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ROZVOJ MLUVENÉHO PROJEVU STUDENTŮ S POUŽITÍM OBRÁZKŮ A FOTOGRAFIÍ: DIGITÁLNÍ VYPRÁVĚNÍ

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Thesis

**USING PICTURES AND PHOTOS TO ENCOURAGE
LEARNERS´ SPEAKING SKILLS:
DIGITAL STORYTELLING**

Bc. Václav Vachrlon

Plzeň 2016

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

V Plzni dne 20. června 2016 ....

Václav Vachrlon

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis deals with the method of digital storytelling from the point of view of its role in encouraging learners´ speaking skills. The theoretical background section provides an explanation of what digital storytelling is and describes different kinds of digital stories. The larger part of the section describes the benefits of digital storytelling from the point of view of its possible influence on different language skills as well as other skills important for learners´ personal development, of course also the competencies given by the Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education. The last part of the theoretical section deals with using digital storytelling in the classroom including description of available tools for creating a digital story. The practical part of this thesis attempts to evaluate suitability and effectiveness of this method in the classroom. The data were obtained during the process of creating a digital story project with two groups of different language ability by the means of questionnaires and an assessment rubric. Based on the result of the research, it is concluded that the method presents an effective method to encourage learners´ speaking skills, especially with students usually considered as less advanced.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis is the use pictures to encourage learners´ speaking skills. There is no doubt that speaking is one of the most important language skills and at the same time one which can be challenging to develop and improve. While encouraging learners´ speaking skills pictures can be used in many meaningful and effective ways. I decided to focus on one particular method which can be considered a modern one - digital storytelling. There were several reasons that led me to this decision. First of all, this method is not generally known and widespread at Czech schools. I myself became aware of this method during my university studies after several years of teaching. I would like to contribute to the expansion of digital storytelling among Czech teachers.

A problem teachers often face when encouraging learners to speak is motivation. It can be difficult to find or design activities that are meaningful and attractive for learners. The method of digital storytelling has a potential to be very effective from the point of view of motivating learners to speak and to acquire new language items. This effectiveness rises from the fact that storytelling represents a very natural way of communication that has been present at humankind since its very beginning. The cave paintings have been replaced by modern technologies, but the main idea remains the same. People tend to tell stories and what people most like to talk about are themselves. This characteristic of storytelling is important in the process of motivating learners to speak. Together with a suitable topic that connects this motivation to speak about oneself with a possible emotional aspect of the story is highly motivating.

The specific method of digital storytelling allowed by the availability of some modern technologies goes even further because it allows learners to work with technologies, use computers, organize their own education, and be creative. Personal photos are used not only as a support of the spoken discourse of learners, but they are an integrated and basic part of the whole digital story. Pictures used in this way encourage learners to speak and in the same time they are attractive for the audience that becomes more involved in the performance.

According to the form of digital storytelling creation process chosen by the teacher there is a possibility to develop not only speaking skills, but also other receptive and productive skills. Teachers also have a unique chance to support the development of some of the competencies that are actually a very important part of the national educational standards.

The Theoretical Background section of the thesis aims to present what digital storytelling is. It offers an overview of different kinds of digital stories that can be used as well as the description of forms of how the digital storytelling creation process can be organized. This section also deals with the benefits of using storytelling in the classroom and with its concordance with the national educational standards. Finally it offers an overview of tools available for creating a digital story.

The aim of my research presented in this thesis was to find out whether this method presents an effective way to encourage learners´ speaking skills. That is why I decided to create a digital story project with two groups of different language abilities to have a chance to compare the results achieved. The description of the groups and the details of the creation process are described in the Methodology section. Finally the Results and Commentaries section presents the results of the research together with the results of questionnaires given to learners before and after the creation process that offer a relevant feedback for future digital storytelling projects. The main ideas of the thesis are summarized in the Conclusion.

II.   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The main objective of this section is to provide general information about the method of digital storytelling. At the beginning it deals with possible definitions of storytelling and digital storytelling in general. The following sections describe kinds of digital stories and elements that make a good piece of a digital story. A large part of the theoretical section deals with the benefits of using this method with learners in general and also from the point of view of language teaching and language acquisition. I focus in detail on how this method meets the national standards, which competencies and cross-curricular subjects may be developed and improved by using digital storytelling. The final part focuses on hardware and software tools available for digital storytelling projects and also on the resources storytellers can use while creating their stories.

What Is Storytelling

First of all I focus here on the term storytelling defined by The National Storytelling Network as "an ancient art form and a valuable form of human expression." ("What is Storytelling," n.d.). Storytelling presents an interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener´s imagination. Storytelling is interactive as it involves two-way interaction between a storyteller and a listener. Storytelling uses language (whether it be a spoken or a manual language) and at the same time it uses actions such as vocalization, physical movement or gestures. It presents a story and encourages the active imagination of the listeners ("What is Storytelling," n.d.). As Rosenthal Tolisano (2009) states: "Storytelling, no matter in what form and created in whatever media is a powerful tool to transmit knowledge, culture, perspectives and points of view" (p. 9). Daniel H. Pink says:

> We are our stories. We compress years of experience, thought, and emotion into a few compact narratives that we convey to others and tell to ourselves. That has always been true. But personal narrative has become more prevalent, and perhaps more urgent, in a time of abundance, when many of us are freer to seek a deeper understanding of ourselves and our purpose (as cited in Rosenthal Tolisano, 2009, p. 5).

According to Lambert (2010) stories can be as short as explaining why you bought your first house or as long as *War and Peace*: "Your own desires in life, the kinds of struggles you have faced, and most importantly, the number and depth of realizations you have taken from your experience all shape your natural abilities as an effective storyteller" (p. 1).

Lambert also describes the importance of storytelling tradition of many cultures and states that a story "enriches the individual, emotional and cultural development, and perhaps ultimately, the more mysterious development of students souls" (p. V). Students that share their stories recognize a metamorphosis of sorts, a changing, that makes them feel different about their lives, their identities.

An important characteristic of storytelling is that it can be combined with other art forms (e.g. drama or dancing). Especially with the help of new media it is possible to enrich storytelling with pictures, music or videos. This is the moment when storytelling becomes digital.

Defining Digital Storytelling

There are more definitions to be found of digital storytelling. According to Bull and Kajder (2004) "a digital story consists of a series of still images combined with a narrated soundtrack to tell a story" (p. 47). The authors also mention that the method of storytelling "grew out of the work of Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley at the center for Digital Storytelling at U.C. Berkeley in 1993. The community of practice that has evolved from this work is based on the premise that everyone has a story to tell. Digital technologies offer particularly powerful means of conveying these stories" (Bull, Kajder, 2004, p. 47). Miller (2004) defines digital storytelling in general as "narrative entertainment that reaches its audience via digital technology and media" (p. 13).

One of the hallmarks of digital storytelling is interactivity. Traditional stories recited orally, printed in books or watched on screen all have some general qualities (fictional characters, events, dramatic situations). According to Miller (2004), it is first of all the interactivity that makes the difference and "profoundly changes the experience of those who are receivers of it" (p. 56). Instead of passively watching, listening or reading, we take on an active role: "We go from being a member of the audience to becoming a participant" (Miller, 2004, p. 68). There is a general definition given by Alan Davis who describes digital storytelling as "a form of short narrative, usually a personal narrative told in the first person, presented as a short movie for display on a television or computer monitor or projected onto a screen" (as cited in Ohler, 2005, p. 44).

Storytelling is more or less a part of our lives. We tend to tell stories and thank to all the modern technologies and media (mobiles, tablets, social networks) and of course to the fact that more and more people are always on-line thanks to mobile internet connection we create digital stories most of the time. Sharing a picture of our children provided with a short

comment is nothing else than creating a piece of digital story. According to Bull and Kajder (2004), two technical advances have made digital storytelling feasible for school settings. The first one is the inclusion of digital video editors with operating systems by both Microsoft and Apple at no additional charge. Bull and Kajder (2004) state that "with appropriate support students readily master these tools" (p. 47). The second technical advance is the presence of digital cameras and digital images. Nowadays the technology is much more advanced and most of students have mobile technologies (phones, tablets) with integrated digital cameras and operating systems equipped with applications (often free) that are able to edit photos and videos at an adequate level. Together with an internet connection and social networks like Facebook, Twitter and of course Instagram these technologies "allow students to capture visual images from their lives to tell their personal stories" (Bull & Kajder, 2004, p. 47).

Seven Elements of Effective Digital Stories

Lambert identifies seven elements of effective digital stories, they include (as cited in Bull & Kajder, 2004, p. 47):

- a point of view
- a dramatic question
- emotional content
- economy
- pacing
- the gift of your voice
- an accompanying soundtrack.

There is a contrast between the scholarly attempts to achieve objectivity by distancing writers from the material and the goal of digital storytelling which is to allow a writer to experience the power of personal expression. Students´ digital stories need to be constructed from their own experience and understanding. Using the first-person pronoun "I" rather than the more distant third-person point of view is essential. Bull and Kajder (2004) comment on the importance of a dramatic question that is resolved by the end of the story as essential to hold the audience´s attention saying that "this characteristic distinguishes the digital story from a travelogue" (p. 48). Narratives that lead the audience to become invested typically pursue a compelling question that evokes interest and commitment.

According to Bull and Kajder (2004) "the most effective digital stories evoke an emotion from the audience. We often see laughter, tears, and expressions of pleasure from the

audience when digital stories are screened" (p. 48). Authors also mention that this can be tremendously rewarding to students, validating the effort and investment they have made.

Economy is the most difficult element to attain while making a digital story. Limiting the scope of the digital story has two practical benefits. It makes the construction process manageable in a school setting, and it makes it practical for an audience to view the stories of more students or of an entire class in a single session (Bul & Kajder, 2004, p. 49). There is an important interaction between economy and pacing. Unvaried pace will not hold the audience´s attention. Storytellers must avoid attempting to "shoehorn several pages of script into a two-minute digital story by narrating it as rapidly as they can" (Bull & Kajder, 2004, p. 49). Pacing means narrating slower or faster according to what the story demands. This often require decisions about what to keep and what to omit which can be difficult for students.

The process of digital storytelling allows students to work with their voice, no matter whether they record themselves narrating the story or just speak to the audience. The pitch, inflection, and timbre of voice convey meaning and intent in a very personal way which has proven to be an essential element of a digital story. Bull and Kajder (2004) state that "there is no substitute for using your own voice to tell your story" (p. 49).

Properly employed music enhances the accompanying story, adding complexity and depth to the narrative. Of course it is important to address copyright when music is employed. Although we can provide students with information about sources where music can be legally downloaded and used for educational applications, Bull and Kajder (2004) state that "regardless of the source of the music employed, it is important to provide students with a lesson in music copyright in an era of file sharing" (p. 49).

Finding a Story

A person´s initial efforts at story making can be frustrating and we have to find the way how to overcome a creative block. According to Lambert a good starting point is to begin with a small idea. Lambert (2010) mentions the natural tendency "to want to make a novel or a screenplay out of a portion of our life experiences, and to think in terms of getting all the details" (p. 3). But it is exactly that kind of scale that disables our memory. That is why it is helpful to use photographs and facilitate the process of taking a potential story, picture by picture. Another way that helps us to find our story is the method of interview or self-interview: "Have someone interview you, then transcribe the words and see what they tell you about the story you are trying to conceive" (Lambert, 2010, p. 3). Lambert offers useful questions that can be used while giving examples of personal stories (see further).

