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THE ANALYSIS OF THE VARIETY OF SPEAKING ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOK 'PROJECT'

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- 2) Analyzovat mluvní aktivity v učebnici Project z hlediska různých technik nácvičku mluvení.
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Anotace

Práce se zaměřuje na analýzu mluvních aktivit a rozvíjení plynulosti v učebnici Project 4 (třetí vydání), která je často používaná na základních školách. Teoretická část vysvětlí klíčové pojmy a shrne typy mluvních aktivit a techniky rozvíjející plynulost. Cílem praktické části je najít všechny mluvní aktivity, roztrždit je podle typu a techniky. Práce se pokusí analyzovat jednu kontrolovanou aktivitu a dvě aktivity rozvíjející plynulost. Účelem je objevit v jakém rozsahu učebnice rozvíjí mluvní dovednosti, jestli učebnice obsahuje škálu mluvních aktivity a zda odráží požadavky mluvní aktivity z hlediska rozvoje plynulosti.

Klíčová slova

Kontrolované aktivity, plynulost, popis obrázku, přesnost, role-play, učebnice, vedené aktivity, volné mluvní aktivity, výuka mluvení, tvorba rozhovoru

Annotation

The bachelor thesis focuses on analysing speaking activities and developing fluency in the textbook Project 4 (the third edition), which is frequently used at primary schools. The theoretical part provides definitions of key terms and a summary of types of speaking activities and the techniques of developing fluency. The aim of the practical part is to find all speaking activities, categorize them according to the type and technique. The thesis attempts to analyse one controlled activity and two fluency activities. The purpose is to discover to what extent the textbook develops speaking skills, whether the textbook includes a variety of speaking activities and whether reflects the requirements of speaking activities in terms of developing fluency.

Key word

Accuracy, controlled activities, dialogue-building, fluency, free oral production, guided activities, picture describing, role-play, teaching speaking, textbooks

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INTRODUCTION

English language as a foreign language has been becoming very important over the past decades of years. Hence, children learn it from the early stages of primary school. One of the most common teaching methods used in classes is transmitting English by means of textbooks. As a result, textbooks have an important role in language classes no matter if they serve only as a supportive material or they provide teachers with the complete programme of lessons. In both cases, when selecting the most suitable material for lessons, teachers usually search for a high-quality textbook that meets the needs of their students. In other words, the textbook has certain advantages from which students benefit.

Leaving aside the advantages, textbooks may have certain disadvantages. It means that some specific areas of textbook cause problems for students. Some textbooks, for instance, contain too difficult subject matter, do not cover a topic sufficiently, become old and outdated faster and give priority to develop some skills rather than others. Last but not least, they lack in speaking practice which; in fact, belongs to one of the most vital skills when learning a foreign language.

The last mentioned speaking practice and one textbook were subjected to the examination in this bachelor thesis. The name of the textbook is Project 4 (the third edition) and it belongs to one of the most frequently used textbooks in the Czech Republic.

First, the theoretical part explains and explores several crucial terms of speaking practice and its teaching. The individual parts of these complex processes, such as accuracy and fluency are defined. In addition, this part summarizes the types of speaking activities and clarifies the techniques of free oral production.

Secondly, the practical part deals with the analysis of the phenomena explained in the theoretical part. It is divided into quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative research brings the examination that consists of revealing the extent to what the textbook gives the opportunity to practice speaking and develop students' speaking skills. Additionally, it analyses a variety of speaking activities; in other words, whether the textbook is rich in the types and techniques of speaking practice.

In fact, developing speaking skills goes hand in hand with two abilities called accuracy and fluency. The qualitative research focuses on the analysis that shows the difference between the speaking activities developing accuracy and fluency. Furthermore, speaking activities of free oral production are subjected to another detailed analysis in order to reveal whether they conform to the requirements that successful speaking activities of this technique have. The analyses are accomplished with two checklists specially designed for the purposes of this work.

I believe that the findings of this bachelor thesis will be rewarding not only for my professional development, but also for teachers selecting a suitable textbook for their students.

1 THEORETICAL PART

1.1 Teaching Speaking

1.1.1 Act of Speaking

A man is the only creature who can speak, which makes speaking one of the crucial human abilities. However, this ability is not inborn that is why it has to be developed. The purpose is to be able to communicate within society, for speaking is a vital skill enabling people to accomplish diverse goals in communication, such as expressing needs, thoughts and providing information.

Chaney and Burk (1998, 13) define this ability as “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts.” Another important feature is that speaking is happening in real time. This is the important fact that constitutes the difference between speaking and writing although both of them are productive skills. Unlike speaking, which is often unplanned and spontaneous, writing conforms to a specific structure according to the purpose. In other words, writing is organized and planned.

In fact, people learn speaking their mother tongue. According to Haynes’s (2005) claim, it is a part of the natural process called language acquisition where small children usually acquire subconsciously the mother tongue in the home environment during natural communication with their relatives. It is a subconscious process because they are not aware of grammatical rules. It means that “they focus on the message being transmitted rather than what is and what is not grammatically correct” (Linse, et al. 2005, 12). Lemetyinen (2012) in her article refers to

constructivist investigators who suggest that children are sensitive to patterns in the language. When the patterns are repeated many times, children acquire sophisticated knowledge of how the language works, which enables the acquisition process.

Besides the language acquisition, there is another process, which is learning. People learn speaking a foreign language. It is a part of language learning that usually takes place in the classroom environment. Learning a foreign language, in contrast to acquisition, is a conscious process and learners can discuss this experience (Haynes 2005).

1.1.2 Process of Learning Speaking

Under normal circumstances, the acquisition of a mother tongue is a matter of years. Thus, it is logical that learning speaking a foreign language requires quite a long time as well. Since rarely do students have the opportunity to hear or practice a foreign language outside the classroom, they gain experience with the language at school. Consequently, the lessons of a foreign language should be effective as much as possible to give students this opportunity. Hadfield and Hadfield (2000, 3) characterize “a speaking lesson as a kind of bridge for learners between the classroom and the world outside.” In order to build the bridge, the lessons have to be well balanced. In other words, they should consist of the following four strands defined by Nation, et al. (2009, 1, 2).

At the beginning of learning a foreign language, students’ experience with the language depends mainly on the first strand. It is called meaning-focused input

and students' attention is on messages transmitted by language. The messages are transmitted through listening and reading. In fact, students need a great amount of input because it has a significant positive effect on the next steps in language learning. The positive effect is largely supported by incidental learning that results from input with which learners are provided. Subsequently, learners can build on this experience no matter how conscious it has been. It is also important that students are presented with the language that they understand. It is called "comprehensible input, which is a little above the learners' language level but understandable" (Krashen in Linse 2005, 13).

