playing, information gathering activities and questioning activities. According to the respondents, the biggest advantage of these activities is the high participation and the high involvement of pupils. The projects and presentations activities are valued as pupils usually have to present a project at the end. They thus improve their presentation skills and have a chance to speak coherently about a certain topic for a couple of minutes. Lastly, communication games are popular since they provide entertainment and fun.

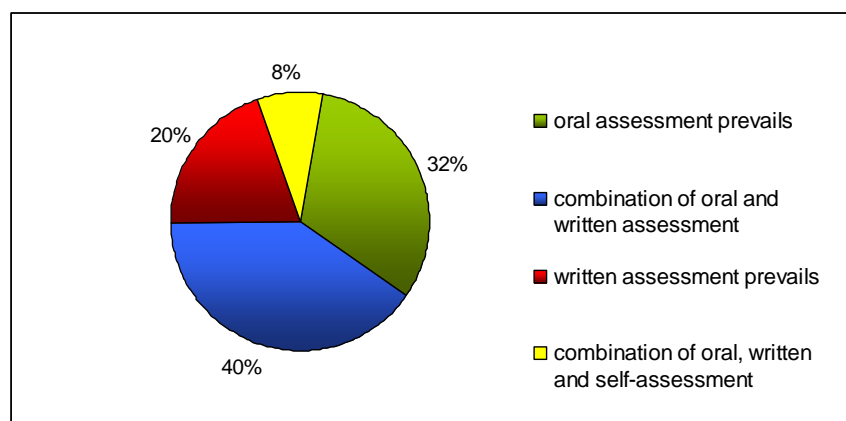
Organizational Forms



Graph 12: The proportion of organizational forms used in conversation lessons

The fact that a broad variety of activities are exploited in English conversation lessons suggests that different organizational forms are probably used as well. The survey confirmed this and showed that the most common organization form is pair work, the second is group work, followed by frontal class work and individual work with an equal percentage. The Graph 12 represents the proportion of time spent on the different organizational forms. Yet, the differences do not seem to be very dramatic and it can be concluded that all organizational forms have their well-founded place in English conversation lessons.

Assessment



Graph 13: Forms of assessment

The survey revealed that the assessment of pupils in English conversation lessons takes many forms. Nevertheless, narrative assessment is used the most frequently; it

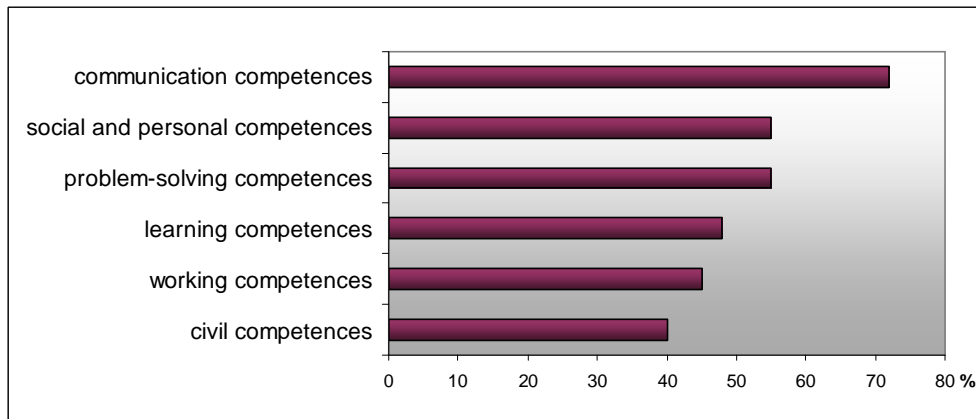
occurred in the majority of responses. In addition to that, it was shown that narrative assessment is used very often, usually after every lesson or even after each activity. More than half of the respondents replied that they use a written assessment as well, vocabulary tests in particular, which usually take place approximately once in every two weeks or whenever a particular topic is covered; however, written assessment prevails only in 20% of responses. A combination of oral, written and self-assessment was used in 8% of responses. The assessment is often graded both by marks and by 'plus points' and 'minus points' while somewhere pupils get a good mark for a certain number of plus points. Pupils are often awarded by plus points for their activity during lessons or in the case that they win a simple game such as the vocabulary game 'the King of Words'. During this simple game, pupils in pairs compete to translate the word given by the teacher and who gets it first is the winner. Subsequently, the winner competes with another classmate (the winner in another pair) and the procedure is repeated until an absolute winner is known and is proclaimed the 'King of Words'.

Goals of English Conversation Lesson Teaching

As was discussed in the theoretical part of this work, the goals of English language teaching in Upper Primary Education are generally defined by the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (FEP BE). Each school develops its own School Educational Programme (SEP) which is based on the FEP BE. Therefore, several School Educational Programmes, which include English conversation, with the following conclusions. The expected outcomes of English conversation lessons in SEPs mostly corresponded with the expected outcomes of foreign language as they are written in the FEP BE (see Appendix 3). However, specific expected outcomes were added by individual schools sometimes. The expected outcomes of conversation lessons in SEPs reviewed usually included receptive, productive, and interactive language skills. Here follows some examples of expected outcomes: pupils are expected to form a simple message related to a situation from family and school life and other studied themes, infer a likely meaning of the new words from the context or request simple information. According to various SEPs, the Key Competences (i.e. learning competences, problem-solving competences, communication competences, social and personal competences, civil competences and working competences) should also be developed in English conversation lessons.

Key Competences

The survey examined which ones of the Key Competences are developed the most in the respondents' point of view, while they were supposed to tick their opinions on a three-point scale (the least, moderately, and the most) regarding the intensity of each competence development; the results are presented in the graph below.



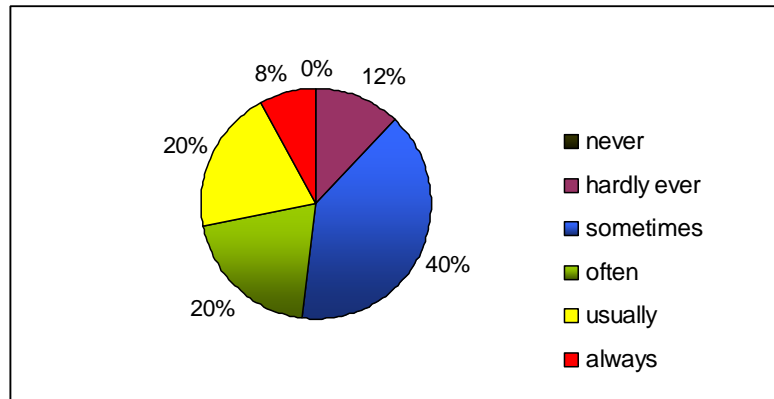
Graph 14: Intensity of the Key Competences development

According to the survey, communication competences are developed the most, social and personal competences and problem-solving competences are ranked in second place. Civil competences are probably developed the least in the lessons of English conversation. To measure the intensity of any competence development precisely would require an extensive and more systematic research; hence, the results are only indicative. In spite of that, it clearly shows that communication competences are developed the most of all the Key Competences in English conversation lessons.

Cross-curricular Subjects

Another part of the survey dealt with the inclusion of cross-curricular subjects in conversation lessons. Firstly, the School Educational Programmes were examined and it was revealed that the most frequently covered cross-curriculum subjects were above all Personal and Social Education, Multicultural Education, and Education towards Thinking in European and Global Contexts. However, Environmental Education never appeared in the examined School Educational Programmes. Secondly, teachers were interviewed on the

frequency of the inclusion of cross-curricular subjects in the lessons and were supposed to indicate the frequency on a six-point scale (never, hardly ever, sometimes, often, usually, and always).



Graph 15: Frequency of the cross-curricular subjects' inclusion in English conversation lessons

According to the survey, all teachers include the cross-curricular subjects in English conversation lessons, only the frequency differs. The moderate tendency represented by the 'sometimes' and 'often' responses prevails. However, it seems quite surprising that 8% of respondents always include the cross-curricular subject in the lessons.

