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**The Development of Sociolinguistic Competence**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Olomouci

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vlastnoruční podpis

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## Abstract

This thesis deals with the development of sociolinguistic competence in English language teaching. It presents an overview of existing research about the importance of the inclusion of culture in language education and the necessity to develop competences in education. Furthermore, this thesis presents a selection of methods and materials, which help develop sociolinguistic competence in language learners, and the best ways to incorporate them into language education. The practical part of this thesis then studies the reactions of Czech lower secondary school pupils to the inclusion of these materials and their ability to work with them, and analyses selected coursebooks in order to determine how and to what extent they introduce culture to English language learners.

## Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Theoretical part</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1. Language and culture</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Culture in language education	10
1.2 English as lingua franca	12
1.3 Competences	13
1.3.1 Communicative competence	14
1.3.2 Linguistic competence	14
1.3.3 Sociocultural competence	16
1.3.4 Intercultural competence	16
1.3.5 Sociolinguistic competence	17
1.4 Summary of Chapter 1	19
<b>2 The development of sociolinguistic competence</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 Communicative activities	21
2.1.1 Role play	21
2.1.2 Genuine communication in the target language	21
2.1.3 Taking initiative in a conversation	22
2.1.4 Discussion	22
2.1.5 Storytelling	23
2.2 Intercultural education	24
2.2.1 Societal constraints on register	24
2.2.2 Small talk	24
2.2.3 Interpreting social meaning	25
2.2.4 Culture comparison	25
2.2.5 Critical incidents	25
2.3 The role of teachers	27
2.4 Summary of Chapter 2	29
<b>3. Teaching materials</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1. Coursebooks	32
3.2 Audio/video materials	33
3.3 Reading materials	36
3.4 Visual materials	37
3.5 Summary of Chapter 3	40
<b>4. Summary of the Theoretical part</b>	<b>41</b>

<b>Practical part</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>5. Aims of the study</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>6. Lessons aiming at real-life communication</b>	<b>43</b>
6.1 General information	43
6.1.1 The school	43
6.1.2 The learners	44
6.1.3 Teaching materials and equipment	44
6.1.4 Listening exercises	45
6.1.5 Reading exercises	45
6.1.6 Speaking exercises	45
6.2 The 6th grade	46
6.2.1 Video on hobbies and interests	46
6.2.1.1 Analysis of the hobbies and interests lesson	47
6.2.2 Travel Guide Reading	48
6.2.2.1 Analysis of the Travel Guide Reading lesson	48
6.2.3 Presenting their own hobbies and interests	49
6.2.3.1 Analysis of the learners' presentations	50
6.3 The 8th grade	51
6.3.1 Video presenting fake news	51
6.3.1.1 Analysis of the fake news lesson	51
6.3.2 Movie Review Reading	52
6.3.2.1 Analysis if the Movie Review Reading lesson	53
6.3.3 Presenting their own fake news	54
6.3.3.1 Analysis of the pupils' presentation of fake news	54
6.4 The 9th grade	55
6.4.1 Video about teenagers in the 1960's	55
6.4.1.1 Analysis of the teenagers in the 1960's lesson	55
6.4.2 Advice Column Reading	56
6.4.2.1 Analysis of the Advice Column Reading lesson	57
6.4.3 Telling a story about their childhood memory	58
6.4.3.1 Analysis of the pupil's story telling	58
<b>7. Results of the study</b>	<b>60</b>

<b>8. Coursebook analysis</b>	<b>62</b>
8.1 Project 1	64
8.2 English Plus 1	66
8.3 Project 3	68
8.4 English Plus 3	70
8.5 Project 4	72
8.6 English Plus 4	74
8.7 Comparison	76
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>List of Appendices</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Annotation</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Resumé</b>	<b>94</b>

## Introduction

More often than not, when we step over the borders of our own country, we find ourselves in situations calling for the use of English. The English language has become so widespread that we seldom try learning local languages when travelling and often rely on English as the easiest means of communication. Naturally, there are problems surrounding this phenomenon – the most obvious being a different level of language acquisition by all parties.

While the English language has found its way into the curricula of schools all over Europe, we still face different accents, dialects, vocabularies, and manners. We might expect different outcomes when talking to a Spanish shopkeeper, a Croatian landlord, an Italian waiter or a Dutch flight attendant, and because these variables cannot be predicted, our incentive as English language teachers is to prepare our students for as many of them as possible.

Teaching a different language must always be accompanied by teaching the culture of the people who speak it. Learning a language is not only about grammar and vocabulary, although those are needed as well, but also about learning the way the language is used in the context of its background. There is a widespread belief that the customs of one culture are generally valid in other cultures, especially in an international world which has a tendency to assimilate and accept other cultures. Language classes should therefore include social and cultural background of its country.

Teaching English as *lingua franca*, a bridge language for international use, offers a unique challenge in this aspect. There is no culture to *lingua franca*, there is no social background for a language that is spoken by parties who learnt it as a foreign language. That is possibly the reason why most teachers choose a particular English – most commonly either British or American English, and present very few other varieties.

This diploma thesis tries to present an alternative that lies somewhere in between – a way to teach English as a native language to specific countries with their cultural backgrounds



as well as a lingua franca meant for international communication of non-native English speakers. The outcome of such a course should be a student who travels abroad and has virtually no problems understanding and communicating in English no matter where they go.

This goal should be accomplished by focusing less on the most common and standard variations of the English language in the lessons and rather including different ones and focusing on different accents, dialects, vocabulary, etc. This thesis first introduces current ideas and studies concerned with this issue, and then presents a set of lesson plans following this pattern. The lessons were realised in a Czech lower secondary school in various grades. This thesis examines the abilities of Czech lower secondary English language learners, their understanding of different Englishes and their ability to use English as a means of communication. Finally, an analysis of selected coursebooks used by Czech lower secondary schools evaluates the way they introduce culture to English language learners.

## I. Theoretical part

### 1. Language and culture

Every language comes from a cultural setting and is, in fact, one of the means by which culture is presented. People strengthen and spread their beliefs and values within the society by communicating with other people. It is only natural that learners of a foreign language will try to incorporate their own cultural background into the way they use the target language. It is therefore important for foreign language teachers to pay attention not only to the cultural setting of the language they teach, but also to the cultural setting of their student's mother tongue.

The idea that language and culture influence each other greatly must be considered by language teachers. The following subchapters present how culture is incorporated into language education, focusing mainly on the competences that a properly educated language student should acquire.

#### 1.1 Culture in language education

The obvious reason for studying a language is communication. Learning a language helps to touch and understand the culture and way of thinking of a different nation. The most effective way to develop language competence, which should be the main objective of a language class, is spending time in the country. Since there is no possible way to ensure that as an option, language teachers should create an environment that mimics real life situations that their students might encounter when travelling abroad. In a language classroom, the students are being introduced not only to the ways to use the language for communication, but also to different cultural values and traditions. To assure a smooth intercultural blending, language teachers need to integrate cultural confrontation in a way that makes students not only see, but experience and understand the other culture. When working on problems concerning everyday life, social and political arrangements, religion, environment, interpersonal relationships, body language, customs and traditions etc,

students should understand different points of view, learn to compromise and accept differences, and most of all, be ready to travel abroad and experience different cultures on their own. (Kyloušková, 2007)

Holme (2003) describes five principles adopted by language teachers according to which culture is assimilated into language:

- the communicative view,
- the classical-curriculum view,
- the culture-free-language view,
- the deconstructionist view,
- the competence view. (Holme, 2003)

These principles vary in their approach to culture and its necessity to language teaching. Holme describes each view in detail, clearly stating that the first three deal with culture as an irrelevant component to foreign language learning while the last two see culture and language as deeply intertwined and mutually influential.

According to Holme's analysis, only the competence view sees culture as essential to understanding the language completely. This approach believes that learning a language should be accompanied by an encounter with the culture of the target language so as to fully understand a language's meaning. (Holme, 2003)

The idea of teaching a language often aims to prepare students for communicating with a native speaker of that particular language in the country of its origin. coursebooks and other materials will try to introduce as much of that particular nation as possible in anticipation of the student travelling and meeting people there. English language teaching in this traditional notion prepares students for travelling to the UK or the USA to meet native English speakers. In the coursebooks, students are introduced to English or American families, their way of living, speaking and spending time. The portrayal of these two cultures is usually quite detailed and very optimistic, while the focus on other

English-speaking countries and their cultures is overshadowed at best and completely missing at worst. (Wandel, 2003)

## 1.2 English as lingua franca

English as lingua franca or English as an international language has been studied by linguists since the 1970s. There have been certain misleading explanations of the terms, mainly because using a shortened version, “international English”, suggests that there is a codified version of English that is internationally used as a clearly distinguishable language, which is not the case. There are two distinguished understandings of the term international English. The first one is to use international English to refer to the English language used by multilingual countries where English is not the mother tongue yet it is used in an institutional role. The second, and for this thesis more valid, explanation is the use of international English as the language used for international communication across linguistic borders. (Jenkins, 2006)

In language teaching, the modern concept of English as a world language should bring some innovation. Teaching English could be the new way of introducing students to a great variety of cultures, of teaching them important values such as keeping an open mind when met with something they do not know or understand at first, fighting xenophobia, discrimination and prejudice, and being interculturally sensitive. By teaching English as lingua franca, teachers open doors to perceiving, experiencing and understanding basically the whole world. Whichever culture they might choose for a particular lesson, it becomes an additional learning objective and broadens the students’ horizons. Students should be encouraged to learn about and discuss diverse opinions on problems they might not have realised other cultures face as well, to notice cultural discrimination and be able to critically think about it and overcome it, to develop empathy and change perspectives. (Kloučková, 2009)

### 1.3 Competences

Dell Hymes described competence in his paper *On Communicative Competence* (1972) as “the most general term for the capabilities of a person” (Hymes, 1972, p. 64). He also divided linguistic competence and performance, this is discussed more in the following subchapter. In his paper *Competences in education: A confusion of tongues* (2001), Wim Westera took Chomsky and others into consideration and came up with his own definition: “Competence is a highly-valued qualification that accounts for the effective use of knowledge and skills in specific, usually complex, contexts” (p. 79). This idea presents competence as a certain ability to choose specific knowledge and specific skills to successfully perform in a situation. (Westera, 2001)

Westera declares competences to have become a “central issue in post-secondary education” (p. 75). Some argument could be made about the “post-secondary education”, seeing as competences have found their way into the curricular documents of all levels of education, however for the purpose of this subchapter, Westera’s words explain the idea of competences very well. He believes that the term competences has become synonymous with capabilities, qualifications and expertise in the eyes of both educators and employers. (Westera, 2001)

Westera puts competences in contrast to cognitive skills and knowledge, presenting competences as a tie connecting knowledge reproduction and skilled behaviour into one package of competent behaviour. Knowledge can be understood as the representation of information, principles and theories, beliefs and prejudices. Knowledge is easy to test, assuming the ability to reproduce knowledge is the same as actually having the knowledge. Westera makes sure not to confuse knowledge and understanding. While the ability to access and share knowledge might prove beneficial in a test, it is not the same as understanding the knowledge and being able to use it in a meaningful way. Understanding of knowledge depends on experience and the ability to link this new knowledge with a situation. (Westera, 2001)

Cognitive skills on the other hand are connected to mental processes using, transforming and expand knowledge. Westera cites Bloom et al. (1956) and lists “problem solving, reasoning, thinking, assessing, concluding, (...), analysis, synthesis and evaluation” as the main mental processes dealing with knowledge (p. 77). Cognitive skills are difficult to test, as the possibilities for brain monitoring are limited. Testing is therefore restricted to observing those cognitive skills that evoke a behavioural response. However, cognitive skills and behavioral responses are closely linked together and more often than not, simultaneous. (Westera, 2001)

The Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (CEFR), declares competences essential to foreign language learning. While all human competences are important and provide a good base for communication, there are certain competences which are closely related to language. The following sections deal with the competences most connected to language and culture.

### 1.3.1 Communicative competence

The concept of communicative competence has been deeply discussed and described by various linguists. They usually agree that the communicative competence is comprised of a number of components, one of which is the linguistic competence. (Kloučková, 2009)

According to CEFR, this specific communicative competence consist of the following:

- linguistic competences,
- sociolinguistic competences,
- pragmatic competences. (CEFR, p. 108)

### 1.3.2 Linguistic competence

The linguistic competence was first studied and presented by Noam Chomsky in the 1960s. He separated linguistic competence and linguistic performance as two parts of our language production. Linguistic competence, as described in his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), is the ability of a speaker to create any number of sentences in that

language. According to his studies, anyone is capable of understanding the grammar of whichever language, perhaps thanks to our brain's ability to create connections and relationships between concepts and ideas. On the other hand, linguistic performance is the actual linguistic output of the speaker. It is dependent on the competence, however it is impacted by a number of outside influences, such as memory, attention, etc. (Chomsky, 1965)

Chomsky's description of linguistic competence was followed and expanded by Hymes (1972). He talks about linguistic competence as "dependent on knowledge and ability to use (...) which allows for the role of non-cognitive factors." (p. 64)". In his paper, he criticizes Chomsky for not accounting for sociocultural factors and states that linguistic theory should take sociocultural influences of language into consideration. He presents the idea that the notion of competence might help find a linguistic theory that would deal with the role of sociocultural differences such as "socially determined perception, contextual styles, shared norms, etc." (p. 59)

CEFR defines linguistic competence as "knowledge of, and ability to use, the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated." (p. 109) CEFR distinguishes six sub-competences which together create the complex linguistic competence. They are:

- lexical competence;
- grammatical competence;
- semantic competence;
- phonological competence;
- Orthographic competence;
- Orthoepic competence. (p. 109)

This thesis will not describe these competences in detail as they are not the subject of this study, which focuses more on the cultural influence on language.