The second strand is meaning-focused output, which consists of speaking and writing. The aim is that students produce and share their ideas with other people.

The third strand is named language-focused learning and students pay attention to the features of the language, such as sounds, spelling, vocabulary, grammar exercises, discourse and so on. This learning includes repetition systems and drills.

Finally yet importantly, the fourth strand called fluency development signifies that students become fluent with what they already know. The last two strands are connected with developing accuracy and fluency, which will be discussed in detail later on.

Nevertheless; as a matter of fact, the lessons of a foreign language do not always balance these four strands. For instance, the lessons include mainly input instead of including output as well. The result is that students have knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, but they cannot actually use it. Scrivener (2005, 147) describes it as a "difficulty in moving language from passive knowledge into active usage." Owing to difficulties that the passive knowledge may cause to students being

required to speak English, the balance between the four strands has great significance in effective teaching of a foreign language.

1.1.3 Effective Teaching Speaking

Before defining teaching speaking of a foreign language as such, it is necessary to pay attention to the assumption of Thornbury (2005, 11), who states: “Being skilful assumes having some kind of knowledge base.” The knowledge base includes processing grammar rules and learning vocabulary items. It means that what learners know comes first and what learners do comes later, but it should not be too late. Even students at early primary school should be able to say a few sentences.

Teaching speaking is well defined by Nunan (2003, 27) and teachers should include all the points in practice:

- “Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns
- use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language
- select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter
- organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence
- use language as a means of expressing values and judgments
- use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses.”

Since teaching speaking was explained, the first part of the name of this chapter ‘effective’ has to be clarified as well. That is why several characteristics will be mentioned below to explain what effective teaching speaking means.

Firstly, an important part of teaching speaking is timing. Teachers have to provide as many opportunities dedicated to speaking as possible. Each child should be provided with approximately the same amount of time as the others in order to develop the skill by building the process and sufficient practice. In case of “shortage of opportunities for practice, it is identified as an important contributing factor to speaking failure” (Thornbury 2005, 28). Naturally, speaking failure is undesirable and when teachers want to avoid it, they should be aware of the following statement by Grugeon et al. (2005, 1). They observe that children bring ready-made resource for speaking when they come to school on the first day because they have been learning speaking in the home environment since they were born. As a matter of fact, it is dangerous to think that resource for speaking a foreign language is ready-made as well. While resources for reading and writing are not ready-made, children learn to read and write at school. In addition, teachers of English may well concentrate only on developing these two skills. Nonetheless, as it was said above, students usually cannot practice a foreign language at home and hence “it is essential that the learner is exposed to the maximum intensive experience of the language” (Leeson 1975, 7).

Sandra Savignon demonstrates highly interesting research based on her own experience with teaching and testing for communicative competence. She says she has found that “students who were given the opportunity for innovative self-expression from the very beginning of their study of the language far outperformed students who had not had the benefit of such experience in situations requiring spontaneous interaction” (Savignon in Bouchard, et al. 1980, 39).

By timing it is not only meant the time when learners actually speak, but teachers should also give children time to think through their opinions, views and ideas as Grugeon et al. (2005, 9) reminds. Even native speakers sometimes need time to formulate their ideas.

Secondly, speaking only as a purpose of practicing grammar is not an effective means of speaking because the focus is on grammar instead of speaking.

Furthermore, teachers have to distinguish between knowledge and skills in teaching speaking and make lessons truly productive. Bygate (1987, 3) claims that “one of the basic problems in foreign-language teaching is to prepare learners to be able to use the language”. In other words, students should be able to use a language not only know it.

Another important step is the adaptation of subject matter. According to Grugeon et al. (2005, 9), “teachers should choose questions and topics that are likely to challenge children cognitively.” The choice of questions and topics should be adequate to learners’ level and age.

Undoubtedly, it is also connected with lesson planning and providing instructions. Moreover, other factors influencing students’ ability to speak appear, for instance, shyness, low knowledge of the topic and so on. However, all of these points are out of the scope of this work.

1.1.4 Accuracy and Fluency

This chapter deals with accuracy and fluency, which are abilities determining the success of students speaking foreign languages and the difference between them.

Firstly, Byrne (1988, 4) defines accuracy as an ability that “refers to use of correct forms where utterances do not contain errors affecting the phonological, syntactic, semantic or discourse features of a language.” In other words, accuracy emphasizes correctness and mistakes are not acceptable. Teachers should correct students every time they make mistakes. Yet teachers should consider the assumption of Grugeon et al. (2005, 23) that “accuracy is relative because a child in early primary school is not capable of the same level of accuracy as an adult.”

On the other hand, fluency is characterized by facility of speech and language performance. Fluent speakers are so skilled that they do not concentrate much of their effort upon speaking and usage of language (Starkweather 1987, 11). Nation and Newton (2009, 151) add that “fluent language use involves the processing of language in real time.” Fluency; therefore, emphasizes the smoothness without concentrating mainly on mistakes. Corrections come after finishing an activity.

The general assumption is that people speaking fluently speak fast. However, Thornbury (2005, 6) says that “fluency is not the ability to speak quickly, but speed is one of the factors.” It does not mean that fluent students say as many words as possible in a short period. Thornbury (2005, 8) mentions another factor of fluency, which is a pause. The pause may be long, but does not occur frequently, appears at meaningful transition points. It implies that fluent language learners use a language naturally and comprehensibly for their listeners.

Both of these abilities are developed and practiced through speaking activities. Accuracy is developed by a variety of possible activities, such as frame dialogues, drills. Fluency activities are, for instance, role-play, ask and answer, dialogue building and they will be discussed in detail in the following section. Nevertheless,

teachers ought to pay attention to Scrivener's claim (2005, 160) that "it is important for the teachers to be clear what is involved in accuracy activities and what aims they have because it can happen that they focus on fluency rather than accuracy, or on accuracy rather than fluency."

Naturally, teaching both of these skills has its notable importance for students to be fluent in a foreign language and not to make mistakes. Therefore, a balance should be between accuracy and fluency as Hammerly (1991, vii) claims "neither accuracy nor fluency has to be sacrificed for the sake of the other." Yet, it is obvious that developments in fluency are related to developments in accuracy. If students' speech was fluent but error-prone, it would lead to misunderstandings.

To conclude, teachers should develop students' fluency at all levels of foreign language learning. Nation and Newton (2009, x) emphasize that "beginners need to become fluent with the few items of language that they already know."

1.2 Development of Fluency by Speaking Activities

This bachelor thesis deals with a variety of speaking activities in the textbook Project 4. As a result, the detailed explanation of types of speaking activities is about to be found below.

