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DRUHÉHO STUPNĚ ZŠ V HODINÁCH ANGLICKÉHO
JAZYKA**

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Thesis

**USING COMICS WITH LOWER-SECONDARY
SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

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Tato stránka bude ve svázané práci Váš původní formulář *Zadání dipl. práce*
(k vyzvednutí u sekretářky KAN)

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

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ABSTRACT

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The goal of the thesis was to examine whether comics in the role of an educative tool were that efficient and desired among learners in L2 classes as the theoretical studies and practical suggestions of experts worldwide generally implied. Their educative value was compared to standard only text tasks to see better students' preferences. In spite of positive theoretical standing points presenting comics as an efficient tool in L2 classes, however, the research outcome revealed rather ambiguous results showing that the power of comics should not be overestimated. Despite the acclaimed role of pictures to be a unique and supportive aspect for the overall understanding of sequential art type of narration, it appeared that the key factors are primarily the amount of the text presented along with the seamless flow of the story line which makes the text being comprehensible, thus also contributive for L2 acquisition.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
RVP	Rámcový vzdělávací program (Framework Education Program)
ESL	English as second language
EFL	English as a foreign language
L1	First language
L2	Second language

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental standing points for successful and motivated learning process is to attract learners' attention so that they participate during the classes with interest in learning. There is a number of ways how to raise their interest; one of them is using attractive materials to be worked on while both absorbing and extending the L2 knowledge. This thesis explains the potential of sequential art, comics, in other words, for the purposes of input materials within the class. Despite the long history of comics, this medium is still considered to be an unconventional type of literature to be used in English classes in Czech schools. Comics, however, offer unique features which can be efficiently utilized for many educative goals in EFL classes. Comics representing a compact combination of visual and verbal message system, teaching experts all over the world have started researching their potential for L2 acquisition from all possible viewpoints. Their studies having proved the efficiency in improving the EFL acquisition, it is hard to impugn the role of comics even in EFL classes in Czech schools, or, is it not? The goal of this thesis is to examine the true potential of comic based tasks at the lower-secondary level of education in Czech elementary schools.

The contents of this thesis begin with the Theoretical Background, where the elementary information about the sequential art medium is presented. This chapter introduces readers not only to the history of comics, but also to the message transfer system in comics in general so that it is easier to think of them as of possible educative tools. The practical part begins with Methods, the chapter which ties the theory together with the ways of using comics in classes. There is also described the process of the research including the process of selecting the appropriate comic varieties which is determined with a number of criterion. The hypothesis of the thesis is presented here as well, whereas the types of techniques used are explained to describe the process of employing the individual types of tasks in classes as vividly as possible. The next chapter deals with the results obtained during the surveys/discussions, which also serve as a source of information for the following chapter, Implications. There is the actual value of comics in EFL classes discussed along with the limitations of the research, the suggestions for possible improvement steps and, the last but not the least, some further research submissions. The thesis is closed up with the Conclusion chapter where the key ideas and results are reminded in brief once again.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Theoretical background of the comic medium

The theoretical part introduces the reader to the world of sequential art from several general viewpoints. At first, the origin of the medium is described, whereas the establishment of sequential art as a distinctive art form is commented as well. The text continues with explanation of the message transfer in comics, which offers many unique advantages to the reader and allows a number of supportive factors to the overall comprehensibility. The first theoretical part concludes with explanation of basic terminology used when dealing with this medium, which allows one to understand it enough and perhaps to utilize its potential for educational purposes as much as possible.

Secondly, the theoretical part examines how the pictures in sequential art influence the readers understanding and the level of concern during the reading process in general. Mentioning the benefits in alternate learning needs as well, the text further continues with explanations how comics may support acquiring vocabulary, accuracy and secondary linguistic skills (style/register etc). The text concludes with a part dealing with fundamental sequential art forms along with suggestions of their possible application within the ESL classes.

The origin of the medium

The history of first comics as we understand them nowadays can be traced up to the end of the nineteenth century when they were gradually used as a more or less regular part of daily newspaper. However, as in the case of the medium of film, the modern shape of comic book medium was established either no sooner than at the turn of 1920's and 1930's, when the first world well known comics characters, *the Superman*, *Mickey Mouse* or *Popeye the Sailor*, appeared (Weiner, 2003, pp. 1-2).

With this increasingly burgeoning, thus increasingly lucrative medium arose also the need to surprise the audience with fresh material and attract their attention so that the profits would maintain their growing tendency (Duncan & Smith, 2009, p. 29). The new industry employed professionals of various kinds similarly as in the case of film. Most of the employees of major mainstream companies remained more or less unknown participants in the production process, dealing with partial tasks for the benefit of the final product to be published mostly under the label of the company. However, some

individualities stood out, such as Will Eisner (1917-2005), one of the most significant pioneers, theorists and peculiar American artists of the comic book medium.

The establishment of comics as a distinctive and respected art form. Will Eisner was the first specialist who considered the medium of comics from the creative point of view at large and it was also him, who, with his publication *Comics and Sequential Art* of 1985, established the theoretical study of sequential art, as he designates the medium in principle. Eisner analysed the mechanism of comics art and explained how the principles, on which the medium are based, works. He also established appropriate terminology, which was subsequently accepted by the community and developed further by the medium specialists such as Scott McCloud, an American comic book creator and respected comics expert of today. Being one of many Eisner's admirers, McCloud decided to continue in exploring the mechanics of sequential art further as he described its principles even more authentically in his non-fictional comic book *Understanding Comics* of 1993. Here McCloud explains the individual aspects of the medium by the means of sequential art itself, which only proves the universal applicability of sequential art.

The unique character of message transfer in comics

The medium of comics offers a unique way of providing the information to the audience as its message system works on a multiple basis. Since comics combine both their fundamental components, pictures and words, at once. A person viewing such a piece of comic text is exposed to two ways of perceiving information – pictorial and verbal. This feature of comics medium makes the main difference from the text of purely verbal contents which, if treated effectively, may provide a number of advantages. If comics are not a wordily based medium, it seems then that such a piece of “text” may be considered as a sort of largely cut film concised in a very few screenshots.

Nevertheless, if nothing more, the beneficial aspect of diversity of the comic medium from the medium of film consists in the possibility of absorbing either pictures or words individually and, moreover, in a relatively timeless way, which allows the audience to perceive “the screenshots” while viewing the whole page, to skip individual pictures, to get back to some previous ones with one glance etc. (Duncan & Smith, 2009, p. 6). This factor enables one to absorb the text in a more customized mode because it is practicable to utilize one's preferences in visual receiving of the information.

Advantages resulting from reader's creative participation in the message transfer. Options of reading or viewing comics are up to the skills or capabilities of the audience then; therefore, those who struggle with common, verbal based text can more or less unwittingly profit from support in the pictures. Because pictures simultaneously enclose the words, readers are able to presuppose the development of the story line, expect the information to come or possibly reassure in what has been viewed/read before. Many qualities of comics are close to the medium of film, however, there are several fundamental differences, which make comics a unique tool for providing information of any kind, which films (and wordily based texts as well) are not fully capable to offer in the potential of comics.

As in the case of individual snaps on celluloid (cinematographic) film, the individual panels include just a cut out scene to be shown to the audience. The creator's choice of what is to be left out is a result of deliberate, sophisticated creative process which has been determined with several factors developing the action flow. This process of selecting the material to be exposed (encapsulation), however, has to be done in respect to readers' ability to complete the whole scene in their imagination. The missing panels have to be accessible in the same way as thoughts come out impliedly from text, since meaning in comics is build up just with a combination of the present and the absent. As the reader is a part of the creative process then, reading comics necessarily invites him or her to add their own images into the story flow (this process is called "closure"). Counting on viewers' interaction, closure and sequential art visual narrative in general is principally based on synecdoche, in other words, a part representing the whole (see fig. 1). The second most common reductive device in comics is metonymy, which is the use of an associative detail to stand for the whole object. Metonymy is most frequently used in expressing emotions, thus emoticons are the most prolific example (Duncan & Smith, 2009, pp. 132-134). Both synecdoche and metonymy allow creators to emphasize the dramatic aspects of the story and, which is even more important, stimulate readers' imagination and include them in the story telling as they become co-narrators. Readers thus become involved in the reading process even on the creative basis, which is important to keep their perception open towards the text for most of the time of reading.

Basic terminology and artwork principles of sequential art

The basic tool of sequential art is a frame in which the scene is shown to the reader. Frames in comics are called panels and their elementary role is to cut the individual scenes from each other, while individual panels are usually separated by white space lines generally designated as gutters (Duncan & Smith, 2009, p. 132). Organized in systematic sequence, panels also represent separate time units, which are a crucial aspect of visual narrative. This approach stems both in the common practice of reading from left to right, but also in the way how human brain compiles the phenomenon of time in general. The importance of sequencing individual panels consists in the fact that we generally realise time through the memory of various experiences, in other words, as a chain of separate images stored in our mind. Thus, from the psychological viewpoint, well chosen layout, arrangement and timing of individual panels leads in storing various steady images in our visual memory, which, in consequence, enables us to be empathetic to surprise, humour, terror and the whole range of human experience (Eisner, 2000, pp. 25-26). Besides the sequence order, the size of a panel can, along with the emphasis given to a moment in the panel, affect the amount of reading time or the relative time span within the overall narrative. Thus, the shape, sequence and cut out view within panels play the fundamental role in sequential art narrative.

The message system of comics relies on visual experience which both the creator and audience share. This means that the methods of creating comics and techniques to transfer information are very cognate across the sequential art worldwide (Eisner, 2000, p.7). For its more or less simplified visual elements, it is almost always possible to presume the information without any necessary knowledge of verbal contents. McCloud describes the process, through which the reality is simplified to the level of symbolical illustrations, as iconization. The term iconization resembles the fact that comics utilize symbolical potential of icons, immediately identifiable visual symbols, which are used to represent any object of real world. Depending on the level of real or abstract way of interpretation, this icon can be decoded in immediate terms as a readymade piece of information, which is the case of face-play for which emoticons are largely used in online communication, for instance. The more the iconization is employed, the more the comprehensibility, as well as the general meaning of a message, increases. Such iconized objects from the real world are, for the sakes of sequential art, called cartoons (McCloud, 1994, pp.28-29). Because of their clear comprehensibility, cartoons allow readers to

unwillingly concentrate on the idea itself and not on the way it is provided, which is the key factor of sequential art efficiency in communicating information. In this sense, visual context prompts the overall understanding as its role in the message system is apparently superior to the verbal based one.

Cognitive aspects of sequential art

The mechanism of decoding the overall information depicted in comics is based on complex principles of cognitive processes in human mind. Humans communicate by the means of a number of information transfers, where written language based on symbols – i.e. letters, is just one of many ways how to share the information. Yet, Neil Cohn, an American cognitive scientist and author of comics, alleges that if a language is considered as a set of cultural codes (e.g. letters/words, gestures etc.), comics just reduce such cultural codes into minimal units by the use of pictures (Cohn, 2012, p. 3). Consequently, the reason why comics are that efficient in their immediate comprehensibility is the presence of “visual language”, which is “the biological and cognitive capacity that humans have for conveying concepts [/ideas] in the visual-graphic modality [/form]” (Cohn, 2012, p. 18). In other words, because the visual language of comics reflects the graphic character of reality we can recognize with no significant constraints, decoding such reality depicted in comics is immediate, intuitive or even instinctive (see fig. 2). This genuine character of sequential art basically makes it superior towards only text literature in the sense of considerable message penetrability in the terms of international comprehensibility of the message. Comics and sequential art in general thus increases the readers’ ability to overcome possible barriers in understanding which would undoubtedly arise while reading a mere text of an overly challenging level in L2 cases.

Why comics can serve as a relevant educational vehicle

The questions of literacy

It is necessary to confront contemporary requirements on students’ general literacy (which are weighty towards their profile after absolving the elementary education) with the needs for their future success in professional, but also personal/civil life. Thus, the question of literacy for information usage cannot be considered as a mere consequence of handling “reading literacy” which consists, basically, in understanding the text. Hence, there is a

need to understand the general competence in communication as a set of communicational skills which are also embedded in general goals of education in RVP, the mandatory curricular document which determines the standards of primary and secondary education in the Czech Republic. More specifically, the integral part of requisite communication competency is so called “functional literacy” which stems in one’s ability to navigate the informational spheres, no matter if the resources are printed or digital, or if being accessible online or in libraries. The functional literacy is closely connected to another skill of “media literacy” which is as much of fundamental for one’s needs in the sense of competent, independent and unbiased treatment with information in general, that is their perception, sharing and conveyance (Nováková, 2013, pp. 12-13). It is thus essential to construe efficient knowledge of functional literacy along with media literacy as a fundamental premise for one’s assertion in various professional or other life situations, where attitudinal information processing, interpretation and consequent decision making is to be employed.

Comics as an authentic medium towards learners’ concern

In the contemporary world of immense media concern, the presence of visual/pictorial support principle is being increasingly exploited for the distribution of information, promotion etc. As an illustrative example may serve almost any video-based advertisement which, in other words, may serve as an exponent of complex, integrated and highly efficient “informational unit”, where both the verbal and visual/non-verbal components are in more or less optimal balance. Similarly, the character of sequential art message mechanism provides various ways of distributing the information such as the visual media practice is often based on (the role of colours, the aspect of pace, striking outlines, apposite expressiveness of verbal contents, etc.). Being an evident part of modern culture then, sequential art is undoubtedly an authentic source material and, what is more, it shares relevant qualities with other promptly comprehensible visual media most of us are familiar with. It is only a matter of purpose which goals are meant to be fulfilled with the employment of sequential art then, including L2 classes’ educational goals as well.

Pictures and the consequences of their presence from educational viewpoint

Sequence of pictures and the role of depicted action in L2 acquisition.

According to McCloud’s analysis of the relation of pictures and frames, the overall

understanding of sequential art contents requires certain level of reading literacy that develops through experience. However, if the focus is primarily on the use of comics in L2 classes, there is no need to employ visually complex works where decoding the message (closure) could be challenging (see fig. 3). The logical scheme in the sequence of pictures must be optimally intuitive so that there is just the adequate need to insist on the text accompanying the pictures (according to the L2 level). Moreover, to be a conducive tool meant to prompt understanding of the contents, the sequence of pictures (or even an individual picture/panel) should imply an action, certain progress of the action and its possible consequences. The reason is that the sequence of frames should provide a more or less completed story with which one may orientate himself or herself. This is also why Barbara Tversky, a professor of psychology and education at Columbia University Teachers College, supports the idea of using comics for the purposes of education since she argues that scientific research proved that the level of students' engagement while dealing with comics is of that kind which few other media can offer. Tversky further argues that the efficiency of comics for educational purposes consist in the fact that "cartoons are particularly good at showing spatial and temporal relationships [and thus] the panels commonly used in comics can show processes and offer explanations in a step-by-step fashion", which is conducive to realising the consequences between the layer of language which is already mastered/understandable and the layer of language which is only to be understood as new (Shurkin, 2015).