### 1.3.3 Sociocultural competence

According to Ieva Anužienė's paper *The structure of sociocultural competence (self) development*, sociocultural competences help ensure tolerance towards other people by enabling multicultural communication. Sociocultural competence can be understood as the sharing of attitudes, values and knowledge in an intercultural communication. Anužienė believes that the development of sociocultural competences takes place in certain contexts, e.g. by communicating with peers, children develop social perception and skills, cultural awareness, knowledge and sensibility. (Anužienė, 2015)

CEFR describes sociocultural knowledge as one aspect of knowledge of the world, which is one of the basic competences it introduces. There are certain typically European features described in the document, such as:

- “Everyday living, e.g. food and drink, meal times, table manner, public holidays, (...),
- living conditions, e.g. living standards (...), housing conditions, welfare arrangements,
- interpersonal relations, e.g. class structure of society and relation between classes, relation between sexes, relation between generations, (...),
- values, beliefs and attitudes in relation to e.g. social class, occupation groups, wealth, tradition and social change, (...)
- body language,
- social conventions, e.g. with regard to giving and receiving hospitality, (...)
- ritual behaviour in such areas as religion, birth, marriage, death, celebrations, festivals, (...).” (CEFR, p. 103)

### 1.3.4 Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence was explored and studied by Alvino Fantini. In *Exploring and Assessing Intercultural Competence* (2006), intercultural competence is explained as “a



complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself.” (p. 12)

CEFR also presents intercultural awareness as one of the basic competences. It is described as “knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (...) between the ‘world of origin’ and the ‘world of the target community’” (p. 103).

### 1.3.5 Sociolinguistic competence

CEFR describes sociolinguistic competence as “the knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use” (p. 118). Ranney (1992) describes sociolinguistic competence as the ability to use speech acts, manage turn-taking and topics of conversation, to understand the differences in register and politeness, and understanding how these aspects of language are influenced by social context and setting.

*In Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching Testing* (1980), Canale and Swain propose a theoretical framework which includes “three main competences: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.” (p. 28) Based on their theory, the sociolinguistic competence follows two rules, the rule of use and the rule of discourse.

The rule of use is based on the appropriateness of an utterance in a given setting and context, while also focusing on the appropriate attitude and register in a given sociocultural context. The rule of discourse could be best explained as the combination of grammatical and sociocultural rules in speech, basically its cohesion and coherence, while also focusing on other notions, such as topic. (Canale, Swain, 1980)

CEFR distinguishes five matters concerning the sociolinguistic competence, which are connected to language use specifically. They are:

1. Linguistic markers of social relations, such as the use and choice of greetings, of address forms, conventions for turntaking, and use and choice of expletives. There

of course differ greatly in different languages and cultures and therefore cannot be generally defined.

2. Politeness conventions, such as positive or negative politeness and impoliteness. These also vary greatly in different cultures and often lead to misunderstandings.
3. Expressions of folk wisdom, such as proverbs, idioms, familiar quotations, expressions of belief, attitudes, and values. These contribute significantly to culture and are often used and referred to. Knowledge of these inside the culture is assumed, and is an important part of the sociocultural competence.
4. Register differences, such as the different levels of formality.
5. Dialect and accent functioning as linguistic markers for social class, regional provenance, national origin, ethnicity, or occupational group, such as lexicon, grammar, phonology, paralinguistics, body language. (CEFR, p.119-121)

## 1.4 Summary of Chapter 1

This chapter presented the most basic ideas as to why culture is an important element of language teaching. If the aim of English language education is to erase communication barriers between speakers of different languages, the learning process needs to accommodate some innovations.

One of these innovations is the focus on competences, which generally means abilities and performance skills. The curricular documents on the Czech Republic, as well as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, see competences as a significant part of modern education, and therefore they are a necessary component to all language education during the compulsory education and beyond it. This chapter discussed five competences which are tightly connected to the education of languages and cultures: communicative, linguistic, sociocultural, intercultural and sociolinguistic competences.

Although not all of the above are connected to languages, mainly the sociocultural and intercultural competence, they bring an important insight concerning cultural education. The communicative and linguistic competences are directly connected to language education and together with the culture-oriented ones, they all encourage and improve the development of the sociolinguistic competence.

## 2 The development of sociolinguistic competence

No second language learner is sociolinguistically a blank canvas. They have already learnt the sociolinguistic system of their own mother tongue and during second language education, they need to learn where those two systems overlap and where they differ. Some systems might appear to be similar and might offer a false sense of security, thus it is important to pay attention to potential misconceptions. (Holmes, Brown, 1976)

In the context of mother tongue acquisition, sociolinguistic competence generally develops gradually within the speech community. Learning a second language however seldom offers the time and opportunity for such pacing and it is therefore in the hands of the teacher to enhance the acquisition of the sociolinguistic competence. Janet Holmes and Dorothy Brown presented three main abilities which they found essential for the development of sociolinguistic competence. They are:

- “an awareness of contexts where the sociolinguistic norms of the first language are likely to interfere with those of the target language,
- the ability to interpret the social meaning as well as the referential meaning of exchanges,
- the ability to take the initiative in developing a conversation.” (Holmes, Brown, 1976, p. 423)

There is a variety of options to facilitate the process. Christina Paulson offered a number of them in another article which Holmes and Brown mention as well. *Linguistic and Communicative Competence* (1974) suggests that teachers need to approach language education with a specific goal in mind: to teach language for the purpose it was first invented, that is to “establish social relations, seek and give information, hide one’s intention, etc.” (Paulson, 1974, p. 352) The following sections examine selected ways to develop sociolinguistic competence in a classroom.

## 2.1 Communicative activities

The ability to speak a language is the most essential skill for communication and therefore the education process should aim to prepare the learners for using the language in authentic situations. Exposure to authentic English language environment promotes the learners' self-confidence and helps avoid stuttering and unwillingness to express themselves in a real life situation. (Oradee, 2012)

Canale and Swain believe that “it is crucial that classroom activities reflect (...) those communicational activities that the learner is most likely to engage in” (Canale and Swain, 1980, p. 33). They argue that the communicative activities must be meaningful for the learners and must resemble genuine communication with unpredictability of utterances, goal-orientation and authenticity. (Canale and Swain, 1980)

### 2.1.1 Role play

Role play enables students to practise the language in a meaningful way. As the name of this activity implies, the students are given roles, be it a title, a profession, a persona, etc., and they are asked to perform a play based on a situation, a piece of dialogue, a hint from the teacher, etc. This activity relies heavily on the students' ability to improvise and act out a scene and while it was created to make the learners of a foreign language feel more secure and confident, this activity should not be forced upon those who are shy or insecure enough to be discouraged to use the language. (Kuśnierek, 2015)

### 2.1.2 Genuine communication in the target language

The classroom provides a shelter, a safe space where making mistakes is encouraged as a part of learning. The outside world, on the other hand, provides no such comfort. Offering learners the possibility for a bit of both seems like an impossible task, yet would be incredibly beneficial. While communicating with their peers or the teacher, who are all familiar and come from the same cultural setting, undoubtedly helps develop the learner's

communicative competence, inviting an outsider into the equation provides a challenge of the sociolinguistic rules they have learnt. (Paulson, 1974)

One of the exercises Paulson (1974, p. 360) described in her article was asking the learners to call her monolingual English speaking neighbour. The authenticity provided by such a task made all the sociolinguistic rules real. She recognised that it would be unrealistic to ask such authentic exercises of all languages lessons but encouraged the use of them to help students to function well in another language.

### 2.1.3 Taking initiative in a conversation

According to Holmes and Brown (1976), foreign language students often lack courage to initiate conversation or contribute anything substantial when speaking to a native speaker who is expected to carry the conversation. It seems that second language learners need to put more effort into opening and leading conversations and providing information their partners might develop. Holmes and Brown described an exercise (p. 427) in which the students were asked to complete simple dialogues with meaningful questions and then take turns answering them as if in a real conversation, providing more information than what the question explicitly asked for. They were also encouraged to ask for clarification of a question and to confess to not understanding, which appears to be another problematic point.

### 2.1.4 Discussion

The discussion method relies heavily on the willingness of all participants to take part in both verbal and non-verbal communication as an organized group with the teacher as a moderator. Discussion will only be successful if all the participants have influence on each other and are willing to listen to and learn from each other. The ability to speak freely about their ideas and arguments and listen to the others helps students learn about various topics. (Gall, Gillet, 1980)

### 2.1.5 Storytelling

Storytelling is one of the most accessible tools of teaching available and as such is widely used by language teachers. It can be used when working with all learning levels and ages, although active storytelling requires at least a certain level of language acquisition. Stories help enhance all four of language skills, depending on the medium, and raise cultural awareness because stories are rarely free of cultural setting. It is an effective tool to introduce different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Authentic sources provide a comprehensive English language input and active participation in storytelling by the learners of a second language helps them develop self-confidence. (Atta-Alla, 2012)

## 2.2 Intercultural education

Intercultural education is a concept adopted first by European scholars in the 1980s. It is a process that should lead to understanding of pluralism, different customs, traditions, faiths and values. The idea of intercultural education sees multiculturalism as a beneficial factor in the enrichment and growth of the learners. Identity and culture are viewed as dynamic, otherness as a positive challenge, diversity as an opening for discussion, emigration as an opportunity to study values, norms and behavioral patterns. (Portera, Grant, 2017)

Intercultural education should lead to the acquisition of intercultural competence (see section 1.2.3). It is not only language education that aims to achieve this, however it could potentially be the most fulfilling way to understand and experience how language and culture influence each other. It should help foreign language learners to experience living in a different culture. There are three fundamental aspects to intercultural language teaching:

- “the teaching of a linguaculture,
- the comparison between learners' first language/culture and target language/culture
- intercultural exploration.” (Crozet, Liddicoat, Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 11)

### 2.2.1 Societal constraints on register

The idea that a certain word or phrase, when literally translated into another language, might hold a different meaning, is hardly new. However, learners of foreign languages need to be explicitly told or shown exactly which words and phrases might be offensive, and just as importantly, which words and phrases in the second language do not hold the same negative connotation as the one their mother tongue perceives. (Paulston, 1974)

### 2.2.2 Small talk

It is important to teach those words and phrases which serve a social function, such as greetings, introductions, farewells, etc. The learners should practise introductions and small talk in the target language in activities where non-verbal communication plays an



equally important role. The customs for physical aspects of greetings (handshaking, hugging, cheek kissing, etc), for example, might vary greatly. (Paulson, 1974)

### 2.2.3 Interpreting social meaning

The problem of social meaning applies to all communication, not only to the barrier of two sociolinguistic systems, however it is enhanced when one speaker is struggling to understand the literal meaning of the words, let alone the latent one. Determining the social meaning and the speaker's intentions is often vital to constructing an appropriate response. (Holmes, Brown, 1976)

Holmes and Brown (1976, p. 426) provided an exercise where they asked their students to analyze the expression "Isn't it awful weather?" in three different contexts and then provide replies that would fit that context. This exercise led the students to realise the latent functions of questions and statements in English and compared them to their own language setting.

### 2.2.4 Culture comparison

Holmes and Brown (1976) presented an exercise suggested by Savignon (1972). In this exercise, groups would role-play a situation in their mother tongue and then once again in English. The rest of the learners were asked to compare the performances. This way, the students are encouraged to distinguish and explicitly name sociolinguistic differences between the two scenes.