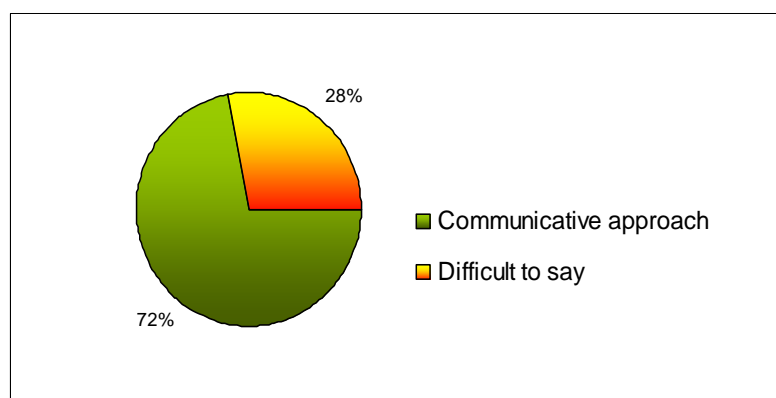
Specific objectives

Now, regarding the specific objectives of English conversation lessons as stated by individual School Educational Programmes, it seems that there are two main goals: extending pupils' vocabulary and improving their communication skills. The first point also includes expanding the knowledge of useful phrases and commonly used chunks of language. The latter, according to several respondents, means that pupils should become more fluent, efficient and self-confident speakers and, even more importantly, they should overcome the fear of communication in English. In three of the schools contacted, English conversation lessons are taught by native speakers, which provide the opportunity for learners to get used to communicating in English quite naturally. Moreover, taking into consideration the broad variety of activities and material used, it seems that all four language skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) are practised in English conversation lessons, but speaking and listening, the skills crucial for taking part in a natural conversation, are practised the most. That gives the idea that receptive, productive

and interactive language skills can be developed quite equally during English conversation lessons. In a few words, the general goal of English conversation lessons might be to provide an opportunity for extending the current language knowledge and practising all the language skills.

Communicative Language Teaching

The last part of the survey focused on the issues connected with the Communicative Language Teaching and its objective i.e. achieving the communicative competence. The teachers were asked whether they use the communicative approach for teaching conversation lessons.

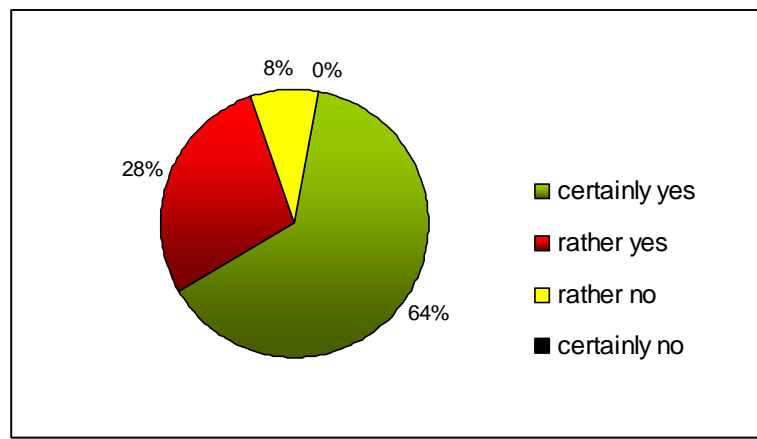


Graph 16: Teaching approach

Graph 15 shows that 72% of the respondents claimed that they use the communicative approach (or the Communicative language teaching, abbreviated CLT), whereas the other part of the respondents answered that it is difficult to determine which approach they apply. The other options provided in the questionnaire were the following: 'No, I do not use the communicative approach' and 'I use a different approach' but neither of the options was chosen by the respondents. This implies that the majority of teachers believe that they are applying the communicative approach in class and the rest of them do not deny using it. Based on this survey, the Communicative Language Teaching is still relevant at present or possibly the term has already become so commonly used that it may de facto comprise other approaches to teaching as well.

Communicative Competence

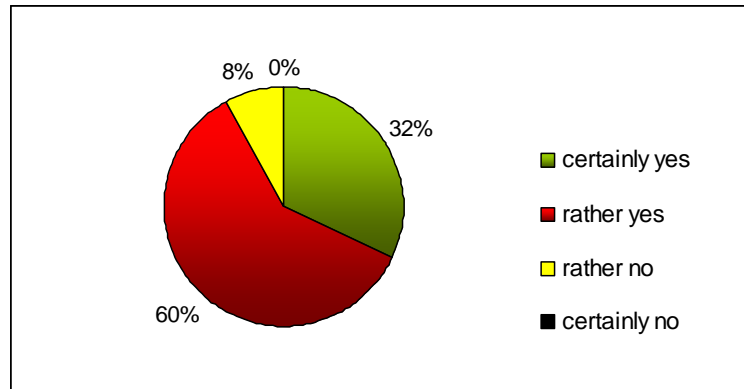
Even though it is assumed that the respondents are familiar with the term “the communicative competence” in the conceptualization of Canale and Swain, a definition of it was provided in the questionnaire to remind it and its individual components to the teachers. Afterwards, the respondents were asked to answer three questions connected with it. The first question aimed to find out whether the teachers consider the development of the communicative competence, as it was described by Canale and Swain, as being very important.



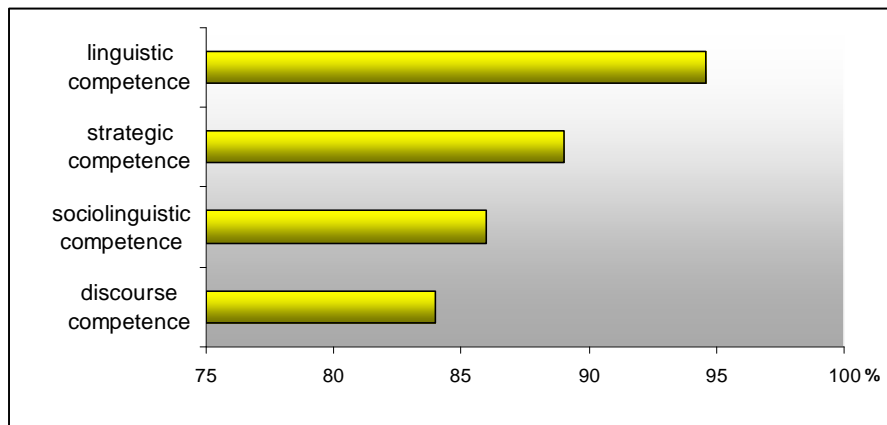
Graph 17: Is development of the Communicative Competence as defined by Canale and Swain important?

The figures in the graph above suggest that there is no doubt that teachers consider the development of the communicative competence and its individual components as very important. From another point of view, this can be interpreted in the way that teachers concur with the underlying ideas of the Communicative Language Teaching and so they might also aim to develop the components of the communicative competence as defined by Canale and Swain.

Other questions dealing with the communicative competence examined teachers' opinions on its general development in English conversation lessons (Graph 17) and on the intensity of its individual components development (Graph 18).



Graph 18: Is the Communicative Competence as defined by Canale and Swain developed in English conversation lessons?



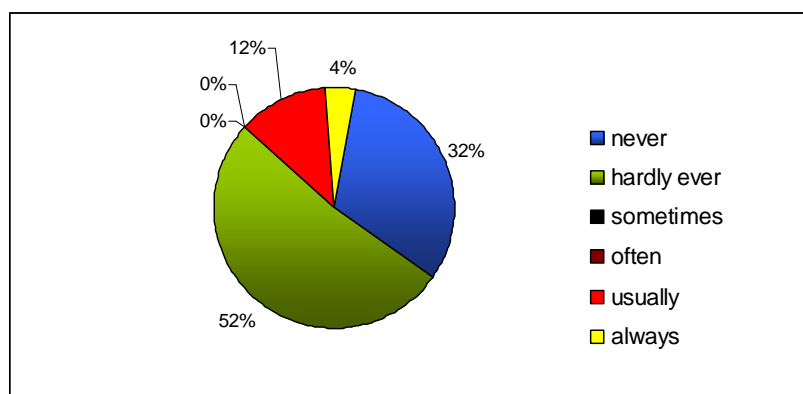
Graph 19: Intensity of communicative competence individual components development

According to a vast majority of teachers (92%) the communicative competence is developed during English conversation lessons. Furthermore, the findings of the survey show that the linguistic competence is developed the most out of all the competences which form the Canale and Swain's conceptualization of the communicative competence. This is followed by the strategic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence ranks the last. It should be noted again that the results of the survey regarding the intensity of the individual components' development are mostly indicative since a more detailed research would be needed to measure it precisely. During the survey conducted, teachers indicated their opinions on four-point scale (number one standing for the lowest intensity, number four for the highest), however, a comparison between individual competences' development is provided. It seems that individual competences' development corresponds with the content of the lessons as it was described in the previous part of this

thesis. To support this idea it can be seen that more activities used during conversation lessons are likely to focus on shorter exchanges between pupils than on longer stretches of language such as giving the presentations and hence the discourse competence is practised the least.