Kinds of Personal Stories

Lambert (2010, p. 5 – 8) mentions the following kinds of personal stories:

The story about someone important. Both character stories or memorial stories are mostly based on a relationship. Very often these stories tell us more about ourselves than the details of our own life story. Memorial stories honoring and remembering people who have passed are often the most difficult to produce, but the results can be the most powerful. Possible interview questions:

- What is (had been) your relationship to this person?
- How would you describe this person?
- Is there an event that best captures the person´s character?
- What about the person do (did) you most enjoy/drives you crazy?
- What lesson did the person give to you?
- If you had something to say to the person what would it be?

The story about an event in my life. They can be in the form of adventure stories. While almost everyone tells good travel stories it is often difficult to create an effective piece of digital story from these stories. We rarely think about constructing a story with photographs or videos in advance of a trip. On the other hand the accomplishing stories easily fit to a structure of a story and they tend to be documented which both make them easier to make a multimedia story with. These stories are about achieving a goal, e.g. being on the winning team in a sporting event etc. Following questions might be useful to create a piece of digital story:

- What was the event (time, place, incident)?
- What was your relationship to the event?
- With whom did you experience this event?
- Was there a defining moment in the event?
- How did you feel during this event?
- What did the event teach you?
- How did this event change your life?

The story about a place in my life. It may be a story about current home, an ancestral home, a town, a park, a mountain or forest storyteller loves, a store, a restaurant, a gathering place etc. We can use these questions to make a story:

- With whom did you share this place?
- What general experience do you relate to this place?

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- Was there a defining experience at the place?
- If you have returned to this place, how has it changed?

The story about what I do. A story can be shaped by people´s job, hobbies or social-commitments. We can construct a story based on the following questions.

- What is your profession or ongoing interest?
- What experiences, interests, and/or knowledge in your previous life prepared you for this activity?
- Was there an initial event that most affected your decisions to pursue this interest?
- Who influenced or assisted you in shaping your career, interest, or skill in this area?
- How has your profession/interest affected your life as a whole?

Of course there are also other personal stories. Such as recovery stories that are based on sharing the experience of overcoming a great challenge in life. Love stories are attractive to audience and tend to have plenty of existing documentation. They can describe how someone met their partner, what our relationship is with our siblings or parents. Finally there are discovery stories illustrating how people uncover the facts to get to a truth. Robin (n.d., Types of digital stories) comes with different categories. *Personal narratives* that can be e.g. positive means for dealing with some of the emotional family issues that were described in the story. Digital stories that examine historical events can be created from historical material explored in the classroom. And finally stories that inform or instruct that reflect material in content areas such as Science or Health Education.

As I have already mentioned everybody has a story to tell. One of the hardest, but most important things to do is to get started. As Lambert (2010) states: "Because many of these stories ask us to reveal things about ourselves that make us feel vulnerable, putting together a story can be procrastinator´s paradise. ... Life is full of stories, but you may not have a lifetime to capture them as movies, so, go for it" (p. 8).

Rosenthal Tolisano (2009, p. 7) lists the three C´s that are connected with digital storytelling. According to the author new technology tools allow us to connect (we connect with other people on an emotional level and connect them to our own experience), communicate (stories let us communicate our perspective and perception) and collaborate easily with others.

Benefits of Digital Storytelling

Benefits of using Digital Storytelling can be seen from more points of view. First of all it is the view of the skills teachers can support developing with the help of digital storytelling.

Bernajean Porter describes the 21st century skills, that include e.g. the folowing (as cited in Rosenthal Tolisano, 2009, p. 8):

- cognitive apprenticeship – practicing real-world work of digital communication
- creativity and inventive thinking – creating multi-sensory experiences for others
- higher order thinking skills – going beyond existing information to add personal meaning and understanding
- enduring understanding – by telling the story authors deepen their own self-meaning of the topic
- effective communication – reading and writing beyond words
- multiple intelligences and learning styles – creates opportunity for students to use their preferred mode of learning and thinking, enables them to practice the effective use of all modalities
- teaming and collaboration – growing skills through practiced opportunities to co-produce group projects
- project management mentality – challenge for students to practice time management of complex, involved tasks, modeling real-world tasks
- exploring affinity – when students create meaningful, engaged work, they discover themselves as successful learners.

Robin (n.d., Digital Storytelling as an Effective Learning Tool for Students, para 3) mentions the 21st century student literacies that can be described as a combination of:

- digital literacy – the ability to communicate with an ever – expanding community to discuss issues, gather information and seek help
- global literacy – the capacity to read, interpret, respond and contextualize messages from a global perspective
- technological literacy – the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity and performance
- visual literacy – the ability to understand, produce and communicate through visual images
- information literacy – the ability to find, evaluate and synthesize information.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned literacies students improve their skills by using technologies and multimedia tools. All of those are important and allow students to "navigate and communicate through new forms of multimedia, while taking on the role of information producer rather than just being information consumers" (Robin, n.d., Digital

Storytelling as an Effective Learning Tool for Students, para 5). When students are able to participate in the multiple steps of designing, creating and presenting their own digital stories, they implement in a large scale of literacy skills that, according to Robin (n.d., Digital Storytelling as an Effective Learning Tool for Students, para 6), include:

- research skills – finding and analyzing pertinent information

- writing skills – formulating a point of view and developing a script

- organization skills – managing the scope of the project, the materials used and the time it takes to complete the task

- technology skill – using different technologies and software

- presentation skills – deciding how to best present the story to an audience

- interview skills – finding sources to interview and determining questions to ask

- interpersonal skills – working within a group and determining individual roles for group members

- problem-solving skills – learning to make decisions and overcome obstacles at all stages of the project

- assessment skills – gaining expertise critiquing their own others work.

There are also the results of the research made by John Seely Brown, Steve Denning, Katalina Groh and Larry Prusak, who are more general in their list of potential benefits of using storytelling and offer the following list (www.creatingthe21stcentury.org/Intro6-benefits-story.html):

- Communicate quickly: Storytelling communicates ideas holistically. As a result, listeners can get complicated ideas not laboriously, dimension by dimension, but all at once with a new gestalt, which is transferred with a snap.

- Communicate naturally: Storytelling is our native language which we know how to do at the age of two. Abstract language by contrast is something that we learn at the age of eight or later and becomes a kind of foreign language that we rarely feel as comfortable in as in our natural language, storytelling.

- Communicate clearly. By drawing on this natural age-old method of communication, storytelling helps us make sense of a chaotic world by connecting us with time and space and human purpose of a sequence of events so as to make sense.

- Communicate truthfully. Stories can communicate deep holistic truths, while abstract language tends to slice of off fragments.

- Communicate collaboratively. In abstract discussions, ideas come to us like missiles, invading our space and directing us to adopt a mental framework established by another being, and our options boil down to accepting or rejecting it, with all the baggage of yes-no winner-looser confrontations. Narrative by contrast comes at us collaboratively inviting us gently to follow the story arm-in-arm with the listener. It is more like a dance than a battle.

- Communicate persuasively. When the listener follows a story, there is the possibility of getting the listener to invent a parallel story in the listener´s own environment. Since we all love our own babies, the story so co-created becomes our own, and something we love and are prepared to fight for.

- Communicate accurately. Before the advent of instant global communications, there was less awareness of the context in which knowledge arises. When communications were among people from the same village, or district, or city, one could often assume that the context was the same. With global communications, the assumption of similar context becomes obviously and frequently just plain wrong. Storytelling provides the context in which knowledge arises, and hence becomes the normal vehicle for accurate knowledge transfer

- Communicate entertainingly. Abstract communications are dull and dry because they are not populated with people but with things. As living beings we are attracted to what is living, and repelled by inert things such as concepts. Stories enliven and entertain.

- Communicate movingly so as to get action. Storytelling does not just close the knowing-doing gap. It eliminates the gap by stimulating the listener to co-create the idea. In the process of co-creation, the listener starts the process of implementation in such a way that there is no gap.

- Communicate feelingly. For all the emotional intelligence, explicit talks about feelings can be cloying. Storytelling enables discussion of emotions in culturally acceptable and elegant way.

- Communicate interactively. Unlike abstract talk, storytelling is inherently interactive. The storyteller sparks the story that listeners co-create in their own minds.

Focus on Competencies

Among others the *Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education* (FEP EE) lists the following objectives of education (FEP EE, 2007, p. 9):

- To make it possible for pupils to acquire learning strategies and to motivate them to lifelong learning;

- to stimulate creative thinking, logical reasoning and problem solving in pupils;

- to guide pupils towards engaging in effective and open communication on all possible issues;

- to develop the pupils´ ability to cooperate and to respect their own as well as others´ work and achievements;

- to prepare pupils to manifest themselves as independent free and responsible individuals who exercise their rights and meet their obligations.

These general objectives of education are more elaborated in the FEP EE and divided into the key competencies which present "a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and values which are important for the personal development of an individual and for the individual´s participation in society" (FEP EE, 2007, p. 11). In the last decade the emphasis has been put on the development of those. The following are considered as key competencies: learning competency, problem-solving competency, communication competency, social and personal competency, civic competency and professional competency. Digital storytelling presents an effective tool to help the improvement of these competencies. In the following part I describe in which specific areas of the key competencies digital storytelling can be useful.

- Learning competency - students plan, organize and manage their learning, seek and clarify information; they use it effectively within the learning process, in creative activities and real life; make observations and experiments independently; have a positive attitude towards learning; assess the results of their learning.

- Problem solving competency – students are able to find information useful for solving a problem; apply the knowledge acquired to discover various solutions; think critically; make prudent decisions and are able to defend them.

- Communication competency – students formulate and express their ideas and opinions in a logical sequence; express themselves pertinently, coherently and in a cultivated manner in both oral expression and writing; listen to other people´s utterances, understand them and respond to them adequately; participate effectively in discussions; defend their opinion and argue appropriately; use information and

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communication means and technologies for quality, effective communication with the surrounding world.

- Social and personal competency – students cooperate effectively in a group; participate in creating a friendly atmosphere in the team; contribute to a discussion within a small group as well as to an open debate of the entire class; create a positive image of themselves which supports their self-confidence and independent development.

- Civic competency – students respect the other´s beliefs and intrinsic values; are able to empathize with the situations of others; respect, protect and appreciate traditions as well as cultural and historical heritage; demonstrate a positive attitude towards works of art, a sense of culture and creativity.

- Professional competency – students use materials, tools and equipment safely and effectively; use their knowledge and experience acquired in individual educational areas for their own development and preparation for the future.

Taking into consideration the possible role of digital storytelling in the educational process I have to state that the area where I find it most useful to be implemented is the communication competency. But, especially when working in groups, teachers can use it to develop the social and personal competency that are of enormous importance as an element of preparation students for their work lives. The learning competency is developed through students´ own participation in the process of creating a digital story. They need not just to find information but also to use them adequately. Teachers have a chance to develop the civic competency by choosing a suitable topic of the digital story itself which can be focused on historical event, monument, person or a specific tradition as well as an ecological issue. And of course, while working with modern technologies and software tools students develop their professional competency.

The other benefit of digital storytelling is that the method targets all the expected outcomes that are divided according to specific language skills. The FEP EE (2007, p. 23-25) presents the skills as following:

Receptive language skills, where the pupil shall:
- read a text of appropriate length aloud fluently and respecting the rules of pronunciation;

- understand the content of simple texts in textbooks and of authentic materials using visual aids; find familiar expressions, phrases and answers to questions in texts;

- understand simple and clearly articulated utterance and conversation;

- infer a likely meaning of new words from the context;

- use a bilingual dictionary, find information or the meaning of a word in a suitable explanatory monolingual dictionary.

Productive language skills, where the pupil shall:

- create simple (both oral and written) expressions concerned with a situation related to family and school life and other thematic areas being studied;

- create simple sentences and short texts and modify them in writing using correct grammar;

- retell briefly the content of a text, utterance as well as conversation of suitable difficulty;

- request simple information.

