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Thesis

USING VOCABULARY GAMES IN PRACTISING VOCABULARY IN YOUNG

LEARNERS CLASSES

Soňa Jindrová

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

V Plzni dne 15. dubna 2014   ………………………….

                                                                                            Jméno Příjmení

ABSTRACT

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USING VOCABULARY GAMES IN PRACTISING VOCABULARY IN YOUNG
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This diploma thesis deals with vocabulary language games and their using in practising vocabulary in young learners classes. The thesis aim is to answer two questions:

1. Are the vocabulary language games an effective tool for practising vocabulary and to what extent can they contribute to pupils' improvement?

2. What was the pupils' response to playing games?

The theoretical part of the thesis describes characteristics of English language learning in the Czech Framework Educational Program for Basic Education and in the Common European Framework of References for Languages. The basic information about young learners and their development are provided. It characterizes vocabulary, ways of remembering words and the methods, and approaches to vocabulary learning and teaching. It deals with the game and its significance in children's lives. It also deals with the educational game and language game. The experimental part of the thesis introduces the used methods and the results of the experiment.

Based on the result of the research, it was concluded that vocabulary language games could be an effective tool in practising vocabulary and eventually help pupils to improve their knowledge. The games were positively accepted and appreciated.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the introduction of the thesis I want to write the reasons that lead me to the topic I have chosen and describe the structure of the thesis. I have been teaching English language at the basic school for ten years in classes of different level. I have taken part in many seminars and workshops and attended lectures at the university where I met different methods and approaches to teaching English language. I was lucky that I always met teachers and lecturers who were professionals and who taught me that learners apart from learning should enjoy the lessons. Therefore as a teacher I have always tried to make my lessons interesting and teach as effectively as possible.

Everybody who has ever learnt a foreign language knows that vocabulary underlies the language and that the most difficult part of learning is remembering words. How to teach vocabulary and help learners to remember as many words as possible is the question that all teachers have asked. I have learned that vocabulary games can contribute to effective learning, especially in young learners classes, and I know from my own experience that vocabulary games bring some fun to lessons and relaxed atmosphere so I am aware of their utility. Nevertheless I have never investigated how effective vocabulary games are and to which extent they can contribute to successful learning. Therefore I decided that in the thesis I would write about vocabulary games and their application to teaching and learning. Through the thesis I want to prove that vocabulary games are an effective method that helps learners to improve their vocabulary and that learning through games can really be fun.

The first part of the thesis is focused on theory. It describes the position of English language in our educational system and characterizes young learners. It also states some facts that describe young learners as foreign language learners. It deals with vocabulary and describes how words are stored in our memory and how they are taught and remembered. The last subchapter of the first part of the thesis is dedicated to the theory of game It focuses on spontaneous game and then on educational game and it also introduces types of vocabulary games.

The second part of the thesis describes the research. First it describes the methods used to verify the assumptions and it also introduces the subjects of the experiment. The data which were acquired are depicted in graphs that are commented subsequently. This part of the thesis also talks about pupils' opinions on games that were acquired from the questionnaire.

The third part of the thesis summarizes what was found out and provides advice for teachers based on the results of the research. It tries to explain the limitation of the research and brings some suggestions for a further research. The last chapter summarizes and provides the main ideas of the thesis.

II.   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The first part of the theoretical background of the thesis is focused on English language learning in Framework Educational Program for Basic Education and on specifics of young learners. The second part deals with vocabulary and the third part is devoted to the theory of game, didactic games and vocabulary games.

English Language in Basic Education

Nowadays English language is spoken all over the world, either as the first or the second language. It is a foreign language of a great significance and this is the reason why it is also taught at Czech school of all levels. According to our educational system the English language becomes compulsory for learners at basic schools in the third grade although at some schools pupils and students can already start learning it from the first grade. How the English language as the foreign language is defined in our Framework Educational Program for Basic Education and what are the characteristics of young learners will be discussed in this part of the theses.

English in Framework Educational Program for Basic Education

As it was said in the introduction of the first chapter English language becomes compulsory subject for children of the third grade. The educational norms for basic education and expected outcomes for young learners are defined in the Framework Educational Program for Basic Education. It consists of nine educational areas. English language belongs to educational area called Language and Communication through Language. This is divided into three fields called Czech Language and Literature, Foreign Language and Another Foreign Language. The field Foreign Language provides a language basis for the pupil's ability to communicate in foreign language within Europe and the whole world. Besides the language, pupils learn about cultural traditions and different aspects of life of people in foreign countries. The requirements for foreign language education are based on the CEFR - Common European Framework of References for Languages that describes various levels of language proficiency (RVP ZV, 2013, p.17).

Learners' knowledge is defined in expected outcomes. Those are knowledge abilities and skills that the learners are expected to achieve after finishing their school attendance. The outcomes are divided into two stages – Stage 1 and Stage 2. Stage 1 describes expected outcomes for young learners, Stage 2 is for older learners. At the end of

the first stage of school attendance, learners are required to achieve level A1 and after they have finished their basic education they are expected to achieve level A2 of CEFR.

Stage 1 consists of two periods of learning. The first period of Stage 1 focuses on development of all abilities on a very simple level. It establishes the knowledge and skills for pupils who attend the first, second and third grades. In the second period (which includes pupils of grade four and five) expected outcomes are defined separately for receptive language skills and productive language skills. In receptive skills learners are expected to understand simple instructions and questions that a teacher says slowly with a careful pronunciation, understand words and simple sentences that are taught, and also to understand simple listening, all that with some visual support. They are expected to find out necessary information in a simple text and understand short texts from the common life. As for the productive skills they are expected to write a simple text to take part in simple dialogues to convey basic information and answer simple questions about themselves, their family and common everyday life, school, and hobbies with some visual support. The subject matter content is: sound and spelling of words and basic pronunciation, basic grammar structures and vocabulary that they can use in simple communicative situations. The theme areas are home, family, school, leisure time, human body, jobs, food, animals, seasons, months, days of the week, feasts, nature or weather. (RVP ZV, 2013, p. 24, 25).

The Framework Educational Program does not accurately specify what to teach but there are specific topics and skills that the young learners should master. What and how it will be taught depends entirely on the teachers who lead up their effort to achieving the expected outcomes. Emphasis is placed on simplicity and everyday life situations and visual support; all the vocabulary topics are related to common life. What are the developmental characteristics of young learners and what is typical for them as a foreign language learners will be discussed in the next part of the thesis.

Young Learners

In this part of the thesis young learners will be characterized from a developmental point of view and their abilities and skills as foreign language learners will be described. There are different classifications of young learners. Slattery & Willis (2001) describe young learners as children aged 7 – 12 years. According to them "young learners are learning to read and write in their own language, are developing as thinkers, understand the differences between the real and the imaginary" (p. 5). Vágnerová (2000) speaks about

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"children of the school age". These are learners aged 6 years, when they start their school attendance, to 12 years of age, when they become learners of the second stage of our basic educational system. (p. 148) Helus (2009) writes about "younger school age". According to Helus, these children range from 6 to 11 years. (p. 244). At this age some developmentally related changes appear in children's thinking, as Vágnerová (2000) writes. Thinking is characterized by respecting fundamental laws of logic and respecting specific reality, it is concrete and tied to the real experience. This stage Piaget called concrete – operational stage. Children explore reality and convince of the truthfulness of verbal facts interpreted by teachers (pp.148-149). Helus (2009) states that children can follow the speech of the others, distinguish syllables and individual sounds and clearly articulate. They can think logically on an appropriate level too. They are able to cooperate with their schoolmates and develop their own learning strategies. (pp. 244-245)

As it has been found out, there is no strict definition of young learners according to their age. Generally we can say that young learners are children at the age of 6-12 years but the classification differs depending on the different authors and their books. All the authors agree that young learners develop as thinkers and learn to understand the difference between real and imaginary word. Their thinking is logical and their own learning strategies are developed. What is typical for young learners as for foreign language learners will be discussed in the following part.

Young Learners as Foreign Language Learners

There is a general idea that young learners learn faster and more effectively than older ones. Ur (2012) is skeptical about this statement. She says that in the context of school-based education younger students are not better than older ones. Harmer (2007) agrees with her claim. He admits that young children "have a facility with the pronunciation" (p. 81) but apart from pronunciation ability older students seem to be better learners in other aspects of acquisition of foreign language. According to him young learners often learn in an indirect way – that means that they take in information from all sides, they learn from everything what happens around them (82), they understand better what they learn when they can see or hear it, and have a chance to touch and interact with. Slattery & Willis (2001) state the same when they say that children's learning is variable including activities such as watching, listening, imitating or doing things. (p. 4). Ur (2012) emphases that "children learn best through implicit learning: imitating, memorizing,

acquiring intuitively through repeating exposure and production of enjoyable or interesting activities" (p. 258)

What all of the authors point out is the concentration span of young learners and the fact that they find it difficult to abstract concepts, they do not fully understand grammatical rules and explanation about language. Their attention span is quite short so the children need interesting and extremely engaging activities to maintain their attention. Ur (2012) suggests that the most useful in their learning is using lots of pictures, stories, games and language play activities that children can enjoy (p. 259). Scrivener (2011) describes young learners as keen, noisy, and curious. They want to learn new things, want to have fun, love attention, and like experiment. They get easily excited and it can be hard to calm them down. They want to use language but do not want to learn its rules. They do not fully realize the importance of learning English but they know that it is fine to do interesting tasks, games and activities (p. 321.)

Read (2007) establishes a couple of principles that are important to consider when teaching young learners. She states that activities need to be challenging which means to be on the appropriate level of their linguistics and cognitive knowledge. She argues that too easy activities can lead to boredom and can be de-motivating. She also mentions 'flow' which is the feeling that learners experience when learning is successful. 'Flow' activates and motivates them towards their further learning. We should keep in mind that young learners are curious and like finding out about things so we should use it to build up their desire to learn through interesting and enjoyable activities. It must not be forgotten that young learners are also very creative so we should use and develop their imagination, fantasy and creative thinking and bring humor and fun in their learning. (pp. 7-10)

Summarizing the all the facts that have been discussed so far, it can be concluded that young learners are children from 6 to 12 years of their age. Concrete logical thinking is typical for them. They prefer to explore reality and verbal information through their own experience. Verbal thinking develops from understanding of concrete to abstract meaning of the words. As language learners they learn better through the context and everything that happens around them. Their attention span is not long so the activities should be interesting, challenging and enjoyable. English language becomes compulsory for young learners when they are in grade 3. What they are expected to know is defined as expected outcomes in Framework Educational Program for Basic Education. Because they are expected to communicate in simple life situations that are a part of their everyday reality

they need to learn basic vocabulary. Vocabulary is the topic that will be discussed in the next part of the thesis.

Vocabulary

Thornbury (2002) in his book used a quotation of the linguist David Wilkins in which he had expressed how important vocabulary is. He had said that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p. 13). In other words vocabulary is the most important area in teaching and learning a foreign language. A word is a carrier of meaning through the meaningful expressions and sentences we can communicate. The more words we know the most effective the communication can be. Nevertheless vocabulary can include items that are more than a single word so that Ur (2012) suggests to use the term vocabulary 'item' rather than 'word' (p.60). According to Scrivener (2011) vocabulary typically represents single words and sometimes two or three words combinations that are tightly linked. (p. 186) He uses the term lexis which as he says is bigger than vocabulary. It includes not only single words but also "common 'going-together patterns' of words "called collocations and longer combinations that are typically used together as a single item called chunks. Lexis contains all words and their combinations that are prepared in our mind to be recalled and used immediately at the moment of speaking (p. 186). What do the learners need to know about a word? How are words remembered? How to teach vocabulary? These questions I would like to answer in the next parts.

Words and Memory

Ur (2012) writes that the most important things the language learners need to know about a lexical item are its spoken form – what a word sounds like (pronunciation), its written form (spelling) and its most usual meaning. In addition, it is necessary to know its grammar, collocation, connotations and appropriate use. (pp. 60-61) The meaning of the word is what it refers to in the real world and in many cases a word can have not only one meaning. Thornbury (2002) says that the basic knowledge of the word involves knowing its form and meaning and he argues that "the form of the word tells you nothing about the meaning" (p. 15) which means that both the form and the meaning are important. Harmer (2007) writes that because the reading and writing skills of young learners are not fully developed, their learning depends mainly on listening and speaking skills (p. 83), so that they mainly need to know the meaning and the sound of the word first and then its spelling.

Slattery &Willis (2001) state the same when they recommend to teach the sound first and the meaning of the world before its spelling form. The best way of teaching the sound of a new word or a phrase is spontaneous repetition as often as it is possible. (p. 47) Thornbury (2002) noted the fact that the learner's attention has to be drawn to the word sounds, its stress, and general shape which also is helpful for retention (p. 84). According to Harmer (2007) the learners need to learn how to use the word in the context (p. 229). Some words occur together with the others in collocation or have different connotations. It is also necessary to know their grammar form and appropriate use in a certain context (Ur, 2012, pp. 61-62).

The words are stored in our mental lexicon and the learners need not only to learn them but also remember them as Thornbury (2002) explains and continues when he states that learning is in fact remembering that takes place in our short-term memory, working-memory and long-term memory. To get the words to the short-term memory and to move it into permanent long-term memory to be never forgotten is the challenge for the language learners (pp. 23, 24) and their teachers. Here Scrivener (2011) sees the main role of the teacher who should help learners to cope with this problem. In order to place the lexis into their long-term store he suggests to do it in four stages. When learners meet the lexical item for the first time, they need to understand them and understand how to use them, then they need to practice how to use them, the third step is to memorize them, and finally to recall them and use them in real speech. (p. 188)

When we learn vocabulary we need to know the spoken form of the word we need to know its sound, spelling, meaning, grammar, collocation, connotation, and appropriate use. For young learners it is better to use the sound first and then the meaning and spelling. If foreign language learners want to remember the word and to recall it quickly and never forget it, they must send it into their permanent long-term memory. How to do it depends not only on learners themselves but on their teachers too who can help them. Some of the ideas about teaching vocabulary will be described in the following part.