European Documents

The very last thing examined in the survey was the use of European Documents (e.g. the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the European Language Portfolio, and the Europass) by teachers for preparation or in the English conversation lessons. Once again, teachers were asked to indicate the frequency of using the documents on a six-point scale (never, hardly ever, sometimes, often, usually, and always). The results are recorded in Graph 19 below.



Graph 20: The frequency of usage of European documents

The survey showed that European documents are used only very rarely by the teachers. The figures show that 32% of all the teachers never use them and 52% of respondents only hardly ever. However, an interesting finding is that the moderate tendency represented by the categories 'sometimes' or 'often' never appeared in the responses and the remaining part of the respondents (16% altogether) uses the documents very often. To sum it up, the documents are not used very often; however, in the case that teachers exploit them, they do so very frequently.

Interview

As was already mentioned, a semi-structured interview was conducted with a teacher of English conversation at the 14th Elementary School in Pilsen. It took 60 minutes and examined the same areas as the questionnaire did, but there was space to discuss everything in greater detail and ask additional questions. The interview, similarly to the questionnaire, concerned three main areas: the organization of English conversation lessons, the lesson content, and the aims of English conversation lesson teaching. The concluding questions of the interview dealt with typical features of conversation such as turn-taking, adjacency pairs, and conversation strategies and the fact whether they are somehow considered during the lessons.

Organization of English Conversation Lessons

First of all, it should be mentioned that the majority of the teacher's answers concurred with the findings in the first part of the survey. This was the case even with matters regarding the organization of English conversation lessons. The teacher said that English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades were cancelled from the school year 2013/2014 onwards, owing to the introduction of another compulsory foreign language from the 8th grade onwards. She perceives this change negatively, as her pupils do not have sufficient practice of the foreign language. According to her, another foreign language should be introduced to schools only as an optional subject and not as a compulsory one. Moreover, the teacher informed that only one lesson of English conversation lessons is taught at present as an optional subject in the 6th and 7th grades of the Upper Primary Education and the lessons are held in regular classrooms and sometimes in a computer laboratory. This is the reason why some of the questions regarding the conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades were not discussed, but since she has substantial experience with teaching conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades from previous years and teaches conversation lessons in lower grades at present, her replies are believed to be relevant for the research.

The Content of English Conversation Lessons

According to the teacher, the preparation of English conversation lessons takes slightly more time than the preparation of standard English lessons, which is caused by several factors. For example the pupils do not have any course books and thus she makes copies of the materials for every lesson. Furthermore, she spends some additional time searching for current authentic materials on the Internet and combining them with other materials (e.g. sources from course books, magazines, or her own materials already used in previous years). Her favourite authentic materials include songs and the articles on any current topic found on the Internet.

Now, regarding the topics and the speech acts covered in the lessons, she said that the syllabus of English conversation includes a combination of both: the topics and the speech acts. This supports the idea, which was discussed in the theoretical part of this work, that the best option for conversation lesson teaching is a blend of all approaches (i.e. approaches focusing on teaching conversation sub-skills, on speech acts, and on the topics). After that, the interview focused on activities used by the teacher in lessons. She distinguishes fluency and accuracy activities in the way that she corrects or lets pupils correct almost all the mistakes themselves during the accuracy activities, but only the most serious mistakes are corrected during or just after the fluency activities. The activities exploited the most in her lessons include: role-playing, simple communication games, information-gathering activities, and projects. She explained that her pupils enjoy these activities the most and she finds them very effective. Other types of activities are sometimes included in the lessons as well, however, with the exception of drama and drama games in particular since in her experience pupils are sometimes ashamed of dramatizing.

After this, organization forms and forms of assessment were discussed. In the teacher's point of view, the most beneficial organization form in English conversation lessons is pair work as everyone joins the activity and practises the language the most. However, she also exploits the other organizational forms (individual work, work in groups, and frontal class work). From time to time, pupils are asked to do a task individually, after which they are supposed to discuss it with their partner, subsequently in groups and in the end the groups' ideas are presented to the whole class. Regarding the assessment, pupils are rewarded mostly positively for their activity in the lessons by the plus points and for three plus points they get a good mark. Apart from that, the vocabulary tests take place approximately once in every two weeks. Thus, the final mark consists of three components:

pupils' activity in lessons, the vocabulary tests, and projects. Every pupil is supposed to take part in a project approximately once or twice during a term and the topics are the following, for example: my favourite singer, my favourite book, my favourite sport, my house, the best holidays, my city, and many others.

Goals of English Conversation Teaching

The teacher interviewed argued that English conversation lessons provide a great opportunity to practise language skills, learn some new words, and above all, allow to include some activities which pupils enjoy but there is not enough space for them in the standard lessons. She compared the language knowledge of pupils who take part in the conversation lessons and of those who do not and argued that there is usually not a significant difference in knowledge between the pupils. However, and this is a very important point, pupils' attitude to English sometimes changes. In her view, the majority of pupils do not like learning English grammar and since grammar is taught only marginally in English conversation lessons and the lessons mostly consist of interesting activities, pupils tend to enjoy them. The lessons which bring fun and pupils interest to the classroom are in her view very worthy and pupils' motivation is likely to increase due to the conversation lessons.

Focusing on the development of the Key Competences as they are stated in the FEP BE, the teacher believed that particularly two of the competences are developed strongly in English conversation lessons. Those are the communication competences and learning competences. The first is obvious since the pupils spend a lot of time on communicating with one another whereas the latter is developed mainly due to the pupils' interest in the subject and their attitude to learning is influenced positively by their high level of motivation. In the FEP BE, cross-curricular subjects are described; hence, the interview examined them as well and it was found that particularly two cross-curricular subjects are included in the teacher's lessons i.e. Multicultural Education and Education towards Thinking in European and Global Contexts.

Another part of the interview examined the teacher's view of the Canale and Swain conceptualization of the communicative competence and its individual components. The teacher considers the communicative competence to be extremely important for pupils and she said that all of its individual components, without any exception, are developed strongly in English conversation lessons.

Conversation in English Conversation Lessons

The very last thing discussed with the teacher during the interview concerned conversation as such. The typical features of conversation and the rules which should be kept in a successful conversation (as they are discussed at the beginning of the theoretical part of this work) were presented to the teacher. Subsequently, the matter was discussed and the conclusion is the following. She said that her pupils practise turn-taking strategies regularly especially during pair work, which is the organizational form which she uses almost in every lesson. She almost never uses drill exercises and during the questioning activities pupils think up their own original answers. This implies that the teacher is aware of the fact that there is a variety of answers in the adjacency pairs (as discussed in the second chapter). Her pupils know that a greeting is usually followed by a greeting, a question by an answer, a complaint by an apology or a justification etc., however, they are free to form the second part of the adjacency pair as they wish as long as it is relevant.

The pupils also spend quite a lot of time in improving their conversation strategies as they are described at the beginning of this thesis. This includes practising effective conversation openings, interrupting other speakers, indicating a lack of understanding, and effective use of repair strategies. Such strategies are commonly practised unintentionally, whenever the necessity occurs during lessons, and are repeated again and again whenever required. Their ability of paraphrasing is developed intentionally in several communication games such as the one where the pupils are supposed to describe a certain word and the other classmates try to guess it. Having reviewed conversation and its typical features, the teacher stated that, basically, the conversation lessons consist of two components with approximately the same amount of time devoted to them: conversation and other activities. To sum it up, it means that conversation as such creates half of the content of English conversation lessons.