1.2.1 Types of Speaking Activities

The speaking activities are generally divided into three categories. Each category has its specific learning dimension and different features.

Controlled Activities

Controlled activities are designed to practice learners' accuracy; therefore, learners are limited in the choice of language. One answer is usually correct and the possibility of making an error is almost excluded. Teachers know exactly what learners' outcome will be, which means that the outcome is predictable. In other words, it is language-focused learning, where students are allowed to focus on the language structure (Cotter 2011). Even though controlled activities focus on accuracy, they lead to certain fluency and confidence of learners, which makes them valuable to a great extent (Broughton, et al. 2003, 80).

Guided Oral Work

Guided oral practice aims to afford students limited freedom to use and practise what they have learnt, yet some restraints have to be respected. By controlling the situation, but permitting a diversity of expression and creativity, the activity is changed from controlled to guided oral work (Broughton, et al. 2003, 81). In general, the best way is to provide a general situation and content, but allow some freedom in the mode of expression. This technique is also valuable because it enables a little space for making errors and learning from correction of mistakes is a natural component of every learning procedure. Therefore, too much control of learners' choice of language can be counter-productive (Broughton, et al. 2003, 81).

Free Oral Production

Free oral production gives students enough room in their utterances, creativity and making adjustments. Broughton, et al. (2003, 82) argue that it is necessary that

“students are able to produce naturally the language which has been presented to them and which they have already practised in various more or less controlled situations.” Speaking activities of free oral production encourage learners to use the language that they already know and improve fluency.

In other words, it is meaning-focused learning where students’ interest is in the activity, not in the language. Since the emphasis is on the meaning, teachers have no control over students’ speech, which makes it unpredictable.

This bachelor thesis focuses on developing fluency by free oral production and a checklist to classify free oral production activities is to be found below.

1.2.2 Techniques of Free Oral Production

In point of fact, many techniques can be used when teachers want to practice free oral production and develop fluency. In this chapter, three particular techniques – role-play, dialogue building and picture describing - will be described in detail.

When using these techniques, a significant feature is also the organization of a class. “Type learner-learner interaction in pairs or in groups provides far more practice in using the language than the more traditional teacher-learner interaction” (Hadfield and Hadfield 2000, 4).

Role-play

Ur (1996, 131) defines role-play as an activity “where learners imagine themselves or someone else in a situation outside the classroom, which implies using language appropriate to the new context.”

The procedure is that students are given a problem or task and a situation or circumstances that they may encounter outside the classroom. Since the name of the technique is role-play, learners also have to act individual roles while using language corresponding to the problem and situation. Therefore, they are given the description of a person or role, which they are supposed to play.

The role-play is often done in pairs, but it can also be done in small groups. The role-play can be improvised with no audience or performed in front of the class (The National Capital Language Resource Centre 2004).

Dialogue Building

Broughton et al. (2003, 76) claim that at the levels of free oral production, “dialogues are endlessly flexible for both presentation and practice.” In fact, “language is essentially dialogic and practising dialogues has a long history in language teaching” (Thornbury 2005, 72).

Teaching free oral production through dialogue building enables teachers and learners to share ideas and consider alternatives. Students are encouraged to listen to their classmates, they build on their own and others’ ideas to develop coherent thinking and they try to express their views fully. Additionally, they help each other to reach common understandings (Department for Education and Skills 2003).

The instructions of the dialogue building procedure are following: Firstly, the situation including figures is established. The figures can be presented to students by using drawings. Consequently, teachers ask questions to elicit information based on visual clues in the picture. In other words, students say who those figures are, where they are and so on.

Having established the context and the purpose for the exchange, teachers start to elicit the conversation. Teachers can also pre-script a few lines in advance or a dialogue can be constructed completely by students.

Students work in pairs or small groups depending on how many figures the dialogue includes. After finishing the dialogue, students can also switch the roles and do it again or they can change the key elements in the dialogue.

As far as teachers are concerned, their role is to move around the class and check whether students do what they should do and understand the task. In this activity they are prepared to answer students' questions as well. They do not correct their pronunciation or grammar since it is a technique developing fluency.

When the dialogue has been constructed and practised, one or two pairs or a group is asked to perform their dialogue in front of the class. The knowledge that this is a standard part of the dialogue building may encourage students to take the practice stage more seriously.

In the end, teachers elicit the dialogue back from the students and write it onto the board, so that learners have a copy to take away (Thornbury 2005, 71-79).

Picture Describing

Another way to practice fluency is using pictures, which is; in fact, a very flexible technique. Firstly, students are given one picture or photograph and they have to describe it. Picture describing may well include a location, place, action, atmosphere, people and other details. It can be an individual task or students can form pairs or small groups and each group is given a different picture. Then students discuss the picture within their groups or with the rest of the classroom. They should also

incorporate their own ideas and opinions regarding the situation or the people in the picture. They can even create their own story. Then the story can be discussed within the group and the other students can express their agreement or disagreement. In the end, a group performs the description in front of the classroom. According to Kayi (2006), “this activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.”

Secondly, students are given two or more pictures and their task is to compare and contrast them. Since many things are usually similar or different, teachers should provide students with clear instructions so that they will know what to particularly concentrate on. An outline written on blackboard seems to be very helpful.

Furthermore, there are other useful sources of oral language practice, such as visual stimuli, including maps, cartoons, even slides and films. They can all be used simply as discussion starters, or as the material for short talks (Broughton, et al. 2003, 83).

1.2.3. Influential Factors

A speaking activity itself does not ensure successful development of fluency unless several influential factors are considered. In particular, teachers should “reduce their own contributions because the less they speak the more space it will probably allow the students to speak” (Scrivener 2005, 161). Obviously, when teachers tend to speak a lot, students do not feel the need to participate.

As it was once said in the chapter named *Characteristics of Effective Teaching Speaking a Foreign Language* the timing of teaching speaking is important. Teachers should be aware of the fact that fluency practice has to be included at all levels of

proficiency. Consequently, they may ask how much of total time should be dedicated to developing fluency. Nation and Newton (2009, 156) says that “where the second language is not used outside the classroom, it is very important that about a quarter of class time is given to fluency activities.” The authors (2009, 156) explain that it is a sufficient time to become good at using what learners already know. Brumfit (1985, 69) agrees with this claim and adds that the proportion of time will increase as time progresses. Not only does the proportion of time increase, but also frequency and demanding character of speaking activity do.

In terms of the number of people speaking, it is undoubtedly better to divide students into pairs or small groups. Naturally, they express themselves more easily than when they work within the class as a whole. As a matter of fact, learners do not get stressed by having to speak in front of the whole class, which encourages them to speak more.

