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Use of Tabletop Role-Playing Games for Communication in English Language

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Prohlášení

Slavnostně prohlašuji, že jsem svou diplomovou práci vypracoval sám, a to jen za použití zdrojů uvedených v seznamu literatury.

Dále souhlasím, aby byla práce uložena na Univerzitě Palackého v Olomouci a zpřístupněna ke studijním účelům v souladu s příslušnými normami.

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Abstract

This diploma thesis deals with the topic of communication and various factors influencing it. Furthermore, the effect of playing tabletop role-playing games in English on these factors is discussed.

The theoretical part introduces the topic of communication and different factors that influence communication, the linguistic and/or psychological background of these factors, and the genre of tabletop role-playing games is introduced, discussing the general concepts and mechanics as well as representatives of said genre.

The practical part deals with a study conducted by the author of this thesis. During the study, nine learners played D&D in English for several weeks. The author examined factors influencing their communication using observations, interviews, and questionnaires.

Key words: communication, Dungeons & Dragons, D&D, willingness to communicate, language anxiety, self-perceived communicative competence

List of contents

List of Abbreviations

CBI	=	Content-based instruction
CC	=	Communicative competence
CLIL	=	Content and language integrated learning
CLT	=	Communicative language teaching
CRPG	=	Computer role-playing games
D&D	=	Dungeons & Dragons
DM	=	Dungeon Master
GM	=	Game Master
L1	=	First language
L2	=	Second language
LARP	=	Live-action role-playing game
MMORPG	=	Massively multiplayer online role-playing game
NPC	=	Non-player character
PC	=	Player character
RPG	=	Role-playing game
SPCC	=	Self-perceived communicative competence
TBI	=	Task-based instruction
TRPG	=	Tabletop role-playing game
WTC	=	Willingness to communicate

Introduction

In the past decades, various linguists became interested in different factors that may influence one's communication. While many experts suggested different ways to facilitate proper conditions in a language classroom for the development of learners' communicative competence, very little research has been done concerning out-of-school activities. Among many different possible activities, one stood out: tabletop role-playing games.

This genre of games has been a hobby of the author of this diploma thesis for about two years at the time this introduction is being written. In addition to extensive personal experience, it also appeared to the author that tabletop role-playing games presented an ideal environment for the development of communicative skills of learners due to its communicative basis.

The goal of this diploma thesis is to introduce selected elements affecting communication, and to determine the participants' levels of selected factors and how the selected factors influencing communication will be affected by playing tabletop role-playing games in English for a period of several weeks. It is the assumption of the author, playing tabletop role-playing games in English will facilitate the factors affecting communication.

The first part of the diploma thesis focuses on communication in second language (L2) and various factors influencing it, namely willingness to communicate, language anxiety, self-perceived communicative competence, and motivation. Furthermore, the category of role-playing games is introduced, and its main aspects are described.

The second part of the diploma thesis will deal with a study conducted by the author of this diploma thesis focusing on long-term learners of English as a foreign language, and how their willingness to communicate and self-perceived communicative competence changed within the duration of the project. At the beginning and at the end of the project, the study participants filled in questionnaires designed to determine the levels of their willingness to communicate and self-perceived competence in English. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain additional background information about each participant. The data analysis will compare the questionnaires filled in by the research participants and will be further expanded by analysing interviews conducted with the participants by the author of the thesis.

THEORETICAL PART

1. Communication

To deal with factors affecting communication in second language, the term 'communication' needs to be explored first. There are many definitions to be chosen from, such as the one by Krauss and Fussell who say that communication can be perceived as any act of conveying signals, which are then divided into 'signs' and 'symbols'. Signs stand for something else with clear relation to it, such as blushing to signify being embarrassed; symbols also represent something else but with the relation towards its signified based on social convention only, e.g. the word 'tree' representing a woody plant.[1] Furthermore, Turner and West define communication as a '*social process in which individuals employ symbols to establish and interpret meaning in their environment*', putting more emphasis on the dynamic and social aspects of communication.[2] If we were to rely on dictionary definitions, we might state communication is a '*a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior*'.[3] It is clear, there are numerous definitions available as the act of communication may be approached from a number of different perspectives.

While there is no one universal definition agreed upon by experts, communication is of the utmost importance in our everyday lives. The ability to convey one's ideas to the others and understand the messages one receives from people one interacts with is crucial for a life within a community.[4] The skills needed for successful communication became the interest of many linguists in the second half of the 20th century. They formed a new approach in language teaching developing the learners' skills and abilities needed for effective communication, collectively called 'communicative competence', in which the emphasis moved away from grammatical correctness as was rooted in the traditional approach prominent until the second half of the 20th century.[5]

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[1] KRAUSS, R.M. & FUSSELL, S.R. Social Psychological Models of Interpersonal Communication.
[2] WEST, Richard & Lynn H. TURNER. *Introducing Communication Theory*. p. 5.
[3] Communication. *Merriam-Webster.com.*
[4] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 1.
[5] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 6, 9.

1.1 Communicative Competence

It has been mentioned before that traditional language education focused mainly on the teaching of grammar and grammatical structures, but this approach was to be replaced.[6] The rise of communicative language theories came in the second half of the 20th century. What most linguists regard as a starting point for defining the term 'communicative competence' comes from the work of Chomsky in 1965, who distinguishes language competence and performance, the former referring to knowledge of language and the latter to practical use of the knowledge.[7] While some linguists accepted or partially accepted this distinction, criticism emerged, most notably in the work of Hymes at the end of 1960's and beginning of 1970's who did not agree with the distinction of competence and performance. Hymes further argued that emphasis should be placed on empirical research of '*actual communicative performance*'.[8] Additionally, while Chomsky regarded competence mostly as knowledge of grammar, Hymes together with Campbell and Wales proposed the importance of social context in communication.[9] This sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of use of language in various contexts) together with grammatical competence then created a notion called 'communicative competence'.[10]

In language teaching, the term was used for the characterization of the learner's '*ability to interact with other speakers*' and '*make meaning*'.[11] Another important milestone in the development of communicative competence (CC) theory came in 1980, when Canale and Swain defined different components of CC:

1. grammatical competence (which deals with the rules of syntax, morphology, phonology etc.)
2. sociolinguistic competence (dealing with sociocultural rules regarding context and appropriateness)

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[6] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 6, 9.

[7] CANALE, Michael & Merrill SWAIN. Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing.

[8] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 19-20.

[9] LEUNG, Constant. Convivial communication: recontextualizing communicative competence.

[10] CANALE, Michael & Merrill SWAIN. Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing.

[11] SAVIGNON, Sandra J. Communicative Language Teaching: Strategies and Goals.

3. discourse competence (dealing with cohesion and coherence; sometimes viewed as part of sociolinguistic competence)

4. strategic competence (dealing with communicative strategies used to make up for lacking in any of the other competences)

Canale and Swain also claimed that to get ones meaning across and reach understanding is more important than producing utterances which are contextually and grammatically correct.[12]

Language theories aside, the communicative movement vastly affected language teaching. A new approach was created setting the development of learners' communicative competence as its primary goal.[13] The name for this approach, which was to completely change second language teaching, was coined in the 1970's – Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).[14]

1.1.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

With the communicative language theories created in the 1960's and 1970's, a new approach (which is still prominent to date) to second language teaching emerged – Communicative Language Teaching or CLT for short. In this period, communicative competence, which we have dealt with in the previous part of the thesis, was the focus of many linguists and sociolinguists. But more importantly, many language teachers agreed that CC should be the primary goal of language teaching,[15] as communication is the '*essential purpose of language*'.[16] Focusing on developing the learners' communicative competence became the primary goal of the newly created approach.[17]

The changes widely implemented since the 1990's changed many of the various aspects of language teaching. Communicative syllabus was designed in a way it was not based on lexical or grammatical items, as was the case with traditional syllabuses,[18] but

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[12] CANALE, Michael & Merrill SWAIN. Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing.

[13] SAVIGNON, Sandra J. Communicative Language Teaching: Strategies and Goals.

[14] LEUNG, Constant. Convivial communication: recontextualizing communicative competence.

[15] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 9.

[16] CANALE, Michael & Merrill SWAIN. Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing.

[17] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 2.

[18] Idem. p. 1, 9, 22.

instead was based on purposes, settings, roles, and events the learners were expected to engage in using the second language. These were determined based on field-research of authentic uses of language, and sometimes on questionnaires regarding learners' needs.[19] New types of syllabuses were also proposed during this era. The new types included skills-based syllabus (based on the four skills of speaking, writing, listening, and speaking), functional syllabus (based on the variety of functions the learners were expected to be able to perform), and, also, notional and task syllabus.[20]

The roles of the teachers and learners also changed. While teacher was mostly dominant in the traditional approaches, it is not the case in CLT. Instead, learners are being led to take responsibility for their own language learning, which is supposed to take place during meaningful interactions between learners and the teacher alike through constant negotiation of meaning among the participants.[21] Overall, in CLT, learners are given more space to express their ideas and opinions with more focus on language fluency than accuracy. In connection to that, the CLT approach is also more tolerant to learners' errors, which are perceived as a natural part of learning.[22]

Furthermore, the general principles of CLT were the basis for the development of many language-teaching methods. These include 'task-based instruction' (TBI) and 'content-based instruction' (CBI)[23] which, in turn, gave birth to 'content and language integrated learning' (CLIL).[24]

The CLT approach, initially, faced certain scepticism. Since CLT is more focused on developing fluency than accuracy (although, this does not mean that accuracy was completely neglected),[25] it was a concern how the learners' accuracy will be affected and how CLT learners will compare to learners using traditional approaches. Early research, however, proved learners more focused on communicative skills achieve similar results to those more focused on grammatical skills in terms of accuracy, and, at the same time, achieve much higher results in terms of communicative performance.[26] Different form of criticism, mentioned by Leung, emerged from the fact that implementation of CLT

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[19] LEUNG, Constant. Convivial communication: recontextualizing communicative competence.
[20] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 11.
[21] ÇELIK, Servet. Communicative Language Teaching.
[22] LITTLEWOOD, William. *Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction*. p. 94.
[23] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 27.
[24] BAYYURT, Yasemin & Şebnem YALÇIN. Content-Based Instruction.
[25] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 13-14.
[26] SAVIGNON, Sandra J. Communicative Language Teaching: Strategies and Goals.

derived from the initial thoughts of CLT and communicative syllabuses were being build according to the idea of an '*ideal native speaker*' instead of based on empirical research, as proposed by Hymes.[27]

In concluding this subchapter, while the new approach to language teaching known as CLT, faced some initial scepticism and criticism, it is still probably the most influential approach to language teaching. Over the course of half a century, CLT revolutionized the roles of both teacher and learners and gave birth to many communicative methods and different types of syllabuses.

1.2 Factors Affecting Communication

There are numerous factors affecting one's communication. From emotions and attitudes to skills and abilities, and more. For the purposes of this diploma thesis, due to its length constraints, the following factors were chosen as a focus of this research: willingness to communicate, language anxiety, self-perceived communicative competence, motivation, and group dynamics. The following subchapters will deal with these variables, introducing them along with their effects on communication and, also, how these variables may be influenced.

1.2.1 Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

Willingness to communicate forms a major factor influencing one's communication. For the purposes of this diploma thesis, the abbreviation 'WTC' will be used, as used for example in the works of MacIntyre.[28] WTC is be defined as '*the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so*'. [29] Arguably, WTC plays, the most significant role in communication for it may determine whether communication occurs or not.

The development of the concept of WTC began in the works of Burgoon in the 1970's. The initial perspective, however, was more concerned with 'unwillingness to

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[27] LEUNG, Constant. Convivial communication: recontextualizing communicative competence.

[28] MACINTYRE, Peter. Expanding the theoretical base for the dynamics of willingness to communicate.

[29] DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.

communicate' in the context of the first language (L1).[30] Essentially, unwillingness to communicate was characterized as a tendency to avoid communication and was perceived as a stable personality trait influenced by various factors, such as introversion/extraversion, perceived communication competence or communication apprehension.[31]

A significant progress in the field of WTC has been made by McCroskey and Baer in the 1980's who introduced the concept of WTC for the first time and developed a new research method. Respondents in questionnaires were to directly estimate the probability they would engage in communication in the presented situations. The new WTC scale was perceived to suit the concept of WTC better than Likert scales used before.[32]

In 1998, a team of experts, consisting of Dörnyei, Clément, Noels and MacIntyre, created a heuristic pyramid-shaped model (see Figure 1) presenting influences on WTC in the context of second language (L2). The model consisted of twelve factors divided across six layers of the pyramid with the most enduring and stable influences nearer to the base of the pyramid and situational influences closer to the tip. The new perspective resulted in WTC being perceived as a situation variable.[33]

Overall, WTC is be perceived as a personality trait since the differences between different people's WTC remain constant across various contexts. To put it plainly, if one person has higher WTC than a different person in one situation, it is probable to be the case in a different situation as well. Additionally, WTC is be perceived as a situational variable since one person reaches different levels of WTC in different situations.[34]

The influence of WTC on communication has been established earlier in this chapter. To unravel the complexity of WTC, factors affecting WTC also need to be introduced. Several factors have been mentioned earlier in the context of unwillingness to communicate: introversion/extraversion, perceived communication competence and communication apprehension.[35] Furthermore, WTC is also influenced by self-confidence,

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[30] MACINTYRE, Peter. Expanding the theoretical base for the dynamics of willingness to communicate.

[31] BAKER, Susan C. et al. WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE, SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND LANGUAGE-LEARNING ORIENTATIONS OF IMMERSION STUDENTS.

[32] MACINTYRE, Peter. Expanding the theoretical base for the dynamics of willingness to communicate.

[33] DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.

[34] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 31.

[35] BAKER, Susan C. et al. WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE, SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND LANGUAGE-LEARNING ORIENTATIONS OF IMMERSION STUDENTS.

anxiety, motivation, and interpersonal relations along with want for affiliation. These factors are not unrelated but affect each other.[36] Additionally, other variables not mentioned in correlation with WTC have significant influence. Self-esteem, for example, is thought to not correlate with WTC. Self-esteem, however, influences communication apprehension and perceived communicative competence which then have impact on WTC.[37]
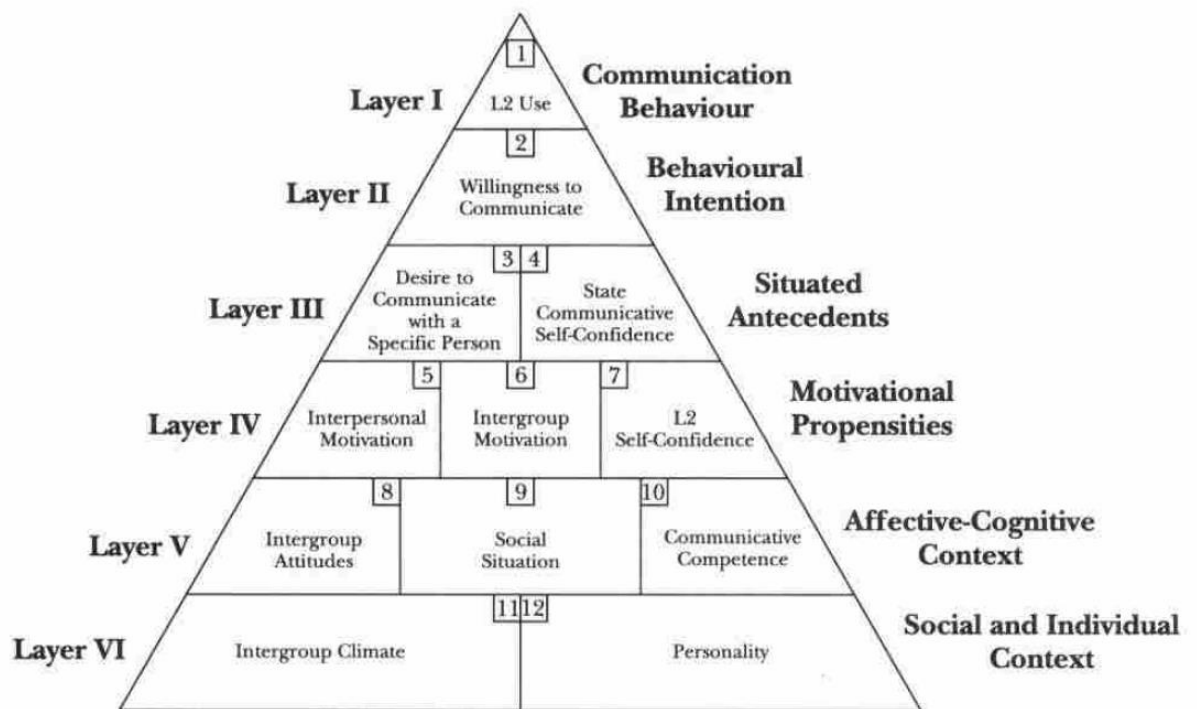
Figure 1: Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC. Source of the image: DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.