Pictures in comics help with subconscious acquisition of L2. Besides the most explicit verbal and non-verbal messages in comics – words and gestures, the visual conduct of pictures in general also offers further means of support. The advantage of such picture-based scaffold in comics is providing the secondary context – the metalinguistic kinds of information such as mood or social status of the characters – which is all absorbed by the readers more or less unconsciously. Thus, through such visual cues/archetypes, it is possible to reduce the amount of verbal elements to a necessary minimum. Just this factor makes comics being suitable for educational purposes indeed, as the amount of text is prevalingly distributed in more concise chunks of text.

Another elementary role of pictures in sequential art mechanism is primarily to provide the frame for identifying the characters and for realizing the time or place settings within the story line. Script-like application of pictures serves well for the overall grasp of what the story is about, which reduces the effort to decode the verbal contents; however,

pictures can reflect other spheres of information which are beyond the text, even though such a kind of information is not perceived downright consciously. Such aspect of sequential art seems to be enormously assessable to Krashen's comprehension hypothesis, in which he discusses language acquisition in general, L2 acquisition not excluding. Specifically, Krashen alleges that "language acquisition is a subconscious process; while it is happening we are not aware that it is happening, and the competence developed this way is stored in the brain subconsciously" (Krashen, p. 1). Thus, the more information is absorbed this incidental way, the less the brain may be exposed to an excessive flux of verbal information to be understood. This phenomenon is even more apparent in the case of dealing with a foreign language where L2 learners deal with eventual uncomfortable moments due to limited understanding. Since the relaxed and safe state of mind is one of basic premises for efficient learning process, comics help learners to stay comfortable as they keep better in touch with the meaning of the contents.

Pictures do not inhibit extension of L2 word-stock. According to read-aloud specialist Jim Trelease, the use of chunks of text that is typical for most varieties of sequential art cannot be understood as a mere drawback diminishing demands on readers' literacy. Trelease claims that to grow into competent readers, it is necessary to become familiar with the amount of about 5,000 words or set expressions that are infrequent in ordinary communication. However, in a common novel for adults, the occurrence of such words is 52 times per 1,000 words in average, whereas the frequency in comic books is generally 53 times per 1,000 (Haines, n.d.b). These results do not only mean that stagnation of vocabulary knowledge/literacy (or even decreasing its level) is in the case of reading comics out of discussion, they also mean that, with the use of optimal amount of language, comics do not distract one's attention with irrelevant text since most of the left out text is not needed on behalf of the pictorial, instantly decodable assistance.

Consequently, comics can be as efficient in developing communication skills as most novels but it is just the visual support that extends the potential of comics for further purposes; in other words, if comics may employ well their pros for the benefit of entertainment, it is also possible to use these pros for (supportive) message delivery in the case of second language classes, where pictures inevitably provide sort of obvious substitution of words for the sakes of situational context support, allowing thus a desirable level of comprehension to a story line.

The incentive aspect of the story line. The role of a story line is crucial for learners' comfortable state of mind while dealing with L2 source material. John Oller, a professor of Communicative Disorders at the University of Louisiana, comments on this phenomenon in his episode hypothesis; he claims that a story line is the key factor that makes the audience motivated "to become more involved in the content than in the language [while reading L2 texts]" (Brown, 1994, p. 227). It is necessary then to choose a comic where the story line may support the goal of the class activity (or even of the whole lesson). It is thus appropriate to choose the kind of comic material with respect to the language skill to be developed, vocabulary area to be practiced or extended etc. Consequently, well chosen comics may serve then, for example, as a great input material which leads students into understanding the topic of the lesson and correspondent vocabulary, such as in the case of making arrangements, offers, excuses etc. The frame of the situation depicted directs students' concentration to relevant area of language use peculiar to that specific situation. Furthermore, the presence of pictures offers other suitable steps extending the scope of activities connected to the same source material, such as a transition tool between two primarily unrelated activities while exploiting the pictures, a prop for creating students' own ending of the story and a number of further didactically purposeful vehicles.

Psychological interaction with the layout of pictures facilitates universal comprehensibility. Graphical way of depicting the scene surely serves well for the overall grasp of the story line, which is always advisable while facing new topic and/or correspondent vocabulary. The metalinguistic context distributed by pictures does not only consist in bare layout settings, though, it informs readers about the whole situation and the story flow on more cognitive levels at once. Moreover, visually presented context may also elicit valuable connotations which, in novels, are very often supposed to be evoked via tedious descriptive passages that can be annoying especially for younger and less experienced readers. Such readymade composition of the whole panel/set of panels can serve for further orientation within the text or support the overall idea of the story. If, for instance, a layout scheme of panels is based on a logical principle, understanding the message does not lie just in decoding particular words and their mutual relation. Other means of comprehension can be applied here such as reader's prior life experience (and ensuing gradual development of imagination) enabling psychological interaction with the text (see fig. 4) (Eisner, 2000, p. 8).

Logical phenomena in sequential art thus invite readers to think thoroughly about the visual aspects of the reading material. This practice may develop their ability to apply their logical or analytical thinking not only at the moment of reading comics, it results in general advancement of this skill ready to be employed any time logical consideration would be about to be needed, exceeding not just the area of second language classes, but also the theoretical school background in general.

Visual support in the terms of alternate learning styles. While comics offer the factor of logical interaction, their contents can be eligible for a wider range of readers' capabilities, nevertheless, this phenomenon is to be particularly appreciated by those whose intellect is based on alternate learning styles. In 1983, that is to say, Howard Gardner, an American cognitive psychologist and author of the theory of multiple intelligences, distinguished eight basic ways of learning. Among the others, one of the styles is based just on logic, working with numbers and strategy. Gardner argues that as panels in comics are always arranged according to a logically based scheme, the plots inevitably require the use of logic and system thinking. Therefore, owing to the character of sequential art mechanism, logical or mathematical learners are highly recommended to deal with sequential art based literature to overcome their possible learning handicap in the terms of reading (Haines, n.d.a). By the means of comics then, it is possible to increase the level of reading literacy (and consequently the word-stock along with stylistics either) even in the case of students struggle with only-text books or who feel no interest in reading at all.

The presence of visual support may surely play an important role in the questions of alternate learning styles in L2 classes then. This genuine aspect of any kind of sequential art provides an exquisite assistance to those readers (or learners in general) who incline to handle the information primarily in the visual/spatial way. That is also why Gardner literally comments on this idea that "placing characters in sets and backgrounds encourages spatial learning" (Haines, n.d.b). However, visual or spatial learners are not the only cases to whom comics may suit well while decoding/absorbing the information.

In his extensive study, Gardner mentions the possible learning benefits of comics in the cases of all the eight types of multiple intelligences. Nevertheless, those who can undoubtedly profit from the pictorial conduct are naturalistic learners (as Gardner designates them). While facing new things around, these learners tend to relate them to their own environment they are familiar with. Thus, it is only natural to them that they

correlate the details about the character's physical environment and how it relates to the story line. Such approach allows these learners to experience more intensive acts of empathy and the possibility to put oneself in the place of the action. Gardner continues that it is also possible to generate individual experiences resulting from reading the story while facing an individual picture afterwards. Furthermore, introducing of any well chosen picture results to remembering a separate sequence of action which may invoke the experience reversely (Haines, n.d.b).

In conclusion, this approach could be well applied in L2 classes while eliciting students' own retelling of various stories, inventing their own scripts etc. Facing well chosen, crucial pictures to the storyline, students could remember relevant "chunks" of the story in few or more sentences of their own. Facing pictures to remember the story, students would mine a consequently arisen "imagery scheme" of the story in their mind. Such support of pictures may lead then to a highly efficient way of eliciting the use of their own active vocabulary, whereas the level of language can be purely up to their abilities. Then, for instance, tasks focused on productive skills are easier to be accomplished, as the prop of pictures scaffolds the language use of L2 learners.

Comics may introduce learners to style and register of L2

Having mentioned primarily the explicit roles of nonverbal elements in sequential art, there is also to be discussed some facts dealing with the secondary, yet still essential role of the visual component in comics. In the terms of sociolinguistics, that is to say, visual elements in comics also provide the information about social context (or status of the characters), within which a different variety of a language and the consequent usage level is about to be used or expected. Hence, the choice of appropriate words stems just in a social context that can be far more obvious from a picture than from pure text. According to the communicative purpose, the level of formality and the consequent choice of vocabulary determine the style of discourse which is applied. Register¹/styles of language in comics spans from a casual to a very formal one, just in the case of novels. Thus, readers are exposed not just to chunks of text and the bare information itself, they are also introduced to various styles of language appropriate for different situations, where the targeted communicants or the purpose of communication should be kept in mind. Such

¹ When discussing the register of a word, we refer to the use of language for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting, that is, its level of formality. When referring to register in writing, the choices are usually 'familiar', 'informal', 'formal' and 'ceremonial' (Lund University, 2011).

aspect of comics offers further possibilities of usage within L2 classes, such as variously designed role plays, where an appropriate style of language can be absorbed incidentally within different model situations while being the frames of the role-plays.

Informal style of language in comics supports communicational skills. In comics, however, the style is most often of more or less informal character, yet it does not have to mean any ineligible effects in L2 classes of lower levels. On the contrary, regular communication needs of young L2 learners are most often based on informal language. It is then legitimate to argue that, for their communicational skills, didactically targeted use of comics in classes may support L2 learners' communicational literacy in general. This idea is, by the way, concisely summed up by David Fay (2007), a promoter of using sequential art in EFL classes:

Sequential art is a window on the spoken vernacular, a variety of the target language that is commonly overlooked in EFL classes in large part due to its absence in both educational material and in more formal authentic texts. The obvious absence of an informal register from a students' linguistic repertoire is a key contributing factor to misunderstanding and confusion when students confront a native speaker of English or when they watch a film in English. (p. 3)

Fay's opinion should be supported also for the fact that L2 learners must be ready to use both their receptive and productive language skills for their future practice. According to the guidelines of the general output of the A2 CEFR level (which is, according to RVP, to be obligatorily pursued and achieved within the secondary education), both the receptive and productive skills should be targeted on efficient interaction in L2 in everyday casual situations in particular (Bilanová, Lorencovičová & Netolička, 2010, p. 12-13). Nowadays, most of L2 interaction with authentic input resources of young learners is, however, conducted online (or via the world of media in general). Offering countless domains of communication then, the internet/media surely break the communicational barriers and offer global sharing of information on the casual basis. The more urgent is thus the need of L2 learners to grasp the contents of more or less casual style (register) of language to keep up with the current, steadily versatile development of colloquial English and, what is more, to understand the very meaning of the input language and thus distinguish its worthwhile benefits for one's communicational

competence. That is also why Fay strongly advises to employ sequential art as it, while being constantly spread by publishing companies, newspapers, and the internet, genuinely offers an up-to-date view at authentic target language of current culture (Fay, 2007, p. 3).

Sequential art can help to develop accuracy and communicational skills in L2

As being mentioned above, the level of general literacy is closely connected to the ability of receiving and producing various (non-)verbal varieties of communication. However, such ability declines with the decreasing amount of exposure to stylistically correct and linguistically acceptable (sc. standard) varieties of text. This phenomenon is even more apparent presently as most of the information is being provided online (blogs, vlogs and other social media based means of communication, etc.), where vast of the text is spread on ordinary basis by general public, mostly lacking linguistically correct and valuable form. Accordingly, such texts are of more or less substandard character, stylistically freed and with a low or no degree of a guaranteed level of correctness. Consequently, if this was gradually a fundamental practice in dealing with written text/verbal communication in the case of L2 learners in particular, the overall degree of communicational competence would undoubtedly be at risk of objectionable deterioration of language culture.

As a result, when discussing the need for maintenance of an acceptable level of overall accuracy in L2 language use which would reflect certain linguistic standard, any exposure to a text of linguistically correct qualities is highly recommended – that is also why reading literature matters for the benefit of linguistic education, as it is, incidentally, emphasized in RVP. Nonetheless, with regard to RVP, linguistic education is not only a matter of L1 education; on the contrary, it is a part of any L2 education as well. Moreover, acquiring the ability of effective communication along with achieving desirable level of required culture of each language are, as a consequence, both obligatory goals within the overall profile of education for the secondary level (Výzkumný ústav pedagogický v Praze, 2007).

On the other hand, linguistically desirable L2 texts suitable for developing such educative skills, such as novels or articles in journals, are often out of the L2 level range of younger learners. There surely are other options how to expose learners to texts of desirable contents and form. If dealing with “only text” possibilities, for instance, projects

like graded readers² may definitely serve well for L2 reading literacy purposes. However, although graded readers publications can undoubtedly be a great educational tool for L2 reading classes, if the choice of comics is done with regards to learning goals and, if the verbal contents are adjusted or otherwise adequate to L2 learners' level with appropriate pedagogical judgment, comics may provide even more efficient support in the terms of developing the communicational skills relevant to RVP mentioned above, as they can offer more illustrative visuals than a text could provide since they are far more close to current generation of "video clip-immersed" learners.

Sequential art as an up-to-date means for raising the interest in classic novels

As comics are friendlier to some audience, many people who are challenged in reading might be introduced to serious, worthwhile works which would otherwise discourage them for the voluminous text in common text only versions. That is to mention that not all comics always provide stylistically appropriate language, nor they reflect educationally valuable contents for developing L2 reading literacy, however, there is a growing number of classic novels by critically acclaimed authors that are carefully transformed into graphic novel³ adaptations. One such representative example is a sequential art adaptation of Melville's *Moby Dick* by Christophe Chabouté, a French well-known illustrator and praised comic book artist, whose approach to Melville's masterpiece is acclaimed both by critics and readers. Chabouté managed to interpret the complex and deeply symbolical plot of Melville's novel especially through his sense of authenticity towards the original work. With the use of black and white, expressively outlined graphics, the gloomy, fatal atmosphere of the original has not lost anything in its power and suggestiveness. He adjusted his own visual style to the overall mood of the story as well as to the historical settings in the midst of the 19th century. As a result, the overall outcome is rendered in a smoothly integrated way since both visual and verbal elements constantly support each other.

Chabouté and other artists who are similarly regardful of the novelists' original style of verbal artwork proved that such conversion into graphic novels is feasible with no harm of the original. Hence, while keeping Gardner's arguments in mind, if chosen

² Graded readers are short books dealing with both fiction and non-fiction genres. They are specially written or adapted with the language learner (sc. their L2 level) in mind, so that the contents are comprehensible, yet not being harmful to the predictive value of originals.

³ A graphic novel is Eisner's term which designates more extensive sequential art works.

mindfully, various exponents of graphic novel adaptations should be nothing but recommended not only in the matters of increasing the level of literacy among readers, but also in the matters of maintaining or even spreading the interest in literature in general.