Interactive language skills, where the pupil shall:

- make himself/herself understood in a simple manner in common everyday situations.

It is obvious that the process of creating digital story stimulates the development of receptive language skills as well as presenting the story is an ideal opportunity to develop students´ productive skills. The issue of interactive language skills may be arguable in the matter of common everyday situations, but there are occasions to develop these to, e.g. a debate following the presented piece of a digital story.

Cross-curricular Subjects

According to the FEP EE (2007) cross-curricular subjects "are the thematic areas of current problems of the contemporary world and have become a significant and indispensable part of elementary education. They represent an important formative element of elementary education, create the opportunities for individual engagement of the pupil as well as mutual cooperation and contribute to the development of the pupils´ characters, primarily in the area of attitudes and values" (p. 91). These subjects should help the development of pupils´ characters both in the area of attitudes and values. The content of these subjects is elaborated into thematic areas, each containing a selection of themes. What is important is the fact that both the selection of themes and the manner in which they are included in the syllabus are

within the competence of schools. The cross-curricular subjects become a compulsory part of education.

The FEP EE (2007, p. 91 – 105) lists the following cross-curricular subjects:

- Moral, character and social education. Its purpose is to help all the pupils find their own paths towards satisfaction in life, a path founded on a good relationship with themselves, with others and the world. Its relation with the area of language is founded on the very fact of the communicative essence of language with its focus on communication as a key instrument for acting in various life situations. Digital storytelling could be helpful in the following thematic areas: developing perception skills, self-awareness and self-conception, self-organization, creativity, interpersonal relations; communication and cooperation; problem solving and decision making.

- Civic education for democracy. It should provide the pupil with the ability to orient himself/herself in the intricacies, problems and conflicts of an open, democratic and pluralistic society. Digital storytelling can be used to develop and support the abilities and skills for communication, formulation, argumentation, dialogue and presentation; to deepen the pupil´s empathy, ability to listen and judge fairly; to develop discipline and self-criticism.

- Education towards thinking in European and global context. It promotes the pupil´s consciousness of traditional European values such as humanism, free human will, public morals along with rational thought, critical thinking and creativity. In this area language education plays an important role as learning languages is key for mutual communication and understanding the cultures of other nations.

- Multicultural education. It develops a sense of justice, solidarity and tolerance. It also deeply affects interpersonal relations at school, including teacher-pupil relation and relation among pupils, between the school and the family and between the school and the local community. In this area digital storytelling can be extremely useful, especially in the case of its public presentation. It can also help to support the thematic areas of interpersonal relations and the one of principles of social conciliation and solidarity.

- Environmental education. It guides the individual towards understanding the complexity and intricate nature of the relation between man and the environment as well as towards participating in protecting and shaping the environment actively. Digital storytelling can be used in the case an appropriate topic is chosen.

- Media education. It provides the pupil with elementary knowledge and skills related to media communication and work with the media which means to equip the pupil with a basic level of media literacy. The area of language education concerns the perception of written and spoken expressions as well as the mastery of the basic rules of public communication, dialogue and argumentation. Digital storytelling can be used to e.g.: develop the ability of an analytic approach to media content and critical distance from it; teach the pupil to use the media´s potential as a source of information, guide the pupil towards identifying the validity of arguments in public discourse; to develop the pupil´s ability to adapt his/her activities to the needs and objectives of the team.

I have presented all the possible benefits that digital storytelling can bring to both teachers and students. First of all this method helps to develop a large amount of different skills and literacies with a strong emphasis on those demanded nowadays, skills that are of much importance from the point of view of preparing students to leave their studies and integrate to society. Because it is not the amount of knowledge, but the ability to find and to work with information, to use modern technologies, to communicate, to solve problems and to present oneself that are required to succeed in present-day society. Another reason why to use the method of digital storytelling is that it perfectly meets the national standards. Teachers can use it to support the development of not only the key competencies but also the concrete expected outcomes. I have also offered some ideas how to use digital storytelling to at least enrich the education in the area of cross-curricural subjects.

Digital Storytelling with Language Learners

I have already summarized all the benefits of integrating digital storytelling into the educational process from the general point of view. Now, when we are informed about all the literacies, skills and competencies teacher can help developing through the process of creating a digital storytelling I focus more on second language acquisition. First of all it is important to realize that "Digital stories are most effective for language learning when they are embedded in a language-rich curriculum that provides varied and abundant opportunities for learners to acquire new vocabulary and structures" (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 29). Digital story is one of the vehicles through which students can practice language meaningfully and have an opportunity to showcase what they can do with the language.

From this point of view teachers can get a good sense of what students are able to do, taking into consideration both the productive and receptive language skills. Ohler describes the finished digital story as "a tip of the iceberg, bellow which are a number of artifacts for

the assessment of literacy. ...A digital story project can literally be a portfolio unto itself of great depth and breadth" (as cited in Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 30). So it is clear that digital storytelling presents an useful tool of assessment.

But it is the process of creating the digital story that is much more important. The method can be seen as an innovated form of the language experience approach, which is a common practice in early childhood classrooms. This approach is very effective to initiate reading and writing based on students´ own experience. In general teachers motivate students to produce language in the way they let them use their own stories, their own experience, their own interests. In the process of creating a digital story they have an opportunity to write, re-write and read the story back multiple times.

In her article Rance-Roney (2008,p.29) states that during the production of the story, learners must write a complete narrative, rewrite or reform it into a short script, speak or record the script using accurate language and then re-speak or re-record the script to perfect it. The process of putting the story together is not linear and gives students opportunity to practice the language multiple times at each stage. The only limitation is the language level of the learners, but on the other hand, even beginners can create simple digital stories. From the point of view of second language acquisition while producing a digital story students definitely have an opportunity to:

- enrich their vocabulary – taking into consideration the fact that the vocabulary is in ideal case based on students´ own experience and interest, it tends to remain a part of permanent knowledge which is also supported by working with it repeatedly during the production;
- improve receptive skills – depending on the topic of a concrete digital story students have to find information which means to read (watch, listen) and to understand texts or records;
- improve productive skills – students have to write and present the story orally.

Of course there are challenges teachers have to face. First of all creating a digital story can be time-consuming. Especially in the case when teachers and students have never worked with software and technologies which they need to create the story they may need some time to acquaint themselves with those. The technology itself can be considered another challenge. According to Brenner´s experience there were students "who were intimidated by new technology and might have preferred a more traditional approach to English language teaching" (2014, p. 27). As I have already mentioned earlier digital storytelling should

function as one of the ways how to support students´ language production and technology should not overwhelm the process of language learning.

Brenner (2014, p. 27) suggests that with such students it may be useful to begin with a simplified effort immediately after presenting the software tools, consisting of one or two photographs, a short narrative and no audio soundtrack. This way students have an opportunity to gradually build up their competency with technology to a more involved project. Finally, teachers have to take into consideration the fact that not all the students may have access to technology and internet connection so a lot of work has to be done at school during the classes which may cause troubles in the organization of the lessons, availability of a computer lab and in meeting the requirements of the curriculum. A positive attitude of colleagues and management is very important.

In my personal opinion an enormous advantage of the method is the fact that except general development of all the mentioned skills and literacies, teachers may focus the digital story on a concrete set of lexical items or grammar structure. It is possible to create short and single digital story presenting an animal with young learners or use their holiday photos to speak about their holiday to practice past tense. This method offers many ways how to lead students to learn new things, to practice, to showcase what they are able to do in the language and of course to get more self-confidence in using the language which is very important in the process of second language acquisition.

Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

Digital storytelling offers a unique opportunity to involve more teachers and of course more subjects in a common project. Except language classes it is not only possible but highly suitable to cooperate with IT classes. In that case the language teacher is able to focus much more on the language and communicative aspect of creating a digital story. According to the topic of a concrete story there is also a chance to involve Art, History or Geography classes. The only limitative factor is the responsiveness of other teachers and of course the management of a concrete school to use non-traditional educational methods.

The role of a teacher in the process of creating a digital story is most of all the one of a guide, a mentor. The first issue teachers have to help their students is organization. Students must be sure of what they are supposed to do, for what purpose, which tools they should use and what the final product should look like. Miller (2008, p. 191-192) lists the areas of questions that should be answered to help to shape the concept and define the structure. This

list is designed for the purpose of creating an interactive project, but we can easily adjust it for the purpose of creating a story with students. The questions are as follows:

- Premise. What is the premise of the project? What is the primary challenge, or what about it will make it engaging? The essential qualities should be captured in a single sentence.
- Purpose. What is the purpose of the project (to entertain, to teach, to inform)? What information will you need to gather in order for your project to meet this purpose? How will you obtain these information?
- Mode of presentation. What medium will be used for this project, what technologies? What are the special strengths and limitations of this specific medium and technology? What is going to be used – video, photos, pictures, music, sounds?
- Audience. Who is this project intended for? What kind of things are important to people in this group? What type of entertainment do they enjoy?
- User´s (audience) role. What role will the user play in the project? How will the user effect the outcome?
- Structure. What will the final product look like?

On the other hand Lambert (2010, p. 14-24) comes with a more general point of view and lists seven steps in creating a digital story. Teachers should help the students in the following areas:

- Owning your insights. Teachers have to help storytellers find and clarify what their stories are really about, which isn´t easy. They can ask questions like: Why this story? Who´s it for? How does this story show who you really are? Is the story really yours?
- Owning your emotions. Teachers should help storytellers to become aware of the emotional resonance of their story, to decide which emotions they would really like to include in their stories and how would they like to convey them to their audience.
- Finding the moment. Teachers can ask questions like: Which moment conveys the different meanings? Which most accurately conveys the meaning in your story?
- Seeing your story. Teachers should help teachers to choose the visuals early in the story to consider how they will shape their stories.
- Hearing your story. Of course the voice of the storyteller is essential. But would the story and the scenes within it be enhanced by the use of additional layers of sound? Would the use of ambient sound or music highlight the turning point in your story?

- Assembling your story. Teacher should lead students to be able to answer the following questions: How are the visual and audio layers structuring their story? And, within that structure, how are the layers of visual and audio narratives working together?
- Sharing your story. Students should be able to answer the following questions: Who is your audience? What was your purpose in creating the story? Has the purpose shifted during the process of creating the piece? In what presentation will your digital story be viewed? And what life will the story have after it´s completed?

In the previous text I have mentioned the audio and visual layers. According to Lambert (2010, p. 22)

- The visual layers are:
  - the composition of a single image
  - the combination of multiple images within a single frame, either through collage or fading over time
  - the juxtaposition of a series of images over time
  - movement applied to a single image, either by panning or zooming or the juxtaposition of a series of cropped details from the whole image
  - the use of text on screen in relations to visuals, spoken narration or sound.
- The audio layers are:
  - recorded voice-over
  - recorded voice-over in relation to sound, either music or ambient sound
  - music alone or in contrast to another piece of music.

Available Tools for Creating a Digital Story

In this section I focus more on hardware and software tools that are available for students to create their digital stories. Several reasons led me to focus more on the following solutions. First of all, I decided to describe software that is already installed within the operating system or can be legally downloaded and installed for free. I have also decided to focus on Windows OS (computers) and Android OS (smartphones, tablets) because Apple technologies are not spread widely among Czech students and they are definitely not available at many Czech schools. For the same reason I am not focusing more on the Linux OS, although there are schools using this system. Also I am not going to list the hardware requirements of the mentioned software as I suppose both students´ and schools´ hardware to reach the satisfactory level.