Résumé

Based on the survey, the answers for the research questions concerning the content and the objectives of the English conversation lessons are as follows. Pupils usually become familiar with a wide range of topics and speech acts during English conversation lessons; the most commonly covered topics are for example 'at the restaurant', 'at the hotel',

'travelling', 'food and drink', 'free time activities', and 'family and relationships', whereas the speech acts cover almost all of the speech acts described by the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education such as greetings, welcoming, introductions, asking for help (see Appendix 3). Pupils also learn and practise conversation strategies such as turn-taking, interrupting other speakers, paraphrasing their statements, indicating a lack of understanding, and effective use of repair strategies. They develop all these skills and practise all four language skills in a high number of different activities during English conversation lessons; the most frequently used types of activities seem to be role-playing, information gathering activities, questioning activities, communication games, projects, and opinion-sharing activities. A combination of teaching materials ranging from course books, newspaper articles, Internet sources to songs and movies is usually used for preparation of the lessons content. Furthermore, the survey showed that authentic materials are used by almost every teacher of English conversation lessons which provides the pupils with an opportunity to be exposed to real language and, thus, they, among others, develop strategies for working out the meaning of unknown words from the context. Regarding the assessment of students, the teachers claimed that motivation plays a very important role in English conversation lessons and that is why they try to motivate their pupils by plus points and good marks in the case pupils win some communicative game; pupils' activity in the lessons is also rewarded.

Now, focusing on the objectives of English conversation lessons teaching, the expected outcomes of English conversation lessons mostly correspond with the expected outcomes of foreign language learning as they are described in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (see Appendix 3); to give an example of some expected outcomes pupils should be able to form a simple message related to a situation from family and school life, infer a likely meaning of the new words from the context, and request simple information. The Key Competences as stated in the FEP BE (i.e. learning competences, problem-solving competences, communication competences, social and personal competences, civil competences and working competences) should also be developed in English conversation lessons. Moreover, the survey revealed that there are two other very important objectives of English conversation lessons which are usually stated by individual School Education Programmes: extending pupils' vocabulary and improving their communication skills. Pupils should become more fluent, efficient, and self-confident speakers and overcome the fear of communicating in English; in a few words pupils are

expected to extend their language knowledge and practise all the language skills during English conversation lessons.

To conclude this chapter, the survey results from both the questionnaires and the interview were presented here. At first, this chapter dealt with the organization of English conversation lessons, and, among others, it revealed that there is a call for more lessons of English conversation in the 8th and 9th grades of Upper Primary Education, especially after the introduction of another foreign language as a compulsory subject from the 8th grade onwards in the 2013/2014 school year. After that, this chapter focused on the content of English conversation lessons, where the following topics were discussed: the materials used by teachers for lessons preparation, topics, speech acts and activities pupils get familiar with during the lessons, and lastly the organizational forms and forms of assessment used in the lessons. The following section of this chapter discussed the goals of English conversation lessons; the survey showed that the expected outcomes of English conversation lessons mostly correspond with the expected outcomes of foreign language learning as they are described in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education. Nevertheless, the survey showed that the two main goals of English conversation lessons are extending pupils' vocabulary and improving their communication skills. In the last part of this chapter, the interview results were presented, which mostly concurred with the findings from the questionnaires. The following and the final chapter of this thesis will discuss the pedagogical implications based on the survey results and limitations of the survey conducted and several suggestions for further research.

V IMPLICATIONS

This chapter consists of three parts. The first part, pedagogical implications, discusses the survey results and especially the matters that might be important for teachers and people in charge of specifying the content and the objectives of English conversation lessons. The second part focuses on limitations of the research; some weaknesses of the research conducted are mentioned there. The final part of this chapter provides several suggestions for further research related to a variety of topics connected with the methodology of English language.

Pedagogical Implications

The survey revealed that English conversation lessons are considered by many teachers as an additional English subject to standard English lessons which provides a unique opportunity for extending pupils' vocabulary knowledge and practising all of the four language skills. In fact, pupils are not expected to learn new grammar structures there but rather they are expected to apply the grammatical rules, which they have learnt in standard lessons, and expand their knowledge of vocabulary. As was discussed in the previous chapter, motivation is of a high importance in the subject and some teachers try to teach the lessons so that pupils enjoy the lessons and actively take part in the activities. This approach to English conversation lesson teaching can positively influence pupils' motivation and in some cases even the pupils approach to the English language.

Unfortunately, it seems that there is not enough space for providing a sufficient number of English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of Upper Primary Education and that is so especially since the introduction of another foreign language as a compulsory subject from the 8th grade onwards in the school year 2013/2014. Possibly, it might be more beneficial if another foreign language was not a compulsory subject but only an optional one. According to several teachers, the requirements connected with the introduction of another foreign language go beyond a certain percentage of pupils' capabilities and it would be more useful for them to have more time to spend on one foreign language only. It looks like that there is a call for more lessons of English conversation and in some schools, where the lessons were cancelled, a call for the return of the lessons.

The survey suggests another thing connected with the organization of English conversation lessons. In three out of all the schools contacted, English conversation lessons are taught by native speakers and this conveys the impression that this is quite an effective way of dividing the lessons, when standard English lessons are taught by Czech teachers and English conversation lessons by native speakers. Thus, pupils can become accustomed to communication in English with foreigners, who do not have any command of the Czech language sometimes, and thus they can overcome their fear of communicating in English.

Regarding the lessons preparation, the survey showed that the preparation of English conversation lessons is more time-consuming than the preparation of standard English lessons. Despite the fact that several teachers answered that there are no specific teaching materials for the lessons, the survey showed that many sources can be exploited and some of them seem to be very useful for English conversation teaching. An overview of the course books, magazines, and websites is given in the previous chapter which might be used as a source of inspiration by teachers of English conversation. Moreover, there is almost an unlimited variety of activities, which can be used in the lessons, and experimenting with new ones from time to time might enliven the lessons. If the activities draw pupils' interest and bring some fun into the classroom, they will serve their purpose. Furthermore, some teachers try to avoid negative assessment in the lessons and reward pupils by plus points for their activity as well. Some games such as 'The King of Words' also provide an opportunity for a positive assessment.

Based on this survey, it would be worthwhile to consider several matters when specifying the objectives of English conversation teaching. Firstly, the survey dealt with the development of the communicative competence as it was described by Canale and Swain and showed that the majority of teachers consider its development as highly important. The development of the communicative competence is in fact an underlying principle of the Communicative Language Teaching, which has been applied since the 1970s and is still widely used around the world. Hence, it might be useful to have these principles in mind when planning the objectives of English conversation lessons or the objectives of individual lessons and aim to develop the components of the communicative competence. Furthermore, use of the documents issued by the European Commission (i.e. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the Europass, and the Language Portfolio) could be considered. The results of the survey suggest that teachers who use the documents work with them very often; however, the majority of teachers do not use the documents at all. Finally, supposing that natural conversation should make about half of the

content of English conversation lessons, teachers could have a closer look at the typical features of conversation, its functions and conversation strategies such as interrupting other speakers, indicating a lack of understanding, and using effective repair strategies and including them intentionally in the lessons.

Limitation of the Research

The survey that was conducted should not be generalized too much owing to three main issues. Firstly, the survey was planned to be more extensive. Out of the 43 schools contacted only 27 replies were received, which means that more than one third of all the schools did not reply. In the next stage, contacting the teachers, the process was repeated and out of the 48 teachers contacted, only 25 answers were recorded. These figures correspond probably with the work load of the teachers at schools and it is highly possible that they are often bombarded by similar questionnaires and their willingness to answer them is likely to decrease. On the other hand, the goodwill of the 25 teachers who spent their precious time on completing the questionnaire should be appreciated and, above all, I value the willingness of the teacher interviewed.