To sum up, teachers should be aware of all the facts presented and provide students with enough space to express their ideas even though it does not mean students speak when they want to, but when they are supposed to do a speaking activity.

1.2.4 Conditions of a Functional Speaking Activity

Not only do the factors mentioned in the previous chapter influence the success of a speaking activity, but also “conditions in which speaking occurs play a crucial role in determining the degree of fluency that is achievable” Thornbury (2005, 25). In order to meet these conditions, the speaking activity has to fulfil certain criteria. When it does, a speaking activity can be supposed to be successful.

Professionals design the speaking activities included in the textbooks used by teachers of foreign languages. Nevertheless, before bringing activities into the class, teachers should examine the activities of free oral production whether or not they meet the following requirements:

The first requirement is that all the language items of the activity are within learners' previous experience. Nation and Newton (2009, 152) call these types of activities "experience" tasks. It means that learners work with familiar topics and types of discourse and make use of known vocabulary and structures. Thus, speaking activities developing fluency are mostly at the end of the chapter because students practice what they have learnt at the beginning of the unit.

Secondly, a speaking activity is preceded by pre-speaking activities. It includes; for instance, brainstorming that gives students suggestions of some useful expressions related to the topic. The purpose of the preparation is to reach speaking of better quality than it would be without the preparation. The preparation ensures students longer utterances and more complex speech because they use pre-prepared words, phrases and ideas in the following speaking activity.

In addition, an activity is meaning-focused. The learners' interest is on the communication of a message as Brumfit explains (Brumfit in Nation and Newton 2009, 152). He adds that learners are exposed to the "real time pressures and demands of normal meaning-focused communication." It entails that the activity is not language-focused. In such language-focused activities, the concentration is on language features, such as grammar.

Moreover, learners are encouraged to perform. The activity should be easy in the sense that they perform without hesitation. But on the other hand, students need

to be encouraged to "speak and comprehend faster and use larger planned chunks than they do in their normal use of language" (Nation and Newton. 2009, 153).

According to Pesce (2014), a structure is also important because the procedure that students should follow has to be clear. Moreover, a structured activity helps the students who lack self-confidence.

Furthermore, the activity has a clear outcome. It means that "teachers know why they bring the speaking activity to the class" (Pesce 2014). In other words, the outcome corresponds to the connection that has to be established between items presented to students and follow-up practice. Teachers ensure that students understand that they have to come up with a product of the role-play, which can be a plan, group opinion, schedule, or some other product.

Last but not least, "good free-speaking tasks give students something they can summarize or report to the rest of the class" (Pesce 2014). It means they have to participate actively because they present the results to their classmates and teacher. Moreover, students can compete to provide better results or ideas owing to the fact that they thrive in healthy competition.

In case the activity fulfils the criteria, there are other aspects to consider. Before students start, the activity should be introduced properly by describing the situation in detail. Teachers should check that all learners understand the instructions and know what to do. Moreover, there is brainstorming where the class predict vocabulary and idiomatic expressions that they might use.

Generally, it is better to keep the groups small because students can easily participate and they do not have to compete with many voices. Furthermore, they

should be allowed to work at their own levels (The National Capital Language Resource Centre 2004).

1.2.5 Examining the Teaching Material

In order to examine whether the activity fulfils all requirements above, teachers can make use of the checklist mentioned in the chapter *Methodology*. By means of the checklist, it can be verified if the activity can be deemed as successful. The questions of the checklist should be well considered and answered in detail. If teachers find the activity appropriate to use, they can run it in the classroom. Unless they find it suitable, it is better to avoid its including in the class.

1.2.6 Providing Feedback

After finishing the activity, students have to be given feedback because they need to know how they performed. It is necessary to “make notes about each student’s performance” (O’Malley and Pierce 1996) Students can benefit from teachers’ observation next time.

When giving students a feedback on speaking activity developing fluency, “the teachers’ attention is primarily focused on the content what they are saying instead of on the way they are saying it” Thornbury (2005, 91). It means that teachers provide students with the feedback on the content and on how they perform. The content means students’ ideas, their participation and contribution, use of a variety of vocabulary and expressions, following the structure, etc. The feedback on how they perform may include the smoothness and confidence of students’ performance, the amount of hesitation, effectiveness of speaking, an appropriate

response as suggested by O'Malley and Pierce (1996). The feedback should include both strong and weak points.

Nonetheless, it does not have to be necessarily the teacher who provides students with the feedback. It may also come from students. Broughton et al. (1993, 141) state that this makes everyone listen closely because they might be called on analysing the classmate's performance.

2 PRACTICAL PART

2.1 Project 4

For the purpose of the practical part, the textbook Project 4 by Tom Hutchinson (2009) was chosen because it is frequently used at primary schools. The set includes a Student's Book, Workbook, Teacher's Book, CD-ROM and Class CDs. Nowadays, five course books of the third edition are available on the market. The fourth course textbook, which is suitable for the ninth grade of primary school, was chosen. This course book is divided into seven units and each unit is divided into subunits. The first unit named "Introduction" is divided into two subunits; while the other units consist of four subunits. The level of the textbook is A2/B1 according to the Common European Framework.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Analysis and Checklists

A close analysis was selected as a method of research. According to McGrath (2002, 22), the "analysis is a process which leads to an objective, verifiable description." The analysis involved a detailed and analytical examination of the materials by using a checklist.

The checklist was selected as the instrument for the analysis because it enabled an in-depth evaluation of the materials. Furthermore, McGrath (2002) states checklists are considered the most effective way of gathering comparable data systematically. Two checklists were used in the analysis - one for quantitative and one for qualitative research. In both cases, the checklists were carefully created based

on the professional literature. The criteria considered when designing the checklists for the analysis were the amount of teachers' control, space for students' creativity, the structure of the activity, the goal of the activity, encouragement for students, a pre-activity, language items within previous experience and meaning-focused orientation. The checklists were titled according to the purpose that they serve.

2.2.2 Quantitative Research

The first part of the analysis was quantitative research. Creswell (2009, 4) characterizes quantitative research as a “means for testing objective theories” where the results can be measured and “the numbered data can be analysed.”

In the quantitative research, the first checklist was used. It contained close-ended questions with *yes/no* replies that were measured numerically. The data were self-administrated. The purpose was to identify the extent to which the textbook supported teaching speaking and whether the textbook was more concentrated on development of accuracy or fluency.

The procedure was firstly to find all sections developing speaking in the textbook Project 4. The amount of these sections was compared to the amount of other activities included in reading, writing and listening sections. All sections were easily found in the table of contents. These findings brought also the figure of the total number of speaking activities included in the sections developing speaking.

