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Thesis

READING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES: DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

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V Plzni dne 20. dubna 2017   …………………………….

                                                          Markéta Súkeníková

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis was to analyse whether teaching aids actually provide teachers with the opportunity of fostering critical thinking and reading. In other words, the main aim of the research was to analyse reading tasks in English textbooks with respect to whether they do or do not support critical approaches. For this purpose four textbooks for secondary education of different publisher were analysed in a great detail. The results show that even though in all the analysed textbooks more than a half of the reading tasks do not exceed knowledge category of Bloom´s Taxonomy, hence, they do not promote critical thinking, there are questions and tasks to be found which actually do so. Having a form of discussion questions and various group works, such tasks enable the comparison of different ideas and opinions, hence, opening a space for critical viewpoint. However, the essential aspect of critical thinking, the metacognition; and the essential aspect of critical reading, the critical analysis of a text, were found to be insufficiently addressed. Therefore, this thesis also offers suggestions to teachers interested in critical approach how to encourage students to read texts critically adopting their personal stance and developing their own thinking abilities through practical examples of critical reading questions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CL	Critical literacy
ESL	English as second language
ELT	English language teaching
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First language
L2	Second language
MŠMT	Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a sportu (Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports)
RVP	Rámcový vzdělávací program (Framework Education Program)
RVP G	Rámcový vzdělávací program pro gymnázia (Framework Education Program for Secondary Education: Grammar Schools)
ŠVP	Školní vzdělávací program (School Curricular Document)
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

I. INTRODUCTION

The search for information in the 21st century certainly does not present such a problem any more due to the speedy development of information technologies. This fact influences the role of information at school. In respect to changing curricular system, information is no longer seen as the goal of education, but instead it serves as a starting point for further work. This belief, that school is no more a place where knowledge is transmitted from a teacher to a learner, but a place where teachers help learners to become educated and independent people through developing their thinking abilities, was the motivation for this research concerning critical thinking in secondary education. The research tries to discover whether English textbooks for secondary education can be used as a scaffolding tool for teachers who are interested in incorporating critical thinking in their classes. More specifically, I have focused on the analysis of reading sections and related reading tasks in terms of presence or absence of critical thinking and reading aspects.

Speaking of the content of this thesis, Theoretical Background introduces readers to the topic by presenting key information concerning critical thinking and reading based on a literature review bonding ideas of a large number of authors addressing this topic. Apart from that it offers the comparison of more traditional and critical approaches to reading. This chapter also analyses Czech curriculum in respect to critical thinking, introduces a methodological approach towards teaching reading, and discusses questions supporting critical thinking in English reading classes.

The practical part of this thesis starts with Methodology Chapter, which describes the process of the research including information about textbook selection, their characterization, statement of the main research questions, and research procedures. The following chapter states and discusses results obtained during the analysis of individual textbooks and ties these findings with information gained through the literary research. The next chapter called Implications discusses the practical value of this research in English classes together with the application of critical viewpoints on some limitations of this research together with suggestions of possible improvements and further research. Conclusion is the closing chapter of this thesis providing a summary of the main ideas of this work.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter, having a form of a literary research, introduces the issue of critical approach in English classes. Based on a large number of studies and publications, this thesis expresses the belief that a critical approach at secondary schools cannot be left unnoticed. In addition to theoretical information introducing critical thinking and reading, this chapter also includes the analysis of Czech Curricular System in respect to requirements of critical teaching approach, comparison of critical and more traditional methods together with examples of possible practical implications of critique in English reading lessons.

Defining Critical Thinking

The emphasis on thinking in education might seem as a concept of the 20th century taking into consideration the number of articles, publications, and conferences which have been concerned with the topic since the end of that century. Nevertheless, it is rather resurgence than a new idea in education as it is a long-standing process in our civilization as Johnatan Baron (1993) states in his essay. As there are numerous publications on teaching thinking in general, there are also countless publications on teaching critical thinking and critical thinking theory. As a result there are many approaches towards critical thinking and the way it is understood. I further discuss a few of them.

Klooster. David Klooster´s (2000) approach to critical thinking is composed of five arguments; those are as follows.

The very first part of his broad definition highlights the fact that critical thinking is an independent thinking. What it means is that each student has to think for himself / herself; students have to be capable of self-contained opinions and convictions. Attention should be paid not to make the mistake of understanding this independent thinking as something necessarily original. A critical thinker does not always have to be original; there is obviously the possibility of coming to the same conclusions as others, but even in such a situation there is still an inner relationship between the student´s values, opinions, convictions, and the thought.

The second component of critical thinking discussed by Klooster (2000) is the importance of seeing information as a starting point, not as a goal of education. Before students can reach the point of applying critical thinking, they need to gain quite a

voluminous amount of information. In other words, application of critical thinking must be established on good knowledge of a particular issue, possibly facts conveyed by teachers. Of course it does not mean that Klooster promotes Herbartism; it means that critical thinking may use knowledge gained by a traditional approach and work with the facts further.

Speaking of the amount of information necessary for applying critical thinking, Brookfield (2012) refers to two approaches towards this issue. One similarly to what has been written above says that it is necessary to provide students with sufficient amount of information before they can think critically about the given theme. As a result this approach inclines to the traditional schooling; this means that at the beginning of a course or a teaching unit basic concepts and facts are transmitted by teachers to students in a traditional manner. The other approach claims that incorporation of critical thinking in education is possible at any level, at least to some extent. A given example is that even at the beginner level in a second language classroom when students start with basic grammar such as the gender of nouns, it is possible to convey information that they are obviously human structures and they are reflections of a given culture in the language. After presenting those two "schools of thought" Brookfield (2000) concludes the chapter by saying that what he sees as more important is not a question when to integrate critical thinking into education (whether in freshman or in senior courses), but a question to what extent it is possible to do so (p. 78).

To return to the previous point, the third aspect of the definition of critical thinking is problem solving. A human being is naturally curious, but as many other experts on education, Klooster also briefly comments on the fact that that the older the students are the lower is their curiosity. Similarly Lipman (2003) mentions this decline in correspondence with Klooster. Lipman (2003) discusses possible reasons for this decline of students´ activity and interest during their school years and as a major factor of this decline he considers the school environment, which he describes as uniformed, uninspiring and often not thought-provoking. One way of improving this unfavourable situation is making the teaching process more personal for the students. It is the teachers´ role then to try to encourage students to take interest in things and problems around them, because only when students see a personal profit and practical application of the topic, then they are really learning and thinking. Problem solving supports critical thinking once students are really engrossed in the problem, when they need to think of various factors, conditions, and points of view.

Brookfield (2012) nevertheless accents that critical thinking and problem solving are not interchangeable terms. There are instances when problem solving does not require critical thinking, for example when students do not consider questions around the problem such as why the problem is formulated the way it is or who formulated the problem etc. Another example of uncritical problem solving is when there is a clear or only one solution to the problem. Problems which require critical thinking are usually those of complex nature with more possible answers.

The forth part of Klooster´s definition considers arguments. Critical thinking involves approaching a question, a problem or an issue from various angles. As there is not a singular solution to a problem, critical thinkers use arguments to support their opinion. An argument then consists of three parts. The first one is an assertion; this is the base for the argument. Arguments are supported by reasons, and reasons are supported by proofs, for example reference to particular places of a text. Critical thinker is supposed to accept that there are other possible approaches towards a given problem which he / she can either adopt or disprove. Such decision making is seen as a core definition of critical thinking by many authors; thinking about the world around us and drawing our own conclusions instead of accepting them blindly.

The fifth approach speaks about a relationship between critical thinking and thinking in society. In the process of reaching perfection in our thoughts we need opinions and ideas of other people. Exchanging arguments, reading, or debating is what improves our thoughts and thinking abilities (Klooster, 2000). In accordance with that opinion, Brookfield (2012) sees critical thinking as a "social learning process" (p.55).

In summary, according to Klooster critical thinking comprises of five aspects, the independent thinking, the information as a starting point and not a goal of critical thinking, the relationship between problem solving and critical thinking, the argument seeking, and the improvement of critical thinking as a social process.

Brookfield. Brookfield (2012, pp. 11-14) describes critical thinking as a process composed of four stages.

The first stage is called "hunting assumptions." Assumptions are principles, often adopted uncritically, on which we base our judgements and actions. In critical thinking it is essential to realize what the particular assumptions influencing our actions are.

Once we are aware of them, it is time to evaluate their relevance and accuracy. Instead of simply accepting unthinkingly the assumption, a critical thinker considers the

evidence for the assumption. It may be something we have experienced, or something which is presented to us by trustworthy authorities, or something on which we performed our own research.

The third step of the critical thinking process is similar to what Klooster (2000) mentions when talking about problem solving; looking at things from different points of view. Applying different viewpoints helps us to realize whether the assumption we hold is or is not relevant and appropriate considering a particular situation.

All the steps described above: hunting assumptions, checking assumptions, and looking at things from different viewpoints lead to the main objective of critical thinking "taking informed actions". From what has been written above, it can be said that informed action is not just an action performed based on our feelings or unsupported evidence, but on the contrary, it is and action based on reliable evidence, evidence which when questioned by others we are able to justify and give good reasons for.

Moor & Parker. Although many approaches to critical thinking may vary according to individual authors, there are also some whose attitudes correspond with each other. Similarly to Brookfield (2012), Moor & Parker (2009) emphasize that the principal idea of critical thinking lies in a thorough consideration whether a claim is true or not. Therefore, they stress that the main focus of a critical thinker is not as much on thinking new thoughts as on evaluating claims, ours or adopted. The evaluation of those claims then has direct impact on our actions. A well considered thought will result in a quality action.

Claims are then one of three elementary components of critical thinking together with issues and arguments. Claims are statements we communicate. They may be true or false; they may be of a more obvious or more complex character and therefore they may require deeper or more superficial evaluation, nevertheless, the examination of those claims is the essential key for critical thinking.

The examination of claims moves the process forward. It is referred to as raising an issue. Simply speaking, issue is a question whether a claim is true or false; in other words we are concerned in "what is raised when a claim is called into question" (Moor & Parker, 2009, p. 22).

The final stage is where arguments are applied. This is a moment when we are deciding whether a claim is true or false by giving reasons for or against it. The topic concerning theory of arguments is a broad one, but it is not the aim of the thesis.

Dewey. John Dewey, often referred to as the father of the modern critical thinking movement (Fisher, 2001), defines critical thinking as "Active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1909, p. 9).

Glaser. Comparing Dewey´s definition to Edward Glaser´s, who is the co-author of the critical thinking test *Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal*, it is obvious that the second one is largely built on the bases of the first one. Glaser (1941) describes critical thinking as follows: "critical thinking calls for a persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports it and the further conclusions to which it tends."

The essential idea of the definitions written by Dewey and Glaser is that when applying critical thinking, we should consider the underlying reasons for our beliefs; the only difference being that Dewey speaks of "grounds" while Glaser speaks of "evidence". The second part of the definitions then refers to the importance of considering possible consequences of our thoughts and beliefs (Fisher, 2001).

Paul, R. & Elder. The final definition focuses on a characteristic of critical thinking that is generally agreed on by most teachers and researches involved in the discipline; critical thinking is developed through metacognition, "thinking about one´s thinking" (Fisher, 2001, p. 5). Paul & Elder (2008) describe critical thinking as "the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it" (p. 2).

Critical Thinking in English Language Classes

When talking about incorporating critical thinking into a curriculum, usually there are two approaches to be found; one way of promoting it is in separate courses. The other way is by including and integrating aspects of critical thinking into standard courses. The third way, often neglected, is to consider doing both (Ennis, 1997). This section discusses the second possibility; incorporating critical thinking in English language classres as it is seen as one of the main foreign language teacher´s tasks (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011). Reading an introduction to *Global Advanced Teacher´s Book* we are given three main reasons for enhancing critical thinking in English as a second language classroom (ESL). Firstly, critical thinking enables deeper involvement of students in practising reading skills and offers them the possibility of deeper understanding of a text. Secondly, critical

thinking improves students´ abilities to actively participate in discussions, and to promote their writing skills. Thirdly, practising critical thinking skills should exceed walls of the classroom and have positive effect on students´ life in society. They should benefit from critical thinking skills and become informed citizens who would gain more information from everyday newspaper articles, magazines and such, and approach these by applying skills they were introduced to at schools (Watkins, 2012).

Types of materials which are used in language classes play an important role in enhancing critical thinking. Types of materials that teacher should focus on are those which give space for analysis, discussion, argumentations, etc. In other words, materials should motivate students for active learning and participation in the class; this can be only accomplished when a material speaks to the students. Nevertheless, the importance of the right choice of a material is not completely sufficient; it should be followed by the right choice of activities which promote students´ activity. Skills that should be practised are e.g. recognizing main ideas, summarizing, evaluating, classifying, interpreting (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011), note taking, or formulating implicit meaning rather than basic multiple choice or Yes / No questions (Iakovos, 2011). Similarly Halvorsen (2005) states that only by repeating of what students have learnt from a reading or listening activity is not sufficient. Teachers should try to make students deeply involved in the content of a material; otherwise they indirectly say that the content and the meaning of a material are not really of such importance.

Apart from particular teaching strategies and activities which enhance critical thinking, it is also important to accent conditions which enable such an approach. This means that it is the teacher´s role to establish a non-threatening atmosphere in which students can openly express their ideas and in which challenging thoughts are actually provoked (Iakovos, 2011).

Czech Curricular System

Since the last decade of the 20th century the Czech educational system has undergone a fundamental reform. After the year 1989 the unified curriculum was exposed to changes leading to a new quality curriculum reflective of the changes in the society. There are two levels, a state level and a school level. State level documents are called "rámcové vzdělávací programy" abbreviated as RVP and determine the mandatory framework of pre-school, elementary, and secondary education. The existence of the second level, the school level of curricular documents called "školní vzdělávací programy"

abbreviated as ŠVP, represents an important feature of the documents which Skopečková (2010) refers to as "participatory". Designing particular content of the documents, individual schools are given huge autonomy in deciding upon methods and procedures of reaching the defined educational goals formulated in RVP (Skopečková, 2010).

For further description the curricular document RVP G (Framework Education Programme for Secondary General Education: Grammar Schools) has been chosen as it expects the highest demands on tuition at secondary education. The content in RVP G is divided into 8 domains according to particular subjects called "vzdělávací oblasti" (Educational Areas); the first one being "Language and Language Communication" including the Czech language and foreign languages. The most important part of each subject characteristic is the section outlining what students are supposed to achieve through their studies; it is up to each school to choose the way these goals will be reached. Apart from individual subject groups there are also broader topics which are meant to be incorporated into all subjects. This integration should have a positive impact on the development of key competencies. These topics such as "Multicultural, Environmental, or Media Education" are referred to as "průřezová témata" (Cross-Curricular Subjects). The last section of RVP G which must not be omitted is concerned with Key Competencies of students, "klíčové competence". The Key Competencies can be understood as a set of knowledge, abilities, skills, and values which students should acquire and internalize throughout their studies providing their incorporation in every subject and obviously teachers´ help and support (Balada et al., 2007).

Critical thinking in Czech curriculum. As it has been mentioned above, the competencies should be supported in all subjects, therefore inevitably in English classes. There are six Key Competencies and in each of them we can find emphasis on promoting critical thinking. The following examples are taken from Balada et al. (2007, pp. 8-10).

In Learning Competency, we can read "student approaches information sources critically, processes information creatively and employs it in his/her study and practice". This is what was discussed in the section Defining Critical Thinking when mentioning Klooster´s definition. He said that critical thinker should not use information as a goal of educational process, but as a starting point. RVP G puts this idea into practice. Similarly, Klooster (2000) speaks of a critical thinker as a person with self-contained opinions and thoughts; RVP G requires a student to "evaluates his/her progress when achieving the

objectives of his/her learning and work critically [...] draws lessons from his/her successes as well as mistakes for further work" (Balada et al., 2007, p. 9).

