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VYUŽITÍ DOPLŇKOVÝCH TEXTŮ PŘI VÝUCE ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA NA 2. STUPNI ZŠ

Radka Stoklasová

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University of West Bohemia

Faculty of Education

Department of English

Thesis

USING SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS IN ENGLISH CLASSES IN UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Radka Stoklasová

Plzeň 2014

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

V Plzni dne 14. dubna 2014

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Radka Stoklasová

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis deals with the topic of skimming and scanning reading techniques in upper primary school. In the theoretical chapter, various aspects that are connected to reading are explained. It introduces the importance of reading, discusses the frameworks that treat reading and provides characteristics of students in upper primary school. However, the greatest importance is put on the process of reading. It presents the basics that lead to successful reading such as development of reading skills and strategies and development of reading attitudes that teachers can form by positive motivation. The conducted experiment in upper primary school is described in the second part of the thesis. The experiment, realized by the aid of four texts, aimed at finding out how fast students can read within a given limit of time and how successful they are in their answers. Considering the results of the skimming experiment, it is concluded that students are able to do the skimming tasks in time, however, they make a number of mistakes that reflect significantly in the total result and decrease its value. Considering the scanning experiment, it is concluded that students do not manage this reading technique properly since they read slowly and when confronted with a challenging text, they make a lot of mistakes.

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I INTRODUCTION

Reading is an important skill that we all need to master if we want to live a quality life. It is a communication tool that helps us share information with other people. Furthermore, it serves a wider role in our lives. It is a means for reaching personal, social and intercultural goals. Through reading, moreover, we gain a lot of benefits.

The basics of reading are taught in lower primary schools where students come first into contact with reading and where the attitudes towards reading are founded. However, the real reading comes in upper primary schools. There, students are no more taught how to read but to read with comprehension, to read more fluently and to critically analyze different kinds of texts. Moreover, they first come into contact with different types of reading, there.

Skimming and scanning are one of those reading techniques that students first encounter in upper primary schools. However, these speed reading strategies are often only outlined and are not practised properly. The lack of practise leads in difficulties that a lot of the students in upper primary already have. They have problems to deal with skimming and scanning reading techniques because they read slowly and tend to read all words. As I have been teaching in the first primary school in Plzeň since 2013, I have had a chance to encounter the same problem, too. This is the reason why I decided to make an experiment in this upper primary school and to find out to what extent students of the eighth grade and the ninth grade would deal successfully with skimming and scanning reading techniques when confronted with the limitation of time or difficulty of the text.

The thesis itself is divided into two main parts - the theoretical part and the part treating the experiment. The theoretical part outlines various aspects that are connected to reading. It provides an explanation of the term and discusses the frameworks that treat reading. It further analyses the reading process from different points of view presenting causes of inefficient reading, benefits of reading, lesson reading activities, its assessment and it deals with different types of reading.

The other part deals with the reading experiment. It presents the background information for the experiment such as when and where it was carried out, its participants and the description of the tools that were used to gather the data. Next, it presents the results and discusses them from different points of view. It further interprets the results and

elaborates the limitations of the experiment and suggests how the experiment can be improved.

II THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical part of the thesis deals with the key issues that relate to reading. It consists of five parts. The first part defines reading from various points of view and explains the reasons why people read. The second part treats two frameworks that are important for assessing students´ knowledge of foreign languages and reading competence as well. These are Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education. The third part analyses some characteristics of the students in upper primary schools including personal characteristics, behaviour and factors of motivation. The fourth part is the largest one and contains several issues connected to the process of reading. It enumerates causes of inefficient reading, suggests some skills and strategies that teachers should concentrate on in lessons and presents various benefits that arise from reading. Furthermore, it proposes activities that a lesson should consist of and, at last, it provides different forms of reading assessment. The last part of the thesis concentrates on different kinds of reading such as extensive reading, intensive reading, skimming and scanning.

All previous reading techniques are important, however, all of us master them in a different way. Since the basis for future success in reading is set in primary schools, the following subheadings focus on various aspects that might have a key role in gaining positive attitudes towards reading and that might decide whether students will be efficient readers or not.

The Nature of Reading

What Reading Means

Reading is a communication skill that plays an important role in our lives. It is a complex process that involves both the reader and the text. It can be defined from two points of view. First, reading is a process of decoding written symbols. Second, reading is an immediate interaction between the reader and the text.