As for practical research, there are numerous studies published focusing on WTC in the second or foreign language context. A team consisting of Cheng, Bukhari and Khan conducted their research on WTC of undergraduates in English as a second language in the Pakistani context. Their results show the respondents were most willing to

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[36] DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.

[37] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 32.

communicate with friends or acquaintances and least with strangers. Furthermore, they were more likely to communicate in a small group rather than in public.[38]

A similar research was conducted in the Polish context by Gałajda among Polish university students, using questionnaires and respondent-written narrative texts to assess the respondents' WTC in both L1 and L2 contexts. The data show the respondents were most likely to communicate with friends and least likely to communicate with strangers, in both L1 and L2. The respondents were, on average, less willing to communicate in a group or in public than with only one other individual. Thus far, the results seem similar to those of the research in the Pakistani context, mentioned in the previous paragraph. What comes striking, however, is the result that respondents were on average more willing to communicate in L2 than in L1. The high level of WTC in L2, as commented by Gałajda, may be due to the fact the respondents were English philology students in their final year. Therefore, the respondents were spending several hours a day interacting in English (L2).[39]

In summary, this subchapter presented the first of a variety of factors influencing communication – willingness to communicate. The historical development of the concept of WTC has been presented, as well as different variables affecting WTC. The subchapter concluded with a brief discussion of results achieved by two studies focusing on WTC, in different socio-cultural contexts.

1.2.2 Language Anxiety

The phenomenon of language anxiety in the context of the language-learning process became of great interest of linguists in the last three decades of the 20th century.[40] The term 'language anxiety' may serve as an 'umbrella term' for both second language anxiety and foreign language anxiety[41] as 'second language anxiety' is usually used within the

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[38] CHENG, Xiaoguang, et al. Willingness to Communicate in English as a Second Language: A Case Study of Pakistani Undergraduates.

[39] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 75-97.

[40] KHAN, Said Muhammad. Influence of Speech Anxiety on Oral Communication Skills among ESL/EFL Learners.

[41] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 48.

Canadian and American context, and 'foreign language anxiety' is commonly used in the European context.[42]

In general, anxiety can be defined as '*a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system*'.[43] Horwitz et al. then defined foreign language anxiety as a '*distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process*'. Their definition suggested language anxiety is unrelated to other anxieties. [44] Whereas 'trait anxiety' is perceived as a stable personality attribute,[45] language anxiety is perceived as a situation-specific feeling, as stated by Gardner and MacIntyre in 1994.[46]

Out of the four basic language skills, the debilitating effect of language anxiety has been found to mostly stem from oral communication/speaking.[47] That being said, language anxiety affects all stages of the language learning process: input, processing, and output.[48]

As for the effect itself, it has been found language anxiety negatively influences the learners' comprehension and production, due to its impact on both short- and long-memory processes.[49] Anxious learners are also less willing to communicate.[50] Furthermore, anxiety, like other negative feelings and emotions, causes raising of the 'affective filter', described by Krashen, resulting in learners being less open to input. Negative impact of language anxiety on learners' motivation and self-perceived competence has also been found.[51] High levels of language anxiety may cause the learners

[42] DRAKULIĆ, Morana. THE 'UNFORGETTABLE' EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY.

[43] AKKAKOSON, Songyut. Speaking Anxiety in English Conversation Classrooms among Thai Students.

[44] ALFAWZAN, Mateb & Jean-Marc DEWAELE. Does the effect of enjoyment outweigh that of anxiety in foreign language performance?

[45] GREGERSEN, Tammy. Dynamic properties of language anxiety.

[46] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 48.

[47] GARDNER, R. C. & Peter D. MACINTYRE. Investigating Language Class Anxiety Using the Focused Essay Technique.

[48] BOUN, Sovicheth. Social Psychological Impacts on Language Use: Anxiety among Cambodian University Students.

[49] GARDNER, R. C. & Peter D. MACINTYRE. Language Anxiety: Its Relationship to Other Anxieties and to Processing in Native and Second Languages.

[50] GARDNER, R. C. & Peter D. MACINTYRE. Investigating Language Class Anxiety Using the Focused Essay Technique.

[51] ALFAWZAN, Mateb & Jean-Marc DEWAELE. Does the effect of enjoyment outweigh that of anxiety in foreign language performance?

to procrastinate or even change their field of study, only to avoid foreign language classes.[52]

There are multiple possible sources of language anxiety. The model introduced by Horwitz et al. suggests three different sub-categories of language anxiety:

1. Communication apprehension (feeling uncomfortable when required to speak in the target language in front of other people)
2. Test anxiety (distress felt before and/or during testing)
3. Fear of negative evaluation (dread of being badly evaluated by teacher and/or peers)

Language anxiety, however, cannot be characterized as a mere sum of these three categories as it poses a more complex phenomenon.[53] A study by Akkakoson among Thai learners, based on learners' own reflections, suggested the self-perceived competence plays a major part in language anxiety. More than half of respondents reported lack of vocabulary or grammatical inaccuracies as major sources of anxiety.[54] Khan's study found, in accordance with the third category of the model by Horwitz et al., that learners' language anxiety stems from the reactions of the teacher and classmates, their facial expressions and how they look at the anxious learner.[55]

Another source of language anxiety can be found among learners' personality traits such as neuroticism or perfectionism. The levels of anxiety may also be raised by bad relationships between learners and the teacher.[56] The way the teacher conducts the lessons, his/her personality, and the methods he/she uses affects language anxiety, as well.[57] The sources of language anxiety are not limited to present situations, however. Past negative experiences connected to the use of the target language or language-learning may cause anxiety, too.[58] In summary, language anxiety can be caused by the teacher,

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[52] BOUN, Sovicheth. Social Psychological Impacts on Language Use: Anxiety among Cambodian University Students.
[53] DRAKULIĆ, Morana. THE 'UNFORGETTABLE' EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY.
[54] AKKAKOSON, Songyut. Speaking Anxiety in English Conversation Classrooms among Thai Students.
[55] KHAN, Said Muhammad. Influence of Speech Anxiety on Oral Communication Skills among ESL/EFL Learners.
[56] ALFAWZAN, Mateb & Jean-Marc DEWAELE. Does the effect of enjoyment outweigh that of anxiety in foreign language performance?
[57] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 49.
[58] DRAKULIĆ, Morana. THE 'UNFORGETTABLE' EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY.

peers, and the anxious learner's own personality traits, and may stem from negative experiences both past and/or present.

There are numerous studies offering different ways of helping learners tackle their language anxiety. Gardner and MacIntyre suggested confidence-building activities, especially promoting positive speaking experiences, to help lower the learners' anxiety.[59] Akkakoson suggested less error correction, and promoting supportive relationships to lower language anxiety.[60] Participants in Khan's study suggested a friendly environment is necessary, where learners are able to freely practice the target language.[61] Research conducted by Boun concluded the more opportunities to communicate in the target language the learners have, both inside and outside of classroom, the less anxious they will be when communicating.[62] Based on both of these studies, it appears advisable to create an environment supporting the learners in free experimenting with the target language.

To summarize, this subchapter introduced the complex phenomenon of language anxiety. The term has been defined and history of linguistic research in this field has been briefly introduced. The effect of language anxiety on learners, and the various sources of language anxiety have been described in detail. At the end, the chapter mentioned approaches to lower learners' anxiety, as suggested by researchers.

1.2.3 Self-perceived Communicative Competence (SPCC)

It is not only the learners' objective communicative competence that is important in communication. The learners' own view of their communicative skills is also relevant. In the process of making decisions when communicating, the self-perceived competence is even more important than the actual competence, according to McCroskey and McCroskey.[63] While different experts used different terms when referring to this concept,

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[59] GARDNER, R. C. & Peter D. MACINTYRE. Investigating Language Class Anxiety Using the Focused Essay Technique.

[60] AKKAKOSON, Songyut. Speaking Anxiety in English Conversation Classrooms among Thai Students.

[61] KHAN, Said Muhammad. Influence of Speech Anxiety on Oral Communication Skills among ESL/EFL Learners.

[62] BOUN, Sovicheth. Social Psychological Impacts on Language Use: Anxiety among Cambodian University Students.

[63] MCCROSKEY, James C. & Linda L. MCCROSKEY. Self-Report as an Approach to Measuring Communication Competence.

this diploma thesis will mainly use the term 'self-perceived communicative competence' and its abbreviation SPCC, as used in the work of Gałajda.[64]

Before dealing with how SPCC influences communication, the relationship between perceived competence and actual competence and performance needs to be addressed. A study conducted by Bakx et al. found a correlation between self-perceived competence and test performance. These results, however, merely suggest the learners' both perceived and actual competence improved during the study.[65] McCroskey and McCroskey firmly stated self-perceived competence cannot be taken as accurate representation of the actual competence as the learners cannot assess their skills objectively and accurately.[66]

As mentioned in the chapter dealing with WTC, SPCC forms one of the factors influencing the learners' WTC. The work by Dörnyei et al. deals with a narrower concept of 'state perceived competence' as '*a feeling that one has the capacity to communicate effectively at a particular moment*'. Furthermore, state perceived competence is a constituent of 'state communicative self-confidence', which can be found in the heuristic pyramid model of factor affecting WTC (see Figure 1).[67]

Looking at the psychological underlying of SPCC, the theory of self-efficacy was introduced by Bandura in 1977. In his work, Bandura defined self-efficacy as one's belief in his/her success in a particular situation in terms of target behaviour rather than outcome. Bandura suggested the higher one's beliefs are the more persistent one will be when facing obstacles.[68]

Other researchers proposed effects of one's view of oneself on their competence and performance. In his study, Ramírez found a positive correlation between one's self concept and communicative competence.[69] High self-perceived communicative competence also leads to higher motivation to communicate.[70]

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[64] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 44.

[65] BAKX, A. W. E. A et al. The Role of Students' Personality Characteristics, Self-Perceived Competence and Learning Conceptions in the Acquisition and Development of Social Communicative Competence: A Longitudinal Study.

[66] MCCROSKEY, James C. & Linda L. MCCROSKEY. Self-Report as an Approach to Measuring Communication Competence.

[67] DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.

[68] BANDURA, Albert. Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change.

[69] RAMÍREZ, Arnulfo. Pupil characteristics and performance on linguistic and communicative language measures.

[70] LOCKLEY, Thomas. Exploring self-perceived communication competence in foreign language learning.

It is apparent facilitating higher levels of the learners' SPCC is desirable for improving communication. Bandura suggested while one's initial self-efficacy might be low, the level rises after successful experiences.[71] Relating Bandura's concept to communication, the learners' beliefs in their communicative skills may be facilitated and raised by providing opportunities for successful communication. Additionally, a close connection between SPCC and anxiety has been suggested.[72] Various experts suggested lowering the learners' anxiety will facilitate higher levels of SPCC.[73] As different ways of lowering the learners' anxiety have been discussed in the previous subchapter, they are not included in this subchapter.

When it comes to measuring SPCC, McCroskey and McCroskey developed their own tool – the Self-Perceived Communicative Competence Scale. The scale is based on twelve different scenarios and the respondents' assessment of how competent they feel about communicating in those scenarios. As stated by its authors, the scale provides accurate data when the respondents know there will be no possible negative consequences based on their answers.[74]

To summarize, this subchapter discussed self-perceived communicative competence as an important factor influencing communication. The relationship between perceived and actual competence has been explained as well as the psychological basis of SPCC. Further, this subchapter commented on both how SPCC influences communication and how SPCC is influenced. The subchapter concluded with introducing the Self-Perceived Communicative Competence Scale used to measure the respondents' SPCC.

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[71] BANDURA, Albert. Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change.
[72] BAKER, Susan C. et al. Sex and Age Effects on Willingness to Communicate, Anxiety, Perceived Competence, and L2 Motivation Among Junior High School French Immersion Students.
[73] DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.
    BAKER, Susan C. et al. Sex and Age Effects on Willingness to Communicate, Anxiety, Perceived Competence, and L2 Motivation Among Junior High School French Immersion Students.
[74] MCCROSKEY, James C. & Linda L. MCCROSKEY. Self-Report as an Approach to Measuring Communication Competence.

1.2.4 Motivation

Motivation generally refers to a driving force behind one's actions oriented towards a specific goal.[75] While the influence of motivation on communication in second or foreign language is of primary importance, a broader category of motivation language learning needs to be addressed first.

When dealing with motivation in language learning and/or language acquisition, different theories have been proposed. In 1959, Gardner and Lambert introduced their theory on motivation, focusing on the reasons an individual learns a second language. They stated there are two main types of motivation:

1. Integrative – the reason for learning a second language is to become part of the group using the target language; to interact and integrate within said group.
2. Instrumental – the reason behind language learning is utilitarian in its nature e.g. to get a better job etc.

The results of the research they conducted on English-speaking high school learners of French as a second language concluded the learners with integrative motivation are more successful in language learning than their instrumentally motivated counterparts.[76] These results were later expanded by finding the language learners' motivations are largely influenced by their parents; how the parents support the learners and how they perceive the target-language group.[77]

Motivation is closely connected to the learner's attitude. This seems clear in the context of integrative motivation where the attitude towards the target-language group is crucial. Further, in the second language learning context, the attitude towards learning itself is important, as stated by Gardner.[78]

While Gardner's theory has been dominant for several decades, other researchers questioned his results. Various studies, for example, showed that in a foreign language learning context, '*instrumental motivation is equally or more important*' than the

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[75] GARDNER, Robert C. *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. p. 50.
[76] GARDNER, Robert C. & Wallace E. LAMBERT. Motivational Variables in Second Language Acquisition.
[77] GARDNER, R. C. Attitudes and Motivation: Their Role in Second-Language Acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*.
[78] GARDNER, Robert C. *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. p. 50.

integrative one.[79] Gardner himself together with Tremblay expanded his model by including other variables, such as goal setting, valence, or causal attributions.[80] The length limitations of this diploma thesis, however, do not allow for a more detailed commentary.