The second competency referred to as Problem-Solving Competency necessarily requires critical thinking. According to RVP G a student "applies critical, analytical and creative thinking", "interprets critically the acquired knowledge and findings and verifies them, finds arguments and evidence for his/her claims", and "is open to using various methods when solving problems" (Balada et al., 2007, p. 9). To compare these statements again with authors of critical thinking theory, both Brookfield (2012) and Klooster (2000) highlight the importance of looking at a problem from different points of view and applying critical thinking if required.

Even though, the third competence, called Communication Competency, does not explicitly use the word "critical" in its definitions, it is believed that for correct interpretation of received information and pragmatic argumentation (Balada et al., 2007) a student must apply critical thinking.

The fourth and fifth competences, Social and Personal Competency and Civic Competency respectively expect students to "decide on the basis of his/her own judgement, resist social and media pressure" and "review the events and development of public life [...] take and defend informed stances and acts" (Balada et al., 2007, pp. 10-11). Similarly, as in number three, there is no explicit declaration of applying critical thinking, but when reading Brookfield (2012) or Baron (1993) it is obvious that to reach these goals, one must apply a critical thought.

The last competence, referred to as Entrepreneurial Competency, literally requires students to think critically. They are supposed to "acquire and critically assesses information on educational and work opportunities" as well as "endeavour to attain set objectives, continuously revise and critically evaluate the attained results", and "critically evaluates the risks related to making decisions in real-life situations" (Balada et al., 2007, p. 11).

In summary, according to the requirements stated in RVP G students are among others expected to be able to think independently, solve problems effectively, approach critically information sources, support their arguments, take informed actions and many others. To acquire perfection, these skills should be continuously practised in all subjects including English language classes (Balada et al., 2007).

Reading

The following section is discussing L2 (second language) teaching and learning of reading taking information from books focused on didactics discussing different types of reading, reading skills, methodological model etc. Following sections concerning critical literacy and critical reading allow us to get slightly further then L2 reading. In other words the literature discussing this topic combines materials dealing with L1 (first language) as well as L2 teaching and learning.

Together with listening, reading ranks among receptive skills. Describing reading as a receptive skill may incorrectly evoke the idea of students´ passivity in a class; therefore, it is important to comment on the term "receptive" to prevent possible misinterpretations. In contrast to speaking or writing in which students actively produce the language, in reading students "only" identify language items. Nevertheless, being a two-stage process, nearly simultaneously with visual identification of the language items, reading necessarily involves comprehension of the ideas conveyed by the language items. According to the description above, reading is a process formed of two stages: identification of language items and meaning comprehension of individual language items as well as the whole text (Skopečková, 2010). Therefore, reading of individual words without understanding the idea they convey is nothing more than "decoding"; accurate reading inevitably involves reading and understanding (Ur, 2012, p. 133).

Unlike listening, reading is a receptive skill which offers one significant advantage, an individual pace of a reader. Listeners have no other option but to adapt to the pace of the speaker, while readers have the option of choosing their own tempo (Harmer, 1991). This is why Ur (2012) promotes silent reading in language classes rather than reading aloud. When teachers ask students to read aloud they are actually withholding the advantage of individual pace from students.

Undoubtedly, we would find many reasons why students should be encouraged to read English texts. Harmer (2007) speaks of two main categories; one is beneficial to the student´s personal life, the other is beneficial to their language acquisition. The reasons in the first category are those such as that reading English texts may have positive impact on students´ further studies and carriers or it may simply play the role of a joyful reading. Speaking of the second category, reading improves students´ writing abilities, spelling and vocabulary knowledge.

Extensive and intensive reading. In order to help students to develop their reading abilities properly and at the same time to build a positive approach to the written word, teachers should encourage students in extensive and intensive reading (Harmer, 2007). Expressions reading for fluency and reading for accuracy are also to be found in literature engaged with teaching reading synonymic to extensive and intensive reading, respectively (Skopečková, 2010).

In general, extensive reading is understood as something which happens outside the classroom: reading novels, articles, websites, etc., but it does not always have to be so. Although, unlike in intensive reading, in extensive reading it should be a student´s choice what he / she shall read; not every child is a reader on its own; therefore, it is one of the teacher´s task to encourage students to read showing them its possible merits and to approach it as a beneficial activity (Harmer, 2007). When approaching extensive reading as an activity which happens outside the classroom, a teacher can later establish some extensive reading tasks in the classroom such as telling the classmates about a book they find interesting or writing reviews, diaries etc. As it is suggested above, extensive reading can also take place in the classroom. Either a teacher can set aside some time for students to read what they are interested in be it a book from a school library, their own literature or various magazines brought by a teacher or if he / she can afford it, set aside one whole lesson a week for extensive reading (Scrivener, 2011).

Intensive reading on the other hand primarily takes place in the classroom and unlike in extensive reading a text is chosen by a teacher. Reading as such is then followed by various activities which can focus on meaning, grammar, vocabulary, and others. Focusing on intensive reading teachers also pay particular attention to development of different reading skills (Hammer, 2007).

Reading skills. For successful understanding of a text students need to practise and develop special reading skills. Different situations require different reading approaches. In real life sometimes we just need to go quickly through a text and find a piece of information we are interested in; sometimes we quickly run across a newspaper article to get the general idea of it; and sometimes we read through a text several times in detail to really understand the message and particular arguments of the author. In correspondence with these examples students at school should be exposed to practise different types of reading skills: scanning, skimming, and reading for detailed comprehension, respectively (Harmer, 1991).

When a reading task is designed so that it asks students to find just a specific piece of information, a reading skill called scanning is practised. This does not mean that other information must be completely neglected; students may notice it but only at speed. Reading and looking up every single unfamiliar word would actually prevent them from completing the task successfully.

The second reading skill mentioned above is referred to as skimming. This skill is useful when we need to get a general idea of what a text is about. Therefore, students are trained at extracting the main ideas of a text, or in other words getting a general overview without being interested in too much detail within a short time.

The third type of reading is called reading for detailed comprehension. This focuses students´ mind on detailed information, specific language use, or what is the author precisely trying to say.

To summarize this section, two reading skills scanning and skimming are often emphasized in language classrooms, but a language teacher should not neglect also activities focusing on reading for detailed comprehension and choose diverse materials and activities which promote these reading skills (Harmer, 2007).

Types of texts in language classes. In a field of the English language teaching a text is defined as "a piece of writing or speech which we use for language learning" (Ur, 2012, p. 28).

Distinguishing monological and dialogical texts is one of the criteria applied in language classes. Monological texts are usually used as a source of information for a topic and as a base for further activities: discussions, debates, etc.; dialogical texts are often used as a source for further speaking activities. It should be mentioned that such a strict division is rather simplified as not infrequently in real life situation one encounters a combination of both (Skopečková, 2010).

A very frequently discussed topic is concerning the authenticity of a text. Authentic texts are created by native speakers for themselves, not for second language learners. This is why such texts are usually used by advanced learners later in their studies when they are able to understand them (Skopečková, 2010). Reflecting the real, authentic language, they may seem as the only correct type of texts that students should work with; but in order to avoid demoralization caused by the difficulty of a text, beginner students usually start working with non-authentic or created text structured in a way to promote the target language. In result, these texts are often artificial, unvaried and unlikely to reflect real-life

situations. However, it is worth mentioning that rather than authenticity or non-authenticity of a text what is seen as more important is trying to seek texts which are actually realistic models of written English (Harmer, 1991). Possible solution can be found in semi-authentic texts which are created identically as authentic texts by and for native speakers, but later are adapted to the needs and particular level of language learners (Skopečková, 2010).

Methodological model for teaching reading. There is always some motivation for students when reading outside the classroom and therefore it seen as essential to motivate students when reading in the classroom and give them purposeful reasons for doing so. In real life we often read because we either know that it interests us or we expect that such a topic will interest us. Sometimes we read because we find it useful; this concerns various instructions, manuals or regulations. In summary, we read because we have a desire to read, purpose for doing so, or we have some expectations and we wonder whether the content of a text will meet our expectations. In reading lessons it is one of the things that a teacher should consider when designing a lesson plan. In other words: "desire, purpose, and expectations have important methodological implications for language learning" (Harmer, 1991, p. 183).

The model for teaching receptive skills is taken from Harmer (1991, p. 189) and is introduced as a recommended procedure, but it is not supposed to be strictly followed in all circumstances. The first stage is referred to as lead-in stage. In relation to the previous paragraph, the role of this stage is to raise students´ interest in reading and create some expectations which later will or will not be met. In the next stage a teacher directs comprehension task; it means that a teacher explains the purpose of reading and comments on the reading skills which students are expected to perform. Third step is when students read for the task and after the actual performance it is again teacher's role to direct feedback on their work. The last stage consists of text-related task directed by a teacher. This activity should be performed to show that practising particular reading skill is not meant for an end in itself but for integration with others. Of course that particular realization in a lesson does not have to take such a linear direction and it may divert according to specific situations. After successful accomplishment of the first task a teacher may want to practise also another reading skill with the same text and thus go back to stage two once again before moving to the text-related task. In a different class the original task might be too difficult for students and for reasons of clarification a teacher may go to stage two once again simply to make sure everyone completed the task successfully before the

text-related task. Instead of summarizing what has been written about the methodological model for teaching reading, below there is a clear *Graph 1* displaying the model taken from Jeremy Harmer *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (p. 190).

Graph 1: Methodological model for teaching English
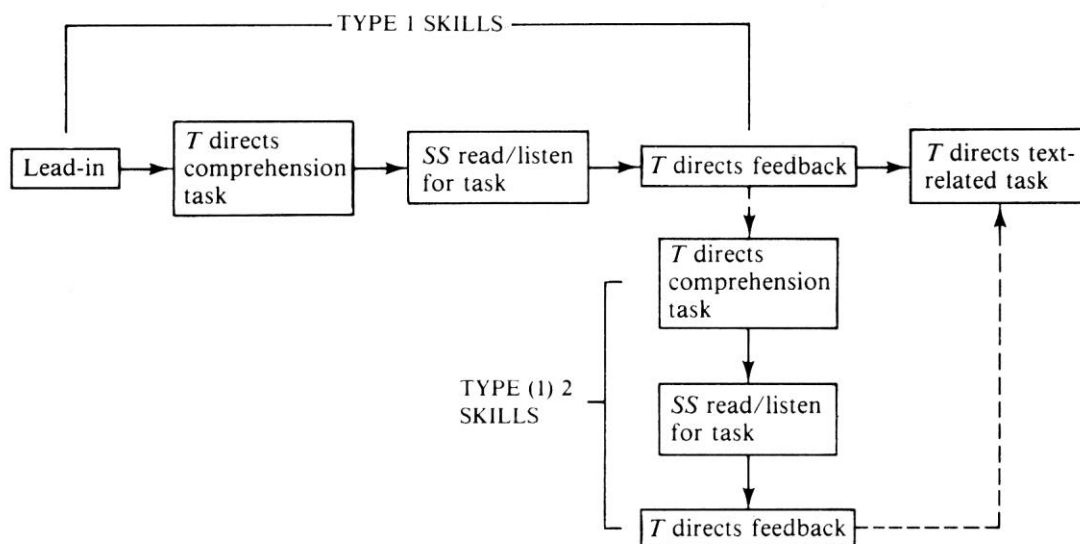
Critical Literacy

Mastery of reading and writing of printed texts is what can be in the traditional sense described by the term literacy. With the steep development of information technology, other forms of media have emerged and literacy concerns many other forms apart from the printed ones such as visual, aural, digital and many others. Having its roots partially in critical social theory, critical literacy (CL) focuses on addressing social, cultural, political relations, and power trying to make justice to those who are experiencing injustice. By analysis and critiques of texts and proposing alterations, CL encourages equitable knowledge and social conditions at school as well as in the society (Luke & Dooley, 2009).

Defining critical literacy. If literacy is understood as the ability of decoding and understanding a text, critical literacy tries to go one step further. As it is believed that not everything written in newspapers, internet sources etc. can be taken uncritically as an objective truth, it is seen essential to incorporate critical literacy instructions into ESL

classes. As a result, application of critical literacy skills requires critical and analytical thinking while reading and interpreting texts together with questioning social contexts, information, and purposes incorporated in them (Van Duzer & Cunningham Florez, 1999).

Similarly Burns & Hood (1998) describe the focus of critical literacy as the ability to question the impact of political and ideological relations upon the writer as well as the reader. Nevertheless, one aspect of critical literacy has been still left unnoticed; the text in relation to student´s life and experience. Both Abednia (2015) and Izadinia & Abednia (2010) highlight that except from encouraging students to ask questions focusing on the purpose of the text, its favoured readers, the manner in which it is written, its possible effects, etc. one of the most important questions is how the text speaks to them. Once students apply their own experience in communication with a text they are actively taking part in its construction.

To conclude the discussion upon this topic, three rules stated by Callison (2003, p. 1) are enclosed. Rule number one is: "Don´t believe everything you read". Rule number two offers a personal advice: "Don´t read only what you already believe". Finally, rule number three states: "Through critical selection of what you read, hear, and observe, apply actions to change yourself and society´s status quo in order to move closer to the common good".

Critical vs. non-critical approach. Language teaching and teaching in general is always shaped according to outer conditions and requirements. Abednia (2015, p. 78) discusses the problem of teaching reading as it is very often "test-oriented". This means that teaching reading is usually structured in correspondence with international English tests such as TOEFL or IELTS and students are trained at such tasks as multiple choice, gap-filling exercises, matching exercises, etc. This "test-oriented" ideology results from the necessity of testing and assessing language proficiency of non-native English speakers who are interested in studying or living in English speaking countries. Language proficiency of such applicants is then expressed in a quantitative manner, a mark, percentage etc. Abednia (2015) concludes that such an approach perhaps focuses on developing language skills, although it is not infrequent that it leads into teaching test techniques rather than language itself, but what is missing is promoting students' critical awareness. This approach is far from helping students to become critical readers. Illustrating this theory with a practical example, Correia (2006) describes a moment in an

ESL when she as a teacher realized the necessity of revaluation of the frequently used traditional reading tasks. The crucial moment came when one of her students calculated over 120 true-false statements done in 5 classes which was approximately 500 true-false statements a month. during a comprehension reading activity. It is highly unlikely that such activities foster critical thinking and help students to become critical readers.

Promoting critical approach, Abednia (2015) claims that unlike critical ones non-critical approaches are likely to result in students´ passive acceptance of information and knowledge transmitted by teachers. Situations in classes when students are not actually supported to active partnership, what more they find themselves in a position of quiet acceptance and dependency on teacher´s instructions and information, are similar to what Freire (2005) refers to as "culture of silence". With the aim of avoiding such a scheme, the goal of critical literacy is to get students involved deeply in the task and help them to question and challenge information they find in the text (Abednia, 2015).

Reasons for critical literacy in ESL classes. Zhang (2015) introduces in his article "Learning Critical Literacy in ESL Classrooms" four reasons which are essential for incorporating the critical literacy approach in ESL classes. The first reason is of course dealing with the meaning of a text. Next to explicit meaning which is easily observable, Zhang (2015) emphasises the implicit meaning which is behind the explicit information. Critical literacy approach is what helps learners to understand more deeply the cultural, social, and personal meaning within a text. The second reason focuses on the presence of ideological subtexts in a piece of work. Although not always consciously implemented by author, a text is always shaped according to a particular social viewpoint and it is essential that students are able to discover the ideologies which are affecting author´s ideas and the language used. Discussing the third reason, Zhang (2015) interlinks changes in language with social changes saying that students should be able to understand the relationship between these two, the language practice and social condition. The author argues for example that this tendency is connected to the shift from explicit approaches of social control to implicit approaches, such as by force to language practice. Finally, even though Zhang (2015) realizes that introducing CL in ESL classes must be done cautiously considering the revaluation of the taken for grantedness of students´ social background, he emphasizes that it cannot be omitted in contemporary international and multicultural world.