Besides computers we may use the following hardware tools:

- Smartphones and tablets. I mention smartphones on the first place because they can more or less replace all of the other hardware tools listed below. They are available to most of the students and with their help students can record and edit video and audio files as well as to capture and edit photos. I also suppose students would prefer to use smartphones instead of e.g. digital cameras. Smartphones are a very easy and intuitive to work with, especially for students who are used to employ them instead of computers most of the time. All the mentioned characteristics of using smartphones are the same in the case of tablets. The only difference is that tablets are not often used to capture photos and video because they are not that comfortable to do that with and because the integrated cameras in tablets are often not at a satisfactory level compared to modern smartphones that can with no doubt replace average digital cameras.

- Digital cameras and camcorders. They may not be available to majority of students as smartphones are, but I suppose there is a school digital camera that can be used available at most schools. And of course these are primarily designed to capture photos and video clips so the results may be of better quality.

- Scanners. They may seem a little outdated, but they are very useful when we need to make paper photos or other printed materials digital. In digital stories dealing with e.g. students´ childhood there is often a need to work with paper photos. Thanks to modern printers that often combine more functions scanners are quite available to many students and of course at schools even when classic scanning machines are disappearing.

- Microphones. They may also seem useless as most of students use laptop computers that are usually equipped with a microphone. But on the other hand it is a fact that the results will be much better when using a microphone and school computer labs are rarely equipped with laptops. But a widespread solution is a set of headphones and a microphone that is usually available in the labs.

Software tools:

- Windows Movie Maker. Software that is preinstalled with Windows OS. It presents an ideal way to edit video comprising more video files, pictures photos as well as to add music, recorded voice-over or written commentaries and subtitles. It is user-friendly and very easy to start to work with. An alternative can be presented by AviDemux or in a more simple way by Video Edit Master, both free.

- VidTrim. An Android OS equivalent of Movie Maker. Available free at Google Play, easy to use, able to manage basic operations with video files. There are many other free video editors available for Android mobile technologies, e.g. Video Maker, AndroVid Pro, KineMaster etc.

- Animoto. A web applicacation that allows users to create videos based on many available styles, add effects etc. The application does not demand to be installed on a computer, on the other hand users have to sign-up.

- Audacity. A freeware sound editor which allows to capture and edit the voice-over of a digital story. It is very simple to use and allows to export audio files in all possible formats. Audacity is not available for Android, at least not in the same form as it is for computers, but there are many Android applications that can be used instead of it, e.g. WavePad Audio Editor or AudioDroid: Audio Mix Studio.

- Vocaroo. An on-line application that allows you to record a voice over in a very simple way by pushing just one button to start and stop recording. The application does not need to be installed and it produces mp3 files that can be easily downloaded or shared.

- Microsoft PowerPoint. As we may begin just with photo slides in the case of young learners PowerPoint may be very useful. There are many other photo editors, even free, that allow the user to create a photo slide show, but PowerPoint is really easy to use and it is available both at schools and at home computers and learners often work with it in IT classes so they are used to it. There are also free equivalents, such as LibreOffice, that can do more or less the same.

Of course there are hundreds of programmes and applications that we can work with. I tried to describe those that are available, easy to use and that I have a personal experience with. And also those that are free, because it would be very disappointing not to implement this method only because of a possible need of purchasing any hardware or software. The aim of digital storytelling method is not to spend the language classes in computer labs and teaching learners to use the software. The ideal way how to avoid this is to cooperate with the teachers of IT and to implement the digital storytelling into their classes so that they work on the process of preparing the story in the mean of its final look and to have a possibility to focus on the language aspect of the digital story in language classes.

Resources and Copyright

Of course it is students´ own speech or text that are the basic elements of a story. But to take all the advantages that digital storytelling offers, students need to enrich the story with visuals and music. Rich media is one of the keys of a good digital story. According to the topic of the project they also may need to find reliable information. Teachers should encourage the students to find and use materials of the best possible quality. If the topic of the story is kind of a personal one, students usually use their own visual materials, but in other cases they have to get those. We can suppose that the main resource to get visuals students use is the Internet. And of course in both cases student need to use also music as a part of their project. At the beginning of a new project with students teachers are obliged to inform them about the copyright issues. Students, especially young learners, usually have lack of information about these and are used to download music and video materials from the internet regularly without realizing they are breaking the law. On the other hand teachers themselves should be informed about the law and inner rules of a concrete school in the matter of publishing students´ projects publicly. At least teachers need parents´ permission before publishing.

Once teachers have encouraged students to use media in their stories and instructed them about the copyright issues they should also help them to find resources where it is possible to find media they can legally incorporate into their projects. There are many sources of images, offering free use for non-commercial purposes (commons.wikipedia.org, imagebank.ie, www.flick.com). It is harder to find a source of music or individual sounds that can be downloaded. But there are two that are easy to use, offer a good searching engine and a library rich enough to choose from (musopen.org, jamendo.com).

A possible way how to avoid copyright issues problems may be to create a library of media for, especially young, students to use that is available at school network. That would of course demand a lot of time to prepare, but on the other hand in the case of using this library repeatedly it is worth of it. In the case of preparing such a library there is the Creative Commons Corporation web (search.creativecommons.org) site that offers searching for any media content (photos, music, sounds, video) that is free to use. But it is not that easy to use and often there is a need to explore the advanced settings to be sure about the details of the license.

Finally, teachers should give students a chance to see more examples of digital stories before they start working on their own projects. The best way is to begin with sharing a

teacher´s own story. But there are several resources on the Internet where students can watch digital stories. A very useful source to begin with is the Center for Digital Storytelling website (www.storycenter.org). In her article Kathy Brenner (2014, p. 25) also mentions the New York Times on-line series titled "One in 8 million," which documents the daily lives of people who live in Manhattan (One in 8 million). These stories combining still photos and a voiceover present a more artistic approach to creating a digital story and can be useful when working with more experienced students.

The theoretical background section has dealt with the general description of digital storytelling, characteristics of different kinds of digital stories as well as the insights into the elements of creating a good digital story. Digital storytelling not only meets well the requirements of the national curriculum but also presents a very useful way to enrich the curriculum and to help students to develop all language skills, competencies given by the Framework Education Programme as well as some of the cross-curricular subjects listed ibidem. The further section of the thesis explores the use of digital storytelling with language learners.

III.   METHODOLOGY

In the theoretical part of this thesis I have described all the possible advantages of using digital storytelling in classes. Digital storytelling appears to be very helpful to encourage learners´ speaking skills. I have decided to try a digital story creation with my learners at Základní škola Komenského in Chodov where I have been teaching for the last ten years. This section covers a brief description of the learners and topics of their digital stories, as well as the description of the digital story creation itself and the results.

Learners

Digital stories were created by learners of two groups in 7th grade. There were two groups, a group of class 7.A with 13 learners and a group of class 7.B with 13 learners. The 7th grade learners are of age 12 to 13. The groups included both genders and were mixed ability classes. All learners have been studying English as a second language from 2nd grade. According to CEFR their level of English is A1+. The reason to choose those two concrete groups was a large difference in the learners´ language skills between these two groups. This difference is to be found not only in the assessment taking into consideration the grading, but much more during the classes.

The group of 7.A consists of learners who reach better assessment and who tend to use the language much more during classes, enjoy speaking activities, are very active and competitive. Among the 13 learners there are only two who could be described less proficient learners according to their assessment. But they also participate in classes and most of the activities. On the other hand, the group of 7.B consists of learners whose average assessment is worse. There are four learners who actively participate in the classes and reach better results. The other learners could be described as less proficient not only according to their assessment, but also according to their approach to language learning.

Having these two very different groups of learners is a unique chance to see whether digital storytelling as a method is able to encourage learners´ speaking skills and whether the results would be any different from learners´ usual language production and its assessment or not. Twenty-four learners out the total number of 26 in both groups actually started to work on the project.

Topics

Learners had a possibility to choose between two topics. The first one was called "someone close to me." Learners could choose any person they wanted to create a digital story about. They were not limited in any way and could speak about a family member or a friend (one of the learners made a digital story about the members of a music band where he plays the guitar). The second topic was called "a feel-good place" and again students could speak about any place (e.g. their room, place where they spent holiday, cottage etc.). In general they could choose between making a story about a person or about a place. The topics were chosen according to learners´ language skills and vocabulary they should be able to use in the creation process. While choosing the topic learners surprised me by deciding to make a story about a person with only three exceptions as I considered the second topic to be easier to prepare.

Questionnaires

The pre-creation questionnaire which was given to the learners after presenting what a digital story is, watching an example story made by teacher, choosing the topic and collecting materials aimed to find out what the expectations of learners were like, what led them to decide for one of the topics, what their IT skills were like and whether they had a possibility to work on the project at home. I was also interested whether the preparation for the creation led to speaking to those persons they spoke about. One learner was not present in each group the day the introduction to the project happened. Later this absence appeared to be long-term, that is why I collected only 24 completed questionnaires (see Appendix 1).

Another questionnaire was given to the learners after completing and presenting their digital stories. The aim of this questionnaire was to find out more about the overall feelings of the learners, their own opinion about their language improvement, their experience with working with technologies. I also wanted to get feedback of what the learners liked about not only theirs, but also the others´ digital stories (see Appendix 2). Due to a few learners not being at school on that day, I collected only 16 completed questionnaires. Both questionnaires were given to the learners in the Czech language.

Assessment

An assessment rubric was designed focused on the level of task completion, using multimedia, creativity, vocabulary, grammar and of course on the learners´ performance. The learners were presented the assessment rubric before they started creating their digital stories. The assessment rubric was also presented to the learners in the Czech language (see Appendix 3).

As I have already mentioned there were two groups of learners involved in the digital story project. Group 7.A, the one that could be described as "stronger" taking into consideration their average grading, attitude to language classes, performance in the classes and the overall positive atmosphere in most of the classes. Group 7.B, the one that could be described as less proficient for the purpose of this comparison. In this section I am going to describe the visible differences not only between the two groups but also a possible difference between the assessment achieved in the digital story project and especially its oral presentation and the assessment achieved in another speaking tasks in the classes performed earlier.

As an object of comparison I chose short one-minute speaking activities learners are regularly asked to perform in the lessons. These speaking activities usually contain an in-leading activity to practice vocabulary and structures, followed by five to ten minutes of time to prepare for speaking. During the three months preceding the digital story project students were given three of those tasks with three different topics (My Mum/Dad, My best friend, My favourite animal). Of course such tasks and their assessment cannot be fully compared to the digital story project which took a much longer time to prepare but they are quite similar in the length of the spoken discourse and presentation in front of other learners. While comparing the results achieved I transformed and averaged the grades into the same form of assessment used while assessing the digital stories. That means three grades: Excellent, Acceptable, Unacceptable.

Process

Before creating the story there were some important decisions to be made. The first one was to decide whether to work in groups or individually. Because it was the first time learners encountered digital storytelling I decided not to assign groups and to let them work on their own. The main reason for that decision was that it is easier for learners to concentrate just one their own work and I also wanted them to work on a topic which would be more personal. According to their level and vocabulary which both contain the ability to describe

people and places the choice of the possible topics was a logical step. I tended to offer only one possible topic to my learners but then I changed my mind because I find it more motivating when learners have a possibility to choose.

Motivation was one of the issues I had to deal with while preparing for the creation of the digital stories with my learners. I started with presenting them my own digital story which is kind of a personal character and designed to provoke emotional reaction. And as I expected learners in the group 7.A, the stronger of the two groups, were at least interested, I would not hesitate to call most of them excited. But the situation was much different in the group 7.B where learners showed no or very low interest in creating their own stories. For the needs of that group I had to design another, more simple, digital story to show them my own expectations about their stories. But according to answers in the pre-creation questionnaire learners were given later they were enough motivated to work on the project and most of them were looking forward to it.

