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**TEACHING SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN LOWER-
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Diplomová práce

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I worked on the thesis on my own and used only the sources listed in the bibliography.

Olomouc, 11th June, 2014

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Abstract

The thesis aims at teaching sociolinguistic competence in the environment of lower-secondary classrooms and its pedagogical implications. The thesis focuses on the significance of developing speech acts strategies, building up cultural awareness and authentic materials as an effective tool in teaching sociolinguistic competence. The research analysis provides with the data presenting to what extent and to which issues is paid particular attention within teaching sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary schools. Two activities promoting sociolinguistic competence were created in the accordance with the theoretical basis.

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I. Introduction

This diploma thesis deals with the issue of teaching sociolinguistic competence within teaching speaking in ELT classrooms in lower-secondary schools. The reason for this choice of this theme is simple. Speaking skill is the skill which everybody who learns a foreign language wants to master first and foremost. Teaching speaking skill is demanding for teachers because this successful process depends on a lot of factors related to both the teacher and the learner. Besides acquiring the communicative competence I mainly focus on acquiring sociolinguistic competence – the part of the communicative one.

I was especially interested in attitudes and opinions of teachers of English towards teaching various features to support the achievement of this competence in classrooms in lower-secondary schools. I believe teaching sociolinguistic competence should be an inseparable part of teaching English as a foreign language and should be implemented in English classrooms bit by bit right from the start.

My diploma project deals with the question whether teachers of English at lower-secondary schools find teaching sociolinguistic competence important and whether they consider this issue one of the essentials when teaching speaking skill. The aim of the thesis is to answer the following questions:

- Do teachers of English at lower-secondary schools try to develop learners' sociolinguistic competence?
- If yes, how do they do it?
- Do they consider teaching culture as important part of promoting sociolinguistic competence?
- If yes, how do they teach it?

- Do teachers of English at lower-secondary schools find textbooks as effective and supportive tools in teaching sociolinguistic competence?

The thesis consists of two main parts; theoretical and practical. The theoretical part aims at describing speaking as a skill, teaching communicative competence and primarily teaching sociolinguistic competence. The practical part then brings results of a small-scale questionnaire research on English teachers' views and attitudes towards teaching sociolinguistic competence including teaching culture, discussing cultural topics, using various interactional techniques, dealing with speech acts and bringing authentic materials in their classrooms. Further, the description of two activities promoting sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary classrooms is included in this section.

The respondents' answers were evaluated according to the assessment scale and the findings were interpreted in relations with actual theoretic background introduced in the first part of my thesis.

II. Theoretical part

Introduction to the theoretical part

The theoretical part is divided into three chapters from which the first chapter aims at

- defining of speaking, including the theoretical backgrounds according to the linguists such as Bygate, Littlewood, and others.
- importance of teaching speaking skill in English language classrooms
- teaching communicative competence and its important part - sociolinguistic competence.

The second chapter deals with

- language interaction, especially interactional activities important for the development of sociolinguistic and communicative competence in classrooms in lower-secondary schools.

The third chapter mainly focuses on

- teaching sociolinguistic competence through teaching culture, choice of appropriate cultural topics and texts, teaching speech acts and promoting this competence via using authentic supplementary materials in ELT classrooms in lower-secondary schools.

1. Speaking as a skill

Speaking is the process of interaction which involves production of meaning.

This procedure includes “producing and receiving and processing information” (Brown, 1994). Most learners of the foreign language put the most stress on mastering speaking skill as the single most important goal of learning a foreign language (Harmer, 1989, p. 39). The following subchapter 1.1 deals with the brief summary of theories of speaking provided by

some linguistics. The next subchapters 1.2 and 1.3 aim at the main elements that are brought into the process of teaching speaking including communicative competence and its important part – sociolinguistic competence. This chapter should provide with the overall summary of standpoints and reasons for teaching especially sociolinguistic competence as a significant part of the language education on the basic level of education.

1.1 Theory of speaking

Bygate (1991, p. 4-7) implies that what is important is the knowledge about a language and the skill how to use the language. He distinguishes two skills: the motor-perceptive skill which includes pronunciation and grammar and interaction skills which comprises of processing conditions, i.e. time limitations during a speech, and reciprocity conditions, i.e. social relationship between participants of a conversation. Bygate sees speaking skill as a combination of these two skills - motor-perceptive skill and interaction skill.

Brown and Yule, (1991, pp.11-14) differentiate between two basic language functions. The first of them is a transactional function and this function involves the transfer of information which is primary, and is oriented on the message. Whereas the second function - an interactional function, which includes communicational interaction and its maintenance, is oriented to a listener.

Littlewood (1981, p.1-3) provides structural and functional view of language, where structure involves the system of grammar and ways how the linguistic items can be combined and he calls it as stable and straightforward. Functional feature of language differs with the relations to a specific situation and various social factors. In other words, functions of the language are represented by e.g. an offer, a suggestion, a complaint etc. There is the reciprocity between a structure and a function, because one grammatical structure can

express various functions and consequently for one single function a number of linguistic structures can be used.

Ur (1991, p.90-97) presents very similar concept including notions and functions as two categories of the language. Notions are represented by grammatical forms and functions, meaning communicative situations with a certain purpose such as again requests, offers, greetings, etc. More over the functions are divided into binary, which demand the certain response according the nature and the purpose of the previous function, and unitary, which occur alone for example giving information.

The next subchapter extends this brief overview to the issue of teaching speaking in more detailed and elaborated way, where mainly the concepts of form and function of the language are concrete and significant parts that need to be balanced in the approach to ELT.

1.2 Teaching speaking

Brumfit (1984, p.33-35) compares the foreign language acquisition to the acquisition of the mother tongue, stating in both cases it is mostly the natural product of socialization. He suggests that language learners are bound up with the context at a level of the social group and he recognizes the lack of opportunities and unwillingness to interact in the social environment as the primary reason for the failure in foreign language acquisition.

Approaches and consecutive methods of teaching speaking and classroom organization are very important for the successful process of language learning in order to gradually master the target language. The following subchapters deal with the possibilities of classroom organization and suitable methods of language teaching. The first subchapter concerning the communicative language teaching including adopting communicative competence and sociolinguistic competence follows as the next.

1.2.1 Classroom organization

Harmer (1989, p. 161-166) distinguishes three possible ways of division of learners: pair-work, group-work and whole-class teaching. Each of them has its advantages and disadvantages. Further, he stresses that they should be used in a balanced way.

1.2.1.1 The whole-class organization

The whole-class teaching relates to the frontal teaching, when a teacher stands in front of learners and they work as one big group. Indisputably, the advantage is the sense of unity and collaboration. This type of the grouping is especially suitable when the teacher presents new material. However, this organizational form is clearly dissatisfying in communicative language teaching and it does not motivate learners to develop cognitive functions on higher level. (Harmer, *ibid.*)

1.2.1.2. The pair-work organization

The pair-work is a very useful way in order to encourage learners to speak and communicate. It can be defined as a communicative interaction between two learners. Byrne (1991) distinguished open pairs, fixed pairs and flexible pairs, when Harmer (1989, p.164) points out, that learners can do many various activities in pairs. It increases the total amount of time when learners are speaking. This enables the learners to be exposed to the language for longer time. Learners also interact independently and cooperatively. The main disadvantage is seen in noisy environment in the classroom. Another disadvantage, which is hard to solve enough to satisfy the teacher, is the learners' use of a mother tongue. On the other hand, Byrne (1991, *ibid.*) sees this problem as quite natural.

1.2.1.3 The group-work organization

The group-work (a group of four to eight learners organized in order to communicate) has its place where pair-work seems to be insufficient, mainly in role-plays, discussions in the

bigger groups, project work, etc. The advantage might be the presence of more opinions on the other hand the main disadvantage is the dominance or passivity of some members of the group. (Harmer, 1989, p. 164-166)

Ur (1991, p.232) sees the main pros in the possibility to offer learners to activate independently, be more motivated and cooperative. Nevertheless, similarly, she mentions some of the drawbacks such as the use of mother tongue, learners can be noisy and they might do the task badly.

1.2.2 The attitudes to teaching speaking

Krashen (in Harmer, 1989, p. 50-51) differentiates between terms of the acquisition of the language and the learning the language. Language acquisition is subconscious and inhibition free. The learner uses the language spontaneously and easily. On the other hand, learning is conscious studying when the produced speech is self-monitored. She states the input (the amount of language the learner is exposed to) which is comprehensible (slightly above the knowledge the learner already has) is the best to be offered in classrooms. (Krashen, *ibid.*)

Harmer (*ibid.*) partly disagrees stating that input and intake (the amount of language the learner really assimilates) are not in balance most often. Further he suggests, if the communication is the aim of teaching/learning speaking than the teacher needs to create to the learner as many opportunities to communicate as possible. This can be done through task-based language teaching, when learners are asked to solve the communicative problem in the foreign language. Importantly, if the learner has a chance to speak he gets motivated (Harmer, *ibid.*).

Ur (1991, p.90) adds that the tasks should be meaningful. It means that they should resemble real life situations and suggests to start with “the meaningful chunks of language rather than decontextualized items”. However, she points out the necessity to focus on

learning both functions and forms of the language. Teaching should focus on communicative activities within interactional context as well as the need of correct grammatical forms and pronunciation. These features should be taught in various combinations. (Ur, *ibid.*)

Brown and Yule (1991, p. 32-34, 50) warn against the tasks which require use of unfamiliar grammatical structures and vocabulary, the tasks that are artificial and resemble testing. They need to be deliberately selected by the teacher so that the learner is able to use the language flexibly and cope with the communicative situation successfully. They also urge for giving the opportunity to the learner to observe the appropriate use of such language using recordings or videos.

Ur, (1991, p.120) concludes pointing out the characteristics of successful speaking activity is sufficient exposure to the language, even participation of learners, high motivation of learners and the used language on the level that relates to learners' knowledge. All these features provide the good starting point to promote communicative competence of the learner via communicative language teaching.

1.3. Communicative language teaching

There has been the great interest in teaching communicative language in ELT classrooms in the twentieth century. The goal is to achieve the purpose of communication not necessarily linguistically accurate, which means that a learner says what he wants to say producing authentic English, rather than strictly correct textbook-like utterances. (Abbott, 1981,p. 116)

Brumfit (19884, p. 32) states that communicative language teaching is focused on development of language functions such as agreeing, offering, requesting and promotion of students' ability to produce them and use them appropriately so that they can communicate in real life situations.

According to Hymes (in Rodgers and Richards, 1991, p.159) the goal of communicative language teaching is the learner's communicative competence, which is closely related to culture and communication. The speaker is communicatively competent if he/she is able to use means of language which are formally correct, appropriate in relation with the cultural and social context.

Rodgers and Richards (ibid.) provide some features of the diverse base for CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) where the language is seen as a system to express various meanings, the goal is the communication and interaction, its structure relates to function and communicativeness and what is seen as the core is not grammar but functional and communicative meanings (see Chapter 1.1).

Richards (2006, p. 23) puts emphasis on the main features of current CLT, which include:

- a. meaningful and interactional communication in pairs or groups
- b. effective teaching based on tasks in which learners focus on both form and function of the language, where fluency and accuracy are required
- c. language production is viewed as a process of trials and errors as natural part of learning
- d. use of effective communicative strategies
- e. positive atmosphere of cooperation where the teacher has a role of a facilitator

He draws upon the eclectic selection for gaining of communicative competence when describing two main current methodologies that he sees as "an extension of CLT movement". They are content based instruction (CBI) and task based instruction (TBI).CBI methodology is based on the content of the lesson first and what grammar and functions will be involved is decided later. He sees the value in creating the framework for a particular unit working load, positive approach in teaching culture.

On the other hand TBI is regarded as a methodology based on an interactional task as a part of teaching, in which communicative competence and grammar are founded. (Richards, 2006, p. 27-38)

While these methodologies are concentrated on input, there are others which concentrate on outcome of the process of communication for example Competency-based language teaching which serves as a starting point in program planning. (Richards and Rodgers, 1991, p. 174)

To summarize all the above, Canale and Swain (in Rodgers and Richards, 1991, p. 160) submit four dimensions of communicative competence. They are grammatical competence (use of appropriate grammar and lexis), a discourse competence (“interpretation of message elements”), strategic competence (the ability to start, maintain and finish communication related to a particular context) and finally sociolinguistic competence. This competence will be discussed and explained in the following part of the thesis.