### 2.2.5 Critical incidents

The idea behind critical incidents is to present the learners with a situation that might be common and unusual for them, however in a different culture certain behaviour might provoke a different response. The learners should describe the situation and how they would behave and compare their thoughts with the rest of the class. This exercise obviously works best in a multicultural classroom, however it can be practised in a

monocultural setting provided the learners have enough information about the target culture. (Kovačková, Halámková, 2016)

The incidents should be based on everyday situations which are confusing or have the potential to lead to conflicts or misunderstandings, however they should be unequivocally explained with the use of appropriate knowledge of the other culture. (Zerzová, 2013)

#### 2.2.6 Intercultural diaries

Intercultural diaries serve as a useful tool for analyzing personal experiences with a different culture. Although it cannot be assumed that all our students have travelled abroad or will during their time in school, or have foreign friends or any other means of exposure to a different culture, there are many films, youtube videos, music clips, literature works etc. to be used. The diaries should contain all cases of different or foreign social situations and the learners' reactions and feelings towards them. These entries then might serve as topics for discussion in the classroom or as models for role-play, etc. (Zerzová, 2013)

## 2.3 The role of teachers

Canale and Swain believe that the role of the teacher in a communicative classroom must undergo changes from its traditional shape. The teacher should be an activator and motivator to the learners while still maintaining their didactic role of a teacher. The teacher themselves therefore needs a highly developed communicative competence to be able to function as an instigator and participant in meaningful communication. (Canale and Swain, 1980)

The teacher also functions as a medium between the learners and the target culture. By teaching the language, the teacher should also introduce the culture of that particular language, and therefore they need extensive knowledge of said culture. (Kloučková, 2009)

The teacher's role is a difficult one in this aspect, since it is their responsibility to know these things. Paulson (1974) encourages teachers to become anthropologists, observing their students and being aware of possible conflicts.

Motivation is one of the main components of successful learning regardless of the subject. Language education can be a long and tedious process and proper motivation acts as a driving force to help the learners not to be discouraged. Motivation is influenced by many factors, such as the learners' self-confidence, the pressure to succeed from outside sources, the value of the task and its difficulty, and others. Motivation strategies are complex and they often involve the teachers as the key factors. (Al Kaboody, 2013)

Al Kaboody cited Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) and described "ten commandments for teachers to motivate language learners" (p. 48). According to them, teachers should:

- "teachers should set a personal behavior example,
- make sure that the class atmosphere is relaxed and pleasant,
- present task properly to the learners,
- have good teacher-student relationships,
- work on increasing learners' self-confidence,

- ensure that the language class is interesting to the students,
- promote as much as possible learners' autonomy,
- personalize the learning process,
- increase learners' goals,
- make sure that learners are familiar with the target language culture.” (p. 48)

To be efficient motivators, teachers should consider their own behaviour as a source of influence on the learners. Mutual trust and respect has a beneficial impact on the learners' enthusiasm for learning the language. Interacting with the learners' on a personal level and being genuinely interested in their lives seems to be the best strategy for that. (ibid.)

The atmosphere of the classroom plays a significant role in lessening the learners' anxiety. A safe space to make mistakes and learn from them and to express their opinions without embarrassment and judgement provides a great environment for learning. (ibid.)

It is also important for the teachers to find out the learners' goals. Teachers often work with a predetermined syllabus with the goals already pre-set, however the learners' goal rarely correspond to these. Teachers and students should figure out the best solution to merge their goals into one that makes sense both for the syllabus and for the learners. Generally speaking, setting relevant goals which draw on the students' interests and experiences might help motivate them to learn. The teacher should then explain the purpose of each activity and exercise in a way that motivates them to fulfil the goal. (ibid.)

Teachers in the role of mentors greatly enhance the learners' growth, development and learning experiences by providing their knowledge of the subject, while also improving their own professional development. (Zachary, 2002)

## 2.4 Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter discussed the importance of including culture in language education. The development of the sociolinguistic competence is a significant part of the whole learning process and language teachers should pay attention to their students' growth in this area.

The means to develop this competence are basically unlimited. This chapter presented a selected number of them, divided into two categories: communicative activities, dealing mostly with the learners' ability to perform in the target language, to use it in a meaningful way and to absorb cultural background of the target language, and intercultural education, concerned with the way the target culture can and should be incorporated into the learning process in a way that would endure the learners' interest.

A vital part of the learners' sociolinguistic competence development is naturally their teacher, who should keep this in mind. In modern education, the teachers acts as an activator and motivator, trying to convince the learners that education is something they want to do rather than something they must do. In this sense, teachers need an extensive knowledge not only of their subject, in this case the language itself, but also the background information, trivia and cultural influences of the target language.

### 3. Teaching materials

There are various materials for teaching culture in language education. Durant (1997) created a list of nine sources that he considers to be efficient. They are:

- “interaction with people,
- personal recorded testimony of others,
- visits to the country,
- the country’s media,
- data from ethnographic fieldwork,
- historical and political data,
- surveys and statistics,
- heuristic contrasts and oppositions,
- fashions styles from the target country.” (Durant, 1997, p. 19-38)

Teaching materials have to be carefully selected to accommodate the learner’s needs. To ensure effective learning, teachers should have their students work with material that reflects their own experience while also including material that contains contrasting perspectives of their peers living in different backgrounds. Especially when working with adolescents, the teaching material should focus on destroying a sense of detachment that they might feel towards the characters presented in their coursebooks. Introducing different cultures to teenagers by showing their counterparts having similar interests and issues, enjoying similar activities and dealing with similar problems, should create a solid base for experiencing unfamiliar cultures. (Wandel, 2003)

The authenticity of teaching materials plays a very crucial role. In a world of quick information movement, it is important to pay attention to topicality. Up-to-date authentic documents reflect the society, its culture and language, and are therefore vital to the development of sociolinguistic competence. (Kloučková, 2009)

According to Richard Allwright (1981), there are two theories as to why teaching materials might be necessary for the process of education. The first theory speaks of teaching

materials as covers for the teacher's deficiency. Their role is to make sure the syllabus is well thought out and covered and the activities and exercises are relevant to it. This theory might indicate that a capable teacher should not need teaching materials for their work and also that once the teaching material is recognized as valid, even incompetent teachers would do a great job in that lesson.

The other theory sees teaching materials as a tool to differentiate between what the teacher is capable of and what the creators of the material are capable of. In this sense, the teacher might use the material as a manager who does not intervene in the process of learning, only makes the classroom environment suitable for learning. This theory might indicate that teachers do not need to develop the competences necessary to foster learning in the classroom, only the interpersonal skills to ensure that it happens. (ibid.)

In reality, the role of teaching material needs to be limited. The material might contribute to the learning but does not determine the content, pace and extent of learning. M. E. Aina (2006) listed a few suggestions for the effective use of any teaching material in language lessons:

- “They should be relevant to the curriculum.
- They should be previewed or tried out in advance before use in the class.
- They should be taught, not merely shown.
- They should be useful not as mere decorations.
- Too many teaching aids should not be used at a time.
- The types of materials used should be within the knowledge and experience of children.
- All teaching aids should be tactically and technically correct.” (p. 29)

Regardless on the type of teaching aid they use, teachers must see them as information carriers and ensure the learners get the right information from them. Previous knowledge and knowledge gathered elsewhere must be considered and used properly when working with teaching materials. (Aina, 2006)

Seeing as this thesis is focused on the development of sociocultural competence in the classroom, the following subchapters discuss material that is the most available for school use. Although coursebooks could be considered a “reading material”, they make up a separate section because they were created specifically for learning and thus are not authentically depicting the target cultures.

### 3.1. Coursebooks

Traditionally speaking, coursebooks play a dominant role in classroom education. Their function varies from syllabus creation to the topic assignment for lessons, they serve as a source of texts and language. They usually include some aspects of the target language’s culture, such as social behaviour, norms and values. (Skopinskaja, 1992)

Skopinskaja (1992, p. 42) presented two categories of coursebooks currently used in various European countries: international/global coursebooks and local/locally produced coursebooks.

As the name suggests, international/global coursebooks are created with the intention to be used internationally. They might present either culture-specific or culture-general orientation. They should therefore be appealing to a broad and universal market and audience. On the other hand, locally produced coursebooks would most likely be created by non-native speakers of the language based in the same cultural setting as the learners. These coursebooks often promote awareness of the learners’ national identity as well as the target culture. They are created with the national curriculum of that given country in mind, usually under the patronage of the Ministry of Education. (Skopinskaja, 1992)

Byram (1994) created a checklist of components by which coursebooks include a focus on culture. The “minimum content” includes:



- “social identity and social groups: groups within the nation-state which are the basis for other than national identity, and which illustrate the complexity of individuals’ social identities and of national society;
- social interaction: conventions of verbal and non-verbal behaviour in social interaction;
- belief and behaviour: routine and taken-for-granted actions, the moral and religious beliefs, routines of everyday life;
- socio-political institutions: institutions of the state which characterize the the state and its citizens;
- socialisation and the life-cycle: institution of socialisation and their ceremonies, representation of divergent practices of different groups;
- national history: events which are significant in the constitution of the nation and its identity;
- national geography: geographical factors which are significant in the members’ perception of their country;
- national cultural heritage: cultural artefacts which are known to the members of the nation;
- stereotypes and national identity: typical notions, symbols of national identities and stereotypes and their meanings.” (p. 51-52)

In a modern classroom, coursebooks are no longer crucial. The teacher and students work with materials that are best suited to the learning objectives, and therefore are not limited by pre-arranged texts, audio- and video-recordings and study questions. (Kloučková, 2009) The following sections explore authentic sources of language that can be used in a classroom.

### 3.2 Audio/video materials

In today’s world, the goal of English language education is to prepare the learners for communication between users of different linguistic backgrounds. It is no longer important

to achieve near-nativeness and therefore the target language and culture of English lessons should no longer be British or American. Based on this idea, native models of pronunciation and accent are no longer appropriate. (Kopperoinen, 2011)

The students of English should aim towards understanding other non-native speakers of English and one of the ways to achieve that is to be exposed to a variety of non-native accents. This exposure would help with the comprehension of that accent, while also creating a tolerance of the differences. It is much more likely that European learners of English will need the language for communication with non-native speakers than native speakers. (ibid.)

Jenkins (2000) argues that there are not enough available teaching materials including non-native listening exercises and recordings. It is because of this shortage of suitable material that English language teachers often search for a more viable source - authentic audio/video recordings. Since these authentic recordings were not created with the intention to be used in a language classroom, they are often diminished to a demonstration of the language rather than a convenient learning tool. (Porter, Roberts, 1981)

Porter and Roberts created a list of distinct features of a specifically ELT listening texts, which include:

- “intonation, which resembles that of a mother speaking to a child, high pitched and often irritable to the listeners,
- received pronunciation, which is unlikely to heard anywhere else,
- enunciation, which tends to be excessively precise,
- structural repetition,
- complete sentences,
- distinct turn-taking,
- uniform and slow pace,
- both speakers saying approximately equal amount and not very much,
- absence of normal attention signals,
- standardised, literary language with a rather formal lexis and syntax,

- limited vocabulary,
- more explicit reference to people, objects and experiences,
- lack of mutilation of the message due to surrounding noise, etc.” (p. 37-38)

These listening exercises develop the ability to talk about certain topics within the range of specific vocabulary in a very formal language, they do not however prepare learners for real world interactions. While their productive skills will be naturally understood, even if a little strange, their conversational counterpart will most likely answer in a completely unintelligible way. If teachers aim to prepare their students for communicating in the target language, they must consider exposing them to authentic language as well as ELT listening exercises. (Porter, Roberts, 1981)

When using authentic texts for listening exercises, it is important for the teacher to realise the original purpose of these recordings and create an exercise that fits this purpose. For example, a commercial was created with the purpose of being heard many times and creating a connection to a brand name or a product, therefore it would not be suitable for a multiple question exercise where the students need to find as much information in the listening as possible. Similarly, a monologue with tightly connected parts would not be suitable for quick scanning exercises. (ibid.)

Using video recordings provides the learners with more information useful for the exercise, such as non-verbal communication or paralinguistic features. (Miller, 2003) It is the role of the teacher to prepare the students for the viewing experience. Since videos, television and films are usually taken only as entertainment, the students expect nothing more. It is the responsibility of the teacher to lead their students towards seeing the video as a source of language and other learning objectives. Teachers need to shift the learners' attention towards gestures and intonation as much as the actual spoken language. (Stempleski, 2002)

### 3.3 Reading materials

According to Berardo (2006), there are three main purposes for reading: “for survival, for learning or for pleasure” (p.61). Reading for the purpose of survival is usually in response to our surroundings and often requires immediate response, such as street signs, warnings, timetables. Reading for the purpose of learning is usually done in a classroom and is goal oriented. Reading for pleasure does not have to happen. (Berardo, 2006)

Similarly to the case of authenticity with recordings, authentic texts were not created for the purpose of learning and teaching. These texts contain real, non-simplified language and have been written to serve a purpose to the society. On the other hand, texts designed for learning usually contain limited vocabulary and extensive use of a language item that needs to be learnt. Such texts usually look very artificial, do not “read” well and include:

- “perfectly formed sentences (all the time);
- a question using a grammatical structure,
- full answers;
- repetition of structures.” (Berardo, 2006, p. 62)

These texts very rarely reflect how the language is used in reality. Although they help to learn useful structures and vocabulary, they are not a very efficient tool in developing reading skills. (ibid.)

The possible sources of authentic texts are basically unlimited. The most common are magazines, newspapers, songs, and literature. The internet is full of news articles and other texts that can be very useful in teaching languages with the added benefit of being up-to-date and relevant. The material used in a classroom should reflect the needs and interests of the students, useful when travelling abroad or using the language outside the classroom. (ibid.)