Comic journalism and its potential to bring in serious issues to L2 classes

According to Stephen Krashen, a professor at the University of Southern California and educational researcher, to make comics a truly incentive for children to read, the contents have to be intellectually accessible and, what is more, they have to primarily appeal their interests (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 203). Thus, if learners are not interested in fiction at all, even graphic novel adaptations may not be a suitable input material. L2 learners at secondary schools may be interested in more down to earth topics and desire for other kinds of reading which bring facts about the real world they live in. Then there is to mention that more recent themes are the matter of a number of graphic novels as well. One such example is an American Book Award winning graphic novel *Palestina*, a collection of nine comic books eventually published in the form of a graphic novel in 1996, which portrays the human story behind the Middle Eastern conflict in the Gaza Strip at the turn of 1991 and 1992 (Weiner, 2003, p. 54). Joe Sacco, a Maltese-American journalist, cartoonist and the author of *Palestine*, mined his own experience from his journalistic career and transformed his autoptic evidence into an alternative comic artwork. Besides the authentic value of the text, what is remarkable about Sacco's work in particular is his genuine style, generally designated as comic journalism. With *Palestine*, Sacco established a new creative approach to the medium as well as he broadened the possibilities how to capture the merits of reality around us. Sacco combined various viewpoints, from that of a narrator who represents the elements of subjective experience, to that of an objective journalist trying to describe the situation neutrally, with journalistic distance.

Critical acclaim of *Palestine* also persuaded other authors to employ their talent for the sakes of social/political issues. One of them is Art Spiegelman, the author of first Pulitzer Prize winning graphic novel *Maus* (1987), an autobiographical story of Spiegelman's parents' survival of holocaust⁴. Spiegelman pushed the boundaries of comics journalism with his documentary graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) (*In the*

⁴ Practice of ESL teachers proved that using *Maus* allowed the subject matter to be much more accessible than a textbook and such experience even inspired students to further their own studies about the Holocaust. Again, such works may play important role not just in English classes; they may also serve well for CLIL purposes, here as a study material for history lessons (The Lexia Blog, 2017).

Shadow). Being largely skilled in dealing with serious themes, *In the Shadow* reflects Spiegelman's experiences with the terrorist attacks on New York (September 11, 2001) (Duncan & Smith, 2009, p. 266). For its metaphorical, complex system of connotations, Spiegelman did not just provide the testimony of the tragedy; he also opened discussions on various consequences. *In the Shadow* can be read from various viewpoints then, either as a mere documentary or, as a means of "a warning about intruding into an alien culture without considering the possible consequences" (Sanderson, 2004, p. 1).

Besides their indisputable educative potential, similarly based works may offer many further options for the shape of the very lessons. If the input text provide adequate contents, following tasks can be designed to prompt the development of speaking skills, for instance, such serious topics tend to elicit the urgency for discussions, arguments and the need of sharing opinions among learners within the class. Furthermore, it is always appreciated by students when they experience that their opinion is being considered and discussed by their classmates or by the teachers. Keeping their students involved, it is then much more feasible for teachers to create proactive atmosphere and make their learners cooperate on the activities during the lesson.

However, the range for tasks based on works mentioned in previous paragraphs is, for the more or less inevitable extensive reading approach, dependent on the amount of time which learners can spend while reading. If organized well, though, such input material may definitely serve well for tasks based on students' study hours spent outside school. The switched classroom method, where students actively practice their knowledge absorbed outside the classroom in various L2 production focused tasks, would be one of a number teachers' options how to utilize such material to its maximum.

Aspects considered when choosing appropriate comics for ESL classes

For full recognition of why sequential art can be an applicable educational tool in L2 classes, it is advisable to distinguish various forms of this medium for their pragmatically targeted use in case of diverse lesson goals. However, for its perceptively complex character, sequential art is a medium of many partial aspects for which it is possible to differentiate a wide range of its forms. Obviously, there are many secondary features which could be examined in each case of a comic work, such as genre, colour (chromatic) aspect, illustrator's technique and style etc. (Nováková, 2013, p. 16). Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight only those aspects which are particularly relevant

to the purposes of targeted applicability of comics in ESL classes. Hence, from the basic viewpoint of L2 targets, there is to be considered the two basic formal constituents – the educationally beneficial aspects of visual art (pictures) and the level and/or the contribution of verbal contents (text).

As for the pictures, the previous text provided sufficient insights into the visual aspects of sequential art. There are many factors which may influence teachers' choice when trying to fit the goal of individual tasks. Nevertheless, the basic rule to be kept in mind (for the sakes of comprehensibility of verbal contents) is that the pictures should not be realized in any perceptually provocative or somewhat over-extravagant style so that the text could not be perceived with desirable concentration (otherwise the visuals might be distracting for the message understanding while reading the text) (see fig. 5). Further aspects are then up to teachers' intentions for the benefit of individual tasks, experiences, technical possibilities etc.

As for the text, there is to be distinguished two basic areas – vocabulary and grammar. The overall level of grammar along with the vocabulary range should fit the L2 learners' areas as much as possible. However, it can be sometimes difficult to search for such comics of an adequate language level. Anyway, Stephen Cary (2004), a second language learner specialist and a promoter of use of comics in L2 classes, insists that the text difficulty range in comics may fit all ESL level needs and that it is just the matter of appropriate choice. He also suggests that there are certain methods of comic selection to be followed which can prevent teachers from time-uneconomical lesson planning and help them with appropriate choice. According to his empirical research, however, he found out that the universal technique to guess the adequate vocabulary load and a number and complexity of grammar structures is advisable to follow the “text-to-picture ratio”, which means, in general, the more text written per page, the higher level and complexity of vocabulary the comics provide. This approach is helpful especially in the case of dealing with comics of more-than-one-page length since the overall level in texts consisting of several frames is easier to be figured out (Cary, 2004, p. 55).

After understanding sequential art from the elementary “text vs. pictures” approach, it is thus necessary to distinguish this medium further according to the length of the work since it is the other aspect which largely determines the options of use within the L2 classes. Disregarding the genre of comics (and correspondent level and character of the contents), the main differentiating feature of individual sequential art forms is the length of

the work. Generally, there are distinguished three main types of comics according to the length of the text. The most voluminous are graphic novels⁵ where the plot is virtually of the same message/content capacity as in the case of only text novels. Such works are usually suitable for tasks based on extensive reading principle, i.e. as a source material for long term reading based essays where overall comprehension to the contents is to be proved. Nonetheless, for the purposes which are more relevant to secondary school level, shorter works like comic books⁶ (works of about 30 pages of the text) and comic strips⁷ seems to be more versatile for designing variously focused tasks. Since comic books include shorter stories, the principle of storytelling is more or less identical to that of graphic novels. For this fact, their employment within the classes tends to be focused most often on developing reading skills as well.

Comic strips, however, offer many reasons why the character of their contents is beneficial to L2 communicative skills practice in particular. The most apparent feature is their length for which they offer many advantages. Basically, they present completed stories showing most often various demonstrative (gag-like) situations of everyday life within a few panels. Being both authentic and short then, L2 learners are able to decode and consequently absorb such concentrated pieces of information more easily. In comparison to the two longer cartoon forms mentioned above, the story line is usually followed and understood with less effort. Furthermore, their contents are frequently based on ordinary interaction dealing with funny situations where gestures and other aspects of body language play crucial supportive role in the terms of overall understanding. Hence, if the funny potential is not diminished with possible contingency of verbal misunderstanding then, it is far more feasible to get learners involved and thus motivated in the process of learning. Moreover, the informal character of contents in strips inevitably requires the use of colloquial language and slang expressions to evocate authentic atmosphere. Such informal (and often idiomatic) expressions are thus much more understandable as they are introduced in natural context which is only supported with the presence of pictures.

To sum up, the use of comic strips as an educative tool seems to be desirable mainly for the compactness in the message delivery, which is mostly presented within three or a few more panels. This feature is very practical when more issues (/strips) are to

⁵ Book-length works of sequential art expanded in scope [beyond science fiction and fantasy] to include biography, memoir, history, and other types of non-fiction (University of Maryland, 2017).

⁶ A periodically published magazine that features a serialized story/stories in the form of a sequential art.

⁷ A sequence usually of 3-6 panels introducing most often an amusing story typically presented in a form of monologue or a dialogue. For their format and potential, comic strips are largely printed in a newspaper.

be introduced within one lesson. It is also practical in the sense of physical manipulation within the class, whereas more strips can be printed on one sheet of paper. The second fundamental feature is the presence of humour as a standard. Appropriate humorous contents attract learners' attention and elicit the inner motivation to grasp the point of the joke, which, consequently, should prompt them to read the whole text and make them think of the meaning more thoroughly. Theoretically then, for their eminent qualities, comic strips especially can be seen as an expedient source material for a number of tasks beneficial to efficient language development.

In conclusion, sequential art is beneficial in providing information both verbally and visually at once. This factor suggests the possibility of employing one's preferences in absorbing the information; however, it is also feasible to anticipate the development of the story line as the plot is most often presented in step-by-step sequence of panels. These fundamental features are crucial for the sakes of the overall understanding and, what is more, it is thus easier to elicit readers' consequent motivation to deal with the text in general. Furthermore, what also makes readers involved and oriented in the story is that they cooperate on the creative basis while reading as they participate on the portrayal of the absent scenes in their minds.

The text in comics is present in that optimal amount which is just adequate for the desirable level of understanding to the story line. Further, it is only contributory that comics include texts of stylistically variable registers; readers are thus exposed to different layers of the language, which shows them the most suitable or natural choice of vocabulary and style appropriate for different situations. Thus, comics in classes should not be excluded in L2 classes as they support the development of L2 learners' communicational literacy along with their awareness of various registers to be used in practice.

III. METHODS

This chapter introduces the research aim, which is to examine the value of comics in the terms of an L2 acquisition tool. The text continues with explanations which factors determined the form and contents of the research materials in general, why just the comic strips applied seemed to be appropriate in particular for the research goals and why a serious topic was employed either to contrast the humorous contents of comic strips. The types of the individual tasks are also described here, as well as the way of their intended accomplishing within the classes. The chapter concludes with determining the research methods which were employed and with a closer commentary on how the research data were gathered. Finally, the sample group of students providing the research output is shortly introduced too.

The research aim

The fundamental hypothesis of the research is that, thanks to their visual support, tasks based on sequential art can serve as more efficient tools in developing L2 learners' language skills than those tools based on texts only. Thus, to compare the efficiency of both, I have designed a set of individual tasks based on sequential art as well as their only text equivalents of similar language contents and qualities.

To sum up, the research aim is to confirm or refute the hypothesis of sequential art being a desirable educative tool in L2 classes for the purposes of efficient development of students' language productive/receptive skills.

Criteria determining the form and contents of the tools

The form and contents of the materials meant for the research were based on a set of criteria resulting from the theoretical background. The main criterion was to choose comics providing an adequate language level which would not be out of L2 abilities of secondary level learners tested. In the case of grammar, there was no problem to find any comics strips acceptable to the learners' limits as the texts in comic strips are mostly based on very brief, clearly addressed dialogues. However, in the case of vocabulary contents, it was important to guess the optimal amount of new words which could have caused problems for misunderstanding of the main ideas.

Furthermore, as for the visual form of the tasks in general, it was necessary to choose comics providing attractive, yet not any disturbing illustrations so that the text

would not have been pushed back on behalf of its visual support. It was also necessary to consider the appropriate sequence of panels that enables smooth “closure”, which prevents one from losing the conception of the story line. Consequently, because most of the comic strips chosen consisted of three or four panels, their only text equivalents had to fit the same time range while reading to elicit learners’ output of relevant results. It was thus necessary to choose texts of optimal length.

Another important aspect was to choose texts and comics of universal themes to avoid culturally determined barriers in understanding especially in the questions of sense of humour. This was the case of choosing suitable comic strips in particular where a vast of this sequential art subgenre is based on sarcastic allusions, cultural phenomena and the last but not the least linguistic ambiguity. Thus these criteria had to be considered just in the case of comic strips as their subject matter usually consists in humorous gags.

Which strips appeared to be preferred according to the theoretical expectations. Firstly, to get informed about the most popular and high-quality comic strips ever created, I researched several mutually independent online statistics accessible on various websites. However, it was not easy to guess precisely what specific strips may have appealed to teenagers’ sense of humour, which was also why I got inspired with the practice of various ESL designed magazines, such as *Gate* or *Bridge* magazine, where similar strips are included in original full text versions as short-reading educative tools on the regular basis. After this practice of mine, I decided to employ strips about characters more or less familiar to my learners - *Garfield* by Jim Davis and *Snoopy* by Charles Schulz, both American authors whose works are well-known for their gentle and smart humour. It generally seems, that is to say, that animals and children as characters are appropriate for these purposes above all as they provide both fun and possibility to find timeless allegory in their behaviour which most people can identify with. Finally, it was also desirable to use strips with universal themes close to most of the students so that their understanding to the context would not have been somehow diminished. From the language viewpoint, strips dealing with casual themes were the most suitable ones as they often include common language of everyday use. The reason for this choice was to work with more or less authentic texts which would not have been isolated from language use in real life situations.

The contrast of a serious issue to examine the roles of humour and a story line.

On the contrary, the last comics based task dealt with far more serious topic. The reason is to examine whether humour is really that important incentive to read rather than true to life drama, which is the genre framework of Spiegelman's *Maus*. *Maus* is, for its length and contents, the most similar equivalent to only text novels. However, being a biographical, thus very authentic work, it presents variable styles of language including a number of casual language expressions (these should not be misunderstood as the visual context in *Maus* is largely very intuitive and expressive). The fundamental theme of this graphic novel is the authentic narration of the experience with the Holocaust. Its gripping story line generally invokes moving reactions among readers, which might reveal whether a strong story (which basically needs more reading effort) can attract readers' attention the same way or even more as in the case of instant reading practice of comic strips. The contrast of the experience with the contents of short humorous strips versus longer comic passages dealing with serious topic might elicit different reactions of learners' which could be important for the research.

Finally, after locating suitable comics, I adapted the materials to fit my research needs. Besides the basic arrangement of the task forms themselves, there is only to say that just the text part for the extensive reading task had to be largely adjusted in the terms of the language level so that there were no objectionable consequences in the overall understanding.

The types of tasks and techniques applied

There were three kinds of tasks based on comics which educational contribution is meant to be examined in practice. All the comics based tasks have their parallel only text counterparts so that it was possible to compare the efficiency of both. All of the tasks (comics/text) are also enclosed in the appendix of this thesis. The tasks were assigned with no prior pre-reading or any other lead-in activity. The learners were introduced to the activity in their native language so that any chance for misunderstanding was minimized. They were also informed about the time needed to accomplish the individual stages. After all the tasks were done, students were given a standardized questionnaire which was common for all tasks. The questionnaire was not anonymous as the data served for more specific research dealing with preferences and performance of individual students (see in appendix). Nonetheless, the student's names are not presented in the thesis as the students'

signatures served purely for organizing the research output data. Consequently, the last stage was a discussion where all students could have expressed their impressions, experiences, suggestions or any other thoughts after dealing with the tasks.

Task 1: Cloze activity. The first task was basically a cloze activity consisting of, firstly, three individual thematically unrelated comic strips – these were done by students in the first stage. For the second stage, there were ready to be done also their only text counterparts – three short jokes of various contents as well⁸. The text alternates were accompanied with one illustrative situational context providing picture as text only would be of a rather higher cognitive level than their strip equivalents.