Yashima further expanded Gardner's concept of integrative motivation. Due to the Japanese context of English as a foreign language, Yashima was concerned with 'international posture', perceiving English as a lingua franca, rather than motivation to integrate into a specific group.[81]

After dealing with motivation in language learning context, the influence of motivation on communication can be discussed. Dörnyei et al. perceived motivation as an important factor influencing willingness to communicate and included Garner's concept of integrative motivation in their heuristic model of WTC (see Figure 1). Furthermore, they expressed the importance of interpersonal motivation: a desire to engage in a relationship with another individual, be it friendship or a romantic relationship. According to Dörnyei et al., this motivation is caused by attractiveness, repeated exposure, physical proximity, or similarity with the interlocutor.[82] The connection between motivation and frequency of second language use has been confirmed in a study by Charos and MacIntyre.[83] The research conducted by Hashimoto on Japanese students attending the University of Hawaii correlates with these results.[84] Overall, it seems clear different types of motivation are important for the learners' WTC.

The learners' motivation, however, is connected to more than WTC. Yashima suggested highly motivated learners showed more effort and achieved better results than less motivated ones. Furthermore, motivated learners were found to have higher self-perceived communicative competence. [85]

Since the importance of motivation in both language learning and communication have been established, different ways of facilitating the learners' motivation need to be addressed. As has been stated before, the learners' attitude is closely connected to

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[79] YASHIMA, Tomoko. Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language: The Japanese EFL Context.
[80] GARDNER, Robert C. & Paul F. TREMBLAY. Expanding the Motivation Construct in Language Learning.
[81] YASHIMA, Tomoko. Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language: The Japanese EFL Context.
[82] DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.
[83] CHAROS, Catherine & Peter D. MACINTYRE. Personality, Attitudes, and Affect as Predictors of Second Language Communication.
[84] HASHIMOTO, Yuki. Motivation and Willingness to Communicate as Predictors of Reported L2 Use: The Japanese ESL Context.
[85] YASHIMA, Tomoko. Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language: The Japanese EFL Context.

motivation. Gardner expressed the importance of attitude towards the target situation.[86] Therefore, to promote the learners' motivation, it seems advisable to make sure the situation is pleasant for the learners. In the context of motivation to communicate, the experience of communication should be pleasant so that the learners foster a positive attitude towards communication. The importance of pleasant experiences has been presumed by Yashima.[87]

Additionally, since motivation is connected to specific goals, helping the learners set specific goals promotes their motivation. Gardner and Tremblay suggested learners with specific goals are more motivated than the ones with broad and general goals, such as simply 'trying their best'.[88] Therefore, helping the learners set specific goals for communication in the second or foreign language, such as being able to talk for a minute without a pause etc. should support their motivation to communicate.

In conclusion, this subchapter presented motivation as an influencing factor in both language learning and communication in second or foreign language. Different views on motivation have been introduced. The connections between motivation and attitude, and motivation and WTC have been established. Furthermore, providing pleasant experiences, and setting of specific goals were stated to help facilitate the learners' motivation.

1.2.5 Group Dynamics

This subchapter will introduce the factor of group dynamics and its influence of communication between group members.

As defined by Forsyth, 'group' is a term used for '*two or more people who are connected by and within social relationships*'.[89] The relationships and attitudes within a group undoubtedly influence the communicative behaviour between its members.[90] While group dynamics might not influence all types of interpersonal communication, for example talking to complete strangers, they play an important role in both language

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[86] GARDNER, Robert C. *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. p. 50.

[87] YASHIMA, Tomoko. Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language: The Japanese EFL Context.

[88] GARDNER, Robert C. & Paul F. TREMBLAY. Expanding the Motivation Construct in Language Learning.

[89] FORSYTH, Donelson R. *Group Dynamics*. p. 3.

[90] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 55.

learning classes and Dungeons & Dragons groups, which will be the focus of the following chapter. Therefore, the basics of group dynamics need to be discussed.

The behaviour of group members differs from the way they would act as individuals. As has been stated by Banyard and Hayes, being part of a group ties with accepting the group's norms and, therefore, acting appropriately to the group and one's position within the group. Additionally, it has been noted people in groups tend to make riskier decisions than if they were individuals.[91] In relation to communication, initiating communication may be perceived as a risky behaviour, especially for anxious learners. Therefore, it may be presumed the levels of WTC will be higher for members of a group than for individuals. This assumption correlates with the one by Gałajda, who has further commented that for the risk-taking to take place, the atmosphere of the group must be positive and friendly, and under appropriate teacher leadership in the case of language learning groups.[92]

The influence of group relationships on communication has also been noted by Dörnyei et al. in their heuristic model of willingness to communicate. According to them, the two main interpersonal purposes – affiliation and control – make for motivation to communicate and increased willingness to communicate. While control appears mainly in hierarchical structures, affiliation comes from similarity between interlocutors, proximity, exposure, or attractiveness.[93] In the context of groups, similarity can be found in terms of shared tasks of interests among group members; exposure and proximity emerge from group meetings.

Levi claims the most pivotal factor influencing communication in a group or a team is trust. Trust stems from the members' confidence in the group's competence, as well as believing in other members' abilities, and feeling safe in the environment of the group.[94]

The atmosphere and climate of a group changes through time. Forsyth discusses five stages of group development, from its creation to its disbanding. Depending on the stage, the feelings towards other members, potential conflicts, or feelings of anxiety will

[91] BANYARD, Philip a Nicky HAYES. *Psychology: Theory and Application*. p. 415-421.
[92] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 55.
[93] DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.
[94] LEVI, Daniel J. *Group Dynamics for Teams*. p. 137.

differ.[95] To achieve an ideal environment for communication, fostering of group dynamics by the group's leader is crucial, especially in early stages of group development. By fostering group dynamics, the levels of anxiety will decrease and, on the other hand, the members' willingness to communicate and/or participate will increase.[96]

This subchapter introduced the basic characteristics of group dynamics. The influence of group dynamics on willingness to communicate, motivation, and anxiety has been discussed. Furthermore, the need for feelings of mutual trust and safety for facilitating positive group dynamics has been mentioned. The chapter concluded with remarks regarding group development and the importance of the group leader's role when facilitating group dynamics.

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[95] FORSYTH, Donelson R. *Group Dynamics*. p. 137-143.
[96] GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 56.

2. Tabletop Role-Playing Games

After dealing with linguistic theory regarding communication and various factors influencing it, the platform used for the practical part of this thesis needs to be introduced. Tabletop role-playing games (TRPGs) have been selected for the study. There are two main reasons TRPGs have been chosen to be used for the research: the author's affection for the genre of TRPGs and the highly communicative basis of said genre. It is mainly due to the communicative basis, the platform of TRPGs appears as an acceptable tool for the research.

To define the genre of TRPGs, the term 'game' needs to be defined first. There have been numerous attempts to define games in the past. In 1967 Bernard Suite, an American philosopher, published an article titled 'What is a Game?' in which he arrived at the following broad and formal definition: '*To play a game is to engage in activity directed toward bringing about a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by specific rules, where the means permitted by the rules are more limited in scope than they would be in the absence of the rules, and where the sole reason for accepting such limitation is to make possible such activity.*'[97] Decades later, game designers Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman proposed their own definition: '*A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome.*'[98] Both definitions, clearly, share the idea of the importance of rules, while the latter adds 'conflict' as a significant feature of games. Salen's and Zimmerman's definition is also more specific in what the participants are trying to achieve – a quantifiable outcome, be it a score or a simple win or lose. Given the enormous scope of what may be referred to as 'games', there is definitely truth in the arguments of Jonne Arjoranta. Arjoranta concluded that, because of the ever-changing nature of both games and culture surrounding them, there will never be one ultimate definition of games, and new interpretation of this phenomenon will keep on emerging to suit the specific purposes of their authors.[99]

Before moving to tabletop role-playing games, there is one category that needs to be addressed: role-playing games (RPGs). Once again, there are many possible ways to interpret the term. If we were to look at the dictionary definition, Collins Dictionary states

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[97] SUITS, Bernard. What is a Game?
[98] SALEN, Katie & Eric ZIMMERMAN. *Rules of Play*. p. 80.
[99] ARJORANTA, Jonne. How to Define Games and Why We Need to.

RPG is '*a game in which players assume roles of fantasy characters*'.[100] This statement seems rather broad. The broadness likely stems from the fact there are multiple categories within role-playing games. These categories vastly differ from each other, even though they share some common ideas. In their edition called *Role-Playing Game Studies*, which tries to present role-playing games from the perspectives of many disciplines, Sebastian Deterding and José P. Zagal tried to synthesize the shared characteristics from the four existing categories of role-playing games:

1. tabletop RPGs or TRPGs,
2. live-action RPGs or LARP,
3. computer RPGs or CRPGs,
4. (massively) multiplayer RPGs or MMORPGs.

Deterding and Zagal pointed out the experience of individual players will differ, even in the scope of a single game, depending on the nature of the community the players interact with. Nonetheless, they stated that the '*common styles*' across RPGs '*are achieving goals and making progress according to rules, acting out and immersing oneself in a role, creating an interesting story, or simulating a world*'. In respect to the previously mentioned definitions of 'games', they also admit that RPGs, although influencing many other games, are on the borderline of being called 'games' as they are clearly missing the 'quantifiable outcome' required by Salen and Zimmerman.[101]

Finally, moving onto the target genre – tabletop tole-playing games, sometimes also called 'pen and paper' role-playing games.[102] The previous category of RPGs, however, cannot be completely abandoned. For many years, the term RPG was used almost exclusively for what we would today call TRPG. In fact, other categories of RPGs originated from the first TRPGs in attempts to bring the same experience to a different media, either physical with LARPs or digital with CRPGs and MMORPGs.[103] To go even further back, when *Dungeons & Dragons* was published in 1974, the authors did not refer to it as a 'role-playing game', at all. It was only after its enormous success when various imitations and similar games were developed and the new genre of (T)RPGs emerged.[104]

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[100] Role-playing game. *CollinsDictionary.com*

[101] DETERDING, Sebastian & José P. ZAGAL. Definitions of "Role-Playing Games".

[102] ARJORANTA, Jonne, Michael HITCHENS, Jon PETERSON, Evan TORNER, Jonathan WALTON & William J. WHITE. Tabletop Role-Playing Games.

[103] DETERDING, Sebastian & José P. ZAGAL. Definitions of "Role-Playing Games".

[104] ARJORANTA, Jonne, Michael HITCHENS, Jon PETERSON, Evan TORNER, Jonathan WALTON & William J. WHITE. Tabletop Role-Playing Games.

The authors of *Dungeons & Dragons* came with a concept of a game based on collaborative narration, together with rules centered on combat with roots in the then-popular hobby of miniature wargaming.[105]

While there are many published TRPGs, they are usually based on the same principle: a group of players sits around a table with most of them being in control of a single character each, called 'player's character' (PC). The players keep the necessary information regarding their PC on a sheet of paper. One member of the group is a referee, usually called 'Dungeon Master' (DM), who imposes the rules as well as manages the fictional world with all its 'non-player characters' (NPCs) and narrates what the PCs perceive and how the world changes based on their chosen actions.[106] The more detailed mechanics will be introduced in the following chapter, which will deal with the representative of TRPGs which has been chosen for the purposes of this research.

In summary, the category of TRPGs is, arguably, not easy to define. Even the broader spectrums of games and RPGs lack any 'perfect' definition as they are ever-changing together with the communities surrounding them. However, the general characteristics of the target genre have been introduced.

2.1 Dungeons & Dragons as a Representative of Tabletop Role-Playing Games

There exists a vast number of tabletop role-playing games in the world. They greatly vary in setting and tone, from high-fantasy games such as *Pathfinder*[107] and grim steampunk dystopias such as John Harper's *Blades in the Dark*,[108] to adventures in outer space, such as *Stars Without Number*.[109] While some games have multiple rulebooks published making for thousands of pages of official material, such as *Dungeons & Dragons*,[110] other need as little as 16 pages, e.g. *Lady Blackbird*.[111] For the purposes of this research, due to limited resources, a single representative of the TRPG genre had to

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[105] MIZER, Nicholas J. *Tabletop Role-Playing Games and the Experience of Imagined Worlds*. p. 24.
[106] DETERDING, Sebastian & José P. ZAGAL. Definitions of "Role-Playing Games".
[107] BULMAHN, James, et al. *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*.
[108] HARPER, John. *Blades in the Dark*.
[109] CRAWFORD, Kevin. *Stars Without Number: Revised Edition*.
[110] Tabletop Games. *Dungeons & Dragons.*
[111] HARPER, John. *Lady Blackbird.*

be selected as a tool for the communication-based study in the practical part of the thesis. Using a single representative is possible since most of TRPGs use the same principles of communication and differ only when it comes to specific mechanics.[112]

The choice of the representative was based on the author's previous experience, as well as data considering popularity of individual games within the TRPG community. The representative of TRPGs the author of this diploma thesis decided on is *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D). Since its original release in 1974, D&D is considered the father of the TRPG genre and many other games trace their origin back to the creation of Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.[113] Even more than forty years later, the game is still considered the most popular of TRPGs. While it is impossible to state the exact number of players, we can use the data published every three months by *Roll20.org*, a platform for online playing of TRPGs. The data collected for the first three quarters of the year 2020 state that over 50% of all player accounts used the latest, fifth, edition of D&D.[114] *EnWorld.org* published a compilation of *Icv2.com* charts of 'Top Five Roleplaying Games' based on '*interviews with retailers, distributors and manufacturers*'. The website's chart shows D&D in the first place for the whole period except for three years since summer 2011 to summer 2014.[115] In summer 2014, however, the latest fifth edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* was published,[116] attracting number of new or returning players. Since then, the game's popularity has been growing again, finding its place in popular culture, such as in the TV series *The Big Bang Theory*[117] or *Stranger Things*[118]. The estimate number of active players, as stated by Paul Camp at *DungeonVault.com*, reaches as high as 13.7 million players scattered across various editions. The estimate is based on a statement by Chris Cocks, the president and CEO of *Wizards of the Coast*, the company publishing D&D. Cocks claimed in 2017 that, according to their surveys, there were about 9.5 active players of the fifth edition of D&D.[119] The data hereby presented illustrates *Dungeons &*

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[112] DETERDING, Sebastian & José P. ZAGAL. Definitions of "Role-Playing Games".
[113] PETERSON, Jon. History: Forty Years of Adventure.
[114] The Orr Group Industry Report: Q1 2020 - Reimagining the Classics.
     The Orr Group Industry Report: Q2 2020 - Widespread Growth.
     The Orr Group Industry Report Q3 2020 - Breakout Hits and Steady Classics.
[115] Top 5 RPGs Compiled Charts 2004-Present. *EnWorld.org.*
[116] PETERSON, Jon. History: Forty Years of Adventure.
[117] *The Big Bang Theory*. The Wiggly Finger Catalyst.
[118] *Stranger Things*. Chapter One: The Vanishing of Will Byers.
[119] CAMP, Paul. How Many D&D Players Are There Worldwide?

Dragons is a suitable representative of the TRPG genre due to its immense popularity which remains unmatched even more than forty years after the first edition was published.

2.1.1 Requirements for Playing *Dungeons & Dragons*

As suggested earlier, to successfully play D&D, one only needs a sheet of paper for the players to keep their character's information, a pencil or a pen, a set of different-sided playing dice, along with the official rulebook.