Teaching Vocabulary

Morgan & Rinvolucri (2004) characterize acquisition of vocabulary as a "branching process rather than linear one". They write that learning words requires associations that cannot be learnt separately. They also describe learning as a social process in which we interchange and share words with the others in order to understand the meaning but also intensive personal process based on our own life experience (p.7). Thornbury (2002)

describes teaching vocabulary in two stages - presenting and practicing and he also emphasis the necessity to teach both the meaning and form of the word together. When teachers are planning a vocabulary presentation they must take in consideration what the language level of their learners is if they are or are not familiar with the words, how difficult the item is, how difficult is to teach it, or whether the purpose of the vocabulary is production or recognition. The means of presentation can be translation, real things, pictures, action/gesture, definition, or situation. It is not important whether to present meaning first and then a form or vice versa. Both of these ways are valid (Thornbury, 2011, pp. 76-92). He recommends exposing learners to the words several times repeatedly in different context as well as giving them a chance to retrieve the word from memory to consolidate their knowledge. What helps to remember words is when they are taught, learnt and used in personally relevant meaning (Thornbury, p. 30). Hadfield (1998) says that remembering new words is hard. He characterizes words as "very slippery things". He suggests that "in order to retain a word, students have to go through three distinct processes" which are fixing the meaning, personalizing it and putting it to the individual store. (p.4)

The introduction and explanation of the meaning of a lexical item is only the first step. After that learners need to become familiar with it and eventually get many opportunities to meet the word in different contexts, and finally learn to use it in real language. There are many different tasks and activities which teachers can use to practise vocabulary: from matching pictures to lexical items, or matching lexical items to others, to filling in crosswords or diagrams or memory games (Scrivener, 2011, p. 191). Slattery & Willis (2001) emphasize connecting new vocabulary with what the learners already know and using visual aids to help them remember the words. They also mention memory games which help learners to become familiar with vocabulary in an enjoyable way (pp. 47-49). Ur (2012) emphasizes that learners need to "re-encounter" a new word several times to remember it permanently so that in every lesson there should be some work that reviews vocabulary. She suggests to link the word to leaner's own life or experience which helps them to remember to display vocabulary on the classroom walls or on the board so the learners can see the words often and to remind new vocabulary in summary time of the lesson (pp. 68-71).

Phillips (1993) writes that young learners learn words quickly but structures are learnt more slowly because the words have immediate meaning and structures do not so.

Learners learn holistically and do not think about separate parts of the language. The best way of teaching vocabulary is to illustrate the meaning of the words by pictures, action or real object and to use them in relevant context in order to be remembered well (p. 74).

To sum up, vocabulary plays an essential role in language teaching. Words are carriers of meaning and the meaning of the word, its form and sound are the most important knowledge which the learners need to know. Vocabulary teaching includes vocabulary presentation and practice. If we really want to know the word, we need to be exposed it many times in many different contexts by using different means. In young learner classes it is important to use engaging, enjoyable activities to teach vocabulary. One of the useful activities is a memory game. Why it is useful and desirable to use games in teaching will be explained in the next subchapter. It gives a look at a game as the most natural activity of children's lives and then shows the value of the didactic game in teaching.

Theory of Game

There are many reasons for using games in teaching young learners. Game is the activity that is natural and integral part of children's lives. In this part of the thesis spontaneous game and educational game and its function in English language learning will be mentioned. It will also be focused on vocabulary game.

Spontaneous Game

In Pedagogický slovník (2001) game is defined as an activity that differs from working and learning. It has got many different aspects, for example cognitive, emotional, practical, physical, social, creative or motivational one. Most of games are based on social interaction and have explicit rules (p.75). Klusák & Kučera (2010) in their book use Huizing's definition of the game who defines game as a "free act " played without any purpose, that can catch player's interest and is played in specified time and area with specific rules (p. 29). Bittnerová (2005) states, that game is a cultural phenomenon used in social communication of children. Through game children realize their relationships "inside a peer group". She mentions that each game has its own "leitmotif" which is the main idea or purpose of a game. If we focus on the spontaneous game of young learners, Bittnerová writes that the repertoire of games is very rich and there are no intellectual problems to play them. Children tend to play more spontaneously and their game does not

serve as the mean of getting attention but as the mean of organizing their free time (pp. 502,503).

One of the most important authors who deal with a game is Jan Amos Komenský. According to Uhlířová (2003), Komenský sees the most significant value of the game just in its spontaneity (p. 11). He understands a game mainly as a leisure activity that gives children opportunity to gain some experience in the most natural way, however, he forgets its entertaining character. In a game he sees "the source of joy, physical and psychical activity and sensorial stimulus that enrich experience and knowledge of children" (p. 29). According to him children must not grow up in isolation, out of the social group. Playing games in a group strengthens liveliness and sociability and overall development, it learns to act correctly and independently. He realizes significance of games for developing children thinking. A game plays the important role not only in intellectual education but also in aesthetic, moral and physical education (Uhlířová, 2003, p. 30).

Komenský fully realizes the role of a game at school. Learning at school can be as easy and joyful as a game. He says that in a game "movement, voluntariness, spontaneity and common interest" of players must be applied. The game must be well prepared and the rules must be accepted by all players. He adds that arrangement and partnership are characteristics of a game and he emphasizes that each game should be accompanied with pleasant experience when it is played and also after its ending (p. 30).

All these principles typical for a game help us to make our teaching effective and unusual which are the requirements in the current education. One of the devices to achieve it is the educational game. What the educational game is will be described in the next part of the thesis.

Educational Game

This subchapter will introduce the educational game, its values and significance for the teaching process. Pedagogický slovník (2001) characterizes educational game as an activity similar to a spontaneous activity of children, but the educational objectives, which the educational game follows, are not always apparent for them. It can be played in a classroom, gym, playground or nature. It must follow its rules and must be evaluated at the end. It can be played individually, in pairs or groups. The role of the teacher is variable – from the main organizer to observer. The most important feature of an educational game is the stimulation because it arouses interest and increases learner's involvement. It also

supports creativity, spontaneity, cooperation and competitiveness. It forces learners to use different knowledge and skills and to involve their life experience (p. 43).

Lokša & Lokšová (2003) classify an educational game as an activating method that is used to develop creativity because a game is for learners much more interesting than common teaching methods. They say that teacher can involve learners to teaching process very intensively by using a game and moreover an educational game brings positive relaxed atmosphere the joy of work and humor to a classroom which is very important for teaching. It also develops different learners' abilities. Educational games can appear as for example quizzes, problem solving tasks, scrabble etc. (p. 122). Also Portmann (2004) confirms the usefulness of games as creativity supporters. She says that playing games is not only fun but it has verifiable influence on learning. When learners play a game they get new life experience but they do not have to be afraid of failure or bad assessment. So we can say that educational games eliminate barriers in thinking and learning and create new habits. "Games require activity, develop all mental processes (strategy, logic, problem solving, creativity, memory), support communication, simulate social processes, enrich life experience, develop personality, and on the top of that, they are entertaining" (pp. 9-10). Portman also emphasizes that while playing a game learners do not realize that the activity involves mental effort (p. 94) so that they learn subconsciously which plays an important role in young learner classes. Kalhous (2009) mentions that in recent years in order to apply alternative approaches the using of educational games has become more frequented. The educational games activate the thinking of pupils, motivate them and can be even used for solving complicated educational tasks. (p. 323)

The educational games can be classified according to many aspects: for example they can be played in the classroom or outside it, they can develop different activities such as motor skills or intellectual skills. The most precious value of them is that their educational objectives remain hidden for players - they learn subconsciously. One of the areas where educational games are very often used is foreign language teaching where vocabulary games play an important role in order to release tension and fear from using a foreign language.

Language Games

In the previous part it was indicated that games used in teaching process have lots of advantages. They motivate and stimulate learners and lead to their higher activity and independence, they generate relaxed atmosphere and reduce fear of failure. In the

environment of the school class they help to induce positive attitude toward language activities. They are a very effective device for practicing vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and spelling.

Menhard (1976) describes the features of a good language game that were established by J. Dobson. According to her a good language game "requires the least preparation, it is easy to play, contains intellectual stimulus and activation, does not take too much time in the lesson, entertains learners but does not release discipline" (p. 184). Menhard adds that it is necessary to take also other aspects in consideration. The game should be appropriate for the age of learners and their abilities. It needs to have appropriate objectives and to be played in specific conditions. It should be entertaining but concurrently contain elements of learning and language subject matter. So that the learners recognize and understand the learning value of games, it is important to say explicitly why the specific game is played, what they learn while playing it, and afterwards help them to realize it (Read, 2001, p. 151).

She speaks about one aspect that is tightly connected to the game: it is the existence of contest. She admits that competitive games can show the worse in children and can lead to overexcitement or even aggression, but on the other hand she states that healthy competition between children is very motivating. She points to the fact that competition is a part of a real life and children can, through the game, learn that life is both about victory and defeat as well. She sees the value of the games in the fact that they help to establish positive attitude towards learning English, they encourage learners to participate, to be active, and stimulate their confidence and self-esteem (p. 150). Hanšpachová & Řandová say that the language games are very effective for learners with some learning disabilities such as dyslexia or dysgraphia (p. 10).

In addition to language skills, games also develop learners' social skills. They teach them to show willingness, to cooperate in a pair or a group, to take turns, to listen to the others and follow and respect the rules of a game (Read, 2001, p. 151). Watcyn-Jones (2001) states that even if the preparation of the language games is quite demanding, it is always worth. Learning becomes more active and more learners' senses can be involved. And the more senses are involved the better learning process is (p. x).

As it can be seen, language games have lots of advantages that can be turned into good account of teaching foreign languages. They are effective, motivate and stimulate

pupils, generate relaxed atmosphere, and reduce stress. In the next subchapter some types of language games will be introduced.

Types of Language Games

As it has been mentioned, there are many aspects for dividing language games. They can be divided according to the learners' age, the level of their language knowledge, the place where they are played, the skills they developed etc., but in fact all games can be used in any age for practicing any language phenomenon. Nevertheless there are many types of games which can be taken in consideration when planning a lesson.

Lewis & Bedson (1999) divide games according to their "most outstanding features" (p. 16). They distinguish movement games, card games, board games, dice games, drawing games, guessing games, role-play games, singing and chanting games, team games, or word games. They divide games into 'rousers' and 'settlers'. The games that wake up the class and bring adrenalin are called 'rousers'. They get children excited, have elements of competition, require movement. 'Settlers' calm a class down. They can be craft activities, writing games, or games which focus on listening (p. 7).

Read (2001) divide games according to the skills they develop – whether they develop receptive or productive skills. Hadfield (1998) describes two types of games: competitive games and cooperative games. She also distinguishes among linguistics games whose main goal is language accuracy, and communicative games. Some of her games are for example guessing games, search games, matching games, arranging games, board games, card games, or memorizing games. Toth (1995) organizes her games according to their complexity and relative language difficulty, but she adds that the division is flexible and the teachers can adapt the games (7). As we can see there is not some strict division among language games and almost every game can be adapted for any purpose. It depends on teachers themselves what type of game is suitable for their learners in terms of their age, level, skills that are to develop, situation, classroom etc. Nevertheless if we want the game to fulfill its purpose and aim we should bear in mind the principles established by Read (2001). We must make sure to know how the game works, give clear instructions and demonstrate, teach children interactive language for playing, be fair and firm in following rules, stop the game when children begin to lose interest, monitor but on the other hand show children that they can take their own responsibility (p. 152).

There are many reasons for playing games. They develop learners' social, emotional and cognitive skills, motivate and activate them. They can become an effective

tool in teaching process as long as the teachers select an appropriate game in the right moment and the learners understand the value of the game for their learning and development. Games play an important role in children's lives. When they start going to school, teachers take advance of game in children's learning to activate and motivate them via the educational games. Educational game helps learners to learn subconsciously in relaxing and playful atmosphere. In order to achieve positive effect of the educational game, teacher must keep in mind that it is important to choose a game appropriate for their learners' abilities and other aspects that attribute to the efficiency of an educational game in the classroom.

In the theoretical part of the thesis these fact have been found out. English language becomes a compulsory subject for young learners (children who are 6 – 12 years old) when they are in grade 3 of their school attendance. They are expected to use the language for communication in everyday life situations. The requirements are described as expected outcomes in the Frame Educational Program for languages. As the main purpose of learning foreign language is communication the vocabulary is in the centre of teacher's interest. Vocabulary or lexis consists from words but also from word expressions or chunks that need to be learnt together. The most important knowledge about a word is its pronunciation, meaning and spelling, collocation, connotations and its appropriate use. The most difficult part of learning vocabulary is the process of remembering words. How to remember as many words as possible is the task not only for learners but also for their teachers who can significantly contribute to it. In order to enable learners to understand, remember and use vocabulary, teachers use many different approaches. One of them is a didactic language game that seems to be natural and effective device. The learning remains hidden and thanks to game, it becomes fun.

In the experimental part of the thesis it will be discussed whether the language games are an effective tool in practicing vocabulary in young learner classes and whether they facilitate their learning. It will be answered whether children enjoyed playing games and whether they realized any purpose of playing games in teaching and learning.

III.   METHODS

This part of the thesis will describe the research, its preparation, the used methods, and the process of realization. For the research two tools were chosen: an experiment and a questionnaire. The main goal of the experiment was to find out whether the vocabulary language games can be an effective tool for learning and teaching vocabulary. The main goal of the questionnaire was to find out children's attitude to the games

Experiment

One of the methods used in the research was the experiment. The experiment had two vocabulary topics; both of them were practised through playing four vocabulary games with two groups of pupils. During the experiment the pupils' knowledge of the given vocabulary before practising and after it was tested and after that the results were compared. The testing was focused on the knowledge of meaning, spelling and pronunciation which, as it was found in the theoretical part of the thesis, are the most important for learning vocabulary.