Together with learners we decided for the minimum of ten slides or 2 minutes of speaking. To be more concrete I also presented the assessment rubric (see further) to learners. I also assured them that because it was the first attempt to create a digital story I prefered fluency, creativity and emotional content to accuracy and the perfect use of language. The main step in this project was the oral presentation, to encourage learners to speak and to use what they already know of the language, possibly a little more. They were expected to search for new vocabulary and to find ways how to express thoughts with the language knowledge they already possess.

After consulting the IT specialist at our school I decided for the final outcome of the digital storytelling project. Learners were supposed to create a MS PowerPoint presentation of at least ten slides. Students of 7th grade work with this software in their IT classes and should be able to manage all the necessary steps which were to include photos and videos, music, texts and possibly some special effects to their presentations. The texts of the story itself were not included in the presentation, students prepared cards with them. But there were some text in the introductory slide and the closing one as e.g. on Screenshot 1:

Screenshot1: My Pop

Learners worked on their digital stories in the IT classroom. Except the computers they used a scanner. Surprisingly the scanner was very useful as most of the learners brought paper photos they wanted to use in their projects. According to their age I expected using mostly digital photos. There were no problems in using hardware equipment including the scanner. Microsoft PowerPoint was used to create the project and Zoner Photo Studio 17 Free was used to work with digital photos. In this part of the creation process two possibly interesting issues appeared. I came to a conclusion that although almost all learners were able to work on a satisfying level with the software many of them appeared to have serious problems with basic operations such as creating files and directories, copying or renaming them, saving a file sent as an attachment of an e-mail (some of them even tried to drag the file from the mail to the desktop). Taking this experience into consideration it could be impulse for IT teachers to think of the curriculum.

Secondly my expectation about present day young generation and their ways of using technologies proved to be right. All learners in both groups have a smartphone, most of them a tablet. Twenty-one out of 24 students have a Facebook account (although they are under the age limit), 17 of them have an Instagram account and use it regularly. But when asked to use

photos out of their smartphones or any social network they were unable to find out how to get those into the computer. They were not able to download a photo from a Facebook status. Out of 24 learners 22 use a smartphone with the Android system which means they have an Google account. But they did not know that Google saves all photos taken with their phone and that they have access to this from the Google start page. In general they use modern hardware and software technologies and tend to own the latest ones but they very often have no idea of what those offer and use a minimum

Dealing with the issue of using IT I came to a concerning conclusion I have to mention although it is not an issue of this thesis. According to my own experience and discussions with my colleagues we, teachers or adults in general, expect that children are able to use computers very well. This is maybe caused by the idea of children spending too much time at a computer, but their real competence to operate the computer on a very simple user level is often very insufficient. When learners were asked what they really do with the computer their answers were very similar. They use Facebook, YouTube and play on-line games which may be perfectly adequate their age and interests but on the other hand they are not able to write and send e-mail with attachment correctly as I have realized while accepting their projects. In my opinion what is closely connected with this issue is the general tendency to use smartphones and tablets instead of a computer as these technologies offer exactly the mentioned possibilities but in a very simplified way and do not demand any skills or knowledge.

Thanks to a very responsive approach of the school management there were three weeks available to work only on the digital story projects which means nine 45 minute lessons of English in each group. Usually I do not spend such a long period working on one particular project and learners are supposed to do most of the work outside the classes, but there was a reason that led me to this decision. It was the first attempt to create a digital story with my learners and I tended to have an overall awareness of all possible complications that could have appeared during the creation process as there was no previous experience. All classes were held in the IT classroom. The organization of the three weeks was as follows:

Week 1:

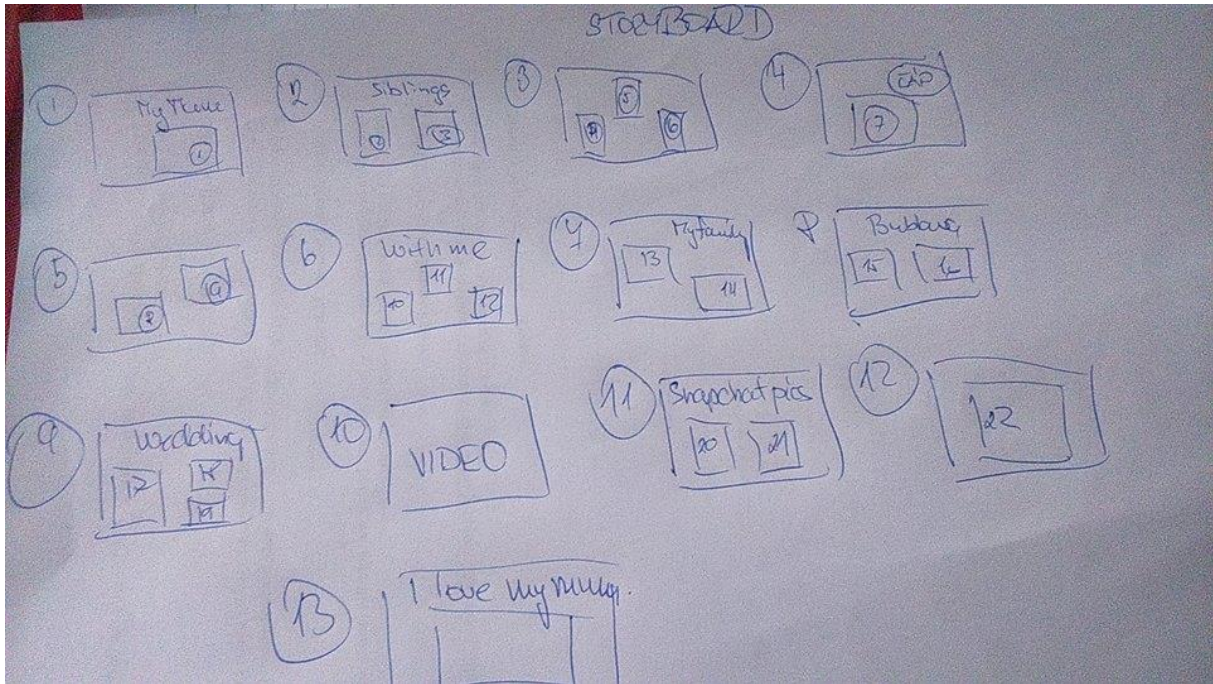- Lesson 1, Monday: Learners were presented an example digital story project, a discussion about possible topics of their own projects followed. Learners were encouraged to choose a topic and think of the availability of possibly needed sources of pictures. Most of the learners in group 7.A showed an unexpected amount of enthusiasm, the following discussion was very lively and learners tended to offer

many ideas, they wanted to begin with the project as soon as possible. I think in the case of this group the motivating example of a digital story was chosen well. The situation in group 7.B was on the other hand completely opposite, students showed a lack of enthusiasm or even interest in the project, the example story showed as almost demotivating. Instead of suggesting ideas they started with questions about the demanded quality, length and term of the project. This situation led me to create another very simple example digital story and present it in the following lesson.

- Lesson 2, Tuesday: Learners chose a topic of their own digital story projects and were instructed to speak to the people who would be the objects of their stories or who were connected with places that would be the objects. Although the instructions many learners brought photos, there were even two of them who brought a project they have already started to work on the day before. But the topic of this lesson was to choose the object of the story, a concrete person or place. During this lesson students were also presented software tools and instructed how to work with the scanner and how to transfer the digital images into their personal files. A discussion about using legal sources of music files, videos and pictures followed. Learners were also invited to bring the paper photos to be scanned for the next lesson.

- Lesson 3, Friday: The plan was to let learners fill in the pre-creation questionnaire and to let them use the scanner. The learners were also presented the assessment rubric. Filling in the questionnaire took about 15 minutes in both groups. Since it was given in Czech language no problems appeared. On the other hand an issue causing the later delay in the plan appeared with the unexpected amount of paper photos learners brought to transfer into digital images. I have to admit I overestimated the accessibility of digital cameras. My own expectation was that there would be only a several photos of the object person (if it was a parent or a grandparent) brought by some of the learners. But most of them brought more than ten photos, some of them actually taken very recently. Surprised by this fact I asked a few of them about this issue and they admitted that they took the photos out the family albums because they did not have time (or of course any desire) to search the family computer for digital images or they needed their parents help to do so. This was the first important discovery I made during this lesson. The other one and the one I could have expected but I did not appeared after one of the learner explained why she has chosen to speak about their family cottage. Some of the learners´ parents did not wish to share their personal photos in public as I contacted the parents and informed them that the project are not

supposed to be presented outside the classroom but they may be attached to this thesis. The student who did not scan photos started to create the visual storyboard of the project which means to look at all the available pictures, mark them and prepare a list of the future slides with the pictures. Learners were instructed to bring the storyboards (see Picture 1) and scripts for the next class.

Picture 1

Week 2:

- Lesson 1, Monday: Learners were supposed to bring their storyboards and their scripts which meant to write one to three sentences to describe a concrete slide or picture. They were instructed to think of the texts and write them in Czech language but also to try to translate them. The reason for that was to avoid using too complicated language. The learners are quite capable to search for adequate lexical items but they very often tend to use structures they are not able to express in English while preparing a text in Czech language. I was quite disappointed because only several of them prepared it at home. Although the main aim of this lesson was to assist learners with the English versions of their scripts, most of them prepared the texts during the lesson. A lot of them also continued in scanning photos. This lesson was not very successful thanks to most of my learners´ approach.

- Lesson 2, Tuesday: Another complication appeared thanks to the absence of most of my learners because of an inter-school competition organized by the Chodov townhall. There were only 11 learners out of 26 in both groups present at school. But on the

other hand, thanks to the fact that most of them were learners in the less proficient group, I had more time to help them with both preparing their texts in English and also with any complications and problems they appeared to have with creating the PowerPoint presentation. For the next lesson learners were instructed to be able to present their storyboards prepared in English language.

- Lesson 3, Friday: The aim of this lesson was to check learners´ storyboards and to give them an opportunity of a consultation over possible language difficulties with me. Although there were again learners who were not ready and did not prepare final versions of their storyboards most of them were ready to present what they have prepared. During the lesson I let learners to work on their stories and I spent about five minutes with each of them to discuss their scripts. During these individual consultations another discovery occurred. Probably thanks to my instructions and because what I have told learners while I tried to motivate them to work on their digital stories many of them prepared texts which could be called too simple. Even those whose skills are much above the average prepared texts that did not meet my expectations. They used short sentences, the less proficient learners only individual words or phrases and they also showed no or very little effort to use new vocabulary. In this way they did not present their actual language knowledge and ability and of course they also were not able to reach any improvement of their language skills. Those were learners who followed my instructions and prepared the scripts directly in English language. The situation was different at those learners who prepared their texts in Czech language first and then tried to translate them into English language. The texts here met my expectations more as they mostly appeared to be too complicated for learners to express them in English. Although I informed learners that it was fluency that would be preferred during the preparation of their digital stories the amount of mistakes, using complicated structures and wrong usage of unknown lexical items made large parts of their scripts almost unintelligible. That was why I wanted them to think of their ability to express what they wanted to say in English language. In the future I am going to let learners to prepare their scripts in Czech language first because although they make more mistakes and often need teachers´ help they tend to gain more of new language items and there is a higher chance to improve their skills, finally their speaking skills which was the main reason for creating digital stories. Learners were instructed to finish their PowerPoint presentations and finish or correct their scripts according to my corrections, advices and mutual discussion. They were

also instructed to try to present their digital stories at home and record their speech if possible.