There are different editions of D&D. The rulebook of the latest, fifth, edition of D&D published in 2014 is called *Player's Handbook*. The playing dice used for the fifth edition consist of seven different-sided dice called dX, where the X stands for the number of sides on the die. The whole set consists of one of d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20 and d100 (which breaks the rule as it is not a 100-sided die, but a percentage die, with ten sides just like the d10, only with numbers 10-100 instead of 1-10).[120]

The sheet of paper with character information, usually referred to as the 'character sheet', allows a player to keep tab of their character's ability scores (the individual abilities being: Charisma, Intelligence, Dexterity, Wisdom, Strength and Constitution)[121] in a numerical form.[122] These numbers are then used to determine the modifier the players apply when they roll a d20 to determine the outcome of their action (this sequence is called an 'ability check'). The modifier, derived from the ability score using a table in the rulebook, is a positive or negative number which is being added or retracted from the number rolled on a d20 when making an ability check.[123]

As for the rest of material components used for playing D&D, there are two more books used by the DM –the *Monster Manual* and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*; these, together with the *Player's Handbook* are called the 'core rulebooks'.[124] Unlike with the *Player's Handbook*, however, these are not necessary, although highly useful.

In addition, there are several supplemental books containing new world settings, adventures, character options etc. which both players and DMs may draw their inspiration

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[120] *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook*. Wizards of the Coast. p. 6.
[121] Idem. p.7.
[122] DETERDING, Sebastian & José P. ZAGAL. Definitions of "Role-Playing Games".
[123] *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook*. Wizards of the Coast. p. 13, 173.
[124] Get Started. *Dungeons & Dragons.*

from.[125] Other supplemental materials, such as grid paper or miniatures, are, once again, not necessary, but some groups prefer to use them. As will be further explained in the following subchapter, the reason these are not requisite stems from the nature of D&D session as the story takes place almost solely in the participants' imagination.

2.1.2 Playing Roles and Communication

The key mechanics of D&D result in high dependency on communication amongst the participants. Essentially, D&D is a collective narrative where the players create a story in cooperation with the Dungeon Master (DM; sometimes called Game Master or GM) who is in charge of the setting and the imaginary world, where the story takes place, along with various NPCs.

The DM is the most important of the participants and, usually, this role is occupied by one person for the duration of a whole D&D session or a larger story arch, called 'an adventure', or an ongoing even larger sequence of connected adventures, called the 'campaign' (the term originated in the miniature wargaming background of the first D&D edition) [126]. It is the DM's duty to verbally describe the imaginary scene. The scene includes where it takes place, what the PCs perceive, and opportunities presented for the characters to engage in.

The rest of the players, the number of which can vary, are in control of their characters (PCs). Here lies the 'role-playing' part of TRPGs. The players imagine the scene described by the DM and try to immerse themselves into their characters. When the DM describes a scene, the players may either decide together what they want their characters to do as a group, or they take turns in describing what their individual characters wish to do based on the DM's description of the scene. The players' decisions come from playing the role of their PC. Essentially, the players do not decide what *they* want to do and/or say in the imaginary world. Instead, they describe what *their PCs* want to say and/or do.[127]

After they players describe their actions, the DM may ask for an ability check resulting in the target player rolling a d20 and applying the according modifier, as has been explained in the previous chapter. Based on the numerical result of the ability check, the

[125] Tabletop Games. *Dungeons & Dragons.*
[126] ARJORANTA, Jonne et al. Tabletop Role-Playing Games.
[127] DETERDING, Sebastian & José P. ZAGAL. Definitions of "Role-Playing Games".

DM then determines to what degree the characters are successful in their action based on the nature of the scene and/or the nature of NPCs the players might interact with. DMs usually use a helping tool called 'difficulty class' (DC). DC is an artificial number set for an obstacle the PCs are trying to overcome. The players then need to roll a number higher than the DC in order to be successful, meaning the higher the DC, the more difficult it is for the PCs to overcome the problem.

After the DM's initial description and players' descriptions of their chosen actions, the scene is altered in a way the DM verbally describes and again the players decide what they wish to do further. This is the ever-repeating basic pattern of playing D&D.[128]

In addition to the importance of verbal descriptions by both players and the DM, there is another type of communication present. In role-playing their characters, the players try to achieve their PCs' set goals. These goals can be anything from buying healing potions to prepare for a fight, to becoming a king. The PCs, usually, need to communicate with other PCs and/or NPCs to achieve their goals. The type of communication may vary from coordinating actions with other PCs, making collective decisions, sharing information etc. to polite conversations meant to develop relationships between characters. This communication can be performed in one of two different ways: 'in-character' or 'out-of-character'. Communication in-character is then considered said/done by that character while out-of-character communication is not. When playing, the distinction whether something was said in- or out-of-character is made based on possible signals and/or context of the utterance.[129]

This chapter focused on highlighting the communicative aspect of playing *Dungeons & Dragons* to further explain why the genre of TRPGs has been chosen for the research. The following chapters will focus on connecting the previously discussed linguistic theory dealing with communication to the platform of D&D.

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[128] *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook*. Wizards of the Coast. p. 5, 6, 174.
[129] DETERDING, Sebastian & José P. ZAGAL. Definitions of "Role-Playing Games".

2.1.3 Communicative Principles of CLT and *Dungeons & Dragons*

Seemingly, D&D and CLT have little in common. CLT takes place in school or a different educational institution and follows a syllabus, while D&D, being a TRPG, is more of a hobby, an endeavour people engage in in their free time for fun. In D&D, players are usually free to explore and engage in the imaginary world in whatever manner they desire. From what the author discovered on various related online forums, any attempts from the side of the DM to force the PCs into a certain situation or forcing them to make a choice they do not wish to make are generally frowned upon by the TRPG community (the term used for this type of behaviour from the DM is 'railroading') [130]. Nonetheless, in this subchapter, it is the intention of the author to establish some of the practices both D&D and CLT share and, ultimately, present D&D as a tool for communicative practice.

Firstly, looking at the roles of the participants in D&D, as established earlier, the DM and the players engage in a cooperative narrative. The DM describes the scene and presents options for the players to engage in, and the players take the initiative and state what they want their characters to do, therefore alter the initial scene.[131] While it may seem the DM is the most influential figure, they are not supposed to dominate the game. Instead, the DM cooperates with the players to sculpt a story together. We wind a similar pattern in CLT, with the teacher being less dominant, providing opportunities for interaction via activities, sometimes acting as a 'co-communicator', with the expectations the learners will take responsibility for their own learning and will engage in the provided activities.[132]

The most important connection between D&D and CLT lies in the importance of meaningful communication, which is the basis for most activities stemming from the CLT approach.[133] This is facilitated in D&D by the pattern of cooperative narrative, which was mentioned in the preceding paragraph, resulting in a need for constant negotiation of meaning when playing D&D. Also, not only the cooperation between the DM and the players, but also the cooperation of PCs is essential for achieving whatever goals the players set for their characters.

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[130] Railroading. *UrbanDictionary.*
[131] ZAGAL, José P. & Sebastian DETERDING. Definitions of "Role-Playing Games".
[132] ÇELIK, Servet. Communicative Language Teaching.
[133] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 12, 14.

In addition to what was stated above, CLT uses a variety of 'functional communication activities' focused on successful communication without special regards to the social situation, and 'social interaction activities' focused on communication appropriate to the situation. These activities are meant to strengthen the learners' overall communicative competence. For this, CLT makes use of, for example, problem-solving activities (functional communication) or role-plays and simulations (social interaction).[134] Playing *Dungeons & Dragons* makes for both functional and social interaction activities. The communication between players is mostly functional, when we consider the players know each other and do not require a special degree of formality. The aspect of social interaction is fulfilled through the interaction of PCs with NPCs, who may vary from beggars to nobles and whose relationship to the PCs might change, for example, if they are approached in an inappropriate way. Furthermore, the players are free to engage in roles and situations they wish to, in a manner that seems suitable for them. This gives them space for experimenting with the language, which is another principle used by the CLT approach.[135]

Finally, D&D can be considered a communicative practice activity. That is defined by Richards as an activity in which language is used '*within a real communicative context*', where '*real information is exchanged, and where the language is not totally predictable*'.[136] While playing D&D, the unpredictability of language stems from the fact that improvisation makes for a great part of the shared narrative. Players cannot know in advance what the scene described by the DM is going to be or what the individual NPCs may or may not say. The realism of context might seem a bit remote, given the fantasy setting of D&D. Nonetheless, the various situations can still be connected to the real world. Essentially, whether buying cans of soup at a local grocery store, or buying magical liquors from a fantasy potion seller, only vocabulary varies while the situation remains very much the same. We may approach the aspect of '*real information*' from a similar way. To summarize, playing *Dungeons & Dragons* is considered a communicative practice activity, as defined by Richards.

In conclusion, while D&D has little in common to CLT in terms of structure, as it does not follow a syllabus the way CLT does. Nonetheless, it may be said they share some of

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[134] LITTLEWOOD, William. *Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction*. p. 20-21.
[135] ÇELIK, Servet. Communicative Language Teaching.
[136] RICHARDS, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. p. 16.

the same principles. The roles of DM and players closely relate to those of teacher and learners in CLT. The manner, in which D&D is played, resembles the activities used for communication practice in CLT. And, overall, D&D makes for an effective communicative practice, as defined by Richards.

2.1.4 Factors Influencing Communication and *Dungeons & Dragons*

After relating communicative principles to *Dungeons & Dragons*, the ways D&D may affect the factors influencing communication need to be discussed.

As has already been established, *Dungeons & Dragons* is a highly communicative game. The players are required to communicate and, furthermore, this communication must be successful, in order to progress in the game. This aspect of the game, providing opportunities for (successful) communication, facilitates the players' self-perceived communicative competence[137] and lowers their language anxiety,[138] as was established in the corresponding subchapters. When perceiving *Dungeons & Dragons* as a communication practice activity for learners, communication is also practiced more intensively than during regular language classes due to the D&D sessions being several hours long and small number of participants.

Furthermore, the players' anxiety is reduced by the friendly and cooperative environment,[139] as cooperation among players is essential for D&D. Since most of the communication when playing D&D is improvisational, the players are free to experiment with the language and say anything they like, which further lowers language anxiety.[140] Additionally, as suggested by Gardner and MacIntyre, positive speaking experiences lower the levels of anxiety, as well.[141] Players may feel positive not only about successful communication, but also about any goals achieved within the game: defeating a monster, saving people, acquiring treasure etc.

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[137] BANDURA, Albert. Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change.
[138] BOUN, Sovicheth. Social Psychological Impacts on Language Use: Anxiety among Cambodian University Students
[139] AKKAKOSON, Songyut. Speaking Anxiety in English Conversation Classrooms among Thai Students.
[140] KHAN, Said Muhammad. Influence of Speech Anxiety on Oral Communication Skills among ESL/EFL Learners.
[141] GARDNER, R. C. & Peter D. MACINTYRE. Investigating Language Class Anxiety Using the Focused Essay Technique.

The effect of D&D on the players' anxiety is further suggested by Horowitz who conducted a study on multiplayer videogames and stated multiplayer games may '*engage language learners*' in a way they '*bypass their fears*'.[142] While Horwitz's study focused on online games, the category of MMORPGs (which were among the games discussed by Horwitz) is very close to TRPGs. Therefore, the same principle should apply.

Pleasant experiences of playing D&D also promote the players' overall motivation and facilitate positive attitude towards D&D, communication and language.[143] The aspect of role-playing has also been proven to facilitate motivation along with better communicative skills, as shown in a study by Arkhipova et al.,[144] although their research took place in a formal educational setting, whereas playing D&D generally takes place in an informal setting outside of school.

By facilitating self-perceived communicative competence and motivation, and lowering the players' anxiety, it may be presumed playing *Dungeons & Dragons* should also positively affect the players' willingness to communicate. The positive effects on WTC, SPCC, anxiety, and motivation have been reported by participants in a study conducted by Reinders and Wattana, albeit their research focused on an MMORPG *Ragnarok Online*.[145] As already mentioned, however, the category of MMORPG is extremely close to TRPGs such as D&D.

To summarize this subchapter, by providing opportunities for (successful) communication and experimenting with the language, supporting friendly and cooperative atmosphere, and engaging the players in a story, D&D facilitates the players' willingness to communicate, self-perceived communicative competence, and lowers their anxiety, as well as promotes the players' motivation.

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[142] HOROWITZ, Kenneth S. The Effect of Massive Multiplayer Online Video Games on the Willingness to Communicate and Communicative Anxiety of College Students in Puerto Rico.

[143] GARDNER, Robert C. *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. p. 50.

[144] ARKHIPOVA, Irina Vladimirovna et al. Motivation within Role-Playing as a Means to Intensify College Students' Educational Activity.

[145] REINDERS, Hayo a Sorada WATTANA. Affect and willingness to communicate in digital game-based learning.

The theoretical part of this diploma thesis dealt with communication and various factors influencing it. Furthermore, the genre of TRPGs has been introduced, further focusing of D&D as a representative of said genre. The factors influencing communication as well as general communicative principles have been related to D&D. The following chapters, forming the practical part of this diploma thesis, will comment on a study conducted by the author of this diploma thesis. The study focused on factors influencing communication of the study's participants, and how these factors changed in the course of playing D&D in English for a month.

PRACTICAL PART

3. Use of D&D for Communication in English – A Study

The theoretical part of this diploma thesis presented background regarding communication and various factors influencing communication, as well as TRPGs and *Dungeons & Dragons*. Based on the theory presented earlier, it has been assumed by the author of this diploma thesis playing *Dungeons & Dragons* in English will facilitate desirable levels of factors influencing communication. For more details, see the corresponding chapters in the theoretical part. The practical part of this diploma thesis will deal with a study conducted by the author of this diploma thesis.

The research was conducted in March and April 2021. The study focused on factors influencing communication in English language of Czech secondary school learners. The aim of the study was to determine the roles of selected factors affecting the participants' communication and the effects of playing *Dungeons & Dragons* in English on the levels of two of these factors. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ 1: How are the learners motivated to learn and use English?

RQ 2: How will the level of learners' Willingness to Communicate change during the project?

RQ 3: How will the level of learners' Self-Perceived Communicative Competence change during the project?

RQ 4: Will the learners feel an effect of the project on their communicative abilities?

RQ 5: How will the learners feel about using solely English when communicating during the research project?

RQ 6: How will the learners feel about their group and its dynamics?

The first research question focuses on the participants' motivation to learn and use English. The objective is to establish the participants' personal integrative and instrumental motivations, their relationship towards foreign and, more specifically,

English-speaking countries, and to determine the effect of playing D&D in English on their motivation.

Research questions 2 and 3 focus on the participants' levels of WTC and SPCC in the English language. The levels of the aforementioned factors are determined in the first stage and in the final stage of the study for comparative purposes.

It is the hypotheses of the author of this thesis the levels of WTC and SPCC in the final stage of the study will be higher than in the first stage of the study.

Research questions 4 and 5 focus on the participants' view of the whole study. To be more specific, the participants' feeling regarding English-only communication when playing *Dungeons & Dragons*, and the perceived effect of the study on their communicative abilities are of interest.

The last research question also focuses on the participants' feelings. Unlike with questions 4-5, however, the dynamics of their D&D group are of interest. The question focuses on possible positive and/or negative relationships within the group, such as feelings of friendship or possible conflicts.

Given the length constraints of this diploma thesis, WTC and SPCC were given primary focus. Group dynamics and motivation were acknowledged as important variables, albeit their levels at the beginning and at the end of the study were not subjected to comparison.

To achieve the objectives of this study and answer the research questions, a variety of research instruments has been used. At the beginning of the study, the participants were administered questionnaires focusing on willingness to communicate (WTC) and self-perceived communicative competence (SPCC) After the initial questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual participants by the author of this diploma thesis. The participants were then engaged in playing Dungeons & Dragons for an extended period of time. In total, the first group of participants (Group A) played for 22 hours in the course of 4 weeks. Group B played for 18 hours in the course of 3 weeks. After the last play-session, the participants were again administered WTC and SPCC questionnaires and individual semi-structured interviews were conducted, concluding the study project.