The reasons for incorporation CL in ESL classes presented by Zhang (2015) are in agreement with Wallace (1998) when she states that the English language, being a tool for international communication, should challenge its users to reflect critically on ideologies, cultural, and social relations present within a text. In addition to this idea, Wallace (1998, p. 56) introduces a term "metacritical awareness". This characteristic of critical literacy should make the students realize that by applying the discussed approach they are doing more than simply dealing with "text features and literacy behaviour". The key moment comes when students realize what their reactions and interpretations to text features are and moreover, in what relations are their reactions and interpretations with those of their classmates or colleagues.

Critical reading

Author – text – reader. Similarly to the traditional approach in conventional reading even in critical linguistics, a text is often approached to not from the point of view of its production and interpretation; rather than a process it is approached to simply as a product. Due to this insufficiency, Wallace (1998) highlights the importance of discussing the mutually dependent relationship between author – text – reader as basis for better understanding of key ideas in critical reading.

A role of a reader has changed many times in concordance with the development of new theories in the linguistics. From the Structuralist viewpoint of a reader as a passive receptor of meaning which is given in a text without any need of further inquiry, linguists of early critical approach stood in contrast to this opinion and regarded a reader as an active participant discovering the meaning in a text. Interactive is the adjective used characterising a reader in more recent studies expressing the idea that what a reader gains from a text is equally important as what he / she brings to it. In short, understanding of reading has undergone a transition in the direction of "extracting from to interacting with" both the author and the text (Wallace, 1998, p. 37). At this point it is relevant to apply this linguistic theory into teaching practice and underline that learners can only make a personal contribution to a text if they are given a space for it. Under the condition of inappropriate atmosphere in a class or introduction of a text, it is highly unlikely that students will feel invited to apply critical thinking on a reading task.

It is also the text itself in which information may be shaped by author´s language choice so that it prevents interactive approach to a text to some readers. Wallace (1998, p. 36) argues that it is in author´s power to structure a text in a way that it will imply a

specific way in which a text should be understood. These preferred interpretations then favour certain types of readers which are referred to as "model readers"; those which are put on a side may differ in social background, gender, or nationality. This is the moment where the problematic issue of second language readers arises. Considered linguistically and culturally ineligible, L2 readers are often put into an inferior position both by teachers and authors of materials. Critical reading approach tries to turn these "obstacles" into an advantage; e. g. coming from a different cultural background can be favourable as it brings fresh and different personal experience into interpretations of a text in contrast to a model reader who is likely to share author´s opinion and therefore finding it harder to bring new concepts into discussion over a text slipping to cooperative reading.

To summarize what has been written above, it is necessary to say that by applying this dialogical communication between reader and author via text teachers can foster critical thinking and critical reading of a text. Commenting on possible problems of L2 readers in terms of their different social and cultural background, critical reading approach should actually utilize them and turn them into advantages of L2 readers over the model readers; this can bring fresh personal concepts into the analysis and interpretation of a text. Abednia (2015, p. 78) states that critical reading focuses among others on analysis and interpretation of a text in correspondence with one´s own personal experience, hence the process shifts from "mere meaning-seeking to self-seeking".

Critical reading approach. According to McDonald (2004) critical reading requires deeper analysis of a text than traditional reading approaches which focus usually on "word recognition, information processing, and personal responses" (p. 18). Tomasek (2009) offers particular examples for clarification of these terms. A typical task for students when talking about information processing is e.g. summarizing the content of a text or its main ideas; a task promoting personal response may take the shape of expressing students´ feelings and first impressions after reading a text. When applying critique in reading tasks, students may approach a text in several possible ways. The first possible way is to ask students to identify problems and pose questions emerging from a text. The second way is not only to recognize important information in a text, but also to offer possible interpretations. As a follow-up to this step, students can examine their present assumptions and their possible implications with their previous knowledge. Lastly, they should use the obtained information from a text and results of prior reflections for effective

discussions with their classmates and suggestion of possible solutions to the questions and problems arising from the reading (Tomasek, 2009).

In view of Paul & Elder´s (2008) definition of critical thinking Tomasek (2009) suggests that apart from analysis and evaluation of a text, critical reader should always focus on improving his / her thinking abilities. This is why many authors of articles on critical reading refer to this concept as higher-order reading comprehension, thus it naturally follows that in critical reading one should apply higher-order thinking skills by approaching a text in an analytical way, making inferences and reading a text critically by comparing its content to personal beliefs and values (Khabiri & Pakzad, 2012).

According to Brookfield (2012) one of the main aims of critical reading is to teach students to approach a text with a more sceptical viewpoint on information presented by the author and rise questions which would help to rethink those concepts earlier taken for granted. The critical analysis of a text then comprises of three steps: "understanding the text in terms the author sets, conducting a critical analysis of the text, and taking a position" (pp. 135-141). Understanding the text in terms the author sets is logically the first step of any critical analysis as students need to understand the author´s purpose of writing the text, what he / she is trying to accomplish, and what are the basic arguments used in the text. In the next step, conducting a critical analysis of the text, students apply their critical thinking abilities such as: what are the assumptions the author is working with; which possible viewpoints are neglected; whether there are any discrepancies in text information; what are the strongest and weakest arguments; whether the ideas presented are influenced by author´s bias; and whether the author clarifies his views with suitable examples. Similarly as critical thinking, according to Brookfield, leads to taking informed actions, critical reading leads to taking a position which is what he sees as the main difference between conventional and critical reading. Critical readers are able to adopt their personal stance towards the content of the text.

Comparison of conventional and critical reading. In "Critical Language Awareness in the Foreign Language Classroom Wallace" (1998) offers a comparison of what she refers to as conventional reading and critical reading. It should be clarified, that the occurrence of the comparison in this thesis should not indicate insufficiency or unsuitability of conventional reading approach in ESL classes. Although the manner in which some aspects of conventional reading are presented may sound offensive, this section should enable language teachers a space for comparison and evaluation of the

merits of critical reading when incorporated into standard language teaching. In this confrontation Wallace (1998, p. 47) discusses three aspects in both approaches: principles, purposes, and practice.

Starting with principles, the first thing discussed is the conventional approach to reading as a skill together with writing, listening, and speaking which stresses separate skills needed to be taught. What is seen as a positive change in the attitude towards reading is the emphasis on strategies which readers can use in purpose of gaining meaning of a text. In comparison to critical reading though there is still the absence of a more communal approach to a text as conventional reading focuses more on individual reactions to a text. This communal approach in critical reading was mentioned e.g. by Tomasek (2009).

Wallace´s (1998) second assumption is that L2 readers are often regarded disadvantaged when reading authentic texts written by L1 writers to L1 readers. The critical reading approach actually turns this "disadvantage" into an advantage. Written for their own preferred readership, texts may invite their readers into preferred and affirmative reading. L2 readers, unlike L1 readers, coming from different culture are more likely to see the author´s bias or ideological subtexts of a piece of writing, which Brookfield (2012) describes as a necessary part of critical text analysis.

Thirdly, focus is given to the position of author in terms of his / her formation of a meaning. While in conventional reading the author's stance to a meaning is what shapes the course of discussion, critical reading does not approach the author´s position as the only to take into consideration. Nevertheless, this does not mean that any interpretation a student offers is highly agreeable; any argument should be based on or put into contrast with specific examples from a text.

Fourthly, although Wallace (1998) does not exclude the possibility of occasional application of critique in conventional reading, she argues that it focuses mainly on biased logic or arguments in text, but omits ideological attitudes behind them.

Another issue to be discussed is the purposes of reading in foreign language classes. Wallace (1998) believes that there has been a positive transition from trying to find the correct answer in a text in conventional reading to trying to reach a dialogue with the author. The main purpose of conventional reading is than understood as a reading with two possible goals, either reading for information or reading for enjoyment, which is what has been mentioned in the section Reading as intensive or extensive reading (Harmer, 2007) or reading for accuracy or fluency by Skopečková (2010). The purpose of L2 conventional

reading described by Wallace is seen as getting the maximum information or enjoyment of a text without excessive expenditure of energy.

Wallace´s (1998) purposes of critical reading are: linguistic, critical, and cultural. Linguistic ones should foster in students the awareness of language choice by which authors can impose certain ideologies on a reader. Although it might seem too complicated for L2 readers, realizing that they are usually well trained in grammatical knowledge, this concept is not as troublesome as it might seem. Critical purposes should encourage students to be able to read "between the lines" and construct valid arguments. Students should have the opportunity to talk not only about ideas and meanings of a text, but also about their implications, connect a text meaning with their lives and question the content of a text. For this purpose discussions in the classroom are highly recommended. Finally, cultural aims should give students the possibility to see into different cultural assumptions and to think of what these have in common and in which ways they differ.

Lastly, Wallace (1998) compares the practice of conventional and critical reading. In teaching conventional reading she mentions another positive shift from working with a text isolated from its context into contextually based reading. This approach is related to pre / while / post reading methodological procedure which is in correspondence what is described in the section Reading by Harmer (1991). The aim is to try to create a reading situation as close to real-life reading as possible. In critical reading the practice focuses on students´ ability to apply critical perspectives to a text and to be able to relate their findings to other texts they have come to contact with both in their indigenous environment as well as with texts from different cultural backgrounds (Wallace, 1998).

Limitations of critical reading. The section Critical vs. Non-critical Approach discussed the reasons for promoting critical approach in ESL classrooms offering the problematic test-oriented ideology of language learning which in the worst case fosters learning test techniques rather than language knowledge, let alone critical thinking. Although critical reading is unquestionably an integral part of language learning, it does not mean that teachers should focus strictly on this approach totally neglecting their previous teaching practice. Even though a promoter of critical reading, McDaniel (2004) mentions that while it is essential to help students become critical thinkers and readers, in English classes teachers are also expected to practise skills and strategies for testing as well and standard outcomes defined in syllabi.

According to McDaniel (2004) teachers trying to incorporate critique in their classes may encounter some troubles and prejudices. Voices against critical approach claim that such an approach, proclaiming questioning and different viewpoint, actually causes damage to the authority of teachers and adults in general. The truth is that critical reading and critical thinking means withdrawing the teacher´s position as an undisputable authority and accepting openness and discussion. The essential change in critical reading taking the form of "speaking with instead of for students" may cause aversion as it infringes the status quo (p. 480). However, if students are not supported to consider questions concerning what is the current state of things, who benefits from them, how things could be changed etc. we are far from fostering thoughtful students and future citizens.

Zhang (2015) also discusses other problems connected to critical thinking and reading in ESL classes. The first issue concerns insufficient background knowledge of historical, social, and cultural aspects. Of course, this is not an insoluble problem as students can be lead to gain relevant knowledge by teachers. Nevertheless, this view is actually in contrast to what was described earlier: that different cultural backgrounds of students in ESL classes are actually seen as an advantage as they bring new and fresh insights into the meanings of a text (Wallace, 1998). The second issue relates particularly to students of a lower level of English proficiency; these students may tend to use L1 rather than L2 in group discussions, pair work etc. during tasks related to the reading. In relation to this matter, Zhang (2015) reflects on the fact that many educationalists believe that L1 plays an important role in acquiring new language and offers learners necessary scaffolding, thus supports students' ability to apply critique to presented texts. Such considerations, however, should not result in teachers´ negligence of the pre-reading stage in which students should be introduced relevant L2 vocabulary and language structures necessary for successful completion of a task.

Textbooks

An examination of literature on textbooks leads to the finding that there are various views and opinions upon the topic, very often contradictory. Nevertheless, whatever our approach is, it is undisputable that textbooks are both for students and teachers a tangible centre of ELT classes (Sheldon, 1988). What is more, a textbook is often used as a syllabus itself and teachers are expected to cover certain number of units in a limited time period (Harmer, 1991).

The integration of a textbook in a classroom may be greatly beneficial for both the students and the teacher. Ur (2012), similarly to Harmer (1991), claims that the presence of a textbook is advantageous in a way that it gives a structure to the course itself. It clearly shows the direction and destination of a course and a sense of satisfaction when it is known what has been already achieved and what is to be expected. Furthermore, a textbook offering ready-made material eases teacher´s preparation for a class as he / she does not have to spend so much time looking for appropriate original materials; for those teachers just beginning their careers it also represents support and scaffolding. One more positive aspect of textbook use should not be forgotten: the autonomy it gives to students. Students should be lead to autonomy and having a textbook enables them to organize their own self-study outside the classroom.

In spite of the prevailing concordance in Ur´s and Harmer´s views, there is one aspect which is not agreed on; it concerns the appropriateness of topics in textbooks. While Harmer (1991) claims that a quality textbook offers topical and interesting materials, Ur (2012) holds a more sceptical viewpoint saying that topics in textbooks are likely to be out of date and not necessarily appropriate to the needs of a particular classroom. Moreover, some topics may be not only irrelevant to the learning needs, but may be also culturally inappropriate which leads to uncomfortable feeling both in the students and the teacher. Hence, she promotes materials chosen by teachers themselves which better meet goals of the lecture and are suitable for individual needs of the classroom. Another disadvantage both authors, Ur and Harmer, agree on is the problematic issue of a textbook following the same pattern in each unit leading into a stereotypical scheme of each lesson. Following a book uncritically then leads to monotonous lessons suppressing teacher´s personal contribution towards teaching.

For the reasons mentioned above, teachers should use a textbook as a profitable basis for their classrooms, but should avoid seeing it as the only possible choice and approach to teaching. What Ur (2012) highlights is the selectiveness, critique, and own judgement which should be always applied when designing a lesson using a textbook.

Questions Promoting Critical Thinking and Critical Reading

Questions in English language classes. According to Ur (2012) Questioning, not necessarily having an interrogative form, is the most typical activation technique in teaching used for eliciting students´ responses. In theory, questions should motivate, check

students´ knowledge, and provoke thinking abilities; in practise questions often reduce thinking activity instead of promoting it according to Fisher (2011). Further, he claims that effective questioning supporting thinking skills is what changes schools from places where teaching happens into places where learning happens.

Ur (2012) discusses the purposes of questions in language classes. The first and very important aspect of questioning in a class is that via questions a teacher actually models language and thinking skills. According to a question type, teachers elicit facts, ideas, and opinions from students. Next it promotes students' activity in learning, encourages thinking and a deeper involvement in an issue. As a result, it leads to students´higher personal involvement and self-expression.

Bloom´s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Bloom´s *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* was first published in 1956 and has had a radical impact on education ever since (Krathwohl, 2002). It classifies learning process into three categories of different levels of difficulty according to the anticipated educational growth of students. The three categories are: the cognitive domain, focusing on intellectual skills and abilities; the affective domain, focusing on personal issues such as interest, aesthetics, moral, feelings, values, etc.; and the psychomotor domain focusing on motor and physical skills (Petty, 1994). Taking into consideration the topic of this thesis, the attention is given to the cognitive domain.

The core aspect of Bloom´s taxonomy is the way knowledge is recognized in education. Knowledge as such is unquestionably essential to any learning process, but it is not the only outcome of it. What is necessary is the students´ ability to use the knowledge and apply it to situations and problems in which they find themselves. Therefore, merely recalling information is insufficient; the ability of practical application of new knowledge is what can be referred to as critical thinking (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Walker, & Krathwohl, 1956). This concept is in agreement with Klooster´s (2000) interpretation of critical thinking highlighting that information is only a starting point, not the goal of critical thinking.

The cognitive domain of Bloom´s taxonomy composes of six categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These are further divided into subcategories. Moreover, each of the categories is accompanied by specific verbs which characterize students´ activities (Krathwohl, 2002). The complete

overview of individual subcategories and individual verbs accompanying each category are placed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

As for the hierarchy of the taxonomy, Krathwohl (2002) describes it as sequential and cumulative taking the direction from easier aspects to more complicated ones and from concrete to more abstract once. As a result, apart from characteristic aspects of each category, each category of thinking also includes certain elements of the lower ones. The following graph taken from Norris M. Sanders *Classroom Questions: What Kinds?* (p. 10) clearly illustrates this concept.