- IT lesson, Thursday (90 minutes): During Week 2 both groups had a possibility to both complete their digital stories and to consult their IT teacher about technical aspects of their stories. This cooperation appeared to be very useful because learners needed more time to finish the presentations according to their storyboards and also because I was not able to help them with all software issues, especially with timing of included music and some other things, e.g. working with animations or importing video files. All learners also had an opportunity to send me their completed presentations and scripts via e-mail or Facebook Messenger and have an on-line consultation with me over any possible problem for three hours on Saturday and for two hours on Sunday afternoon. Only two of them used it.

Week 3:

- Lesson 1, Monday: A final lesson of the preparation which was focused on speaking, pronunciation and proper timing of the presentations. Unfortunately, another unexpected complication occurred which was the very high absence of learners due to illness. It would not be such a significant issue because under normal circumstances I would be able to change the terms of presentations, but it was my last week at work before my own absence due to preparation to state exam at the university. On this lesson only 9 learners were present in group 7.A and 7 learners in group 7.B and the situation did not change during the whole week. The low number of learners in both groups led to having enough time to work individually with them. All pupils presented their presentations in a neighbouring classroom accompanied by their speech recordings. After that we discussed pronunciation and oral presentation issues, such as pacing, pauses, intonation and proper timing according to their presentation. Then learners presented their digital stories in its complete form to me.

- Lesson 2, Tuesday: I planned two lessons for learners presentation and one extra lesson in Week 4 for the post-creation questionnaire, discussion and assessment to get some feedback from learners. But thanks to the already mentioned absence of a large number of learners we managed to present all the digital stories in one 45-minute lesson.
  - o The presentation itself contained of presenting the digital story and an immediate discussion between the audience and the storyteller as well as a possible comment on the aspects that the audience liked about the digital story.

Although the questions asked in the following discussion were very similar after each story presented and focused usually on details about the person depicted in the story I can state that more or less all learners were involved and showed a sincere interest in the presentations.

- Lesson 3, Friday: The aim of this lesson was to fill in the questionnaires, have a discussion with learners and to assess their works according to the assessment rubric. All these issues are described further in detail.

IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

In this section I describe the results of both of the questionnaires given to learners before and after the creation of the digital story project and summarize the collected data in order to find out what the expectations of the learners were like and also how the digital story creation and performance met them. The post-creation questionnaire´s aim was alto to find out about the possible restrictions and learners´ expectations in the case of creating a digital story again in the future. I am also going to describe the assessment of the digital stories submitted and performed and comment on the difference in assessment between this method and other speaking tasks in the classes.

Pre-creation Questionnaire

Out of 24 learners 22 chose stated that they were excited about creating a digital story or looking forward to creating it. It showed that students were highly motivated to create their own digital stories. 9 learners explained their answers. 4 of them were looking forward because they like working with computers. 3 of them because it "is was not learning" and 1 learner answered that making a digital story looked interesting and he/she has never done something like that before. Only 2 learners answered that they felt scared, afraid of failing and explained that they were not very sure about their IT skills.

Most of the learners chose a family member to make a story about: 5x the father, 5x the mother, 9 x a brother or a sister, 1x grandpa and 1x friends in a music band. Three of the learners created a story about a place, one of them about their family cottage, two of them about a place where they spent holiday with their families. Those explained their choice by stating that they felt good and had a nice time at that place. The learner who made a story about a cottage stated that it was the only place where all the family members met together. The learners who decided to make a story about a person almost all explained that they had a close relationship with the person. There were also some more personal answers such as: "My dad is very inspiring person to me./My Mum never takes me to interesting places and my dad always makes me happy./ My sister is my idol."

Of course the emotional element of a digital story is very important. It was quite disappointing that only eight learners interviewed or at least spoke to persons involved in their stories. Later in the creation process I found out that those were the students who created the most interesting stories. All of them stated that they had fun while looking at photos, one student stated: "We smiled a lot and then cried with my mum. That was amazing." Only five

learners answered no. Later I found out that those were students who had only paper photos. Because we worked with a scanner in the IT classroom this issue turned out not be a problem.

Only three learners answered that they did not expect any improvement. Out of 21 learners who answered "yes" in question 6 and marked answers in the following question 14 expected to improve their vocabulary, 12 expected to improve their speaking skills, 4 expected to improve their writing skills, 3 expected to improve their reception skills. There was not even one learner expecting to lose the shyness to speak in front of others. In general most of the learners expected to improve their vocabulary and their speaking skills.

Questions focusing on the IT technologies followed The answers to the first question proved the overall ability of learners to use IT technologies, because out of 24 learners 19 stated that they can use the software tools well enough, 4 learners stated that they were able to do what was expected by the teacher. Only one learner stated that he would need help with using the software. Later in the process of creating the story I found out that it was not only learners´ expectations, but real ability. They were able to work with all software we used on an at least satisfying level.

The reactions to the following two questions proved the overall availability of technologies. The aim of these questions was also to find out more about the possibility of creating other digital stories in the future that would involve more work outside the class. Out of 24 respondents only 4 answered that they did not have a computer at home. In a later discussion I found out that only one of the learners actually did not have a computer at home. The other three did not have the demanded software installed. Also the learner who did not have a computer available at home was the only one to state that he did not have access to the internet. It seems that teachers do not have to be afraid of setting homework or projects demanding a computer at home. The learners have access to technologies both at home and at school, all of them have a possibility to make digital photos.

The answers showed that learners were motivated, mostly looking forward to creating a digital story, because it was "something different" and because they like using computers. They were not afraid of using technologies and they also had access to software and hardware equipment they needed to work on the digital story. They expected to improve their vocabulary and speaking skills and mostly they decided to make a story about a person in their family, surprisingly mostly a brother or a sister, because of their close relationship.

Post-creation Questionnaire

As I have already mentioned only 16 of these questionnaires were completed which affected the information value of the collected data, especially in questions focused on comparing the learners´ feelings before and after creating the digital story projects. First of all I was interested of how the process of creating the digital stories met the expectations of the learners as in the pre-creation questionnaire they were mostly excited or looking forward to working on this project. Before the process I found the leaners highly motivated and I wanted to find out whether this motivation and positive attitude was present also after finishing and presenting the digital stories.

Eleven learners stated that they enjoyed working on the project according to their expectations and 2 learners admitted that they liked the project in the end although their earlier doubts about it. The number may seem small while compared to 22 learners with a very positive attitude towards the project before the creation, but we must take into consideration that there were 8 respondents less completing the post-creation questionnaire. According to this result I am able to state that the project met the expectations of most of the learners and they enjoyed working on it. Three learners answered that they did not find the project special in any way and stated that they did not like working on it which more or less corresponds with the number of learners who were not interested in the project from the very beginning. Fourteen of the learners showed interest in working on another digital story project, 8 of them on one with a different topic. When asked about an attractive topic the learners mentioned: school (4x), favourite music/films/TV shows (4x), hobbies (3x).

As I have expected most of the learners, concretely 8, stated that they improved their vocabulary. My opinion is not that optimistic as I came to the conclusion that most of the learners did not tend to search for and use much of new vocabulary although being encouraged to. Improvement in writing skills was marked by 4 learners and improvement in reception skills by a single one. But I was surprised by the fact that only 3 learners saw any improvement in their speaking skills, especially when compared to 12 who marked this kind of improvement as one of their expectations. Thanks to a very positive and encouraging atmosphere in the class during their presentations and, from my point of view, performances often above my expectations as well as most of the learners´ average spoken discourse, I expected the learners to gain a sense of their personal development. Of course encouraging learners´ speaking skills was the main purpose of the whole digital story project.

Learners proved their ability to use all the necessary technologies and software tools while creating their digital stories and they have also assessed their IT skills as sufficient to create the project according to their needs (11x), possibly with some help (3x). Only 2 learners described their skills as too low to create a digital story that would meet their own expectations or the minimum acceptable extent. On the other hand, in both groups there were learners who helped others with the technical aspect of their stories and of course each learner had a possibility to ask for help during the classes. With this form of help all of them were able to reach the acceptable level in the case they showed any interest in this issue.

When asked about what they liked about their classmates´ digital stories learners appreciated humour contained both in the spoken commentaries and in the choice of pictures in most cases. Four learners mentioned the emotional content of some of the digital stories stating that those showed how strong the relationship between the particular storyteller and the person depicted in the story was. Three learners appreciated the quality of the PowerPoint presentation itself and/or choice of musical background.

Learners appeared to have some difficulties with commenting on the positive aspects of their own digital stories. In many cases they commented again their feelings through the process of creating the stories by stating that they had fun with choosing the pictures and working with the computer. On the other hand two learners appreciated the improvement they noticed while preparing the text and the visible difference between the first draft and the final script. And surprisingly one of the learners found it positive to be ahead of the class, to speak and react to classmates´ questions although first he felt nervous about it.

Assessment

Finally there were 16 digital stories both presented and submitted in the given term. Nine stories presented by the learners of the group 7.A and 8 stories presented by the learners by the learners of the group 7.B. Another 5 digital stories were submitted but not presented orally which made them useless for the purpose of this thesis as the main focus was set on learners´ speaking skills. In the following text I am going to describe the assessment according to particular chapters of the assessment rubric.

I begin each section with a brief overview of the assessment achieved in both of the groups (the actual scoring process is described in the research methodology of the project). According to the assessment rubric used (see Appendix 3) there were three grades used: "Excellent" (the storyteller perfectly met the requirements or completed the story even above the required extent and expectations, showed interest in improving the particular skill and a

tendency to use new language items), "'Acceptable" (the storyteller met the requirements and expectations on a satisfying level, used familiar language correctly or with some mistakes) and "Unacceptable" (the storyteller did not met the requirements, showed a lack of interest in the project, did serious mistakes in familiar language items and any tendency to acquire new language items was not visible at all).

- Task completion - as for grades, the following scores were awarded:
  - Group 7.A: 4 x Excellent, 5 x Acceptable
  - Group 7.B: 1 x Excellent, 6 x Acceptable, 1 x Unacceptable

Commentary: The issue of task completion showed the difference in learners´ attitude towards English classes and tasks in general. As I expected taking into consideration the pre-creating motivation difficulties and prevailing negative emotions about the digital story projects less works were submitted by leaners in group 7.B and only one of the digital stories was assessed as excellent. Learners in group 7.A showed much more interest in working on a task which was new, attractive and challenging for most of them. From the point of view of task completion the matter of motivation, class atmosphere as well as the attitude to do interesting language tasks appeared to be determinative aspect. In my opinion and according to my personal experience gained while working with both groups, the enthusiasm that is visible at most of the learners in group 7.A influences also those learners of lower language ability in that group and makes them more involved in the classes which leads to better results they are able to achieve.

- Using multimedia- as for grades, the following scores were awarded:
  - Group 7.A: 2 x Excellent, 7 x Acceptable
  - Group 7.B: 7 x Acceptable

Commentary: Focusing on using multimedia while creating the digital stories I came to the following conclusion. Although the fact that most of the learners in both groups were excited by the possibility of using computers and considered their skills to be very good which proved to be right most of the learners did not use all the possibilities they were allowed to by the software. And in this case there was not a significant difference between the two groups. In almost all of the digital stories only pictures were used, in some of them the background music was not included (or not included in a proper way so the presentation did not work properly during the presentation), in most cases there were no gif animations used and there was only one digital story containing a video file. In general I have to state learners of both groups showed a lack of interest in creating a story with rich multimedia although

their skills and available technologies offered a possibility to achieve it. Of course there were exceptions such as using Snapchat to work with photographs as e.g. on Screenshot 2:

Screenshot 2: My Mum

- Creativity- as for grades, the following scores were awarded:
  - Group 7.A: 2 x Excellent, 6 x Acceptable, 1 x Unacceptable
  - Group 7.B: 2 x Excellent, 5 x Acceptable

Commentary: Taking into the consideration the aspect of creativity of the submitted and presented digital stories I finally discovered that the method of digital storytelling has a potential to encourage learners to a visible improvement. The assessment of this aspect was very comparable in both groups. This finding showed that the learners of the group 7.A were creative on a quite satisfying, but on the other hand average and expected level. On the other hand the learners of the group 7.B surprised me with the amount of creativity they used while creating their stories, especially when taking into consideration their feelings before and while creating them. This finding was very important as it proved the beneficial effect of the method of digital stories while working with multi-ability classes and students whose motivation and

attitude towards language education is of a lower level. The learners of the group 7.B themselves described the digital storytelling project as challenging, amusing and attractive which makes it very successful in my eyes. They appreciated the guidance of the teacher that allowed them to achieve better results. Of course this positive attitude led to much better performance when focusing on learners´ speaking skills.