Topic 1 *Sports* included fourteen expressions: *play football, play volleyball, play tennis, play table tennis, play basketball, play ice hockey, ride a bike, do judo, do gymnastics, swim, run, jump, skate and ski.* Topic 2 *Sports equipment* included twelve expressions connected to sports: *ball, racket, hockey stick, hoop, ribbon, skates, skis, trainers, trampoline, helmet, swimsuit and bike.* As for the games three card games and one board game were chosen – Pelmanism, Snap, Domino and the Board game. Topic 1 was practised through Domino (see Appendix A) and the Board game (see Appendix B), Topic 2 was practised through Pelmanism (see Appendix C) and Snap (see Appendix D).

Realization of the Experiment

The experiment was realized during two weeks in February 2014. The children completed two tests and finally they answered the questions in the questionnaire. First Topic 1 *Sports* were practised and then Topic 2 *Sports equi*pment. As it has been mentioned children were playing three card games and one board game – Pelmanism, Snap, Domino and the Board game that pupils called Olympic Race. To make so many game cards was quite a long and time-consuming process; it took almost one week to print, stick, cut out and complete all the game cards. The children created their own Board games with materials that had been prepared and brought to the lesson; the pictures were the same too. Domino and the Board game were played to practise Topic 1, while through

Pelmanism and Snap Topic 2 was practised. Domino, Snap and the Board game were played by the children in pairs, Pelmanism in groups of three members. The vocabulary picture cards with labels were fastened on the board every lesson at the beginning of the playing because the children needed a visual support. Pronunciation of the words, which was monitoring and correcting during the experiment, was also revised at the beginning of the playing. After finishing a game the children change their partners and played a game at least twice. During the lessons children only play the games. They practised the vocabulary orally they did not write.

Testing

The knowledge of meaning, spelling and pronunciation was tested. The children completed the same tests for Topic 1 (see Appendix E) and Topic 2 (see Appendix F) before playing games and after playing them. The children's knowledge of pronunciation of the words was tested before and after playing as well. Each child read the expressions individually and their pronunciation was recorded in the table (see Appendix G). The only one version of the tests was used because there were only eleven children in the group and they could sit alone at a desk while they were completing tests.

Subjects of the Experiment

The experiment was realized at The 7th Basic School and Kindergarten in Plzeň. For the experiment two groups of pupils who attended Class 5A and Class 5 B were chosen. In the time of the experiment the children in those classes had been together for five years and had been learning English language for three year. They started to learn English language in grade three and they had three lessons per a week. For English language lesson they were divided into two groups. Even though at this school English language is taught from the third grade, some of the children had learnt English before.

In Class 5A there are eleven pupils, who are very clever, hard-working, and enthusiastic. They are sometimes noisy so they need to be engaged all the time. All the children achieve good results and they care about good marks. In Class 5B there are eleven pupils too. They are also very smart, enthusiastic and lively, and achieve good results. In the both groups there are children witch mixed abilities but there are not any children with learning disabilities.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as the second method of the research (see Appendix H). There were four questions in the questionnaire. Two of them were multiple choice close-ended questions. Their goal was to find out which of the games children enjoyed most and why. Other two questions were opened-ended questions. In these questions children were asked about the purpose of the playing language games in the lessons. Pupils completed the questionnaire immediately after the finishing the second tests. All the children filled in the same questionnaire. The questions were written in the Czech language. It was necessary for children to understand the questions well. The questionnaires were anonymous in order to gain truthful and sincere answers.

In this chapter methods used in the experiment were described. It was also introduced when, where, and how the experiment was realized. As well as the most important information about the subjects of the experiment were given. In the following chapter of the thesis the result of the experiment will be described.

IV.   RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

In this chapter the results of the experiment will be described. The knowledge of the meaning, spelling and pronunciation of the words before the playing and after playing games will be presented and commented consequently. First the results of the test of Topic 1 will be introduced and then the result of the Topic 2. The results will be described separately for the individual classes. After that the answers from the questionnaire will be evaluated and summarized.

Experiment

First Topic 1 Sports will be evaluated and then Topic 2 Sports equipment. For each skill there are two figures that describe the results in numbers and in percentage.

Evaluation of Topic 1 in Class 5A

Topic 1 included these words: *play football, play volleyball, play tennis, play table tennis, play basketball, play ice hockey, ride a bike, do judo, do gymnastics, swim, run, jump, skate* and *ski.* Ten children completed the same tests before and after the experiment, the pronunciation was tested orally. The results that children achieved are compared in graphs and commented subsequently.
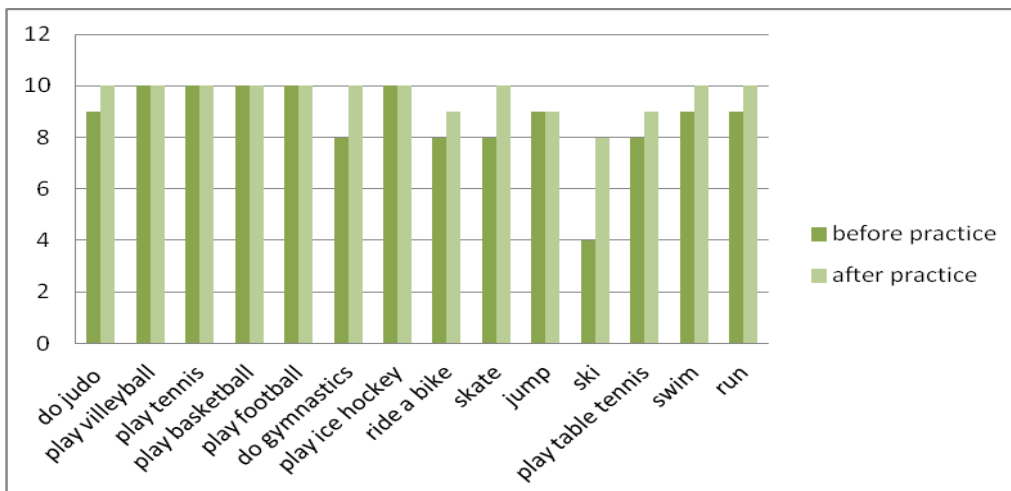
Meaning

Graph1. Topic 1 – knowledge of the meaning in Class 5A. This graph refers to the total number of students who knew the meaning of the words before and after the practice.
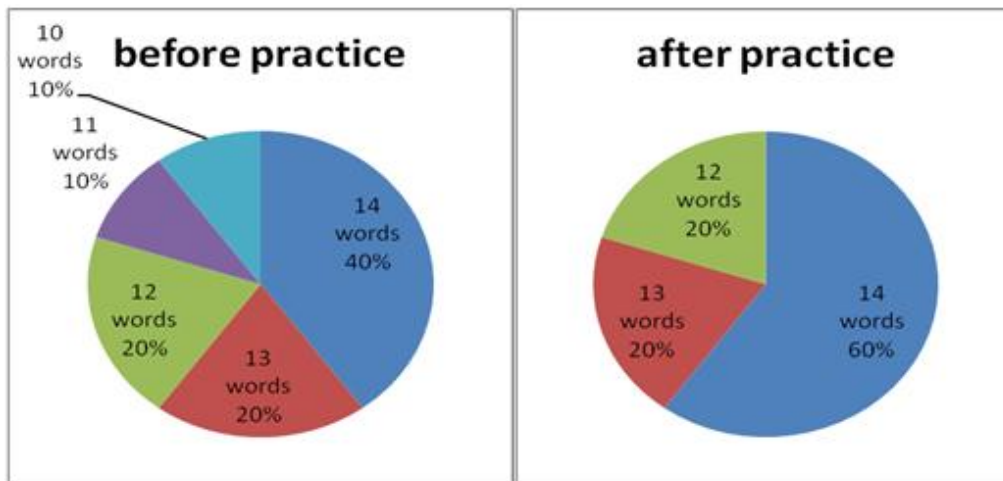
Graph 2. Topic 1 – knowledge of the meaning in percentage in Class 5A. This graph refers to the number of students who knew the meaning of the words before and after the practice in percentage.

The tests before the practice were completed by ten children from Class 5A. Nobody completed the test without a mistake. From the total number of pupils four of them knew the meaning of all fourteen words, two pupils did not know one word, two pupils did not know two words, one pupil did not know three words and one pupil did not know four words. As it can be seen in the Graph 2, before the practice 40% of pupils had known all the words. There was only one mistake in the meaning of the word *swim* which was translated as *swimming pool.* Similarly in the word *jump* there was only one mistake in its meaning. It was confused with the word *jumper.* Everybody knew sports that we play – *play ice hockey, play basketball, play tennis, play table tennis, play volleyball and play football.* Four children used *play ping pong* for table tennis which is an informal expression but that expression was accepted as the right one. All but one pupil knew the word *run.* Only two pupils exchanged *do* and *play.* It was surprising that five pupils did not know the word *ski* but only two did not know *skate*. Two pupils did not know the expression *ride a bike. Do judo* and *do gymnastics* were different just because of *do.* Three children made a mistake when they used *play* instead of *do* for *judo* and *gymnastics*.

After the practice, the pupils improved their knowledge of all the words. As the Graph 2 shows 60% knew the meaning of all the words. Six children knew all of them, two children did not know one word and two children did not know two words. The most

obvious improvement can be seen concerning the word *ski* (see the Graph 1). Twice more children knew this word.

When we summarize these facts, pupils in class 5A did not have many problems with the meaning of words from the Topic 1 *Sports* and after playing games they even improved.

Spelling
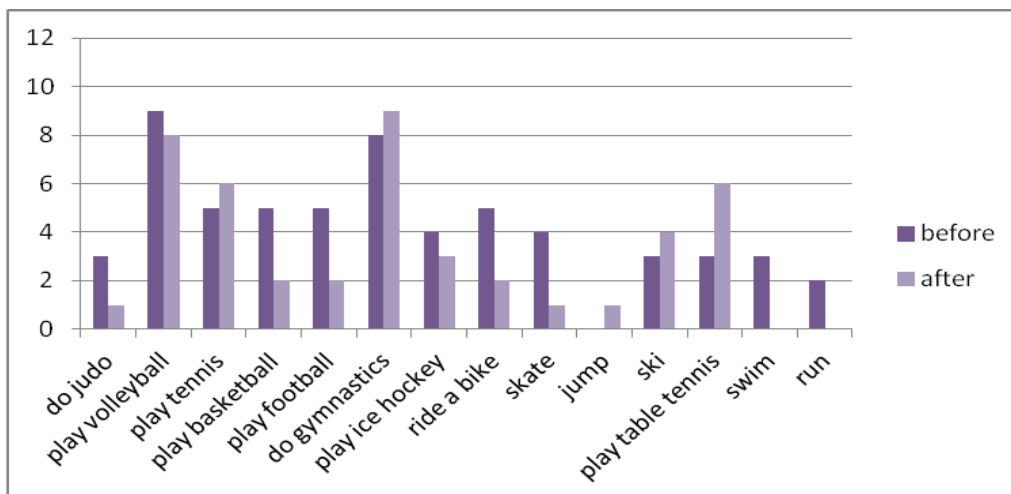
Graph 3.Topic 1 – spelling mistakes in Class 5A. This graph refers to the number of pupils who made spelling mistakes in individual words (sometimes more than one in one word) before and after the practice.
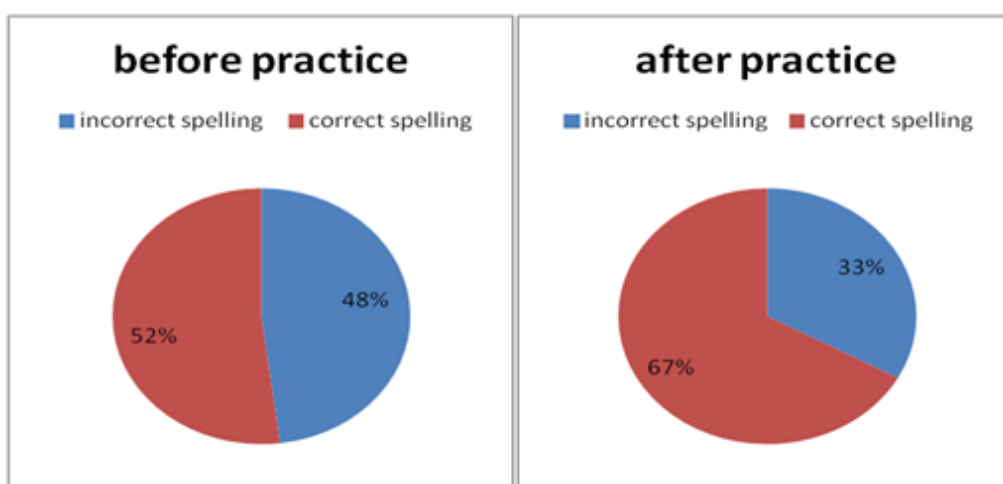

Graph 4.Topic 1 – spelling mistakes in percentage in Class 5A. This graph refers to the correct and an incorrect spelling before and after the practice in percentage.

When evaluating the data from spelling, it must be taken in consideration that the number of spelling mistakes depended on the number of words that the children knew. Ten children were supposed to know 140 words. Before the practice they had known 122 words and in 59 words the children made a spelling mistake. As the Graph 4 illustrates before the practice the children were mistaken in 48 % of the words they had known before the practice. As it can be seen in Graph 3 there were not any mistakes in the spelling of the word *jump*. In the spelling of the word *swim* only three children made some mistakes. In the expressions *play ice hockey, play basketball, play tennis, play table tennis, play volleyball and play football* children made similar mistakes. The most common spelling mistake the children made was in double consonants that were missing, e. g. double *–n* in tennis, double *–ll* in volleyball or the children wrote *baal* instead of *ball.* Only two children out of ten made a mistake in the spelling of the word *run.* There were no spelling mistakes in *do judo,* but everybody made a mistake in *do gymnastics.* In the spelling of the expression *do gymnastic* the common mistake was that the children wrote *gymnastik* instead of *gymnastics.* Out of eight pupils who knew the expression *ride a bike,* five of them made a mistake in its spelling. Most mistakes they made were in the spelling of *do gymnastics* and *play volleyball.*

After the practice out of the total number of words (140) the children knew 135 words and 45 of them were written with a spelling mistake. Summarizing these facts the children improved in the spelling of the words in Topic 1 because they made a spelling mistake in 33 % of words (see the Graph 4) they knew after the practice so the overall improvement was 15 %. However, it does not hold for all the words. In the expression *play table tennis* six children made a mistake after the practice. The reason might have been that before the practice four of them had used *play ping pong* so they avoided the word *tennis* where they were mostly mistaken after the practice. It is necessary to mention the expression *do gymnastics.* Before the practice everybody had made a spelling mistake, after the practice everybody but one child made a spelling mistake as well which might mean that this expression may have been very difficult for the pupils. They did not improve in spelling of that expression and they made the same spelling mistake as before the practice.