2. Classroom interaction techniques

As mentioned in the previous chapter, methodologists consider the most important task of the teacher in foreign language classrooms to help learners communicate as actively as possible. Obviously, this brings some practical questions to consideration. They include the decision of types of activities and their organization and whether teachers should put more emphasis on either accuracy or fluency (Byrne, 1990, p.1). This chapter summarizes activities and techniques that are suitable for ELT classrooms in lower secondary schools according to their appropriateness with the regard to teaching communicative and sociolinguistic competence in these classrooms.

2.1 Various techniques within the classroom organization

As for the organization of techniques within the classroom Abbott (1981, p. 112) points at two facts that must be born in mind. Firstly, every learner will get the necessary preparation and secondly, everybody will get the adequate practice. Organization of activities must involve controlled ones either choral or individual in order to ensure correctness, and also other techniques providing learners with more relaxed control activities to allow communication, e.g. pair or group work (Chapter 1.2.1.), when learners are divided into groups or into pairs in order to process communication in a more relaxed way. (Abbott, *ibid.*)

2.1.1 Drills

Although Abbott (1981, p. 112) admits drills as artificial techniques that require learners paying almost no attention to the meaning, he insists on the need to start with techniques involving repetitions, predictability and memorizing which are features that authentic conversations lack. Moreover, he reminds that learners are aware of the problem of the certain artificiality of the classroom environment. Further, he suggests using contextualised dialogues more resembling natural conversations (*ibid*, p.120-122).

2.1.2 Dialogues

Littlewood (1981, p. 8) agrees to some extent, stating that every technique has its role in teaching language fluency and understanding. He also focuses on the amount of control and creativity that certain techniques provide, when memorised dialogues and contextualised dialogues are much more controlled by teacher than for example cued dialogues or role-playing and improvisation. He considers cued dialogues as a gateway to the technique of role-play that definitely supports mastering communicative competence of a foreign language. Although learners interact via given series of cues, they still have the opportunity to interact on their own by selecting appropriate language from their own repertoire. (ibid, p. 17)

2.1.3 Role-plays

Revell (1981, p. 10), unambiguously, puts role-plays in the first place to improve the ability of communication in language classrooms. Nevertheless, she states the necessity of some previous psychological preparations when implementing role-plays with older learners, contrary to young learners who happily settle in role-play activities. Such preparatory activities to role-plays include games, production of gestures, mime, cued or partially cued dialogues. She stresses using verbal or visual stimuli for example more detailed description of a situation or use of a picture in order to help understand the purpose of the role-play (ibid, p. 27-33).

Surprisingly, Abbott (1981, p. 128) disagrees saying that he does not see anything communicative in role-plays, on the contrary he suspects danger with young children in unreasonable grading of metalanguage, when e.g. a task "Greet a friend" involves the notion greet, which is difficult to understand for little learners, unlike the notion of simple hello.

Nevertheless, Littlewood (1981, p. 43-49) agrees with Revell and points out role-plays as a technique belonging into the group of social interactional activities in which learners must intertwine both social and functional factors of the language. It means that learners are requested to communicate in situations that can occur outside the classroom, they need to act in specific social roles and behave as if the situation was real (Littlewood,ibid.).

Revell (1981, p.60) defines the role-play as a technique which pictures the communicative situation as very similar to a real life situation when the participants get social roles, some basic information about the persons and their intentions. Their goal is to communicate appropriately referring to a language form and understanding the situation. Revell also implies the need of some stimuli in the form of additional material as a map, an article or a menu to help learners interact.

Byrne (1990, p. 39) also suggests keeping the hypothetic situation simple and corresponding with the knowledge of the young learners providing the essential language and visual aids not to frighten them.

2.1.4 Other techniques

Certainly not as communicative as role-plays is the technique of a questionnaire, however it must not be omitted. Abbott considers a personal questionnaire interesting, because learners are more interested in getting to know each other than textbooks' characters (Abbott, 1981, p. 129). Littlewood , Revell and Byrne mention it as a valuable pair work activity too (Littlewood, 1981, p. 13, Revell,1981, p. 44, Byrne,1990, p. 47).

Other techniques including various types of simulation, problem-solving activities and discussions are considered suitable for more advanced students (Byrne, 1990, p. 59).

If a teacher wants a learner to benefit from the lesson, an effective organization of the lesson involving suitable interaction activities is an obvious step forward to achieve this

particular objective. This is the reason why one particular intention of my research was to answer the question which technique is seen as the most optional for lower-secondary learners from the point of view of teachers, the respondents. The results are presented in the practical section in Chapter 4.2.

3. Sociolinguistic competence

This chapter follows the topics of teaching speaking, especially teaching communicative competence and aims at explanation of

- what sociolinguistic competence and sociolinguistics are
- what pedagogical implications are drawn upon teaching sociolinguistic competence
- speech acts and the significance of their teaching in lower-secondary schools

The theoretical base for this field and its findings are compared with the views and attitudes of teachers in lower-secondary schools, the participants of my research, in practical part of the thesis in chapter 4.

The next subchapters are focused on

- culture and teaching culture as inseparable part of sociolinguistic competence
- use of authentic materials in ELT classes
- the question whether lack of sociolinguistic competence may negatively influence the further study especially abroad is dealt with in the last subchapter.

The particular goals of these subchapters are mentioned at the beginning of each one.

3.1. Sociolinguistic competence and sociolinguistics

This part focuses on defining sociolinguistic competence as well as sociolinguistics as a linguistic science which research and findings are important for applying sociolinguistic competence in ELT especially through teaching speech acts and awareness of ruled and structured conversational interchange within various social contexts.

3.1.1. Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a scientific branch of linguistics. It is an interdisciplinary field intertwined with sociology of language, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics and applied linguistics (Spolsky, 1998, p. 3). "Sociolinguistics studies all aspects of relationship between language and society." (Crystal, 2008, p. 440). The main purpose is to record and analyze the relation of social situations and use of language by individuals and social groups at a point in time or over a time duration (Spolsky, 1998, p. 4).

3.1.2. Sociolinguistic competence

Canale and Swain (in Rodgers and Richards, 2001, p.160) define sociolinguistic competence as "understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants and the communicative purpose for their interaction".

In other words it means that we can define sociolinguistic competence as the ability to communicate and understand communication with the reference to the circumstances a person is in. Although people seem to assume this process to be quite natural and simple on the contrary, when speaking a foreign language the unexpected reality of its complexity turns out. (Canale and Swain, 1980, p.1)

Sociolinguistic competence is one of the components of communicative competence (Chapter 1.3), which includes the grammatical knowledge of a language and the knowledge of how and when to use language appropriately. This gives it the direct relevance for foreign language teaching. (Common European Framework of Reference or Languages, 2001)

However what makes sociolinguistic competence an important element of foreign language teaching is the fact that it is a part of guidelines for expected outcomes of learners

of foreign languages in European countries and also one part of the curriculum of the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education in the Czech Republic.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages outlines the components of sociolinguistic appropriateness for all the levels including A2 level which refers to lower-secondary school requirements. These requirements are rather similar to our Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education. For both concrete materials see Fig. 20 and Fig. 21 enclosed in the Appendices 5, 6. The requirements include the ability to address others, to greet, to well-come, to say good-bye, to use forms of politeness, to introduce somebody, to apologize and accept the apology, to express agreement or disagreement etc.

3.2. Teaching sociolinguistic competence

This chapter is aimed at providing answers to the question why it is necessary to teach sociolinguistic competence and stressing some pedagogical implications that result from this fact.

Littlewood (1981, p. 4-5) states that the speaker's choice of language depends on two factors. The first one is the overall knowledge of the language and the second one is the social context of the situation in which the conversation takes place. The speaker is made to decide whether to use informal or formal language and then the appropriate strategy in order to complete the communicative purpose of the particular social situation. As Brown and Yule (1991, p.23) add, this results in establishing and maintaining social relationship. All these decisions need to be done from the view of cultural norms and attitudes of the participants of an individual social interaction. When the speaker makes the wrong decision by using inappropriate language he/she may be unintentionally sending the wrong signals and the result may be a break-down in communication.

For the purposes of sociolinguistics we use the term of the conversational interchange. It is a natural spoken conversation with the pattern which is determined culturally and socially. These determinants include many elements, for example the topic of the conversation, the setting, the relationship between participants and the culture background of individual participants (Saville-Troike in McKay and Hornberger, 1996, p. 362-366) These patterned rules are recognizable mostly in speech acts (see Chapter 3.3.)

Turn-taking (changing turns during participation in a dialogue) applied in exchanging conversational replicas, the length of turns in a conversation and who has the floor (the right to speak) are formal situations which represent the clear patterned rules of speaking. Nevertheless, sometimes it is quite tricky matter depending on social status and power of the communicators and other features of cultural appropriateness. (Hymes in Spolsky, 1998, p. 14)

Crystal (2008, p. 266-271) agrees when he supports the importance of teaching sociolinguistic competence including awareness of turn-taking and politeness and states that the rules of the appropriate turn-taking in conversations depend also on social roles of participants. When there are rules, there are obviously some expectations about the direction in which the conversation is going to lead. Because a human assimilates intuitively the process of learning turn-taking and conversational politeness (number of social rules we use when we communicate) from the birth, these social rules vary according to the different cultural backgrounds from which individual communicators come from. (Crystal, *ibid.*)

Referring to the practical teaching patterned interactions and social rules of conversations, Wolfson cited by Chick (in McKay and Hornberger, 1996, p. 354) “sees the goal in teacher’s intervention via helping the learner to build up strategies in order not to be unintentionally misunderstood by native speakers”. Gumperz and Roberts cited in Chick

(ibid.) on the contrary emphasise that though it would be beneficial for teachers and learners to have access to straight and accurate sociolinguistic conventions of different cultures, it is mainly the learner himself who is responsible for developing his own strategies for interpreting and responding social situations appropriately.

Littlewood, (1981, p. 12, 43-48) suggests that the artificial environment of the classroom can serve as a social context for teaching sociolinguistic competence. Firstly, the teacher should expose learners to classroom language, i.e. language that deals with routine classrooms matters, in order to use the second language as medium or organizing classroom activities.

Secondly, discussions can work as a stimulus for communicative interaction and practising of turn-taking. It offers a wide space for use of different language functions, for example expressing agreement or disagreement, introducing the own opinion, informing, etc. (Littlewood, ibid.)

According to Littlewood (ibid.), the teacher needs to create such types of situations in which the learner is expected to consider and accordingly choose the appropriate language. Such language should be socially acceptable and functionally effective at the same time.

In addition, Brown and Yule (1991,p. 32) advise teachers to let learners observe amount of dialogues with social interactions showing appropriate use of the language, for example in video clips. Behaviour of participants of the interchange, used language expressions and gestures are the features that need to be focused on.

Two activities in order to promote sociolinguistic competence in the classroom of lower-secondary school were conducted, described and analyzed in the term of their efficiency in Chapter 5, practical section of this thesis.

The question how much appropriate is teaching sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary school viewed by teachers is dealt in more detail in the practical section of this diploma project in chapter 4.6.

3.3. Speech acts

Teaching the skill to conduct conversational interchanges correctly and effectively in order to avoid communicational breakdowns is the most feasible in terms of ELT classrooms through the teaching speech acts. The goal of this chapter is to introduce the theory of selected speech acts with the reference to several researches conducted by respected sociolinguists and provide some suggestions of how to teach them. By teaching speech acts learners should develop the ability to be successful in every day interactions with speakers in various environments of daily life.

3.3.1. Theory of speech acts

A fluent speaker is considered to be able to cope with different situations in various social and cultural contexts. In order to maintain a current relationship or achieve a communicative goal the sets of speech acts are used by speakers of a language. Cohen (in McKay&Hornberger,1996,p. 383) defines a speech act as a functional unit in communication (see chapter 1.1).

Searle (1985, p.2) determines speech acts as “production of the sentence token under certain conditions”.

Murphy and Neu (cited in Cohen, in McKay&Hornberger,1996, p.384) add that speech act set is a combination of particular speech acts produced together in order to enable a speaker to reach a purpose of communication. In this respect, the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is not enough for a learner to participate actively and socially appropriately in wide ranges of everyday situations. Moreover, the lack of ability to deal appropriately

with a language within certain social situations may harm not only the communication itself but also a relationship between participants of communication.

Speech act groupings called speech act sets have been divided into five categories: representatives (including e.g. claims, reports), directives (including e.g. suggestions, requests, commands), expressives (e.g. apologies, complaints, thanks), commissives (e.g. promises, threats) and declaratives (e.g. decrees, declarations). (Searle, 1985)

All these speech acts provide speakers with information about a social interaction. They comprise of typical patterns spoken by native speakers in particular social contexts.