Afterwards, the questions of the first checklist for free oral production were answered. The results were classified into three categories – controlled activities, guided work and free oral production. From this classification, the variety of types of speaking activities included in textbook Project 4 is visible. It means that

the classification shows if all three types were found in the textbook and their proportion.

A checklist for classifying free oral production activities				
1) Is students' outcome predictable in the sense that teachers have control over students' speech?				
Yes	Total control	<i>CONTROLLED ACTIVITIES</i>	No	<i>FREE ORAL PRODUCTION</i>
	Partial control	<i>GUIDED WORK PRODUCTION</i>		
2) Do students have space for their creativity?				
Yes	Unlimited space	<i>FREE ORAL PRODUCTION</i>	No	<i>CONTROLLED ACTIVITIES</i>
	Limited space	<i>GUIDED WORK PRODUCTION</i>		

Figure 1: A checklist for classifying free oral production

Secondly, free oral production activities were divided into four groups according to the characteristics of the techniques in chapter 1.2.2 – role-play, dialogue building, picture describing and others. The category of “others” includes all techniques of free oral production that are not explained in the chapter mentioned above and they were numbered together. This classification brought the figure of the techniques of free oral production included in the textbook Project 4. In other words, it was discovered if the author included the most common techniques of free oral production and their proportion.

2.2.3 Qualitative Research

The second part of the analysis was qualitative research. Creswell (2009, 4) characterizes it as “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning and the final written report has a flexible structure.”

In the qualitative research, the second checklist contained open-ended questions that were processed in detail. It also included a text and image analysis. The data were self-administrated.

Firstly, one controlled activity and one free oral production activity were chosen and the answers of the first checklist were answered to show the difference between them. Secondly, two speaking activities of free oral production were randomly chosen. The purpose was to reveal whether they met the requirements of free oral production activities presented in chapter 1.2.2. In other words, positives and negatives were searched. It was accomplished by answering the questions of the second checklist for examining free oral production activities. The answers were classified into the categories according to the answer - either “yes” or “no”. When the number of the positive answers (yes) was more than four, the activity was assessed as successful and suitable of its usage in the class. This minimum limit of four positive answers was determined because it formed slightly more than one-half of seven.

A checklist for examining free oral production activities		
1	Are all the language items included in the activity within learners' previous experience?	
	Yes	No
	Explanation:	
2	Is the activity preceded by a pre-activity?	
	Yes	No
	Explanation:	
3	Is the activity meaning-focused?	
	Yes	No
	Explanation:	
4	Is the activity encouraging for the learners to perform?	
	Yes	No
	Explanation:	
5	Is the activity structured?	
	Yes	No
	Explanation:	
6	Does it have a clear learning goal?	
	Yes	No
	Explanation:	
	7 Is there a final report or summary at the end of the activity?	
	Yes	No
	Explanation:	

Figure 2: A checklist for examining free oral production activities

2.3 Quantitative Research

2.3.1 Extent of Developing Speaking Skills

Sections in the textbook	Absolute frequency		Relative frequency	
	Speaking sections	10	10	27%
Reading sections	7	27	19%	73%
Writing sections	8		22%	
Listening sections	12		32%	
In total	37		100%	

Figure 3: Number of sections developing skills in the textbook

As seen in figure 3, 12 sections (32%) regarding listening were found, which means that listening was the most frequently occurring skill to be practiced. Speaking was the second most frequently included category in the textbook. In fact, 10 speaking sections (27%) formed slightly more than one quarter of all sections. The total number of writing sections was 8 (22%); in other words, less than one quarter of all sections. It can be clearly seen that the least frequently occurring category is reading since the textbook contained only 7 reading sections (19%).

As it was mentioned before, the division of the sections was included in the table of contents of the textbook. However, it was discovered that each unit contained a revision subunit and the revision subunit included speaking, listening and writing sections. For unknown reason, they were not mentioned in the table of contents. Nevertheless, they were included them in the analysis because they were named and looked the same way as the sections mentioned in the table of contents. In my opinion, there was no reason to exclude them.

After careful examination of all sections, the most significant fact was that the sections developing speaking were generally left towards the end of the unit or subunit so that students would be exposed to enough input. It confirmed the statement in the chapter 1.1.3 of necessity of having some kind of knowledge base. In other words, students' learning vocabulary items and grammar preceded speaking activities.

Speaking activities in the sections	Absolute frequency		Relative frequency	
Speaking activities	16	16	29%	29%
Reading activities	13	39	24%	71%
Writing activities	8		14%	
Listening activities	18		33%	
In total	55		100%	

Figure 4: Number of speaking activities in the sections developing speaking

In fact, 10 sections developing speaking contained one, two or three speaking activities mentioned in the table of contents that were focused on the same topic related to the title of the unit. In total, 16 speaking activities were included in the textbook, which represented 29% of all activities. Each speaking activity had its own title. The professional literature said that teachers had to provide as many opportunities dedicated to speaking as possible. The textbook gave the similar opportunity to practice speaking and listening. It is visible from the table that the listening activities appeared in 18 cases (33%). On the other side, students would not have the opportunity to practice reading and writing to such extent. In comparison with listening and speaking, writing activities were rather omitted. As the figure 4 indicates, writing had the smallest proportion of only 8 activities (14%).

In conclusion, the table indicated a certain imbalance in the proportion of developing the four skills.

The results of the finding showed 13 reading activities. In the previous analysis, it was said that the sections developing reading were least frequent; however, these sections consisted of more activities than the sections developing writing, which usually contained only one activity.

Since the aim of this bachelor thesis was to reveal the extent to which the textbook developed speaking, the result was one quarter of all activities. The data yielded by the analysis provided evidence that the occurrence of speaking activities was satisfactory because speaking was not neglected unlike some of the other skills.

After the examination of the proportion of activities, the other features mentioned in the chapter 1.1.3 will be described. As regards challenging children cognitively, the topics of the units and the activities in the textbook were generally appropriate for children of the age for which the textbook was designed. Some of the topics were following Game Shows, the Environment and Fundraising Day. The textbook was full of colourful pictures and photographs, which may well be found funny and attract students' attention. The activities challenged children not only cognitively, but they also encouraged their imagination. For instance, the author (2009, 47) included one activity dealing with the description of what they could see, hear, smell and feel; for example, at a busy train station or their favourite place. Moreover, several activities consisted of giving advice to other people. In this type of activities, students have to imagine the situations and think about them. They learn how to be helpful and think about their own involvement in such events.

2.3.2 A variety of Speaking Activities

In the previous chapter, it was said that 10 sections developing speaking included 16 speaking activities with their own title. Nevertheless, when examining closely every single activity, it was discovered that these 16 speaking activities contained even more speaking activities. As a result, 16 groups of speaking activities contained 24 independent speaking activities in total. These 24 speaking activities were classified into three categories by using the first checklist.