- Vocabulary- as for grades, the following scores were awarded:
  - Group 7.A: 3 x Excellent, 4 x Acceptable, 2 x Unacceptable
  - Group 7.B: 2 x Excellent, 3 x Acceptable, 2 x Unacceptable

Commentary: Again in this aspect the learners of both of the groups achieved a very comparable assessment which leads to a similar conclusion as in the previous aspect of creativity and proved the effectiveness of using digital stories with learners considered to be of a lower language ability. Although in both groups there were learners who showed a tendency to search for and to use new vocabulary this tendency was more visible in the group 7.B. The amount of vocabulary actively used in spoken discourse is higher on average in the group 7.A but the two less proficient learners in this group showed more interest in this issue which was reflected in their assessment. On the other hand some of the best students in this group showed a lack of such interest and they did not apply any newly acquired vocabulary. There were even examples of (although teacher´s guidance and repeated consultations) such mistakes as e.g. in Screenshot 3:

Screenshot 3: My Mum

- Grammar- as for grades, the following scores were awarded:
  - Group 7.A: 3 x Excellent, 6 x Acceptable
  - Group 7.B: 2 x Excellent, 3 x Acceptable, 2 x Unacceptable

Commentary: There were pupils in both of the groups who showed a tendency to work with unknown grammar structures because of the need to express all the thoughts they wanted to. More of the learners transformed or simplified their text so that they could use only structures they were more sure about. In that case they used it correctly or on an acceptable level. Focusing on a tendency to use new grammar items and structures I do not see any difference because from this point of view the texts were of a level comparable to that usually achieved in other speaking activities.

- Performance- as for grades, the following scores were awarded:
  - Group 7.A: 6 x Excellent, 3 x Acceptable
  - Group 7.B: 1 x Excellent, 5 x Acceptable, 1 x Unacceptable

Commentary: The main aim of doing the digital story projects with the learners was of course to find out whether this method can be considered effective to encourage speaking skills and that is why the performance aspect of the assessment was the most important one. Out of the nine pupils in the group 7.A the average assessment in the previously mentioned typical short speaking activities was the following: 4 x Excellent, 2 x Acceptable, 1 x Unacceptable. Comparing this assessment to that of the digital story projects there is a visible, although not noticeable difference. But on the other hand the average assessment of the learners involved in the group 7.B was the following: 4 x Acceptable, 3 x Unacceptable. I can state that there was a very noticeable difference in the learners´ performance and spoken discourse. Also to a very positive and encouraging atmosphere that was achieved in the class during the learners´ performances led to more intelligible, better structured and lexically more rich spoken discourse of most of the learners.

Focusing on the speaking skills of the learners of both of the groups involved in the digital story project I can state that digital storytelling can be considered an effective method to encourage those. While assessing the learners´ speaking performance I found out that this method effectiveness is slightly higher when working with learners that are considered less proficient according to their average assessment. The benefits of digital storytelling mentioned in the Theoretical Background part of this thesis appeared to be real and to be helpful to encourage learners´ speaking skills.

The results of both of the commentaries led to the following conclusions. In general learners were highly motivated to create a digital story project because they like to work with

computers and they proved that their IT skills are mostly above the expected level . They also find it interesting to speak about a personal topic, usually about someone they love, and they love to share their personal feelings with the audience. Although they first felt nervous about a public presentation they mostly enjoyed it in the end. Most of the learners involved in the project also showed an interest in creating the digital story again in the future which shows very positive feedback on the whole process.

From the point of view of the assessment of the digital stories and of course the learners´ performance itself I can state that this method presents an effective way to encourage learners´ speaking skills. Although the enthusiasm of the group 7.A, improvement of language skills was much more visible in the case of the group 7.B. Even taking into consideration the different language levels the less proficient group showed more improvement in general and learners´ performances were strongly different than their average spoken discourse in the classes. That led to the conclusion that this method is very effective to encourage students in mixed-ability classes because any of them can reach higher in the language which is very important from the point of view of motivation.

V.   IMPLICATIONS

This chapter deals with the implications for teaching which could be considered recommendations for teachers who would like to try digital storytelling in their own language classes as a way to encourage learners´ speaking skills or just to try something new. Also the limitations of the research and ideas for further research are discussed within this section.

Implications for Teaching

According not only to my experience with digital story telling creation, but also to the results of the research that has been carried out there are several important decisions that the teacher has to make before commencing the project. All of these decisions may influence the effectiveness of the creation process and the quality of the final product itself. Every activity teachers do with their learners demands proper planning, especially if it is a completely new one. Digital storytelling is more specific because of its complexity and the need to involve more teachers, at least the IT specialist, into the project. It is also quite time consuming. The teacher is expected to fully take the role of the guide in the educational process instead of the role of a class leader that is typical for the classical model of education and which still prevails among teachers. But taking a different role is essential for project-oriented education in general.

The first and fundamental decision that has to be made is a topic selection. According to my own experience I would recommend first to discuss the topic with the learners before commencing the project which can be crucial for the process of motivation and the interest or even enthusiasm of learners for working on their digital stories. Teachers must take into consideration the age, language skills and of course also the personal characteristics and interests of the learners. I led the learners to choose between two topics which I would avoid in the future. I find it better to work on the same topic, but the one that has been at least discussed with the learners and that is more or less attractive for all of them.

Of course it is impossible to choose a topic perfectly suitable for every learner, but teachers have to find a way to a compromise. What I find essential while dealing with the topic is to begin with a kind of a personal story, because the emotional element of the digital story can be highly motivating not only for the storyteller but also for the audience. The teachers should keep in mind the fact that what people like most to speak about are themselves. According to the research learners would like to work on digital stories about their interests, role models or hobbies. With learners who are more experienced in the digital storytelling we can move to other kinds of stories that focus on famous persons, interesting

places or important historical events. These demand more of the research activities and they definitely improve more of the skills and competencies of the learners but I think that a personal story is the best suitable to begin with.

Another issue teacher must have a clear vision of are the expectations of how the story should be treated, of what the final product should look like. Teachers must take into consideration the limitations of time, technologies available at school and of course the IT skills of the learners. As I found out the learners´ ability can be of a sufficient (e.g. use of Microsoft PowerPoint software), but in case of more complex digital stories that include more work with multimedia, especially with recording voice-over and making videos, a more detailed preliminary research would be necessary to avoid potential troubles. The advantage of such kind of work is that learners in general like using computers. What is important is the cooperation with the IT specialist at school. Teachers must know what tools are available or possible to acquire for the needs of the project.

Teachers also have to decide whether students will be working individually or in groups. Working in groups offers more possibilities to work on the development of the specific competencies as given by the FEP EE such as communication competency or social and personal competency. But again, according to my experience, I would recommend to let learners to work individually in case they are beginning with digital storytelling.

The next issue teachers have to decide about is the amount of time they are willing to dedicate to the digital story creation in the classes. As I have done the project for the first time I let students to do almost all work at school which was quite time consuming, but I wanted to keep control over the project progress and to find out what are the possible constraints and limitations. Now I know that a large part of the creation can be realized as homework or outside the class. Next time I will trust my learners more to work on the project more individually and in the classes I will spend more time focusing on the language aspect of the stories. But every teacher willing to create digital stories have to find out first what the real abilities of the learners are.

Finally teachers have to decide about the assessment of the project. They must be sure about what concretely will be assessed and in what form. Although teachers with their learners may be accustomed to a particular form of assessment of speaking activities, I recommend to create an assessment rubric with clear given criteria. This kind of assessment should help to achieve objective grading.

I believe that all the decisions mentioned in the previous text have to be made in order to make the digital story project successful and effective. Of course both teachers and their learners differ and there is no average class so certain changes would be necessary.

Limitations of the Research

The most important limitation of the research was the number of completed and submitted questionnaires, especially the difference between completed pre-creation questionnaires and post-creation questionnaires caused by the unexpected absence of some of the learners involved in the project. As there were issues to be compared in both of the questionnaires the results may be not objective enough.

Further Research

My research aimed on the possibility of encouraging learners´ speaking skills through digital storytelling and I compared two groups of different language skills, but those of the same age and level. In future research it would be interesting to choose groups of learners of different ages and levels to be involved in the project. As the cross-curricural subjects are an important issue nowadays and the digital storytelling offers a perfect opportunity to develop those, I think it would be also interesting to connect more subjects and teacher in creating the digital stories, not only IT. After dealing with serious troubles while creating the scripts I came to the conclusion that a cooperation with Czech language teachers may be beneficial to avoid those. Learners could create the story first in the Czech language to find out the differences in the outcomes in the Czech and English languages.

VI. CONCLUSION

As described in the Theoretical Background section of this thesis storytelling presents the most natural form of communication of humankind. As I have already mentioned people prefer to speak mostly about themselves. Together with the possibility of involving pictures and personal photos of people, places or things learners like storytelling can be considered a very effective educational tool. In this thesis I tried to describe all the benefits and advantages this method offers to teachers who are willing to encourage learners´ speaking skills. But creating a digital story project is beneficial not only to help the development of different language skills, it also presents an effective way to support other skills and competencies important in learners´ future lives.

In my research I focused on the effectiveness of digital storytelling and also on its attractiveness for learners. I can state that learners in both groups, one of a higher and one of a lower language ability, found creating a piece of digital story challenging, but attractive and amusing. From this point of view this method seems useful at least to break a possible monotony of the language classes. After assessing the learners´ performances and comparing the results with their average assessment of speaking I am able to state that the method is effective and meaningful. Although learners did not tend to search for and to use new language items on their own that much as I expected, their performances were generally of a higher quality than those reached in other speaking activities. Especially the learners of the less proficient group reached visibly better results. The atmosphere in the class while presenting learners´ digital stories was extraordinary, even unforgettable.

Digital stories demand proper preparation and organization as well as sufficient amount of time to create them. But their potential in encouraging learners´ speaking skills is large and teachers who do not know this method or do not feel sure about using it should try it. I recommend all teachers try to create their own digital story first to see how this specific combination of a personal story, emotions and multimedia works. This is the only way they would be able to motivate their learners enough to become really involved in creating their own stories. Finally I would add that creating digital stories can be helpful to create closer relationships between the learners and the teacher which makes it even more valuable in my opinion.

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Appendix 1

Pre-creation Questionnaire

English version

1) How do you feel before creating a digital story?
   a) I am excited.
   b) I am looking forward.
   c) I am not looking forward.
   d) I am going to make the story only because I have to.
   e) I feel scared, I am afraid of failing.

   Try to explain briefly your answer:

2) Try to explain briefly what led you to choose a concrete topic:

3) Did you speak to the person your story is about before the creation (or someone the place is connected with)? Yes x No

4) If yes, could you briefly describe your meeting (e.g. It was funny/ I found out something new./We looked at old photos together etc.)