In order to be good at planning and production of speech acts learners have to achieve socio-cultural and sociolinguistic skills. It means that learners are successful in selecting speech acts strategies which correspond with the culture of the particular language, age and sex of speakers, their social status and roles in the society and during the conversation. Further, learners have to gain the knowledge of utterances and phrases in order to produce the speech act and what is important is the awareness of degree of formality of these utterances. (Cohen in McKay&Hornberger, 1996, p. 380-386).

3.3.1.1 Compliments

The research on structure of speech acts namely on compliments conducted by Wolfson (1978) showed that just five adjectives (nice, good, beautiful, pretty and great) and two verbs (like, love) were used by majority of respondents. She also stresses the minimal use of “really” when making compliments (Wolfson, p.60, 61).

3.3.1.2. Apologies and requests

The research on the speech acts of apologies and requests were done for instance by Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1984). They elicit the request strategy based on the scale of directness. The most direct level is produced by using imperatives (Open the window!). The

conventionally indirect level by using *would* or *could* (Could you open the window?) and open-ended indirect strategies (It's cold in here.) (Blum-Kulka and Olhstein, 1984, p. 207).

The strategies used to apologise depend on many social variables (Blum-Kulka and Olhstein, 1984, pp. 206-207). There are two ways how to produce an apology. Firstly, using illocutionary force verbs ((be)sorry, apologise, regret, excuse) represent the most direct production of apology. Secondly, it is possible to apologise through expressing the utterance that relates to the cause, responsibility, willingness to offer repair or promise that it will not happen anymore (Blum-Kulka and Olhstein, *ibid*).

Moreover, Wolfson (1985, p. 70) states that when participants were given a situation in which they were supposed to apologize no explicit formula was used. What is important is the relationship of a speaker and an interlocutor. Various cultural backgrounds count as a significant feature too, because what one group considers offensive is not so offensive for the others (Wolfson, 1985, p. 70).

3.3.1.3 Complaints and refusals

In comparison to the speech acts research stated above, far less research was conducted on complaints and refusals. Refusals are considered as a major cross-cultural issue for learners of English language and their inappropriate production consequently leads to unintended offenses and a breakdown in communication (Takahashi and Bebe in King and Silver, 1990, p.50) They are undeniably very complex and demand good pragmatic skills because they relate to different speech acts such as invitations, offers or suggestions. Moreover, refusals are one of the most difficult tasks from the psychological point of view, because a person has to say no politely, so that the others accept it.

The speech act of complaint occurs when a speaker reacts with annoyance to an act that evokes the sense of dissatisfaction (Olshtain and Weinbach in Tanck, 2004, p.3). The aim of a

survey led by Tanck (2004) was to investigate the differences between the refusals and complaints produced by native speakers and learners of English as a foreign language. Her findings are as follows: refusals produced by non-native speakers were vague and indirect, lacking the appropriate features connected compared to the American culture rules and complaints were regarded too direct in relation with the American culture.

3.3.1.4 Forms of addresses

Although English does not have T/V distinction it offers a range of address forms, the choice of which depends on the social context (Spolsky, 1998, p. 21). Moreover, each occurrence of address terms depends on age, rank, collegiality, gender, role and status of interlocutors (Ervin-Tripp, 1980, p.141-143).

3.4 Teaching speech acts

As was already mentioned, there have been accomplished a great deal of sociolinguistic research on speech acts of compliments, however a few of them provide a teacher teaching English as a foreign language with a suitable and sufficient amount of materials and instructions. The small-scale research in the practical part focuses on whether the participants-teachers are satisfied with the way how speech acts are dealt in common textbooks (see Chapter 4.4). The obtained data are visually analysed in the Appendix (see Figs. 7-13).

Speech acts are routinized and patterned. This helps teacher and learners to concentrate on the choice of appropriate speech act strategies. Though it is rather demanding process, they can be learnt in classrooms. There is the evidence that after learners were given instructions referring to speech act language behaviour, non-native speakers were more likely to choose the speech act strategy or similar one that a native speaker would produce. (Cohen in McKay, 1996, pp. 408-410).

Billmyer (in King and Silver, 1990, p.49) agrees and states that instructed learners showed better vocabulary, spontaneity, fluency, responses were longer and more approximate to native speakers norms compared to responses of uninstructed learners.

King and Silver (1993, p. 58-59) suggest several techniques and activities suitable for foreign language classrooms that promote speech act awareness and proficiency. They mainly highlight the use of audiotape authentic conversations for input. Further, they encourage teachers to conduct discussions on personal experiences related to production speech acts in real life, reading and analysis of dialogues aimed at various speech acts, role-plays, jig-saw dialogues and they state explicit teaching of speech acts as well. Generally, they urge teachers to focus on providing authentic input (see Chapter 3.6) and implicit learning that follows through the activities mentioned above.

In order to prove these recommendations the activity to teach speech act of greeting was conducted, analyzed and evaluated (see Chapter 5.1).

Cohen (in McKay and Hornberger , 1996, p. 391-393) suggests the language teacher to be a researcher and to prepare summarized instructions how to make various speech acts. The analysis of native speaker's performance of speech acts can be viewed as another option to teach and learn speech acts. He gives several steps in order to plan a lesson on speech acts. They include the finding out the level of learners' knowledge of different speech acts in general. This could be done through role-play or discourse completion task. The next step is to present various model dialogue on speech act, preferably as authentic examples. The evaluation of a situation is another possible activity, in which a learner decides whether the particular speech act is appropriate, how some expressions could be replaced, etc. Again, the practising the situations through role-plays may follow. The discussions of speech acts structural differences comparing culture of the learner and the culture of the target

language is the significant means of building up the speech act awareness (Cohen in McKay and Hornberger, *ibid*).

For younger learners, it would be especially contributing to explain what a speech act is, for instance an apology. To discuss with them that we can name a situation according to what it means and stress the existence of the opening, maintenance and ending of an interaction. (Schiffrin, in McKay and Hornberger, 1996, p. 321)

As it has been indicated above, the role of authentic materials and prompts in ELT gains the greater and greater importance when teaching and keeping up the direction that has been set up. The role of the teacher as a mentor or a coach becomes more and more demanding as well as the position of the learner who should be participating actively, instead of being a mere consumer, and developing his communicative, social and intellectual abilities.

3.5. Culture and sociolinguistic competence

The reason for teaching culture in ELT classrooms in lower-secondary schools is explained and summarized in this chapter and the questions why and how to do it are considered. The aim of this chapter is

- to focus on culture as a significant part of English language teaching also in lower-secondary schools
- to give answers to the questions why teaching culture is so important and then what is necessary to teach in the term of culture.

3.5.1. Culture as a part of ELT

Firstly, the term of culture needs to be defined in order to be able to grasp this point in all the aspects. Webster's New Riverside University Dictionary defines culture as:

1. Behaviour patterns, art, beliefs, institutions and all other products

of human works and thought typical for a population or a community at a given time. 2. The act of developing the social, moral and intellectual faculties through education.

Kramersch (1998, p.8) explains that culture is passed on through a language, which represents not only facts and artefacts but also dreams, values and imaginings of a community. She adds that culture is a constantly changing process.

It means that culture as a representative of a target language and rules of social behaviour of the target language speakers is an inseparable part of the foreign language teaching and has its justified place in ELT classrooms. Gagnestam (in Pervan 2006, p. 11), states that the doors to other cultures are being opened through the language learning. According to Kramersch (ibid.), one should have some knowledge of their own culture in order to be able to reflect and be aware of cultural differences between his or her community and the community of a speaker of a target language. Gagnestam (ibid.) adds, that getting to know other cultures can function as a motivation to learn a foreign language.

Brown and Yule (1991, p.74-6) agree stating that if a learner is supposed to understand the target language he or she needs to have some knowledge of cultural background that concerns the native speaker. This helps a learner understand what and why a native speaker said. The authors also suggest teachers should provide learners with a sample of cultural stereotypes to be able to share with native speakers.

3.5.1.1 Cultural stereotypes

Hall (1997, p.257) defines cultural stereotypes as few and simple characteristics of people from one particular culture community when those characteristics are valued differently compared to other cultural community. According to Kramersch (1998, pp.80-81) stereotypes help recognize cultural boundaries between different cultures. Learners of languages attribute great importance to the ability to behave and think like native speakers of a target

language, because they want to be acknowledged and appreciated by native speakers. Besides she stresses the importance of appreciation of uniqueness of a learner's own culture too.

Brown and Yule (1991, p. 40) agree when stating that if a student is to use appropriate language, it is essential that he recognizes cultural stereotypes.

Guest (2002, p.154-161) warns against overuse cultural stereotypes and the negative consequence of too much generalization. Further, he is against distorting foreign culture by intensive reinforcement and making learners see them as: "monolithic rather than fluid entities." (p. 307). Nevertheless, Kirsch (2004, p. 131-140) implies that stereotypes should be the part of education and on top of that, a teacher should bring and discuss them in the classrooms. Kramsch (1998, 210-11) approaches with a suggestion that a language classroom should be a place where learners would be encouraged to discuss and reflect on culture stereotypes based on their own cultural backgrounds.

3.5.1.2 Cultural awareness

Teaching cultural awareness in ELT classrooms is a significant part of teaching language as a whole. Teachers of foreign or second language should not insist only on the correctness of the form of learners' utterances, but they should support and make pupils able to communicate in real-life situations. Moreover, it is clear that in order to carry a meaningful communication a learner should know what is appropriate to say in what social situation (i.e. be culturally aware) in order to prevent communication from creating misunderstandings. As Chick (in McKay and Hornberger, 1996, p. 344) summarizes, the goal of teachers is to help learners avoid being unintentionally misunderstood by native speakers because of not being aware of values and norms of behaviour of a native speaker or interpret words in a fundamentally different way. Lastly, according to Takahasi and Beebe awareness of cross-

cultural differences (differences between two or more different cultural communities) is particularly important because it will improve sociolinguistic competence of students and help them deal with the language and its social dimensions (King& Silver, 1993, p.56).

The question whether teachers of lower-secondary schools find teaching culture in their English classrooms necessary is dealt with in the practical section of the diploma thesis in Chapter 4.5. Further, the activity created to develop cultural awareness was conducted in the environment of English classroom. It was described, analyzed and evaluated in Chapter 5.2.

3.5.2 Culture topics in ELT classrooms

There have been done a few studies focusing on a selection of culture topics in language classrooms, e.g. Brooks' five-part-definition of culture (1968), Ten basic points for cultural study (1968), further his Key Questions (1975) which all aim to help learners realize what culture is, what notions culture relates to and afterwards realize the existence of cultural differences . Howard and Nostrand's Nine Objectives (1971) remains more or less the general list of speech act sets with neither further instructions nor practical examples. Lafayette's 13 Goal Statements for Students (1988) offers cultural topics to be discussed with adult advanced speakers. Just a few topics are suitable for lower-secondary school learners, for example: friendship, love, family, religion. Seelye's Seven Goals of Cultural Instruction (1984) are rather similar in its features to the previous one. Nostrand's Theme on French Culture(1974)(Mizne, 1997, p. 23-27) seems to serve the best for our purposes and is reflected in the practical part of the diploma project in chapter 4.1.

Common textbooks accessible on the market offer a range of elementary topics for sixth and seventh graders such as my family, daily routines, hobbies, animals and etc. However, from my point of view, these topics function very often as simple headings of units and a

teacher has to prepare his or her own materials to comprehend the real tasks within communicative and sociolinguistic competence. Eckert uses the term of communities of practice which is related to the concept of social networks and defines these communities as people who gather in groups whose feat is a common activity. (Eckert in Milroy and Gordon, 2012, p. 123) When we consider pupils of 7th or 8th grades as a particular community of practice with distinctive activities characteristic for those groups then the topics introduced in our textbooks are rather uninteresting and out-of-date. Since those social networks are involved in various ways of communication, mainstream lifestyle including being and speaking “cool”, trendy clothing, music and American series, these topics are hardly found in our textbooks to please learners.

Also Ur (p. 180, 188) admits possible triviality and boredom of topics and suggests that teachers should substitute or add supplementary materials for their lessons. Not every topic or text is suitable and the teacher should reflect the needs and interests of both pupils and teachers in order to create useful and interesting learning experience.

3.5.3 Culture in textbooks in ELT classrooms

It is obvious that a good selection of texts which provide learners with information about culture of speakers of a target language is as equally important as an appropriate selection of cultural topics discussed in ELT classrooms.

Although Ur (1991, p. 90-97) states that in order to teach speaking, language should be taught in meaningful chunks around a common topic. The learner is more immersed in the language although this is harder than doing exercises.