The research is of mixed design, meaning both qualitative and quantitative research tools were used. The semi-structured interviews and observation sheets compiled during the play-session were the qualitative tools, while the WTC and SPCC questionnaires were quantitative tools.

3.1 Research Participants

The study was conducted on 9 participants, who will be further referred to as 'learners', with their age ranging from 16 to 20. All of the participants were long-term English learners, learning English as a foreign language since 3rd grade in primary school at the very least. To be more specific, at the time this study was conducted, the youngest of the learners have been learning English for at least 8 years. Eight of the learners identified as male, one identified as female. One of the learners was a first-year university student, seven of the learners attended grammar school, and one learner attended a different type of high school/upper secondary school. Given the time-consuming nature of this study, all of the learners who participated in the study were volunteers.

The learners were separated into two groups which will be further referred to as 'Group A' and 'Group B'. Group A consisted of four first year grammar school students, all of them 16 years old and identifying as male. The members of Group A were approached by the author of this diploma thesis during the author's second teaching practice at the grammar school the learners attended. While all the learners from Group A participated in the classes taught by the author of this diploma thesis, the author did not have a chance to become acquainted with the learners prior to this study, given the pandemic situation and established regime of online teaching in the Czech Republic in 2020. None of the members of Group A had any prior experience with playing *Dungeons & Dragons*. All the members of Group A knew each other, were classmates and friends who first discussed volunteering for this research among themselves before applying to take part in this study.

Group B consisted of five learners, four identifying as male and one as female. One of the members was a first-year university student, three attended grammar school, and one attended a different type of upper secondary school. The learners attending grammar school applied for the study after being approached by the author of this diploma thesis via email with the help of the school's deputy director. The other members of Group B

became part of the research after being suggested by the grammar school attendees and considered by the author of this diploma thesis. As was the case with Group A, all the learners forming Group B knew each other and considered each other friends. Unlike with Group A, the author of this diploma thesis did not teach any of the learners forming Group B during the author's teaching practice. To further distinct Group B from Group A, all the learners in Group B had prior experiences with playing *Dungeons & Dragons*.

3.2 Research Methodology

The focus of this chapter is to describe the tools used for collecting data during the research, as well as the procedure of data collection. Additionally, the procedure of the project engaging the learners in playing *Dungeons & Dragons* in English will be discussed.

Before discussing individual tools used in this study in detail, the overall structure of the research needs to be introduced. The study was of mixed design: both quantitative and qualitative research tools were used. The collection of data for this study took place in three distinct stages:

1)   Before the learners were engaged in playing *Dungeons & Dragons*, they were administered questionnaires (quantitative tools) meant to determine the levels of their willingness to communicate and self-perceived communicative competence. The learners also underwent a semi-structured interview (qualitative tool) meant to obtain more insight on the learners, their relationship to learning English and English itself, as well as their motivation regarding using and learning English.

2)   For the duration of the project, the author of this diploma thesis, who also served as the Dungeon Master for both of the research groups, observed both groups when playing and compiled observation sheets for all playing sessions. The observations were focused on the language of communication, flow of communication, potential pauses, misunderstandings, the learners' willingness to participate in discussion, and the overall atmosphere. The observation sheets serve as a qualitative research tool.

3)   The final stage took place after the last session of playing D&D. Once again, the learners were administered (quantitative) questionnaires focusing on

their willingness to communicate and self-perceived communicative competence. Another semi-structured (qualitative) interview was conducted with individual learners by the author of this diploma thesis. This interview was focused on the learners' reflection of the project, the learners' feelings about communication in English when playing D&D, as well as their reflection on how the project affected their competence. Additionally, the interview also focused on the group dynamics within the research groups.

Before moving on to the individual tools, the aspect of anonymity of the participants needs to be discussed. In accordance with the GDPR policy, no personal data including names of the learners can be mentioned. The use of multiple tools for acquiring deeper insight with individual learners and the comparative purpose of the WTC and SPCC questionnaires, however, create a necessity for a signature, so that all the data-collecting tools can be connected. The possibility of assigning a signature number or a personal code to each learner has been considered by the author of this diploma thesis. In the end, however, the author decided to use the learners' D&D characters' names as signatures. That way the learners' identity could be protected, and, at the same time, the research tools were more connected to the experience of playing D&D and did not feel too impersonal.

3.2.1 WTC Questionnaires

The questionnaires focusing on willingness to communicate (see Appendix A) were based on the WTC Scale designed by Richmond and McCroskey.[146] The questionnaires consisted of descriptions of twenty different situations. The learners were asked to indicate their willingness to initiate communication in English in the target situations. To do so, the learners were asked to write a number ranging from 0 to 100 next to the individual situations. The figures represent the percentage of times the learners would initiate communication in given situations, with 0 being 'never' to 100 being 'always'. The respondents were instructed to imagine they are completely free to choose whether they want to initiate communication or not, nothing forces them to.

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[146] MCCROSKEY, J.C. & V.P. RICHMOND. Willingness to communicate.

The situations varied in terms of the number of participants as well as the relationship between the respondent and other interlocutors. The range of situations covered communication in a dyad, in a small group, during a large meeting, and giving a public speech. The other interlocutors in given situations ranged from friends and acquaintances to strangers.

Out of the 20 situations, only 12 were used for further analysis, the other 8 questions serving as mere fillers. The scores obtained for the 12 significant situations were analysed in accordance with the scoring key which is part of the WTC Scale. Using the scoring key and simple mathematics, 8 different scores were obtained for each learner. Four scores were obtained in connection to the number of other interlocutors: WTC scores for communication in a dyad, small group, large meeting, and giving a public speech. Three scores were connected to the relationship between the respondent and the other interlocutors: WTC scores for communication with a friend, an acquaintance, or a stranger. The last score was the total WTC score, computed by adding the scores for WTC with a friend, an acquaintance, and a stranger, and then divided by three.

This research was not focused on factors affecting communication within a specific context, therefore, the WTC scale was adopted in its general form without adjustments in terms of context. Translating the WTC Scale from English into Czech was the only adjustment made by the author of this diploma thesis. The decision to use questionnaires in Czech has been made due to the nature of the learners: the learners were in most cases upper secondary school learners and Czech was their native language. Although the learners are long-term English learners, the author of this diploma thesis decided it might cause unnecessary complications in terms of misunderstandings if the questionnaires were in English. For the purposes of maximum accuracy in the learners' WTC self-assessment, it seems reasonable to ensure the learners' maximum understanding of given situations.

Before administering the questionnaire to the learners, the form and language of the questionnaire were discussed with the supervisor of this diploma thesis. Due to the global pandemic situation and related restrictions, the questionnaires were administered to the learners via *Discord*, an online communication platform used for most communication with the research groups, in the form of a fillable PDF file and collected in the same manner. For the purposes of comparison of the levels of WTC before and after the project, the questionnaires were administered twice – at the very beginning of the study project

and after the last D&D session. The learners were instructed not to look at their initial questionnaire when filling the concluding one, however, the author of this diploma thesis had no means of surveillance over the process of filling in the questionnaires.

3.2.2 SPCC Questionnaires

The questionnaire focusing on the learners' self-perceived communicative competence (see Appendix B) were designed using the SPCC Scale developed by McCroskey and McCroskey.[147] The questionnaire consists of 12 different situations varying in terms of the number of interlocutors, and the relationship between the respondent and the interlocutors. The learners were asked to fill in the questionnaire, estimating how competent to communicate in English they feel in each scenario. The learners' estimate took the form of a number ranging from 0, meaning 'completely incompetent', to 100, meaning 'completely competent'.

The situations presented covered communication in a dyad, a small group, a large meeting, and giving a public speech. In terms of relationship between the respondent and the other possible interlocutors, the situation covered communication with a friend, an acquaintance, and a stranger.

Unlike with the WTC Scale, there were no filler situations. The twelve situations were the same as the significant situations found in the WTC Scale. The obtained scores were further analysed, using the scoring key which is part of the SPCC Scale. Using the scoring key, 8 different scores were computed for each learner: 4 different scores depending on the number of other interlocutors, 3 different scores depending on the relationship between the respondent and the other interlocutors, and the total SPCC score.

The SPCC questionnaires were not adjusted by the author of this diploma thesis in terms of context of the situations. The author of this diploma thesis, however, translated the SPCC scale from English into Czech for the purposes of maximum accuracy of the learners' self-report. For more details on the thought process of the author behind this decision, see the previous subchapter.

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[147] MCCROSKEY, James C. & Linda L. MCCROSKEY. Self-Report as an Approach to Measuring Communication Competence.

As a result of the numerous restrictions in connection to the global pandemic, the questionnaires were administered in the form of a fillable PDF via *Discord* and collected in the same way. The questionnaires were administered at the very beginning of the project and after the last play-session, with the intention to compare the levels of SPCC and examine if and how the figures changed. The learners were instructed to complete each questionnaire thoroughly and to not consult the initial questionnaire when filling in the concluding one.

3.2.3 Initial Interviews

After the initial WTC and SPCC questionnaires were filled in by the learners, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C) with the learners were conducted by the author of this diploma thesis. The interviews were meant to provide additional background information regarding the learners' WTC and SPCC, and to examine sources of the learners' motivation to learn English. The semi-structured format allowed the learners to speak at greater length without restrictions, as would be the case in most questionnaires, and the author of this diploma thesis was able to adjust the questions and possibly ask additional questions, depending on the learners' answers.

The interviewees were asked how long they had been learning English, if there is anything they like or hate about learning English, and about their past positive and/or negative experiences regarding learning and their English teachers. Furthermore, the learners were asked if and how they use English outside of school, and if they had ever used English abroad.

They learners were also asked to assess their communicative competence using English, giving the learners an opportunity to provide additional information to the data already collected in the SPCC questionnaires.

The next questions focused on the feelings of the learners when using English in school both in front of their teachers and their peers. They were asked about their emotions when a teacher corrects their mistakes, how they feel about their peers' reactions to the learners' mistakes.

The final part of the interview focused on the learners' motivation, examining the influence of their parents on learning English, possible sources of instrumental motivation

in connection to the learners' future professions and plans, and possible interest in the culture of English-speaking countries.

As the restrictions connected to the global pandemic did not allow for the interview to be held in person, the interviews were conducted online via *Discord*. With the learners' permission, the individual interviews were recorded using *OBS*, a free recording and broadcasting software, for the purposes of making accurate transcripts of the interviews to be later used in this diploma thesis. To achieve maximum accuracy in the learners' self-report, the interviews were conducted in Czech, its transcripts were later translated into English.

3.2.4 Observations Sheets

During the D&D play-sessions the learners were engaged in, the author of this thesis observed the learners' behaviour, specifically focusing on the learners' communication.

The observations focused on the language the learners used during the session – whether they managed with English only or they had to use Czech in some occasions. Additionally, the author of this diploma thesis observed the flow of the learners' communication – if the learners made pauses, if they ever were at a loss for words, and if misunderstandings occurred and what caused them. Furthermore, the learners' participation in communication was observed – how willing the learners were to initiate communication, how willing they were to talk among themselves in contrast to communicating with the DM and possible NPCs, etc.

Due to the online environment of the play-sessions, technical difficulties were noted by the author of this diploma thesis as well. In addition, the overall atmosphere of each session was of interest.

The observations were compiled by the author of this diploma thesis in the form of observation sheets (see Appendix E). The observation sheets were designed by the author of this diploma thesis, taking inspiration from observation sheets used during the author's teaching practice. An unfilled form used for the observation sheets may be found among the appendices of this diploma thesis.

3.2.5 Concluding Interviews

After the concluding WTC and SPCC questionnaires had been administered to the learners and filled out, a semi-structured interview (see Appendix D) was conducted with the learners by the author of this diploma thesis. The aim of this interview was to determine the learners' feelings about the research project and the dynamics of their respective research groups. As was the case with the initial interviews, a semi-structured form was used to enable the learners to speak more openly without possible length restrictions, and the author was able to adjust the questions during the interview.

Firstly, the learners were asked how they felt about communicating in English during the project, how successful they were in communicating with both other learners and the DM (the author of this diploma thesis). Additionally, the learners were asked to assess the effect of the study project on their communicative competence.

Further, the learners were asked about their respective research groups (Groups A and B). More specifically, the learners were asked how their groups were able to cooperate, how they felt about their role within their respective group, who were the most active and most passive members, if there was any more dominant figure, and how they felt about relationships and affinities among their group's members. In addition, the learners were also asked whether they would change anything about their group or not.

Since motivation was also of interest, the learners were asked if the project affected their motivation to communicate in English, and if the project motivated them to learn anything new in English, and/or motivated the learners to read or watch other authentic materials they would not search for otherwise.

The concluding part of the interview focused on the learners' general reflection of the project, asking them what they liked and disliked about the project, what they would change, and if they would participate in a similar project in the future.

As with the initial interviews, the concluding interviews were conducted in Czech to ensure maximum accuracy of the learners' thoughts, ideas, and reflections. Due to the restrictions regarding the global pandemic, the interviews were conducted online via *Discord* and recorded with the learners' permission using *OBS* for the purpose of creating accurate transcripts to be further used in this diploma thesis.

3.3 Results and Discussion

In the following subchapters, the results of the study conducted by the author of this diploma thesis are presented. Each subchapter will present results regarding a different communication-influencing factor based on the data obtained using the selected research tools. For example, the first subchapter will deal with willingness to communicate and will present data collected from the WTC questionnaires as well as data obtained interviewing the learners.

3.3.1 Level of Willingness to Communicate

At the beginning of the research project and after the last D&D session, the learners were asked to fill in WTC questionnaires. The learners were asked to estimate the percentage in which they would initiate communication in English in the presented situations. The resulting figures, or percentages, were then taken by the author of this diploma thesis. Using the key attached to the WTC scale,[148] results for WTC in different contexts were generated; the context varying in the number of other interlocutors and the relationship between the respondent and the other interlocutor(s).

The resulting figures can be found in Tables 1 and 2 on the following page. There are two columns for each learner: the first column presents the results of the initial questionnaires filled in at the beginning of the project, the second column presents results from the questionnaires filled in at the end of the project.

Out of the nine learners that participated in the study, Pixie and Beta showed the lowest total levels of WTC both at the beginning and at the end of the project. Beta's total WTC was 26.5 in the initial questionnaire and 29.33 in the second one. Pixie's WTC was lower than Beta's in the first questionnaire (25), but their second WTC result was a little higher (33.33). Wilhelm showed the highest figures, not only the total values, but also the values of every single category.