Berardo presented three main criteria for choosing text as defined by Nuttall. Suitability reflects the idea of using relevant texts that are of interest to the students. Exploitability

means the extent to which the text can be used to develop the learners' competence as readers. Readability refers to its structural and lexical difficulty, the amount of new vocabulary and grammatical forms. Another good point to consider when choosing a text is its presentation. Although it might seem superficial, the appearance of the text plays an important role in the motivation of the readers. (ibid, p. 62)

One of the reasons to include authentic text in language teaching is to promote a feeling of reality in the learners, similarly to their experience of reading in their mother tongue. For them, the real life exists outside of the classroom and authenticity of their reading material brings them closer towards experiencing the world of the target language. Motivation is not the only benefit of using authentic texts, it also provides a great insight into the target culture. Exposure to the target language in a natural way makes the learners realise that what they learn in school actually makes sense and is useful in real life situations. (ibid.)

It is however important to notice the disadvantages of using authentic texts and deal with them accordingly. One of the most obvious drawbacks is the difficulty of the text. It can contain complex structures and vocabulary that the learners simply cannot understand or decode. The language in the text might also not correspond with the needs of the lesson, even if the topic and structure does, and vice versa. A clear educational goal should always be considered before choosing an authentic text, as well as suitable questions and tasks for the learners. Simplification of the text to decrease the disadvantages should be done carefully as it might make the text less authentic. Much more appropriate is the use of pre-reading discussions and other activities to prepare the learners for the reading itself. (ibid.)

### 3.4 Visual materials

Visual aids are a great tool for enhancing the learning process by helping the learners see, understand and process what they were asked to do. They help with the creation and fixation of memory pathways. Traditionally, they are best used with audio materials

because spoken word clears the structures and enables efficient communication. (Macwan, 2015)

There is a great variety of visual aids: pictures, posters, photos, illustrations, icons, symbols, sketches, figures, presentations, mind maps, charts, maps, diagrams, powerpoint slides, etc. They are useful for a wide range of activities, speaking, writing, vocabulary learning, and others, in the role of warm-up activities, conversation or debate starters, role play aids, hints for problem solving activities, motivation and so on. Visuals stimulate the learners' imagination and by giving insight into the outside world, they help bring the target language's culture into the classroom. (ibid.)

M. E. Aina (2006) created a list of characteristic features of visual aids useful for language teaching:

- “The pictures, maps and charts should be attractive and with suitable colors.
- Writing must be large enough and clear enough to be easily read from the back of the class.
- The charts and posters should be accurate in spacing and planning.
- The figures and the letters should be well formed.
- Objects and pictures should be big enough for children to see from their sitting places.
- There should be a great deal of pictures or materials to go round the children if possible.
- Apparatus must be accurately prepared and be ready before the lesson.
- Let all pupils first see any materials or apparatus before individuals or age group can see [them].
- All pictures on the television must be clear and the radio should have a clear sound.
- When preparing apparatus, the correct, accurate language and spelling must be considered.” (p. 28)

Visual aids need to convey information in a way that makes the learners interested in the message. The learners should not only acquire knowledge and understanding of the topic, the material should also influence their feelings, attitudes and habits. (Aina, 2006)

### 3.5 Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter discussed the importance of various teaching materials in a modern language classroom, especially as the carriers of the language and its culture. Teachers should use those materials which make the most sense both to them and the learners, carefully choosing the best material to benefit the learning process by being challenging enough and interesting enough to hold the learners' attention and motivate them to learn.

This chapter discussed coursebooks as a vital part of second language education and presented some ideas as to what types of coursebooks there are and how and why they should be used. However, the best materials to develop the sociolinguistic competence are naturally authentic, and so the other sections of this chapter focused on different audio/video, reading and visual materials and the way they can be used in a language classroom.



#### 4. Summary of the Theoretical part

The theoretical part of this thesis presented the available research by various linguists and educators concerning the development of sociolinguistic competence in second language education. The main goal of these three chapters was to bring the reader closer to the idea that language and culture are connected and mutually influential and that language education must, in its nature, include cultural education.

This theory behind the sociolinguistic development was supposed to guide the reader towards deeper understanding of the methods and techniques that usually foster this competence in language learners. Introducing the ideas behind and reasons for the inclusion of culture in second language education, especially given the multicultural nature of the English language, as well as the most common and obvious ways to achieve smooth blending between language and culture, aimed to substantiate the practical part of this thesis, which is focused on a selected number of these methods and their actual implementation in second language teaching and learning.

## II. Practical part

### 5. Aims of the study

The aim of this project is to establish how Czech lower secondary school pupils react to different Englishes. This project tries to determine whether Czech pupils accept and understand various accents and dialects of English, whether they find it difficult to understand non-native English speakers and how far their own command of English language helps them communicate in a non-native setting.

This aim was achieved by incorporating authentic spoken and written word into their regular English language class as well as aiming the lessons towards active production of the language (speaking activities, storytelling etc.) with focus on real-life communication, and then observing the outcome. This project took place during my four-week teaching practice at a lower secondary school. Groups of pupils from four grades participated in this project with support of their usual English teachers.

The practical part of this thesis also includes an analysis of selected coursebooks used for ELT in the Czech Republic. The aim of this analysis is to determine if these teaching materials introduce different cultures into the English lessons and if yes, to what extent.

## 6. Lessons aiming at real-life communication

This study was carried out during a three-week period in October 2019 during a compulsory teaching practice. It took place in a public primary/lower secondary school in the city of Brno.

This project was realised as a set of ELT lessons aimed at Czech pupils between the ages of 12-15 years old. The lessons focused mainly on listening exercises, as well as some reading of authentic texts, examining their understanding of various English varieties and dialects, and active production of language examining their ability to express their opinions and ideas and to communicate in English.

### 6.1 General information

All of the lesson plans were created in accordance to the topic, language items and structures presented in the unit of the coursebook for each group, and similarly the aims for each of the lessons were set to follow the monthly plans and aims of each group. All of the exercises had to accommodate these plans and aims. The following chapters present all of the exercised used to answer this project's inquiry. For clarity and comprehensibility, the exercises are sorted by level of language (class in which they were carried out) and further sorted by skill (listening, reading, speaking).

#### 6.1.1 The school

The school where this project took place is focused on broadened language education. Since 2016, English language is taught to pupils starting in the first grade, and the school has multiple language classrooms equipped with smart boards with educational programmes for learners of all levels. The English language teachers support reading English books and the school makes sure their library has multiple pieces of English language literature to offer.

The school offers educational trips to London each year for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders. The pupils usually stay in host families during their trip and so are encouraged to use the language in everyday situations as well as in class.

#### 6.1.2 The learners

The subjects of this study were the pupils of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade (approx. ages 12-15 years old). They all have studied English language since at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (approx. age 9 years old) and they all belonged to an advanced group within their grade.

Each of these three groups had a different teacher who acted as a mentor and observer while the teaching practice took place. While all three of them agreed to have their class be a part of this project, only the 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher allowed complete independence and liberty of the type of tasks and exercises the learners would be asked to do. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers agreed to one project-based exercise a lesson and insisted the learners complete the exercises in their student's books and work books.

#### 6.1.3 Teaching materials and equipment

All groups used the English Plus coursebooks in accordance to their grade (6<sup>th</sup> grade used English Plus 1, 8<sup>th</sup> grade used English plus 3, 9<sup>th</sup> grade used English Plus 4). All three classrooms that were used by these groups were equipped with a computer to play audio/video recordings and well as a record player to play CDs, a white board with a projector, and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom had a smartboard as well.

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade classroom proved to be a bit difficult to work in as the speakers of the computer-projector system were not loud enough for the back rows to hear. The pupils had a hard time understanding certain recordings and videos that were played for them and so the results of this group could be inconclusive, especially the parts dealing with understanding various accents and dialects.

#### 6.1.4 Listening exercises

Listening exercises were the main focus of this project as the study aims at determining whether Czech pupils understand English spoken in various dialects and accents. The original idea was to provide videos and recordings of non-native English speakers, however it has proved nearly impossible to find authentic material meeting that requirement. All the listening exercises used for this project were selected according to the following criteria: 1) the recording had to be focused on the same topic as the unit of the coursebook for that particular group, 2) the language level of the recording had to be in accordance to what the learners would know and understand, 3) the speaker in the recording was not to speak in RP (the wider the range of accents the better).

Since the project was carried out as a part of teaching practice, the lessons could not have been focused only on this. Most of the listening exercises were part of lesson plans related to the coursebook unit and monthly aims set by the English department of the school. While the main purpose of these recordings was to answer questions set by this project, they all had secondary purposes set by the aims of the lessons.

#### 6.1.5 Reading exercises

A part of the examination of the pupils' understanding of various Englishes was the inclusion of authentic written texts which were used as a secondary tool to prove their ability to comprehend real life English rather than what coursebooks usually provide. These texts were also chosen in accordance to the topic of each groups' coursebook as well as their language level. Reading comprehension exercises were created in a way that would correspond with the monthly aims and be beneficial not only for this project, and also for the lesson aims.

#### 6.1.6 Speaking exercises

Since the secondary aim of this study was to determine whether Czech pupils would be capable of communicating in a real-life setting, active production of the language had to be

included. All three groups were asked to actively participate in discussions about both the listening and reading exercises which showed the pupils' ability to communicate and argue in English, however it did not seem to be convincing enough for the purpose of this study. All three groups were then asked to prepare a story or a presentation based on their abilities. All of these tasks were based on the topic or grammatical structure the unit of their coursebook was focused on at the time so as not to diverge from the monthly lesson aims set by the English department of the school.

## 6.2 The 6th grade

The 6<sup>th</sup> grade class used the coursebook English Plus 1, Unit 1, dealing with hobbies and interests, and so the recording and reading material were chosen to correspond with the topic. Their language level was somewhere between A1 and A2 of the CEFR, meaning they were all capable of using present simple and present continuous, they were capable of answering questions asked in past simple using 'was/were' and 'had'. The unit of the coursebook was focused on the structure 'have got'. The class' overall usage of English was active and enthusiastic, the pupils were eager to speak.

### 6.2.1 Video on hobbies and interests

Seeing as the 6<sup>th</sup> grade was a class of 11-12 year olds who were just learning to talk about their hobbies and interest, the best listening exercise would be of a similarly aged child talking about the same.

Based on those criteria, a video titled "Ria Arora's Presentation on my Hobbies and Interest" from the YouTube channel Ranju Tarneja<sup>1</sup> was chosen. In the video, Ria herself says she is 11 years old and she is a student of an international school in India. Her English level is appropriate for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Although her ability to express herself is above the 6<sup>th</sup> graders, she does not use advanced vocabulary extensively.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbFmIiY1cKp8602cszOWylA>

The learners of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade were taken to the computer room in the school where they were able to use a computer with headphones and watch the video as many times as they wanted during the class. Each learner was given a copy of a worksheet (see Appendix 1) with three different tasks related to the video. They were asked to answer questions and choose correct answers based on the information they found out in the video about Ria Arora.

#### 6.2.1.1 Analysis of the hobbies and interests lesson

There were twenty-one learners in the class, each of them using their own computer and their own set of headphones. The aim of the exercise was for them to work alone and fill out a worksheet based on what they learnt from the video. Group work or any sort of cooperation would compromise the attempt to find out how well they understand an Indian English speaker.

Overall, the results were very satisfactory. Listening to Ria Arora using headphones with no outside distractions helped them focus, and the ability to play the video repeatedly as needed helped them catch and understand difficult phrases and vocabulary better. They all filled out the worksheet with no problems whatsoever.

Based on a discussion held afterwards, none of the learners deemed Ria Arora's accent strange, it appears they did not notice any differences. They all agreed that certain phrases were difficult to understand upon first hearing, however they all managed to understand the message of the video with no difficulty. It was apparent they were not aware of different accents and variations of English and that they would not notice differences in English speakers in regards to their accent.

Ria Arora's pronunciation is clear, however it is very apparent she is not a native speaker. Judging by the fact that the class did not find her accent and use of English strange in any way, it can be assumed they would not have any problems understanding a non-native speaker for English as long as their pronunciation was clear enough and their vocabulary on an appropriate level.

## 6.2.2 Travel Guide Reading

The purpose of the reading exercises was to see how well the learners understand English in a real-life setting, however the 6<sup>th</sup> graders' limited vocabulary and understanding of the grammatical structures of English made choosing an authentic text rather difficult. Magazine entries and personal blogs presenting hobbies and interests are common, yet they usually contain language that would be almost impossible for this class to comprehend.

Trying to find a compromise between language difficulty and topic conformity, a travel guide<sup>2</sup> was selected as a convenient source of both authentic and 'hobbies and interests' related language. Each learner was given a worksheet with the brochure in the original layout and two exercises related to the text (see Appendix 2). They were asked to read the text bubbles on the brochure and try to do the first exercise on their own. The purpose of this was to figure out whether they already have the vocabulary needed to understand the text or if they can figure the meanings of these words out on their own based on previous knowledge. The pictures were meant to discourage the learners from asking for translation.