Traditionally, short texts touching various cultural points have been incorporated into course books. Such texts have been the fundamental source of answers to questions about culture differences for foreign language students. In the past these texts served as basic

information mainly about a country and its geographical facts and institutions in which the foreign language was spoken. Also current textbooks include such texts (Risager, 1991, p. 183-190). However, as Risager (*ibid.*) argues, besides the texts with general information textbooks should contain also those which focus on values, attitudes and feelings so that learners could find out more about target language speakers.

Tomlinson (2001, p. 68) suggests that such texts however do not resemble real language and real situations because authors of textbooks have to bear in mind the level of proficiency of learners in order to provide them with explicit information.

Sheldon (1988, p. 237-240) agrees when she argues that ELT textbooks are usually an insufficient compromise between real pedagogical needs and financial resources invested. Moreover she states that materials in textbooks are static and out-dated. Cultural appropriateness is often neglected. Unfortunately, the materials produced by teachers themselves have less credibility even if they are more dynamic and fulfil communicative and cultural requirements far more than the published ones. On the other hand she warns against stereotyped images of members of a nation.

Cortazzi and Jin (in Kubricka, 2013, p. 161-164) also states that second language teaching and learning include not only mastering grammar and vocabulary but being able to communicate. The communication which is culturally conditioned and creates the framework for interpretation of behaviour, thinking and production of utterances. They distinguish open and closed cultural texts and define the emotional and cognitive involvement of learners in interpretations of the texts. Closed text is explained as a text which does not provide learners with space for making their own opinion, however an open text is one which stimulates learners to think and possibly disagree.

Kubricka (ibid) draws attention to the fact of a possibility of ideological influence connected with the choice of cultural topics in foreign language textbooks and states that it is necessary that teachers would read critically and reveal their potential cultural biases.

Finally Byram (in Kubricka, 2013, p. 161) affirms the great value of foreign language teaching when texts in textbooks offer the opportunity for learners to reflect their own experience within intercultural contents which are the significant feat of present days.

In conclusion, what must be mentioned here is the correlation between textbooks syllabuses (including contextualized culture points) and requirements of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and of course Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education.

The significance of teaching culture in ELT classrooms is also discussed in Chapters 4.3 and 4.5 of my practical part in the diploma thesis. The respondents expressed their opinions whether teaching culture as a part of ELT is important also in lower-secondary schools and whether they are satisfied with the way of how the cultural topics and materials are dealt with in commonly used textbooks.

3.6. Authentic materials in promoting sociolinguistic competence

Generally, implementation of authentic materials as books, magazines, videos and internet resources represent another step forward to reaching sociolinguistic competence in English language teaching. Hence, this part of the thesis aims at the reflections of the following questions:

- whether authentic materials used as supplementary aids are appropriate and reasonable teaching tools in lower-secondary ELT classes in order to promote sociolinguistic competence within teaching speaking,

- whether authentic texts used for the purposes of lower-secondary classrooms should be simplified,
- what possible advantages and disadvantages of use of authentic materials are,
- what other authentic materials besides oral or written texts may be considered as teaching materials.

The attitudes of teachers towards the use of authentic materials in lower-secondary classrooms are polled, recorded and compared to the theoretical background in Chapter 4.7 of the practical section of the thesis.

3.6.1. Authentic materials in lower-secondary classes

Firstly, it is necessary to define what an authentic material is. Chavez (1994, p.1) explains, that such materials are any materials produced by native English speakers for native English speakers.

Little (in Guariento and Morley, 2001, p. 348) suggests the direct relation with sociolinguistic competence stating that the authentic text is created to reach the social purpose in a certain community in which it was produced.

Further, Chavez (1994, p.1) highlights the importance of the integration of authentic materials to communicative ELT in order to improve the learner's linguistic skills in real-life situations and cultural knowledge. Ur (1996, p. 189-209) agrees and stresses the need of supplementary material to offer a larger range of teaching tools from which the teacher may choose some to fulfil the needs of particular groups of learners.

Finally, Guariento and Morley (2001, p.347) conclude stating the general consensus in the opinion that use of authentic materials is beneficial to the teaching/learning process.

3.6.2. Adjustment of authentic materials, the issue of simplification

Although the positive attitudes towards authentic materials in ELT, Chavez (1994, p.2) reasons to what extent teachers should incorporate such materials into ELT and how difficult the materials should be. Whether the material itself should be simplified or the task related to the authentic material should be adjusted to the level of learners. (Chavez, *ibid.*)

She partly answers this questions when she states that providing students are able to deal with such material in a successful and interactive way then such material relating to real-life language is suitable also for lower-level learners. (Chavez in Kilicka,2004)

Guariento and Morley (2001, p. 348-351) also ask the question whether authentic materials when simplified do not lose their authenticity. In the relation to this issue they state, that as long as learners are able to deal with the material effectively, which means to be able to extract the required information, the full-length understanding of the text is not important and therefore the text does not need to be adjusted or simplified.

Heitler (2005, p. 6-25) adds some criteria to be observed, when choosing such materials. They include the type of real English that the teacher needs. They should be topical, and they should be limited with the regard to learners' real abilities within the language catering for relevance of students' needs and requirements.

A quality material should be prepared in advance as well as a teacher should prepare himself/herself well and also if needed, some adjustments of a text or a video have to be done. Moreover, a teacher should follow correct methodological procedures so that students benefit from the material as much as possible. (Heitler,*ibid.*)

3.6.3 Advantages and disadvantages of authentic materials in ELT

To support the importance of authentic materials in ELT, advantages of using such materials need to be mentioned.

Ur (1996), Harmer (1989) and Guariento and Morley (2001) they all emphasise the element of learners' motivation when working with authentic materials and improvement of listening and receptive abilities.

The authentic materials are sources of cultural oriented information learners are exposed to the real-life language. Greatly positive effect on the learner can be achieved if the materials are focused on learners' interests and relate closely to learners' needs. Authentic materials in ELT classrooms contribute to more creative and up-to-date approach to teaching/learning (Kilicka, 2004, p.1)

Another great asset is their contemporaneity, such materials are interesting and learners can see that also the language is living, developing and constantly changing thing (Heitler, 2005, p. 6-25).

On the other hand, there are negative features that include particularly the occasional need to adapt materials somehow, especially simplify the text or the task, as was mentioned above. This is probably the most crucial point when working with such materials. If the learner is prevented from being able to handle with the material he may feel confused, demotivated and even frustrated (Guariento and Morley, 2001, p. 347-351). Kilicka (2004, p.2) agrees when she states that the difficult language and complex vocabulary may represent a burden for the learner as well as the teacher especially in lower-secondary classrooms.

Brown and Yule (1991, p. 87) warn against the materials which deal with completely unknown field of interest for the learner. Additionally, they remind that also native speakers need help in a form of written support when watching a really complex motion picture or video sequence, for example one of Shakespeare's plays. It means the materials need to be

adjusted to the needs of learners, relating to the age, level of the language knowledge and interests of learners.

3.6.4 Sources and types of authentic materials suitable for lower-secondary classrooms

According to Ur (199, p. 189-209) the most appropriate items that may be used when working with learners in lower-secondary schools include films in target language (I suggest subtitled films either with English or with Czech subtitles not to upset the learners), various videos, audio recordings covering appropriate task and purpose with an attractive topic. She further suggests setting up the library with simplified classic stories from very simple to advanced level, where learners may borrow the books (Ur, *ibid.*)

McGill (2010) values video clips which can be segmented and activities like role-plays, drawing cartoons, making leaflets and quizzes may follow.

Harmer (1989, p. 190-192) considers the greatest source of authentic materials the Internet, where videos, audio material, various articles can be found and used. Students can go on-line and listen to songs, read lyrics, read about history, or browse on-line encyclopedias. Quizzes about the real world and board games introduce competitive element within learning. Pictures and articles in real magazines are a very powerful tool in teaching/learning too. They represent practically unlimited source for various types of activities in the classrooms. (Harmer, *ibid*)

In conclusion Guariento and Morley (2001, p. 348-351) encourage teachers to use the classroom itself and the students' potential as authentic item for producing authentic language when playing for example bingo, verbal hide and seek, etc.

To sum up, according to the theoretical input stated above, authentic materials are very important when teaching sociolinguistic competence, the authentic materials need not to be simplified if the learner is able to pick up the required information, the main advantages are

their contemporaneity, real-life language, interesting topics, motivated learners. On the other hand, such materials may be demotivating when they are over demanding in respect to the complex language especially. Besides videos, films, magazines and books, there are songs, quizzes and games which may use as an interesting means of authentic language.

3.7. Sociolinguistic competence and its relevance to the learner's further study

Nowadays, students and learners can study abroad thanks to The Lifelong Learning Programme established by The European Parliament in 2007 as successor of Socrates Programme. The goal is to support students' mobility in education and training throughout the countries of the European Union. With its subsystems of the Erasmus Programme and the Comenius Programme students' exchange training stays are carried out in order to create connections between people in the field of education and training. (The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013).

From my point of view, the fact that all these activities involve mainly dealing with people, taking part in number of activities emphasises the need of teaching sociolinguistic competence starting at lower-secondary schools.

Regan (1995, p.3-4) suggests when students work in a new social environment where they have to communicate they may not have the strategies to communicate effectively. However, on the other hand, such situation provides learners with the chance to undergo the complex process of learning both sociolinguistic competence and the own field of study.

Thompson (2006) adds the examples of unfortunate impact of lack of sociolinguistic competence in workplace as well as at school. Trying to apply their own cultural strategies and habits can result in misunderstanding and can affect the performance of the students and the learners.

The opinions of the participants of my research concerning the question whether the lack of sociolinguistic competence can influence the performance of students in their further study abroad is dealt with in the chapter 4.8 in the practical section of this diploma thesis.

Summary of the theoretical part

The theoretical part aims at covering the wide area of teaching speaking, particularly teaching sociolinguistic competence as a component of communicative language teaching. The appropriateness of teaching sociolinguistic competence at lower-secondary schools as well as teaching culture awareness through cultural or cross-cultural topics were proved to be relevant according to numerous significant sources which established the theoretical basis for the small-scale research carried out among lower-secondary teachers of English (see Practical part).

Significant attention was also paid to theory of teaching speech acts thanks to which the effective strategies promoting sociolinguistic competence can be successfully achieved. Consequently, the evidence of the importance of authentic materials use in ELT classrooms was fully acknowledged.

These theoretical facts provided the foundation for my questionnaire research and interpretation of the results. The polled items of the questionnaire (Fig. 1 in the Appendix) related to development of sociolinguistic competence at lower-secondary schools and the data analysis are submitted in the practical section of the diploma thesis.

III. Practical part

Introduction to the practical part

The aim of the practical section of my diploma project is to research whether teachers in lower-secondary school find it important to include teaching sociolinguistic competence into their English lessons and what interactional techniques, materials are of the great importance to them. Whether the teachers find textbooks' culture texts suitable to use to build up pupils' cultural awareness and in this way also help motivate children to learn English and understand cultural differences, i.e. the knowledge which might be particularly useful in their further studies and lives.

To obtain the data necessary for my small-scale research a questionnaire was designed (see Fig.2 in the Appendix 2). It includes ten questions which deal with the teaching sociolinguistic competence. The answers to each question are analyzed and the results are graphically illustrated.

The criteria of categorization of respondents are as follows:

- gender
- type of the level of a school where a teacher works
- length of teaching experience
- teachers with/without qualification

This small-scale research involved twenty teachers altogether, out of them thirty per cent were male and seventy per cent female teachers.

Thirty per cent of questioned teachers work in lower-secondary and secondary type of education system and seventy per cent as teachers in primary and lower-secondary schools.

Only fifteen per cent have been teaching more than sixteen years, forty-five per cent have teaching experience within the length from six to fifteen years and forty per cent of questioned teachers have been teaching not more than five years.

Twenty per cent of teachers are not qualified and eighty per cent are qualified teachers.

The facts that the teachers were mostly qualified and the length of teaching practice was mainly from six to fifteen years could be a good precondition for the assumption that the answers are relevant with reference to the real state of the problem as the persons that have provided the answers (a) seem to have enough teaching experience and (b) should not suffer from burnout syndrome yet.

The next chapters deal with the findings to particular question-topics and the reflection of the teachers' willingness and sensation of importance to set the children at schools to think in this "sociolinguistic way".

4. Data presentation and interpretation

The textbooks of New Project, volumes 1,2,3,4 by Tom Hutchinson (2008) as a generally used textbook serve as the basis for the comparisons and deductions carried out in the practical section of the diploma thesis.