The tasks based on comic strips (and their text equivalents as well) were each accompanied with word banks – an enclosed groups of expressions to be filled in, where there also was a certain amount of distracters incorporated to keep the tasks optimally challenging. According to the textual and visual context, learners were supposed to choose a word from the word bank enclosed and fill it in the random blank spaces so that the sentences, dialogues and the whole story would make sense. Each word bank included the same amount of distracters as of the correct expressions to maintain requisite level of difficulty. Both the comics and text based tasks were done within one standard lesson, while the time limit for the first stage was 10 minutes and for the second one 15 minutes.

The tasks were set orally and in Czech language so that there was eliminated a possible problem with understanding the procedure of how to cope with the exercises. The instructions were given separately, which meant that the instructions for the second stage – the text based exercises – were given after the comics versions from the first stage had been finished and collected by the teacher. This process was done in order to minimize the lack of students' concentration. Students were sat separately to make sure that their work was individual, thus relevant to the research outcome. For this purpose, it was only welcome that the sample group of students was not any large (13 students maximally) and that it was possible to make such seating with no space or time constraints, however, the number of students also brought some drawbacks which will be mentioned further in the text.

Observation of students' work. The time given to solve the first stage (comic strips) was 10 minutes, which appeared to be sufficient enough. Most of the students were

⁸ All the strip-based tasks are done as first before their text alternates – this succession is preferred on behalf of the level of students' focus.

interested in the comics based tasks at first, however, their enthusiasm slackened after a while and some of them apparently even skipped filling in some blank spaces. There were no additional questions about the exercises neither during the instruction introductory, nor during their work, and their level of attention/employment seemed both to be in norm. Nevertheless, several stronger students appeared to be gradually bored with the contents; they were done with the task at about the half of the time limit and they had handed their works before the time limit ran out.

The time needed for finishing the second stage – the only-text jokes – was estimated at 15 minutes, however, all students managed to accomplish the task in no more than 10 minutes. The students showed no significant changes in their overall lower level of enthusiasm which remained from the previous stage, yet it was possible to notice slight laughter in some cases, which was not a case of the previous stage at all. As they were working, there were no questions to be answered again; students gradually seemed to be more immersed as they had to absorb more of the verbal information. This is also why most students handed over their papers after they checked what they had put down, which was not the case of the previous comic tasks in most cases.

Task 2: Ending the story. The second task consisted in the method based on finishing the story. According to their capability in comprehension, students reacted on the part of the story line where the verbal contents were presented in full text. Again, there were two stages, whereas the first one consisted in three unrelated comic strips and the second one in their three only text counterparts. The comics took the first stage and the text based equivalents took the second stage as in the previous case. There was no lead-in activity and the instructions were introduced separately before each of the two stages. For the instructional part, L1 was used again to avoid undesirable misunderstanding as in the previous case. All the comics and text based tasks were done within one standard lesson as in the case of the cloze activities.

Again, the comic based task took the first position not only for the presumption that pictures were more suitable for an initial, warm-up type of activities in the class than texts, but also because comic strips required more time to be completed as the visuals either were to be finished along with the text balloons. When dealing with the strips then – there was always the last panel missing which was meant to be completely created by the learners (this meant to create both the drawing part along with writing/drawing the text balloons

when necessary). If there was a problem with the artistic part, however, there was no restriction to sketch basic stick figures⁹ only so that all learners could possibly feel comfortable with this task. The complexity of learners' verbal/visual output was up to their individual abilities. Being thus freed from any significant talent limits in their work, students should have only taken an advantage of this task because their success depended on their own interpretation of the story entirely (if their point was not apparent just from the artwork, it could have been explained in a discussion which followed afterwards). Students were given 20 minutes for the first stage.

The second stage consisted in ending the dialogue with no clue words available. There were three different dialogues (again, accompanied with one illustrative picture), where there was always to be answered the last question of one of the character's on students' own. Students thought up their endings according to their understanding to the previous text. The length and complexity of the reaction was up to their linguistic and comprehensive capabilities - if there was a need or any other creative reason important for students' conception of the ending, the dialogue could have also been extended with more answer-backs. Students had to complete all three dialogues in the time limit of 10 minutes.

Observation of students' work. According to students' level of assignment, the comic strip task was accepted with greater appreciation than in the case of its cloze variety from the previous class. At first, students were rather upset about the need of drawing; however, it was apparent that most of them were far more engaged and willing to complete it with more positive attitude. Five students were not comfortable with the drawing part at all and exploited the possibility to draw mere stick figures (in spite of this option, one student completed only one of the three exercises as she struggled with both the text and the visual part presented). Drawing stick figures enabled students to focus better on the text and their consequent verbal output was being less afflicted than in the case of those, who were dealing with the drawing part first of all. These three students in particular were occupied with their drawings to that extent that they were almost unable to finish the task for the pressure of time limit. The remaining four students were engaged with their drawings in the optimal way while both their verbal and visual output were given of about the same effort.

⁹ A stick figure is a simple picture of a person in which the head is drawn as a circle and the body, arms, and legs are drawn as lines (Stick figure, n. d.).

The quality of accomplishing the first stage differed in both the visual and the verbal contents. In the case of nine students, the text contents were almost identical or very close to the original version in the terms of plot coherency. Only three students did not fully succeed in understanding the preceding text properly so that they were not able to react in an adequately comprehensible way in all three exercises. As for the understanding to the story line then, there was no significantly disturbing factor which would have caused any general failure.

The second stage consisted in the text based activity where there was enclosed one illustrative picture to each dialogue to only set the situational context. Generally, students became oriented in the task with no difficulties and started working with no additional questions. No need to draw anything was welcome in most cases either. It was also evident that students were more familiar with such a type of activity, where there was only text to be added. The process of accomplishing this task was generally smoother than the previous one and most students had handed over their works before the time limit ran out.

The accomplishing of the text equivalent task provided high level of students' understanding to the textual context. Ten students finished all the three exercises with no continuity mistakes in the plot composition and only two students did not fit the idea and failed when linking the script of the preceding plot. However, eleven students proved the tendency to react with significantly more extensive responses than in the case of the comic strip variety.

To sum up, both stages were finished in the expected time limit. Students proved more efficient work in the second stage (text) as they responded with richer and more confident use of vocabulary. Both varieties, however, proved that students were able to produce text with minimal amount of grammatical mistakes. This aspect should be attributed to the fact that they could have used their own L2 level in their responses. Finally, there is to mention that the comic strips were not generally appreciated as any refreshing and significantly helpful tool in the class again.

Task 3: Extensive reading tasks. The last task was basically an extensive reading activity, where the only text part was a summary of Spiegelman's first book about his father's gruesome memoir – *Maus I - My Father Bleeds History* (1985). The text – which was an extract of a summary – was adjusted towards the level of English of ninth graders. It was also provided with a short glossary and character list introducing the most important characters. The length of the summary part was of about a standard page, whereas there

were two “breaking points” in the full text where the narration was taken over by the original graphic novel passages which were of the length of seven and eight pages (approximately 6 panels per page). Each of the students got their own copy of both the summary and of the graphic passages so that it was possible to switch for one another according to their own reading needs. The reading activity was concluded with the second graphic novel passage with an unfinished ending, so that the rest of the story would have been still open for students’ own conclusions. Besides the overall impressions from the reading experience then, the open ending was used deliberately so it could have become one of the topics for the discussion.

The discussion followed after the time limit ran out and not after all students managed to read the complete reading task. This was so because the main goal of the task was to compare working with two different types of texts, not to necessarily conceive students’ own ending of the story. It was realized in a circle/horseshoe seating arrangement so that all the speakers could have discussed their impressions while facing each other. They were allowed to use their native language because this stage was not primarily meant as a follow-up L2 speaking activity, but as a recall feedback of one’s experience with the reading itself.

Students were introduced to the task procedure in their L1. During the reading part, all students were permanently allowed to use printed dictionaries to prevent any crucial misunderstanding. Both the stages of reading text and comics were, in principle, combined in one complex reading task. The time limit given to students was 30 minutes for accomplishing the whole reading. The questionnaire (along with the discussion) was realized afterwards.

Observation of students’ work. In comparison to the previous comic strip activities, this task was generally appreciated with more significant attention. Students were introduced to the context of the story, which included not just the explanation of the basic historical facts, but also the reason why the allegory of animal heads was employed by the author. They started reading as they had been instructed – no additional questions were needed again. All students also seemed to be more immersed in the task. This was probably caused with a number of factors. Primarily, the character of the extensive reading task itself required more intense level of concentration. Also the serious topic required not just deeper level of consideration the plot, it also brought in wider range of vocabulary to

be understood or deduced from the context. Only a few students used the dictionaries, the others relied either on the visual support or on their L2 skills only. Finally, five students had managed to finish reading about five minutes before the time limit ran out, other four students finished it with consequently slightly extended time limit, however, three students confessed that they did not manage to finish reading the second/concluding graphic novel passage.

Research data acquisition

The output data relevant to the part dealing with results and commentaries are based on several methodical tools. In the case of “cloze” and “story ending” tasks, the materials being accomplished by the learners themselves provide crucial data for the research as these serve as clear evidence of their actual understanding. Secondly, the teacher’s own impressions while observing his students working on the tasks also serve as one of the methods applied.

Another research method is a short questionnaire consisting of six questions in native language examining the students’ impressions. The questions are aimed on their own experience with confronting the efficiency (that means L2 comprehension/attribution in general) of the only text tasks and the sequential art based ones. The questionnaire provides closed questions invoking the level of agreement/disagreement and is common to all the tasks. The questionnaire is – along with all the other materials used in classes – enclosed in the appendix of the diploma thesis.

Lastly, fundamental data are also provided via the discussion with students which is realized immediately after accomplishing both the text and the comics based tasks in all three cases. All the data obtained serve further for final evaluating commentaries of the actual efficiency of comic based/only text tools in developing ESL language skills.

All the above research activities were performed with a group of 13 students of the age span from 15 to 16 years. The students represented a heterogeneous group (including 3 boys) of nine graders attending a common elementary school. Their classes of L2 English lessons were of a standard frequency, which means four 45 minute classes a week. There were three kinds of tasks to be examined; each of them was fulfilled within one standard class of the norm duration of 45 minutes. Each class was also concluded with filling in a short questionnaire and with a consequent discussion with students, through which it was

possible to gain important information based on their first-hand feedback for the research outcome.

To sum up, this chapter introduced the goal and the way of the research in depth. The research materials employed arose from the theoretical findings and they should have examined the power of comics for the benefit of L2 acquisition development within standard classes in a common Czech elementary school. The chapter explained the reasons why such materials were chosen and how they were meant to be accomplished by the students so it was more possible for the readers of this thesis to imagine the process within the individual classes. The course of events from the individual classes themselves were commented either, as well as the brief introduction of the research group of students and the way how data relevant to the research were acquired.

IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

This chapter presents the data gathered during the research process in classes. Each task was observed with two different approaches – a questionnaire survey and a discussion. The questionnaire was common to all the tasks; however, the discussions were partially directed with various, in advance prepared questions so that each of the discussions was organized with desired focus. There were thirteen students at the most (all of them were nine graders) who could possibly participate in each class. However, none of the tasks was done with thirteen students. Such a small group of students provided both disadvantages and advantages. The positive aspect was that most students could have actively participated in the discussion to a larger extent. This fact appeared as really efficient as most students discussed issues not just with the teacher, but also among themselves. Nonetheless, even though the process of research was realized with five different types of exercises, it is necessary to keep in mind that the data represent reactions of just a limited sample of EFL students of the age of 15/16. Thus, the data serve as a general insight into the preferences and reservations of similarly aged students and should be understood as one of a number of starting points for EFL teaching purposes.

Task 1 – Cloze

Survey. The statements in the questionnaire should have examined the level of comprehensibility, practicality and enjoyable potential of both the comics and the texts as all these were seen by students. Twelve students were present during the first research task.

The responses to the first statement – examining the level of difficulty of both task varieties - were exactly of ambivalent character. Six students rather agreed that the comics based task was less difficult than its text counterpart, while the other six were of the opposite opinion. The second statement examining the time demandingness proved that filling in the comics took less time – specifically, eight students agreed on this fact. The level of amusement while working on the comic strip tasks was responded with the third statement. Four students only agreed that comics were funnier than their text equivalents. The fourth statement examined whether the lower amount of text in comics meant any constraint for comprehension and accomplishing the task. The responses proved that the text economy/condensed message delivery in comics really meant problems with the understanding. Seven students alleged that they missed more text and that the only text task was possible to be done with lesser inconveniency. The fifth statement found out the

L1 reading preferences of students in terms of similarly based comics. Eight students stated that such comics were not a type of literature they would prefer. The sixth and the last statement was meant to discover whether such comics tasks would be welcome in English lessons again. The result corresponded with the previous reaction – eight students responded that similar exercises would not have been welcome again as they were not entertaining enough.

Discussion. After filling in the questionnaires, the lesson was concluded with a partially directed discussion. There were put three questions/statements prepared in advance by the teacher; this was done in order to make students address as much relevant information to the research as possible.

1) statement: *In the case of comic strips, it was easier to follow the story line just on behalf of the pictures.*

The prevailing feedback from students was rather against this statement. Only one student confirmed that pictures had helped her measurably with understanding the story, whereas four students confessed that the presence of pictures had played certain role in their understanding, however, this support had meant no crucial aspect for their overall comfort while dealing with the task. Most of them claimed that the story-line in comic strips barely made sense and that this type of narration did not suit their taste at all. Presumably, their reason for this fact was that they faced a similarly designed task for the first time, whereas two of them also claimed that they had never read any comic strips at all. It was very likely then that no prior experience with comic strips had largely afflicted their performance.

As for the second stage, six students alleged that they preferred working on only-text task where the visual support was provided with one illustrative picture only. Their universal argument - supported with overwhelming majority - was that following the ideas in text was easier for them than in comics, where they found pictures as disturbing elements more or less distracting their attention from the text in balloons. Nonetheless, there is also to mention that all these students were ordinarily of above-average or even excellent school achievements in general, in English classes in particular. This is why this argument should be understood only limitedly as the weaker students basically did not react to this statement with any significant response. Additionally, four of the stronger

students were used to read books in their free time, which was why they generally considered dealing with comics as with something infantile and not adequate to their age.

2) question: *Which of the tasks did you find funnier and why? What made you laugh?*

The overall impressions towards the sense of humour presented via the comic strips were rather of constrained or even negative character. The students stated that the humour in *Garfield* strips was out of their interest and that this kind of entertainment was not any close to their generation. Specifically, eight students agreed on the opinion that comic strips were something rather old-fashioned – so much the more those with *Garfield*. Three students also contributed that they did not mind films with *Garfield*, but the original comic strip version was something they would not have read just by themselves. Four students also insisted on the opinion that strips were awkward in principle, while one girl reacted on this opinion that the strips did not have to be necessarily unbearable, however the style of the drawings in those presented ones put down any humorous potential which, in other case, might have been perceivable. Consequently, I asked an additional question to find out what kind of humour based on pictures they did prefer - the only concrete suggestion was that an alternative to similarly designed task could have been various “memes”¹⁰, which is a slang word for an item of image-based source of fun. However, memes are largely based on cultural, social or other context, which would have presumably caused reasons for misunderstanding either.