Pronunciation
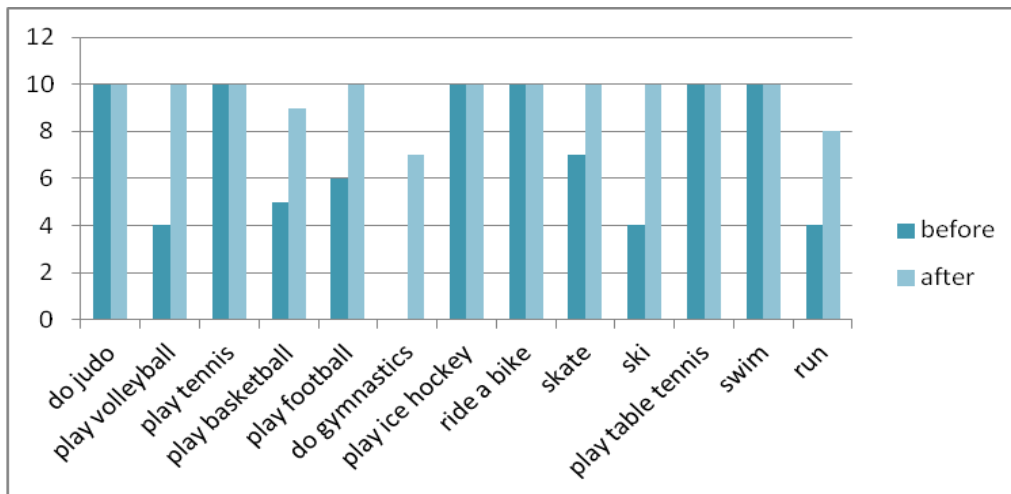
Graph 5.Topic 1 – pronunciation in Class 5A. This graph refers to the total number of pupils who pronounced the words correctly before and after the practice
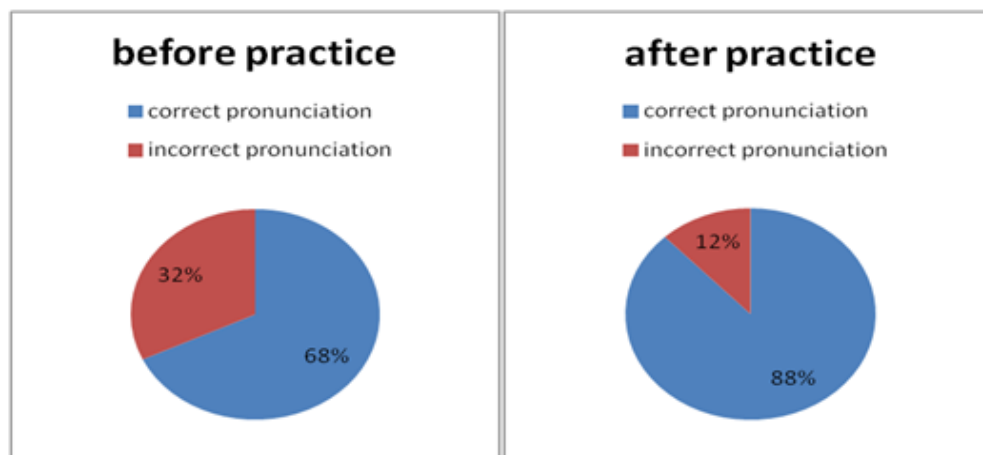

Graph 6 Topic1 – pronunciation in percentage in Class 5A. This graph refers to the number of pupils who pronounced the words correctly before and after the practice in percentage.

As for the pronunciation of the words before playing games the Graph 5 shows that the children were sure about the pronunciation of do *judo, play tennis play ice hockey, play table tennis, ride a bike and swim.* Everybody was sure about the pronunciation of the word *play* and *do* but they made mistakes in the pronunciation of *volleyball* or *basketball* or *football*. The most difficult word to pronounce was *gymnastics*. The children pronounced it inaccurately and the most frequent mistake was pronounced -*g* at the

beginning of the word. They also had problems with *run, ski* and *skate*. After the practice, the pronunciation of the words improved. As it can be seen in the Graph 5 the children improved their pronunciation of *volleyball, basketball* and *football,* they achieved a significant improvement in the pronunciation of *gymnastics*, *ski* and *run*. While before the practice they had known the pronunciation of 68 % of words after the practice they were sure with the pronunciation of 88 % of words (see the Graph 6). The most problematic word to pronounce remained the word *gymnastics.* In its pronunciation three out of ten children made a mistake. Nevertheless, the overall improvement in pronunciation of the words was 20%.

Evaluation of Topic 1 in class 5B

Meaning
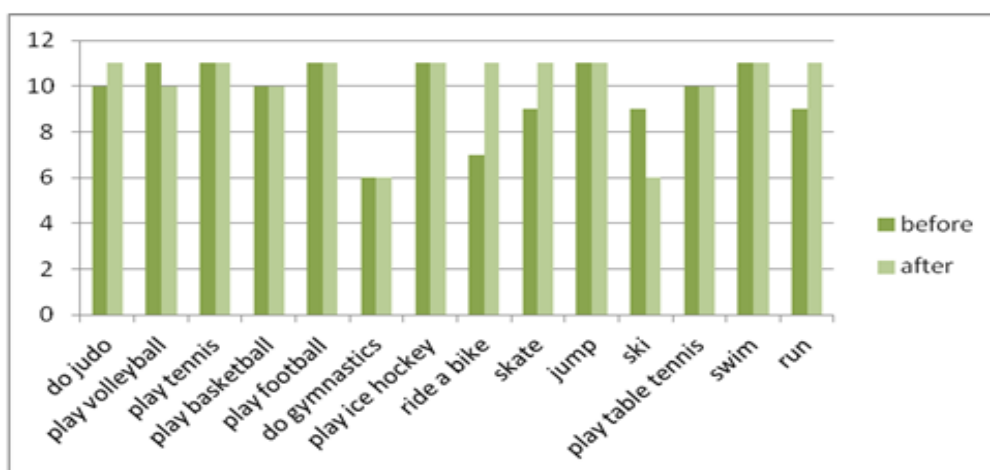
Graph 7.Topic 1 – knowledge of the meaning in Class 5B. This graph refers to the total number of pupils who knew the meaning of the words before and after the practice.
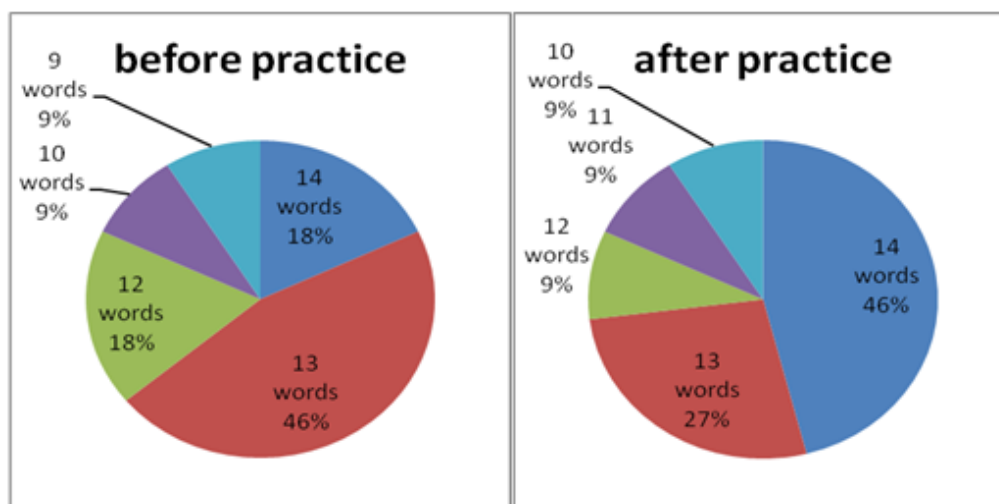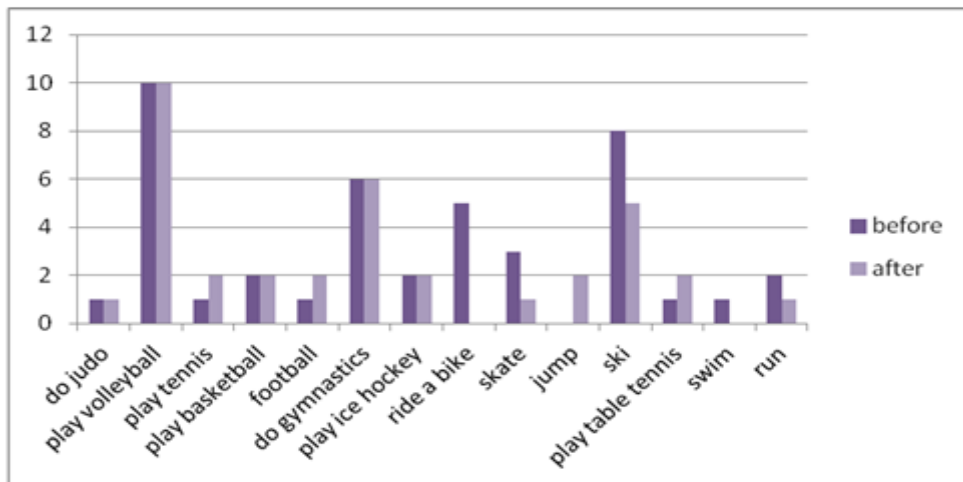
Graph 8.Topic 1 – knowledge of the meaning in percentage in Class 5B. This graph refers to the number of pupils who knew the meaning of the words before and after practice in percentage.

In class 5B eleven children had completed the tests before the practice. Out of the total number of children only two children knew the meaning of all the words. Five children did not know the meaning of one word, two children did not know two words, one child did not know four words and one child did not know the meaning of five words. Expressed in percentage only 18 % of pupils knew all fourteen words and 46 % of pupils knew thirteen words before the practice. As it can be seen in the Graph 7 five children did not know the expression *do gymnastics*, three of those who knew it (six children) wrote *do gym* which means that they knew the meaning but confused that word with *gymnastics*. Nobody exchange *play* and *do* for *judo* and *gymnastics*. Two children used *do* instead of *play* with the expression *table tennis*. The Graph 8 shows the number of pupils who knew the meaning of the words in percentage. Before the practice only 18 % of pupils had known all fourteen words and 46 % of pupils had known thirteen words.

After the practice five children knew the meaning of all the words, three children knew thirteen words one child knew twelve words, one child eleven and one child ten words. As it can be seen in the Graph 8 after the practice 46% of all children knew all fourteen words, which is the overall improvement of 28%. But it is necessary to mention the word *ski* because after the practice six pupils did not know it so some deterioration could be seen in the results.

Spelling

Graph 9.Topic 1 – spelling mistakes in Class 5B. This graph refers to the total number of pupils who made spelling mistakes in the individual words (sometimes more than one in one word) before and after the practice.
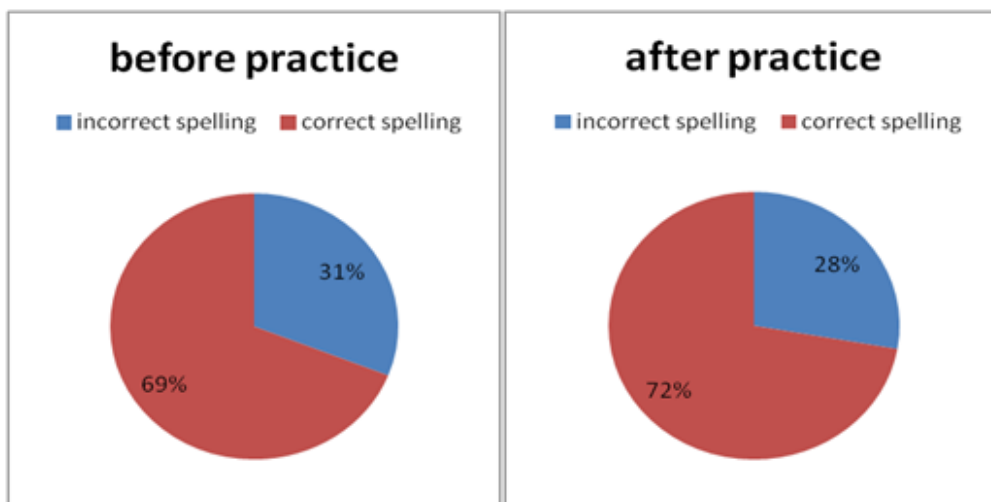

Graph 10.Topic 1 – spelling mistakes in percentage in Class 5B. This graph refers to the correct and an incorrect spelling before and after the practice in percentage.

When evaluating an improvement in spelling it must again be taken in consideration that the number of spelling mistakes depended on the number of the words that the children had known. The total number of words that all the children were supposed to know was 154 words. Before the practice they had known 136 words. In 43 words they made a spelling mistake. As the Graph 10 illustrates they were mistaken in 31% of words they had known before the practice.

In the Graph 9 it can be seen that in the words *swim, do judo, play tennis* and *play table tennis* the children were mistaken once. Two children made a mistake in *play ice hockey, play basketball* and *run*; in *ride a bike* five children were mistaken. In the expression *do gymnastics* they were mistaken six times, in *ski* eight times. Everybody made a mistake in the word *volleyball*. The most frequent mistakes were the missing double consonants –ll in *volleyball*, that mistake was made by all eleven pupils. The second most common mistake was –y instead of –i in the word *ski* – that mistake was made by six out of eight children who had known the word. Five children made a mistake in the expression *ride a bike*. They were not mistaken in the spelling of the expressions *jump* and *play football*. It was found that the most difficult words regarding to a correct writing in this group of pupils were *volleyball* and *ski*.