4.1. Cultural topics and their appropriateness in lower-secondary classrooms

The first item of the questionnaire deals with the appropriateness of cultural topics that should be preferably discussed in English lessons in lower-secondary schools in order to set up and maintain learners' awareness of cultural differences. Since this kind of awareness is important to learners to recognize the values and meanings of various social situations and help them to choose appropriate communicative strategies as Saville-Troike (in McKay and Hornerger, 1996, p. 350-367) suggests (see chap.3.3).

The basis for the selection of these topics was proceeded from Nostrand's Theme on French Culture (1974)(see chapter 3.5.2, Fig. 1 in Appendix 1) and modified according to the basic offer of topics in textbooks' syllabuses used in lower-secondary schools, mainly in New Project textbooks series.

In total, eight basic topics were offered. The respondents' task was to tick the most important and the most appropriate ones to be taught and discussed also from the cultural point of view, i.e. a topic in which the cultural differences can be seen and pointed out. The respondents were not limited in the number of choices. Additionally, the respondents could submit their own ideas of topics to the list.

There was not one single topic that all the respondents agreed on. However, everyday life and family were agreed as the most important by 80 per cent of respondents. Friendship and school followed with 75 per cent of respondents. 65 per cent suggest housing as the next important subject to discuss. Surprisingly, only 45 per cent of respondents seem the theme of good and bad as appropriate and love and religion come as the last with 20 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. Namely these three topics are not included in standard syllabuses. The results might suggest either the satisfaction with the topics included in syllabuses in general or settlement for the routinized offer by textbooks' authors. The graph in Fig.3 (see Appendix 3) provides clearer differentiation of the findings.

There also was not meeting of minds in additional ideas of respondents. Firstly, only 30 per cent expressed their ideas and secondly, these ideas all correspond with the other topics of syllabuses in broadly used textbooks. The suggestions included: holidays/festivals, sports, hobbies, music, must and mustn't topics, different cultures and weather.

The small percentage of suggestions is rather striking because it might mean what was suggested above and also the reality, that only a few teachers think of or even submit

supplementary topics to be discussed with pupils despite the common recommendations of methodologists (see Chapter. 3.5).

In conclusion, unambiguously, all the respondents find the traditional topics as family, everyday life, school and relationships of a considerable importance in relation to teaching culture. Hopefully, this indicates that we, teachers, follow the right direction referring to this point. However, it is vital that teachers not only adjust the issues to talk to learners' wishes but also creatively, actively and intentionally choose other themes of culture worth discussing in ELT classrooms. Teachers consequently try to support children to think of global values that can be shared on one hand and values in which differences are found and help them communicate boldly and meaningfully.

4.2 Appropriate techniques useful to promote sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary classrooms

The importance of the appropriate choice of teaching techniques should be obvious to every teacher (see Chapter 2). The second item of the questionnaire deals with the selection of convenient options of techniques to support communicative and also sociolinguistic competences in lower-secondary ELT classrooms. The respondents used the assessment scale to indicate which technique is more suitable and which one is less suitable in the environment of lower-secondary classrooms. The scale included the following ranking:

1 – not at all 2 – a little 3 – quite 4 – very much

Four techniques to choose from were listed; role-plays, discussions, questionnaires and quizzes, and short dialogues based on small situations. The fifth possibility was to add another technique according to a respondent's consideration. The purpose of this was to find out other practically tested activities suitable for support of interactional activities within the classroom. The theoretical basis for the choice of these four activities was the

summary of facts according to the findings done in theoretical part of the thesis (see Chapter 2).

As for the results of the research, small dialogues and role-plays received the most positive assessment (95% positive and 75% positive, respectively). Both these techniques are evaluated as very suitable by 60% of the respondents. Discussions are considered to be very contributing by 25% and quite valuable by 40%. Questionnaires and quizzes are seen as very positive just by 10%, however 60% of respondents evaluate them as quite effective. For detailed data see Fig. 4 in the Appendix 3.

From my point of view, two positives can be assumed:

- 60 per cent of respondents voted for role-plays and small dialogues as the most suitable techniques at the same time signal very good methodological approach to teaching communicative language (see Chapter 2).
- Only a minimum of teachers consider role-plays inappropriate in the classrooms.

The data also indicate two rather negative findings:

- Unfortunately, quite a big ratio of teachers is not sure of the appropriateness of discussions in lower-secondary ELT classrooms (35%).
- The fact that nobody added any further interactional activity or technique to the questionnaire can be explained in various ways: either the respondents found my offer sufficient and they do not use any other techniques themselves or they know and use other techniques, but did not include them into the questionnaire because of being in a constant hurry or they simply did not feel like doing it. Sadly, neither of these possibilities foster positive tunes.

In conclusion, although the choice of teaching techniques mentioned above comes from experience of each teacher, there is always some space to be flexible and learn new

approaches in order to be successful in teaching communicative and sociolinguistic competence. Secondly, each such communicative activity should be carefully prepared in order to make a really effective step forward on our way to the aim called learner's ability to communicate correctly and appropriately.

4.3 Cultural topics in modern textbooks and teachers' expectations related to the texts

As mentioned above (see Chapter 3.5), texts dealing with culture and culture stereotypes are important part in teaching foreign languages. Learners need to be aware of cultural background of the speakers of a target language in order to prevent misunderstandings in communication and build up good strategies and abilities to meet the language and social expectations of native speakers and also be aware of what they can expect themselves in various social situations in everyday life.

Indisputably, short texts about culture, which are one of the significant resources for both teachers and learners of getting this kind of information, are inseparable parts of language textbooks. After all, a textbook is one of the main teacher's tools in teaching language and that is the reason why I focused my research on texts about culture in textbooks teachers usually use.

Hence this chapter deals with the views of teachers on

- the sufficiency of cultural texts in their textbooks (see Fig. 2 in Appendix 2, item 3, Fig. 5 in the Appendix 3) and
- whether the teachers are satisfied with them (see Fig. 2 in Appendix 2, item 4, Fig. 6 in the Appendix 3).

The respondents had the same ranking scale from 1 to 4 at their disposal in order to evaluate the items above as they did in previous point of the questionnaire.

Concerning the results of the survey, 65 per cent of respondents considers the amount of cultural texts in textbooks as quite sufficient, 25 per cent found the texts as little sufficient and only 10 per cent of respondents were fully satisfied with the amount of texts culturally orientated. Nobody expressed themselves as totally discontented. Interestingly, so far this is the point which the biggest amount of respondents agreed on in terms of rating (for overall results see Fig. 5 in Appendix 3).

These findings could be interpreted as quite pleasing, however, the fact that a compact short text dealing with culture is on average only one in each unit of a textbook used in lower-secondary ELT classrooms, is not so fulfilling in my opinion. Obviously, use of authentic texts from magazines or internet sources, adjusted if necessary, can compensate for this drawback.

However, long lasting teaching experience of the respondents must be taken into account and might signal the reality that such amount is just enough considering the total unit teaching load compared to the total amount of lessons per a school term. The solution can be seen in a careful and possibly restricted choice of tasks from textbooks added by well considered selection of supplementary material including cultural texts.

The degree of the respondents' satisfaction with the content of texts providing information about target culture was polled as follows. 50 per cent of the respondents consider the texts little suitable to their needs. On the other hand, 45 per cent are quite satisfied with what the texts offer. Only five per cent are very satisfied. No respondent was unsatisfied at all (for more details see Fig. 6 in Appendix 3).

The result gives the clear picture of splitting of opinions of the respondents. This might mean that every teacher has quite different expectations from such texts. However, I assume that this is rather natural, because everybody feels differently about various issues.

Supposedly, the respondents ranking was based on their personal experience with the texts they work with. Different teachers give more importance to different contents and different topics. Also the degree of formality of texts (integration of unit's grammar and vocabulary) is viewed differently.

Personally, I rather agree with those whose expectations are met only little. Firstly, in some cases the language is quite difficult, especially for beginners. Secondly, although the texts more or less include at least elements of currently learned grammar and vocabulary they look as if they stood without any outer coherence. Further, majority of texts are not very interesting for learners of this age group. They are not up-to-date and if they are, e.g. The British Cinema (Project 2, Hutchinson, 2008, p.76) they present persons either unknown to learners or uninteresting, e.g. Wallace and Gromit or Chaplin. Another rather unhappy example is Florence Nightingale or Bob Geldof as portraits of the British heroes (Project 3, Hutchinson, 2008, p.64). The choice of persons is unfortunately mostly aimed at history. Cultural texts about life and institutions seem to be of bigger attraction for learners, e.g. Big Apple (Project 3, 2008, p.52) Australia (Project 4, Hutchinson, 2009, p.64) etc. The rest of the texts deal with a bit too general topics as transportation, emergency services or families (Project 3) where not much cultural difference can be found.

In conclusion, the existence of old-fashioned articles in textbooks I consider as a gap that teachers should fill up bringing additional texts which would be modern, interesting and adapt them if needed so that cultural differences could be discussed satisfyingly in ELT classrooms in lower-secondary schools.

4.4 Speech acts in textbooks

Speech acts and their presentation in textbooks for lower-secondary schools are discussed in the fifth item of my small-scale questionnaire research. The respondents were asked to decide to what extent the speech acts of

- greetings
- address forms
- compliments
- apologies
- requests
- refusals
- and complaints

are implemented sufficiently in the textbooks mentioned above using the assessment scale as in the previous items of the questionnaire. The occurrence of every speech act in textbooks and the evaluation of its sufficiency provide the base for the interpretation of the findings (see also Fig. 7-13 in the Appendix 3), as well as the theoretical input in the theoretical section of the diploma thesis (see Chapter 3.3)

The textbooks for lower-secondary schools Project by Tom Hutchinson, 2008, 2009, volumes 1 – 4 , broadly used textbook at lower-secondary schools (as mentioned in the introduction of the practical section) served as a basis form my own considerations relating to these issues.

Greetings

Seventy per cent of respondents consider the speech act of greetings as entirely sufficiently presented for the need of lower-secondary learners. Twenty and ten per cent are quite satisfied and not very satisfied (respectively) (see Fig.7 in the Appendix 3).

From my point of view, there is no doubt that greetings are dealt with in our textbooks really well. The learner has the chance to meet different types of greetings right from the beginning in very easy dialogues and texts.

Address forms

By the same token, the half of respondents agreed on explicitly adequate presentation of address forms in the textbooks which they have been using. Thirty per cent were not very satisfied and ten per cent were quite content (see Fig.8 in the Appendix 3).

In my opinion, there is just a little chance to observe the use of various address forms in the textbooks. The reason might be the generally expected fact, that using address forms is something quite natural and therefore easy. However, I must disagree because the fact that the learners greet the teacher "Good morning, Mrs. teacher" or more over they do not address her/him at all, proves the contrary.

Compliments

This speech act would be probably the subject of disagreement among the respondents. Forty-five per cent sees the dealing with them in the textbooks as not very sufficient, on the contrary, forty percent is rather content (see Fig. 9 in the Appendix 3).

In this particular case I would incline towards the group of quite satisfied. I , personally, believe that especially short series stories focusing on everyday English offer quite large vocabulary to be helpful in making compliments.

Apologies

As for apologies, repeatedly, most respondents find this speech act implemented in the textbooks in an adequate frequency. Forty per cent are quite happy, thirty per cent are very pleased with the extent of apologies in the textbooks. However the rest is not contented (see Fig. 10 in the Appendix 3).

Unfortunately, I must agree with the minority of the respondents and I also find the amount of examples mainly in the dialogues or cartoon series surprisingly small. I suppose that “I’m sorry” or “I’m very sorry” are so commonly used expressions and quite sufficient for the purposes of lower-secondary learners according to the author of the textbooks. However, I feel that learners should be provided with other examples such as “I’m really sorry”, “I regret it” or “I do apologize”. All these expressions may be used within the every day situations in classrooms as a normal part of classroom language.

Requests

Almost complete agreement prevails in the field of requests. Sixty-five per cent are contented with the issue of requesting in textbooks and thirty-five respondents are very satisfied (see Fig. 11 in the Appendix 3). I share the same attitude with my colleagues. I believe that requests are one of the best elaborated speech acts in textbooks particularly because modal verbs can, could and would are treated really well in study materials.

Refusals

Similar survey results to those relating to requests apply to refusals. Forty per cent of respondents expressed that they are not very satisfied with the representation of refusals in textbooks, whereas thirty are very content and twenty-five quite content. The rest (five per cent) is not pleased at all (see Fig. 12 in the Appendix 3). Heterogeneous points of view are

probably dependant on what is considered as the act of a rejection by each respondent. If it is a mere negation e.g. “No, I won’t” then the textbooks offer plenty of examples. To refuse should not be then the problem matter of grammatical forms for learners. What we as teachers may want to do is to “dress up” the direct refusal e.g. “No, I don’t.” into some polite coat of a refusal, for example “Look, I’m really sorry, but I can’t” or “I’d love to, but I have another plan”. Concurrently, the attention should be paid to cultural norms and stereotypes in order to sound polite and hence avoid problems in communication.