Graph 2: Bloom´s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives
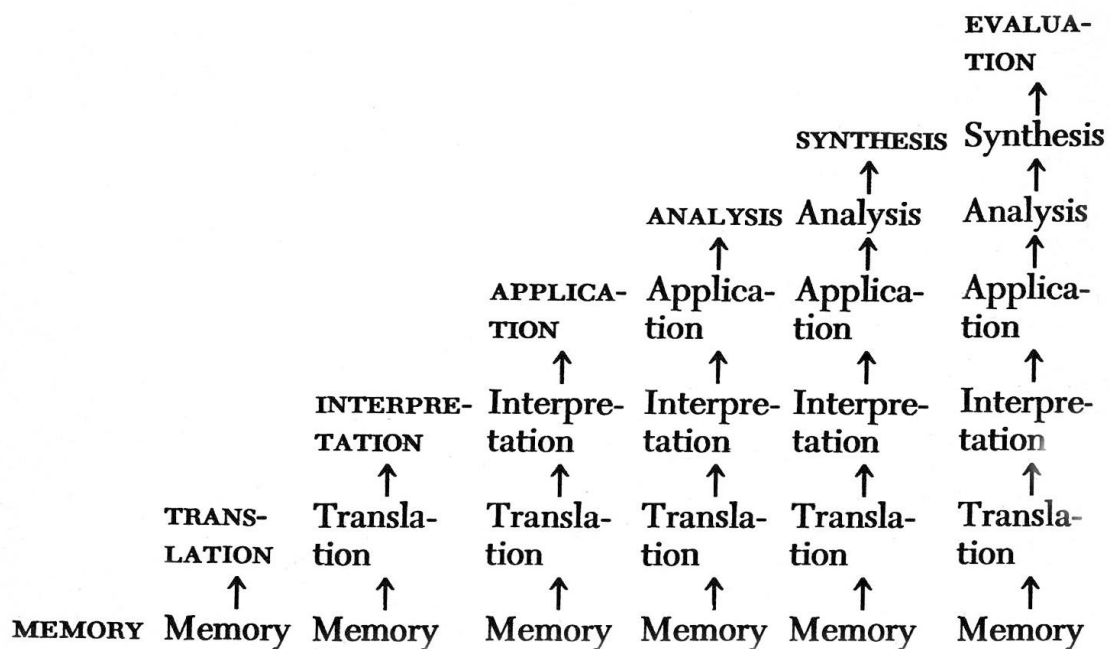
Teacher should always organize their lessons so that students apply all the categories of the cognitive domain, perhaps not necessarily always in one lesson. The taxonomy is structured in a way that it invites to a sequential approach. This means that a student should master a lower-level category in order to successfully master a higher one. Again, this view supports Klooster´s (2000) opinion that before successful application of critical thinking students need to familiarize themselves with quite an extensive amount of information. In other words, students need to have good knowledge of something and comprehend it well so that they can apply it practically (Zormanová, 2014).

Questions promoting higher-order and lower-order thinking. Sanders (1966) opens his book *Classroom Questions: What kinds?* with a belief that students can be encouraged to all kinds of thinking through effective questioning. The questions which invite thinking atmosphere in a class are those which not only ask students to recall information, but especially those which expect them to actually use information and ideas they have. The study concerning the topic of questions by Sanders (1996) is built on the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. The reason for this is given by the fact that one way of defining individual categories is by using sample questions which expect students to employ different levels of thinking.

According to Sanders (1996) nearly all sets of educational objectives, and definitely Bloom´s taxonomy, focus on the encouragement of critical thinking. Further, he says that in order to achieve it, a teacher must apply those questions which go beyond the knowledge category; this means practising student thinking abilities at the level of comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Speaking of Bloom´s taxonomy, it is traditionally divided into higher-order and lower-order thinking skills and correspondingly to it higher-order and lower-order questions. The dividing line is to be between application and analysis; thus, knowledge, comprehension, and application are referred to as lower-order thinking skills; analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as higher-order thinking skills requiring more complex thinking performance (Fisher, 2011).

One of the problems concerning language classes discussed by Ur (2012) or Hill and Flynn (2008) is the tendency of applying higher number of questions focusing on lower-order thinking and neglecting higher-order thinking skills. The reason for this unfavourable tendency according to Hill and Flynn (2008) is caused by teacher´s inclination to make connection between students´ limited level of output and the ability of abstract thinking. Nevertheless, questions promoting higher-level thinking should be addressed to all students irrespective to their L2 level.

Ur (2012, p. 230) claims that both lower-order questions, such as "What is the past tense of the verb take?", and higher-order questions, according to Ur involving categories reaching from comprehension to evaluation such as "What are some differences between the opinions expressed in the two text we have read?", have their place in language teaching. Nevertheless, similarly to Hill and Flynn (2008), Ur (2012) comments on the problem of overemphasizing the role of lower-order questions, usually taking form of close-ended and short-response tasks. The reason she presents is that while teachers

necessarily need lower-order questions for initial teaching and revision of new language items, they do not necessarily needs higher-order ones. This tendency then leads to frequent omission of questions promoting higher-order thinking skills.

Lower-order questions. According to Grecmanová, Urbanová, & Novotný (2000), accepting Sanders´ approach, classify questions calling for memory / knowledge, questions calling for translation and interpretation (comprehension category), and application questions as lower-order questions. Ur (2012) on the other hand, considers only questions expecting recall or basic factual information as lower-order questions; others fall into the second category.

Memory questions require only recall or factual information. Translation questions are those involving paraphrasing or saying in own words and unlike interpretation questions do not expect students to find relations between facts, ideas or thoughts. Finally, application questions try to link students´ theoretical knowledge with its use in practice (Grecmanová, Urbanová, & Novotný, 2000).

Higher-order questions. The following types of questions are referred to as higher-order questions: analysis questions, synthesis questions, and evaluation questions. Analysis questions focus on the use of available information to draw conclusions while focusing on conscious thinking of one´s own thinking process; this is in contrast to application question which do not involve metacognition. Synthesis questions expect students to apply self-contained thinking and give students freedom in problem solving applying their own experience gained even outside the class. Finally, evaluation questions invite students to draw conclusions according to their personal criteria and values and disprove or internalize the moral of what they have been reading about building their personal values (Grecmanová, Urbanová, & Novotný, 2000).

Critical reading questions. As Correira (2006, p. 19) states, although promoting critical thinking and critical reading in ESL classes may be "difficult and time-consuming", it is believed that it is worth showing student the possibility of questioning approach to a text in which they can choose their own personal way of reading it, not necessarily adopting the author´s stance, but creating their own.

Tomasek. Tomasek (2009) introduces a set of critical reading questions which guide students to critical thinking while reading. This is provided by active learning which enables students to think about the ideas and issues arising from a text. Applying this approach in a class should result in a higher engagement of students and more personal reactions to a text; this is why most of the questions are written in the first person singular form. The following questions when used as guidance to better orientation in a text will also help students to find bigger ideas behind the text instead of simple search for facts and details.

Speaking of a categorization of these questions, the author explains that though organized, they are not organized in a hierarchical order of the cognitive taxonomy. These sets of questions then elicit more interactive flow of a lesson rather than a linear one. The six categories are as follows: identification of a problem or issue, making connections, interpretation of evidence, challenging assumptions, making applications, and taking a different point of view.

The first set of questions concerning the identification of a problem or issue focuses students´ mind on the conditions of the origin of a text. In other words, students should be able to recognise the purpose of a text. The second area of questions described as making connections should promote students´ critical thinking abilities by connecting the content and ideas presented in a text with their own experiences and knowledge based on indigenous cultural and social background. The third type of questions referred to as interpretation of evidence enables students to compare their own views with those of their classmates. When making their own inferences, the next step is comparing and discussing individual inferences with others which help students to find possible biases and unjustified assumptions which may lead to erroneous inferences. The fourth set of questions called challenging assumptions asks students to inspect the validity of their assumptions. In addition to that, similarly, they should try to question the author´s assumptions. The result of such considerations should be the ability to think of how different viewpoints influence the character of assumptions and subsequently the reading process itself. The fifth type concerns questions which should help students to realize what practical value a reading task may have for them; students then make applications of what they have learned while working on a reading task. The last set of questions is described as taking a different point of view. These questions are designed so that a reader approaches ideas in a text from different perspectives and hence foster critical thinking. Sample questions are placed in Appendix 3.

Heberle. Heberle (2000) introduces another set of questions promoting critical reading in ESL classes. These should lead students to the cognition that there is a relation between linguistic and social structure and that "discourses determine and are determined by social values and conventions" (p. 134). The set of questions, divided into 5 sections, invite students to read a text with a critical, social, and historical perspective.

The first set introduce general question for the analysis of a text focusing on the genre, content, and purpose of a text. The second and third sets focus on the author´s choice of language and consequently whether the style tends to any kind of preferred reading; those are lexicogrammatical questions. The fourth set of questions examines visual elements of a text: what kinds of visual elements are used and in what way they are related to the content of a text. The final set of questions focus on the issue of gender, particularly whether a text involves any stereotypical tendencies or asymmetry in gender relationships. Heberle´s questions are placed in Appendix 4.

Sousa. Sousa (2005) deals with questions promoting critical reading in his publication *How the Brain Learns to Read.* Even though the author realizes the pressure at many secondary school teachers in terms of time and increasing demands of testing students, he claims that developing critical reading will result in more productive and confident reading. Unfortunately, critical reading is not exercised in classes sufficiently enough which leads into insufficient employment of higher-order thinking skills necessary for "evaluating evidence, drawing conclusions, making inferences, and defending their line of thinking" (p. 104).

Questions which can be used as prompts for fostering critical reading and which concentrate their focus on the reader, the writer (writer´s arguments, evidence, and conclusions), writer´s use of evidence to support the conclusion, and reader´s own reaction to the reading (Sousa, 2005) are placed in Appendix 5.

Theoretical Background Summary

To summarize the content of the Theoretical Background, the extensive number of introduced studies and publications dealing with the topic of critical thinking and critical reading shows that critical approach towards teaching English simply cannot be left unnoticed in the 21st century. Moreover, the theoretical part also discusses binding curricula for secondary education which literally states the requirement of fostering critical

thinking at Czech secondary schools across all subjects. Thus, trying to avoid English lessons with a main goal being test-oriented approach, students should be encouraged to foster analysis and evaluation of own thinking process as well as to foster analysis and evaluation of assumptions, conclusions, and language choice expressed in a text by its author in order to be able to take a personal stance towards the content of a text.

Apart from the theoretical research on this topic, the theoretical part of the thesis also includes comparison of traditional approaches towards reading with the critical ones in which students are encouraged to apply critical thinking and critical reading. Furthermore, it offers ideas as well as practical examples how to enhance students´ critical thinking abilities in relation to reading texts.

The next section, Methodology, describes in detail the procedure of the analysis of textbooks used at secondary schools. It introduces individual steps taken for the analysis of different textbooks dealing with the challenge of incorporating critique in tasks related to reading sections.

III. METHODOLOGY

With the main goal of the research being analysis of reading tasks in English language teaching (ELT) textbooks in terms of presence or absence of tasks enhancing critical thinking and reading, this chapter introduces individual aspects of the present research. It describes analysed textbooks and their selection, main research questions, and methods applied during the analysis itself.

Textbook Selection

Prior to the analysis, the first step taken had to be the selection of English textbooks used at secondary schools. In order to increase the level of objectivity of the research, it was decided that each analysed textbook must be of a different publisher. Based on a correspondence with several Czech secondary schools, English library research, and consultation with my supervisor, four most common publishers for secondary course books in the Czech Republic were chosen: Cambridge University Press, Macmillan Education, Oxford University Press, and Person Education Limited. There was chosen one student´s book certified by Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (Doložka MŠMT) from each publisher. Specifically, these are: *English in Mind: Student´s Book 4* reaching up to B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference of Languages (CEFR), *Gateway: Student´s Book B1+*, *English File: Intermediate Plus Student´s Book* ranging between B1-B2 level based on CEFR, and finally *New Challenges: Student´s Book 4* at B1 level. The analysed textbooks are listed in order of individual publishers mentioned above. The last note before introducing the textbooks themselves should be given to the levels of English these textbooks reflect. Different publishers organize levels of English differently; therefore, analysed textbooks are ranging from B1-B2 level. Even though, levels stated by CEFR influence to some extent the length and the difficulty of individual reading texts, this fact does not actually have such an impact on the carried out research as critical thinking and critical reading is not dependent on levels of English, on the contrary, it should be encouraged at all levels.

Analysed Textbooks

English in Mind. *English in Mind* is a six-level course comprising A1 – C1 CEFR levels. Published by Cambridge University Press, it is a work of several authors: Herbart Puchta, Jeff Stranks, Peter Lewis-Jones, and Richard Carter. The series *English in Mind*

promises both engaging content for teenagers and special attention given to building grammar and vocabulary. Speaking of its content, it literally advertises thought-provoking reading and listening topics. Further on it tries to enrich student´s knowledge and interest by sections such as Culture in Mind, Literature in Mind, or Fiction in Mind differing according to individual levels. Even though the course is divided into six levels, the authors promote its use even for mixed-ability classes.

The organization of content in analysed *Student´s Book 4* is as follows. It composes of 16 units organized into 4 modules. Each unit has two or three reading sections. The beginning of every module composes of a double page introducing the content in an interactive way so that students know what to expect from the forthcoming lessons. Similarly, each module concludes with a Check Your Progress double page focused on grammar, vocabulary, or everyday English. Four module topics are also designed into four class or group projects placed at the end of the *Student´s Book*.

New Challenges. *New Challenges* is a five-level secondary course book taking students from A1 to B1 level according to CEFR. This series is published by Pearson, written by Amanda Maris, Michael Harris, David Mower, Anna Sikorzynska, and Lindsay White. According to the authors, this course book presents topics which are close to students´ own world, it develops awareness of citizenship as well as multicultural awareness. This series proclaims to encourage confidence, creativity, and performance in order to help students become self-reliant and independent learners. Moreover, it promises cross-cultural topics reflecting the real world which make students think about the world they are living in.

The contents of *New Challenges 4* are organized into 8 units; each unit is dedicated to a certain topic such as communication, news, imagination, etc. Each module starts with an introductory page showing what students are to expect as far as the topic is concerned, speaking, writing, and reading skills as well as grammar and vocabulary. At the end of each module, students can check their progress in so called Study Corner usually focused on grammar or vocabulary. At the end of a *Student´s Book* a few pages are dedicated to a section called Time Out Magazine with interactive activities, games, and reading sections.

Gateway. *Gateway* is a five-level course guiding students through their studies toward school-leaving examinations. Published by Macmillan, it written by David Spencer. *Gateway* series promises the development of students´ language and study skills while

promoting their study independence. Apart from exam guidance introducing study tips and preparation for exam strategies, the *Student´s Book* advertises authentic texts which not only develop students´ language skills, but also raises their interest and develop their knowledge and skills beyond the classroom.

Gateway Student´s Book B1+ is organized into 10 units developing all four language skills and vocabulary and grammar awareness. In addition to that there is a double page called Exam success / Study skills at the end of every second unit which introduces students to exam tips and techniques as well as their practice. Each unit also involves a section Click Onto which focus on cross-curricular knowledge, literature, or international cultural knowledge. The course book is concluded with recapitulation of study skills of each unit, a speaking and a writing bank.

English File. *English File: third edition* is a six-level course book starting at the beginner level reaching the advanced level. This series written by Christina Latham-Koenig, Clive Oxenden, and Paul Seligson is published by Oxford University Press. Its subtitle "the best way to get students talking" promises enjoyable and lively lessons based on various activities and updated texts. The new series adverts development of students´ language skills which are enriching not only inside the classroom, but also outside the classroom in real-life situations.

The content of *Student´s Book Intermediate Plus* is well structured and organized in 10 units furthermore divided into A and B sections. In each unit, there are two, three, or four reading sections. After every second unit there is a section called Revise and Check where students find out to what extent they have mastered knowledge, skills, and abilities emerging from previous units. At the end of the book there are enclosed grammar, vocabular, and sound banks.