Then, they were asked to read the text bubbles again and finish the second exercise. The simple 'true or false' exercise was focused mostly on reading comprehension and obtaining information available in the brochure.

### 6.2.2.1 Analysis of the Travel Guide Reading lesson

This class was the most enthusiastic to communicate in English and this activity was no different. Most of the learners use English naturally, although with limited vocabulary and grammar, and so the use of an authentic material caused no problems.

Most of the learners had a good grasp of the vocabulary items in the first exercise, probably because they went on vacation to the coast with their families in the past. They

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<sup>2</sup> The Round the World Travel Guide, p. 22. available in: <https://www.statravel.co.uk/travel-brochures.htm>



were allowed to discuss their ideas in pairs, which seemed to encourage them to talk to each other in English.

The reading comprehension exercise proved to be a bit more difficult, as almost everyone in the class got one of the answers wrong. However, that can be ascribed to not understanding a vocabulary item perfectly, which caused the whole message to be misunderstood.

Overall, considering the low level of language the 6<sup>th</sup> grade was at, their reading comprehension of a text that was not created with specific vocabulary and grammar in mind exceeded expectations.

### 6.2.3 Presenting their own hobbies and interests

The 6<sup>th</sup> grade class had just learnt useful vocabulary, phrases and expressions to talk about hobbies and interests. As part of this project, they had already listened to Ria Arora talk about her hobbies and interests (see section 6.2.1 above) and finished reading through a travel guide. Based on this, they were well prepared for their own presentation. Their task was carried out through two lessons. In the first lesson, they were asked to use the school computers to create a poster (see Appendix 3) about their hobby. In the second lesson, they were asked to present that poster and introduce that hobby to their classmates.

To ensure that their poster and presentation includes certain information, the whole class was presented with the following questions:

- How often do you do this activity?
- Do you do it alone?
- How old were you when you started?
- Are you very good at this activity?
- Is there a club? Where do you do it?

The whole class presented their posters during the following three lessons because of time restrictions and reluctance of their teacher to allow this to use up the whole lesson.

### 6.2.3.1 Analysis of the learners' presentations

The 6<sup>th</sup> grade was by far the most enthusiastic to use the English language in conversation and non-class related talking among each other. Once the one who was presenting finished, the rest were encouraged to ask questions about the presentation, which they mostly did. This was the first month this particular group was joined to work together. There were smaller groups of friends who would support each other, however the whole class was eager to get to know each other.

They had not learnt past tenses yet, however they could all answer what age they were when they started their hobby using "I was". Since the follow-up questions were asked by their peers, they were all capable of answering them. The listeners used expressions they had learnt from their coursebook in meaningful questions about the topic and they tried not to repeat the same questions to each speaker without prompting.

Overall, the class proved their ability to speak about a given topic. Their limited vocabulary and ability to conjugate did not turn out to be a barrier in communication. Even though they were not a tight group, they all tried to help others express their idea and very clearly wanted to communicate.

## 6.3 The 8<sup>th</sup> grade

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade class used the coursebook English Plus 3, Unit 1, dealing with television programmes. Their language level was somewhere between A2 and B1 of the CEFR, the unit of the coursebook was focused on past simple and past continuous. The class was active however not always eager to speak English. There was a small group of pupils who had a tendency to speak Czech simply out of spite, although they participated enthusiastically in speaking activities based on role-play and cooperation with each other.

### 6.3.1 Video presenting fake news

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade class had just started the topic of media and television which was a perfect opportunity to introduce them to the idea of fake news, both for comedic purposes and malicious misleading. First, a video of a comedy skit by the channel Pick a Persona titled “Northerner terrifies Londoners by saying "Hello"”<sup>3</sup> was played for them and then a series of questions started a discussion on the topic. This particular video was chosen especially for the fact that the “Northerner” in question spoke in a mild yet distinct accent and thus the exercise would also correspond with this project.

#### 6.3.1.1 Analysis of the fake news lesson

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade’s level of English was much more advanced than the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and therefore the discussion could lead to different results. The main focus of the discussion was on the two different accents from the video and the difference between “Londoners” and “Northerners”.

The first question the learners were asked was naturally if they hear a difference. Out of the 18 pupils in that class, only 10 answered yes while the remaining 8 people did not react at all. However, they were overall reluctant to express themselves and their lack of reaction was very likely caused by unwillingness to participate. Most of the discussion was then lead by those 10 learners who were eager to talk and express their opinions.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PT0ay9u1gg4>

It became apparent that the learners knew about the difference between the American and British accents and some of them knew that there were other accents, too. They figured out that the accents are what distinguishes the “Londoners” and “Northerners” in the video and pointed out a few distinctions between them. The whole class agreed that it was not difficult to understand either at all.

The natural progression of the discussion led it towards the cultural differences shown in the video which was a very pleasing outcome. It showed that the learners are aware of and able to discuss how politeness and proper ways to greet and approach strangers differ from place to place. The discussion then completely diverged from the video and continued towards proper ways of greeting strangers in different situations.

Overall, this group showed an understanding of the difference between accents as well as cultures of the people who speak them. They understood both accents in the video perfectly and had no troubles discussing the sociolinguistic points of the video.

### 6.3.2 Movie Review Reading

There are many authentic texts connected to the topic of television and TV programmes and therefore the choice was influenced also by the source. A movie review<sup>4</sup> in an Indian e-paper named Hindustan Times was chosen with the idea that it might contain some cultural influences on the English language in mind. For the most part, it did not, however the movie review chosen for this particular reading lesson seemed fit both for the language difficulty and topic-wise.

The learners were given a worksheet with two parts of the review copied directly from the website and two exercises (see Appendix 4). The first exercise was aimed at vocabulary. The learners were asked to find certain vocabulary items in the text and explain their use in the context. Most of these expressions have two or more meanings or are very unusual. The learners were asked to describe the expressions rather than translate them.

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<https://www.hindustantimes.com/hollywood/once-upon-a-time-in-hollywood-movie-review-leonardo-dicaprio-brad-pitt-shine-quentin-tarantino-shocks/story-gPhsB7xAPgtcVRqUe3NWAP.html>

The second exercise was aimed at the overall comprehension of the text. The learners were asked to decide whether given statements were true or false based on the information the author of the review presented. Most of the statements referred to sentences in the text which used slang or unusual language items, some of which were previously explained in the first exercise.

#### 6.3.2.1 Analysis of the Movie Review Reading lesson

The first exercise proved to be a challenge for this group, as they were used to translating new vocabulary rather than using different English words to explain and describe it. They all tried their best even though the task was so unusual but they had trouble thinking about the meaning of words based on context.

At the end, finishing the exercise became a collective effort of the whole class, and even then, they were unable to figure out the meaning of “chin-wag” (see Appendix 4, third paragraph). That was caused by the fact that the context of this particular phrase was set in the previous paragraph and the learners did not realise that all of the paragraphs are connected and must be considered together.

The reading comprehension exercise was mostly successful, even though the original sentences all contain slang or unusual vocabulary items. A heated discussion occurred about whether or not the characters have much to talk about according to the author of the review. The comprehension problem was once again caused by the phrase “chin-wag” which the learners failed to explain properly and so they could not figure out the meaning of the sentence.

Overall, the learners actively participated in these two reading exercises, going as far as debating each other on their findings and opinions. Their reading comprehension seemed to be on a satisfactory level, although their ability to think about the language and figure out meaning from context should be further developed.

### 6.3.3 Presenting their own fake news

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade class had just finished their student's book unit about television programmes and listened to the fake news video for this project. Their speaking task was connected to the listening exercise in which they were supposed to find inspiration.

Their task was to get into groups of five and together create a news report. Each group was to include two studio reporters, one field agent and two witnesses. Each learner was to say at least three sentences and include past simple or past continuous depending on the context. The story of the report was to be completely made up for entertainment and the learners were encouraged to be creative and imaginative.

#### 6.3.3.1 Analysis of the pupils' presentation of fake news

There were four groups of five learners. Each group followed the instructions perfectly. This group of learners was very enthusiastic about role-play activities and the opportunity to express their comedic abilities suited them well. Since the activity was prepared and presented during one lesson, they could not have possibly had any outside help, although they were asking questions about certain vocabulary or expressions.

The outcome was surprisingly advanced. There were a few quiet pupils who would have preferred not to speak at all, however they followed the rules and said their three lines. Other pupils were actively joking, going as far as to make puns. Overall their ability to express themselves and speak in English exceeded expectations.

## 6.4 The 9<sup>th</sup> grade

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade used the coursebook English Plus 4, Unit 1, dealing with life in different decades of the previous century. Their language level was roughly B1 of the CEFR, the unit of the coursebook was focused on present perfect and past perfect. The class overall was subdued, not very eager to talk unless asked a direct question. Over the course of two weeks, most of the pupils started showing enthusiasm when participating in role-play and cooperative activities, however a small group remained inactive. They were clearly used to working on gap-filling exercises in the workbook much more than speaking activities.

### 6.4.1 Video about teenagers in the 1960's

The video chosen for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade was by far the most difficult to understand. The class had been discussing life in different decades of the previous century and they had just finished with the 1950s. The video by ABC Australia titled “Teenagers in the early 60's... how they seemed then.”<sup>5</sup> was specifically chosen for three reasons. Firstly, the speakers are Australian and therefore the video is fit for the purpose of this project. Secondly, the video not only speaks of the 1960s, it is actually set in the 1960s which provides an interesting insight into the culture of that time. And lastly, the respondents in the video are asked to talk about teenagers and their behaviour which provides an opportunity for a discussion afterwards.

#### 6.4.1.1 Analysis of the teenagers in the 1960's lesson

There were certain technical difficulties in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class with the speakers causing the back row of the learners problems with hearing and understanding the video properly. Regardless of that, the results were satisfactory.

Out of the twenty learners in that class, only five were actively responding to questions concerning the video. ten other learners responded passively (non verbally – nodding, writing down answers for themselves), the remaining five learners refused to cooperate

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xBFHKxVpu8>

altogether. The ten cautious learners started responding when asked direct questions during the discussion and had no problems whatsoever discussing the topics among each other when prompted.

This situation made it rather difficult to obtain any satisfactory results for the project. It seemed that the majority of the class understood the speakers in the video with some difficulties while the group of uncooperative learners likely had a hard time understanding at all.

Those who responded pointed out the bad quality of the video as a reason why they did not understand certain phrases or expressions. When prompted, the cooperative group pointed out the accent and together, they managed to place it geographically. Ten learners said they had troubles understanding the speakers in the video because of the accent and five out of them said they understood less than half of what was said.

The learners were asked three questions after the video was played for them. This prompted a discussion among the learners and together, the class was able to answer two of them correctly. The answer to the remaining question could not have been properly heard and understood because of the audio imperfection.

#### 6.4.2 Advice Column Reading

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade lessons have moved towards the next unit in their coursebook, which was focused on relationships. For that reason, the authentic reading for this class was chosen from then current issues of the youth magazine *Seventeen*<sup>6</sup>. The learners had a similar reading exercise in their coursebook, however it was very apparently artificial and the idea of this lesson was to use authentic sources. Each learner was given a sheet of paper with three entries to the magazine's advice column written by teenagers about their friendship or relationship troubles (see Appendix 5).

The learners were asked to read the three short texts and underline words and expressions they did not understand or were not sure they understand. Then, they worked in groups of

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.seventeen.com/> - texts (see Appendix 5) retrieved 2019-10-06. (no longer available online)



three that were previously established in a warm-up exercise and they asked each other about the meaning. The remaining items, ones that none of the group members were able to explain, were then discussed together with the whole class.

The second part of their reading lesson was to once again work in groups of three and create answers for these advice column entries. They were asked to discuss the problem of each individual text and give advice that would resolve the issue. The groups were not asked to write these replies down, only to present one of them orally when asked to. They were given 20 minutes to finish their work and afterwards, a discussion between the groups was expected.

#### 6.4.2.1 Analysis of the Advice Column Reading lesson

Surprisingly, most of the learners actively participated in the first part of the activity. There was an ongoing issue between two parts of the class as they were mixed from two groups who had not previously known each other and were not friendly. Choosing the groups was a bit difficult because of that although they came to a somewhat satisfactory result. Once the groups were settled, the learners actually worked together and enthusiastically discussed the meaning of the words or phrases they selected. Overall, there was not much to talk about collectively as most of the groups came up with explanations or understood the texts.

The second part proved to be much more difficult. Although their passive comprehension of the texts was alright, their active production of language seemed to be lacking. It took the groups much more than the 20 minutes they were given to come up with two sentences for each text, which does not seem adequate for learners of English at their level.

The advice itself was well thought through, it appeared that the language production was the main issue in this activity. All of the groups asked for translation of particular Czech words or phrases into English or used dictionaries, even though it was not encouraged.