Other limitations of this research arose owing to the usage of Google Docs Questionnaire programme. The responses were recorded in the programme anonymously, so it was not possible to trace who of the teachers contacted by e-mail answered and who did not. Since schools all over the Czech Republic were contacted in the survey, it is difficult to find out in which area the survey actually took place. Furthermore, a problem occurred with analyzing the data in the programme as only the final figures were shown and the individual answers did not appear sometimes. Hence, it could not be analyzed whether there is any correlation between the individual answers such as in the case of a correlation between the status of a lesson (compulsory and optional) and their number per week.

In addition to that, some questions in the questionnaire proved to be insufficient such as in the case of differentiating the fluency and accuracy activities or the usage of the European Documents (CEFR, the Europass, and the Language Portfolio). It would be interesting to find out how the activities are differentiated and how the documents are used. However, there is danger that the questionnaire could become intolerably long; it is possible that even the 24 questions included in the questionnaire discouraged many teachers from completing it.

The very last thing perceived as a limitation of this research is that only teachers' view on English conversation lessons was considered. For example, the fact that the number of English conversation lessons decreased rapidly since the school year 2013/2014 was commented on only by teachers of English, who have taught the lessons in the past. Moreover, many teachers mentioned pupils' higher level of motivation, fun and interest which the lessons provide. The question arises whether the pupils share this opinion too and if there is a real possibility that English conversation lessons can change their attitude to learning English.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study dealing with the content and goals of English conversation lessons might be expanded in a few ways. For example, this research suggests that the communicative competence is developed in English conversation lessons; however, a more detailed study might aim to examine which activities develop the individual components of the communicative competence. Another study might eventually focus on the cross-curricular subjects and their inclusion in English conversation lessons. Two other suggestions on the studies are as follows: the first study might investigate the issues connected with an introduction of another compulsory foreign language in schools from the 8th grade onwards and the other study might examine the issues connected with native and non-native English teachers.

To summarize the content of this chapter, the implications, it examined the following three areas: pedagogical implications, limitations of the research, and suggestions for further research. It was discussed, among others, that motivation is very important in English conversation lessons and teachers might try to reduce the negative assessment and take advantage of other forms of positive assessment. Teachers might evaluate pupils' activity in lessons and also exploit some games such as 'King of Words' to assess the pupils. After that, it was shown that a wide range of sources can be exploited for the preparation of English conversation lessons and it was recommended to teachers to check the list of possible sources which is presented in this thesis. Furthermore, teachers were recommended to consider the use of the European documents (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the Europass, and the Language Portfolio) in

lessons. It was also recommended to have in mind the development of the individual components of the communicative competence as an underlying goal during the process of planning the general objectives of English conversation lessons and the objectives of individual lessons. Based on assumption that natural conversation makes about half of the content of English conversation lessons, teachers could have a closer look at the typical features of conversation, its functions and conversation strategies such as interrupting other speakers, indicating a lack of understanding, and using effective repair strategies and include them intentionally in the lessons.

After this, the following limitations of the research were discussed. Firstly, it was explained that the survey was planned to be more extensive and the reasons were given why this failed. Secondly, the research limitations which arose owing to the usage of Google Docs Questionnaire programme were described, and, finally, it was remarked that only teachers' view on English conversation lessons was considered during conducting the survey and interpreting the results. The last section focused on several suggestions for further research such as examining the activities that develop the individual components of the communicative competence, investigating the issues connected with an introduction of another foreign language in schools from the 8th grade onwards, and the issues connected with native and non-native English teachers. The next chapter will conclude the content of the whole thesis.

VI CONCLUSION

This thesis discussed the topic of the content and the objectives of English conversation lessons in the 8th and the 9th grades of Upper Primary Education. Firstly, the act of conversation was defined as an interpersonal, interactive, and unplanned speaking event, whose main functions are to establish social relationships between speakers and to convey information. It showed that conversation has several typical features, which distinguish it from other genres, such as the use of appraisal language, incomplete utterances, non-standard forms, ellipsis, discourse markers, stressed words, falling intonation, specific gestures or body language, and many others. Moreover, there are many strategies and rules that should be observed by speakers to keep conversation going such as turn-taking, conversation strategies, sociocultural rules and the co-operative principle. After this, the following three approaches to teaching conversation lessons were mentioned: the first, which suggests to break down the skills used in conversation into a number of sub-skills and to teach them one by one; the second, focusing on different genres and speech acts; and the last, according to which the best way of learning conversation is to have conversation on a range of topics. In reality, a blend of all the approaches is used the most often, which was also confirmed by the research conducted. The speech acts and the topics which the pupils should be familiar with are stated by the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education and the survey showed which topics are covered in English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades in particular.

The keystones of conversation lessons are communicative activities which reflect the real world, which among others, means that pupils should be motivated by a communicative goal such as obtaining information, making a request, and giving instructions; not only by the need to display the correct use of language for its sake. However, there is a broad variety of communicative activities and a high number of their classification. Thus, the fluency and accuracy activities or pre-communicative and communicative activities may be differentiated. The types of the communicative activities for example include information-gap activities, jigsaw activities, role-playing, opinion-sharing activities, debates, questioning activities, communication games, and drama games. The survey revealed that the most frequently used activities in English conversation lessons are above all role-playing, information gathering and questioning activities, and communication games. Furthermore, the survey showed that during the activities all four organizational forms are used (i.e. frontal class work, group work, pair work, and individual

work), whereas pair work and group work are used the most in English conversation lessons. The assessment, which is also a part of the lessons content, takes many forms in English conversation lessons, but narrative assessment prevails. Pupils are often rewarded for their activity in lessons, vocabulary tests, and presentations of some projects. It was revealed that pupils' motivation plays an important role in English conversation lessons and the lessons might positively influence pupils' attitude towards English as such. English conversation lessons provide a unique opportunity for incorporating activities, which pupils enjoy, and during which they have a chance to practise all of the four language skills and extend their vocabulary knowledge. In addition to that, many competences are developed during English conversation lessons. These are both the Key Competences, as they are defined by the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education, and also the individual competences that make up the communicative competence, which was defined as early as in the 1970s and seems to be relevant even today. In spite of all the facts that favour English conversation lesson teaching, the survey revealed that English conversation lessons were cancelled or their number reduced after the introduction of another foreign language to schools from the 8th grade onwards in the school year 2013/2014. Many teachers argued that this is a change for the worse; in other words, there seems to be a call for a higher number of English conversation lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of Upper Primary Education.

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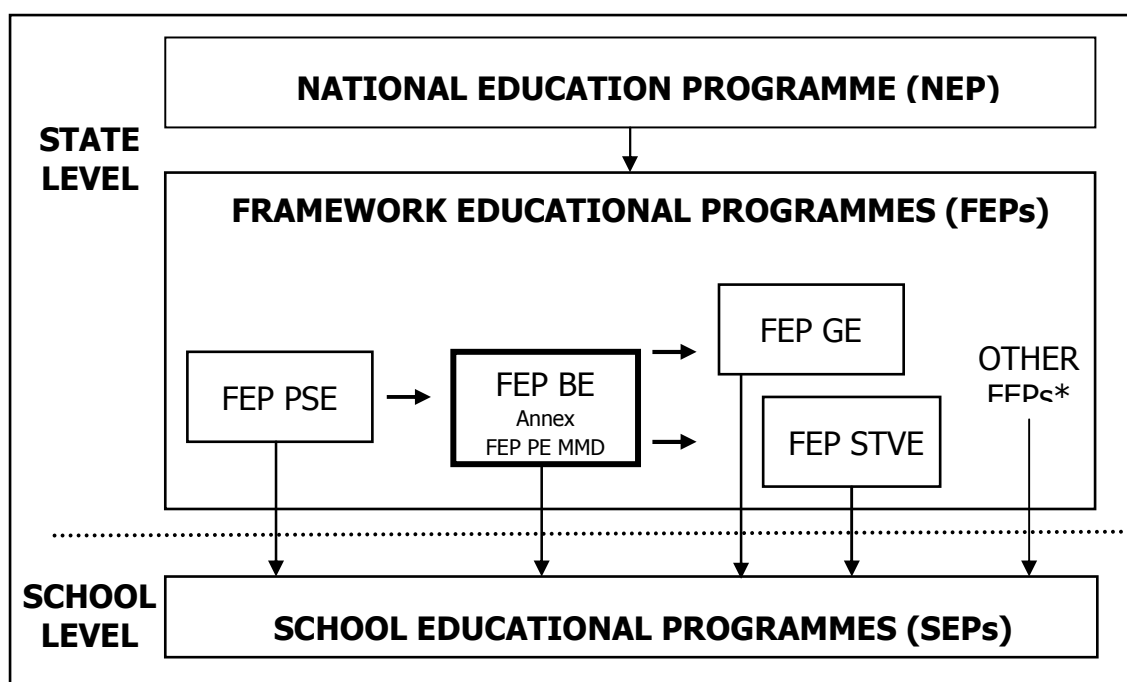
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, illustrative scale for conversation