3) statement: *Owing to the presence of pictures, it is easier to remember new words and call back their meaning rather than the only text tasks.*

The prevailing reactions to the statement were mostly opposing. It is possible to say that most students would have dealt with only text tasks rather than with those based on comics. Eight students were of the opinion that they had been more used to only text tasks and that this was why such materials were more familiar to them, thus more welcome and feasible. Three students alleged that orientation in the story-line appeared to be less challenging to them, which was why they felt more immersed in the text tasks than in the comic strips. Five students in total consequently agreed on the argument that comics as a

¹⁰ Meme is a slang word used mainly among the Internet users to designate basically an image or a short video presenting humorous contents, most often of ironical or self-critical character. Memes are spread online via social media and are shared and copied globally.

medium was not an up-to-date way of entertainment, which essentially influenced even their enthusiasm and attitude to accomplishing the tasks based on this medium.

The level of success: comic strips vs. text jokes. After correction of both sets of the tasks, the resulting statistics proved that accomplishing the only text exercises was significantly more feasible than in the case of comic strips. Almost all students improved their performance when working with texts, which also proves their arguments against comics. The level of successfulness is expressed via the percentage representing the ratio of expressions filled in correctly. When dealing with the text task, the whole group improved their performance with the growth of successful responses at 17, 50%. For more detailed results see the chart in the appendix.

The first survey proved that comics were not a type of literature these students preferred. Most students were not familiar with comic strips at all. Czech students are not used to such types of comics and this was probably why they considered them to be old-fashioned and unsuitable to their age. Only four students confessed that they understood the jokes. However, missing the funny point could not have been just because comic strips seemed to be out-of-date to them; most students confirmed that condensed messages in comics actually caused problems with comprehensibility to the story, which consequently lead to mistakes and frustration. Having been used to them, most students finally preferred the only text tasks. Finally, the results from the questionnaire survey corresponded with the responses provided during the discussion.

Task 2 – Endings

Survey. According to the responses, students rather disagreed with the first statement (the difficulty aspect). In this case, the comic strip exercises were considered to be even more demanding than in the case of the cloze variety which had been done in the previous class. All in all, nine students tended towards the negative responses. The second statement (detecting the time demandingness) elicited rather distorted answers. Here eight students claimed that the first task – ending the comics – took shorter time than finishing the texts. According to my observation, most students used the whole time limit for the first task, which was 20 minutes, as they tried to somewhat refine their drawings. Only five students agreed with the third statement examining whether the comic task was amusing more than texts; seven students disagreed as they understood comic strips as less

entertaining exercises again. The reactions to the fourth statement, examining how much the pictures were helpful at the expense of the text amount, were split in halves. Six students confirmed that pictures were helpful while finishing their own final panel, the others were against – four rather disagreed and the last two absolutely disagreed. The next statement elicited disapprovals again. It showed that such kind of literature is not any interesting for this group of students. Eight students abode with the negative responses, which exactly corresponded with their responses as in the case of the cloze variety. Anyway, in the case of the sixth statement asking about students' concern in similarly designed tasks to be employed in further classes, five students absolutely agreed with the option that such a type of comic exercises would have been appreciated in the English classes more often, the others were rather against this suggestion.

Discussion. The discussion was too partially directed with initial questions in advance. These questions were meant to raise students' arguments and opinions towards their experience with the second task and opened the field for more extensive discussion about their preferences in the means of L2 “written” activities.

1) question: *In comparison to the first comic strip task (cloze), was the second task based on comic strips any better? Why, why not?*

Students' reactions to this question were not outright. Six students confessed that working on both the visual and verbal endings was a new experience to them; however, this was why they would have preferred the second task rather than the first one (the cloze). Nevertheless, the other six students strongly complained about the drawing part for various reasons – three students supported their complaint that they did not like to draw in general and that any type of drawing task should not have been included in language lessons at all. The other three students simply said that the drawing part had been boring and that they had focused rather on their verbal output. Finally, the others agreed on the argument that such type of tasks is a waste of time as the drawing part required quite a lot of time. There is to say that all stronger students (five, to be precise) finally agreed on this opinion. They also continued that such an activity was not welcome even as a diversion from common, routine text based tasks they had been regularly exposed to. Eleven students out of twelve finally agreed on the statement that the creative part was for such reasons more or less just an inconvenience.

On the contrary, the second stage introducing the text activities was appreciated far more mainly for the fact that the creative part in the first stage was, to a certain level, a source of frustration. Four students labelled the text variety as the more entertaining one as it was possible to extend their endings with less plot-context constraints than in the case of comic strips. They explained this opinion that more text meant more efficient and supportive resource for their understanding, which consequently lead in smoother work and more pleasant experience in general. Five students also contributed with the argument that it was significantly more feasible to reassume the dialogue than in the case of comic strips, where they felt lost in the story line.

2) question: *After your experience with comic strips, how do you understand them now as a medium and as a variety of an educative tool in class?*

Six students responded that comic strips and any other types of sequential art was just an infant source of entertainment suitable for much younger children and that reading books would have been far more entertaining and upgrading their overall knowledge. These students also added the argument, that they did not consider comic strips to be funny at all (as an alternative, memes were offered again). The others answered that comic strips were basically quite good, however, they promptly continued that not those strips which were presented in the classes. They commented on further that strips with *Garfield* and *Snoopy* were old-fashioned and that they did not enjoy the kind of humour much. Nevertheless, when trying to find out what concrete comic strips offering more attractive contents they were interested in, no examples were offered by them. Thus, this argument of theirs could have been accepted only limitedly. Five students consequently confessed that they did not even felt any presence of humour at all.

The second stage employing the text activities was generally accepted with greater appreciation. After some disputes, the whole group agreed on the argument that the text activities were better just for the fact no humour was included, thus also no humorous punch lines were not expected to be filled in by them. They explained their attitude that their sense of humour is simply different from that which the comic strips used in the classes offered.

The results from the survey are a bit ambivalent. Five statements were of just about a neutral outcome in the end. Only the statement about the reading preference of the students was clear as eight students out of twelve stated again that such kind of literature is

out of their interest. Half of the students did not like the drawing part and because of that they considered such an activity as a waste of class time. Almost half of the students also stated that more text provided more level of support to them, thus comic strips were not as efficient in providing the context as the text exercises.

Task 3 – Extensive reading

Survey. There were only ten students present during this task. Even though the task was of a very different form and contents, the survey results were of similar outcome data as in the previous two tasks. According to the responses, even this task did not elicit any deeper excitement about the comic based activity in the class. As for the first statement then, five students considered the comics passages as the less difficult ones to be understood; the same number of students was of the opposite opinion. The responses to the second statement - the time demands factor - were almost single sided as only one student stated that comic passages, in spite of their much more extensive volume in comparison to the pure text, took her less time to read than in the case of the summary part. Five students consequently responded to the third statement that comic passages were more entertaining than the pure text. This meant that the other five students felt no significant interest even in the largely different story telling and contents (if comparing to the comic strips) which the original *Maus* text provided. The next statement was, again, of a balanced outcome. Five students missed more text while reading the original text for full comprehensibility. In the case of the fifth statement, dealing with the students' reading preferences, only three students alleged that they liked to read similarly conceived comics/graphic novels. This could have caused rather negative attitudes on behalf of this task indeed. No prior experience of nine students might have influenced their admission of such task. Finally, the responses to the sixth statement showed that despite the task was of a serious issue and of significantly more sophisticated composition in general, only four students out of ten would have appreciated similarly designed tasks in their classes again.

Discussion. This discussion was more focused on the contribution of the two relevant changes of the comics materials. The first was the plot introducing a deeply serious story; the second one was the expressive drawings contributing to the overall impression from the reading experience.

1) question: *Did you have any problems with linking the plot while switching from the text into the comics passages?*

Eight students confirmed that switching between the text and the graphic novel parts meant no significant problems to them. They said that the transfers were more or less smooth and logical. Only two students stated that it was rather uncomfortable to get used to the standard “text narration” after they had finished the first graphic novel passage. They also added that after they assimilated with the comics, it was not seamless to switch back into the pure text again. Nonetheless, there is to say that the combined form of the task meant no problems for the process of reading. Five students alleged that the text was brief and clear to them and that the only somewhat challenging parts had been experienced in the comic passages. The other five students added that they considered both text varieties to be equal in the L2 skills demands and that any relevant difficulties with comprehension were not perceived either. Most students consequently confirmed that the presence of pictures in the case of *Maus* was really efficient and helpful.

2) question: *How did you perceive the serious theme realized in comics? Did you appreciate the serious issues more than the funny comic strips?*

Seven students agreed on the answer that the topic and form of *Maus* was far closer to their taste than all the contents of comic strips. They also admitted that the serious issue of the Holocaust was more adequate to their age, which consequently resulted in raising their interest while reading the task. This was probably why even those who did not like reading in general struggled to finish the reading before the time limit ran out (it showed that nine students finally finished the reading). There were two students who claimed that they would have liked to read the whole book, nevertheless, these students added upon this they would have liked to read it not for the form of a graphic novel, but for the story base on true to life dramas; thus, if available in a standard novel version, they would have preferred this option. Furthermore, it appeared that the generally higher level of interest in this task was in most cases caused only because the two previous tasks were rather boring to them (this was a case of five students). In other words, the last task was appreciated as something new to them rather than something virtually yearned in classes. The three remaining students stood out of any remarks as they prefaced in the very beginning of the discussion that they did not like literature of any kind, comics not excluding (these students were all the three boys from this group, that is to say).

3) question: *How did you perceive Spiegelman's style of drawings? Were the pictures any significantly helpful to your understanding?*

First of all, most students reacted to the use of symbolic animal allegory for the appearance of the characters generally with a positive feedback. They admitted that this aspect helped them in their orientation in the story; they could have easily recognized who were the Jews and the Nazis. This was particularly why all the students finally appreciated this artistic feature in spite of their initial mockery. They also mentioned the oppressive sketch-like drawings in the sense that their visual conduct influenced their perception of the story line and helped them with putting themselves into the mood of the story in general. Thus, in comparison to the comic strips, the drawings in this task were accepted positively. This fact only showed that this artistic intention of Spiegelman's was perceivable even by inexperienced and very young audience. The role of visual backing was, at least in the case of *Maus*, proved to be efficient in the sense of context support.

All in all, the third task was the most accepted one of all the research exercises. The reason for this was primarily the serious theme. In comparison to the previous two tasks, pictures in *Maus* provided the most efficient support of all the class research materials. Even the third task, however, did not convincingly prove that comics are a significantly attractive educational tool in English classes which would have been desired by students to work with more often. These results showed that the choice of appropriate comics depends on very subjective aspects; the choice of the study materials is ultimately crucial.

Generally, the surveys did not prove fully nondescript results. Nonetheless, there is to say that if there were any preferences towards one of the varieties (comics vs. text), the larger number of students surprisingly tended to prefer text to comics. The most apparent explanations for this fact was firstly the inconvenient use of brief message system which is generally typical for most comics. No prior experience with comic strips also contributed to the unsatisfactory results towards comics, as most students consequently confessed. All in all, the condensed text in comics raised problems in comprehension which, in some cases, lead in losing the conception of the overall idea of the story line. The second explanation results from the amount of the text either – as the text exercises provided more words, students felt more support for their own performance while writing the responses.

During the discussions, students were largely concerned with the issue of humour/seriousness of the story. The deep topic of the third task presenting the Holocaust

machinery was generally approved as far more adequate and appropriate study material than comic strips/text jokes which were for the most part based on comic strip form of humour. When dealing with these tasks, most students were demotivated just for they could not have recognized this kind of humour. The discussions also repeatedly showed that students shared different kind of humour which was based on pictures or photographs – memes. The options of using memes as a more attractive alternative to comic strips will be – along with other suggestions resulting from the research – mentioned in the next chapter.

V. IMPLICATIONS

This chapter suggests possible solutions of crucial problems which appeared relevant to the research outcome. The chapter is divided into three sections. The goal of the first one – Pedagogical Implications - is to offer how to consider the teacher's pre-class conception of the class contents and scenario so that the use of similarly designed tasks would avoid any drawbacks as much as possible. The implications for contents, form and type of comics to be primarily employed in further practice are presented along with the arguments resulting from the research. Next section deals with the limitations of the research where there are presented also possible suggestions how the research could be improved and focused further. Finally, the chapter concludes with other suggestions how the research could be extended while examining the value of memes in the role of comic strips alternates and how comics could be efficient in case of alternate learning styles of students.

Pedagogical Implications

It seems that the main crucial aspect which determined accomplishing the tasks was primarily the character of the contents. In similarly conceived tasks based on comics, it is necessary to be sure in advance that the students are interested or willing to work on such tasks. According to the overall response, the kind of humour proved to be largely inappropriate. It appeared that the most successfully accepted exercises were those which were not based on humour, but those dealing with neutral or even serious issues. Consequently, topics based on interesting/serious facts or events would have been much more efficient with the reference to the enthusiasm of the students. Moreover, not only from the pedagogical viewpoint, just the actual concern of students brings their significantly more efficient work, reflecting their subjective responses and consequently also the level of L2 acquisition in general. Thus, for further practice, it would be highly advisable to discover topics which the students prefer in advance so that the tasks could be designed with respect to their true interest. There can be a number of ways how to get informed about students' interests; nonetheless, a short survey realized through brief questionnaire/discussion might be sufficient enough to get the gist of the topic to be worked with before designing any similarly conceived tasks. This method can be anonymous, thus even shy students may express their preferences with no restrictions.

When regarding the form of the sequential art to be applied in classes, comic strips, despite the suggestions mentioned in the theoretical part, proved not to be the form which should be largely preferred. Since comic strips are principally based on impliedly constructed humour, students did not receive them with sympathy simply for the fact that they could not have recognized the point of the joke. As a consequence, comic strips seem to be efficient only limitedly and not in general, as the theoretical part of the thesis had presupposed. Anyway, the use of memes was offered by most students as a solution for designing alternate, visually supported tasks employing humour. However, even in the case of memes, there is to be considered the aspects of cultural, social or other context, which would unavoidably cause problems with misunderstanding as in the case of comic strips. The aspect of topic seems to be crucial even in the case of memes as well.

Another reason why comic strips were not accepted with any relevant positive response was the drawing part in the case of the second task. Most students, there is to say, were not comfortable with this stage even though mere stick figures could have been drawn. The most relevant argument they agreed on was that the drawing part seemed to them to be only a waste of time with no L2 acquirement contribution. Consequently, such tasks should be employed only in the case that students express their interest in similarly conceived tasks in advance or if the teacher is absolutely sure that drawing is no constraint in all cases at all.

The last and the most fundamental reason why comics were not that efficient as the theoretical findings suggested was the factor of condensed message delivery. The brief chunks of text presented in the balloons caused problems with understanding to the story line. Moreover, pictures - which should have backed up the overall comprehensibility - did not prove to be helpful enough to substitute the lack of verbal information. As mentioned earlier, understanding to the story line is essential no matter if it is realized through verbal or visual messages. The use of comics providing sequence of pictures with the tight closure (minimal time shifts between the panels) is crucial when choosing comics materials as well. All in all, even though there was more text included as in the case of *Maus* in the third task, it showed that the more extensive volume of the input text the students were exposed to, the more efficiently they were able to engage/respond in average (this phenomenon was undoubtedly proved as almost all of the students improved their performance when working with the only text exercises). If dealing with comics as much efficiently as possible then, similarly conceived tasks as the third one (the extensive

reading task) seems to be one of the most desirable varieties. Thus, comics may contribute to the L2 acquisition contributively especially in the matter of extensive reading tasks which, if needed, might be succeeded with various follow up tasks, productive exercises not excluding (e.g. discussions, dramatic interpretations/role plays, creative writing tasks etc.).