As was explained in detail in the theoretical part of this diploma thesis, there are many factors accountable for the levels of willingness to communicate. SPCC being one of

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[148] MCCROSKEY, J.C. & V.P. RICHMOND. Willingness to communicate.

situations	Akiro before	Akiro after	Will before	Will after	Arjhan before	Arjhan after	Alberich before	Alberich after
3	0	0	30	34	10	30	32	35
4	100	60	55	58	80	70	55	75
6	100	50	58	73	50	70	43	50
8	20	60	46	55	30	20	37	30
9	100	80	82	91	80	80	68	80
11	80	20	53	55	70	65	31	57
12	100	50	43	48	20	30	30	36
14	30	70	52	60	40	65	30	58
15	100	30	60	67	50	65	55	78
17	10	20	19	34	10	20	25	25
19	100	50	86	87	50	70	65	77
20	50	30	51	63	45	60	45	49
group discussions	73.33	46.67	64	69.67	43.33	51.67	52.33	61.67
meetings	63.33	30	43.33	54	43.33	51.67	33	44
interpersonal	100	63.33	60	65.67	60	60	51	63.67
public speaking	26.67	33.33	44.33	52.33	31.67	51.67	35.67	47.33
stranger	32.5	32.5	34.5	42.75	17.5	25	31	31.5
acquaintance	82.5	35	54.75	60.75	61.25	65	46.5	64.75
friend	82.5	62.5	69.5	77.75	55	71.25	51.5	66.25
Total	65.83	43.33	52.92	60.42	44.58	53.75	43	54.17

Table 1: Results of WTC questionnaires of Group A

situations	Savek before	Savek after	Beta before	Beta after	Pixie before	Pixie after	Bague before	Bague after	Wilhelm before	Wilhelm after
3	0	20	0	1	0	0	70	40	90	100
4	50	40	50	40	50	40	90	90	100	100
6	70	70	20	20	20	40	80	90	100	100
8	55	30	10	40	30	50	60	75	90	90
9	65	85	90	80	60	60	100	90	100	100
11	30	30	2	5	30	30	90	50	90	90
12	25	65	50	50	50	60	50	50	90	90
14	10	40	0	5	0	10	80	85	90	90
15	35	35	15	30	10	50	85	75	100	100
17	35	55	1	1	0	0	50	50	100	100
19	55	80	80	80	50	50	100	80	100	100
20	5	30	0	0	0	10	75	50	90	100
group discussions	48.33	48.33	35	50	30	50	81.67	76.67	96.67	96.67
meetings	45	51.67	7.67	8.67	16.67	23.33	73.33	63.33	96.67	96.67
interpersonal	46.67	63.33	63.33	56.67	53.33	53.33	80	76.67	96.67	96.67
public speaking	5	30	0	2	0	6.67	75	58.33	90	96.67
stranger	28.75	42.5	15.25	23	20	27.5	57.5	53.75	92.5	95
acquaintance	30	33.75	16.75	18.75	22.5	32.5	85	66.25	95	97.5
friend	50	68.75	47.5	46.25	32.5	40	90	86.25	97.5	97.5
Total	36.25	48.33	26.5	29.33	25	33.33	77.5	68.75	95	96.67

Table 2: Results of WTC questionnaires of Group B

them, the results found in this subchapter will partially correlate with the results in the following subchapter (see Tables 3 and 4). Wilhelm's dramatically high WTC score may, therefore, be a result of Wilhelm's SPCC, which is also on average the highest of all the learners. Similarly, Pixie's SPCC was the lowest in both questionnaires. Pixie's low WTC can also be a result of negative experiences with English teachers, discovered during an interview, or Pixie's admitted nervousness when speaking, especially in front of their friends. Beta's and Savek's levels of both WTC and SPCC were among the lowest, as well. The SPCC of the learners will be further dealt with in the following subchapter. Beta's low WTC may be connected to a statement given by Beta during an interview:

'Generally, I do not feel well talking in front of people. I am usually quite nervous.'

Similarly, Savek admitted during their interview they feel they have bad pronunciation and generally cannot improvise, saying:

'When it comes to more complex debates where I have to improvise, I usually keep aside.'

The results for the learners WTC were on average in accord with the results of Gałajda and Cheng et al.[149] Specifically, the learners showed the highest average WTC for communication with a friend (69.46) and an acquaintance (62.54) rather than with a stranger (49.63). Similarly, the learners were most willing to communicate in a dyad (72.26) and least likely to initiate a public speech (50.74).

The learners WTC during the project and their participation in communication was also of interest. These aspects will, however, be discussed in more detail in the subchapter dealing with group dynamics, as it is closely connected to active and passive roles within a group.

As can be seen in the tables, the values of the learners' WTC changed during the project. Seven out of nine learners showed higher levels of WTC in the concluding questionnaires while two of the learners, Bague and Akiro, showed lower results. In Akiro's case, these results correlate with the ones from the SPCC questionnaires. Bague's results, surprisingly, show the opposite trend: while Bague's WTC got lower in every

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[149] CHENG, Xiaoguang, et al. Willingness to Communicate in English as a Second Language: A Case Study of Pakistani Undergraduates.
GAŁAJDA, Dagmara. *Communicative Behaviour of a Language Learner: Exploring Willingness to Communicate*. p. 75-97.

category, their SPCC got higher in every category. Nothing in Bague's answers during either interview explains this phenomenon. Due to the relatively short time span of the research and the small quantity of the questionnaires, Bague's momentary state of mind during either questionnaire could be accountable. Further research in this field should conduct a larger number of questionnaires over a longer time period.
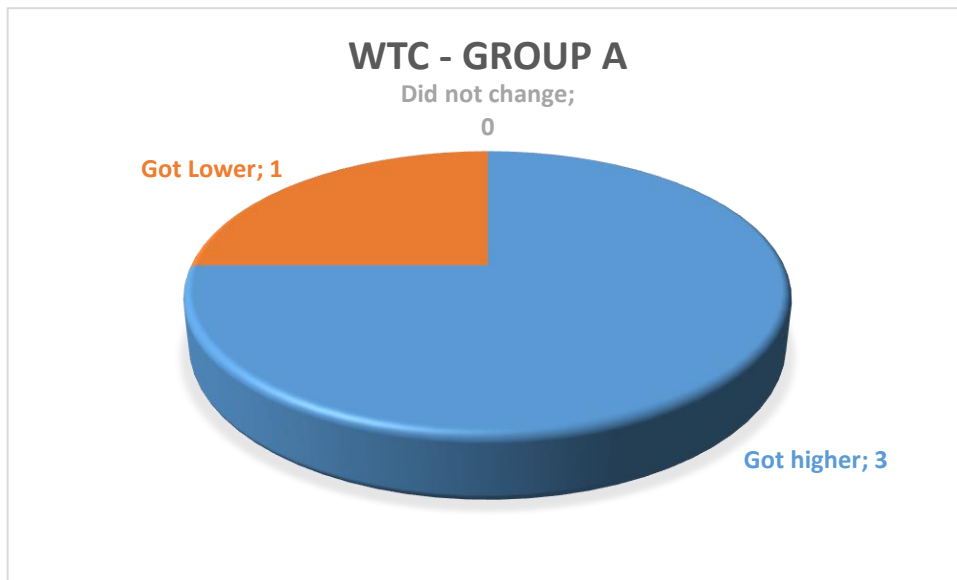

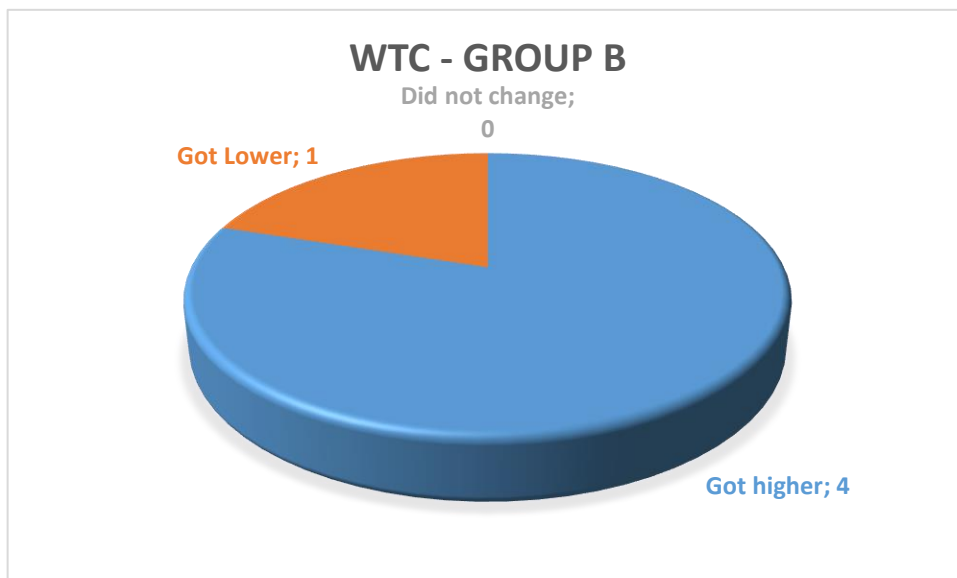*Figure2: Changes of total WTC in Group A*

Figure3: Changes of total WTC in Group B

The WTC results of the other learners do not fully correlate with their SPCC results either. While Savek's and Wilhelm's WTC has risen, their SPCC remained the exact

same. The SPCC figures of Pixie, Alberich and Arjhan got lower, even though their WTC got higher. Only Will and Beta reported higher concluding results in both WTC and SPCC. As suggested earlier, not all the factors affecting the results of the WTC questionnaires are accounted for. A longer and more detailed research, preferably using a larger number of questionnaires, is required.

This subchapter presented the results of the WTC questionnaires the learners filled in at the beginning and near the end of the research project. The general nature of the results has been discussed. Additionally, the recorded changes of WTC values were presented together with possible causes of these changes. Finally, specifications for future research have been suggested.

3.3.2 Level of Self-perceived Communicative Competence

This subchapter presents and discusses results of the SPCC questionnaires adapted from the SPCC scale[150] supplemented by findings from both the initial and concluding interviews conducted with the learners. As with the WTC results, the results of the SPCC questionnaires were further processed and compiled in the form of tables which can be found on the following page (see Table 3 and 4). As mentioned earlier, the SPCC questionnaires were conducted at the beginning of the project and after the last play-session.

Out of the nine learners, Pixie showed the lowest SPCC scores in both questionnaires, both total SPCC scores and scores for individual categories. These scores correlate with Pixie's statements recorder during the interviews:

'[my ability to communicate in English is] *really bad. I can understand, I can reply, but I cannot reply well enough. Usually, I cannot think of the right words to use and then I sometimes mess up the pronunciation.'*

Furthermore, Pixie expressed nervousness when talking in front of the people they know:

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[150] MCCROSKEY, James C. & Linda L. MCCROSKEY. Self-Report as an Approach to Measuring Communication Competence.

situations	Akiro before	Akiro after	Will before	Will after	Arjhan before	Arjhan after	Alberich before	Alberich after
1	35	50	47	45	30	30	53	59
2	100	80	62	65	60	40	85	70
3	60	20	65	70	60	60	84	65
4	80	45	50	52	40	30	62	57
5	100	95	75	80	70	80	98	85
6	50	50	58	57	60	50	75	63
7	70	70	56	56	50	30	65	65
8	30	50	62	65	40	60	78	68
9	75	40	67	65	60	70	79	70
10	40	10	32	35	45	25	70	40
11	100	0	70	85	70	80	87	80
12	40	40	63	58	50	60	76	60
Public	35	46.67	57.33	56	40	50	69	62.33
Meeting	50	26.67	51.67	54	55	45	76.33	56
Group	85	28.33	62.33	67.33	56.67	60	76	69
Dyad	90	81.67	64.33	67	60	50	82.67	73.33
Stranger	56.25	43.75	46.25	47	41.25	28.75	62.5	55.25
Acquaintance	66.25	52.5	62.5	61.25	57.5	55	78.75	65.75
Friend	72.5	41.25	68	75	60	70	86.75	74.5
Total	65	45.83	58.92	61.08	52.92	51.25	76	65.17

Table 3: Results of SPCC questionnaires of Group A

situations	Savek before	Savek after	Beta before	Beta after	Pixie before	Pixie after	Bague before	Bague after	Wilhelm before	Wilhelm after
1	20	20	8	10	10	0	60	85	100	100
2	45	65	75	75	20	40	95	100	100	100
3	75	75	76	75	10	10	95	100	100	100
4	50	30	21	30	20	10	90	90	90	90
5	60	85	95	95	50	50	95	100	100	100
6	65	45	30	35	10	10	90	95	90	90
7	60	60	20	70	50	50	90	90	80	80
8	40	50	33	30	10	10	80	100	90	90
9	50	30	85	80	30	20	90	100	100	100
10	55	50	20	20	10	0	80	90	70	70
11	55	60	80	90	30	20	95	100	100	100
12	35	40	30	40	10	20	75	95	100	100
Public	31.67	36.67	23.67	26.67	10	10	71.67	93.33	96.67	96.67
Meeting	65	56.67	42	43.33	10	6.67	88.33	95	86.67	86.67
Group	51.67	40	62	66.67	26.67	16.67	91.67	96.67	96.67	96.67
Dyad	55	70	63.33	80	40	46.67	93.33	96.67	93.33	93.33
Stranger	46.25	40	17.25	32.5	22.5	15	80	88.75	85	85
Acquaintance	48.75	45	55	57.5	17.5	22.5	87.5	97.5	97.5	97.5
Friend	57.5	67.5	71	72.5	25	22.5	91.25	100	97.5	97.5
Total	50.83	50.83	47.75	54.17	21.67	20	86.25	95.42	93.33	93.33

Table 4: Results of SPCC questionnaires of Group B

'I am very nervous when talking in front of my friends because they know me a know when I make a mistake. (…) Most of my friends have better English than me so it feels strange to talk to them in English when I know they are better.'

In the concluding interview, Pixie also stated how they felt about communicating in English during the course:

'It could have been better. (…) I could not express what I wanted to because I would not be able to pronounce it correctly and so nobody would understand what I wanted to say.'

There are multiple possible reasons for these incredibly low SPCC scores. Pixie reported they have negative past experiences with teachers of English and, in addition to that, have nobody they communicate with in English regularly and, therefore, lack practice.

Bague and Wilhelm showed the highest overall SPCC scores. During the interviews, both of them expressed great confidence about their communicative skills in English. To provide an example, during the initial interview, Wilhelm said:

'I do not want to sound arrogant, I make mistakes in spoken English and sometimes in grammar, but teachers who listen to me say that my speaking skills are decent. Whenever I had to talk to someone in English, I had no problems whatsoever.'

Both Wilhelm and Bague said they use English very often outside of school: talking with friends in English for fun, playing computer games in English, watching YouTube videos, movies, etc. Both of them also said they often partake in English competitions. Wilhelm did not report any problems using English during the project. Bague reported little problems remembering the right words.

On average, the learners' SPCC scores were lowest for communicating in public (50.74) and with strangers (49.63). The SPCC average scores got higher the fewer people were involved in the potential situation and the more familiar the learners were with the other interlocutors. Therefore, the learners showed highest average SPCC for communicating in a dyad (72.26) and with their friends (69.46).