	CONVERSATION
C2	Can converse comfortably and appropriately, unhampered by any linguistic limitations in conducting a full social and personal life.
C1	Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage.
B2	Can engage in extended conversation on most general topics in a clearly participatory fashion, even in a noisy environment. Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker. Can convey degrees of emotion and highlight the personal significance of events and experiences.
B1	Can enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics. Can follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversation, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases. Can maintain a conversation or discussion but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what he/she would like to. Can express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference.
A2	Can establish social contact: greetings and farewells; introductions; giving thanks. Can generally understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters directed at him/her, provided he/she can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time. Can participate in short conversations in routine contexts on topics of interest. Can express how he/she feels in simple terms, and express thanks. Can handle very short social exchanges but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord, though he/she can be made to understand if the speaker will take the trouble. Can use simple everyday polite forms of greeting and address. Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions and apologies. Can say what he/she likes and dislikes.
A1	Can make an introduction and use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions. Can ask how people are and react to news. Can understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs of a concrete type, delivered directly to him/her in clear, slow and repeated speech by a sympathetic speaker.

Appendix 2: Structure of curricula documents in the Czech Republic



Appendix 3: Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education, Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (2013), Educational content of the educational field 'Foreign language', stage 2.

Očekávané výstupy

POSLECH S POROZUMĚNÍM

žák

- CJ-9-1-01 rozumí informacím v jednoduchých poslechových textech, jsou-li pronášeny pomalu a zřetelně
- CJ-9-1-02 rozumí obsahu jednoduché a zřetelně vyslovované promluvy či konverzace, který se týká osvojovaných témat

MLUVENÍ

žák

- CJ-9-2-01 se zeptá na základní informace a adekvátně reaguje v běžných formálních i neformálních situacích
- CJ-9-2-02 mluví o své rodině, kamarádech, škole, volném čase a dalších osvojovaných tématech
- CJ-9-2-03 vypráví jednoduchý příběh či událost; popíše osoby, místa a věci ze svého každodenního života

ČTENÍ S POROZUMĚNÍM

žák

- CJ-9-3-01 vyhledá požadované informace v jednoduchých každodenních autentických materiálech
- CJ-9-3-02 rozumí krátkým a jednoduchým textům, vyhledá v nich požadované

informace

PSANÍ

žák

- **CJ-9-4-01** *vyplní základní údaje o sobě ve formuláři*
- **CJ-9-4-02** *napiše jednoduché texty týkající se jeho samotného, rodiny, školy, volného času a dalších osvojovaných témat*
- **CJ-9-4-03** *reaguje na jednoduché písemné sdělení*

Učivo

- **zvuková a grafická podoba jazyka** – rozvíjení dostatečně srozumitelné výslovnosti a schopnosti rozlišovat sluchem prvky fonologického systému jazyka, slovní a větný přízvuk, intonace, ovládání pravopisu slov osvojené slovní zásoby
- **slovní zásoba** – rozvíjení dostačující slovní zásoby k ústní i písemné komunikaci vztahující se k probíraným tematickým okruhům a komunikačním situacím; práce se slovníkem
- **tematické okruhy** - domov, rodina, bydlení, škola, volný čas, kultura, sport, péče o zdraví, pocity a nálady, stravovací návyky, počasí, příroda a město, nákupy a móda, společnost a její problémy, volba povolání, moderní technologie a média, cestování, realie zemí příslušných jazykových oblastí
- **mluvnice** – rozvíjení používání gramatických jevů k realizaci komunikačního záměru žáka (jsou tolerovány elementární chyby, které nenarušují smysl sdělení a porozumění)

Appendix 4: Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education, Research Institute of Education in Prague (2007), Educational content of the educational field 'Foreign language', stage 2.

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS

Expected outcomes

pupils will

1. *read aloud texts of appropriate length, fluently and respecting the rules of pronunciation*
2. *understand the content of simple texts in textbooks and the content of authentic materials using visual aids; find familiar expressions, phrases and answers to questions in texts*
3. *understand simple and clearly pronounced speech and conversations*
4. *infer a likely meaning of new words from context*
5. *use a bilingual dictionary, look up information or the meaning of a word in an appropriate monolingual dictionary*

PRODUCTIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS

Expected outcomes

pupils will

6. *form a simple (oral or written) message related to a situation from family and school life and other studied theme areas*
7. *create and modify grammatically correct simple sentences and short texts*
8. *provide a brief summary of the content of a text, speech and conversation of appropriate difficulty*
9. *request simple information*

INTERACTIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS

Expected outcomes

pupils will

10. in a simple manner, make themselves understood in common everyday situations

Subject matter

simple messages – address, responding to being addressed, greetings, welcoming, saying good-bye, introductions, apologies, responding to an apology, thanking and responding to being thanked, pleas, requests, wishes, congratulations, requests for help (services, information), agreement/disagreement, meetings, social plans

basic relationships – existential (Who?...), spatial (Where? Where to?...), temporal (When?...), qualitative (What? Which? How?...), quantitative (How many/much?...)

theme areas – home, family, housing, school, free time and leisure activities, personal letters, forms, questionnaires, sport, healthcare, food, in town, clothing, shopping, nature, weather, people and society, travelling, the socio-cultural environment of relevant language areas and the Czech Republic

vocabulary and word formation

grammatical structures and sentence types, lexical principles of orthography

Appendix 5: Questionnaire used to carry out the survey, Czech version

Hodiny anglické konverzace v 8. a 9. třídě

1. Anglická konverzace je...

	povinný předmět	volitelný předmět
...v 8. třídě:		
...v 9. třídě:		

2. Týdenní dotace hodin anglické konverzace je...

	1h	2h	3h	4h	5h
...v 8. třídě:					
...v 9. třídě:					

3. Kde se na Vaší škole realizují hodiny konverzace?

- a) V běžných třídách
- b) V jazykových učebnách
- c) V počítačových (popř. multimediálních) učebnách
- d) Venku

4. Jaké materiály používáte pro přípravu hodin anglické konverzace?

(Uveďte prosím názvy tištěných materiálů, konkrétní internetové stránky, či další zdroje.)

5. Využíváte autentické materiály? (Tj. materiály v angličtině nijak neupravené pro potřeby studentů)

- a) ano
- b) ne

6. Jak často používáte autentické materiály?

(nikdy) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (vždy)

7. V případě, že využíváte autentické materiály, uveďte prosím jaké.

- a) novinové a časopisové články
- b) písně
- c) filmy, seriály
- d) televizní a radiové programy
- e) plakáty, reklamy, letáky, inzeráty
- f) internetové zdroje
- g) knihy
- h) ostatní

8. Jaké jsou podle Vás největší výhody a nevýhody autentických materiálů?

9. Určete prosím proporci, kolik času přibližně tráví žáci během hodin konverzace:

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Frontální výukou						
prací ve skupinách						
prací ve dvojicích						
samostatnou prací						

10. Jaká témata probíráte na hodinách konverzace v 8. a v 9. třídě ?

Témata	8. třída	9. třída
Česká republika		
Moje město, můj region		
Reálie anglicky mluvících zemí		
Cestování		
Orientace ve městě		
V restauraci, v hotelu		
Jídlo a pití		
Zábava, volný čas		
Lidé, společnost a kultura		
Škola		
Rodina, rodinné vztahy		
Dům, bydlení		
Příroda		

Počasí		
Sport		
Lidské tělo		
Zdraví a nemoci		
Móda, oblékání		
Móda, oblékání		
Ostatní		

11. Osvojují si žáci na hodinách konverzací následující řečové akty?

Řečové akty	ano	ne
Oslovení, reakce na oslovení		
Pozdrav, přivítání		
Představování		
Rozloučení		
Omluva, reakce na omluvu		
poděkování, reakce na poděkování		
Prosba, žádost		
přání, blahopřání		
Žádost o pomoc, službu, informaci		
vyjádření souhlasu/nesouhlasu		
Ostatní		

12. Zaměřujete se cíleně na aktivity rozvíjející plynulost vyjádření a na aktivity rozvíjející gramatickou správnost? (Pokud ano, jsou si žáci předem vědomi rozdílných požadavků na jejich výkon?)