Types of speaking activities	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Controlled	3	12%
Guided oral work	5	21%
Free oral production	16	67%
Total	24	100%

Figure 5: Types of speaking activities

The data suggest that controlled activities appeared rather rarely. In only 3 cases (12%) teachers have full control over the task and know exactly what students' response will be. When they have full control, students do not have any space for their own creativity because they have to use the expressions and structure suggested by the activity.

A closer look at the data indicates that 5 guided oral work activities were included. In other words, in 21% of the cases, teachers have partial control over the task and students have limited space for their creativity.

Furthermore, there were 16 free oral production activities, which makes them the most frequently occurring category. 67% speaking activities were not controlled by the task, which means that the activity does not give the exact structure and sentences or expressions that have to be used by students. Therefore, teachers would

not have control over what students would discuss. On the other hand, it gives students space for their creativity, meaning they can suggest their ideas.

The findings were surprising because a significant imbalance between the proportions of activities was discovered. Only a small number of controlled activities were found. Students using this textbook have broad knowledge of vocabulary and grammar since they have been learning English from the third grade of primary school; for this reason, students do not need to be tightly controlled by teachers. However, they still need to learn new vocabulary items and structures; therefore, controlled activities have their importance and the number of the controlled activities is very low. Guided activities occurred slightly more frequently.

Not surprisingly, the free oral production activities appeared most frequently since as once said the textbook is suitable for the students of ninth grade who have a broad knowledge base. They can easily develop fluency of what they already learnt in the previous grades of primary school. After finishing the textbook Project 4, students should reach the level of English up to B1 corresponding to broad knowledge. However, the number of free oral production activities was surprising because formed more than half of all speaking activities and five times more than the controlled speaking activities. These results provided the evidence that the textbook focused more on the development of fluency rather than accuracy.

2.3.3 Techniques of Free Oral Production

Techniques of free oral production	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Role play	3	12,5%
Dialogue building	6	25%
Picture describing	6	25%
Others	9	37,5%
Total	24	100%

Figure 6: Techniques of free oral production

The frequency distributions of techniques of oral free production are shown in figure 6. The authors included 24 speaking activities in the textbook, all of which corresponded to a particular technique of free oral production. Three techniques were described in the chapter 1.2.2, but the author also included other techniques that were classified as “others”; for instance, ask and answer.

The textbook contained 6 dialogues building (25%), 6 describing pictures (25%) and 3 role plays (12, 5%). The category “others” contained 9 activities (37, 5%) in total.

It is obvious that dialogue building and picture describing are the most common. On the contrary, the author does not include role-play so often. In spite of dividing the activities into clear categories, it is worth noting that some activities consisted of not only one main technique but also one support technique essential for the students to imagine the situation. For a better understanding, the activity on page 18 (Hutchinson 2009) was classified as a dialogue building; nevertheless, visualization or pictures served as a support. In another case, role-plays were supported by dialogues.

The role-plays practising free oral production were in all cases designed for two students. The given situations for role-plays originated in everyday life, for instance, interaction between a doctor and his patient.

Likewise, dialogue-building activities were most often created for two students. The topics of the dialogues always supported the theme of the unit.

Additionally, pictures designed to be described were usually colourful and included characters. Mostly, there was one or two pictures and in a few cases the author included a set of pictures.

2.4 Qualitative research

2.4.1 Controlled Speaking Activity

- 7** Work with a partner. Make interviews with the people at the fundraising day. Use the questions.
- 1 What's your name?
 - 2 What do you usually do at this time?
 - 3 What are you doing today?
 - 4 Why are you doing it?
- *What's your name?*
 - *My name's Mike.*
 - *What do you usually do at this time?*
 - *I usually ...*

Figure 7: Controlled speaking activity

The instructions:

Student's book: "Work with a partner. Make interviews with the people at the fundraising day. Use the questions" (Hutchinson 2009a, 5).

The 1st checklist

- 1) Is students' outcome predictable in the sense that teachers have control over students' speech?

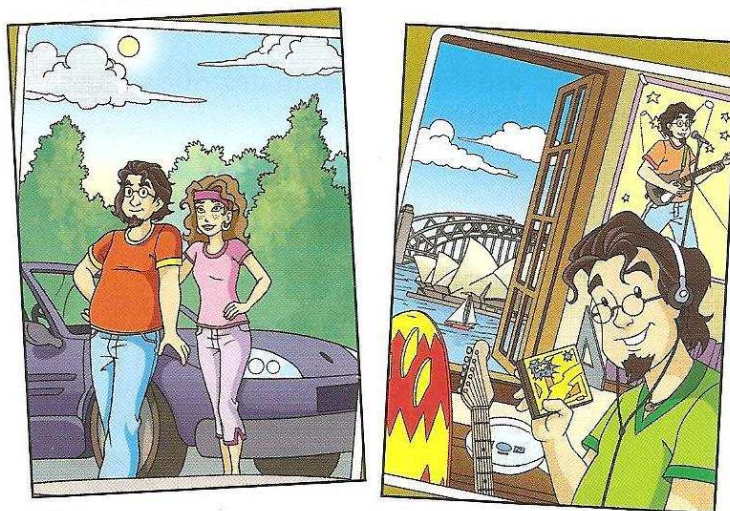
Yes, it is easily predictable because teachers have total control over students' speech.

The first student is supposed to use the questions designed by the author of the textbook. The second student will use the information included in the text in the previous exercise to answer partner's questions.

- 2) Do students have space for their creativity?

No, students are not allowed to either add any information that is not mentioned in the text or create their own questions since the instructions say "use the questions."

2.4.2 First Activity of Free Oral Production – Role Play



b Work with a partner. Interview Smart Alec.

What did you use to look like?

Where did you use to live?

Figure 8: Activity 1 – Role play

The instructions:

Student's book: "Work with a partner. Interview Smart Alec. What did you use to look like? Where did you use to live?" (Hutchinson 2009a, 11)

Teacher's book: "Students work with a partner to role play the interview between Smart Alec and an interviewer. Monitor conversations, checking the correct use of grammar" (Hutchinson 2009b, 22).

The 1st checklist

1) Is students' outcome predictable in the sense that teachers have control over students' speech?

No, teachers do not have control over students' speech. The students playing an interviewer are supposed to suggest their own questions. Thus, teachers cannot

predict questions suggested by students and foreknow the answers of students playing Smart Alec. The picture may give a hint, but it does not give a considerable amount of control to teachers.

2) Do students have space for their creativity?