After the practice out of the same total number of words (154) they knew 141 words and made a spelling mistake in 36 words. The Graph 10 shows that they were mistaken in 28% of words they knew after the practice. Although the children made fewer mistakes in spelling, it does not hold for all the words. In the expression *play volleyball* everybody made a spelling mistake after the practice and it was the same with *do gymnastics*, everybody who knew this expression made a spelling mistake in it. The most frequent mistake was again the missing double consonant *-ll* in volleyball and missing *-s* at the end of the word *gymnastics*. There was some significant improvement in the expressions *ride a bike* (see the Graph 9). Summarizing the results, the improvement in the spelling can be seen but it is not a great one. While before the practice children had not made a spelling mistake in 69% of words, after the practice they wrote without a spelling mistake 72% of words they knew, which is the overall improvement of 3%.

Pronunciation
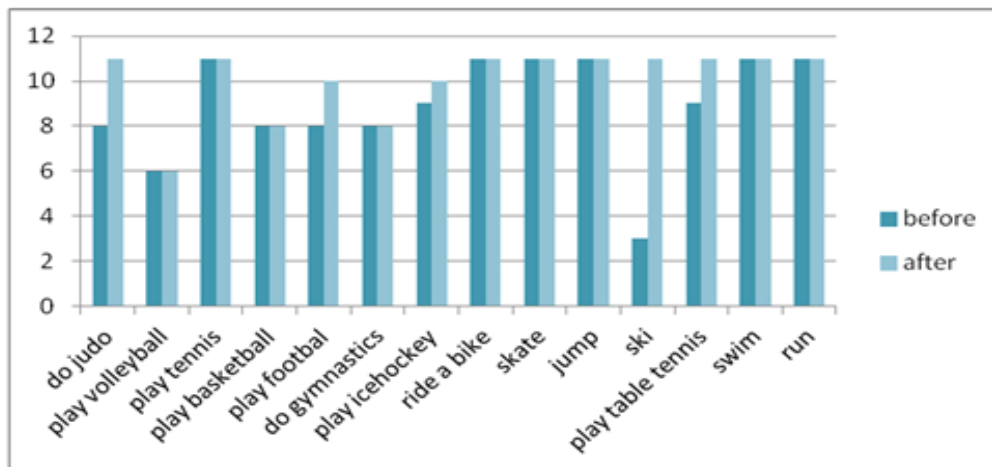
Graph 11.Topic 1 – pronunciation in Class 5B. This graph refers to the total number of pupils who pronounced the words correctly before and after the practice.
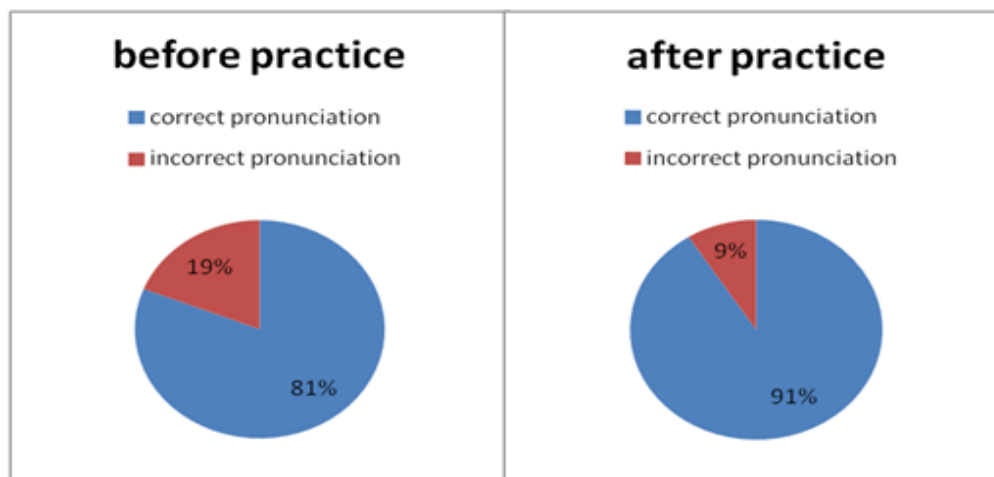
Graph 12.Topic 1 – pronunciation in percentage in class 5B. This graph refers to the number of pupils who pronounced the words correctly before and after the practice in percentage.

Before the practice children in 5 B had known the pronunciation of almost all the words or there was some inaccuracy in their pronunciation. As the Graph 12 illustrates they were able to pronounce 81% of all the words in Topic 1. The children did not have problems with short monosyllabic words *jump, swim, skate* or *run*. They were sure about the pronunciation of *ride a bike* and *play tennis*. There were mistakes in pronunciation of the expressions *volleyball, football* or *basketball* and the children were less successful in

the pronunciation of the word *ski*. Only three children could pronounce it correctly and only two children did not know how to pronounce the word *gymnastics* (see the Graph 11)

After practice the pronunciation improved and the children were able to pronounce 91% of words correctly as it can be seen in the Graph 12. However, some words were still pronounced with a little inaccuracy, e. g. *play volleyball, play basketball* or *do gymnastics*, so the pronunciation of these words remained on the same level but the overall improvement of pronunciation was 10%.

To sum up the results of these tests, no child could be able to write the tests without making a mistake. The children did not know either their meaning or spelling or pronunciation. After the practice they improved their knowledge in all three areas, though in some words they still made the same mistakes even after the practice.

Evaluation of Topic 2 in Class 5A

Topic 2 included twelve words: *hoop, hockey stick, skates, bike, trainers, racket, helmet, trampoline, skis, swimsuit, ribbon* and *ball.* In Class 5A eleven children completed the tests. The children completed the same tests before and after the experiment, the pronunciation was tested orally. The results that the children achieved are compared in figures and commented subsequently.
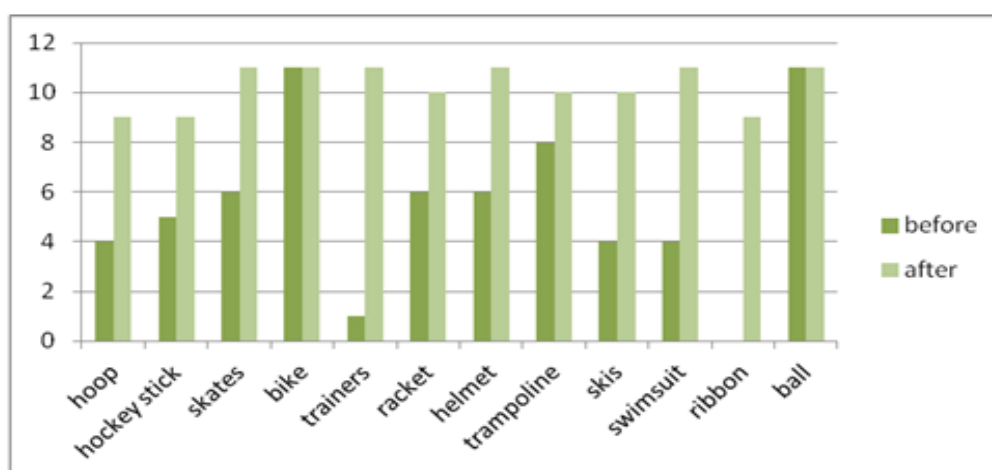
Meaning

Graph 13.Topic 2 – knowledge of the meaning in Class 5A. This graph refers to the total number of students who knew the meaning of the words before and after the practice.
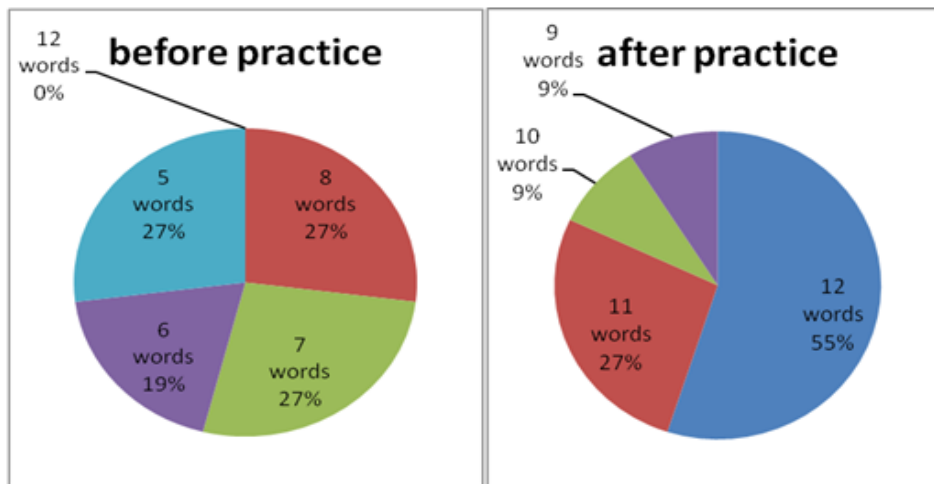
Graph 14.Topic 2 – knowledge of the meaning in percentage in class 5A. This graph refers to the number of students who knew the meaning of the words before and after the practice in percentage.

The tests before the practice were completed by eleven pupils from Class 5A. No child knew the meaning of all twelve words. Three children knew eight words, three children knew seven words, two children knew six words and three children knew only five words. As the Graph 14 illustrates in percentage, 0% of pupils knew all twelve words, the highest number of words which children knew was eight. 27% of pupils knew less than half of all the words. The Graph 13 shows that nobody wrote the word *ribbon*, the words *hoop* and *swimsuit* were clear only to four children. Five children knew the meaning of a *hockey stick.* The word *trainers* was clear only to one child, three children confused it with the word *shoes* and one child wrote the expression *sport shoes* which proved that they were able to cope with the word in another way. Everybody knew the word *ball* and ten children knew the word *bike*.

As the Graph 14 refers to there was a significant improvement in the knowledge of the meaning of the words after practice. After the practice 55% of pupils knew all twelve words and 27 % of children knew eleven words. While the word *ribbon* had not been clear to any child before the practice, after the practice nine children were successful, two children confused *ribbon* with *hoop.* While only one child had known the word *trainers* before the practice, after the practice everybody knew it, and everybody also knew the word *swimsuit.* Summarizing all these fact after the playing games children improved their knowledge of all the words of 55 %.

Spelling
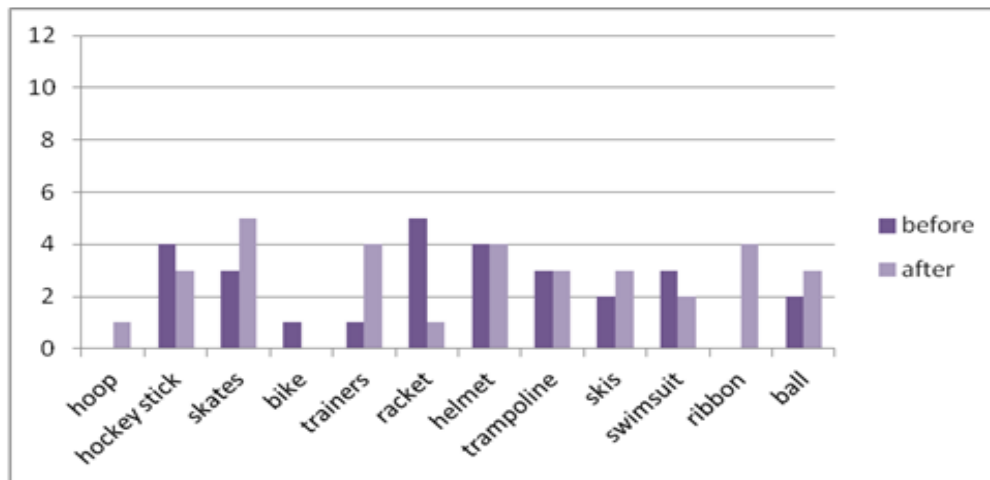
Graph 15.Topic 2 – spelling mistakes in Class 5A. This graph refers to the total number of pupils who made spelling mistakes in individual words (sometimes more than one in one word) before and after the practice.
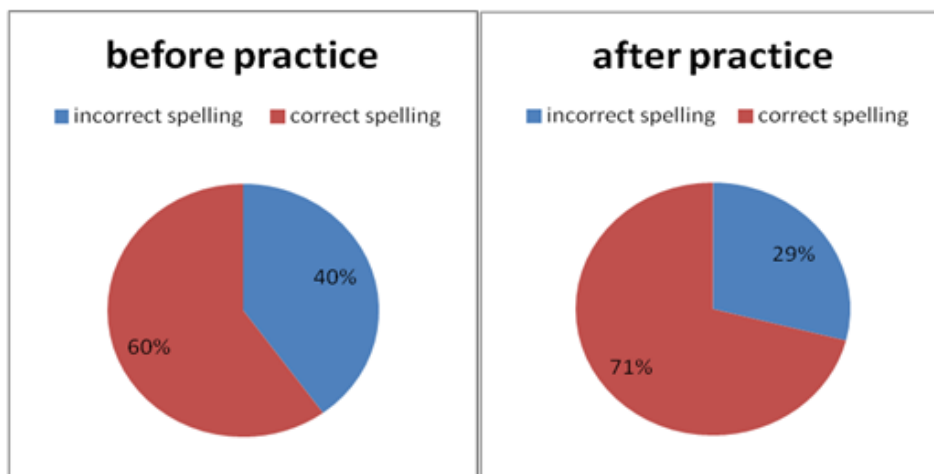
Graph 16.Topic 2 – spelling mistakes in percentage in Class 5A. This graph refers to the correct and an incorrect spelling before and after the practice in percentage.

As in the previous evaluation of spelling, it must be taken in consideration that the number of spelling mistakes depended on the number of words that children had known. Before the practice all the children had been supposed to know 132 words. Before the practice out of the total number of words they had known 67 words and in 27 of those words they made a spelling mistake. As it can be seen in the Graph 16 the children did not make a spelling mistake in 60 % of the words they had known before practice.