From the practical viewpoint, it would also be advisable to allow students using dictionaries in their mobile phones, if they have any. This approach should prompt not just their reading pace, but also prevent them from possible distraction while switching between the reading process and the word search, which might become a disturbing aspect in the case of using printed dictionaries.

Lastly, no matter if working on comic based or only text exercises, there should always be ready some extra task/exercise to be done in the case that the stronger students are done before the rest. It is thus possible to engage all students to their own maximum this way. Another solution ensuring the teacher that all students work with full engagement is to offer the opportunity to choose and accomplish only certain amount/part of the exercises. This approach, however, could be misused for idleness more likely and should be used only if no extra material has been prepared in advance.

Limitations of the research

The most significant factor why the research cannot be generalized too much is the low number of students who went through the tasks and responded in the survey/questionnaire. Firstly, if more precise output is to be researched then, more sample groups of students must be engaged.

Secondly, the sample groups should also be of wider age range and not focused just on ninth graders of the age of 15/16. It is thus possible that younger students would provide entirely different responses and results. This might be the case of, among others, the second comic based task employing the drawing stage which might appeal to younger students rather than to the ninth graders.

Another aspect to be considered is also the type of tasks which should be used for the research purposes. Basically, as in the case of the amount of students participating in the research, there should also be tested more types of exercises developing both the receptive and productive skills to examine the genuine contribution of comics in classes with more exact and relevant output data.

Finally, even though the methods of gathering the research data which were applied here provided sufficient amount of information on which the conclusion can be based, there is to say that most students who were actively responding during the discussion were basically the “stronger” ones. Thus, the preferences of the less confident/free-spoken students were often rather vague as they tended to follow the opinions of their more assertive classmates.

Other Suggestions for Further Research

There can be a number of ways hot to utilize this research. Anyway, one of the close-knit follow up surveys could examine the didactical value/efficiency of memes which were strongly offered by the students as possible alternates to comics strips. To test their actual power, memes could thus be compared to comic strips so that the direct comparison was realized. Then, the value of memes in classes should also be checked in comparison to their text equivalents such as comic strips were screened here.

The theoretical part also suggested that comics may serve as highly efficient EFL tools in the case of students of specific learning needs. Thus, further research should examine whether such hypothesis is in congruence with practice in the case of Czech students, specifically, in the case of second graders of such alternate needs.

Finally, comics in a role of an educative tool developing L2 productive skills (communicational skills - speaking in particular) should be examined further. It is possible that the efficiency of comics would be much diverse from the results this thesis presented.

In conclusion, this chapter implied how the research could be used further as a starting point for another research dealing with comics in the role of educative tools in EFL classes. All of the conclusions presented resulted from the arguments based on the actual data researched. Practical implications for pedagogical practice were offered in reference to the teacher’s observations and to the students’ feedback. Limitations of the research were mentioned as well as they too may provide relevant basis for further research.

IV. CONCLUSION

The fundamental theme of the thesis was to examine whether sequential art and its various forms might efficiently serve as educative tools in EFL classes. The theoretical part explained the most significant aspects of the comic medium from several viewpoints which were relevant to the educative purposes in particular. There were also highlighted the unique advantages of the comic medium which should be utilized while designing tasks aimed on developing individual L2 skills. These findings also prefaced the aim of the research which should have examined the real contribution of comics in EFL acquisition.

The research was realized with the objective to find out whether the visual context of pictures provided that significantly helpful support as the theoretical part had suggested. For all of the research tasks, there were designed comic based exercises along with their only text counterparts in order to compare the benefits of both the varieties.

Due to the facts which were found out before the actual research, comic strips had seemed to be one of the most efficient varieties of sequential art to be used for educative purposes. Nonetheless, the research outcome consequently proved that their potential was mined only limitedly as such type of literature was out of the students' interest. This factor largely influenced the level of their enthusiasm, which was also reflected in their responses and in the quality of their performance in general. The only comic based exercise which was accepted with more positive reception was the extensive reading task. This task – introducing a serious topic – was designed to contrast the humorous issues of comic strips to examine the actual value of humour in the sense of students' interest in the learning process. Consequently, it appeared that the misconception of the jokes (along with the considerably condensed message delivery) in comic strips really caused problems in comprehensibility. Thus, if any variety of sequential art proved its value in EFL class during this research, it was the extract from *Maus*. This research thus implied that comics of larger number of pages/of more voluminous text support should be employed above all not only in the case of tasks aimed on receptive skills, but of those aimed on productive skills as well.

All in all, the amount of text proved to be crucial for the success in accomplishing any of the individual tasks presented. If only one of the two varieties were to be chosen by the students, though, most of them would vote for the only text exercises. Their arguments were largely pragmatic; however, there were two main reasons for their negative response towards comics. Firstly, it was for sure that the briefness of the text seemed to be the most

disturbing factor; nonetheless, lack of experience with the comic medium appeared to be the second relevant factor for their inefficient performance. Even this aspect, however, has its explanation. Besides other reasons mentioned earlier, it showed that comics are not any topical medium close to the second graders who went through the research. It is thus highly possible that this poor level of interest in comics could be a case of a larger part of Czech students of this age, which would throw sort of different light upon the efficiency of comics in EFL classes in general.

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APPENDICES

Figures



Figure 1. Synecdoche in sequential art – a part representing the whole. Reprinted from *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (10th ed.) (p. 36), by F. L. Miller, K. Janson & L. Varley, 1996, New York, NY: DC Comics.

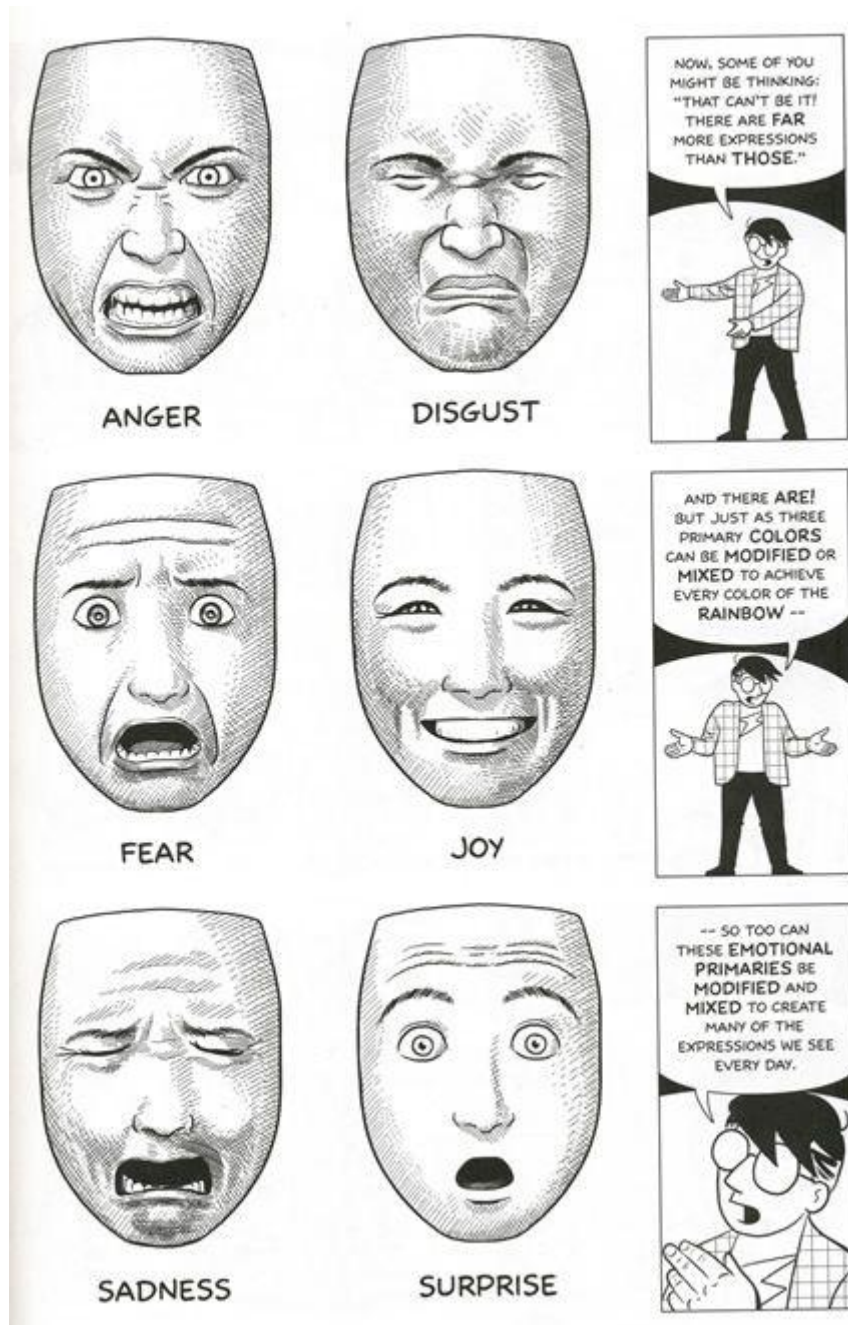


Figure 2. The visual language of comics reflects intuitively recognizable reality. Reprinted from *Reinventing Comics: How Imagination and Technology Are Revolutionizing an Art Form* (p. 83), by S. McCloud, 2000, New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

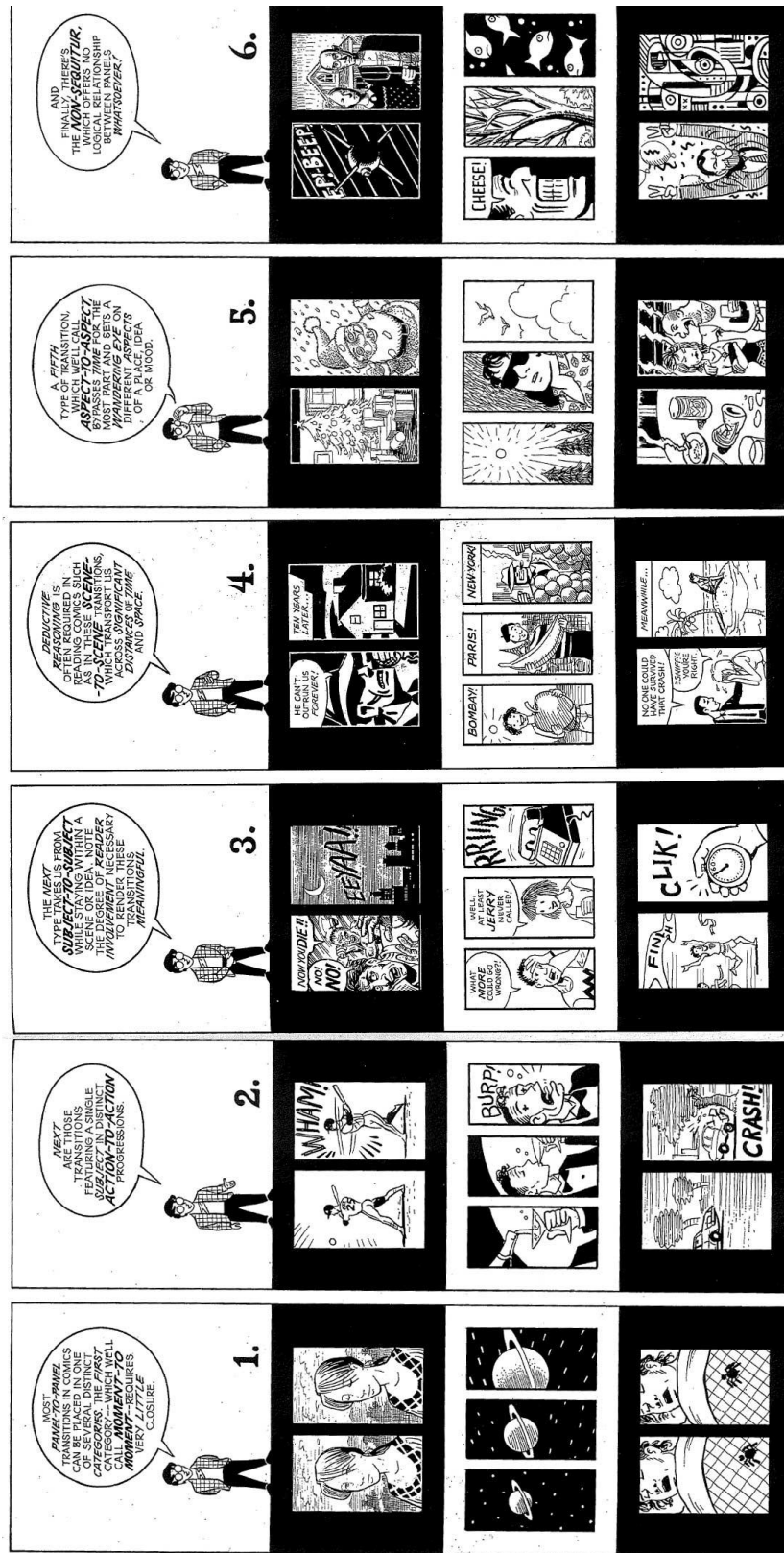


Figure 3. Closure. Reprinted from *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (p. 70-72), by S. McCloud, 1994, New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.



Figure 4. Psychological interactions with the text in comics. Reprinted from The Comics Get Serious: Jar of Fools. Retrieved April 7, 2012, from <http://www.rationalmagic.com/Comics/JarofFools.html>

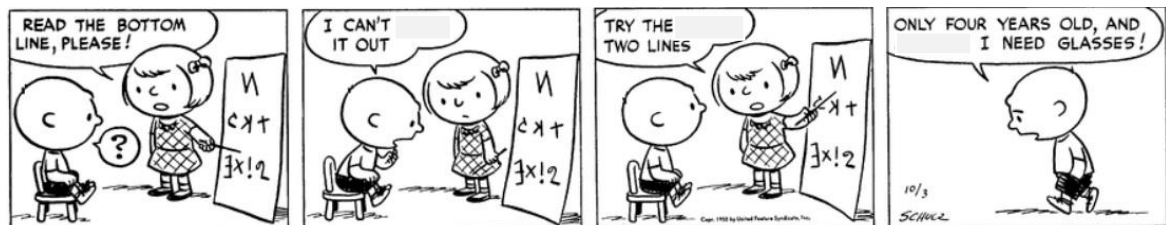


Figure 5. Visuals which might be distracting for the message transfer. Reprinted from Before You See the Deadpool Movie Meet the Character. Retrieved March 11, 2018, from <https://www.sideshowtoy.com/blog/before-you-see-the-deadpool-movie-meet-the-character-that-inspired-ryan-reynolds/>

Task 1 – CLOZE – I. Comic Strips



1. Spiders – word bank: anyway, fruit, without, hard, with, him, good



2. Optician – word bank: same, usually, make, other, get, already



3. Boss at Home – word bank: excuse, when, realize, stay, what, protest

Task 1 – CLOZE – II. Texts

1. Speeding

Word bank:

lesson, lawyer, ticket, another, no, jerk, remember, think

A man was stopped for driving too fast, but he thought he was driving just fine.