Yes, students have plenty space for their creativity. Only two questions serve as a hint and students are supposed to form more questions related to the picture. Moreover, the amount of answers to the questions is unlimited.

The 2nd checklist

1) Are all language items included in the activity within learners' previous experience?

Yes, they are. In the previous section of "grammar," students learn the phrase "use to." Therefore, it was the right decision to incorporate this activity at the end of the subunit so that students could practice the phrase just after learning the grammar. Moreover, Alec's character often appears in the textbook that is why learners should be familiar with him and his life.

2) Is the activity preceded by a pre-activity?

Yes, a picture description serves as a pre-activity. Learners suggest the description of Alec's character and the place where he used to live. It is presumed to be a good preparation for students to produce more complex speech in the following activity. The items in the picture do not seem to be too demanding to describe. In the first picture, they describe Alec, his car and his friend while in the second picture they focus on the place where Alec lived and his hobbies.

3) Is the activity meaning-focused?

Yes, it is meaning-focused. Students' focus is on comparing past and present of Alec; in other words, they learn new information about his life. Besides, the instructions in the teacher's book say that teachers should monitor the conversation and check the correct use of grammar. Based on the theory mentioned in the chapter "*Providing Feedback*", professional literature said teachers did not check the correct use of grammar when dealing with free oral production activity. Instead, the instructions ought to suggest concentrating on content, such as students' ideas, use of a variety of vocabulary and expressions, following the structure and their participation.

4) Is the activity encouraging for the learners to perform?

Yes, it is encouraging. Learners should perform without hesitation due to the pre-activity and the previous controlled activities in the grammar section. Moreover, the picture is colourful, which may well attract students' attention.

5) Is the activity structured?

No, it is not structured. Two pictures provide students with guidance even though its sufficiency is questionable. As a matter of fact, the freedom in order in which they would describe the features of the picture could confuse them. For example, students could easily concentrate on some features and forget others or digress from one to another.

6) Does the activity have a clear learning goal?

Yes, it does. The learning goal of the activity corresponds with the overall aim of the unit "asking questions about past habits" as the beginning of the unit says. In this

activity, students not only suggest description of the pictures, but they also have to practice forming questions regarding past habits.

7) Is there a final report or summary at the end of the activity?

No, the instructions in the teacher's book do not mention a final report or summary. However, the instructions of other activities included in the textbook often say that the activities should be reported in the end in the front of the class. It was not the case of this activity though. In fact, it could lead to lower student's activity. Nevertheless, teachers may express their creativity and include the final report because they are not supposed to obey strictly the instructions and they may adjust them to fit their needs.

2.4.3 Results - Activity 1

Fulfilling the criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Yes	x	x	x	x		x		5	72%
No					x		x	2	28%

Figure 9: Fulfilling the criteria – activity 1

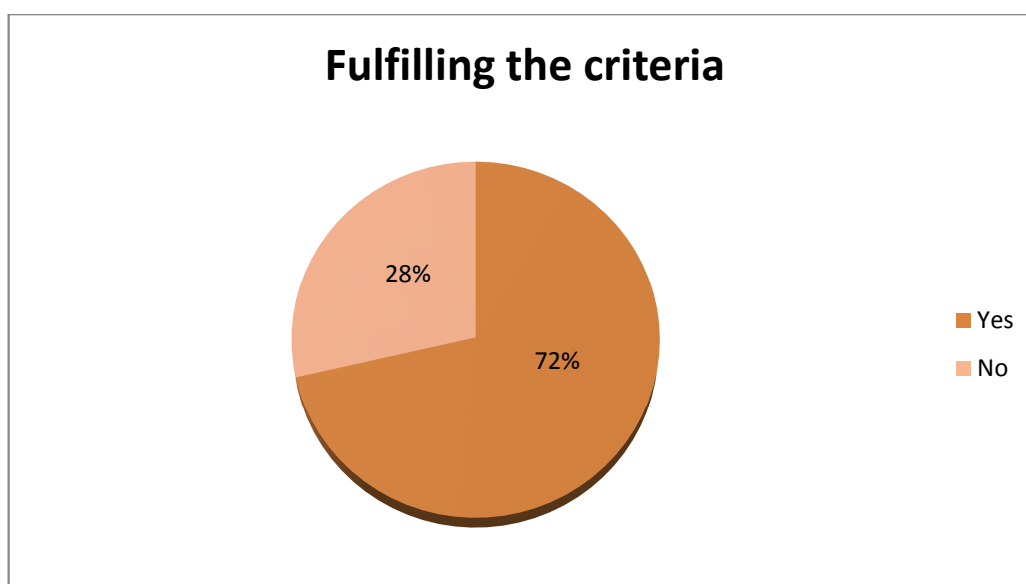


Figure 10: Fulfilling the criteria – activity 1

The first activity achieved 5 out of 7 points of the checklist. The first issue was the structure of the activity. In fact, the activity did not include any structure that could be followed, which could cause difficulties for students while performing. The second requirement that was not met regarded the final report or summary. Nevertheless, teachers could announce to students that they are going to present the results in front of the class after finishing the role-play. Despite these two issues, the activity is supposed to be successful because it accomplished more than four positive answers. It was meaning-focused, encouraging, preceded by a pre-activity and it has a clear learning goal, students should be familiar with all language items. That is why its usage is appropriate when practicing fluency because it enables development of free oral production.

2.4.4 Second Activity of Free Oral Production– Picture Describing

- 4 a** What is your favourite game show on TV?
What do the contestants have to do?
- b** Look at the picture. What is the name of the show? What do you think the contestants have to do?



Figure 11: Activity 2 - Picture describing

The instructions:

Student's book: "Look at the picture. What is the name of the show? What do you think the contestants have to do?" (Hutchinson 2009a, 25)

Teacher's book: "Focus attention on the picture. Ask what people are doing. (They're taking part in a TV game.) Check students understanding of the name (Wheel of Fortune). Encourage different ideas about what the contestants have to do" (Hutchinson 2009b, 37).

The 1st checklist

- 1) Is students' outcome predictable in the sense that teachers have control over students' speech?

No, it is not predictable. The instructions encourage students to use their imagination in order to think about what the contestants have to do in the show. It prevents teachers from having control over the answers of students.

- 2) Do students have space for their creativity?

Yes, they have. Teachers are supposed to encourage different answers so that students suggest many ideas and thoughts. Even if they do not know the name of the game show, they can create a name by themselves.

The 2nd checklist

- 1) Are all the language items included in the activity within learners' previous experience?

No, the items are not within learners' previous experience because no helpful activities are presented at the beginning of the section unit. In addition, the workbook does not include any new vocabulary items suitable for this particular exercise that students could use in the picture description.