### 6.4.3 Telling a story about their childhood memory

Although topic-wise, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade was focused on different decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and life back then, their speaking task was connected to the grammatical part of their unit. They had just gone through past perfect, its creation and use. Their task was to create and write down a story about something that happened to them in their childhood and then present it during in class. The story had to include at least two sentences in past perfect and telling it had to take more than three minutes. Seeing as learners on the B1-B2 level of the CEFR should be able to speak spontaneously, they were asked not to read their story. For their comfort, they were allowed to peak into the text if necessary during their presentation.

#### 6.4.3.1 Analysis of the pupil's story telling

Out of the twenty learners, only one outright refused to participate, even though they were told it was a graded homework. The rest of the class had troubles not reading their story, claiming they were incapable of telling it all by heart, however they could all be persuaded to try. At the end, all but the one succeeded.

It proved quite difficult to assess the use of past perfect in fluid speech. The learners also frequently made mistakes in the creation of past perfect, such as used a different form of an irregular verb, and they had a tendency to speak very quietly. At the end, the written texts that they prepared at home were assessed too.

This brought attention to another issue. While most of the learners' written texts were mistake-free, there were plenty of mistakes in their spoken word. This could be ascribed to nervousity and the overall reluctance with which most of the class spoke English. Perhaps they were not used to using English actively and this task brought on extra stress which caused them to make mistakes.

Overall, out of all the groups who took part in this project, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade was by far the least enthusiastic about using English actively. They were somehow willing to speak to each

other in cooperative speaking activities, however simply by observing, it was apparent that they were the most comfortable while filling out exercises in their coursebook and workbook. They all had a good grasp on the grammatical rules in theory, yet using them in spontaneous speech seemed very difficult. The learners had limited vocabulary, they were usually well capable of using phrases and expression only from the unit they were focused on at the time.

Working with this group was challenging. While they were supposed to be the most advanced, their lack of motivation and enthusiasm to learn the language prevented them to reach their full potential. It is unclear how much of their reluctance to use English is connected to the class environment. It is possible that they would be much more eager to use English in their leisure time activities.

## 7. Results of the study

The aim of the project was to establish how Czech lower secondary school pupils react to different Englishes in listening and reading exercises. The secondary aim was to study how well they actively produce the language and whether they would be successful in real-life communication. Each of these lessons was concluded by a discussion about the content of the materials as well as the language used in them. The analysis of each lesson was done based on the learners' reactions, questions and immediate feedback during the activities, the outcome of these activities and the discussion held afterwards. The learners were never asked for any formal feedback on the types of activities and exercises as the objective of this project was not to determine whether learners like doing them but rather how well they can do them.

For the most part, the listening exercises can be concluded as successful. The learners from the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades fulfilled the requirements for each of their respective listening exercises, showing that their understanding of the spoken word is satisfactory, regardless of the accent or register of the speaker.

The reading exercises were by far the most popular. All of the groups were very obviously used to a quiet classroom, reading on their own and completing exercises. While this was beneficial for this particular part of the project, their eagerness to quietly work alone explains their reluctance to participate in speaking activities. Overall, the reading comprehension of all the groups was good. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade exceeded all expectation with their ability to comprehend language items above their level just from context and previous general knowledge, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade surprised with willingness to debate each others ideas and opinions and the 9<sup>th</sup> grade showed their ability to passively understand and actively discuss the meaning of different language items.

Lastly, the speaking exercises showed the learners' willingness to use the language actively. Surprisingly, even with their low level of English, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade group showed the most enthusiasm to use the language in a meaningful way. Their use of the language might

not have been perfect, however they had good command of what they knew and were not afraid to make mistakes while speaking. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade was a class of questionable enthusiasm towards actual English speaking and much more towards participating in lively activities. It seemed that their command of the English language was at the expected level, however their usual class activities left a lot of room for improvement. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade seemed to have lost their enthusiasm over the summer holidays and were not eager to speak at all. After some careful persuasion and not so subtle motivation by official grades, most of the class found their willingness to speak, however the language level was deep below the expected level. Based on their overall results, they were supposed to be fluent in the topics selected for their language education, yet the truth was far from it.

Overall, the sociolinguistic competence of these learners was found to be plentiful in one regard and lacking in another. While their passive comprehension of different Englishes was found to be exceptionally good in most cases, their communicative abilities seem to decrease with age and level of English, which seems to be confusing and implausible. Naturally, the rather narrow sample of English language learners caused the results to be inconclusive with respect to the whole country and all its lower secondary schools and English language learners. Similarly, the fact that only one group from each grade participated in the study and the fact that each group had been taught by a different teacher before the study took place both cause the study to be inconclusive with respect to the rest of the English learners in the school.

Most of the areas in which the students were lacking could be ascribed to their previous teachers' competence and enthusiasm, the learners' age and typical behaviour connected to it, and many other factors. A different study concerning these issues would complete the results of this one and answer the question whether Czech lower secondary language education develops the sociolinguistic competence on a satisfactory level.

## 8. Coursebook analysis

The following sections present analyses of selected coursebooks according to a checklist created by Michael Byram (see section 3.1 in the theoretical part) aiming to determine how well they introduce culture into the language lessons. While analysing each coursebook, every item of Byram's checklist was carefully considered and commented on.

The following coursebooks were chosen for this analysis:

- English Plus 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition
- English Plus 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition
- English Plus 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition
- Project 1, 4<sup>th</sup> edition
- Project 3, 4<sup>th</sup> edition
- Project 4, 4<sup>th</sup> edition

Seeing as only the learners of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade participated in the study, only coursebooks relevant to their current learning process were analysed.

The *English Plus* coursebooks were used by the learners participating in this study, and as such played a role in the development of their sociolinguistic competence before this study took place. These coursebooks were analysed to determine how well acquainted with foreign cultures the learners are or should be and which cultures were usually presented to them.

The *Project* coursebooks were chosen because they appear to be the most commonly used coursebooks in the Czech Republic primary/lower secondary schools, as reported by other students of the English section of the Institute of Foreign Languages<sup>7</sup>. Their analysis serves as a comparison to the *English Plus* coursebooks, which can be found in the last section of this chapter. The *Project* coursebooks were analysed at first in order to set an example of what is usually to be expected in English language coursebooks. The *English Plus*

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7 21 out of 30 asked students reported that they used the Project coursebooks during their teaching practice

coursebooks analysis often compares the two corresponding coursebooks together or references something the *Project* coursebook contains.

## 8.1 Project 1

The *Project* coursebooks contain a section called *Culture* in every unit. Upon first sight, it seems that the cultural background is mostly British with the focus more on the typically English parts of their culture, with the focus on foreign names, housing, school systems, towns and people, and typical sports and leisure time activities. Naturally, culture and cultural background must seep into every other part of the coursebook, not only these few pages of carefully selected topics and themes.

One of the most obvious embodiments of culture in a coursebook are the characters who accompany the learners through each unit, play the roles of participants in the learning process and act as the learner's friends sharing the language with them.

In *Project 1*, the learners meet Carla, Andy, Ravi, Molly, Joe and Mel. Out of the six children, one is Asian and one is Black, which does not seem very characteristic for the ethnic minorities of the United Kingdom. There are no prominent groups of other than national identity typical for the British Isles. The social class of these characters is never mentioned, neither is their religion or regional identity. The regional focus of this coursebook is mostly on England and Wales. Seeing as the characters are children, there is no such thing as professional identity presented in the book, however two minor characters appearing here and there in the units are teachers, most likely because teachers play a significant role in the lives of the learners' as well. The lack of variation of social identity in this coursebook might be ascribed to the lower level of language of the target learners, however topics such as family, introductions, names, places and so on make a very convenient leeway for including as many different points of view as possible.

The interactions between these six characters is that of friends meeting for the first time, asking information about each other and then spending time together, which acts as a great model behaviour for the learners' future meetings and social interactions. The coursebook also provides good examples of interactions between pupils and teachers, as far as saying hello and goodbye and asking questions, and meeting strangers on the street.



There are quite a few examples of routines and typical behaviour for a British school child, mostly reflected in the action verbs and vocabulary exercises. The characters spend their time calling each other on the phone, going to a shopping centre, playing football after school and watching TV shows in the evening, going to the park every Saturday morning, and so on. Their daily lives might not seem significant, although routines such as reading the newspaper in the morning or drinking coffee with their breakfast or greeting the mailman are all very common for the western European cultural setting, especially the British Isles.

This particular coursebook contains no mentions of institutions, political systems, health care, law or social security, which can once again be explained by the level of language this coursebook provides and the topics and themes presented in it. Similarly, there are no hints of the history of the nation, as the language does not allow for much - past tenses are not part of the curriculum for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. No holidays or national cultural heritage, such as generally known people, places, and stereotypes are introduced in this coursebook. However British, or rather English, the characters are in their behaviour, the creators of this book did not try to explicitly introduce the culture in a way that would point to specific parts of it.

## 8.2 English Plus 1

Similarly to *Project*, the *English Plus* coursebooks also contain a section called *Culture*, although it is not a part of each unit but rather at the end of the coursebook together with *Curriculum Extra*, *Puzzles* and other additional sections. The focus seems to be closer to British rather than any other English speaking country, however it does not seem as obstinately English as *Project*. The *Culture* sections of *English Plus 1* present children from Australia, China and Nigeria (however the last two are living in the US and UK, respectively), the description of Liverpool, the differences between Englishes and other languages spoken around the world, Canada's national parks, homeschooling in Britain, the history of Roman Britain, Britain's favourite games, and a Nepalese and New Zealandian men climbing Mt. Everest.

Unlike *Project*, there are no recurring characters leading the learners through the units. On the contrary, *English Plus* introduces characters of a great variety of ages, ethnicities and places of origin, most of which are English speaking countries. They do not seem to bring much from their culture to the coursebook, even though there is a whole unit dedicated to the cultures of the whole world. It is mostly focused on geography and history trivia about selected countries, which is on itself much more than was expected, and the texts focus on people of different origin living in English speaking countries. This unit brings attention to migration as one of the main issues of the modern world and one of the main causes of culture merging. The rest of the coursebook does not pay much attention to cultural differences between the many people it presents, and most of their experiences and everyday lives are very western European. Their professional identity does not matter much as they are mostly children, neither does their social class or religion.

There are not many interactions between the characters in this coursebook, however the ones that are present usually try to introduce the learners to common scripts of conversation, both between peers and between teachers and students or when meeting strangers on the street. The language focus seems to be more on the ability to talk about

things, people and places, rather than conversation. Asking parents for permission and discussing past experiences with classmates seem to be the most common conversations presented in the coursebook.

This coursebook tries to be very international in the topics, however most of the language is quite British. If an exercise asks the learners to talk about their everyday routines, the vocabulary given to them to complete the task is centered around the everyday life of a British pupil, when talking about hobbies and interests, most of them are those of a typical British child, and so on. Seeing as the coursebook tries very hard to be international, most of this britishness is very subtle upon first sign, however not many teenagers outside of the UK would be, for example, Arsenal fans (nor would they automatically know what “Arsenal” is).

This coursebook does not necessarily introduce any socio-political systems, however the unit about different countries around the world could very well do so. There is no mention of the Queen neither in connection of the UK or Canada and Australia, even though both of them are described in the coursebook. It is perhaps the teacher’s responsibility to connect kingdoms with royalty and states with presidents or even to introduce these words into the learners’ vocabulary. As important as the geography of and interesting facts about different countries are to the sociolinguistic learning process, their political systems should perhaps be one of the first things to be mentioned.

There is a unit dedicated to school life, introducing concepts such as homeschooling, boarding schools, typical school sports in Britain, drama clubs, school rules, etc. There does not seem to be any focus on family life and relationships between family members or friends. No religious practices or holidays are mentioned in the coursebook, neither are family celebrations of festivities. As for history or national cultural heritage, there is a section concerning the history of English names, a reading exercise on Christopher Columbus, the history of Liverpool, a few past tenses exercises using trivia from European history as subjects of the sentences, and a reading exercise about Britannia, the Roman colony. The cultural background of this coursebook is rather obvious.

### 8.3 Project 3

The *Culture* sections of the units in *Project 3* seem to have expanded a bit outside the UK, as one of the titles is *The Big Apple*, hinting at an American focus. Nonetheless, the rest of the *Culture* sections are still heavily Britain-oriented: a typical British family, public transportation available in Britain, the cultural heritage of Britain, the Black Death in London, British national heroes and heroines, street and other signs commonly seen in Britain, etc.

The characters leading the learners through this book are Layla, James, Chloe and Dylan, who is the token person of colour, and the cartoonish detective Sweet Sue. Unlike *Project 1*, however, there are many different characters from various backgrounds who only appear once in reading or listening exercises. The creators of this coursebook seem to have made it a point to include some cultures other than British, although only those of English speaking countries, and to compare the typically British culture with the learners' one.