- a) Ano, aktivity rozlišuji a žáci si jsou vědomi rozdílu.
- b) Ano, ale žáci o rozdělení aktivit obvykle neví.
- c) Ne, nerozlišuji.

13. Využíváte na hodinách následující aktivity?

Typy aktivit	ano	Ne
Rolové hry (hraní podle rolí, např. doktor x pacient, revizor x cestující, matka x dcera)		
Otázkové aktivity (např. aktivity typu 'Najdi někoho, kdo...' nebo 'Hádej, kdo jsem', kdy pomocí ano/ne otázek mají přijít na novou identitu spolužáka.)		
'Information gap activities' (Žáci pracují ve dvojicích. Každý žák má jiné informace a k vyřešení úkolu je třeba je sdílet. Např. mají najít rozdíly na odlišných obrázcích.)		
'Jigsaw activities' (Stejný princip jako u 'information gap activities', ale žáci jsou rozděleni do skupin. Každá skupina má jinou část informace důležitou k vyřešení problému. Např. mají poskládat z části příběhu celek.)		

Sdílení názorů (Žáci sdílejí své názory na určitou problematiku. Např. mají za úkol sestavit svůj žebříček hodnot či seřadit důležitost povahových vlastností kamarádů podle důležitosti.)		
Získávání informací od spolužáků (Pomocí rozhovorů a průzkumů zjišťují žáci informace od svých spolužáků např. způsob trávení volného času, oblíbené filmy, stravovací návyky apod.; údaje poté zpracovávají a vyhodnocují.)		
Debaty a diskuze (Mohou mít i netradiční formu, jako např. 'balonová debata'. Zde se v košíku balonu, ze kterého uniká vzduch, nachází několik významných osobností. Žáci diskutují, kdo má či nemá balon opustit, aby tak zachránil ostatní a tým i jejich přínos lidstvu.)		
Komunikační hry		
Dramatizace		
Projekty		
Filmy		
Exkurze, výlety		
Ostatní		

14. S jakými aktivitami máte obzvláště dobrou zkušenost?

+ Můžete prosím popsat Vaši osvědčenou aktivitu a její výhody?

15. Používáte na hodinách anglické konverzace komunikativní přístup k výuce cizího jazyka?

- a) ano
- b) těžko určit
- c) ne, využívám jiný přístup. (V tomto případě, pokud možno, uveďte jaký).

16. Souhlasíte s tvrzením, že hodiny konverzace rozvíjí komunikativní kompetenci, tak jak je definována v tradičním pojetí Michaela Canale a Merrill Swainové?

Ta se skládá ze 4 složek:

1. lingvistické kompetence (znalost gramatiky, slovní zásoby, morfologie, syntaxe a fonologie)
2. sociolingvistické kompetence (znalost sociokulturních pravidel užívání jazyka)
3. diskurzivní kompetence (schopnost používat vhodné strategie při tvorbě a interpretaci delších psaných i mluvených projevů, např. koherence, koheze textu)
4. strategické kompetence (schopnost poradit si v obtížných komunikačních situacích, např. při neznalosti určité slovní zásoby či při vzniku nedorozumění).

- a) Ano, určitě.
- b) Spíše ano.
- c) Spíše ne.
- d) Určitě ne.

17. Považujete rozvíjení takto definované komunikativní kompetence za důležité?

- a) Ano, určitě.
- b) Spíše ano.
- c) Spíše ne.
- d) Určitě ne.

18. Jak rozvíjí hodiny konverzace jednotlivé složky komunikativní kompetence?

Kompetence	Vůbec	téměř vůbec	částečně	Výrazně
lingvistická kompetence				
sociokulturní kompetence				
Diskurzní kompetence				
Strategická kompetence				

19. Jak často využíváte během příprav hodin nebo přímo na hodinách dokumenty Rady Evropy, konkrétně Evropský jazykový referenční rámec, Evropský jazykový pas nebo Evropské jazykové portfolio?

(nikdy) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (vždy)

20. Jak jsou definované cíle hodin anglické konverzace ve Vašem ŠVP?

21. Jak často začleňujete do hodin konverzací průřezová témata, která jsou součástí rámcového vzdělávacího programu? (Tj. osobností a sociální výchovu, výchovu k myšlení v evropských a globálních souvislostech, multikulturní výchovu, environmentální výchovu, mediální výchovu.)

(nikdy) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (vždy)

22. Jaké klíčové kompetence žáků definované podle rámcového vzdělávacího programu rozvíjí podle Vašeho názoru hodiny konverzace a nakolik?

Klíčové kompetence	nejméně	průměrně	Nejvíce
Kompetence k učení			
Kompetence k řešení problémů			
Kompetence komunikativní			
Kompetence sociální a personální			
Kompetence občanské			
Kompetence pracovní			

23. Jak často a jakým způsobem probíhá hodnocení žáků?

24. Máte nějaké další postřehy, komentáře či připomínky k tématu anglické konverzace?

Appendix 6: Questionnaire in English

English Conversation Lessons in the 8th and 9th grades of Upper Primary Education

1. English conversation is...

	a compulsory subject	an optional subject
...in the 8 th grade:		
...in the 9 th grade:		

2. How many lessons of English conversation are in you school per week?

	1	2	3	4	5
8 th grade:					
9 th grade:					

3. Where do English conversation lessons take place?

- a) in a regular classroom
- b) in a language laboratory
- c) in a computer laboratory or in a multimedia classroom
- d) outside the classroom

4. Which materials do you use for preparation of English conversation lessons?
(Please, indicate specific coursebooks, websites, magazines, and other resources)

5. Do you use authentic materials? (i.e. materials designated for English native speakers)

- a) yes
- b) no

6. How often do you use authentic materials?

never hardly ever sometimes often usually always

7. Which authentic materials do you use?

- a) newspaper or magazine articles
- b) songs
- c) movies, TV serials
- d) TV or radio programmes
- e) posters, advertisements, leaflets
- f) Internet sources
- g) books
- h) others

8. In your opinion, what are the biggest advantages and disadvantages of using authentic materials in English conversation lessons?

9. Please, estimate the proportion of time your pupils spend in the following organizational forms.

Organizational form	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Frontal class work						
Group work						
Pair Work						
Individual work						

10. Which topics do you cover in English conversation lessons in 8th and the 9th grade?

Topic	8th grade	9th grade
The Czech Republic		
My city, my region		
English speaking countries' life and institutions		
Traveling		
Asking and giving directions		
At the restaurant, at the hotel		
Food and drink		
Free time activities		
People and society		
School		
Family and relationships		
House and living		
Nature		
Weather		
Sport		
Human body		
Health and illnesses		
Clothes and fashion		
Shopping		
Other		

11. Do you cover the following speech acts in English conversation lessons?

Speech act	yes	no
Address, responding to being addressed		
Greetings, welcoming		
Introductions		
Saying good-bye		
Apologies and responding to an apology		
Thanking and responding to being thanked		
Requests		
Wishes, congratulations		
Asking for help, service, information		
Expression of Agreement/disagreement		
Other		

12. Do you differentiate between fluency and accuracy activities somehow?
(In the case you do, are pupils aware of the difference?)