The Graph 15 illustrates that before the practice the children made most mistakes in the expressions *hockey stick* and *racket*. As for the *hockey stick* they made mistakes either in *hockey* or in *stick*. Five children wrote the word *racket* without *–c*. Out of six children who had known the word *skates*, three of them wrote the word without *–s* for plural. In the word *bike* only one child made a spelling mistake. The word *trainers* was clear only to one child and wrote it with a spelling mistake, one child who used the expression *sports shoes* wrote it with a spelling mistake. Three children wrote the word *trampoline* with an incorrect spelling. Two children did not make a mistake in the word *skis* two forgot to write *-s* for plural. In the word *ball* only two children made a spelling mistake. Number of the spelling mistakes in the words *hoop* and *ribbon* is not expressed because nobody knew them.

After the practice out of the same total number of the words (132), pupils knew 123 words and in 36 words they made a spelling mistake. Expressed in percentage the children did not make a spelling mistake in 71% of the words they had known after practice (see the Graph 16). After the practice a significant improvement can be seen in the knowledge of the spelling; for example out of eleven children who knew the word *helmet* only four made a mistake. Before the practice five out of six children had made a mistake in the word *racket* after the practice only one child out of ten made a spelling mistake in it. In the word *trainers* children made four mistakes but it must be taken take in consideration that before the practice only one child had known it and in the word *hoop* that nine children knew after the practice, only one child made a spelling mistake.

Pronunciation
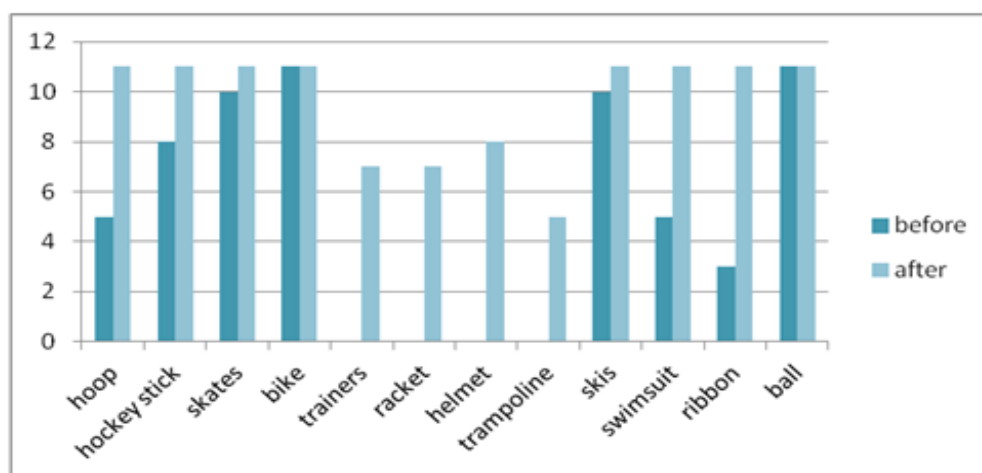
Graph 17.Topic 2 – pronunciation in Class 5A. This graph refers to the total number of pupils who pronounced the words correctly before and after the practice.
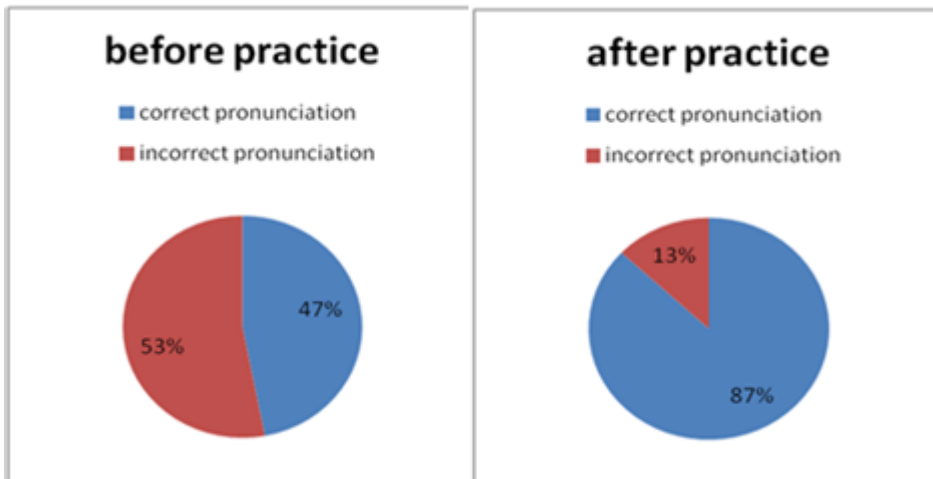
Graph 18.Topic 2 – pronunciation in percentage in Class 5A. This graph refers to the number of pupils who pronounced the words correctly and incorrectly before and after the practice in percentage.

The improvement in the pronunciation of the words is also evident. Before the practice every child had had a problem with the pronunciation of *trainers, helmet, racket* and *trampoline* (they did not know how to pronounce them or they pronounced them with a mistake), after the practice there was some improvement, but the words *trainers, helmet, racket* and *trampoline* still caused some problems (see the Graph 17). After the practice the children were able to pronounce most of the words correctly. When the improvement is stated in percentage, before practice, as the Graph 18 illustrates, the pupils had pronounced 47% of words correctly, after the practice, as the same graph shows, they pronounced correctly 87% of all the words.

In the contrast with the Topic 1 *Sports*, the pronunciation of the words in the Topic 2 *Sports equipment* was more difficult for the pupils. It was found that words from Topic 2 were less known to the children. They were mistaken either in their meaning or in their spelling and in their pronunciation as well.
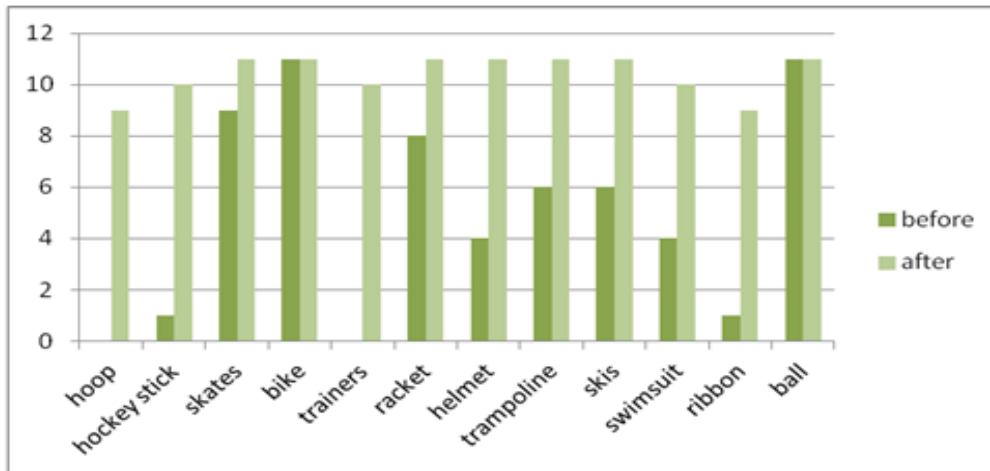
Meaning

Graph 19.Topic 2 – knowledge of the meaning in Class 5B. This graph refers to the total number of students who knew the meaning of words before and after the practice.
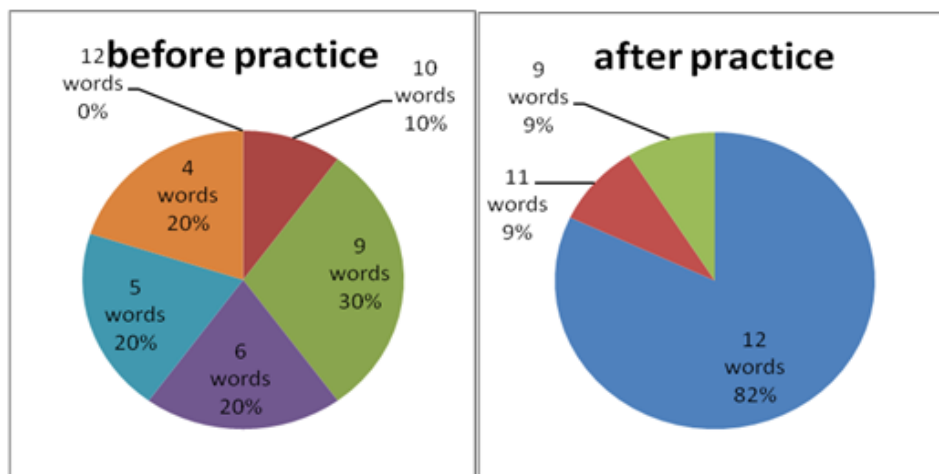
Graph 20.Topic 2 – knowledge of the meaning in percentage in Class 5B. This graph refers to the number of students who knew the meaning of words before and after the practice in percentage.

The tests were completed by eleven children from class 5 B. Topic 2 was much more difficult for the children in 5B too. Before the practice out of the total number of the pupils, nobody had known the meaning of all twelve words. When you look at the Graph

20, only 10 % of the pupils knew 10 words. The best child in this class knew ten words. The words *hoop* and *trainers* were unknown to all of them. Only one child knew the word *ribbon* and *hockey stick*. The children confused the word *trainers* with *shoes*, one child used the expression *tennis shoes.* Ten children did not know the expression *hockey stick*, one child used *pole* instead of *stick* which is not semantically correct. Eight children knew the word *racket*. The meaning of the expression *swimsuit* was known to four children, two of them did not use *swimsuit* but replaced it with *swim dress* and *swimming dress.* One child used *swimwear* which is American English expression. On the contrary eleven children knew the words *bike* and *ball*.

When you look at the Graph 19 that shows the results after the practice, a significant improvement can be seen. The word *hoop* was known to nine pupils and *trainers* to ten pupils – nobody had known these words before the practice. The word *swimsuit* was learnt by ten pupils and *ribbon* by nine pupils. The expression *hockey stick* was known to ten pupils. While before the practice nobody had known all twelve words, after the practice 82 % of the pupils knew all the words.

Spelling
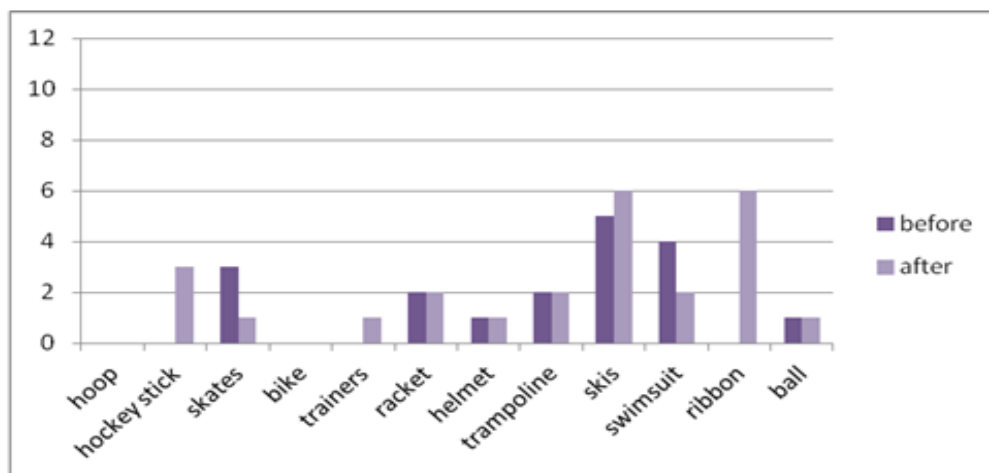
Graph 21.Topic 2 – spelling mistakes in Class 5B. This graph refers to the total number of pupils who made spelling mistakes in individual words (sometimes more than one in one word) before and after the practice.
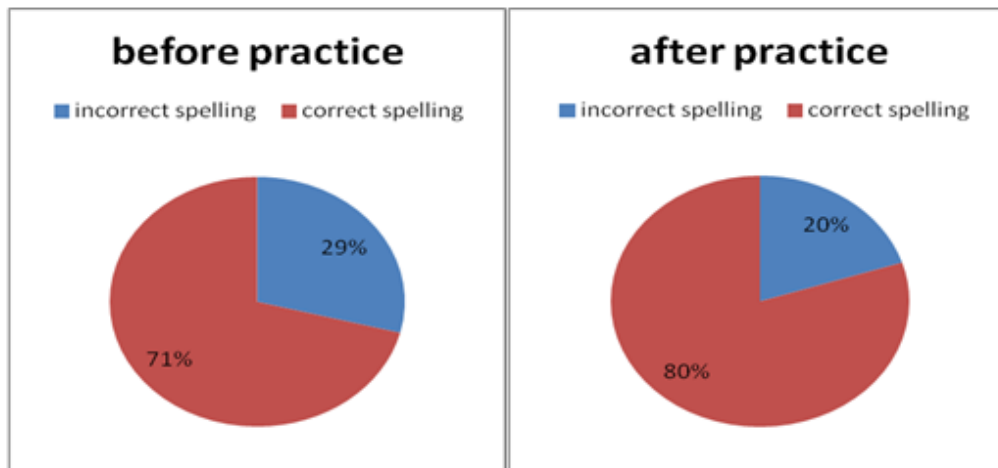
Graph 22.Topic 2 – spelling mistakes in percentage in Class 5B. This figure refers to correct and incorrect spelling before and after the practice in percentage.

Although the children had not known many words before the practice, as the Graph 21 shows, they made some spelling mistakes. Before practice they had been supposed to know 132 words but they knew only 61 words and in 18 of them they made a spelling mistake which means that they made a spelling mistake in 29% of words they knew as it can be seen in the Graph 22.

Before the practice three children had made a spelling mistake in the word *racket*. Out of six children who knew the word *skis*, five of them made a mistake – they did not write *-s* for plural which was similar to the word *skates*. This word was known to nine pupils, three forgot *-s* for plural. As it can be seen in the Graph 21 the children did not made any spelling mistakes in the words *hoop* and *ribbon* because they did not know them at all. On the other hand they knew well the spelling of *ball* and *bike.*

As the Graph 22 shows, after the practice out of the total number of words (132) the children knew 125 words and they made a spelling mistake in 25 words so they made a mistake in 20% of words. After the practice the children still made many mistakes in the word *skis*. They made the same mistake as before the practice. Nobody was mistaken in the word *hoop* and *bike* but while the word *hoop* had been unknown to all the pupils before the practice, after practice nobody who knew it made a spelling mistake. The word *bike* had been known to everybody without a mistake before and after the practice as well. The overall improvement was 9 %.