5) Was it easy for you to collect the materials for your digital story?
   Yes x No

6) Do you expect that the digital story creation will improve your language skills?
   Yes x No

7) If yes, you expect to improve your (you can choose more answers):
   a) vocabulary
   b) speaking skills (fluency, pronunciation, intelligibility etc.)
   c) writing skills (spelling etc.)
   d) reception skills (better understanding to spoken or written text)
   e) you will be less shy to speak in front of others
   f) your own answer:

8) You were presented the software needed to create the digital story. How well can you work with it?

   a) We use this software normally in IT classes, make presentations or do homework for other subjects. I can use it well enough.

   b) I can´t work with the software very well, but I can do what is expected by teacher.

   c) I am not sure whether I can do everything expected by teacher. I will need help.

   d) I am not able to create a story similar to that presented by teacher.

9) Do you have a computer equipped with MS Office or a freeware equivalent (e.g. LibreOffice, OpenOffice)? Yes x No

10) Do you have internet connection at home? Yes x No

11) If you do not have a computer at home and you need more time than will be given in classes, do you have a possibility to use IT classroom at school before or after your regular lessons? Yes x No

12) Do you have a possibility to make digital photos (a digital camera, mobile phone, tablet equipped with a camera)? Yes x No

13) Did your teacher speak to you about sources of legal music to download and use in your stories? Did he explain you that it is not legal to download, use and publish digital music without the author´s permission. Yes x No

Úvodní dotazník

Česká verze

1) Chystáte se vytvářet vlastní digitální příběh (DS). Jak se cítíte?

   a) Jsem nadšený.

   b) Na práci na DS se těším.

   c) Na práci na DS se netěším.

   d) Budu to dělat jen proto, že musím.

   e) Cítím spíše strach, obavy ze selhání.

   Pokuste se stručně vysvětlit svou odpověď:

2) Popište stručně, co vás vedlo k výběru tématu:

3) Než jste začali na DS pracovat, hovořili jste s člověkem, jehož se váš příběh týká (případně s nímž je spojeno místo, o kterém budete mluvit)? Ano x Ne

4) Pokud ano, můžete toto setkání stručně popsat (např. dozvěděl jsem se něco nového, pobavili jsme se u starých fotografií apod.)?

5) Bylo pro vás jednoduché shromáždit materiály, které jste při přípravě vašeho příběhu potřebovali? Ano x Ne

6) Očekáváte, že vytváření DS zlepší vaše schopnosti v anglickém jazyce? Ano x Ne

7) Pokud ano, očekáváte, že se zlepšíte v oblasti (můžete zvolit více možností, případně vlastní představu):

   a) slovní zásoby

   b) mluveného projevu (plynulost, výslovnost, srozumitelnost atd.)

   c) psaného projevu

   d) schopnosti porozumět mluvenému či psanému textu

   e) ztratíte ostych mluvit anglicky před lidmi

   f) vlastní odpověď:

8) Byl vám představen software, který budete při vytváření DS používat. Jak dobře s ním zvládnete pracovat?

   a) Tento software běžně používáme v hodinách výpočetní techniky, děláme prezentace nebo domácí úkoly na různé předměty. Zvládnu ho používat bez potíží.

   b) Nedokážu software používat perfektně, ale zvládnu, co je pro DS potřeba.

c) Nejsem si jistý, zda dokážu vše, co se ode mě očekává. Budu potřebovat pomoc.

d) Nejsem schopný vytvořit DS v takové podobě, která nám byla představena jako příklad.

9) Máte doma k dispozici počítač vybavený programem MS Office či jeho freeware verzí (např. LibreOffice, OpenOffice)? Ano x Ne

10) Máte doma přístup na internet? Ano x Ne

11) Pokud doma nemáte potřebné vybavení a nebude vám stačit čas, který práci na DS budeme věnovat společně ve škole, můžete používat počítač a další potřebné vybavení ve škole mimo vyučovací hodiny (tedy před či po vyučování)? Ano x Ne

12) Máte možnost pořizovat digitální fotografie (tedy máte k dispozici digitální fotoaparát, tablet či mobilní telefon vybavený fotoaparátem)? Ano x Ne

13) Poučil vás vyučující o zdrojích, odkud lze legálně stáhnout hudební podklad pro svůj DS? Vysvětlil vám také, že nemůžete použít a dále šířit skladby v digitálním formátu bez svolení autora? Ano x Ne

Post-creation Questionnaire

English version

1) How do you feel after creating and presenting your digital stories?

   a) It was fun, I enjoyed it according to my expectations.

   b) First I was not very excited about the project, but I liked it in the end.

   c) I was looking forward, but I did not enjoy the project very much in the end.

   d) It was just like any other task we have to do at school.

   e) If I did not have to, I would not work on the project.

2) Would you like to create another digital story in the future?

   a) Yes

   b) Yes, but with a different topic

   c) No

3) Which topic would be attractive for you?

4) After creating your digital story, which language skills do you think you have improved?

   a) vocabulary

   b) speaking skills (fluency, pronunciation, intelligibility etc.)

   c) writing skills (spelling etc.)

   d) reception skills (better understanding to spoken or written text)

   e) I am less shy to speak in front of others.

   f) Your own answer:

5) How difficult was it for you to use IT technologies?

   a) I was able to do everything I needed. I also learned something new.

   b) I was able to create the digital story in the way I wanted to. I needed some help.

   c) I was not able to create the digital story in the way I wanted to.

   d) Without the help of the teacher (or my classmates) I would not be able to create the digital story even in a very simple way.

6) What did you like most about your classmates´ digital stories?

7) What did you like most about your own digital story?

Závěrečný dotazník

Česká verze

1) Jak se cítíte po vytvoření a prezentaci vašeho digitálního příběhu?

   a) Práce mě bavila tak, jak jsem očekával.

   b) Nejdříve se mi do toho nechtělo, ale práce mě nakonec bavila.

   c) Těšil jsem se, ale bavilo mě to méně, než jsem myslel.

   d) Práce mi přišla jako každý jiný úkol ve škole.

   e) Kdybych nemusel, práci bych nedělal.

2) Lákalo by vás pracovat opět na podobném projektu v budoucnosti?

   a) Ano

   b) Ano, ale s jiným tématem

   c) Ne

3) Jaké téma by pro vás bylo atraktivní?

4) V jakých oblastech jazyka jste se podle Vás zlepšili? */můžete označit více odpovědí/*

   a) ve slovní zásobě

   b) zlepšil se můj mluvený projev (plynulost, výslovnost, srozumitelnost)

   c) zlepšil se můj psaný projev (pravopis)

   d) zlepšila se moje schopnost porozumět psanému či mluvenému textu

   e) už se tolik nebojím mluvit před ostatními

   f) vlastní:

5) Jak náročná pro vás byla práce s IT technologiemi?

   a) Uměl jsem vše, co jsem potřeboval. Dokonce jsem se naučil něco nového.

   b) Moje schopnosti stačili k vytvoření DS, jak jsem si ho představoval. Občas jsem potřeboval s něčím poradit.

   c) Nedokázal jsem udělat DS, aby vypadalo tak, jak jsem si ho představoval.

   d) Bez rady od učitele (či spolužáka) bych DS sám nevytvořil ani ve velmi jednoduché podobě.

6) Co se vám líbilo na DS vašich spolužáků?

7) Co se vám nejvíce povedlo na vašem vlastním DS?

APPENDIX 3

Assessment Rubric

English version

	Excellent	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Task completion	The task completion perfectly met the requirements or was completed even above the required extent.	The task was completed, but does not meet the required content and extent.	The task was not completed.
Using Multimedia	Student used all the potential of available technologies as well as his/her IT knowledge and skills, showed interest in using elements not presented by teacher.	Student used some of the elements and functions presented to him or already known from IT classes.	Student showed lack of IT skills or any interest in creating a multimedia-rich digital story.
Creativity	Student´s digital story was way above the required content, student used his/her own ideas, tried to work with emotions.	Student´s digital story followed the instructions and met the required content, student incorporated some ideas of his/her own.	Student´s digital story did not meet the required content, student did not show any creativity.
Vocabulary	Student used various vocabulary, was not afraid of using new vocabulary items, vocabulary is used with accuracy.	Student used various, but mostly familiar vocabulary with accuracy or with some errors.	Student was not able to use even familiar vocabulary with accuracy.
Grammar	Student used familiar grammar structures correctly, avoided using too easy structures, in case of need consulted using new unknown structures.	Student used familiar grammar structures correctly or with some mistakes.	Student did serious grammar mistakes that made the content unintelligible.
Performance	Student´s performance was perfectly intelligible, fluent and accurate. His pronunciation was excellent. Student kept contact with audience.	Student´s performance was intelligible with some mistakes in pronunciation and fluency.	Student´s performance was unintelligible, it was not fluent, there were serious mistakes in pronunciation.

Hodnocení

Česká verze

	Excellent	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Splnění úkolu	Úkol byl splněn ve stanoveném rozsahu nebo dokonce předčil očekávání.	Úkol byl splněn, ale ne v požadovaném rozsahu.	Úkol nebyl splněn (dokončen, řádně odevzdán).
Využití multimédií	Student využil všech možností, které nabízí použité technologie a software, projevil vlastní iniciativu, která vedla k využití multimédií nad očekávání.	Student využil znalostí a schopností, která má z hodin výpočetní techniky.	Student projevil zásadní nedostatky v oblasati použití výpočetní techniky a nezájem vytvořit projekt využívající multimédia.
Kreativita	Práce předčila očekávání, student projevil vlastní nápady, vytvořil kreativní a emotivní projekt.	Práce splnila požadavky, student zapojil vlastní nápady.	Student neprojevil žádnou kreativitu, nesplnil stanovené požadavky, neprojevil zájem vytvořit originální projekt
Slovní zásoba	Student využil bohaté slovní zásoby, osvojil si novou slovní zásobu a využívá ji správně.	Student využil rozmanitou, ale převážně známou slovní zásobu, použil ji správně s občasnými nedostatky.	Student nebyl schopen využít ani známou slovní zásobu v dostatečné míře a správně.
Gramatika	Student využil známou gramatiku srpávně, nepoužil zbytečně jednoduchých struktur, v případě potřeby konzultoval užití nových gramatických struktur.	Student využil známé gramatické struktury spávně či s občasnými nedostatky.	Student nebyl schopen využít jenoduchých gramatických struktur, chyby měly vliv na srozumitelnost projevu
Provedení	Studentův projev byl plynulý, srozumitelný, se správnou výslovností, udržoval kontakt s publikem.	Studentův projev byl srozumitelný, přijatelně plynulý, občasné nedostatky ve výslovnosti.	Studentův projev byl nesrozumitelný, nedostatečně plynulý, se závažnými nedostatky ve výslovnosti.

SHRNUTÍ

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá využitím obrázků a fotografií jako opory pro rozvoj mluveného projevu žáků, specificky pak metodou vytváření digitálních příběhů. Teoretická část se zabývá definicí základních pojmů a nabízí přehled různých druhů digitálních příběhů či možných forem jejich zpracování. Stěžejní část teoretické části práce je pak věnována výhodám použití této metody ve výuce a to i s ohledem na rozvoj dovedností a kompetencí žáků s ohledem na RVP a možnému rozvoji mezipředmětových vztahů. Poslední část teoretické části práce pak popisuje proces samotné tvorby digitálního příběhu přímo ve výuce, včetně přehledu potřebných technologií a softwaru. Praktická část práce popisuje průběh výzkumu, který proběhl přímo ve vyučování, kdy byl s žáky dvou skupin rozdílných schopností realizován projekt, jehož cílem bylo vytvořit vlastní digitální příběh. Popisuje obě zúčastněné skupiny, průběh realizace projektu, hodnocení výsledků a dotazníků žáků. V závěrečné části práce lze nalézt návrhy pro použití této metody ve výuce a možnosti dalšího výzkumu.