Research Questions

Once the selection of the textbooks for the analysis was complete, another step was a detail specification or rather statement of research questions. These should naturally emerge from what is described and discussed in the Theoretical Background. Therefore, the main attention was to be given to the character of questions and tasks related to reading sections. Individual exercises were to be analysed according to the extent they enable enhancement of critical thinking and reading abilities of students and levels of Bloom´s Taxonomy they reflect. Based on these considerations, research questions are as follows:

1. Are there elements of critical thinking and reading present in the reading sections of the textbooks?
2. If question no. 1 is positive, how is critical approach encouraged? If question no. 1 is negative, how are the reading sections designed in analysed textbooks and what is their focus?
3. Which categories of the cognitive domain of Bloom´s Taxonomy are covered in the reading questions and tasks?

Research Process

In respect to the stated research questions, I analysed the chosen textbooks in a great detail. The first aspect I was interested in was how many reading sections the textbooks include as well as what types of reading text there are to be found. Subsequently, the attention was given to related questions and tasks around the texts. These were examined again from the quantity as well as quality viewpoints. In other words, I was interested in the amount, characteristics, and types of tasks. In light of the Theoretical Background which discussed among others methodological approach towards reading, I analysed both pre-reading as well as post-reading questions and tasks focusing on to what extent they support critical thinking and critical reading based on te theoretical research of relevant literature. In addition to that individual reading questions and tasks were analysed from the point of view of the cognitive domain of Bloom´s Taxonomy and results were organised in four graphs displaying the frequency of all categories in percentage. The obtained results emerging from the analysis are described in the following chapter.

IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

The first part of this chapter presents results obtained from the analysis of textbooks introduced in previous section – Methodology. Findings from the analysis are organized in following order: *English in Mind*, *New Challenges*, *Gateway*, and *English File.* The second part of this chapter discusses obtained data in connection to literature review presented in the Theoretical Background.

Results

English in Mind. In the *Student´s Book 4 English in Mind* there are 31 reading section. Each unit incorporates reading sections ranging from one to three. A great advantage of this book is not only the great number of texts, but also their variety including different types of text both monological and dialogical such as newspaper articles, novel extracts, emails, blogs, informal conversations, and websites. From the methodological viewpoint every reading part mostly follows the methodological model for teaching reading described by Harmer (1991). Before reading the text itself students´ interest in the topic is raised by a lead-in question, next students are given time to read the whole text, and finally, there are questions or tasks related to the content of the text. In this post-reading stage in terms of fostering critical thinking and critical reading "discussion boxes" have an immense impact; these will be discussed later in a detail. Speaking still of the reading section design and structure, the total number of post-reading exercises is 42. Out of the total number there are only six matching exercises, three gap-fill exercises, one task requiring sentence ordering, five multiple choice tasks including also true / false questions, and two vocabulary exercises. The rest of the post-reading tasks taking the form of WH-questions occupy more than one-half of the total number. These numbers show that what has been discussed in the Theoretical Background of this thesis as one of the greatest problematical issues in ESL classes, the test-oriented ideology (Abednia, 2015), is quite successfully dealt with by the authors of *English in Mind* course book. In order to support this shift from a test-oriented approach to a communication approach, authors also incorporated 19 discussion boxes with large number of open-ended questions promoting discussion in pairs or smaller-groups granting not only a larger amount of students´ taking time, but also the possibility of sharing different viewpoints and encouraging social learning which are necessary parts of developing students´ critical thinking skills according to Klooster (2000) and Brookfield (2012).

Prior to the main analysis of the post-reading questions and tasks, attention was paid also to the pre-reading questions introducing students to the topic of the text. In conventional reading these questions raise student´s motivation; in critical reading these should be used as initial stages for promoting thinking and self-reflection in relation to the content of the text. Tomasek (2009) speaks of "making connections", Sousa (2005) describe these as questions about the reader. As such the reader´s attention must be returned to them after the reading process. This is, however, not the case of the analysed textbook where pre-reading questions have mostly motivating / introductory function. This means that in comparison to the critical reading questions according to Tomasek (2009) placed in Appendix 3, the introductory questions in the *Student´s Book 4* reach only the knowledge category of Bloom´s Taxonomy and fail to promote student's metacognition. Another circumstance preventing the analysis of one´s own thinking is the fact that even when students are invited to work with their expectations in relation to the content of the text, the lead-in questions says "check with the text" rather than e.g. "compare". This is what Wallace (1998) describes as a sign of conventional reading approach taking author´s stance as a defining aspect shaping the course of discussion.

During the textbook analysis, the main attention was given to the post-reading questions and tasks. One of the analysed aspects was the level of cognitive domain of Bloom´s Taxonomy they present: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation (Krathwohl, 2002).

Graph 3 below clearly shows that questions and tasks promoting knowledge category largely dominate in the reading sections – 72%. These are referred to as lower-order questions expecting from students nothing more than recalling information without working with own thinking process. At this stage the critical thinking abilities are not yet encouraged. However, the result was not unexpected as students need to understand the content of the text in order to work with it further. Brookfield (2012) refers to this as an initial stage: "understanding the text in terms the author sets" (p. 136). These tasks take especially the form of matching exercises, gap-fill exercises, multiple choice exercises, ordering sentences, and WH-questions usually outside the discussion box.

Second most common questions are comprehension questions presenting 9% out of the total number. According to Ur (2012) these already fall into the higher-order questions category in contrast to Grecmanová, Urbanová, & Novotný (2000) who, although admitting student´s thinking process, categorize these among lower-order questions.

Application questions, trying to connect students´ theoretical knowledge with practice, and evaluation questions, occupying the top of Bloom´s Taxonomy, fill 7% of the reading tasks in the textbook each.

Interesting finding is that both analysis and synthesis which are actually bases for successful evaluation reach only 3% and 2% respectively. The question emerging from this finding is what quality of evaluation students can reach when they are not encouraged to focus on the preceding stages sufficiently.

Graph 3: English in Mind: Bloom´s Taxonomy
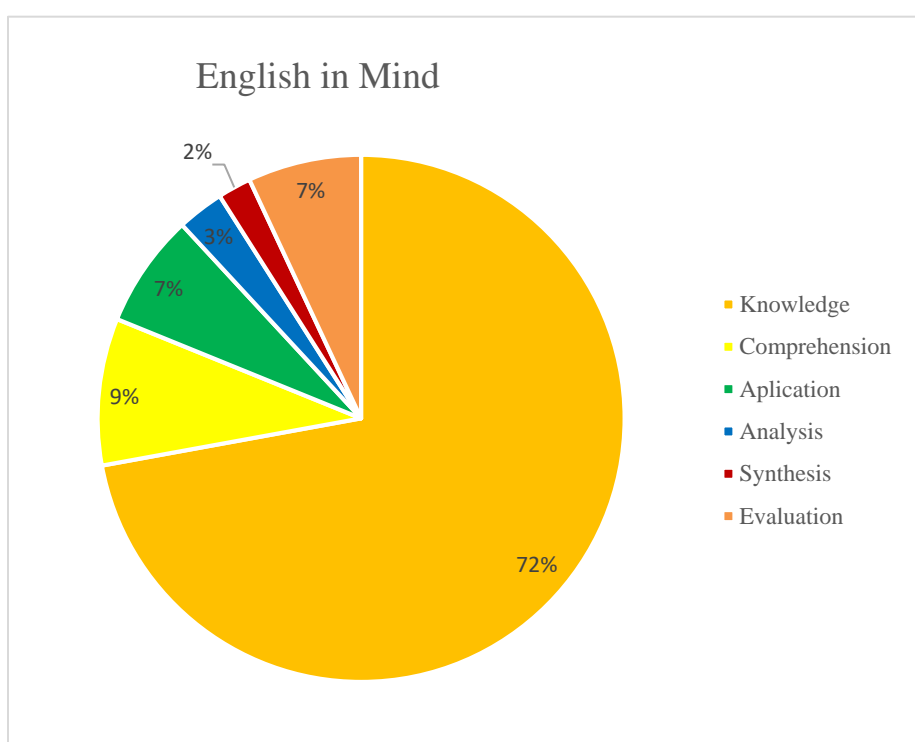
As it has been stated above, detailed focus was directed to the discussion boxes composing of two, three, or four questions in the post-reading sections. They have been obviously incorporated in the analysis of Bloom´s Taxonomy categories and formed the major part of the higher-order questions. Because of this fact and considering the research questions, I analysed these in a great detail to see in what way they promote critical thinking and reading.

With the main aim being discussion and sharing views / opinions with classmates, discussion boxes provide a great opportunity to foster critical thinking. The results also confirm these assumptions; at least as far as Klooster´s (2000) approach to critical thinking

is concerned. It can be said that all 19 discussion boxes, except for a few inconsiderable exceptions, promote the possibility to apply independent thinking, social learning, information as a starting point (not the end in itself), and arguments as a support to an opinion. The truth is, however, that one aspect of critical thinking is missing, it is the problem solving. Another essential aspect of critical thinking, which is agreed on by all the authors discussed in Theoretical Background such as Brookfield (2012), Moor & Parker (2009), or Paul & Elder (2008), is metacognition, in other words thinking about one´s own thinking with view of improving it. Even though different author´s approaches might slightly differ, the aim is always the same– encourage metacognition. None of the tasks (except for three instances where authors asked students to apply different viewpoint on an issue) systematically deals with encouraging the development of one´s own thinking process, not even making students aware of it. Nevertheless, very often students are asked to give arguments for their opinions without any prior evaluation of claims and assumptions which are integral components of successful metacognition (Brookfield, 2012; Moor & Parker, 2009).

As critical thinking theory fosters analysis and evaluation of one´s own claims and assumptions, critical reading fosters analysis and evaluation of assumptions, evidence, conclusions, or language choice of the writer (Brookfield, 2012). Following Brookfield´s theory and the practical suggestions in form of critical reading questions by authors: Tomasek (2009), Heberle (2000), and Sousa (2005), the questions in the discussion boxes were analysed. The results are analogous to what has been written about critical thinking. Analysis of writer´s arguments, evidence, or language choice was not touched upon at all. Only one question asked about the evidence the author is working with; however, it was only to be found, not to be evaluated. Much more positive results were found in the area of interactive reading approach. Authors such as Tomasek (2009), Khabiri & Pakzad (2012), or Brookfield (2012) see the comparison of personal believes and values to the content of the text as one of the criteria for critical reading. Again, most of the questions in the discussion boxes, apart from a few exceptions, ask students to combine text information and prior knowledge and apply these findings in a discussion resulting in suggesting solutions or taking personal stance towards the ideas emerging from the text. Abednia (2015) speaks of a reading process which shifts from mere meaning-seeking to self-seeking. In addition, a large number of discussion boxes enable what Wallace (1998) sees as one of the principles of critical reading, and it is the communal approach to a text, in contrast to more individual reactions typical for conventional reading.

New Challenges. There have been 28 reading sections analysed in the *Students´ Book 4 New Challenges*. In each of eight units there are three or four reading sections. Talking about the diversity of the text types, we can mainly distinguish only monological or dialogical texts. Despite a great topic variability, the text types are not deeply elaborated and students encounter mainly articles, informal conversations, and one story. As far as the methodological organization of reading sections is concerned, prior to reading itself the authors paid attention to pre-reading activities which take the form of warm-up activities. These activities are either connected directly to the text itself or at least introduce students to the topic and elicit their own experience or predictions. The issue of pre-reading activities is discussed later in more detail. In order to outline the organization of reading sections fully, quantity as well as characteristics of post-reading sections is discussed. The total number of analysed post-reading tasks is 48. Although the type of exercise based on WH-question slightly dominates, matching exercises are nearly equal, 23 : 16 respectively. In addition, there are four true / false exercises (including option not given), three multiple choice and two sentence order exercises. The numbers given clearly show that this course book largely focuses on developing students´ testing skills, to which Abedina (2015) refers as test-oriented ideology of English classes. In order to eliminate this tendency authors also include four double pages labelled as "Across Cultures" always including the opportunity for a discussion and a project task.

In critical reading pre-reading stage plays an important role. According to Tomasek (2009) students should be able to examine their own assumptions and prior knowledge and as a follow-up step compare and contrast these in relation to information extracted from a text. Such an approach supports critical thinking and especially one of its main aspects which Paul & Elder (2008) refer to as metacognition. Even though in *New Challenges* students are invited to return to the pre-reading stage tasks after reading the text itself, it hardly reflects critical thinking as most of the pre-reading tasks take the form of multiple choice or true / false questions with instructions such as "guess the answer to the questions" or "try to answer these questions". Thus, students have no other choice than to "check" their answers or rather guesses. At this stage, students remain passive receptors of the meaning discovered in a text rather than becoming active participants in a dialogue with both the text and the author. These findings reflect what Wallace (1998) refers to as conventional reading in opposition to critical reading approach. It can be said that though in the course book we can encounter pre-reading tasks inviting students to consider what

they already know about the topic, which Tomasek (2009) refers to as making connections, it usually does not exceed the knowledge level of Bloom´s Taxonomy and does not include self-reflection. Further questions considering students´ own assumptions in relation to information form a text such as "What new ideas are here for me to consider?" or "What ideas presented in the reading are similar to my own and what are the ideas I have not thought about before?" (Tomasek, 2009, p. 129) are nowhere to be found.

Major part of the analysis focuses on the analysis of the post-reading tasks from the point of view of the individual categories of Bloom´s Taxonomy. To describe *Graph 4* bellow, the most numerous post-reading tasks and questions equal the knowledge category, precisely 81 %. From what has been mentioned above, these tasks include various true / false, multiple choice, or matching exercises, as well as majority of WH-questions, in other words what Ur (2012) describes as close-ended questions and short response tasks.

As the major part of the follow-up exercises is taken by knowledge category, there remain only 19% for incorporating higher-order questions, applying Ur´s view (2012). The second level of the cognitive domain of Bloom´s Taxonomy concerns comprehension questions and tasks such as paraphrasing, giving examples, explaining, etc. These occupy 6 % out of the total number. Similar percentage to the comprehension questions and tasks is occupied by application questions (8% out of the total). These tasks usually include discussions when students are to discuss, interpret or give suggestions to the questions and issues arising from a text. Scarcely any attention is given to the analysis questions and tasks (1%). Moreover, no attention at all is given to the synthesis questions in the post-reading tasks. Although the analytic and synthetic skills and abilities are hardly practised, students, though not very frequently, are asked to apply evaluation. 4% of analysed post-reading tasks are focused on argumentation, stating advantages or disadvantages, etc.

Graph 4: New Challenges: Bloom´s Taxonomy

New Challenges

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Aplication
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation
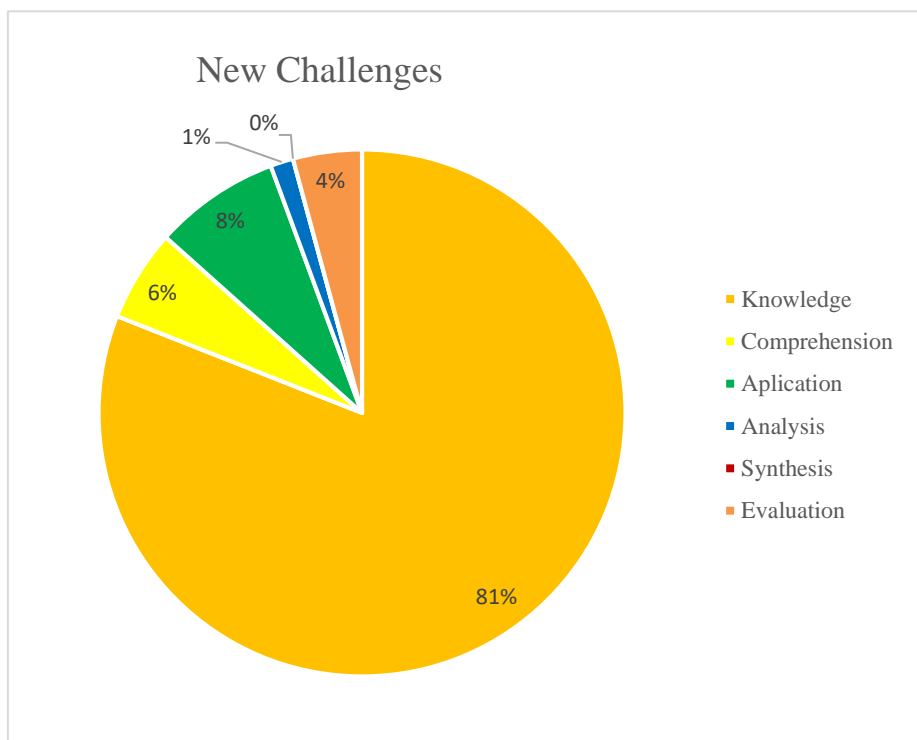
Taking into consideration the large number of tasks not exceeding the knowledge category of Bloom´s Taxonomy, not much is left for the analysis of possible tasks promoting critical thinking. However, it has been mentioned above that the authors of the *Student´s Book* incorporated also four double pages called Across Cultures including reading texts upon various topics from our world. Although even here we can find the traditional true / falls tasks and multiple choices, there is always a space for a discussion related to the reading texts and a project sometimes loosely, sometimes more closely established on the content of the text. Apart from these four instances, there are only few post-reading tasks which take the form of open-ended, thought-provoking questions offering at least a little bit of space for critical thinking.