The interactions between these characters are those of classmates who appear to be discovering social life outside of school. The main theme throughout all of the units seems to be asking people out and misunderstandings, which makes a good ground for everyday real-life situations. Sweet Sue, on the other hand, appears to be solving a crime. She faces some difficulties with gaining respect as a female detective and arrogant colleagues, which is surprisingly resembling of real life.

The everyday lives, behaviour and attitudes of this coursebook's characters are very British in nature. However, they seem to have friends all over the globe, there are hints at chatting or communicating with children from other countries. Much more attention is paid to history and geography of the world, yet the main focus is still on the UK and its historical events, important people and places, with one page dedicated to New York City and its most popular sights and attractions. Overall, cultural heritage is presented very obviously in this coursebook, with specific places, names and ways it is represented.

There are once again no mentions of socio-political institutions. It comes as a surprise that the Queen of England has not yet been mentioned as the language level of this coursebook allows for deeper historical backgrounds in texts and with the amount of general britishness in the coursebook, a nod to the Royal Family would seem almost essential. Sweet Sue seems to be the face of law, although it is up to debate how reflective of actual law and order practice her story is.

Once again, the characters do not partake in any religious activities, they do not celebrate any holidays or important days in their lives. The family life portrayal is reduced to the benefit of teenage socialisation, which seems more important to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade language learners. Overall, *Project 3* seems more keen on introducing culture in an obvious way while still maintaining a supposedly neutral stance as to which part of the culture the learner should embrace, however the evident englishness of these characters influences the learners' subconsciousness.

## 8.4 English Plus 3

The *Culture* sections of *English Plus 3* seem to be focused on the whole world. The topics in this coursebook revolve around internationality and the *Culture* sections of each unit correspond to the topic and language focus, talking about television in the USA, environmental activists in Australia, British teenage magazines, studying in New Zealand, the biggest charity in the UK, the British film industry, etc. The vocabulary focus also tries to implement some features from American English, mostly by introducing its differences compared to British English.

Just like in *English Plus 1*, there are no recurring characters throughout the coursebook. The ethnicity, social class or personal background of the characters who appear in the coursebook does not seem to be the focus of anything. Their professional identity, however, is often emphasised, as the point of their introduction is what they do in life. Their national identity is undeniably British, although not as English as that of the *Project* characters. The creators of this coursebook paid attention to different parts of the English speaking world and included characters from the USA, Australia and New Zealand, however their introduction in the coursebook is not meant to bring the learners closer to their cultural background but rather to inform them of the fact that such people exist in the first place.

Most of the social interaction between characters, who are usually random faceless names, is mostly friendly and acts as an example dialogue for the learners. However, the coursebook is not very dialogue heavy. On the contrary, most of the speaking exercises give a topic or a list of vocabulary and ask the learners to create the questions and answers on their own. It is the teacher's responsibility to prepare the learners for creating sentences. Out of the few dialogues and social interactions presented in the book, most revolve around the everyday life of a British teenager. For example, the fear of being expelled for cheating in school or having opinions on school uniforms would be very alien for a Czech pupil.

This coursebook does not pay much attention to socio-political institutions, however unlike in *Project*, there are quite a few hints at the Royal Family in English Plus. The Queen figures as an example of the kingdom's symbolism, Prince William and Barack Obama are both seen as so well known that the learner would be able to talk about their professions. The political systems of either Britain or the other English speaking countries are not discussed, although the language focus of this particular coursebook allows it and the internationality of the topics would benefit from it.

There is a whole unit revolving around school life. The focus is very British, with the aforementioned school uniforms, private single-sex schools and boarding schools. Family life or spending time at home are not the focus of this coursebook, the characters never seem to be at home or communicating with any family members, so their socialisation is limited to friends and schoolmates. The coursebook does not prepare the learners for social interaction outside of the classroom but rather aims at their ability to talk about a great variety of topics.

The intended internationality of this coursebook limits the historical and geographical focus on one particular nation. The creators of this coursebook tried to introduce many interesting places in and facts about the English speaking world, and did not put much pressure into discussing the culture of any of them at length. Art history starting with prehistoric cave painting and going all the way to the modern styles are as close as the creators got to introducing anything specifically cultural. No holidays or religion are presented, neither are any particular stereotypes or signs of national identity. If it were not for the inherent Britishness of the chosen language and the characters' behaviour, this coursebook would actually be neutral as far as culture presentation goes.

## 8.5 Project 4

The *Project 4* coursebook seems to be more internationally oriented, however most of the *Culture* sections are still concerned with the UK with topics such as the history of England, British teenagers' reading habits, British sports events, great paintings by British painters, volunteering in Britain, and one page about Australia. The rest of the coursebook is also very Britain-oriented, with texts about the Excalibur, King Arthur or Robin Hood.

There are four characters leading learners through the pages of this coursebook, all of which are white British students, and the cartoon detective Sweet Sue. Similarly to the previous *Projects*, they lead typically British lives in and outside of school. They have to complete work experience as part of the compulsory school education, they discuss their weekends and school struggles, etc. Sweet Sue seems to have found a tentative truce with Smart Alec, who used to taint her expertise in the previous Project coursebooks, however he seems to actively aggravate her work still. It should be also mentioned that their names leave room for improvement as far as appropriate role models are concerned. There are a few interactions between students and teachers, as well as a scene in a restaurant, which seem to be good examples for real-life communication.

The national identity of these characters is never discussed, however they are all very English in their manners and behaviour. The book introduces a few characters of different ethnicities, yet those are never the point, usually they only look different but act and talk the same way a white British person would. The exercises never present any insight into a different culture. Even if the pictures of the people who are supposed to be speaking indicate that they come from a different than white English cultural background, most of the everyday life and routines they mention are very western European.

The coursebook does not discuss socio-political institutions, even though at least the text about Australia could have mentioned the Queen, the Commonwealth and their connection. There are not many symbols of national identity, national cultural heritage or significant geographical factors present in the coursebook. National history is limited to



stories about King Arthur, the legend of Robin Hood and the history of England up to 1066. No other culture's history is discussed, although the text about Australia naturally speaks of its history.

Neither the recurring characters nor the side characters discuss their family lives or religious practices, they do not celebrate any holidays or hold any festivities. However much their everyday lives obviously resemble those of British citizens from an English cultural background, there are not many actual symbols of any culture introduced or discussed. The coursebook does not expect the learners to have much background information concerning the English speaking world and does not provide much, except some interesting trivia about particular countries or a particular event in its history.

## 8.6 English Plus 4

The *English Plus 4* coursebook appears to be the most Britain-oriented as far as culture is concerned. The *Culture* section and the *Curriculum Extra* section of the coursebook are both heavily British with a hint of an American influence, presenting topics such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the Industrial Revolution in Britain, Britain in the 1960s, the wedding culture in the UK, typical British snacks and drinks, alternative subcultures in the UK and USA, American high school elections, typical British comedy and sense of humour, and American boot camps.

There are once again no recurring characters leading the learners through this coursebook and the people portrayed for different exercises are all of various ages, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds. This coursebook paid a lot of attention to actually presenting typical features of different cultures rather than simply showing that they exist. While most of the focus is still very western European and heavily English-centric, there are mentions of the issues and interesting ideas of different cultures. There are bits and pieces of various cultures throughout the whole coursebooks, talking about issues such as arranged marriages, different ways of sustainable living in different parts of the world, etc. The first unit revolves around generations and the different cultures of different decades of the previous century and although it is concerned only with the culture of the west (mostly the UK and USA), the scope at which culture is discussed is an improvement compared to the previous *English Plus* coursebooks.

The interactions between people in this coursebook is very similar to the previous English Plus coursebooks. Neither of them are very dialogue heavy, actual conversations appear scarcely and usually function as script presentations for the learners, who are then asked to come up with their own. The language focus of this coursebook is on invitations, accepting and declining them, exchanging opinions and giving advice, discussion and discourse markers, apologising and asking forgiveness, and other ways to communicate in real-life situations.

This coursebook pays much more attention to socio-political institutions. Vocabulary items such as democracy, citizenship, left, right or centre government, and elections are discussed and the learners are expected to have a broad knowledge of different political systems. Other than that, however, there are no culturally significant issues of political systems, like kings and queens or the existence of the Commonwealth, important political figures by name and so on.

While the previous *English Plus* coursebooks tried to be very international, the creators of this one made it unabashedly British. The vocabulary, the conversation styles and strategies, the way of viewing the world are all very obviously coming from a British cultural background. There are some reading and listening exercises focused more on the USA, however very little is concerned with other parts of the world. Most of the socialisation is between peers, family life is not discussed, neither are holidays, celebrations or religious practices.

National history also does not seem to be the point of interest of this coursebook. Except the life in the different decades of the past century, there is a reading exercise on the Industrial Revolution focusing on child labor and one about the Berlin Wall. There are not many symbols of national identity present in the coursebook, as much as the characters are British, the coursebook itself aims towards internationality. That being said, whenever an exercise asks for representation of culture, a British one is almost always chosen.

## 8.7 Comparison

Overall, neither *Project* nor *English Plus* introduce a great variety of cultures, of English speaking countries or others. In this sense, however, *English Plus* appears to be much more suitable for the sociolinguistic competence development, as it tries to be international and to present and discuss the various cultures of the English speaking world.

While the *Culture* sections of all the analysed *Project* coursebooks are very interesting, they are very Britain oriented with most of the actual language and topics revolving around the white English cultural background. Naturally, if the aim of the language course is to prepare the learners for travelling to the UK and meeting native speakers of English there, this coursebook would provide a solid cultural education.

The *Culture* sections of the *English Plus* coursebooks aim a bit more toward internationality by introducing people and places from and interesting facts about other English speaking countries, however the focus of most of them is also very British. The cultural backgrounds of these particular countries is nicely presented, and the learners of this language course would be well prepared to travel not only to the UK, although their knowledge of the British culture would be much better.

Both coursebooks lack cultural backgrounds of other countries, not even those which used to be part of the Empire (previous Asian and African colonies etc.) and nowadays use English for administrative purposes as an official language and thus should be included in the English language education. Both coursebooks include hints that the characters presented to the learners come from various ethnicities, yet the culture of those is never described in any detail. The religion of these characters is never mentioned in either coursebook even though discussing the customs, traditions and practices of different religions could open the doors to a potentially very enlightening discussion between the learners, and would help introduce the learners to the idea that other people lead very different lives to theirs.

If the aims of both these coursebooks were to present British culture in a more detailed way than any other with the goal of travelling to the UK in mind, it is very surprising that they do not include some of the symbols of British cultural identity, such as typical cuisine, their customs, traditions and festivals, the importance of the Royal Family and the Queen, the most important events in its history, notable people who helped enrich the culture and so on. In reality, both of these coursebooks try to introduce British culture without using any obvious symbols and parts of it. This way, it seems, the learners unintentionally absorb the British culture without actually knowing anything specific about it.

## Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis was to highlight the importance of the sociolinguistic competence in English language teaching and to present possible means of developing it in a Czech classroom. The idea of competence development as part of elementary education might not be exactly new, yet certain parts of it are still rather overlooked. This thesis tried to persuade the reader that developing the sociolinguistic competence is one of the most important components of effective language education, as well as present what might perhaps be seen as the most basic outline of suitable methods, exercises and activities that enhance sociolinguistic development in second language learners, and which teaching materials might best aid them.

The activities and exercises presented in this thesis are only a sample from a sea of possibilities to introduce English language learners to different Englishes. Their selection aimed towards variety, both in the sense of language skill training and life skill training. The pupils were examined both on their listening and reading comprehension and ability to produce meaningful language, as well as their communicative abilities and intercultural education, which all together complete the English language education package. The results were overall optimistic, the learners proved to be capable of meaningful communication, although occasionally reluctant to participate in it. Their language skills and intercultural understanding were on an expected level, most of the learners accepted different variations of English well, having no problems understanding various accents and dialects. The exercises seemed to be further enhancing them, however a three week lesson plan could not possibly clearly examine their effect.

The coursebooks analysed in this thesis proved Reinhold Wandel's words, quoted in the first chapter of this thesis, that ELT coursebooks have a tendency to prioritise English and American cultures over any others. This does not necessarily need to be a problem for the sociolinguistic development of the learners as long as the teachers realise that the

coursebooks do not provide enough cultural background and supplement the lessons with other material presented by this thesis.

Although the aim of the study was to determine how well the Czech lower secondary English education develops the sociolinguistic competence, the time slot and number of participants was not enough. To fully understand the level of sociolinguistic competence in Czech English language learners, this project would have to study a larger number of schools all over the Czech Republic for a longer time period. Perhaps the time and opportunity limitations could be overcome by others interested in the problem, and this thesis might serve as a stepping stone for broader and deeper research.

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## List of Appendices

Appendix 1: A worksheet for the Hobbies and Interest lesson for the 6th grade

Appendix 2: A worksheet for the Travel Guide Reading lesson for the 6th grade

Appendix 3: Posters created by 6th graders for their presentation

Appendix 4: A worksheet for the Movie Review lesson for the 8th grade

Appendix 5: Three Advice Column entries for the 9th grade

# HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

1. Watch a video. Listen to Ria Arora talk about her hobbies and interests. What does she like doing?



Ria likes \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ria doesn't like \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. True or false? Correct the false sentences.