- d) yes, there is a difference and pupils are aware of it
- e) yes, there is a difference but pupils do not notice it
- f) no, there is not any difference

13. Do you use the following types of activities in English conversation lessons?

Type of activity	yes	no
Role-playing (Students adopt a specific role and improvise a scene, e.g. a doctor x a patient)		
Questioning activities (e.g. activities like 'Find someone who...' or 'What would you do if...')		
Information gap activities (each learner has a different piece of information. In order to solve the specific tasks, learners have to share their knowledge)		
Jigsaw activities (activities also based on the information-gap principle, but the class is divided into groups and each group has a different part of the information. The class has to put the pieces of information together to solve the task)		
Information gathering activities (pupils gather information about a particular topic e.g. computer games, television programs, hobbies, leisure-time occupation from their classmates analyze the results afterwards)		

Opinion-sharing activities (pupils compare their values, beliefs of and opinions on a certain topic)		
Communication games		
Drama, drama games		
Debates, discussions		
Projects		
Movies		
Excursions, trips		
Others		

14. Which activity do you find particularly useful?

Please, describe one of your favourite activities and its advantages.

15. Do you use the communicative approach (or Communicative language teaching, abbreviated CLT) to language teaching in English conversation lessons?

- a) yes
- b) difficult to say
- c) no, I do not use the communicative approach
- d) I use a different approach to language teaching

16. Do you agree with the statement that English conversation lessons develop the Communicative Competence as it was described by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain?

According to the authors, the Communicative Competence comprises of the following four components:

1. linguistic competence (the knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and phonetics)
2. sociolinguistic competence (the knowledge of sociocultural rules)
3. discourse competence (the knowledge how to interpret the larger context and how to construct longer stretches of language so that the parts make up a coherent whole)
4. strategic competence (the knowledge of recognizing and repairing communication breakdowns and working around gaps in one's knowledge of the language, e.g. describing a word which you do not know)

- e) certainly yes
- f) rather yes
- g) rather no
- h) certainly no

17. Do you consider development of pupils Communicative Competence (in Canale and Swain's conceptualization) of a high importance?

- e) certainly yes
- f) rather yes
- g) rather no
- h) certainly no

18. How are the individual components of the Communicative Competence developed during English conversation lessons?

Competence	not at all	not much	moderately	very much
Linguistic competence				
sociolinguistic competence				
Discourse competence				
Strategic competence				

19. How often do you use the European Documents (the Common European Framework for Languages, the Europass, and the European Language portfolio) during the lesson preparation?

never hardly ever sometimes often usually always

20. What are the goals of English conversation lessons according to the School Education Programme in your school?

21. How often do you include the cross-curriculum subjects, which are a part of the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education, in English conversation lessons?

(i.e. Personal and Social Education, Democratic Citizenship, Education towards Thinking in European and Global Contexts, Multicultural Education, Environmental Education, and Media Education)

never hardly ever sometimes often usually always

22. How are the Key Competences, as defined in the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education, developed in English conversation lessons?

Key Competences	the least	moderately	the most
learning competences			
problem-solving competences			
communication competences			
social and personal competences			
civil competences			
working competences			

23. How do you assess your pupils?

Please, indicate the frequency and type of assessment.

24. Do you have any additional comments on English conversation lessons?

Appendix 7: Interview with a teacher of English conversation lessons

Interview

1. Organization of English conversation lessons

- optional / compulsory subject in the UK and USA called from 2013 - 2014
only 7th grade + 8th grade - optional
↓
it's a pity
- number of lessons per week - used to be 1 per week
 - should be compulsory subject → practice of English
- type of classroom (regular classroom, language laboratory, computer laboratory...)
sometimes; if PC needed

2. Content of the lessons

- Materials used for preparation - more time - consuming
combination of materials - own materials,
websites, coursebook, magazines)
- depends on topic
- Authentic materials (types of authentic materials, frequency, advantages - disadvantages)
- Every 2nd lesson
songs + articles on the internet
- Syllabus of English conversation lessons (speech acts, topics, conversational sub-skills)
greetings + restaurant ...
↓
not included
- Fluency x accuracy activities (how does she differentiate the activities?)
there is a difference; students know about it
accuracy act. - corrects almost every mistake
- pupils correct themselves

- Types of activities used (the most and the least used; why)

role-playing, simple communication games, information-gathering activities + projects (presentations) ↓

NOT: drama, drama games - pupils are shy
⊕ most speaking practice; effective; pupils like very active

- Organizational forms (the proportion of forms used, advantages, disadvantages)

⊕ 'pair work'; (individual, group, brain all)

sometimes: in pairs → in groups → whole class
pair work - speaking practice; effective for everyone
- every lesson

- Assessment of pupils (type of assessment, frequency)

possible assessment! - motivation!

projects - my favourite singer, sport, my house, my city, best holidays

vocabulary games

tests - vocabulary; once in 14 days

3. Goals of English conversation lessons teaching

What are the goals of English conversation lessons according to the School Education Programme in your school?

- practice of language skills?

What is the difference between English standard lessons and English conversation lessons?

more time - conversation
- funny activities / motivation! / not teaching grammar
- changing attitude to English; interest of pupils

How are the Key Competencies, as defined in the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education, developed in English conversation lessons?

(learning competencies, problem-solving competencies, communication competencies, social and personal competencies, civil competencies, working competencies)

pupils are aware of the progress they make
- they observe what they can say
- motivation
speaking practice

Which cross-curriculum subjects (which are stated in FEP BE) do you include in English conversation lessons in particular?

(i.e. Personal and Social Education, Democratic Citizenship, Education towards Thinking in European and Global Contexts, Multicultural Education, Environmental Education, and Media Education)

the most
new

Is a development of the Communicative Competence (Canale and Swain's conceptualization) of a high importance for the learners?

YES, definitely; extremely important

How are the individual components of the Communicative Competence developed during English conversation lessons?

(linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence)

the most - - " - the most " - - " -
all of them are developed a lot!

4. Conversation in English conversation lessons

Do pupils practise the following conversation strategies? (how?)

- turn-taking strategies - in a pair work, every lesson

- different adjacency pairs - ✓; grammatically correct

- conversational strategies (effective conversational openings, interrupting the other speakers, indicating a lack of understanding, effective use of repair strategies)

- communication games
- conversation (50:50) - other activities
- unintentionally
- paraphrasing

Other comments on English conversation lessons

- there should be lessons of con. in the 8th and 9th grade
- not a difference in knowledge of trends but in their attitude to English
- great for motivation
- "benefit" - extra lessons of English

SHRNUTÍ

Tato diplomová práce pojednává o současném stavu výuky hodin anglické konverzace na 2. stupni ZŠ v České republice. Zaměřuje se zejména na obsah a cíle hodin anglické konverzace a okrajově se také zabývá jejich organizací. V teoretické části je nejdříve detailně popsána konverzace, převážně její charakteristické prvky, kterými se odlišuje od ostatních žánrů, a jsou zde zmíněny zásady, které by měly být v průběhu konverzace dodržovány jednotlivými mluvčími. Dále se teoretická práce zabývá možnými cíli výuky hodin konverzace, například pojednává o komunikativní kompetenci. Dále je uvedeno, jakých konverzačních schopností by žáci 9. tříd měli dosáhnout podle Společného evropského referenčního rámce, a jaké jsou očekávané výstupy žáků podle Rámcového vzdělávacího programu pro základní vzdělávání. V praktické části práce jsou prezentovány výsledky výzkumu provedeného jak prostřednictvím vyplnění dotazníků učiteli anglické konverzace na školách po celé České republice, tak i osobním interview s vyučujícím hodin anglické konverzace na 14. ZŠ v Plzni. Výsledky průzkumu jsou rozděleny do třech základních celků, jenž se zaměřují na organizaci, cíle a náplň hodin anglické konverzace. Na základě průzkumu se ukázalo, že hodiny konverzace poskytují jedinečnou možnost k procvičování všech čtyřech základních řečových dovedností, rozvíjení celé řady kompetencí, a začleňování zajímavých aktivit, které dokonce mohou pozitivně ovlivnit vztah žáků k anglickému jazyku.