Officer: You were speeding.

Man: No, I wasn't.

Officer: Yes, you were. I'm giving you a

_____.

Man: But I wasn't speeding.

Officer: Tell that to the judge! (The officer gives man the ticket.)

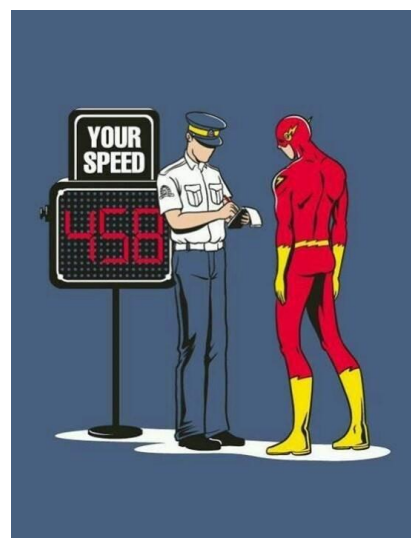
Man: Would I get _____ ticket if I called you a _____?

Officer: Yes, you would.

Man: What if I only thought that you were?

Officer: I can't give you a ticket for what you _____.

Man: Fine, I think you're a jerk! (doplň student)



<http://iteslj.org/c/jokes.html>

<https://funnyjunk.com/Flash+speed/funny-pictures/5217293/> (pic)



2. Parrots

Word bank:

sell, buy, shocked, satisfied, fast, late, notes, time, don't, have to

One day a man goes to a pet shop to buy a parrot. The assistant takes the man to the parrot section and asks him to choose one.

The man asks, "How much is the yellow one?"
The assistant replies that it costs \$2,000. The man is _____ and asks the assistant why it's so expensive. "This parrot is a very special one. He can type really _____."

"What about the green one?" the man asks. "He costs \$5,000 because he can type, answer incoming phone calls and take _____."

"What about the red one?" the man asks.

The assistant says, "That one's \$10,000."

Curious, the man asks, "What does he do?"

The assistant says, "I _____ know, but the other two call him boss."

http://www.myenglishpages.com/site_php_files/jokes.php?page=4

3. Gong

Word bank:

when, clock, serious, sure, hammer, how,
phone, suddenly, earlier

A young man moved away from his parents to become a student. Proudly showing off his new apartment to his classmate late one night, they went into his bedroom where there was a big brass gong.



"What's that big brass gong?" his friend asked.

"It's not a gong. It's a talking _____," the man replied.

"What? Are you _____?" asked his impressed friend.

"Yup," replied the student.

"_____ does it work?" his friend asked staring at it.

"Watch," the student replied. He picked up a _____,
gave it an ear-shattering bang and stepped back.

His friend stood looking at the gong for a moment.

_____, someone on the other side of the wall screamed: "You idiot, it's ten past three in the morning!"

http://www.myenglishpages.com/site_php_files/joke.php?t=161

<http://www.guibingzhuche.com/group/gong-clipart/>

Task 2 – ENDING THE STORY – I. Comic strips



1. Mouse in the House



2. Remote Control



3. Born Wrong

Task 2 – ENDING THE STORY – II. Texts

1. In the pet store

John: Mom, can we take one of these puppies?

Mother: I would love to have a puppy, but we can't take one. We live in an apartment. A dog in an apartment is not a good idea.

John: But Bill my friend has a dog, and he lives in an apartment.

Mother: Yes, I know that many people have a dog in their apartment, but I think it's not a good idea for us.

John: If we move to a house, can we have a dog?

Mother:



<http://www.eslideas.com/esl-dialog-pet-store.html>

<http://www.dogster.com/lifestyle/never-buy-dogs-puppies-from-pet-stores> (pic)

2. Ghosts at the library

Ghost 1: Where do you live?

Ghost 2: At the main library. I moved in 70 years ago.

Ghost 1: I live in the department store across from here. I moved in 50 years ago.

Ghost 2: You must have seen many changes over the years.

Ghost 1: Oh yes, long dresses, short dresses, tight pants, loose pants, hats, no hats. You must also have seen differences.

Ghost 2: There are enormous differences. Today we have computers and electronic texts. 70 years ago we didn't have this technology.

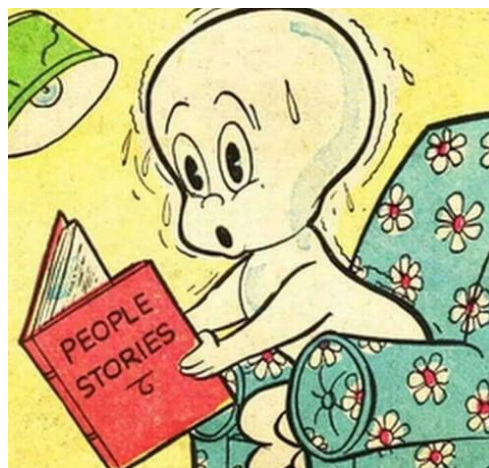
People read books.

Ghost 1: I preferred the past.

Ghost 2: And I like the present. I love to read when the library is closed.

Ghost 1: Really! What do you like to read?

Ghost 2:



<http://www.eslideas.com/esl-dialog-ghosts-at-the-library.html>

http://nailpolishpress.org/assets/uploads/m4ca81435_05aa_445b_9ea0_3f6ac5ead2c9/2015/May/Casper_the_Ghost_reading_People_Stories_500x474.jpg (pic)

3. Friday the thirteenth

A: Today is Friday the thirteenth.

B: That's a bad day.

A: It's supposed to be unlucky.

B: You're supposed to stay home all day.

A: That's what I do.

B: My friend stayed in a hotel on Friday the thirteenth.

A: That was a mistake.

B: He stayed on the thirteenth floor.

A: What happened?

B:



<http://eslyes.com/easydialogs/ec/dailylife029.htm>

<http://williamjohqnsn.blogspot.cz/2017/02/dolphin-inn-ny-1408.html> (pic)

Task 3 – EXTENSIVE READING – I. Text

MAUS, Book I: My Father Bleeds History

Character list:

Art Spiegelman - the author and narrator of *Maus*, and also one of the story's main characters. Born in Stockholm after the Holocaust, he is the only surviving child of Vladek and Anja Spiegelman. His brother, Richieu, died as a child during the war.

Vladek Spiegelman - Vladek is Art Spiegelman's father. He grew up in pre-war Poland, and much of *Maus* tells his experiences in the Holocaust, as told in his own words to his son. As the story opens in 1978, he is married to his second wife, Mala. Vladek marries Art's mother, Anja, in Poland in 1937, only two years before the Nazi invasion.

Anja – Vladek's first wife

Mala – Vladek's second wife

As the book opens, it is 1978, and Art Spiegelman arrives in Rego Park, NY, to have dinner with his father, Vladek, a Holocaust survivor. It is immediately clear that the two men are not particularly close. Art's mother, Anja, killed herself in 1968, and Vladek is now remarried to a woman named Mala, herself a survivor. The couple does not get along, and there does not appear to be much love in their relationship. Vladek, constantly afraid that Mala will steal his money, is intensely mean and treats his wife like a maid. Art tells his father that he wants to draw a book about his experiences in the Holocaust, and Vladek starts to tell his son the story of how he met Anja.

It is 1936. Vladek is living in Czestochowa, Poland, and has been dating a girl named Lucia Greenberg for several years. One day he travels to Sosnowiec and meets Anja, the intelligent daughter of a rich manufacturer. They are married in 1937, and Anja's father gives Vladek part-ownership in his business. Anja gives birth to their first child, Richieu, soon after the marriage. After the birth... **Maus (pp. 31-38).**

As the Germans advance in the invasion, Vladek manages to kill one soldier before he is caught and taken to a prison of a German war camp. One night, Vladek has a dream about his grandfather, who tells him that he will be set free during the Jewish religious, week-long event Parshas Truma. Three months later, it is

Parshas Truma, and Vladek is released, indeed. When he returns to Sosnowiec, his home, there are twelve people living in Anja's father's house. The family's business has been taken over by the Germans, and they are living off of their savings. Vladek also meets their old customer, Mr. JIzecki, and the two begin a dangerous business of black market (they deal mainly food).

In 1942, the Jews are forced by Germans to move to a different part of town. Soon after, Anja's grandparents are transported to a new community for the old Jews. The family tries to hide them, but soon they are taken away to Auschwitz¹¹. Not long after, all remaining Jews are forced to go to a nearby stadium for "registration." Here, the old people, families with many children, and people without work cards are sent to the left, while everyone else is taken to the right. Those on the left are sent to their deaths at Auschwitz. Vladek's father is sent to the right, but when he sees his daughter alone with her four children on the left, he crosses over to be with her. None survive the war.

In 1943, all Jews are forced into a ghetto in the nearby town of Srodula. Vladek's uncle Persis, chief of the Jewish community office in the nearby ghetto of Zawiercie, tells Vladek that he can keep Richieu in safety until things calm down. Vladek and Anja agree, and Richieu is sent there with Anja's sister, Tosha. Soon afterwards the Zawiercie ghetto is destroyed by the Nazis. However, not long after, rather than be sent to the Auschwitz, Tosha poisons herself, her daughter, and Richieu. **Maus (pp. 110-115)**

The text was adjusted from the original version accessible at:

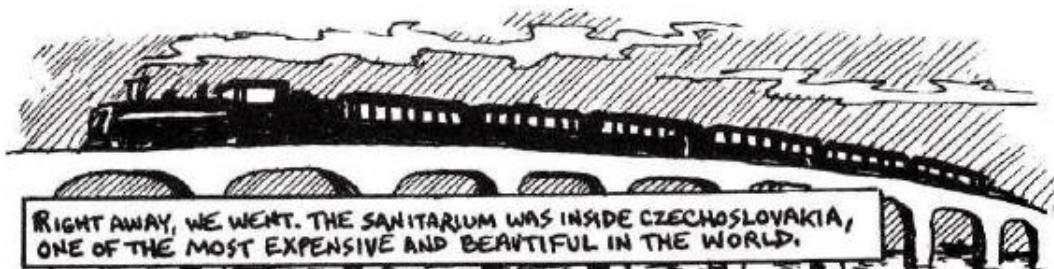
<http://www.gradesaver.com/maus/study-guide/summary>

¹¹ Auschwitz-Birkenau (Oswiecim) was the largest of the German Nazi concentration camps.

Task 3 – EXTENSIVE READING – II. Comics

a) Maus (pp. 31-38)

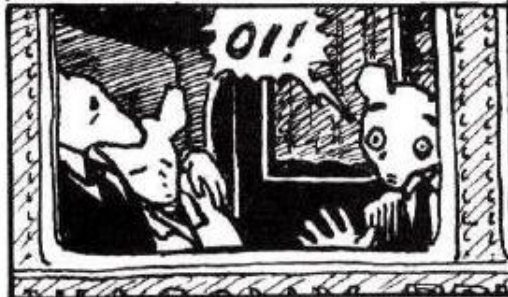




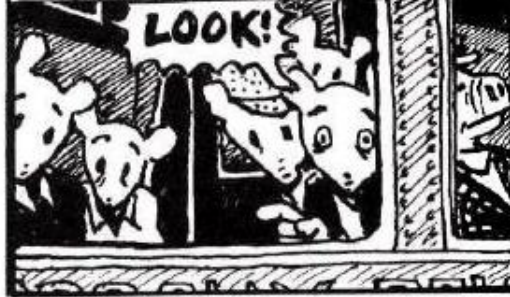
RIGHT AWAY, WE WENT. THE SANITARIUM WAS INSIDE CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND BEAUTIFUL IN THE WORLD.

I REMEMBER WHEN WE WERE ALMOST ARRIVED, WE PASSED A SMALL TOWN.

EVERYBODY-EVERY JEW FROM THE TRAIN - GOT VERY EXCITED AND FRIGHTENED.



OI!



LOOK!



IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF 1938 - BEFORE THE WAR - HANGING HIGH IN THE CENTER OF TOWN, IT WAS A NAZI FLAG..

HERE WAS THE FIRST TIME I SAW, WITH MY OWN EYES, THE SWASTIKA.



I TELL YOU, THERE'S A POGROM GOING ON IN GERMANY TODAY!

ONE FELLOW TOLD US OF HIS COUSIN WHAT WAS LIVING IN GERMANY...



...HE HAD TO SELL HIS BUSINESS TO A GERMAN AND RUN OUT FROM THE COUNTRY WITHOUT EVEN THE MONEY.



IT WAS VERY HARD THERE FOR THE JEWS - TERRIBLE!



ANOTHER FELLOW TOLD US OF A RELATIVE IN BRANDENBERG - THE POLICE CAME TO HIS HOUSE AND NO ONE HEARD AGAIN FROM HIM.



IT WAS MANY, MANY SUCH STORIES - SYNAGOGUES BURNED, JEWS BEATEN WITH NO REASON, WHOLE TOWNS PUSHING OUT ALL JEWS - EACH STORY WORSE THAN THE OTHER.



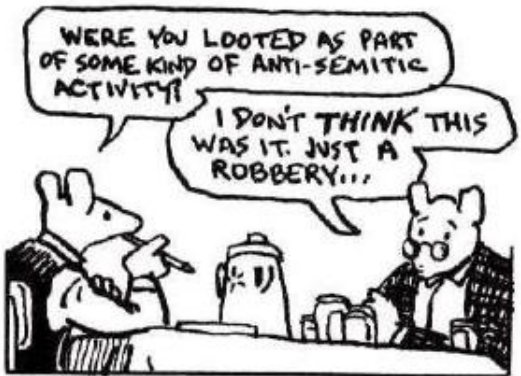
LET'S HOPE THOSE NAZI GANGSTERS GET THROWN OUT OF POWER!

JUST PRAY THAT THEY DON'T START A WAR!!





AND SHE WAS SO LAUGHING AND SO HAPPY, SO HAPPY, THAT SHE APPROACHED EACH TIME AND KISSED ME, SO HAPPY SHE WAS.





IN A COUPLE MONTHS WE WERE WELL-OFF—
 QUITE WELL-OFF...
 A WORKING FACTORY,
 A 2 BEDROOM APART-
 MENT, A POLISH GOVERN-
 ESS, AND EVEN A MAID.



LOOK, RICHIEU,
 POPPA'S HOME!



YOU LOOK
 UPSET, VLADEK.

THERE WAS ANOTHER
 RIOT DOWNTOWN TODAY.



...EVERYONE YELLING, "JEWS OUT!
 JEWS OUT!" ...EVEN TWO PEOPLE
 KILLED. THE POLICE JUST WATCHED!



IT'S THOSE
 NAZIS STIRRING
 EVERYBODY UP!