Discussion sections in Across Cultures related to the reading texts usually consist of three or four statements or questions to which students are invited to take a personal stance, discuss, express agreement or disagreement, or give reasons. These are instances when, if worked with effectively and supported by a teacher, students actually can apply critical thinking. In view of Klooster´s approach to critical thinking, students must apply independent thinking, take information as a starting point, in most cases offer arguments to support their opinion. This leads to the relationship between critical thinking and thinking

in society, which Brookfield (2012) refers to as social learning. These are, however, only bits and pieces and more structured and deliberate approach towards fostering critical thinking is missing. In none of the tasks are students encouraged to or introduced to thinking about own thinking, which is by most of the teachers and researches agreed on as one of the substantial skill of a critical thinker (Paul & Elder, 2008).

During the analysis, there has been found that majority of the reading texts are followed by either word or sentence builders. The fact that many reading texts are actually used as a source for new grammar structures or vocabulary development greatly limits the possibility to foster critical reading. These findings are in concordance with Theoretical Background where it is mentioned that the traditional reading approaches usually concentrate only on word recognition and information processing (McDonald, 2004). Not to be unjust, in *New Challenges* there is to be found a slight hint towards fostering critical reading. It takes the form of Reading Help short sections (four in total). These focus on the development of reading abilities; two of them aim towards testing tips, but two of them focus on developing critical reading. The first one talks about taking notes, which Shirkhani & Fahim (2011) support as one of the activities which should foster critical thinking abilities, even though, Tomasek (2009) finds these still insufficient as students should be able to not only recognize the main ideas in a text, but also offer possible interpretations. The second Reading Help finally promotes critical reading; it teaches students how to distinguish facts from opinions in a text. According to the critical reading questions by Heberle (2000) this task focuses on the author´s choice of language, which authors may deliberately use to influence their readers in order to promote any kind of preferred reading. This issue is also discussed by Wallace (1998) who states that it is in the author´s power to structure a text in a way that it leads to a specific way of understanding it. Other types of critical reading questions discussed in Theoretical Background are hardly to be found. Only the characteristics of discussion questions in Across Culture sections and few post-reading questions enable the comparison of the content of a text to students´ personal believes and values (see Tomasek, 2009) as well as the comparison of their ideas and opinions with other students. Wallace (1998) describes this approach as communal approach to critical reading.

Gateway. *Gateway Student´s Book* comprises of 10 units; each unit consists of two to four reading sections. In this thesis, the overall number of the analysed reading sections equals the number 29, out of which four reading sections are incorporated in so called

Gateway to Exams double-page placed after every second unit. Taking into consideration the goal of these reading sections, it is hardly surprising that they focus mainly on test techniques and do concentrate on fostering critical thinking and reading. However, the author of *Gateway* integrated a large number of various authentic texts including articles, leaflets, literature extracts, poems, newspaper articles, or websites. Speaking of the methodological point of view, texts are worked with in correspondence to the traditional pre-reading, reading, and post-reading tasks as it is mentioned e.g. by Harmer (1991) in the Theoretical Background. Usually, pre-reading tasks take the form of making predictions and guessing, sometimes they take the form of picture description or eliciting students´ knowledge. Half of the analysed post-reading tasks are in the form of WH-questions (50 tasks); there are also four project or group works leading students to cooperation. 24 tasks focus mainly on test techniques such as matching, true / false, multiple choice, or gap fill exercises plus several ordering exercises or complete-sentence exercises. A special attention is also given to the development vocabulary; there are 21 tasks related only to the analysed reading sections which take the form of vocabulary exercises or word boosters and broaden students´ lexical knowledge. In respect to predominating number of WH-questions it can be said that even though one of the *Gateway´s* goals is the guidance towards school-leaving exams, hence practising test techniques, it also teaches students to understand a text differently than only on the bases of multiple choice exercises and suchlike. Such an approach is also enhanced by tasks referred to as What about you, attached to the majority of the reading text, which promote connections between text information, personal believes, and opinions as discussed by Tomasek (2009) or Abednia (2015) in Theoretical Background.

Analysing the questions and tasks related to the reading texts, attention was given also to the pre-reading questions. Except for one instance, every reading text has a pre-reading task or a question which leads students into the topic. Mostly it asks students to make predictions or guess what the text is going to be about. Subsequently, it says "read and check in the text". Thus, it does not differ from the textbooks discussed above: *English in Mind* and *New Challenges.* Apart from personal expectations, it sometimes elicits students´ knowledge. In other words, the pre-reading questions and tasks ask information about the reader as Sousa (2005) describes it. However, the problem remains the same as with other analysed textbooks, the verb "check in the text" does not allow enough space for evaluation of own claims and assumptions, see Brookfield (2012) or Moor & Parker (2009).

In order to describe the analysed-post reading tasks in detail, *Graph 5* presents result emerging from the analysis of individual levels of Bloom´s Taxonomy. Results show that the most numerous were questions and task on the level of knowledge category. These questions and task taking the form of true / false, matching, multiple choice exercise etc. usually ask only for recall and factual information (Ur, 2012). Even though, tasks at the knowledge level are the most numerous ones reaching 59 % of the analysed exercises, another level of the Bloom´s Taxonomy is not far behind. The second level, referred to as comprehension level, occupies 27 % of the analysed exercises. These results clearly display that *Gateway* pays attention to students´ ability of interpretation and explanation of information from texts in own words. The third most common tasks and questions are of the application category. Out of the total number 8 % of the analysed tasks expect students to discuss, interpret, offer suggestions, etc. on the bases of information gained form the texts. In other words, they are encouraged to work with gained information rather than to simply recall basic information without any further discussion. Following the categories of Bloom´s Taxonomy: analysis and synthesis categories are hardly to be found. Their percentage reaches only 1 % and 0 % out of total respectively. With a slight increase in the last category of Bloom´s Taxonomy in the post-reading tasks, evaluation questions and tasks reach 5 % of the total number. This highest level expects students to be able to give arguments, justify their opinions, state advantages or disadvantages, etc. according to Skalková (2007) and Zormanová (2014).

Graph 5: Gateway: Bloom´s Taxonomy
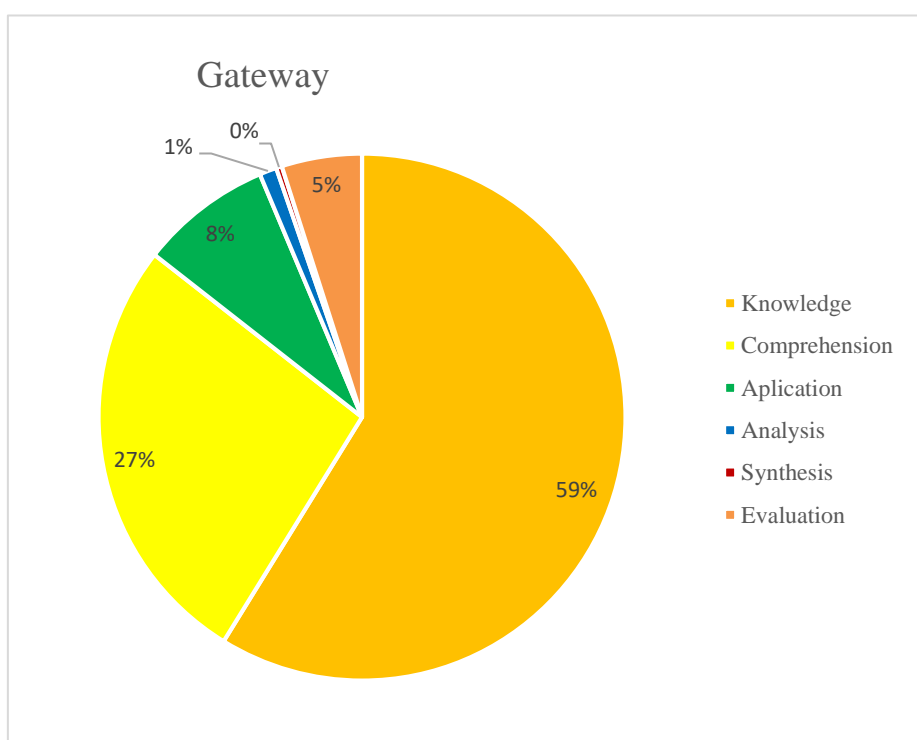
As it has been discussed above, *Gateway Student´s Book* includes a large number of post-reading exercises in a form of WH-questions. This fact enables enough space for open-ended questions which exceed the knowledge level of Bloom´s Taxonomy. What about you? sections incorporated into every unit consisting of one or two questions which try to connect personal opinions with information from a text give a space for some basics of applying critical thinking. Aim of these tasks is to develop discussion among students. As long as the questions are established on information from a text they should ensure one of the basic aspects of critical thinking which is taking information as a starting point and apply independent thinking, the ability to think for yourself (Klooster, 2000). The character of these tasks always expects students to be able to support their opinions with arguments. However, students are not really encouraged to work with their assumptions and arguments critically in a way that it would imply metacritical awareness. There are two more aspects that a critical thinker should practice according to Klooster (2000) and it is the problem solving and thinking in society. As far as the problem solving is concerned, it is not encouraged in the analysed reading sections, nevertheless, What about you? tasks allow a space for exchanging arguments and debating which is what improves students thinking abilities. Similar conclusions apply to the four group tasks and projects, and those post-reading tasks in the form of WH-questions which exceed the level of recalling factual information acquired in the text.

As far as critical reading is concerned, discussed tasks obviously promote critical reading as they encourage students to take a personal stance towards the content of the text (Brookfield, 2012) which promotes thinking based on the comparison of personal believes towards the content of the text (Khabiri & Pakzad, 2012). Thus, *Gateway* supports Abedina´s (2015) understanding of critical reading as reading a text in correspondence with one´s own personal experience. Nonetheless, analysing the text related tasks in respect to Brookfield (2012), Tomasek (2009), Herble (2000), or Sousa (2005) it must be said that the critical analysis of a text, essential for these authors, is insufficiently addressed. It has been mentioned above, though, that *Gateway* involves various text types and these few instances when student are introduced to the literary extracts enable closer analysis of a text. One reading task also refers to what Tomasek (2009) describes as identification of a problem or issue and students are to think of who is the text for, who it is written by and what is its purpose. Another task related to the same text also asks students to evaluate the usefulness of information arising from the text, which Tomasek (2009) addresses as making applications. Two more critical reading tasks are to be found when a

text is not approached to as a truthful unquestionable information, but students are invited to take into consideration the writer´s personality, his / her opinion and feelings. Sousa (2005) refers to these as critical questions about the writer. Other critical questions discussed in Theoretical Background are not to be found, therefore, challenging one´s own assumptions, considering author´s language choice, challenging author´s arguments and evidence, and trying to approach information in a text from different viewpoints is not encouraged.

To conclude, I would like to make the last note on an issue discussed at the beginning of this section: making predictions. Unlike in pre-reading tasks where predictions usually take the form of guesses which are later "checked" with information given in a text, in two of the literary sections students are actually encouraged to make prediction based on the issues arising from the text and therefore, really apply critical thinking in reading literature.

English File. The number of reading sections analysed in *English File Intermediate Plus Student´s Book* counts 27. These reading sections are organized in 10 units grouping two, three, or four reading texts in each. In terms of the type of reading text, the authors opt for articles mainly, usually in a form of newspaper articles taken and adapted from internet news. There is also a blog entry, Wikipedia entry, and two literary extracts to be found. The Student´s Book follows a traditional methodological model as described in Theoretical Background. Pre-reading tasks usually lead-in students into a topic and elicit their knowledge, expectations, and predictions. After reading the texts students are invited to work on various exercises based on the information in the texts. There are 90 post-reading exercises in the text book out of which 21 exercises are dedicated to the development of students´ vocabulary. Making connections to Theoretical Background, it is visible, that such results refer to what McDonald (2004) refers to as traditional reading approach focusing among other on a word recognition. This issue will be commented on later in this section. Positive results, in terms of higher probability of supporting critical thinking, are given by following numbers. More than a half of post-reading tasks is in the form of WH-questions (48), in addition, there are three group tasks which allow discussions and social learning. Even though, a certain part of these tasks composes of close-ended questions which do not exceed the knowledge level and serve for simple feedback at the level of understanding the basic facts, unlike "test tasks", the majority of these tasks encourage students to discussions and open-ended responses. These results show that even in reading

sections authors promote communicative approach in English classes. Typical test techniques such as matching exercises, multiple choice exercises, and their variety true / falls exercises are in minority counting 11, 3, and 4 respectively. In other words, what Abednia (2015) refers to as "test-oriented" ideology, in which students are trained to follow structure of international English tests and attention is often given to test techniques rather than the language skills, is successfully dealt with by the authors of *English File*.

Prior to the analysis of the post-reading questions and tasks, the pre-reading questions have been examined. Similarly to textbooks discussed above, *English File* leads-in students into the topic either in the form of an introductory question or an exercise. Frequently these elicit students predictions, knowledge, or their personal experience. In terms of critical questions discussed in Theoretical Background, these could be referred to as questions about the reader (Sousa, 2005) or slightly they even touch upon what Tomasek (2009) calls making connections. However, in order to promote critical thinking and reading these introductory questions should be worked with after reading the text itself and compared and contrasted with the text information. Even though not explicitly stated, we can find a few instances when authors work with analogical questions in pre-reading and post-reading stages. Very often, nevertheless, we encounter the same problem as with the previous textbooks and students are only to "check" their predictions and knowledge with information presented in the text. Hence, they are not invited to deeper critical analysis and reconsideration of their own assumptions. In one chapter, though, there is a hopeful moment, which I have suggested above, and students are to "compare" not to "check" their answers from the pre-reading exercise with the findings in the text. The instruction that follows asking students how many did they guess correctly, unfortunately, leads us back to the original problem.

The first part of the analysis of post-reading questions and task was again focused on the individual categories of the cognitive domain of Bloom´s Taxonomy. The representation of individual levels in *English File Intermediate Plus* are clearly depicted bellow in *Graph 6* and described in the following text in a greater detail.

The very first category necessary for understanding the content of the text, in Bloom´s Taxonomy referred to as the knowledge category is the most numerous and presents 78 % out of the total number of the reading questions and tasks. Verbs which characterize this category are for example match, order, repeat, choose, etc., therefore the common type of these exercises are in the form of a matching exercises, multiple choice and true / falls exercises. In addition to that WH-questions which are of a close-ended

character asking only for factual information fall within this category. The second category, known as the comprehension, category involves only 3 % of the analysed post-reading tasks. Taking the form of a group work or WH-questions, these expect students to be able to conduct basic interpretations, give examples, explain, or express in own words. The second most common category, very often addressed by the authors, falls into the third category of Bloom´s Taxonomy: the application category. The tasks and questions in *English File* expecting discussions, making connections between information in a text and their practical implication hold 11 % of the post-reading tasks. Other two categories, the analysis and synthesis, reflecting higher-order questions according to Grecmanová, Urbanová, & Novotný (2000), together present only 2 % of the analysed tasks. The peak of Bloom´s Taxonomy, the evaluation category, expecting students to work with arguments reaches 6 % of the analysed tasks.