When comparing the initial and concluding questionnaires, most learners showed different SPCC scores. Wilhelm was the only learner that showed the exact same scores in both questionnaires. Savek showed the same total SPCC scores, although the scores

for individual categories slightly shifted: Savek's scores for communicating with friends, in a dyad, and in public have risen while the rest got lower. Beta, Bague and Will showed improvement in their SPCC scores. Akiro, Alberich, Arjhan and Pixie, on the other hand, reported lower scores in the second questionnaire.
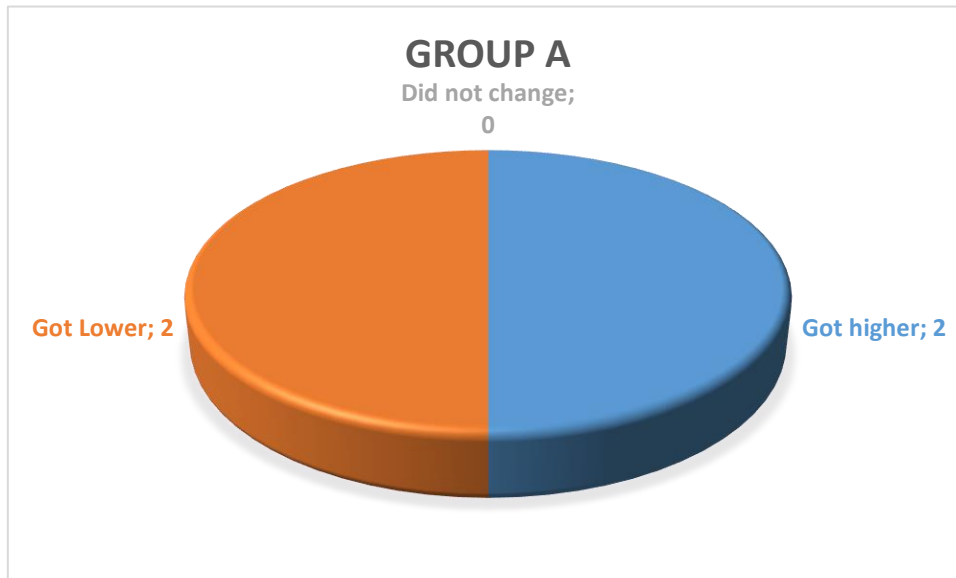
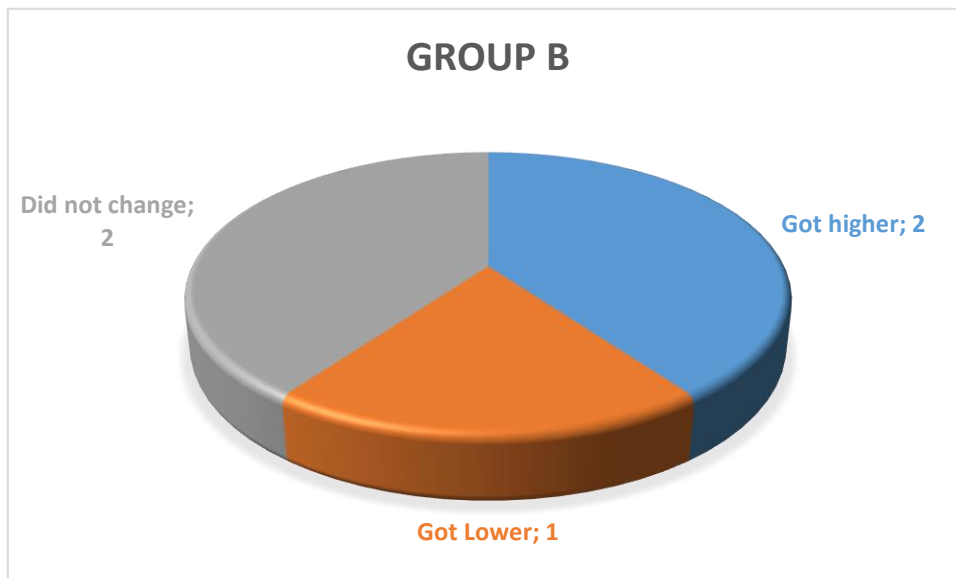

Figure 4: Changes of total SPCC in Group A

Figure 5: Changes of total SPCC in Group B

There are many possible reasons for these changes. The research study was conducted during a relatively short time span. Although all of the learners reported, during the concluding interviews, they perceived their communicative skills have changed slightly

for the better during the research project, all of them also expressed the changes were not dramatic as the time span of the project was relatively short to have larger impact. Future research should be, therefore, conducted over a longer time span. Additionally, the results of any of the questionnaires may have been influenced by a momentary state of mind of the respondent. Future research should preferably use a higher number of questionnaires for more accurate data.

It is possible the research project facilitated improvement of SPCC of certain learners in providing opportunities for successful communication. As will be further explored in the subchapter discussing group dynamics, however, some of the learners accepted rather passive roles within their groups. For these learners, such as Pixie and Akiro or Alberich, the exact opposite may be true. Perhaps they felt frustration in their passive positions. And unable to have larger impact in the group discussions, the passive learners might have felt like they failed when facing with a natural improvised communication. This negative experience would, presumably, affect their SPCC scores. Although, all nine of the learners reported they felt overwhelmingly positive about the research project.

This subchapter presented the results of SPCC questionnaires supplemented by the answers the learners gave during the initial and concluding interviews. The overall results were briefly discussed. The learners who achieved the highest and the lowest score were examined in more detail. Additionally, changes of the learners' SPCC scores during the research project were commented on. At the end of the subchapter, several explanations for the results of the SPCC questionnaires have been presented.

3.3.3 Motivation

During the initial and concluding interviews conducted by the author of this diploma thesis, the learners were asked about their motivation to study and learn English, and about their motivation to communicate in English, comparing their motivation to communicate when playing *Dungeons & Dragons* to their motivation during English classes in school.

Members of both research groups reported various levels and sources of motivation to learn English. Six out of nine learners stated their parents have an influence on their motivation. Five out of these six (Alberich and Arjhan from Group A, and Savek, Bague

and Wilhelm from Group B) reported their parents support them in learning English, acknowledging the importance of English in today's world. Will, a member of Group A, reported a much stronger influence of their parents than any other learner, saying:

'My parents force me a lot into learning English, and I am glad they do. Everyone in my family emphasizes the importance of learning languages.'

In addition to the extrinsic motivation, mostly coming from the learners' parents, the learners reported various levels of intrinsic motivation as well. All of the learners stated they feel the necessity of being able to communicate in English for the purposes of travelling or if they ever encountered someone who does not speak Czech. Four learners, additionally, stated they need English for their future profession: Will wishes to become a pilot, Alberich wants to be a soldier, Wilhelm wants to study journalism, and Beta is studying to become an architect.

While the purpose of English to achieve a certain job correlates with the idea of instrumental motivation, developed by Gardner and Lambert,[151] the other purpose, being able to communicate with foreigners both in the Czech Republic or abroad, is in accord with the thoughts of Yashima and perceiving English as a lingua franca.[152]
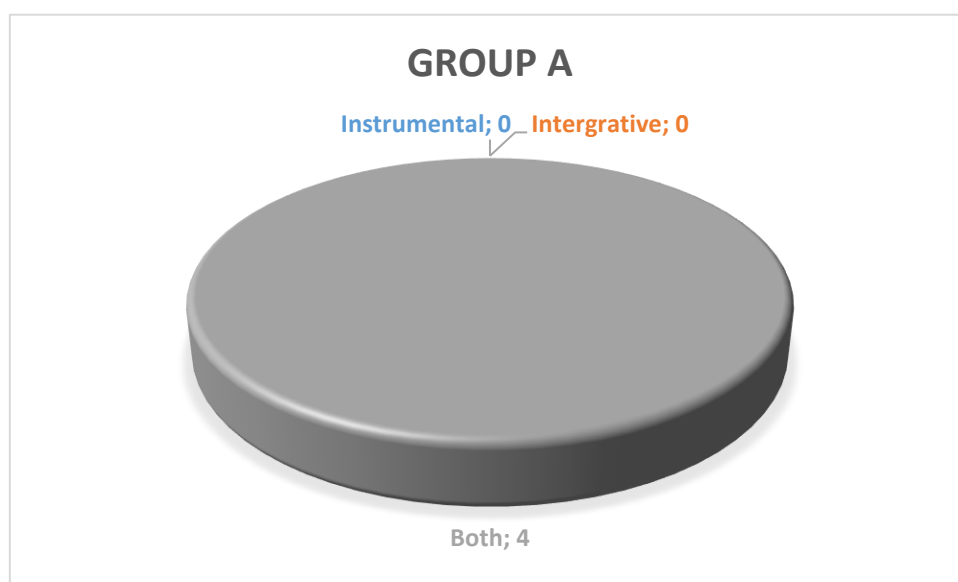

Figure 6: Learners' motivation to learn English – Group A

[151] GARDNER, Robert C. & Wallace E. LAMBERT. Motivational Variables in Second Language Acquisition.
[152] YASHIMA, Tomoko. Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language: The Japanese EFL Context.
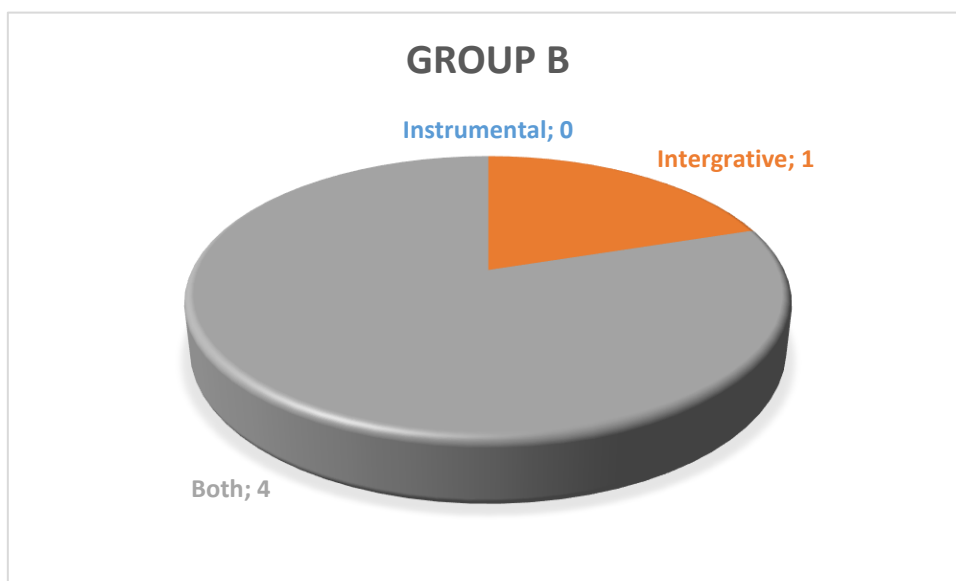
Figure 7: Learners' motivation to learn English – Group B

The research project affected the learners' motivation to learn English. During the concluding interviews, all but one of the learners reported playing D&D in English made them learn new words they could then use during the play-sessions, and the majority of the learners actively searched for more D&D content in English, either textual or videos on *YouTube*.

During the concluding interviews, the learners were asked to compare their motivation to communicate when playing D&D to their motivation to communicate during English lessons. Arjhan, a member of Group A, stated:

'The comparison depends on the topic we are dealing with at school. If the topic is something I do not know much about, I am much less motivated to communicate than while playing Dungeons & Dragons. If the topic is something interesting, however, my motivation to communicate is higher than while playing D&D.'

The other eight learners all reported they were more motivated to communicate when playing D&D than in school. Some of the learners also presented their thoughts on why this was the case. One of the learners in Group B, Savek, stated:

'I was much more motivated to communicate when playing D&D. In school, I usually try to pretend I am not there. I think there are several reasons for this: the environment is more pleasant here and, also, there is fewer of us.'

Another member of Group B, Beta, reported:

'Since communication is the basis of D&D, the pressure to communicate was greater. It did not, however, seem forced in any way to me. It seemed more natural.'

Wilhelm, Bague and Will mentioned they felt more motivated to communicate as there was more space and more opportunities to engage in communication. Bague and Wilhelm further noted the aspect of role-play motivated them to communicate in order to bring their characters to live. Bague stated:

'I felt more motivated when playing D&D because there were more opportunities to communicate and it was all about us talking, whereas during English lessons there are fewer opportunities, especially nowadays during online learning. I also felt more motivated because I wanted my character to live and to engage in the world…'

Figure 8: Learners' motivation to communicate while playing D&D in comparison to their motivation to communicate during English lessons

The learners' self-report shows a variety of reasons why their motivation to communicate was greater during the D&D sessions than in regular English lessons in school. The fact the environment was more pleasant than school environment for the learners seems in accordance with the works of Gardener and the thought that pleasant experiences facilitate motivation.[153]

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[153] GARDNER, Robert C. *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. p. 50.

As multiple learners stated, playing D&D provided them with more opportunities to engage in communication than regular lessons would. As Boun stated in relation to language anxiety, and Bandura's work suggested in relation to self-perceived competence, more opportunities for communication should facilitate these factors.[154] As both language anxiety and self-perceived competence are closely linked to willingness to communicate and motivation, the higher level of motivation during playing D&D may be explained by the learners' having greater opportunities to communicate.

Finally, the fact both research groups consisted of friends provides another explanation. As previously stated by Dörnyei et al., interpersonal motivation rises with affection and wanting to engage in and maintain relationships with other people, whether romantic relationships or friendship[155]

The author of this diploma thesis assumes multiple factors played part and all the presented explanations are responsible for the results to certain degree. Future research might focus on assessing the influence of different factors on the learners' motivation. For future research, more diverse research groups should be examined, for example a group of friends in comparison to a group of people who would not know each other at the beginning of the study.

In this subchapter, the results related to the learners' motivation to learn English and to communicate were presented. The results were backed up by transcribed answers the learners gave during the initial and concluding interviews. Multiple possible explanations for the results were presented and future research had been suggested.

3.4.4 Group Dynamics

During the concluding interviews, the learners were asked about several aspects of their respective research groups: how well they managed to cooperate, who were the most dominant and the most passive members, what were the relationships between members and how the members felt about each other. Additionally, the learners were

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[154] BOUN, Sovicheth. Social Psychological Impacts on Language Use: Anxiety among Cambodian University Students.
[155] DÖRNYEI, Zoltán et al. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.

asked to estimate their role within the group and, finally, if they would change anything about their group.

The original intention of the author of this diploma thesis included examining the changes of group dynamics during the research project in relation to the stages of group development mentioned in the theoretical part. This intention has been, however, abandoned as both research group were groups of friends before the study and continued to be friends after the study, and also due to the relatively short time span of the study.

All of the learners stated they managed to cooperate well within their respective groups and there were mostly no problems communicating within the group. These statements correlate with the impressions of the author of this diploma thesis recorder in observation sheets. The members of Group A mentioned they argued a lot during the play-sessions. They also mentioned, however, they greatly enjoyed arguing and had no negative feelings about their communication. Will said during an interview:

'We argued a lot but that was the part I enjoyed the most, so I am not complaining. Usually, after a long debate, we managed to reach an agreement, however…'

Since both groups consisted of long-known friends, the learners were asked about any perceived effect the presence of the author of this diploma thesis may have had on their communication and dynamics within the group. Most of the learners perceived no such effect. Only one of the learners, Alberich, stated:

'The fact that [the author of this diploma thesis was] *present made communicating with the group harder for me because I did not want to look stupid by making mistakes.'*

Furthermore, learners were asked to identify the most active and passive members of their respective groups. In Group A, Will and Arjhan were considered the most active by all of the members, usually responsible for the decisions the group made. Akiro was perceived as slightly more passive, and Alberich was overall considered the least active. There are several factors that may be found responsible for the unequal participation of the members of Group A. During the initial interview, both Arjhan and Will assessed their communicative skills as 'above average'. Will, additionally, stated they consider themselves an extrovert. Although Akiro also estimated their communicative skills as reasonably high, they stated in the concluding interview:

'I had terrible problems finding the right words… The others would start talking before I could think of the right words.'

When asked about their rather passive role, Alberich said:

'The problem was I have my computer in the living room and my parents walk around all the time (…) They do not speak English, but I still feel uncomfortable speaking in front of them.'

As mentioned before, the play-session were held online, as a result of the global pandemics restrictions. It seems, therefore, reasonable to assume the participation of the learners in Group A could have been more equal if the research project were held in person, as was the original intention of the author of this diploma thesis.

In the second research group, Wilhelm, Bague and Beta were perceived as the most active and dominant learners. Pixie and Savek were considered mostly passive. When asked about their role within the group, Pixie stated:

'I was the one going with the flow of the rest of the group, usually staying in the background. But I am usually like this whenever we play.'