Complaints

Forty per cent of respondents are not very content with the treatment of complaints in textbooks and thirty per cent are not satisfied at all, which shows more or less the major concordance in the opinions among the respondents. Twenty per cent were really satisfied and ten quite content (see Fig. 13 in the Appendix 3).

The issue of complaint can be possibly viewed from two different angles so both groups of respondents may be right. I agree with those respondents who state the lack of examples of complaints in textbooks for lower-secondary learners. At the same time, the fact that the issue of complaints is complex for these learners must be admitted and it means that the colleagues who consider the amount of complaints as sufficient are right too. I personally believe that at the level of proficiency which lower-secondary learners are able to reach the speech act of complaint is not really necessary to focus on in detail. However, learners may come across some easier examples when dealing with another real-life situations in role-plays.

In conclusion, the speech act of greeting was the one which the respondents marked as represented most sufficiently in the textbooks. In contrast the complaints were considered to be treated in the least sufficient way.

4.5 Teaching culture (English/American) as a part of ELT

This chapter deals with the answer to the question whether teaching culture of the target language is seen as an important part of teaching English in lower-secondary classrooms by the respondents in my small-scale questionnaire research.

Fifty-five per cent consider teaching culture as a part of ELT quite important and thirty percent as very important. Ten per cent of the respondents find it not very important and five per cent do not consider teaching culture of the target language in lower-secondary schools important at all (for more details see Figure 14 in Appendix 3).

According to the total collected data it can be assumed that the vast majority of teachers – in this case 80 per cent - agree on teaching culture within English classrooms in lower-secondary school. This is, from my point of view, gratifying finding. This result quite accords with the approaches and opinions of many highly respected linguists.

I, personally, believe that it is necessary to begin to discuss issues related to culture speakers of the target language rather than directly and strictly teach some selected cultural topics. Such open discussions may be the right way to avoid forcing learners into the process of mere dogmatic interiorization of rules and patterns relating to particular culture without thinking and forming their own opinions. Setting out this direction, I see the real asset in teaching, which can be considered as real education then. Teaching English language via promoting cultural awareness - that of target language speakers and also that of our national culture, improving communicative competence, sociolinguistic competence and

showing learners how to look critically at various topics could be the real aim of our profession.

4.6 Teaching sociolinguistic competence

Teaching sociolinguistic competence and the appropriateness of teaching it were dealt with in the questionnaire research (see Fig. 15 in the Appendix 3). Regarding the fact that sociolinguistic competence is significant part of communicative competence (see Chapter 3.1.2), the results would seem to be absolutely predictable and identical.

Although half of the respondents expressed their conviction that teaching sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary classrooms is quite important, thirty percent understands promoting this competence as very useful and necessary. On the other hand twenty percent feel that development of sociolinguistic competence is not important (the complete numbers can be found in Fig.15 in Appendix 3).

An interesting fact is, that all the teachers who expressed a rather negative opinion relating to this question teach in so called eight-year gymnasiums.

In conclusion, step-by-step development of sociolinguistic competence is surely the way to make teaching and learning English in lower-secondary classrooms more effective and successful. The young learners capable of dealing with simple social situations without fundamental mistakes causing breakdowns in communication may be the achievable goal of our effort.

4.7 Authentic materials in teaching sociolinguistic competence

The importance of authentic materials in English language teaching in lower-secondary classrooms was one of the questions dealt within my questionnaire research. The

respondents were asked to express their attitudes towards the relevance of such materials in teaching sociolinguistic competence.

A vast majority of respondents consider the use of authentic materials really important. Forty-five per cent see it very important and forty per cent rather important. Only fifteen per cent of the polled teachers find such materials not very important (see Fig. 16 in the Appendix 3).

The findings entirely correspond with the theoretical background (see Chapter 3.6), which gives the use of authentic materials in ELT clear relevance.

Such results are greatly satisfying, because it proves the willingness of teachers to be flexible and able to adapt themselves to the requirements of the modern teaching. Besides, it gives the evidence of the fact that our schools have well-educated teachers who are able to cope with real authentic language as well as being competent methodologically in order to arrange good-quality, effective lessons providing learners with what they will need the most in the future – accurate, natural and appropriate communicative language.

I personally believe, that authentic materials serve the enrichment of lessons and motivate learner, which I consider the most important. From my experience, reading magazines, listening to songs and discussing their contents, watching suitable films or short videos, playing English scrabble are perfect ways how to show our learners that language is more than just learning grammar and testing and more over it improves learners' cognition. However, the projects like Comenius offer to teachers and learners to be authentic participants and speakers the best. Another aspects worth mentioning are Skype conferences between our pupils and those from our partners' schools which are particularly popular and provide great experience for our pupils and an opportunity to train sociolinguistic competence to the fullest.

4.8 The lack of teaching sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary schools and its influence in students' further study abroad.

This chapter is focused on the opinions of the respondents relating to the importance of sociolinguistic competence in learners' further study abroad. As was mentioned in chapter 7, there is the real possibility for students to take part in educational program in European countries. Although the respondents surely considered this possibility, forty per cent see the lack of sociolinguistic competence in this particular circumstance as just little important and thirty as quite important. The rest, i.e. thirty per cent, find the lack of this competence alarming. For detailed data see Fig. 17.

As a matter of a fact, these results may give the evidence of not very satisfying reality, which suggests that basically, teachers are not entirely aware of the actual significance of practical use of sociolinguistic competence in real life. I personally believe, that it is necessary to train sociolinguistic competence and set up the cultural awareness in terms of politeness in classrooms right from the beginning, i.e. even lower-secondary schools. If the sociolinguistic competence is gradually and sensibly implemented into ELT classrooms in primary and lower-secondary education we, as teachers, will make students and learners' way to succeed in real life easier.

4.9 Participation of the respondents in training/workshop on teaching sociolinguistic competence

The last item of my small-scale questionnaire research was aimed at the teachers' interest in taking part in a training or a workshop on promoting teaching sociolinguistic competence in English language classrooms. A half of the respondents would like to participate in such a workshop if it was offered. Thirty per cent were not sure and only

fifteen per cent would reject to attend the course which would provide its participants with “know-how” relating to teaching sociolinguistic competence (see Fig. 18 in the Appendix 3).

I think that these results are expectable. Not every teacher is keen on similar training where active participation and personal performance are required. From my experience such training would be rather demanding and exhausting and these are the reasons that may discourage potentially interested teachers.

Further, if approximately half of respondents do not consider lack of sociolinguistic competence as unfavorable condition for the students’ future (see Chapter 3.7), they will hardly be attracted to attend courses of this sort.

In conclusion, I am still strongly convinced that teaching and learning languages is an intertwined long-lasting process. Therefore teachers need to go back to classrooms from time to time and learn new ways how to teach in order to be good and respected in their jobs.

5. Activities developing sociolinguistic competence

This chapter presents two activities aimed at the development of sociolinguistic competence in ELT classrooms in lower-secondary schools. The first activity deals with teaching speech act of greeting and the second activity is conceived as an introductory activity concerning teaching culture.

Each activity embraces descriptions of the participants, instruments needed, procedure and results comprising of data analysis and conclusion. The conclusion also involves my evaluation and reflection of the particular activity from my point of view.

5.1 Teaching speech act activity

As I was interested in teaching speech acts according to the instructions and recommendations in chapter 3.4 I decided to try to enrich my pupils' knowledge of speech act of greetings (the item no. 5 in my questionnaire see Fig 2, Appendix 2). The activity was also partly created according to the theoretical background by McGill (2010) (see Chapters 3.2, 3.6, 4.4). I focused on this particular speech act because it is one of the less complicated speech acts to learn and because the whole procedure of teaching consisted of six follow-up, however rather separate activities, which changed quickly.

Participants

The learners of 8th grade were chosen for this activity. The main reason for such choice was the small number of learners in my group – only 13 pupils (5 boys and 8 girls), which, I supposed, was the guarantee of more efficient work. Out of those thirteen pupils, 6 were bright learners and 7 were average and below-average learners.

Instruments

I needed following instruments: a computer, LCD projector, a white board, a white board marker, 13 sheets of paper, a video clip

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmOKZLeFKCM>) 4 minutes long, aimed at teaching speech act of greeting.

Procedure

The procedure involved several follow-up activities taking one whole lesson. The activities and time schedule were supposed to be following:

1. A short motivational discussion aimed at the importance of greetings in normal life so that the learners understand why this topic was selected. (5 minutes)
2. Introducing the question "How are you?" and listing learners' answers to the question on the board. (5 minutes)
3. Watching the sequenced video. Every part checked and explained. (10 minutes)
4. The final summary of all parts of the video, questions and responses listed on the board. (5 minutes)
5. Learners drawing figures that are greeting each other, using the new phrases. (10 minutes)
6. Final discussion why greetings are important in common conversation. (10 minutes)

Results:

Observation

Firstly, I wrote "How are you ?" on the board and asked what this phrase mean and when we use it. The learners' answers were when we meet somebody, a friend.

When I asked if they thought whether greeting is important to talk about in the classroom, pupils were a little confused, but they suggested the reason of being polite.

Further, they were supposed to give their answers to the question on the board. Their suggestions were following: "Fine. I'm fine, thanks. Good." I wrote their answers on the board.

The pupils watched the first part of the video clip and enlisted other possibilities how to respond: "Pretty good", "Not bad" and negative options: "Not so good", "Not so well" and "Not great".

The second part involved the explanation that if somebody uses the negative responses another question "What's wrong?" follows as an expression of politeness. And more over, the learners must be ready to give further explanation.

The third part of the video offered the other possibility of saying "How are you?" in an informal way: "How's it going?" and the appropriate responds were repeated: "Good", "Pretty good", "Not bad". At the same time their attention was drawn once again to the informality of "How's it going?".

In the last part of the video the learners found out that "What's up?" is another informal expression for "How are you?" which may be responded "Not much" or "Nothing much" and they mean that the speaker is free to chat. Also, "What's up?" may mean "Hello" and then the reply is "What's up?" too.

Every single answer and relating response was taken down on the board after summarizing each video sequence. In the next phase the learners were asked to draw some simple comic figures greeting each other. The learners were requested to draw a couple of pictures with positive and negative responses and use some of new phrases they had learned and remembered. Then I cleaned the board. Some pupils finished in five minutes, some needed more time.

In the end there was held a discussion aimed at what could happen if we would not be able to use correct phrases when greeting with new friends e.g. on holidays or at an international sports tournament. Pupils expressed doubts of being viewed as impolite or silly

and particularly the boys expressed worry that older kids may not be interested to continue talking with them then.

The discussion followed with these questions:

- a. Do you think that if you do not know how to respond properly, the communication could break down?
- b. Is it important to know at least some of those phrases then?
- c. Is it important to learn such things as we did today?

All the questions were answered positively all over the class.

Data analysis

Three learners completed the task wholly. They wrote correct both positive and negative responds to one of the three possibilities of "How are you?". The negative one was followed by "What's wrong?".

Nine learners draw one picture with only the positive respond. However, the question and answer were correct and related to each other. Four out of those pupils drew another picture with "What's up?" and proper answers.

Only one learner was not able to complete task successfully.

Conclusion

In conclusion, from my point of view the activity described above proved to be successful and effective one. The pupils were active, everybody drew their pictures. They were not bored or noisy and what was important and satisfying, they took part in the final discussion and evaluated the topic as attractive, interesting and important. More over the results turned out to be more than good.

5.2 Teaching culture activity

The second activity is aimed at teaching culture and cultural stereotypes in ELT classes. This lesson is meant to be an introductory lesson into teaching culture in ELT classes. The final form of this activity was created according to the theoretical background referring to teaching culture and cultural stereotypes (see Chapter 3.5) and McGill (2010) (see Chapter 3.7). This activity also relates to the questionnaire item no. 6 (see Fig 2 in the Appendix 2, Chapter 4.5). The goal of the lesson was to explain the learners the notions of culture and cultural stereotypes in an easy way in order to be able to answer the questions:

- What is culture?
- What are cultural stereotypes?
- Why are these questions discussed?

Participants

This activity was carried out with the pupils of 9th grade. The relatively high level of complexity of the activity involving ability to discuss, compare, deduct and evaluate was the reason for making such decision. The small group of 13 learners of 8 above-average and 5 average pupils served the best to the purpose of the prepared activity. The pupils were divided into four groups.