Graph 6: English File: Bloom´s Taxonomy
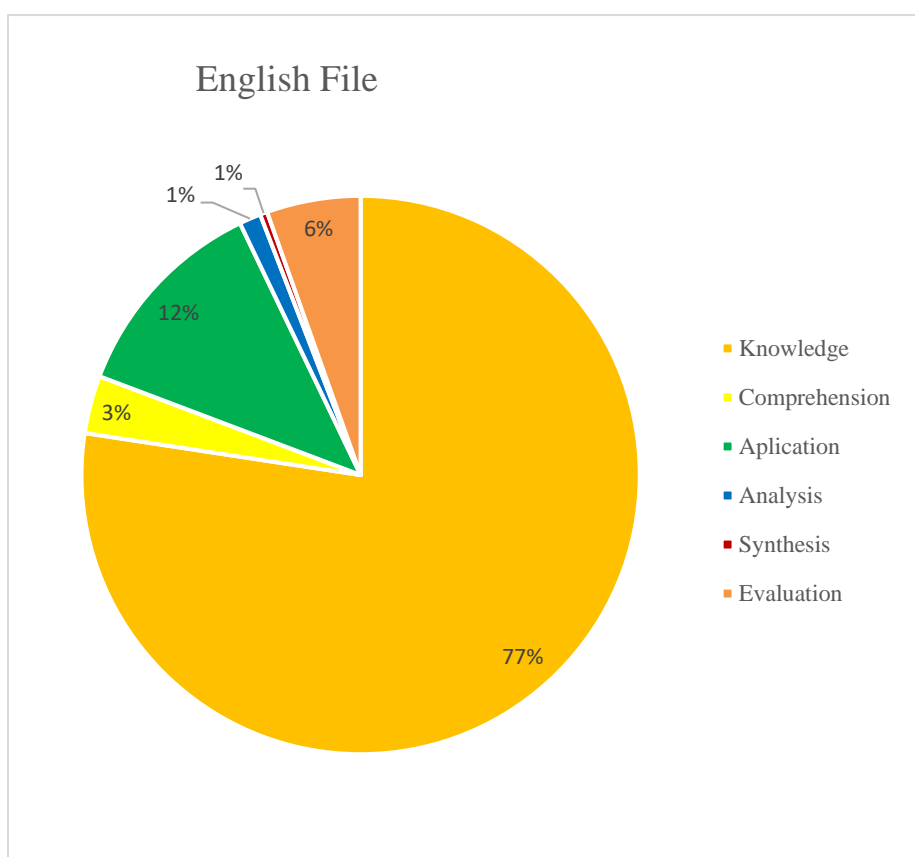
When introducing the course book *English File*, it has been stated that one of the goals of this textbook is to raise students´ talking time in classes and encourage them to lively discussions. In reading lessons, this is encouraged by the open-ended discussion

questions or group tasks at the end of every reading section. Their number differ in units but there is always at least one question which provokes student´s thinking abilities. In light of Klooster´s definition of critical thinking, authors´ approach gives space for independent thinking, taking information as a starting point, social learning, and expressing arguments as support to opinion. Moreover, although not frequently, there are instances when students are encouraged to apply different viewpoints (see Brookfield, 2012). What is, as in other analysed textbooks, missing from Klooster´s five-level definition of critical thinking is the problem solving.

From the point of view of critical reading, open-ended questions following all the texts very often enable to practise at least some basics of critical reading. As it is discussed in Theoretical Bacground, Wallace (1998) sees as one of the differences between a conventional and a critical reading the principle of more communal approach to reading. Questions calling for group / class discussions are great opportunity to this. Not only these enable students listening to different ideas of their classmates, but they are also established in a way that they ask for personalization of the content of the text. In other words, this can be compare to Abednia´s call (2015) for interpretation of a text in correspondence with one´s own personal experience. *English File* therefore tries to apply what Abednia (2015) refers to as self-seeking approach to a text. Similarly, Tomasek (2009) talks about making applications when students are to find practical values emerging from the readings.

Another integral part of critical reading is the critical analysis of a text. Following Tomasek (2009), Sousa (2005), or Brookfield (2012) not only the writer´s claims and arguments have to be taken into consideration, but they also have to be questioned by the reader (which does not necessarily mean that they have to be in opposition). In the analysed text book, the authors do try to direct students´ attention to the writers´ reasons, feelings, and claims. Thus, students have to take the author´s stance into consideration which is the first step for the critical analysis, as Brookfiled (2012) calls it understanding of what the author sets. The actual critical analysis in terms of e.g. Sousa (2005) who works with logical fallacies of authors, sources of their arguments etc. are, however, not to be found.

To end on a positive note, the last comment applies to Revise and Check sections which always involves a reading text. Even though the headings in bold always "challenge" students only to understand the text, which would not take us behind the knowledge and comprehension category in Bloom´s Taxonomy, the questions related to these reading sections usually offer more and challenge students to express agreement or

disagreement with the content of the text, evaluate the overall character of the text, or make comparison.

Commentaries

In order to make connections between the obtained results and the theoretical part of this thesis, it is essential to discuss the gathered data. As every lesson focusing on developing reading skills should be opened by a pre-reading stage, the first discussion is focused on the character of the pre-reading questions and tasks in the analysed textbook and their support of critical approaches.

Based on the results, we can see that the pre-reading stage is to be found in all analysed textbooks, obviously in various forms such as WH-question, true / falls exercise, or multiple choice, etc. It elicits students´ knowledge, guesses, and predictions. As it has been mentioned above, if these tasks should have more than merely a motivation function, they should be reflected on once again after reading a text. Once students compare and contrast their prior predictions and assumptions in the connection to text information, then they can actually promote their critical thinking and reading. In a critical approach, Tomasek (2009) talks about making connections. Such an approach promotes one of the key abilities of a critical thinker which is the metacognition, thinking about one´s own thinking, see e.g. Brookfield (2012) or Paul & Elder (2008). The results presented earlier, however, show that even though, the pre-reading tasks in the analysed textbooks try to return students´ attention to the predictions elicited before the reading, they are far from promoting critical thinking because of the style they are formulated in: "check your answers in the text" or "how many did you guess correctly" cannot support evaluation of prior knowledge, claims, and assumptions (see Brookfield, 2012). Similarly, checking answers with information in a text is what Wallace (1998) sees as one of the characteristics of conventional reading, in which the author´s stance is a defining one, in contrast to critical reading approaches in which the author´s stance is to be questioned by a reader. Students should not be passive receptors of information, but they should be encouraged to get into a dialog both with a presented text as well as its author. Therefore, a slightly different formulation of pre-reading questions and tasks such as "compare your expectations / knowledge / predictions with information in a text" or "has the text changed your assumptions" etc. might allow more space for enhancing critical approach. Other possible critical reading questions which could be used in English lessons are placed in Appendix 3.

Following the research procedure, in the next step focus was given to the post-reading exercises with a special attention concerned with individual levels of the cognitive domain of Bloom´s Taxonomy. Based on Theoretical Background, Ur (2012), we know that both the lower and higher categories of Bloom´s Taxonomy have their place in language teaching, however, Ur (2012) or Hill & Flynn (2008) claim that there is a prevailing tendency to omit the higher categories. Therefore, this thesis offers specific data in order to compare empirical research with information gained through the literature review. The table below is enclosed for the reasons of better clarity.

Table 1: Categories of Bloom´s Taxonomy in Analysed Textbooks

	English in Mind	*New Challenges*	*Gateway*	*English File*
Knowledge	72 %	81 %	59 %	78 %
Comprehension	9 %	6 %	27 %	3 %
Application	7 %	8 %	8 %	11 %
Analysis	3 %	1 %	1 %	1 %
Synthesis	2 %	0 %	0 %	1 %
Evaluation	7 %	4 %	5 %	6 %

The data from *Table 1* clearly display that the frequency of individual categories does not differ distinctly; only except for the comprehension category in *Gateway* which exceeds other textbooks. In concordance with Ur (2012) and Hill & Flynn (2008) the results show that the tasks and questions reflecting the knowledge level are the most numerous ones. The lowest percentage then concerns the analysis and synthesis category which is in correspondence with what is discussed below in the paragraphs dealing with critical reading. However, in respect to Sanders (1996) or Ur (2012) and others, who claim that critical thinking is applied once teachers ask questions reaching beyond the knowledge category, we can see that the analysed textbooks do offer, at least to some extent, the possibility of fostering critical thinking. High percentages in the knowledge category are not that surprising when we realize that if students are to get involved in a deeper analysis of a text, they need to understand it well enough first. Brookfield (2012) refers to this as understanding the terms the author sets. Nevertheless, teachers should not stop at this level, but on the contrary, they should dedicate enough time to other categories which actually support critical thinking abilities of their students.

During the analysis attention was also given to the types of tasks in respect to promoting critical thinking. The most task not exceeding knowledge category, and therefore, not supporting critical thinking were the tasks in a form of various true / falls and matching exercises, some multiple choice tasks as well as close-ended and short response WH-questions as Ur (2012) describes them. The character of these questions does not allow much space for applying critical approach; on the contrary these types of tasks tend to fulfil what Abednia (2015) refers to as test-oriented ideology of English classes. In other words, these are exercises which prepare students to take international English exams or school leaving exams and though to some extent develop language skills, although frequently rather test techniques, they do not support critical abilities of students. The type of questions and tasks which, on the other hand, do promote critical thinking abilities are open-ended WH-questions, various group works, and projects. All the authors of the analysed textbooks might have paid attention to this fact as all the textbooks have their special way of incorporating such tasks in the reading sections. In *English in Mind* nearly every reading text has a special discussion box with two or three open-ended questions. *New Challenges*, though incorporating a great number of traditional exercises, include four special double-pages called Across Cultures with texts on various topics and a space for discussions. *Gateway* established discussion sections following reading texts labelled as What about you? and *English File*, though not graphically emphasized, contains at least one discussion question in each reading section. In addition to that there are various pair works, group works, or projects to be found in the textbooks. The reason why I paid attention to these questions and tasks is because such types enable the possibility of applying critical thinking. To connect the obtained data described in the section Results with Theoretical Background, the very first aspects of critical thinking described and stated by Klooster (2000) are reflected in above mentioned types of post-reading tasks established in a way that they allow discussion based on information in a text. If they are worked with effectively, they foster independent thinking, taking information as a starting point, as they are to be discussed with other classmates, they give space for social learning and some of these also expect students to give arguments as support to their opinions. However, in none of the textbooks we can find another aspect of Klooster´s approach towards critical thinking and it is the problem solving, at least not in relation to the reading sections. These quite positive results are unfortunately spoiled to some extent by the fact that we can only scarcely find systematic approach to one of the most essential aspects of critical thinking which is the metacognition as explicitly expressed by Paul & Elder (2008) and described

by many other authors such as Brookfield (2012) or Moor & Parker (2009). Therefore, enhancing one´s own critical awareness is more dependent on the teacher´s guidance rather than on the guidance given by the textbook, even though there are a few instances for example in *English in Mind* or *English File* when students are indirectly invited to apply critique on their own thoughts when asked to apply different perspective or as Brookfield (2012) calls is different viewpoint on a discussed issue. However, these moments are infrequent and it is the teacher´s job to be aware of aspects and principles of critical thinking and to enhance it in classes.

To comment on the absence or presence of critical reading in questions and tasks related to the reading texts, it should be once again reminded that if one of the main goals of critical thinking is the development of own thinking abilities, one of the main goals of critical reading is the ability to question and analyse assumptions, conclusion, evidence, and language choice of authors and based on critical analysis to be able to take a personal stance towards the content of a text (see Brookfield, 2012). Based on this consideration and the results obtained from the analysis of the textbooks, we can focus on two main aspect of critical reading: critical analysis and personal stance towards the text as discussed e.g. by Brookfield (2012). Starting with the critical analysis, based on the research, it must be said that the results are not very positive. In comparison to Theoretical Background and practical examples of the critical reading questions suggested by authors Tomasek (2009), Sousa (2005), and Heberle (2000), the analysed textbooks show rather insufficient critical analysis of the texts. It can be said, however, that there are few instances in each of the books when students are encouraged to take into consideration author´s stance or the overall character of a text. In *English in Mind* there are a few instances when students are asked to find author´s opinion and reasons. *New Challenges* even explain students how to distinguish fact from opinion, *Gateway* asks once questions about the purpose of the text, who is the text written for and by whom, and *English File* directs students´ attention to author´s feelings, claims, and reasons. These instances, although rare, are calling for the basics of critical analysis which Sousa (2005) refers to as critical questions about the writer or Heberle (2000) as general questions for the analysis of a text and questions about lexical and grammar choice. Another step of critical reading approaches (see Brookfield, 2012) is focused on questioning and challenging author´s claims in order to check their accuracy. This advanced critical approach is not to be found, though, in all the textbooks students are expected only to find authors believes, claims, opinions, etc., but they are not to be questioned and analysed in a detail. We can, however, conclude the commentaries on

critical reading positively. Another aspect of critical reading addressed by Wallace (1998) or Tomasek (2009) is so called communal approach towards reading in contrast to conventional reading which prefers individual reactions to a text. Taking into consideration above discussed types of tasks (group works, project, open-ended questions…), it can be said that these communal reactions to a text are greatly supported in all the analysed textbooks. Such types of tasks combine text information and students´ knowledge and opinions in order to promote discussion, hence, improving their thinking abilities, which is in concordance with information in Theoretical Background (see Tomasek, 2009). Moreover, this interactive reading approach expect students to compare their own personal convictions and believes to the content of a text. Results from the analysis, therefore, support what has been described in Theoretical Background by e.g. Abednia (2015), who claims that apart from critical analysis of a text and writer´s arguments and claims, critical reading approach should shift from "mere meaning-seeking to self-seeking" experience (p. 78).

To conclude this chapter, the research questions proposed prior to the analysis and stated in the section Methodology are provided answers to.

1. Are there elements of critical thinking and reading present in the reading sections of the textbooks?

Based on the results emerging from the research, the answer to this question is mostly positive. In all of the analysed textbooks there are elements to be found which enable fostering critical abilities of students. Even though results clearly show that the majority of the reading questions and tasks in the reading sections do not exceed the level of knowledge category (see *Table 1*) and that critical thinking and reading abilities of students are not systematically established, the authors of the textbooks managed to incorporate also tasks which do encourage students to employ a critical thought.

2. If question no. 1 is positive, how is critical approach encouraged? If question no. 1 is negative, how are the reading sections designed in analysed textbooks and what is their focus?

Giving mostly positive answer for the research question no. 1, it can be summarized how critical thinking and reading are encouraged. It has been discussed that apart from various exercises not exceeding the knowledge category, usually taking the form of various multiple choice and matching exercises etc. and promoting test techniques, there has been also a large number of open-ended WH-questions, group works and projects which invite students to discuss with their classmates information given in a text while expressing their

own feelings, opinions, believes, and their overall stance towards the content of a text. This communicative approach to reading texts is where critical thinking and reading can be encouraged. Each textbook has its own way of doing so: discussion boxes, What about you? questions, various projects, and discussion questions. This type of social learning promotes critical thinking as well as the communal approach typical for critical reading. However, there are two essential aspect of critical approach which are not sufficiently encouraged. These are: the metacognition, the ability to effectively work with one´s own thinking process, and the critical analysis of a text, the vital component of critical reading. These finding are necessarily reflected in lower percentages of analysis and synthesis categories in the next answer to the third research question.