This statement suggests the perceived passiveness of Pixie is the norm of this group, even outside of this research project. Wilhelm's statement, however, contradicts this assumption:

'I would say Pixie and Savek [were the most passive ones]. *They did not talk as much as they usually do when we play together in different campaigns.'*

This contradiction might suggest during the concluding interview Pixie tried to hide their shyness by stating they usually are rather passive. This is seemingly supported by Pixie's statements during the initial interview saying while Pixie does not have problems understanding English, they cannot speak as well as they would like to. The results of the SPCC questionnaires (see Table 4) also reveal Pixie had the lowest level of SPCC out of all the learners taking part in this study. This has been, however, dealt with in more detail in the previous subchapters.

When the learners were asked about their feelings towards the other members of their respective groups, all the learners stated they had positive feelings towards them. Most of the learners stated they felt the same way towards each member of their respective

group. Will and Alberich, members of Group A, stated they had more positive feelings towards each other, due to their shared interests, than towards the rest of their group. Bague, a member of Group B, was the only learner that said they held more negative feelings toward a particular member of their group:

'Perhaps I have slightly more negative feelings towards Wilhelm. The way Wilhelm presents [themselves] *and the way Wilhelm interrupts other people's speech can be annoying… but I got used to it.'*

Despite this statement, Bague insisted they consider Wilhelm their friend.

In addition, the learners were asked whether they would change any aspect of their group or not. Eight out of the nine learners reported they would not change anything. The only one who would, Arjhan, said:

'The only thing I would wish for is to make the participation in group communication equal.'

This subchapter presented the results regarding group dynamics of the research groups. The way the learners perceived cooperation and communication within their respective groups has been presented. Furthermore, the learners' feelings towards each other have been explored, as well as the activeness of the learners and the learners' overall satisfaction with their respective group.

3.5 Answers to the Research Questions

At the beginning of the research, several research questions were formulated. While the preceding chapter presents the results of the research in detail, this chapter presents the summary of the results and gives answers to the research questions. The research questions will be answered one by one.

RQ 1: How are the learners motivated to learn and use English?

Based on the results presented earlier, it seems the learners participating in the study mostly feel both instrumental and integrative motivation to learn English. Integrative motivation stems from the perceived need of English to communicate anywhere in the world and the instrumental motivation comes from the possible need for future career. Most of the learners also reported both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

Focusing on motivation to use English, many learners reported they use English in their free time, albeit most of them passively when watching videos or movies or listening to songs. In relation to the research project, a vast majority of participants reported they felt more motivated to use English during playing D&D than they feel in school due to the friendly and accepting environment.

RQ 2: How will the level of learners' Willingness to Communicate change during the project?

Based on the comparison of questionnaire results, the levels of the learners' WTC changed during the project. While a majority reported higher WTC at the end of the study, two of the learners reported lower results. As mentioned before, due to the relatively low number of respondents, more research in this field is necessary.

RQ 3: How will the level of learners' Self-Perceived Communicative Competence change during the project?

The results for SPCC are less optimal than the WTC results. Comparing the questionnaire results and the total values of SPCC, four learners achieved higher figures. Three learners, however, showed lower SPCC and two learners reported the exact same total SPCC as in the initial questionnaire. As with the WTC results, more research is required.

RQ 4: Will the learners feel an effect of the project on their communicative abilities?

Most of the learners stated they believed the project affected their communicative abilities, however, they were not able to perceive the effect themselves. One learner stated they felt more confident using English after the project. The learners mostly agreed the research project was too short for it to have any larger impact on their communicative skills.

RQ 5: How will the learners feel about using solely English when communicating during the research project?

Most of the learners reported only little problems communicating solely in English during the project. The problems that did arise consisted mostly of having trouble think of the right words quickly and improvising.

RQ 6: How will the learners feel about their group and its dynamics?

All the learners felt overwhelmingly positive towards their respective groups. This outcome was rather expected due to the fact members of both groups considered each other friends. There was only one learner who reported slightly more negative feelings towards another member of their group.

The learners also felt positive about cooperation and communication within their groups, although several members stated they played a rather passive role within their group and would try to be more active if they ever participated in such activity again.

Conclusion

The main objective of this diploma thesis was to examine the levels of selected factors affecting communication and the impact of playing tabletop role-playing games in English as an out-of-school activity on some of these factors. While the theoretical part of this diploma thesis introduced various of these factors, the practical part discussed a study conducted by the author of this diploma thesis.

To the satisfaction of the author, the research questions set at the beginning of the practical part have all been answered. The motivations of the learners participating in the research were examined in detail. The levels of the learners' WTC and SPCC were discussed. Most of the learners felt comfortable using English during the project, although several learners struggled with finding the right words. The learners felt overwhelmingly positive not only about their groups, but also about the whole project.

Although the research questions have been answered, the author's hypotheses regarding the changes of the learners' WTC and SPCC were not confirmed. Even though the author assumed these levels will improve during the project, the results are inconclusive: several learners showed improvement while results of other learners showed deterioration. It seems a longer research in this field is required, as has been also stated by the learners when asked about the perceived effect of the project on their communicative skills.

Most importantly, however, the research showed the potential of out-of-school activities held in English. Although some of the results regarding the levels of different factors affecting communication are inconclusive, both the author of this thesis and the learners expressed their overwhelmingly positive feelings and satisfaction with the project. Not only due to the intensive language practice, but also due to the nature of TRPGs, all the participants expressed they would engage in a similar activity again. It is a firm believe of the author of this diploma thesis, any enjoyable activity held in English can only improve the participants' communicative skills. No matter if the activity consists of shopping or slaying imaginary dragons. As long as the participants enjoy it, they will get more proficient in the language as a result.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Willingness to Communicate Questionnaire

Jméno (postavy): _____

Věk: _____

Ročník SŠ: _____

Pohlaví: _____

Ochota zahájit komunikaci v angličtině

Angličtinu můžete uplatnit v nejrůznějších situacích. Níže najdete 20 různých situací, ve kterých si můžete zvolit, zda zahájíte komunikaci nebo ne. Berte v potaz, že volba zahájit komunikaci je čistě na vás. Nikdo a nic vás nenutí komunikaci zahájit.

Prosím, doplňte u jednotlivých situací v kolika procentech případů byste <u>zahájili</u> **komunikaci v angličtině**. (0 = nikdy; 100 = vždycky)

<u>V kolika procentech situací bys zahájil:</u>

1. Konverzaci s prodejcem jízdenek _____

2. Konverzaci s lékařem _____

3. Proslov před skupinou cizích lidí _____

4. Konverzaci se známým _____

5. Konverzaci s prodavačem v obchodě _____

6. Konverzaci ve velké skupině kamarádů _____

7. Konverzaci s policistou _____

8. Konverzaci v malé skupině cizích lidí _____

9. Konverzaci s kamarádem _____

10. Konverzaci s číšníkem/číšnicí v restauraci _____

11. Konverzaci ve velké skupině známých _____

12. Konverzaci s cizím člověkem _____

13. Konverzaci s učitelem   _____

14. Proslov před skupinou kamarádů   _____

15. Konverzaci v malé skupině známých   _____

16. Konverzaci s popelářem   _____

17. Konverzaci ve velké skupině cizích lidí   _____

18. Konverzaci s přítelem/přítelkyní   _____

19. Konverzaci v malé skupině kamarádů   _____

20. Proslov před skupinou známých   _____

Appendix B: Self-Perceived Communicative Competence Questionnaire

Jméno (postavy): _____

Věk: _____

Ročník SŠ: _____

Pohlaví: _____

Hodnocení vlastní komunikační kompetence v angličtině

Níže najdete 12 různých situací, ve kterých lidé často potřebují komunikovat. Schopnosti komunikovat se u jednotlivců mohou podstatně lišit. V různých situacích je tak jednotlivec různě kompetentní komunikovat.

Prosím, doplňte u jednotlivých situací, jak kompetentní se v nich cítíte, pokud jde o **komunikaci v angličtině**. Do vyznačeného prostoru vpravo od dané situace napište číslo v rozmezí 0-100. (0 = naprosto nekompetentní; 100 = naprosto kompetentní)

<u>Jak kompetentní se cítíš při:</u>

1. Proslovu před skupinou cizích lidí _____

2. Konverzaci se známým _____

3. Konverzaci ve velké skupině kamarádů _____

4. Konverzaci v malé skupině cizích lidí _____

5. Konverzaci s kamarádem _____

6. Konverzaci ve velké skupině známých _____

7. Konverzaci s cizím člověkem _____

8. Proslovu před skupinou kamarádů _____

9. Konverzaci v malé skupině známých _____

10. Konverzaci ve velké skupině cizích lidí _____

11. Konverzaci v malé skupině kamarádů _____

12. Konverzaci před skupinou známých _____

Appendix C: Initial Interview Structure

1) Jak dlouho se učíš angličtinu?

2) Je něco, co se ti líbí na učení se anglicky?

3) Je něco, co se ti naopak nelíbí?

4) Jaké máš zkušenosti s učiteli angličtiny? Pozitivní/negativní zkušenosti se současným/ bývalým učitelem?

5) Používáš angličtinu i mimo školu? V jakých situacích?

6) Využil/a jsi někdy angličtinu v zahraničí?

7) Jak bys zhodnotil/a svou schopnost mluvit anglicky?

8) Jaké máš pocity, když musíš používat angličtinu ve škole před učitelem?

- Sebejistý? Nervózní?

- Když něčemu nerozumíš, požádáš učitele, aby to zopakoval?

- Jaký máš pocit, když učitel opravuje tvoji angličtinu?

9) Jaké máš pocity, když musíš používat angličtinu ve škole před tvými kamarády?

- Jak bys porovnal/a svou úroveň angličtiny s úrovní kamarádů?

- Máš obavy, že se ti budou kamarádi vysmívat za tvé chyby v angličtině?

- Měl/a jsi někdy obavy, že tvá angličtina není tak dobrá jako angličtina tvých kamarádů?

- Máš pocit, že se na tebe spolužáci dívají, když ve třídě mluvíš anglicky?

10) V jakých situacích používáš angličtinu ve škole nejčastěji? Ve dvojicích? Ve skupinách? Před celou třídou?

11) S kým komunikuješ v angličtině nejčastěji? S učitelem? S kamarády?

12) Jsou nějaké důvody, proč máš strach mluvit anglicky?

13) Máš pocit, že tě někdo nutí, abys byl dobrý v angličtině? Rodiče?

14) Je pro tebe důležité, abys uměl dobře anglicky?

15) Je pro tebe angličtina důležitá jen kvůli známkám nebo je pro tebe důležité ji opravdu ovládat?

16) Budeš angličtinu potřebovat pro budoucí zaměstnání? Hodláš se stěhovat do zahraničí/cestovat?

17) Je pro tebe zajímavá kultura anglicky mluvících zemí? USA? UK?

18) Díváš se na filmy/seriály v angličtině? Posloucháš anglické/americké písničky?

Appendix D: Concluding Interview Structure

1) Jak se ti podle tebe dařilo komunikovat v angličtině v průběhu projektu?

2) S čím jsi měl během komunikace v angličtině největší problémy?

3) Jak se ti dařilo komunikovat anglicky se zbytkem skupiny?

4) Jak se ti dařilo komunikovat anglicky s vedoucím projektu?

5) Myslíš, že se tvá schopnost komunikovat v angličtině nějak změnila v průběhu projektu?

6) Jak bys zhodnotil spolupráci ve vaší skupině?

7) Kdo ve vaší skupině hrál podle tebe dominantní roli?

8) Kdo ve vaší skupině podle tebe byl nejvíce pasivní?

9) Jak bys zhodnotil svou roli ve skupině?

10) Jak ve vaší skupině probíhala domluva o dalším postupu apod.?

11) Jak bys zhodnotil vztahy ve vaší skupině?

12) Měl jsi k někomu ze skupiny negativnější vztah než ke zbytku?

13) Měl jsi naopak k někomu ze skupiny vřelejší vztah než ke zbytku?

14) Je něco, co bys na vaší skupině změnil?

15) Jak bys zhodnotil svou motivaci komunikovat v angličtině v průběhu projektu v porovnání se školním prostředím?

16) Motivoval tě projekt vyhledávat další autentické textové či audiovizuální materiály v angličtině?

17) Motivoval tě projekt k učení nových slovíček a výrazů v angličtině?

18) Co se ti na projektu nejvíc líbilo?

19) Co se ti na projektu líbilo nejméně?

20) Obecně byla to pro tebe spíše negativní nebo pozitivní zkušenost?

21) Zúčastnil by ses podobné aktivity znovu, kdybys dostal tu možnost?

Appendix E: Observation Sheet Structure

Group:

Date:

Time:

Language of communication *Czech? English?*	
Flow of communication *Pauses? Fishing for words?*	
Misunderstandings	
Learners' participation *Initiating conversation?* *Talking only when asked?*	
Other difficulties *Technical problems?*	
Overall atmosphere *Friendly? Hostile?*	

Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Vojtěch Hlubek
Katedra:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Ondřej Duda
Rok obhajoby:	2021

Název práce:	Použití stolních RPG her pro komunikaci v angličtině
Název práce v angličtině:	Use of Tabletop Role-Playing Games for Communication in English Language
Anotace práce:	Práce se zabývá faktory ovlivňujícími komunikaci žáků v angličtině a také vlivem hraní D&D v angličtině na tyto faktory. V teoretické části jsou představeny některé faktory ovlivňující komunikaci, včetně jejich lingvistického a/nebo psychologického pozadí. Praktická část popisuje studii, během které autor této práce pozoroval studenty hrající D&D v angličtině. Autor zkoumá jednotlivé účastníky studie se zaměřením na jejich komunikační schopnosti a faktory, které je ovlivňují.
Klíčová slova:	komunikace, Dungeons & Dragons, D&D, ochota komunikovat, jazyková úzkost, sebehodnocení komunikační kompetence
Anotace v angličtině:	This thesis deals with factors affecting communication in English and with the effects playing D&D in English has on these factors. The theoretical part introduces several factors affecting communication and discusses their linguistic and/or psychological background. The practical part deals with a study conducted by the author of this thesis, observing learners playing D&D in English. The author examines the participants, focusing on their communicative skills and factors influencing them.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	communication, Dungeons & Dragons, D&D, willingness to communicate, language anxiety, self-perceived communicative competence
Rozsah práce:	86 stran
Přílohy:	Dotazníky použité během výzkumu, struktura otázek obou vykonaných rozhovorů, struktura pozorování účastníků během hraní D&D, CD s diplomovou prací

Resumé

Práce se zabývala faktory ovlivňující komunikaci v angličtině. Teoretická část postupně představila pojem komunikace, komunikační kompetence a následně se blíže zabývala jednotlivými faktory, které mohou ovlivňovat komunikaci, včetně představení jejich lingvistického a/nebo psychologického pozadí. Praktická část popisuje případovou studii, během které autor této práce hrál po dobu několika týdnu *Dungeons & Dragons* v angličtině se dvěma skupinami studentů středních a, v jednom případě, vysokých škol. Během této studie autor této práce sledoval komunikační schopnosti účastníků se zaměřením na faktory ovlivňující komunikaci. Předpokladem autora bylo, že se hodnoty vybraných faktorů ovlivňujících komunikaci účastníků, v průběhu výzkumu zlepší/zvýší. U vybraných faktorů byly hodnoty na počátku studie a na jejím konci porovnány. Ze získaných dat vyplynulo, že se autorovy předpoklady nepotvrdily. Za pomoci získaných dat byly autorem předloženy návrhy k dalšímu výzkumu.