Instruments

The following instruments were needed: a computer, a LCD projector, a white board, a marker, two video clips “What are the British like?” (<http://www.real-english.com/reo/13/unit13.asp>) and “What are the Americans like?” (<http://www.real-english.com/reo/14/unit14.asp>), each approximately 1 minute long focused on cultural stereotypes, pictures of Big Ben, the White House, the Queen, president Obama, One Direction, Miley Cyrus and Czech band New Element.

Procedure

The procedure included five main steps covering the whole lesson. The activities and the time schedule were supposed to be following:

1. Explanation of the notion of culture. Discussing questions: “What are the British like?” and “What are the Americans like?” in groups first, then presentation and comparison of ideas throughout the classroom (10 minutes)
2. Watching both videos and doing two short exercises focusing on unknown vocabulary (see Fig. 19, Appendix 4) in groups (up to 10 minutes)
3. Discussing the question “What are the Czech like?” in groups first, then presentation and comparison of ideas throughout the classroom (10 minutes)
4. Discussing the question “What are the cultural stereotypes?” in groups first, then presentation and comparison of ideas throughout the classroom, answering the question why we discuss this topic in the classroom (10 minutes)
5. Summarizing and answering the goal questions through brainstorming ideas throughout the classroom (5 minutes)

Results:

Observation

I opened the lesson with the question “What is culture?” which I wrote on the board and in the meantime I placed all the pictures I brought on the board. The learners’ answers included: historical buildings, architecture, theatre, traditions, customs. I appreciated their answers and explained that traditions and customs determine people’s thinking and behaviour. Then the response to my additional questions whether they think there are different cultures in the world was positive.

Further, I asked the questions “What are the British like?”, “What are the Americans like?” and wrote them on the board and prompted pupils to give their answers. They were the following as for the British: sophisticated, boring, nice accent, cook badly, rich, traditional, clever. The Americans were described as clever, ambitious, impulsive, messy, fat, they like eating hamburgers and chips, drinking Coca-cola, beautiful and attractive, good singers and dancers.

I praised them for their answers and played them the video clips where different native speakers – Americans or British gave their replies to the same questions. After watching the videos learners went through the simple exercise focused on unknown vocabulary and they agreed that their examples corresponded more or less with the opinions of people in videos.

Afterwards I asked the children to explain what they think cultural stereotypes are, bearing in mind what we had discussed. They agreed that they are “some characteristics or rules typical for a single nation or a single group of people”.

Followingly, I asked what the Czechs are like. The learners’ answers included feats as lazy, envious, smart, funny, full of ideas, handy, selfish, sporty people.

“Everybody is different” was the perfect answer which helped me focus the learners on the fact that accepting the stereotyped features literally may be misleading. I pointed at the three pictures of the pop-stars and explained that though people are different because of their traditions they are in fact the same as for the basic values and attitudes towards e.g. good, bad, friendship, love, etc.

When I asked the learners to try to come to a conclusion and explain why we discuss these topics in our English lessons, the learners were not able to give an answer immediately. When I stressed the fact that the culture rules, which are sometimes different,

relate to people's behaviour, two learners suggested that "we discuss it because we should know how to behave in foreign countries".

Lastly, the learners were submitted the simplified idea of two cultures characterized by their cultural stereotypes. The cultures were represented by their own class and the other classes. Their task was to brainstorm the ideas of the characteristic features as cultural stereotypes of both groups, stressing that there can be different as well as the same characteristics. The board was divided into halves and the learners came to write their ideas on the board. The ideas included:

- we help each other vs. they do not help each other
- we talk to each other vs. they are separated in groups
- we stick together
- we are good friends
- we have fun

Conclusion

From my point of view the activity above was not as successful as I expected. The weakest part was the final activity, when the learners did not have enough ideas and there were the language limitations. Also, five minutes did not give them enough time to think.

On the other hand, answering the questions "What are the American's/British/Czech like?" and watching the video clips went more successfully and smoothly.

They managed to realize the relation between cultural stereotypes and learning language with my guidance quite quickly, however they found it very difficult to express this relationship.

In conclusion, I do not think that this activity would be unsuitable for lower-secondary level, because the learners proved to be quite active and co-operative, providing ideas.

However, I suggest that it should be done with older learners (14-15 years old, 9th graders), preferably in schools where learners are divided into language groups according to the level of their knowledge of the target language. Further, the division into two lessons would provide learners with more space and time to think.

Summary of the practical part

The practical research described above was aimed at teaching sociolinguistic competence in ELT classrooms in lower-secondary schools. The goals of the research were accomplished within the small-scale questionnaire comprising of 10 items to answer.

The respondents were the teachers of primary and lower-secondary schools and lower-secondary and secondary schools. They answered the questions relating to issues concerning teaching sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary schools. The main areas involved teaching sociolinguistic competence, teaching culture and various cultural topics, the issue of cultural texts and teaching speech acts in common textbooks and authentic materials in ELT.

All the data were processed, analyzed and interpreted according to the theoretical input in the theoretical part of the diploma thesis. They were graphically compiled in the forms of graphs and tables in the Appendix of the diploma project.

Lastly, two activities were created according to the theoretical knowledge and recommendations in order to test their appropriateness in the environment of lower-secondary classrooms. Each activity was described and evaluated.

IV. Conclusion

The purpose of the diploma thesis was to answer questions concerning the teaching sociolinguistic competence at lower-secondary schools. Primarily, the diploma thesis research aimed at the attitudes, opinions and experience of teachers of lower-secondary schools referring to promoting sociolinguistic competence within the teaching speaking and teaching communicative competence.

The theoretical section of the diploma project provides the theoretical basis for creation of small-scale questionnaire as an instrument for the research submitted in the practical part of the thesis and the basis for the correct interpretation of collected data providing the final conclusions.

Two activities based on the theoretical foundations relating to teaching speech acts and teaching culture are submitted in the practical section in order to show and verify the conclusions of the diploma thesis.

The practical section of the thesis provided the source for the resumes of the results of the small-scale questionnaire research whose goal was to provide answers to the questions stated in the introductory part of the thesis. Firstly, the answer to the question whether teachers of English at lower-secondary schools try to develop learners' sociolinguistic competence is definitely positive. Importantly, they find this competence important to teach. Role-plays and short dialogues promoting speech acts are routinely exploited in ELT classrooms as a means of achievement of sociolinguistic competence. Authentic materials of various types are considered as a useful and helpful tool in promoting sociolinguistic competence in the lower-secondary classrooms.

The issue whether teachers consider teaching culture as important part of promoting sociolinguistic competence and what means they exploit to accomplish it were the other matters of interest.

In accordance with the findings of the small-scale research, throughout the requested group, teachers regard teaching culture as really significant element within teaching sociolinguistic competence. Further, they have the clear perspective of the cultural and cross-cultural topics that should be taught for the purpose of achievement of cultural awareness in lower-secondary classrooms, although the sufficiency of the cultural texts submitted by the authors of textbooks for lower-secondary schools is not adequate to the needs of teachers.

The answers to the items of the questionnaire provide overall view of teachers to the question whether teachers of English at lower-secondary schools find textbooks as effective and supportive tools in teaching sociolinguistic competence. Although materials useful for teaching speech acts are of appropriate quality, cultural issues are not very well elaborated.

In conclusion, bearing in mind the limited scale of the research, the results, nevertheless, indicate that teaching sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary ELT classrooms is considered significant by teachers and this competence is put into effect as an important part of English language lessons.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Nostrand's Themes of French Culture (1974)

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for teachers

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Appendix 5: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – proficiency levels

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Appendix 1: Nostrand's Themes of French Culture (1974)

Figure 1: Nostrand's Themes of French Culture (1974)

Nostrand's Themes of French Culture (1974)

1. The art of living: enjoyment of the lifestyle one has chosen
2. Intellectuality and *etre raisonnable*
3. Individualism and civil liberty (including acquisitive ambition)
4. Realism and good sense (including health care and sensitivity to material conditions and conveniences)
5. Law and order (including retributive justice)
6. Distributive justice (including an increasing humanitarian concern and sensitivity to the deteriorating environment)
7. Friendship
8. Love
9. Family
10. Religion
11. The quest for community (with a subculture), and loyalty to province or region
12. Patriotism and its object, *La patrie*

(Valdez in Mizne, 1997, p. 26)

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for teachers
 Figure 2: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Stepanka Ondrackova and I am a student of Palacký University Olomouc, Faculty of Education, Department of English studies. The purpose of the questionnaire is a thesis research that is focused on teaching sociolinguistic competence at lower-secondary schools. Your kind help and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Sociolinguistic competence – a learner’s ability to use a language appropriately in various social contexts (e.g. how to make an apology, ask for things, greet appropriately, how to start a conversation, etc.)

Assessment scale: **1 not at all **2 a little ** 3 quite ** 4 very much

1. **What cultural topics would be the most important and the most appropriate to be discussed in lower-secondary English classes? (tick as many as you want)**
 FRIENDSHIP, SCHOOL, YOUR IDEAS:
 FAMILY, RELIGION,
 LOVE, HOUSING,
 EVERYDAY LIFE, GOOD AND BAD,

2. **Rank the following techniques (1 2 3 4) according to their appropriateness of sociolinguistic competence improvement in lower-secondary schools, possibly, add some, please.**
 ROLE-PLAYS 1 2 3 4 QUESTIONNAIRES AND QUIZZES 1 2 3 4
 DISCUSSIONS 1 2 3 4 SHORT DIALOGUES BASED ON SMALL SITUATIONS 1 2 3 4
 OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

3. **Do modern textbooks contain a sufficient amount of “culture capsules” (short, meaningful texts in order to compare cultures in an ordinary foreign language classroom)?** 1 2 3 4

4. **Do these “culture capsules” meet the teacher’s (your) expectations?** 1 2 3 4

5. **How satisfyingly do the textbooks, which you use, deal with these issues:**

compliments (e.g. You look great, ...)	1 2 3 4
requests (e.g. Can I ...?)	1 2 3 4
apologies (e.g. I’m sorry,...)	1 2 3 4
greetings (e.g. Hello,...)	1 2 3 4
address forms (e.g. Mr. Smith,...)	1 2 3 4
refusals (e.g. No, I can’t.)	1 2 3 4
complaints (e.g. There seems to be a problem with...)	1 2 3 4

6. **How important is teaching culture (English/American) as a part of ELT at lower-secondary schools?** 1 2 3 4

7. **How much appropriate is it to teach sociolinguistic competence to students of lower-secondary schools (from your point of view)?** 1 2 3 4

8. **Do you think that authentic materials such as books, magazines, videos, various internet resources would contribute to efficient teaching sociolinguistic competence to students of lower-secondary schools?** 1 2 3 4

9. **Do you think that a lack of sociolinguistic competence in English language can influence the student’s further study abroad?** 1 2 3 4

10. **Would you like to participate in a training/workshop on teaching sociolinguistic competence, if being offered?** Yes I’m not sure No

Appendix 3: Results of the questionnaire

Figure 3: What cultural topics would be the most important and the most appropriate to be discussed in lower-secondary English classes?

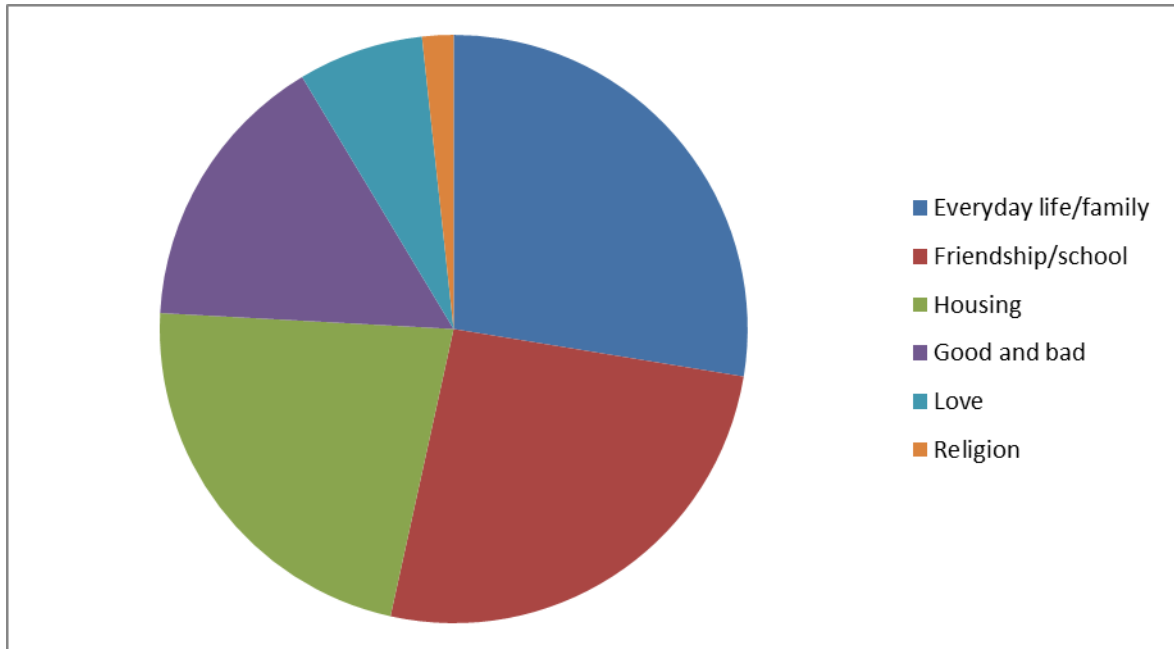


Figure 4: Rank the following techniques (1 2 3 4) according to their appropriateness of sociolinguistic competence improvement in lower-secondary schools.