Pronunciation
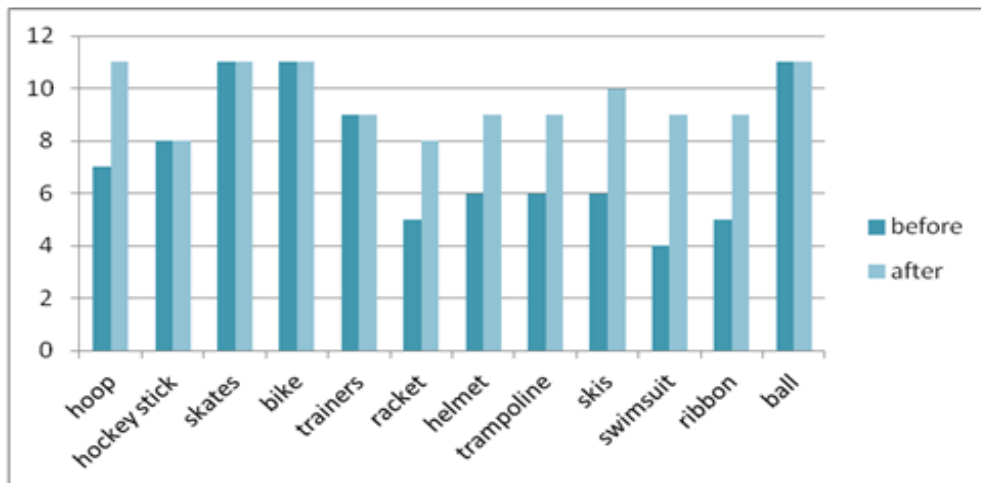
Graph 23.Topic 2 – pronunciation in Class 5B. This graph refers to the total number of pupils who pronounced the words correctly before and after the practice.
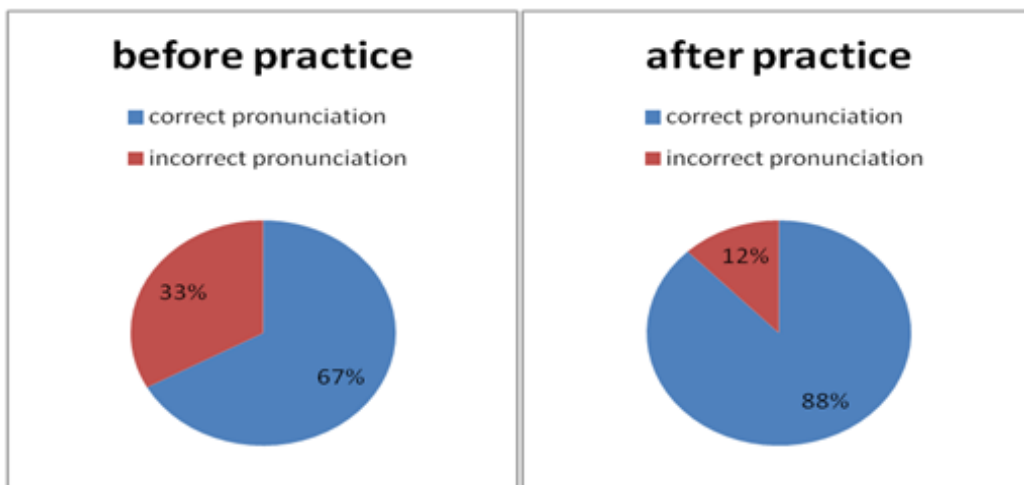
Graph 24.Topic 2 – pronunciation in Class 5B. This graph refers to the number of pupils who pronounced the words correctly before and after the practice in percentage.

As it can be seen in the Graph 24, before the practice the pupils had pronounced correctly 67% of words. Seven children were able to pronounce the word *hoop* and ten pupils were able to pronounce *trainers* although they did not know their meaning which was surprising but, on the other hand, the rest of them could not pronounce them at all. Before the practice children had had also some problems with the pronunciation of the word *swimsuit.* Only four children could pronounce it; six children made a mistake and one

child did not know its pronunciation. Five children could pronounce the word *ribbon*, four made a mistake and two children did not know how to pronounce it. There were three words that did not cause any problems for the pupils. Those were the words *skates, bike* and *ball* (see the Graph 23).

After the practice the pupils were able to pronounce 88% of all the words. All the children were able to pronounce the word *hoop*. In the pronunciation of the expressions *hockey stick* and *trainers* no improvement can be seen; the same number of students was mistaken. As the Graph 24 shows, the children's pronunciation improved during playing the games and the overall improvement was 21 %. As it was found, vocabulary from Topic 2 was more difficult for the children because of its less frequent use. The biggest problems appeared with their meaning. Before the practice nobody had known all twelve words. It can be stated, however, that in this part of the experiment the children made the most evident progress, i.e. after playing games, almost everybody knew all twelve words.

Questionnaire

The main goal of the questionnaire was to find out what had children thought about the games and whether they had realized any purpose of the playing games. In the questionnaire there were two multiple choice close-ended questions and four open-ended questions. The children had to choose only one answer and to give a reason for their choice. The questionnaires were anonymous in order to gain truthful and sincere answers. They were filled in by all the pupils involved in the experiment.

Evaluation of the Questionnaire

Question 1: Which of the games we had played you liked most and why?
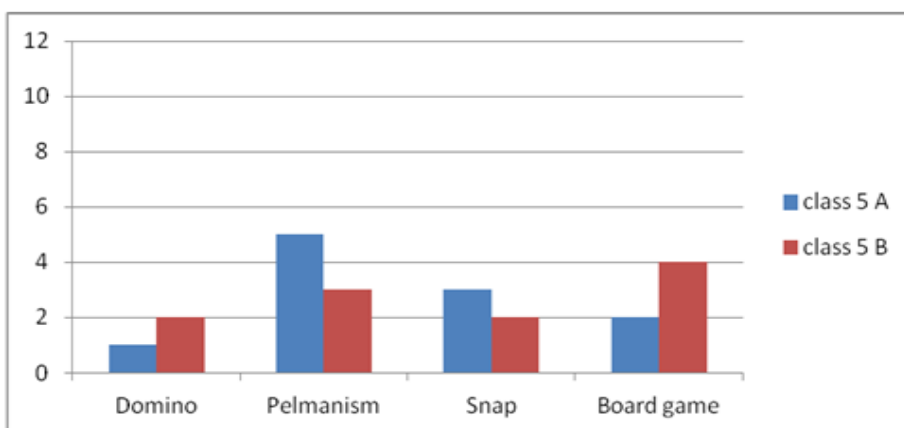
Graph 25.Popular games. This figure refers to the games that children liked.

As it can be seen in the Graph 25, the popularity of the games was different. In class 5A children the enjoyed Pelmanism most; it obtained five votes. They liked it because it was fun and exciting and nicely made. Snap got three votes and one of the reasons for that game was that the children could shout and argue in the lesson. The Board game got two votes and Domino only one vote. In class 5B the Board game was the most favorite one. The children liked the Board game because it was entertaining and amusing; they created it themselves, played with figures and there was a field with a medal that sent them two fields forward. Pelmanism got three votes; it was fun and exciting and nicely made. Snap and Domino got two votes both.

Question 2: Which of the games we had played you did not like and why?
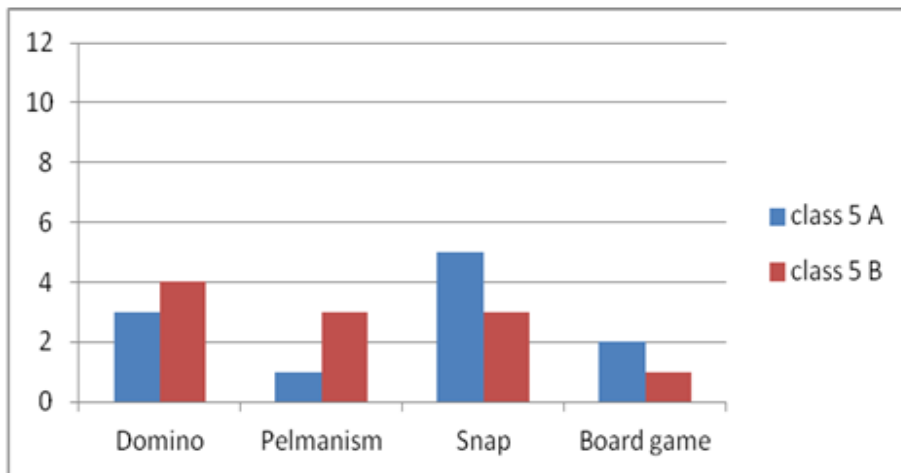
Graph 26.Unpopular games. This figure refers to the games that children did not like.

Snap was less popular in class 5 A. This game obtained five negative votes. The children did not like it because they had to shout a lot and argue, it was loud and fast, one child did not like that he/she always lost the game and one felt sorry because they fell out with her friend. Domino got there negative votes because it was not action and they did not enjoy it.The Board game got two votes, one of the reasons why they did not like it was that the other games were funnier. Domino was less popular game in class 5 B because it was boring and too long; it got four negative votes, Pelmanism and Snap got three negative votes both because they were boring and long while the Board game got only one negative vote.

Question 3: Why did we play the games?

Only two children answered that they did not know why we played the games. The other answers were similar and the children understood the reason why we played. They answered that the main reason was that through the games they practiced vocabulary and games helped them to remember and improve their vocabulary and pronunciation. The second reason was that learning with the games was entertaining and fun, and while they were playing they were not naughty.

Question 4: Do you play games in other lesson?

Seven children answered 'yes' and seven children answered 'no'. Three answers were 'yes, but only sometimes or from time to time' two answers were 'I am afraid not'. Three children mentioned they sometimes had played games in Math and PE.

To sum up these facts the children realized that playing games in English language lessons has its importance and that the main reason for playing them is learning and also having fun. While some children enjoyed Snap because they could shout and argue while playing, the other children did not like Snap just because of the same reason. They did not like shouting and arguing with their friends. Other games, that were essentially calmer, were boring and less action for some pupils. While they were playing, they sometimes had a little quarrel, but everybody wanted to win so it was a natural side effect of playing. There also appeared some reluctance to change a partner and play with another boy or girl but it happened only rarely; partially because of shyness of some pupils, especially girls. It must also be mentioned that children appreciated the playing cards that I had been created for them.

In this chapter the data gained in the experiment were summarized. The mistakes in meaning spelling and pronunciation of the words were analyzed and commented. The pupils' answers from the questionnaire were introduced too. In the following chapter of the thesis some implication for the teachers will be introduced. The limitations of the research will be discussed and some suggestions for a further research will be suggested.

V. IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter of the thesis the result of the research will be summarized and some advice for teachers based on the result of the research will be provided. The limitations, problems and weak points of the research will be discussed and explained. The explanation of why the data from the research cannot be generalized too much will be offered. And finally, some suggestion how the same study might be expanded or improved will be given.

Implications for Teachers

In the introduction of the thesis it was explained why an educational game is an effective tool for learning and teaching and how important the vocabulary games are for language learners and their teachers. It was also said that the vocabulary is the essence for language learning and teaching. Teaching vocabulary in an effective way is a challenge for every teacher.

During the research it was found out that an educational game could significantly contribute to successful learning and teaching. For teachers it can be a very effective tool that helps them to motivate pupils. Especially in young learner classes, games create a positive relaxed atmosphere and enable teachers to teach in a way that in fact does not have a character of teaching or at least pupils do not realize it. For pupils, the the game brings fun in an interaction with their schoolmates; the feeling that something is going on and that English lesson is not boredom and memorizing word and grammar rules. Moreover pupils themselves can contribute and create their own playing cards or playing fields which is,in fact, also one step of learning and brings satisfaction. And we must not forget that, while playing games, children learn to cooperate and respect the rules. Playing educational games, however, has also some weak points. Lessons are lively and noisy and children seem to concentrate more on playing itself than on learning; but as it has been found out and the result of the test have confirmed that, both activities occur simultaneously and learning becomes subconscious.

The results of the research have confirmed an improvement in all three areas that were the subject of the testing. The most significant improvement was recorded in the knowledge of meaning and pronunciation, the improvement in spelling was not so significant but still quite was evident. It is possible to say to say that the children during playing concentrated more on meaning and pronunciation than on spelling. As the

experiment did not include writing, the children probably did not fix their spelling well enough.

The results of the questionnaire have confirmed the pupils' interest in playing games. They also have proved that the children were aware of the purpose of playing games in the lessons – practicing vocabulary and having fun. That is why the teachers are recommended to use the advantage of educational games in their teaching as frequently as possible.

Limitation of the Research

It must be taken in consideration the data which have been acquired from the research cannot be generalized too much because they were influenced by some problems and limitations. First of all the number of the students involved in the experiment must be mentioned. The research was realized in two groups of pupils and the total number was twenty-one pupils for Topic 1 and twenty- two pupils for Topic 2 it. Another problem was that some children were absent during the experiment so that it cannot be said that everybody was present in all the lessons and played the same number of games; but it happened only in two cases and the majority of pupils was present and played intensively. So the number of pupils cannot be sufficient to offer grand results.

The second limitation was time. The experiment was realized at basic school during two weeks of a school year. English language is taught three lessons per week so it took six lessons. It was realized with the agreement of the head teacher and with the knowledge that the lessons in those two weeks would be disrupted because the whole six lessons were dedicated to the experiment in order to make playing games as intensive as possible. Six lessons are not many and that the research cannot have a big value in general.