WHEN IT COMES
 TO JEWS, THE POLES
 DON'T NEED MUCH
 STIRRING UP!



MRS. SPIEGELMAN—HOW CAN YOU
 SAY SUCH A THING. I THINK OF
 YOU AS PART OF MY OWN FAMILY!

I'M SORRY, JANINA.
 I DIDN'T MEAN
 YOU! I'M JUST
 WORRIED!



MAYBE WE SHOULD
 MOVE AWAY, LIKE
 SOME OTHERS HAVE.

IF THINGS GET
 REALLY BAD
 WE'LL RUN BACK
 TO SOSNOWIEC.

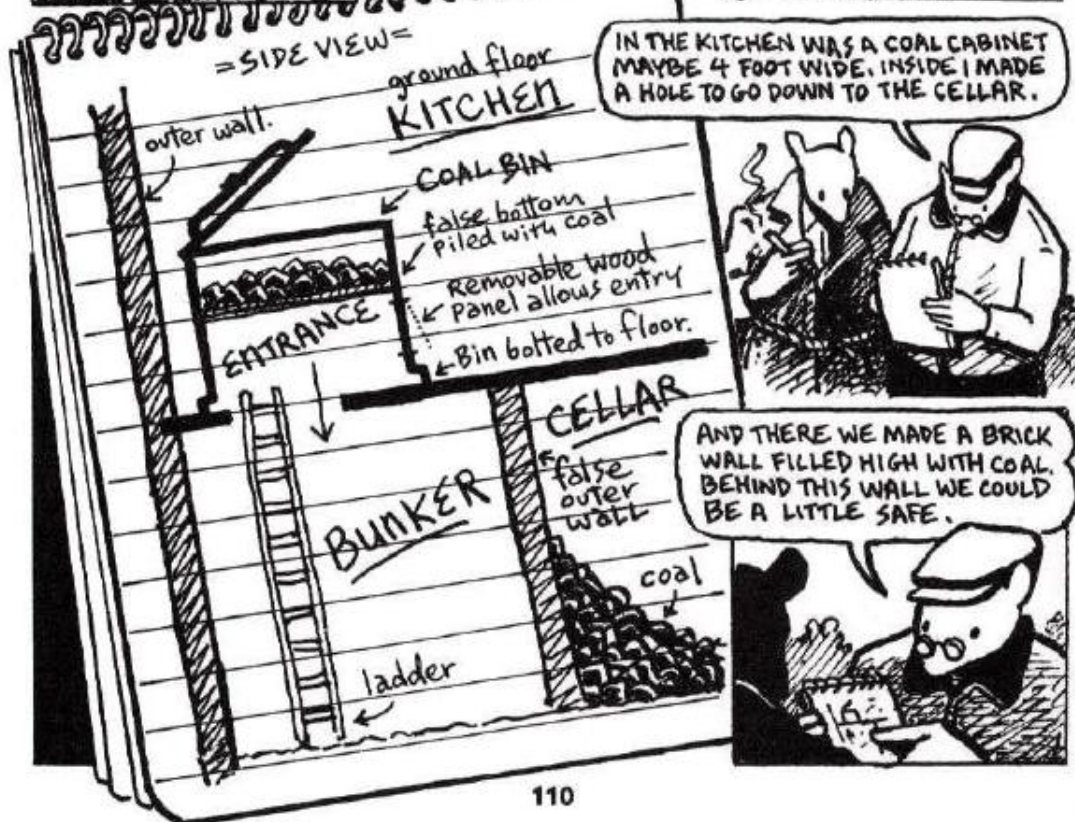
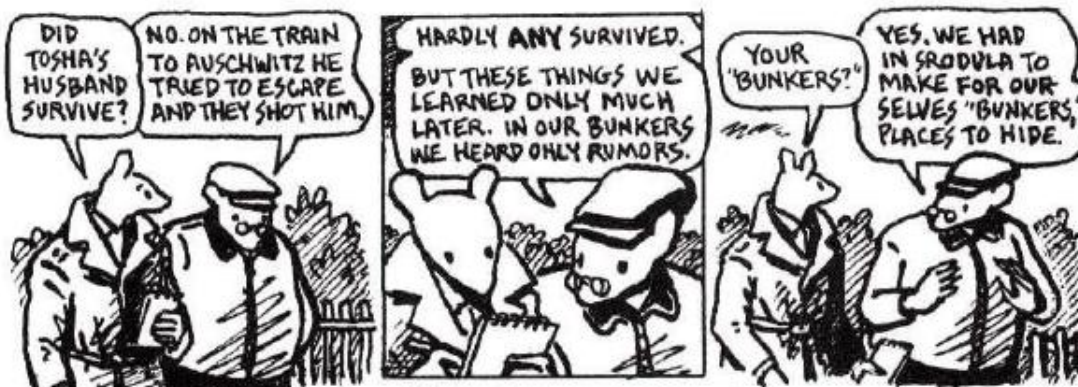


WHY WOULD
 SOSNOWIEC BE
 ANY SAFER
 THAN BIELSKO?

WE THOUGHT THEN, THAT
 HITLER WANTED ONLY
 THE PARTS FROM POLAND,
 LIKE BIELSKO, WHAT USED
 TO BE PARTS FROM GER-
 MANY BEFORE THE
 FIRST WORLD WAR.



b) Maus (pp. 110-115)





THEN, IN JUNE, THEY ARRESTED MONIEK MERIN AND ALL THE OTHER HIGHEST BIG SHOTS OF THE JUDENRAT, THE JEWISH COUNCIL.

A floor plan diagram of a bunker. It shows a 'false wall' at the top, a 'BUNKER' area below it, and an 'ATTIC' area to the right. Below the bunker is an 'Entrance hidden by chandeliers' with an arrow pointing up. To the right of the entrance are 'UPSTAIRS' and 'BEDROOM'.

AROUND THIS TIME WE WERE PUT INTO A DIFFERENT HOUSE. HERE ALSO WE MADE A BUNKER.

BY THE END OF JULY THE NAZIS MADE TO LIQUIDATE COMPLETELY OUR GHETTO - IT WAS 10,000 JEWS TAKEN AWAY IN ONE WEEK.

EXCEPT TO SNEAK FOR FOOD, WE STAYED MOSTLY IN THE BUNKER.

LOLEK! THANK GOD YOU'RE SAFE!

IT'S LIKE A BATTLEFIELD OUTSIDE!

THERE'S HARDLY ANYONE LEFT IN SRODULA. EVERYONE HAS BEEN DEPORTED OR SHOT.

FROM ALL THE JEWS OF ALL SOSNOWIEC IT WAS LEFT MAYBE 1,000 IN THE GHETTO.

AT LEAST YOUR BAG IS FULL... YOU FOUND A LOT OF FOOD, YES?

JUST A FEW OLD TURNIPS... AND SOME BOOKS.

BOOKS!?! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? WE CAN'T EAT BOOKS!

SHH

ALL THE TIME WE WERE HUNGRY. WE JUST DIDN'T HAVE WHAT TO EAT.

ONE NIGHT WE WENT TO SNEAK FOR FOOD...



WE DRAGGED HIM UP TO OUR BUNKER.



MY WIFE AND I HAVE A STARVING BABY. I WAS OUT HUNTING FOR SCRAPS!



IN THE MORNING WE GAVE A LITTLE FOOD TO HIM AND LEFT HIM GO TO HIS FAMILY...



HE MAY BE AN INFORMER. THE SAFEST THING WOULD BE TO KILL HIM!





WE WERE MAYBE 200 PEOPLE TOGETHER WAITING... EACH WEDNESDAY WENT VANS TO RUSCHWITZ. WHEN WE WERE CAUGHT, IT WAS THEN MAYBE A THURSDAY.

LOOK, ANJA! THAT'S MY COUSIN, JAKOV SPIEGELMAN, IN THE COURTYARD.



HEY! JAKOV! HELP! JAKOV-HELP US!

VLADK?! THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO!



I MADE SIGNS TO SHOW I COULD PAY.

SOME GOLD I HID IN THE CHIMNEY OF OUR BUNKER WHEN THEY TOOK US. BUT A FEW VALUABLES I HAD STILL WITH ME.



OKAY. DON'T WORRY! HASKEL WILL COME HELP YOU!

HASKEL SPIEGELMAN WAS ANOTHER COUSIN.



WOULDN'T THEY HAVE HELPED YOU EVEN IF YOU COULDN'T PAY? I MEAN, YOU WERE FROM THE SAME FAMILY..

HAH! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...

AT THAT TIME IT WASN'T ANYMORE FAMILIES. IT WAS EVERYBODY TO TAKE CARE FOR HIMSELF!

THE NEXT DAY CAME IN TWO GIRLS CARRYING FOOD. WITH THEM CAME HASKEL, A CHIEF OF THE JEWISH POLICE.

(LOOK, VLADEK. I CAN GET YOU AND YOUR WIFE OUT- EVEN YOUR NEPHEW. BUT YOUR IN-LAWS ARE TOO OLD. THEY'LL NEVER GET PAST THE GUARDS.)

PLEASE! WE'LL MAKE IT WORTH YOUR WHILE.



THE TWO GIRLS HE SENT BACK TO THE KITCHEN.

QUICK, BOY, GRAB THIS EMPTY PAIL AND CARRY IT OUT WITH ME.



FROM THE WINDOW WE SAW LOLEK GO.



MY GOD, VLADEK...

YOU MUST GET MATKA AND ME OUT TOO. GIVE YOUR COUSIN THIS GOLD WATCH, THIS DIAMOND- ANYTHING!

OF COURSE I- I'LL DO EVERY- THING I CAN.



THE DAY AFTER, ANJA AND I CARRIED PAST THE GUARDS THE EMPTY PAIS.



HASKEL TOOK FROM ME FATHER- IN-LAW'S JEWELS. BUT, FINALLY, HE DIDN'T HELP THEM.



ON WEDNESDAY THE VANS CAME. ANJA AND I SAW HER FATHER AT THE WINDOW. HE WAS TEARING HIS HAIR AND CRYING.

HE WAS A MILLIONAIRE, BUT EVEN THIS DIDN'T SAVE HIM HIS LIFE.

Questionnaire – English

Name:

Task: 1 2 3

You have just finished two exercises. One of them was based on comics and the second one was based on text and a picture. Tick how much you agree with the statements below.

1. The exercise with comics was generally less difficult than that with text only.
 - a) I absolutely agree
 - b) I rather agree
 - c) I rather disagree
 - d) I absolutely disagree

2. The exercise/part with comics took me a longer time than that with text.
 - a) I absolutely agree
 - b) I rather agree
 - c) I rather disagree
 - d) I absolutely disagree

3. I enjoyed the exercise with comics more than that with text.
 - a) I absolutely agree
 - b) I rather agree
 - c) I rather disagree
 - d) I absolutely disagree

4. When dealing with the exercise based on comics, I missed the text which would help me with understanding and with accomplishing the exercise. The illustrative pictures were not supportive enough.
 - a) I absolutely agree
 - b) I rather agree
 - c) I rather disagree
 - d) I absolutely disagree

5. I like to read the type of comics used in the exercise even in Czech.
 - a) I absolutely agree
 - b) I rather agree
 - c) I rather disagree
 - d) I absolutely disagree

6. I would like to work on this kind of exercises in English classes more often.
 - a) I absolutely agree
 - b) I rather agree
 - c) I rather disagree
 - d) I absolutely disagree

Questionnaire – Czech

Jméno:

Úkol: 1 2 3

Právě jsi dokončil/a dva úkoly. Jeden úkol používal komiks a druhý používal text a obrázky. Zaznamenej níže, jak moc souhlasíš s naspanými větami:

1. Celkově byl pro mě úkol s komiksem snazší než úkol s textem.
 - a) Naprosto souhlasím
 - b) Spíše souhlasím
 - c) Spíše nesouhlasím
 - d) Naprosto nesouhlasím

2. Úkol s komiksem mi trval déle než úkol s textem.
 - a) Naprosto souhlasím
 - b) Spíše souhlasím
 - c) Spíše nesouhlasím
 - d) Naprosto nesouhlasím

3. Úkol s komiksem mě bavil víc než úkol s textem.
 - a) Naprosto souhlasím
 - b) Spíše souhlasím
 - c) Spíše nesouhlasím
 - d) Naprosto nesouhlasím

4. V úkolu s komiksem mi chyběl text, který by mi pomohl porozumět a úkol splnit. Obrázky mi nestačily.
 - a) Naprosto souhlasím
 - b) Spíše souhlasím
 - c) Spíše nesouhlasím
 - d) Naprosto nesouhlasím

5. Typ komiksu použitý v úkolu čtu rád i v češtině.
 - a) Naprosto souhlasím
 - b) Spíše souhlasím
 - c) Spíše nesouhlasím
 - d) Naprosto nesouhlasím

6. Tento typ úkolů s komiksem by mě bavil v hodinách angličtiny.
 - a) Naprosto souhlasím
 - b) Spíše souhlasím
 - c) Spíše nesouhlasím
 - d) Naprosto nesouhlasím

Table 1: The Level of Success: Comic Strips vs. Text Jokes

The Success of Accomplishment			
Task 1: CLOZE			
Student NO.	COMICS	TEXTS	Progress (comics vs. texts)
1	10%	77%	67%
2	X	X	X
3	100%	100%	0%
4	40%	38,50%	-1,50%
5	90%	100%	10%
6	40%	46%	6%
7	40%	69%	29%
8	40%	77%	37%
9	80%	100%	20%
10	90%	100%	10%
11	0%	15,40%	15,40%
12	100%	100%	0%
13	60%	77%	17%
The performance in average	57,50%	75%	17,50%

SUMMARY IN CZECH

Cílem této diplomové práce bylo ověřit, zda komiksy skutečně hrají tak důležitou roli na poli vzdělávacích nástrojů ve výuce cizího jazyka, jak se všeobecně prezentuje odbornou veřejností všude ve světě. Práce se snaží mimo jiné zjistit nejen efektivitu sekvenčního umění ve výuce, ale i samotný zájem studentů o toto médium v hodinách cizího jazyka ve smyslu vítaného zpestření. Vzdělávací hodnota cvičení založených na komiksu byla přímo porovnávána s jejich ekvivalentními alternativami, které byly postavené na pouhém textu. Cílem takto koncipovaného výzkumu bylo získat co nejobjektivnější, a tedy nejrelevantnější poznatky pro další možný výzkum a pro případné návrhy do učitelské praxe. Navzdory všeobecně pozitivním teoretickým poznatkům světových odborníků ve prospěch komiksu v roli vzdělávacího nástroje ve výuce druhého jazyka se tato očekávání po ukončení výzkumu naplnila jen velmi omezeně. Potenciál komiksu by tedy neměl v tomto ohledu být nadhodnocován a to i navzdory tomu, že funkce obrazového doprovodu v komiksech slibuje určitou podporu ve smyslu chápání kontextu a významu děje. Výzkum však ukázal, že nikoliv obrazová podpora, ale zejména množství srozumitelného textu jako takového spolu s plynulou dějovou linií činí z textu podpůrný materiál/nástroj při osvojování lovní zásoby či, řečeno obecně, získávání nových jazykových dovedností ve druhém jazyce.