	1	2	3	4
Role-plays	5%	20%	15%	60%
Discussions	5%	30%	40%	25%
Questionnaires, quizzes	0%	25%	60%	10%
Short dialogues on small situations	0%	5%	35%	60%

Figure. 5: Do modern textbooks contain a sufficient amount of “culture capsules”(short, meaningful texts in order to compare cultures in an ordinary foreign language classroom)?

	1	2	3	4
Sufficient amount of “culture capsules” in modern textbooks	0%	25%	65%	10%

Figure. 6: Do these “culture capsules” meet the teachers’ expectations?

	1	2	3	4
Teachers’ expectations	0%	50%	45%	5%

Figure 7: How satisfyingly do the textbook, which you use, deal with greetings?

	1	2	3	4
Greetings	0%	10%	20%	70%

Figure 8: How satisfyingly do the textbook, which you use, deal with address forms?

	1	2	3	4
Address forms	10%	30%	10%	50%

Figure 9: How satisfyingly do the textbook, which you use, deal with compliments?

	1	2	3	4
Compliments	10%	45%	40%	15%

Figure 10: How satisfyingly do the textbook, which you use, deal with apologies?

	1	2	3	4
Apologies	10%	20%	40%	30%

Figure 11: How satisfyingly do the textbook, which you use, deal with requests?

	1	2	3	4
Requests	0%	0%	65%	35%

Figure 12: How satisfyingly do the textbook, which you use, deal with refusals?

	1	2	3	4
Refusals	5%	40%	25%	30%

Figure 13: How satisfyingly do the textbook, which you use, deal with complaints?

	1	2	3	4
Complaints	30%	40%	10%	20%

Figure 14: How important is teaching culture (English/American) as a part of ELT at lower-secondary schools?

	1	2	3	4
The importance of teaching culture	10%	5%	55%	30%

Figure 15: How much appropriate is it to teach sociolinguistic competence to students of lower-secondary schools (from your point of view)?

	1	2	3	4
Sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary schools	5%	15%	50%	30%

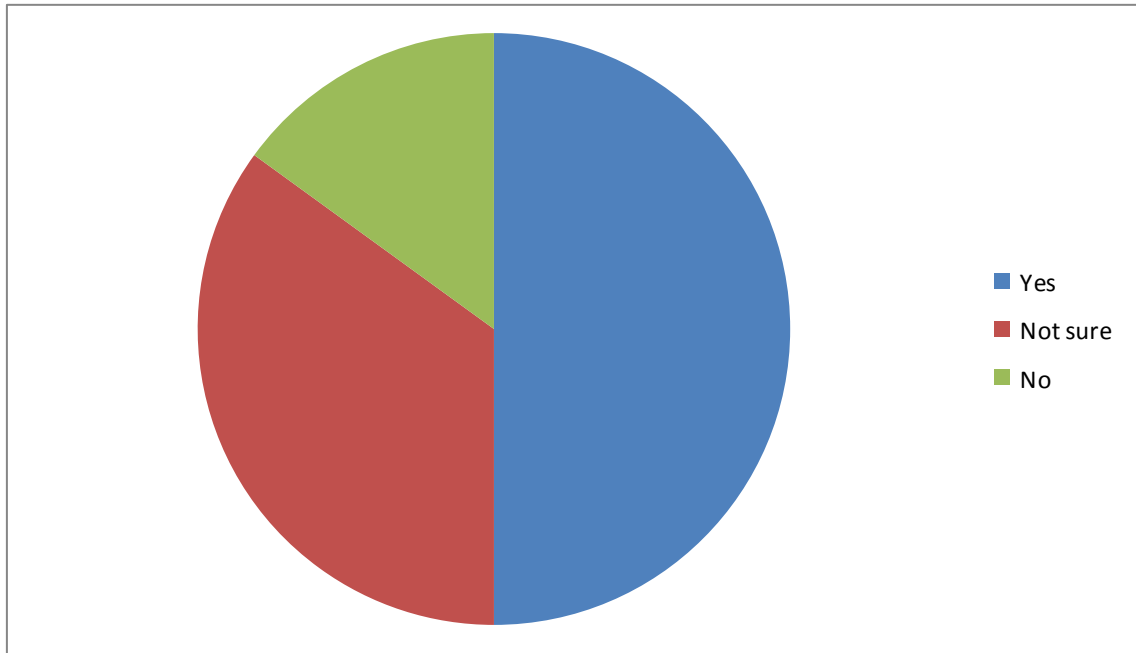
Figure 16: Do you think that authentic materials such as books, magazines, videos, various internet resources would contribute to efficient teaching sociolinguistic competence to students of lower-secondary schools?

	1	2	3	4
Authentic materials in promoting sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary schools	0%	15%	40%	45%

Figure 17: Do you think that a lack of sociolinguistic competence in English language can influence the student's further study abroad?

	1	2	3	4
A lack of sociolinguistic competence relating to study abroad	0%	40%	30%	30%

Figure 18: Would you participate in a training/workshop on teaching sociolinguistic competence, if being offered?



Appendix 4: The short exercise aimed at unknown vocabulary

Fig: 19: The short exercise aimed at unknown vocabulary

Culture (adjectives)	
1. Self-confident means: A. the person who is sure of himself/herself B. the person who runs her/his own business	2. Accommodating means: A. helpful B. the person who likes new furniture
3. Loud over the top means: A. extremely loud B. little loud	4. Outspoken means: A. the person who says directly what he/she thinks B. a silent person
5. Brash means: A. an impolite person B. the person who likes to take care of his/her hair	6. Stuffy means: A. a boring person B. a person who likes his/her things
7. Snobbish means: B. a person who likes animals	8. Pompous means: B. a paranoid person
9. Sophisticated means: A. an arrogant person A. a naïve person	A. a snobbish person B. a cultivated, cultured person

Source: <http://www.real-english.com/reo/13/unit13.asp>

<http://www.real-english.com/reo/14/unit14.asp>

Appendix 5: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – proficiency levels

Fig 20: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – proficiency levels

Basic user	
A1	A2
Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

Source: <http://www.eui.eu/Documents/ServicesAdmin/LanguageCentre/CEF.pdf>

Appendix 6: Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education

Fig. 21: Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education

<p>Receptive language skills</p> <p>Expected outcomes</p> <p>pupils will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read aloud texts of appropriate length, fluently and respecting the rules of pronunciation• Understand the content of simple texts in textbooks and the content of authentic materials using visual aids; find familiar expressions, phrases and answers to questions in texts• Understand simple and clearly pronounced speech and conversations• Infer a likely meaning of new words from context• Use a bilingual dictionary, look up information of the meaning of a word un an appropriate monolingual dictionary <p>Productive language skills</p> <p>Expected outcomes</p> <p>Pupils will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Form a simple (oral or written) message related to a situation from family and school life and studied theme areas• Create and modify grammatically correct simple sentences and short texts• Provide a brief summary of the content of a text, speech and conversation of appropriate difficulty• Request simple information <p>Interactive language skills</p> <p>Expected outcomes</p> <p>Pupils will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In a simple manner, make themselves understood in common everyday situations
--

Subject matter

- ☒ **simple messages** – address, responding to being addressed, greetings, welcoming, saying good-bye, introductions, apologies, responding to an apology, thanking and responding to being thanked, pleas, requests, wishes, congratulations, requests for help (services, information), agreement/disagreement, meetings, social plans
- ☒ **basic relationships** – existential (Who?...), spatial (Where? Where to?...), temporal (When?...), qualitative (What? Which? How?...), quantitative (How many/much?...)
- ☒ **theme areas** – home, family, housing, school, free time and leisure activities, personal letters, forms, questionnaires, sport, healthcare, food, in town, clothing, shopping, nature, weather, people and society, travelling, the socio-cultural environment of relevant language areas and the Czech Republic
- ☒ **vocabulary and word formation**
- ☒ **grammatical structures and sentence types, lexical principles of orthography**

Source: Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education, 2007

<https://www.google.cz/search?q=Framework+of+Education+Program&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:cs:official&client=firefox-a&channel=np&source=hp&gf>

Resumé

Diplomová práce se zabývá otázkou výuky sociolingvistické kompetence žáků 2. stupně základních škol v hodinách anglického jazyka a zjišťuje názory učitelů základních škol na tuto problematiku. Podává teoretický základ, v němž se zabývá se otázkou výuky kultury, kulturních stereotypů a řečových aktů pomocí autentických výukových prostředků jako součástí této kompetence. Praktická část předkládá dotazníkové šetření, které analyzuje a interpretuje názory učitelů základních škol na výuku sociolingvistické kompetence v rámci mluvení, včetně vhodnosti a přiměřenosti kulturních témat a řečových aktů tak, jak jsou předkládány v běžných učebnicích angličtiny. Zvažována je také vhodnost a důležitost využití autentických materiálů při výuce této kompetence. Součástí jsou také dvě aktivity, které tuto kompetenci rozvíjí.

Anotace

Jméno a příjmení:	Bc. Štěpánka Ondráčková
Katedra:	Katedra Anglického jazyka
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Josef Nevařil, PhD.
Rok obhajoby:	2014

Název práce:	Výuka sociolingvistické kompetence na 2. stupni základních škol
Název práce v angličtině:	Teaching sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary schools
Anotace práce:	Diplomová práce se zabývá otázkou výuky sociolingvistické kompetence žáků 2. stupně základních škol v hodinách anglického jazyka a zjišťuje názory učitelů základních škol na tuto problematiku. Podává teoretický základ, v němž se zabývá se otázkou výuky kultury, kulturních stereotypů a řečových aktů pomocí autentických výukových prostředků jako součástí této kompetence. Praktická část předkládá dotazníkové šetření, které analyzuje a interpretuje názory učitelů základních škol na výuku sociolingvistické kompetence v rámci mluvení, včetně vhodnosti a přiměřenosti kulturních témat a řečových aktů tak, jak jsou předkládány v běžných učebnicích angličtiny. Zvažována je také vhodnost a důležitost využití autentických materiálů při výuce této kompetence. Součástí jsou také dvě aktivity, které tuto kompetenci rozvíjí.
Klíčová slova:	Sociolingvistická kompetence, výuka kultury, kulturní stereotypy, řečové akty, autentické výukové prostředky, 2. stupeň základní školy
Anotace v angličtině:	The diploma thesis aims at teaching sociolinguistic competence in ELT classrooms in lower-secondary schools and focuses on teachers' opinions of significance and appropriateness of teaching this competence in lower-secondary education. It provides with the theoretical background which deals with teaching culture, cultural stereotypes and speech acts using authentic materials. The practical section provides with the small-scale questionnaire research aimed at analysis and interpretation of teachers' opinions of teaching sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary schools including appropriateness of cultural

	topics and speech acts in common textbooks of English language in lower-secondary education. The importance of authentic materials is also considered. Two activities to promote sociolinguistic competence in lower-secondary ELT classrooms are enclosed in the diploma thesis.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Sociolinguistic competence, teaching culture, cultural stereotypes, speech acts, authentic materials, lower-secondary schools
Přílohy vázané k práci:	Appendix 1: Nostrand's Themes of French Culture (1974) Appendix 2: Questionnaire for teachers Appendix 3: Results of the questionnaire Appendix 4: The short exercise aimed at unknown vocabulary Appendix 5: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – proficiency levels Appendix 6: Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education
Rozsah práce:	94 s.
Jazyk práce:	anglický