Ria thinks she does a very good job with her presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_

Ria feels very sad when she does a good presentation.

\_\_\_\_\_

Ria dances with a professional dancer.

\_\_\_\_\_

Ria thinks your hobbies make important life skills.

\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 2: A worksheet for the Travel Guide Reading lesson for the 6th grade

Part 1:

**Fiji**

**CHILDREN & SCHOOLS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**  
1-8 WEEKS, Fr £748

**AWESOME ADVENTURES FIJI ISLAND ESCAPES**  
Fr £106 (Plus meal plan)

**FIJI WELCOME PACK & MALAMALA BEACH PACK**  
FULL DAY, Fr £30

**ISLAND HOPPING**  
PASSES FR £162  
5-13 DAYS

If you're a bit of a freestyler, this pass takes care of your boat transfers in the Yasawas and selected Mamanuca Islands. It includes one return journey from Port Denarau along the full length of the Yasawa Island chain, with one island-hop per day. The pass is valid for 5-13 consecutive days, and you can add on a flexible accommodation pass to use with it.

**FEEJEE EXPERIENCE**  
PASSES FR £264  
4-11 DAYS

Want to get the best out of your trip to Fiji? Look no further than Feejee Experience, who have perfected their route over the past ten years to offer you the best possible Fiji experience. Choose from a range of packages, mingle with locals, visit remote villages, channel your inner Robinson Crusoe and enjoy the overwhelming Fijian hospitality.

**WE KNOW BECAUSE WE GO**

"Spend your days hopping from one island paradise to another. Whether you're looking to scuba in a gleaming blue sea, walk through lush rainforests or just relax in a hammock listening to the waves gently lapping the shore line, then Fiji is a must do for you."

- ADELE ARNOLD, ASSISTANT MANAGER  
LONDON VICTORIA

**WHERE TO next?**

**JAPAN**  
see page 16

**AUSTRALIA**  
see page 18

**USA**  
see page 26

22

BOOK WITH US 24/7 BY PHONE AND LIVE CHAT



Appendix 2: A worksheet for the Travel Guide Reading lesson for the 6th grade

Part 2:

1. Find these words in the text and connect them to the pictures.

port    scuba    rainforest    hammock    village    beach    shore line



1



5

6



2



7



3



4

2. Write true (T) or false (F).

People can travel around the island on boats.

Island hopping lets you visit as many island as you want every day.

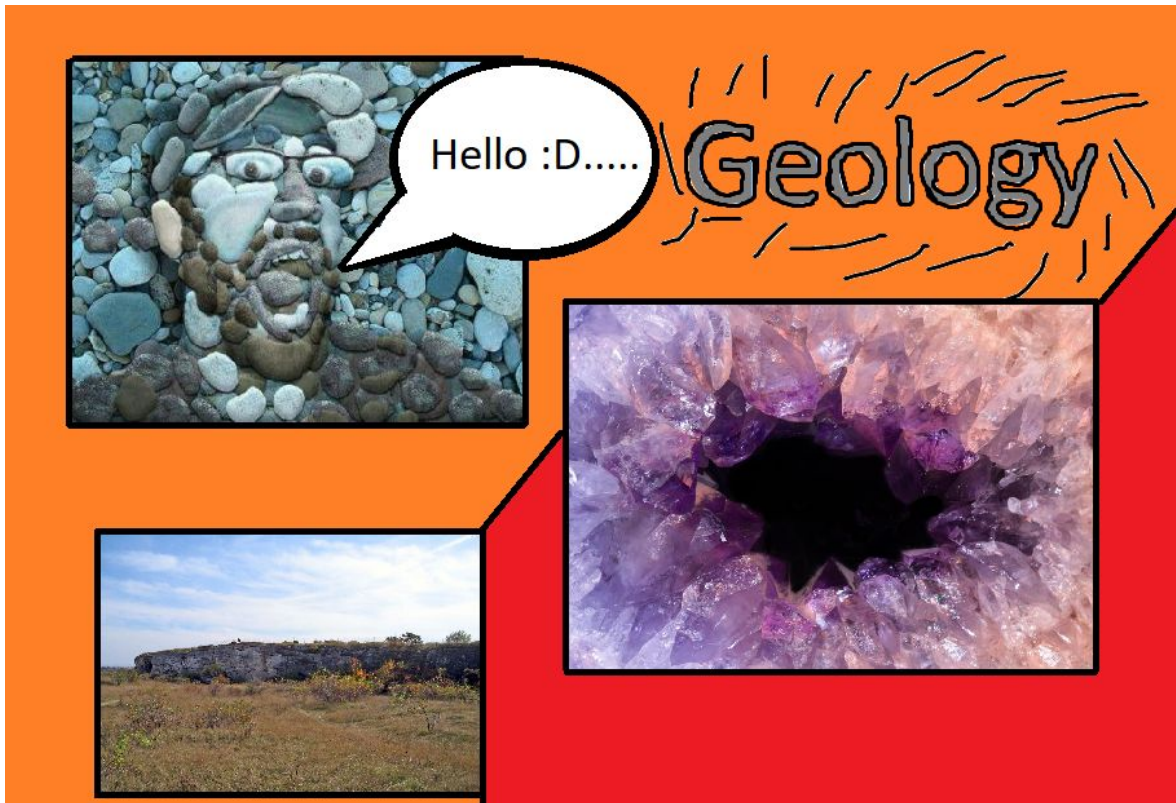
Locals don't want visitors and are not happy to meet them.

Robinson Crusoe visited Fiji.

Adele Arnold likes the Fiji nature.

There are programs for children on Fiji.

Appendix 3: Posters created by 6th graders for their presentation



MY HOBBY is playing on mobile - crash of cars





## Appendix 4: A worksheet for the Movie Review lesson for the 8th grade

### Part 1:

# Once Upon a Time in Hollywood movie review: Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt shine; Quentin Tarantino shocks

Once Upon a Time in Hollywood review: Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt bring effortless chemistry to the most surprising film of Quentin Tarantino's career. Rating: 3.5/5.

HOLLYWOOD Updated: Sep 02, 2019 21:16 IST



#### Once Upon a Time in Hollywood

Director - Quentin Tarantino

Cast - Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, Margot Robbie, Al Pacino, Kurt Russell

Rating - 3.5/5

Once Upon a Time in Hollywood is a solid yet surprising addition to director Quentin Tarantino's singular filmography - a languid and laid-back mood piece that doubles as a throwback to the filmmaker's lifelong obsessions, and ends with one of the most controversial sequences of his career.

Despite being fully prepared for what was in store, I was taken aback by how many surprises Tarantino had up his sleeve. There is none of the breakneck back-and-forth dialogue that the filmmaker is known for; the conversations, instead, are paced as sleepily as the summery vibe of the film, which is set during a period of great upheaval in Hollywood, circa 1969.

Don't get me wrong, his characters are still partial to a long chin-wag, but in a less aggressive, and more internalised manner - perhaps a sign that Tarantino, like the fading movie star Rick Dalton (Leonardo DiCaprio), is maturing with age.

The movie is, however, also a victim of some of Tarantino's annoying excesses, and self-imposed rules. Tarantino has convinced himself that a film's length is directly proportional to its quality. As anyone who has seen *City Lights* (a breeze at 87 minutes) and *High Noon* (even breezier at 85) would tell you, this is simply not true. *Once Upon a Time...*, like *The Hateful Eight* and *Django Unchained*, could easily have shaved a few minutes off its 161-minute runtime, especially because it has such a meandering structure.

There has been talk of *Once Upon a Time...* being re-edited into a four-hour miniseries for Netflix, when the time comes for it to be released on home video and streaming. I'd imagine it would make for a more enjoyable experience.

As amusing as it was to watch a bunch of Jewish mercenaries massacre Hitler and his Nazis in *Inglourious Basterds*, or to watch a black slave annihilate his white oppressors in *Django Unchained*, Tarantino's revisionist streak is sure to divide audiences right down the middle this time around. Personally, I was on board with the burst of his trademark graphic violence towards the end, but once again, his single-minded obsession with putting his female characters through hell can't help but feel a little tiresome. The times have changed, I wish he'd have as well.

If Tarantino is to be believed, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is his second-last film. To end on a truly subversive note, might I suggest that for his final movie, Tarantino direct a nice little romantic comedy set in a French vineyard or something. If anything, it would give him an excuse to really zoom in on the feet as they stomp on the grapes.

Source: screenshot from original web:

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/hollywood/once-upon-a-time-in-hollywood-movie-review-leonardo-dicaprio-brad-pitt-shine-quentin-tarantino-shocks/story-gPhsB7xAPgtcVRqUe3NWAP.html>

Appendix 4: A worksheet for the Movie Review lesson for the 8th grade

Part 2:

1. Find the following words in the text and explain their meaning in the context of the review. Use max 5 words in English.

chemistry \_\_\_\_\_

have (something) up his sleeve \_\_\_\_\_

chin-wag \_\_\_\_\_

shave off \_\_\_\_\_

was on board \_\_\_\_\_

2. Write true (T) or false (F) on these statements.

The author of this review thinks Quentin Tarantino is cruel to his female characters.

The author thinks the characters don't have much to talk about.

The author thinks the movie is too long.

The author believes the movie would be better as a TV series.

The author thinks Quentin Tarantino would enjoy filming some grapes being destroyed.

Source: worksheet created by myself

## Appendix 5: Three Advice Column entries for the 9th grade

I have to ask you about something quite personal. My best friend and I have been close for a long time and we have a lot in common, but I've just realized recently that every conversation we have daily is just about HER! I hadn't realized that until a short time ago, and sometimes it gets annoying when all we do is talk about her!! And also I feel that sometimes she's just using me, you know. We've never had an argument about anything so I don't even know how that would go! And how do you make up after that?

- Eliz, 16

At school, there's a person I consider a friend, but I recently found out that she hates me. But that's not my concern. My issue is that she had my two friends lie to me about how they felt about me, and she continually tries to keep them away from me! She gets agitated if I talk to one of them. What can I do? I don't want to fall out with my friends completely.

- Ayako, 14

I'm terribly shy and not good at making friends. I'm very close with my older sister but she got engaged recently and I'm afraid she won't have time for me when she gets married and moves in with her husband. I like him enough but I've never enjoyed spending time with both of them as much as when it's just my sister and me. I have a few people in school that I talk to but we're not very close. How can I get to know more people?

- Allison, 16

Source: Retrieved from original web: <https://www.seventeen.com/> (no longer available online)

## Annotation

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Jiřina Kučerová
<b>Katedra:</b>	Ústav cizích jazyků
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Josef Nevařil, Ph.D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2020

<b>Název práce:</b>	Rozvoj sociolingvistické kompetence
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	The development of sociolinguistic competence
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Diplomová práce se zabývá rozvojem sociolingvistické kompetence ve výuce anglického jazyka na základní škole. Představuje dosavadní výzkum problematiky rozvoje sociolingvistické kompetence a výběr metod a materiálů, kterými je rozvíjena. Dále představuje vlastní výzkum reakce žáků základní školy na některé tyto metody a materiály a analýzu učebnic, které žáci ZŠ používají, dle míry prezentace kultury.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	výuka anglického jazyka, kompetence, kultura, jazyk, sociolingvistika, výukové metody, výukové materiály, autentické materiály

<p><b>Anotace v angličtině:</b></p>	<p>The diploma thesis deals with the development of sociolinguistic competence in English language teaching in lower secondary schools. It presents existing research about the development of sociolinguistic competence and a selection of suitable methods and materials. It also presents its own research of the reactions of lower secondary school pupils to these methods and materials and an analysis of coursebooks used by these pupils based on the extent to which they present culture.</p>
<p><b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b></p>	<p>English language teaching, competence, culture, language, sociolinguistics, teaching methods, teaching materials, authentic materials</p>
<p><b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b></p>	<p>7 stran</p>
<p><b>Rozsah práce:</b></p>	<p>94 stran</p>
<p><b>Jazyk práce:</b></p>	<p>angličtina</p>

## Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá problematikou rozvoje sociolingvistické kompetence ve výuce anglického jazyka. Představuje přehled dosavadního výzkumu zabývajícího se významem kultury jako součástí výuky jazyků a důležitosti rozvoje kompetencí ve vzdělávání. Dále představuje výběr metod a materiálů, které slouží k rozvoji sociolingvistické kompetence ve jazyků, a způsobů, jak tyto metody a materiály ve výuce použít. Praktická část této diplomové práce potom zkoumá reakce žáků české základní školy na tyto materiály a jejich schopnost s nimi pracovat ve výuce formou několika hodin anglického jazyka zaměřených na poslech a četbu autentických textů a aktivní produkci jazyka. Poslední částí práce je potom analýza vybraných učebnic, se kterými žáci českých základních škol pracují, dle způsobů a míry obsažení kultury.