3. Which categories of the cognitive domain of Bloom´s Taxonomy are covered in the reading questions and tasks?

Individual graphs (3, 4, 5, and 6) displayed in section Results and summary *Table 1* in section Commentaries show that all the levels of the cognitive domain of Bloom´s taxonomy are covered in the reading sections of the analysed textbooks. Based on the percentages there are three common tendencies. In each of the textbooks more than a half of analysed reading exercises do not exceed the knowledge category and except for *Gateway* with 59 % of the knowledge category tasks, range present 70 – 80 % of all analysed tasks. The second most common categories ranging around 3 – 10 % are comprehension, application, and evaluation categories; again, except for *Gateway* which has a much higher number of the comprehension category questions and tasks. An interesting finding, which has been already addressed above, is the low percentage of the analysis and synthesis category (0 – 3 %). Even though, these categories are inadequate, the evaluation category, which should emerge from the analysis and synthesis, is again more common ranging between 4 – 7 % out of all analysed tasks.

This chapter has presented the data obtained from the analysis of the selected textbooks and discussed issues emerging from the analysis in connection to the literature review. The next section talks about the possible implications of the research to teaching, the strengths and weaknesses of the research as well as the suggestions for further research.

V. IMPLICATIONS

This chapter introduces teaching implications based on the literature review dealing with critical approach in English classes as well as the results and findings gained through the carried-out research. In other words, this chapter provides information useful to English teachers who would like to improve their reading lessons by going beyond their textbooks.

Pedagogical Implications

One of the most important information expressed throughout this thesis, both in the theoretical part as well as in the research, is that a text in an educational context should never serve only as a source of factual information. Information gained through reading should always be the initial stage for further investigation of a text itself, its author, as well as students´ assumptions, knowledge, believes, and values. It can be said that a text should be used as a tool and worked with as with a tool. A text – a tool should be used to reach behind the level of mere information search, and should be used in a way that it promotes students´ ability of critical approach to a text and critical thinking. The type of tasks which were in the analysis evaluated as those fostering critical approach were those which enabled students a space to express their own opinions, listen to understandings and suggestions of others, and based a on discussion with classmates and information in a text adopt a personal stance to the subject matter. To connect these findings to Theoretical Background, we can refer to Klooster (2000) and Brookfield (2012) who talk about social learning or Wallace (1998) who promotes a communal approach in critical reading. Trying to incorporate critical approach in reading lessons, teachers should pay special attention especially to these tasks, in the textbooks having various forms of discussion questions, group works, and projects going beyond the knowledge category of Bloom´s Taxonomy. Based on the research it was found that such tasks are to be found in all the textbooks, and therefore, it can be said that they do cover some of the aspects of critical thinking and reading. However, the next paragraph focuses on aspect which in the analysed textbooks were insufficiently incorporated. Hopefully, discussing these will help teachers interested in critical approach to enrich their reading classes.

The first trouble concerns the textbook approach towards pre-reading questions and tasks. Making predictions and eliciting students´ prior knowledge is very important and they play an important role in critical approaches to a text. The analysed textbooks, nevertheless, did not make use of the pre-reading questions in that sense. Teachers should

try to avoid following the book by only "checking" students´ prior knowledge based on information in a text. One of the most substantial aspect of critical thinking is encouraging the metacognition, and by "checking" correct answers we can hardly do so. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers try to apply some of the critical questions presented in Appedixes 3, 4, or 5 and encourage students to work with their own assumptions and believes. Some of the questions might be: What new ideas are here for me to consider? What might be the limitations of my thinking related to this topic? In what areas has this reading changed my approach to this topic? (Tomasek, 2009, pp. 128-130).

Another aspect to be consider by teachers who want to apply critical reading approach in their classes is also the critical analysis of a text. Information we encounter certainly shape our knowledge and believes, but it is important to be able to critically approach our reading sources. This ability has been only scarcely touched upon in the analysed textbooks. Therefore, teachers can again make use of critical reading questions in Appenixes 3, 4, or 5 and guide students´ attention to the questions about the writers (see Sousa, 2005, pp. 106-107) and their language choice (see Heberle, 2000, pp. 130-133). A few examples might be: What evidence does the writer use to support the conclusions? Are there any logical fallacies? Does the vocabulary appeal to emotions or is it more logical and argumentative?

Incorporating such questions into English lessons will greatly help students to become aware of their own thinking process as well as of the fact that information around us may be presented in a way that they imply preferred interpretations (see Wallace, 1998).

Limitations of the Research

Regarding the design of the research, there are certainly aspects which could have been carried out better. The original idea of analysing four textbooks of four different publishers is certainly a good opportunity to gain more objective results as it gives the possibility to analyse textbooks broadly. However, asking oneself if there are any limitations in this consideration, it is not difficult to find the answer. Even though, I have gained large amount of data from the analysed textbooks, it is still a question to consider whether the results can be uncritically generalized. If I were to carry out the research once again, perhaps I would decide to gather a larger amount of data choosing more textbooks for the analysis. Analysing more textbooks from each publisher would certainly increase the objectivity index of this thesis.

Another aspect I have considered relates to the media which has been analysed. Living in the 21st century typical of a steep development of information technologies, it is worth considering whether analysing the textbook texts is sufficient. Based on personal experience I know that paper textbooks at secondary education are still widely used; however, other types of media are penetrating English lessons. Therefore, starting the research once again, I believe it would be interesting to analyse also iTools accompanying paper textbooks and focus on whether they are used for interactive activities promoting critical approaches or they rather practise language skills in connection to test-techniques.

Suggestions for Further Research

Speaking of possibilities how this research could be improved and expanded, I suggest that the analysis could be carried out across different levels of English following CEFR. Readers of this thesis might object that it is of no value taking into consideration information form Theoretical Background where it is clearly stated that critical approach should be encouraged at all levels and therefore, analysing different levels is not meaningful. However, exactly this consideration makes this idea interesting. Such a research focus would map whether the theory that is being discussed by authors writing about critical thinking is actually reflected in school practice or if the authors´ believes, introduced in the literature review, still remain only in their articles and other studies.

There is one more suggestion for another research study. In search of a real state of things at Czech secondary schools in terms of encouraging critical thinking and reading approaches, I would suggest a field research study at schools. Attending English reading classes at different secondary schools would give the researcher a great opportunity to map the situation in practice. Through these inspections, it would be possible to monitor whether teachers encourage students to work on the reading tasks which enhance critical thinking and reading, and if so, what part of the lesson is dedicated to these tasks. In case such tasks are not encouraged, it should be monitored what types of tasks teachers are working with and what is their purpose.

VI. CONCLUSION

The essential idea penetrating both the theoretical and practical part of this thesis is that a text should serve as a tool which is used to reach behind the level of a mere information search. Students should be encouraged to apply their critical thinking and reading abilities to validate text information.

The research was carried out in order to find answers to the stated research questions concerning the presence or absence of textbook reading tasks enhancing critical thinking and reading. Even though, the results show that in each of the textbooks more than a half of reading exercises do not exceed the knowledge category of Bloom´s Taxonomy, hence, do not promote critical thinking, there were exercises reaching beyond this category. Such reading tasks, having the form of various discussion questions, group works, or projects, enable due to their character the ability of fostering critical thinking and reading. This conclusion was established based on information discussed in Theoretical Background in which authors such as Klooster (2000), Brookfield (2012), or Wallace (1998) introduce the idea that critical thinking and reading can be enhanced by social learning or as Wallace (1998) calls it the communal response towards a text. Therefore, sharing ideas with classmates and comparing these to information in a text, students are encouraged to apply critical approaches. However, another substantial aspect of critical thinking and reading were hardly to be found. Due to the insufficient reflection of students´ assumptions and believes, metacognition, a key aspect of critical thinking, was not appropriately addressed. Similarly, as the insufficient analysis of one´s own thinking process, the critical analysis of a text was also scarcely touched upon.

In respect to these findings, this thesis tries to be of a great value to teachers interested in critical approaches. I believe that reading this thesis can encourage teachers´ awareness of important practices and encourage class work towards critical thinking and reading.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Bloom´s Taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002, p. 213)

1.0 Knowledge
1.10 Knowledge of specifics
1.11 Knowledge of terminology
1.12 Knowledge of specific facts
1.20 Knowledge of ways and means of dealing with specifics
1.21 Knowledge of conventions
1.22 Knowledge of trends and sequences
1.23 Knowledge of classifications and categories
1.24 Knowledge of criteria
1.25 Knowledge of methodology
1.30 Knowledge of universals and abstractions in a field
1.31 Knowledge of principles and generalizations
1.32 Knowledge of theories and structures

2.0 Comprehension
2.1 Translation
2.2 Interpretation
2.3 Extrapolation

3.0 Application

4.0 Analysis
4.1 Analysis of elements
4.2 Analysis of relationships
4.3 Analysis of organizational principles

5.0 Synthesis
5.1 Production of a unique communication
5.2 Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations
5.3 Derivation of a set of abstract relations

6.0 Evaluation
6.1 Evaluation in terms of internal evidence
6.2 Judgments in terms of external criteria

Appendix 2

Bloom´s Taxonomy translated from Skalková (2007, p. 122) and Zormanová (2014, p. 59)

Category	Typical verbs used for specifying educational goals
Knowledge	define, complete, write, repeat, name, describe, match, retell, line up, explains, determine
Comprehension	proof, paraphrase, give examples, interpret, clarify, estimate, correct, show, say in own words, explain, calculate, verify
Application	apply, demonstrate, discuss, interpret, draft, suggest, use, proof, register, solve, show relation between, organize, plan, test
Analysis	analyse, determine, distinguish, divide, specify, find organizing principle
Synthesis	categorize, classify, combine, modify, write a message, organize, reorganize, summarize, draw general conclusions, synthesize, make inferences
Evaluation	give arguments, justify, acknowledge, oppose, support opinions, compare, critique, evaluate, examine, compare with standard norm, state advantages and disadvantages, evaluate, disprove

Appendix 3

Critical reading questions according to Tomasek (2009, pp. 128-130)

Identification of problem or issue

- *What problem is the author identifying? Who does the problem relate to?*
- *What are the complexities of this issue?*
- *For whom is this topic important and why?*

Making Connections

- *What do I already know about this topic? Where and how have I acquired this knowledge? What might be the limitations of my thinking related to this topic?*
- *How is what I am reading different from what I already know? Why might this difference exist?*
- *What new ideas are here for me to consider? Why am I willing to consider them? Why am I not willing to consider them?*
- *What experience I have support, confound, or refute the information presented from this reading assignment?*
- *How do the principles from this reading selection compare to what I am learning in my other subjects?*
- *What ideas presented in the reading are similar to your own and what are the ideas you have not thought about before?*

Interpretation of evidence

- *What inferences can I make from the evidence given in the reading selection?*
- *What relevant evidence or examples does the author give to support his or her justification?*

Challenging assumptions

- *This text is about (any topic here). What assumptions do I have about this topic? How have my assumptions shaped my initial point of view? What information from the reading opposes my assumptions? What information from the reading supports my assumption?*
- *What do I still not know or understand about this topic?*

- *In what areas has this reading changed my approach to this topic?*

- *What kind of assumptions is the author making? Do I share these?*

- *What does the author appear to value? Have I been convinced to value these same things? Why or why not?*

- *What information builds my confidence in the authors´ expertise?*

- *If the opportunity arose, what questions would I pose to the author?*

- *How my frame-of-reference affect my understanding and interpretation of this information?*

Making application

- *What advice could I add to this reading selection? On what basis do I give this advice?*

- *3-2-1 reading application. What are three of the most important concepts from this reading? What two pieces of information would I share with my classmates? What is one view that altered based on this reading?*

- *How did this reading help me to build / reconsider my knowledge (skill)?*

- *In what ways has this reading helped me to understand myself better?*

Taking a different point of view

- *Meeting opposition. What would I point out as important about this topic to others who either question or disagree with my point of view?*

Appendix 4

Critical reading questions according to Heberle (2000, pp. 130-133)

General questions for the analysis of a text

- *Where and when was the text written?*
- *Why was it written?*
- *What is the text about?*
- *Who is the text addressed to? Who are its probable readers?*
- *How is the topic developed?*
- *What are other ways of writing about the topic?*
- *Does the text producer establish an interactive, friendly relationship with the readers, or is she / he distant, formal, and impersonal?*
- *What kind of genre is the text?*
- *Are there elements of promotional discourse, such as positive evaluative words?*
- *What interdiscursive elements are there? For example, are there elements of simulated conversation, self-promotion, personal qualities, advertising, educational / government / religious discourse?*

Lexical choice

- *What kind of vocabulary predominates in the text? Are there formal, technical words or informal and colloquial expressions (suggesting closer relationship with readers)?*
- *Does the vocabulary appeal to emotions or is it more logical and argumentative?*
- *Are there words which are ideologically identical?*
- *Which verbs, nouns, and adjectives contribute to project identities (of the text producer, receiver, of a specific group of people)?*
- *Does the use of the pronouns we or you refer to a specific positively classified social group?*

Grammar choice

- *What kinds of verb processes are there? (Verbs of actions – material processes, or feelings and thoughts – mental processes, or saying – verb processes, or those which establish relations classify or identify entities – relation processes.)*

- *What verb tenses are used? Why?*
- *Are sentences in the active or passive voice? Are the agents of the actions explicit or implicit?*

Visual elements

- *What visual resources are used besides the verbal text (colours, figures, symbols)?*
- *In what ways do the illustrations relate to the verbal text?*
- *What socio-cultural aspects can be identified in the visual signs?*

Gender issues

- *Does the text contain signs of asymmetry in male-female relationships?*
- *Does the text reinforce of reassert traditional gender ideology?*
- *Are there signs of stereotyped attitudes?*

Appendix 5

Critical reading questions according to Sousa (2005, pp. 106-107)

About the reader

- *What do I know about this topic?*
- *What are my beliefs and values about this topic?*

About the writer

- *What is the writer´s background?*
- *How might that background affect the writer´s approach to the topic as well as the selection and interpretation of the evidence presented?*
- *What are the writer´s assumptions about this topic?*

Writer´s arguments, evidence, and conclusions

- *What is the basis for the writer´s argument?*
- *What evidence does the writer present to support his argument?*
- *What is the writer´s conclusion?*

Writer´s use of evidence to support the conclusion

- *Are there any logical fallacies?*
- *What evidence does the writer use to support the conclusions(s)?*
- *Are the writer´s sources credible?*

Reader´s reaction to the reading

- *Do I accept the writer´s evidence as reliable and as a valid support of the conclusion?*
- *How does the conclusion relate to what I already know about this topic?*
- *How has the writer´s arguments changed my views on this topic?*

SUMMARY IN CZECH

Změny probíhající v českých kurikulárních dokumentech a všeobecná víra v to, že škola není místo sloužící pro přenos znalostí a vědomostí, ale místo, kde žáci rozvíjí své myšlenkové dovednosti, mi daly impulz pro bližší prozkoumání tematiky kritického myšlení. Tato práce zkoumá, do jaké míry jedna ze základních pomůcek učitele angličtiny, učebnice, podporuje aplikaci kritického myšlení při četbě učebnicových textů. Jinými slovy, hlavním cílem výzkumu byla analýza a vyhodnocení jednotlivých čtecích cvičení ve vztahu ke kritickému myšlení. Pro analýzu byly vybrány čtyři středoškolské učebnice od čtyř různých nakladatelství. Výsledky ukazují, že v jednotlivých učebnicích můžeme sledovat obdobné tendence. Ve všech učebnicích zásadně převažují taková cvičení, která nepřekračují úroveň znalostí (zapamatování), aplikujeme-li Bloomovu taxonomii kognitivních cílů. Avšak setkáváme se i s takovými cvičeními, která svým charakterem umožňují podporu kritického myšlení a čtení. Taková cvičení mívají podobu otevřených a diskusních otázek, skupinových prací a různých projektů. Nicméně analýza čtecích cvičení poukazuje na dva zásadní nedostatky. Základní princip kritického myšlení, a to dovednost pracovat se svými myšlenkovými procesy, a základní princip kritického čtení, který spočívá v kritické analýze textů, se ve zkoumaných učebnicích prakticky neuplatňovaly. Z tohoto důvodu se diplomová práce snaží poskytnout učitelům anglického jazyka také návrhy pro podporu kritického myšlení při četbě anglických textů v podobě otázek podporujících kritického myšlení získaných z literárního průzkumu.