Thirdly it must be mentioned that the children first welcomed the idea of playing games with enthusiasm but as they were playing they found out some of the games boring or they did not like them and their enthusiasm was getting weaker after some time. And for some of them the problem was to change a partner and play with another boy or girl in the class because they just were not friends. So after playing more times, the game got worn off and the children lost their interest. Another problem was that the children sometimes, in order to win the game, cheated and quarreled and although all the activities were monitored intensively by the teacher, it was not possible to monitor everything. The same situation came when the pronunciation of the words was monitoring. It was probably the reason why, after the experiment, the children still pronounced some words with mistakes.

It is also necessary to take in consideration the pupil's nervousness when they were completing the test.

There were some problems with analyzing the mistakes that the pupils made. They, in many cases, made more than one mistake in one word so it was difficult to compare the individual mistakes or words. When the pronunciation was tested all mistakes and inaccuracies were not probably recorded because of the noise that other children were producing when they were waiting for their turns. But when all the advantages and disadvantages based on the results of the research are taken in consideration, it is possible to recommend the teachers to include the educational games in their lessons because the language games can contribute to learning and teaching in a significant way and make their teaching more attractive for their pupils.

Suggestion for Further Research

Here are some suggestions in which way the research might be expanded and improved. First of all it might, after the agreement of the school officials, took longer period than just six lessons. The data might be gathered from more pupils of the same age at more schools. The vocabulary used in the experiment was not known to children; some of them knew some words from their previous learning. So the suggestion is to use the words that would be new for children because then, after the experiment, the improvement of the pupils would be probably more evident. If we wanted to gain more valid data there should be more than one teacher in the class for monitoring and correcting pronunciation and mistakes that children might make. Pupils' pronunciation might be recorded on a tape before and after the practice and analyzed more carefully.

There is one more question that might be answered. How long will the pupils remember the words? It would be interesting to study some facts about our memory and memorizing words and to test the same vocabulary after some time. In this way it could be possible to find out how many words children have kept in their memories and eventually what competences they have forgotten most – whether in the meaning, spelling or pronunciation. It would also be interesting to compare the results of the individual pupils before and after the experiment and compare their improvement or to realize the same experiment with a group of pupils with learning disabilities and to find out if the educational game could be an effective tool in their teaching and learning.

This chapter summarized what have been found out in the research and on the basis of these findings some advice for teachers were formulated. The limitations that influenced

the results of the research were mentioned. Finally some improvements for the further research were suggested. In the following part the main idea of the experiment and the whole thesis will be summarized.

VI. CONCLUSION

Teaching vocabulary is a challenge for every teacher. How to teach it and help learners to remember as many words as possible is a question that many of them have asked. There are lots of different methods and approaches to teaching vocabulary. One of them is the vocabulary language game. The main goal of this thesis was to verify whether vocabulary language games could be an effective method that would help learners to improve their vocabulary and whether learning through games could be more relaxing and joyful.

The experiment, which consisted of an intensive playing of the vocabulary language games that were focused on practising the meaning, spelling and pronunciation of the chosen words, confirmed the usefulness of vocabulary games in teaching. Lessons were lively and noisy and the preparation of all the games was demanding and time-consuming. In the questionnaire it was found out that children enjoyed the playing. It was also proved that children had been aware of the purpose of playing the games in the lessons – practicing vocabulary and having fun.

On the basis of the research and gathered data it is possible to say that vocabulary language games have a reasonable place in teaching vocabulary in an English language lesson and that they can be used as an effective method for practicing vocabulary in the young learners classes. It is possible to recommend the teachers to include the educational games in their lessons because they can contribute to learning and teaching in a significant way and make their teaching more attractive for their pupils.

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APPENDIX A

Domino

Activity plan

Background information

Objectives: by the end of the game the learners will be able to name sports

Language focus: topic – sports (vocabulary meaning, spelling, pronunciation)

Specific target language: play football, play tennis, play table tennis, play basketball, play
    volleyball, play ice hockey, do judo, do gymnastics, swim, ski, skate, jump, run,
    ride a bike.

Aim of the game: to be the first player to lay down all the dominoes in your hand by connecting pictures to the text

Material: one set of cards for a pair of children

Duration: 5 minutes

Playing the game:

    The children put the pile of domino cards face down at the edge of the desk. They draw who starts the game by playing Rock, paper, scissors. They turn one domino card over. The winner (Player1) takes a card from the pile and look if he/she can put next to the first card. It must match either to the picture or to the word of the first card. If it matches Player 1 can lay the cards if it does not match he/she keeps the card and misses turn. 2.

    Player 2 takes his/her card from the pile if the card matches he put it next to any domino card laying on the desk if not he or she keeps it. He or she matches his or her cards until he or she has some available ones, if not he or she misses a turn.

 The winner is the first person to put down all their dominoes.
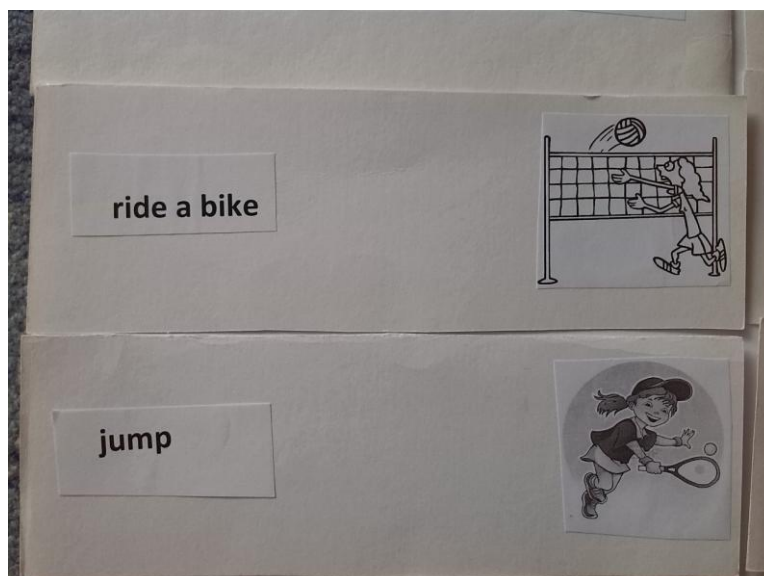
APPENDIX B

Board game

Activity plan

Background information

Objectives: by the end of the game the learners will be able to name sports

Language focus: topic – sports (vocabulary meaning, spelling, pronunciation)

Specific target language: play football, play tennis, play table tennis, play basketball, play

       volleyball, play ice hockey, do judo, do gymnastics, swim, ski, skate, jump, run,

       ride a bike.

Aim of the game: To be the first to get home.

Material: set of picture cards with sports, three pictures with gold medal and three pictures
of an accident, dice and figures

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Procedure:

Divide the class into groups.

Give the children a large sheet of paper. Explain that you want the children design a board
game based on the idea of a sport race in which they meet people who play sports.

Add things to include in the game - medal field that says *Go two fields forward* or an
accident field that says *Go two fields back.*

Explain children how to prepare a game monitor and help.

Playing the game:

Children take their turns and move ahead the playing field. They had to name the sport
depicted on the field they stopped. If they do not the answer they have to return to the
previous field they had stood before their turn. The player who reaches the field Finish first
is the winner.
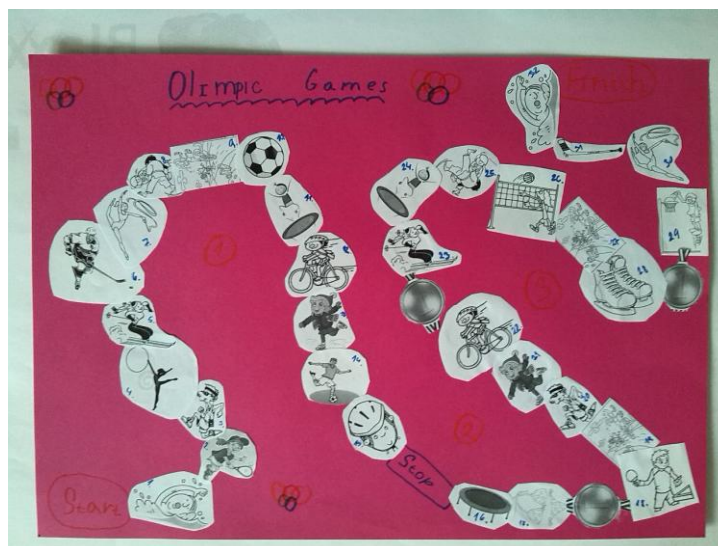
APPENDIX C

Pelmanism (pexeso)

Activity plan

Background information:

Objectives: by the end of the game the learners will be able to names ports equipment

Language focus: topic - sports equipment (vocabulary meaning, spelling, pronunciation)

Specific target language: ball, skates, skis, swimsuit, hockey stick, hoop, ribbon, helmet,
        trainers, racket, bike, trampoline

Aim of the game: to collect the most pairs

Material: one set of pictures cards with twelve pictures for a group of three children

Duration: 5 -10 minutes

Playing the game:

Shuffle the cards and place them face down on a desk.

Child A turns two cards face up and says: for example, *a ball and a ribbon.*

If the two cards match together, the child keeps the pair and has another turn.

If the cards do not match, the child puts the cards face down again and the next child turns over two cards.

The child who collects the most pairs wins.

APPENDIX D

Snap

Activity plan

Background information:

Objectives: by the end of the game the learners will be able to name sports equipment

Language focus: topic - sports equipment (vocabulary meaning, spelling, pronunciation)

Specific target language: ball, skates, skis, swimsuit, hockey stick, hoop, ribbon, helmet,
        trainers, racket, bike, trampoline

Aim of the game: To be first to call *Snap* when text or picture match.

Materials: One set of pictures and words for a pair of children.

Duration: 5 – 10 minutes

Playing the game:

        In pairs Child A and Child B mix their cards together and put them face down on their desks. They take twenty-four cards each, putting their cards on the top of each other in a pack, with the words and pictures still face down.

        Child A starts by turning over the card from the top of his/her pack and laying it in the middle of the desk while saying the kind of the sport equipment out loud. Child B then takes a card from his/her pack and lays it on the top of Child A's card, calling out the sports equipment. If the two cards go together for example helmet (picture) and helmet (text), or helmet (picture) and helmet (picture), or helmet (text) and helmet (text), the first player to say Helmet – Snap wins the cards and places them underneath the other cards in his or her hand. If they do not match, the players continue to turn over cards in turn until two matching card appear. The first person to say the correct equipment and Snap takes all the cards in the middle of the desk and adds them to the other card in his or her hand.

        If the child calls Snap by mistake, for example when two cards do not match, or he or she say an incorrect word such as a helmet for a picture of skates, the other player takes the cards from the centre of the desk and adds them to his or her pile.

        If a child has used all his or her cards, the other player continues to lay down an call cards one after another until Snap is called.

        The first player to gain all the cards is the winner. As it can sometimes take a long time to get to this stage, you can impose a time limit, for example ten minutes. The players can then count their packs of cards to see who has the highest number.

APPENDIX E

Test – slovní zásoba　　　　　　**Name:**　　　　　　　　**date:**

Napiš anglicky:

_____　　　　　　　_____

_____　　　　　　　_____

_____　　　　　　　_____

_____　　　　　　　_____

_____　　　　　　　_____

_____　　　　　　　_____

_____　　　　　　　_____

APPENDIX F

Test – slovní zásoba   Name_____   date_____

Pojmenuj sportovní náčiní anglicky:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX G

Pronunciation – test

Name	Correct pronunciation	Pronunciation with an inaccuracy	Does not know the pronunciation
Do judo			
Play volleyball			
Play tennis			
Play basketball			
Play football			
Do gymnastics			
Play ice hockey			
Ride a bike			
Skate			
Jump			
Ski			
Play table tennis			
Swim			
Run			

Name	Correct pronunciation	Pronunciation with an inaccuracy	Does not know the pronunciation
Hoop			
Hockey stick			
Skates			
Bike			
Trainers			
Racket			
Helmet			
Trampoline			
Skis			
Swimsuit			
Ribbon			
Ball			

APPENDIX H

Dotaznik

V hodinách anglického jazyka jsme hráli čtyři hry: Domino, Pexeso (Pelmanism), Snap a Stolní hru (Board game), kterou jste sami vyrobili.

1. Která z her se Ti líbila nejvíce:
a) Domino   b) Pexeso   c) Snap   d) vlastní stolní hra
Co se Ti na hře líbilo nejvíc?

2. Která z her se Ti líbila nejméně:
a) Domino   b) Pexeso   c) Snap   d) vlastní stolní hra
Proč se Ti hra nelíbila?

3. Proč myslíš, že jsme tyto hry hráli?
4. Hrajete hry i v jiných předmětech?

Questionnaire

In the English lessons we played four games: Domino, Pelmanism, Snap and the Board game which you made yourself.

1. Which of the games you enjoyed most?
a) Domino   b) Pelmanism   c) Snap   d) Board game
    What did you like about the game?
2. Which of the games you did not like?
a) Domino   b)Pelmanism   c) Snap   d) Board game
    Why did not you like the game?
3. Why did we play the games?
4. Do you play any games in the other lessons?

SHRNUTÍ

Tato diplomová práce se zabývala využitím jazykových her ve výuce anglického jazyka u žáků mladšího školního věku. Jejím hlavním cílem bylo odpovědět na dvě otázky. První otázka byla, zda jsou jazykové hry efektivním nástrojem při výuce a do jaké míry mohou přispět k zlepšení znalostí. Druhá otázka zkoumala, jaký byl ohlas dětí na hraní her při hodinách anglického jazyka.

V teoretické části práce byl zmíněn systém výuky anglického jazyka na našich školách, byly charakterizování žáci mladšího školního věku z hlediska jejich psychického vývoje. Jedna kapitola je věnována výuce slovní zásoby, popisuje způsob zapamatování slov a jejich vybavování z paměti. Byl popsán význam hry v životě dětí a využití didaktické hry ve školní výuce. Ve výzkumné části práce je popsán experiment, jehož prostřednictvím byly hledány odpovědi na výše zmíněné otázky.

Jak bylo zjištěno, jazykové hry mohou být efektivním nástrojem při výuce anglického jazyka a mohou přispět ke zlepšení znalostí žáků. Hry byly žáky příznivě přijaty a hodnoceny.