- 2) Is the activity preceded by a pre-activity?

Yes, there is a pre-activity where students are supposed to speak about their favourite game show on TV. They also have to discuss contestants' involvement in the game show. In spite of lack of helpful activities, this particular pre-activity can greatly help students because it is very likely that students' favourite game show is similar to the game show in the analysed activity. Therefore, the preparation in the pre-activity

ensures less hesitation when using the expressions and utterances in the following activity.

3) Is the activity meaning-focused?

Yes, it is meaning-focused because attention is not paid to language features. Unlike in the first activity, the instructions in the teacher's book do not suggest monitoring students' mistakes.

4) Is the activity encouraging for the learners to perform?

No, as it was mentioned above, the lack of vocabulary items can discourage students. In fact, not having sufficient knowledge base may result in speaking failure.

5) Is the activity structured?

No, it is not structured. The main concentration is on the actions, which the contestants are supposed to do in the game show. Nonetheless, more areas could be discussed. An outline that would include points, such as the age of contestants, human characters, for instance, introvert or extrovert and so on could be designed.

6) Does the activity have a clear learning goal?

It achieves the goal because the name of the unit is "Fame and Fortune" and students are supposed to discuss the game show "Wheel of Fortune." They practice speaking about the topic that they are bound to be familiar with. In fact, these types of show are often broadcast on the television or they encounter wheel of fortune in real life.

Strangely, the unit overview in the teacher's book says that the goal of the unit as a whole is "talking about past experience." At the beginning of the unit present perfect is practised in the grammar section. However, this particular activity is

designed to use present tense to describe what the contestants have to do in the game show, which clearly does not correspond with the unit goal.

Nevertheless, as once said, when speaking serves only as a way of practicing grammar, it is not an effective because the focus is on grammar instead of speaking. That is why the first aim of talking about the Wheel of Fortunate is more relevant than talking about past experience can be practiced in other activities in the unit.

7) Is there a final report or summary at the end of the activity?

No, the author did not design the activity to be summarized or reported in its end same as the first activity. It could also cause the low participation of students. Moreover, adding summary or report at the end of the activity can smoothly lead to feedback, which can be otherwise forgotten.

2.4.5 Results - Activity 2

Fulfilling the criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Yes		x	x			x		3	43%
No	x			x	x		x	4	57%

Figure 12: Fulfilling the criteria – activity 2

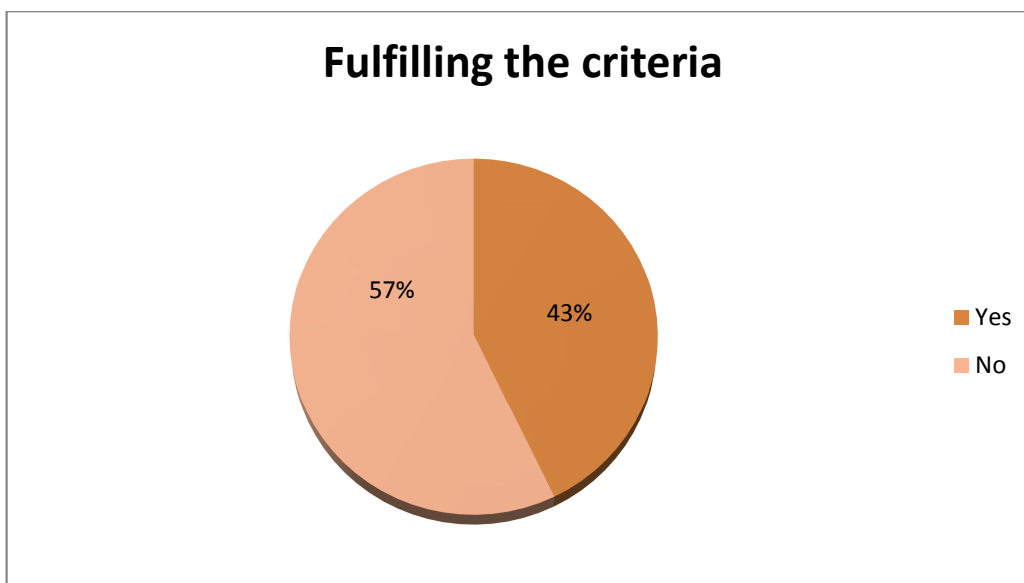


Figure 13: Fulfilling the criteria – activity 2

The second activity managed to accomplish only 3 requirements out of 7 as seen in figure 10. In other words, in 57 % of cases the answer to the question of the checklist was “no”. For this reason, it could not be considered as a successful activity unlike the first activity. Students may struggle in a few points, such as lack of vocabulary items presented to them before starting the activity. Moreover, the lack of structure can cause difficulties when formulating their ideas. Both of these issues lead to learners’ loss of encouragement. As well as the first activity, the second activity was not designed to be summarized or reported in the end. Despite the activity had a clear learning goal, was meaning-focused and was preceded by a pre-activity its inclusion in the English classes is not recommendable due to the reasons mentioned above.

In spite of equivocal results yielded by the qualitative research, Project 4 was assessed as a textbook suitable for teaching speaking because of the results of the quantitative research and the first speaking activity.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, a textbook represents an important resource for teaching English as a foreign language. In many cases, textbooks are the prevailing, most frequently used teaching material and thus their role is even more crucial. When selecting a textbook, teachers should consider the content of the textbook, their specific requirements and students' level of English proficiency. In other words, a textbook should be subjected to an analysis that will reveal if the subject matter is not too demanding for students, if it gives the opportunity to develop all skills, if it does not lack in speaking practice and so on.

The last mentioned issue was chosen as a subject for the analysis elaborated in this bachelor thesis. In other words, the aim of the thesis was to explain effective teaching speaking, development of speaking and apply these phenomena to a variety of speaking activities in the textbook Project 4.

The theoretical part of this bachelor thesis focused on the explanation of the crucial terms of teaching and development of speaking. Besides, several factors influencing the development of fluency and conditions of a functional speaking activity were clarified. Finally yet importantly, the importance of providing students with feedback on their performance was emphasized.

The practical part dealt with the opportunities for the development of speaking skills provided by textbook Project 4. The opportunities to practice speaking have great importance for students as they cannot usually practice speaking outside the classroom. An analysis chosen as a research method was carried out based on two checklists that proved that the textbook did not neglect the

opportunities for teaching speaking and diverse types and techniques developing free oral production were found.

To sum up, working on this bachelor thesis was rewarding for me as I explored many significant facts of teaching speaking and its individual components. I hope I will have an opportunity to investigate this field in greater depth and verify it in practice in the future, which, undoubtedly, would enrich my professional growth.

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