Both definitions constitute one unit. In order to interact with the text, people need to be able to decode written symbols. However, in order to do that, at least three conditions must

be accomplished. First, people have to be literate. Second, people have to understand the language and third, people have to understand the vocabulary. If individual words do not make sense then the overall story is incomprehensible. Furthermore, to understand the text, printed information must fit in people´s schema – a pre-existent knowledge of the world. If there is no appropriate schematic knowledge, comprehension becomes much more difficult. (Harmer, 2001)

Although previous conditions are a basis for reading comprehension, it is in fact the interaction between the reader and the text that makes up actual reading. According to Aebersold and Field (1997), "the meaning the reader gets from the text may not be exactly the same as the meaning the author of the text wished to convey" (p. 15). Likewise, different readers get different meanings from the same text. These differences occur because they are influenced by their previous experience, by family or cultural background, by motivation and other personal characteristics. (Aebersold & Field, 1997)

Reading as a Communicative Skill

Reading is an essential skill that we all need to possess if we want to live a quality life. Today´s society operates on the premise that everyone can read. People are expected to be able to read advertisements, warnings, street signs, instructions on cosmetic products, etc. Reading is so much a part of daily life that we don´t even think about it. (Wallace, 1992)

The importance of reading in a mother tongue or in a foreign language still increases since more and more information is published in a written form. According to Mikulecky (1988), "reading is the basis of instruction in all aspects of language learning and reading instruction is an essential component of every second-language curriculum" (Teaching Reading, para. 1). Furthermore, reading is important while visiting foreign countries where people have to read different texts such as signs, warnings, menus or travel guides. Concerning the Czech Republic, opportunity for reading in a foreign language is higher than for speaking in a foreign language. Everybody can borrow books, magazines or other writings in libraries or buy them in bookshops or second-hand bookshops. (Henrich, 1988)

Reading as a Receptive Skill

Reading, together with listening, are both receptive skills. It means that readers do not produce language, they receive it and understand it. In comparison to speaking, writing and listening skills, reading may be described as the easiest one. It takes place under quite favourable conditions since it is up to the readers what strategy they decide to use. They are not so much limited by acoustics of environment, time, contextual situation or presence of another person as in other language skills. Readers can choose the pace of reading and, if necessary, they can stop and go back to the problematic parts and read them again. Another benefit of a written text is its clarity. Readers can take a view of the text, read ahead and guess what will happen next in the text. (Henrich, 1988)

Reading, together with other language skills, constitute a united structure where each skill supports another in a certain way. Reading influences listening, speaking and writing skills. On the contrary, listening, speaking and writing skills influence reading. It is thus important to practice the skills to develop sufficiently the personality of the learner.

Reading Purpose

Although the appearance of modern technologies such as television or the Internet may have lessened a need to read for some people, we still need to read in different situations of our lives. According to Wallace (1992), reading can be done for different purposes. These are reading for survival, reading for learning and reading for pleasure. Sometimes it can be a combination of all.

Reading for survival. Reading for survival arises from an immediate situation. Sometimes it might be a matter of life and death. Good examples may be reading traffic signs for motorists or reading instructions on drug goods that could cause harm. Moreover, as Wallace suggested (1992), "Survival reading serves immediate needs or wishes" (p. 6). Obvious examples are signs on lavatory doors like "Ladies", "Gentlemen" or the sign "Exit".

Reading for learning. This type of reading is more common in our lives. According to Wallace (1992), "reading serves the wider role of extending our general knowledge of the world" (p. 7). Much of the daily reading is for this purpose. It includes reading newspapers

to get to know what has happened, reading different materials that would help us write a literary work or reading materials for academic purposes. Although reading for learning is a basis for future progress it might not be motivating for readers. More motivating reading comes with the reading for pleasure.

Reading for pleasure. As the title suggests, reading for pleasure serves to please readers. The main advantage of it is that we don´t have to do it. We do it because we want to and we can stop whenever we decide to. It is used as a perfect tool to motivate children in schools. However, this point may be overturned since it might be chosen for inappropriate activities. Wallace (1992) found that "reading for pleasure might be lost on children in school where literature, originally written primarily to offer enjoyment, is required reading for examinations" (p. 7). Thus, the pleasure principle is neglected and it can further affect children in a bad way.

Reading in Frameworks

This part of the thesis treats two important documents that deal with reading and further elaborate key competencies, objectives and outcomes of English language in upper primary school. These are Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education (FEP EE).

Reading in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CEFR is an internationally recognized document that is common for Europe and some states outside Europe. It provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, examinations or textbooks. It defines six levels of language ability on a scale of levels from beginners (A1) to those who have mastered the language (C2). Since it provides this sorting, learners of foreign languages have a possibility to see the level of different qualifications and can measure each stage of learning on a life-long basis. (Council of Europe, 2001)

CEFR is a basis for requirements for foreign-language education specified in the FEP EE. Education in the field of foreign language reading supposes achieving the level A2. It

follows that at the end of primary education, students shall be able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance and find specific information in everyday materials such as advertisements, timetables or menus. (Council of Europe, 2001)

Reading in Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education

Reading takes a special position among key competencies in FEP EE. According to it, reading serves as a means for reaching personal and social goals and, furthermore, for getting to know culture differences and traditions of foreign language speaking nations and respecting them. In primary schools, attention is paid not only to teach students how to read, but also to read with comprehension, work with specialized texts, assess these texts critically and to work with the content of the texts. (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy [MŠMT], 2013)

Together with other skills, reading is a tool to achieve specific objectives. During the course of primary education, according to MŠMT (2013), students are lead towards obtaining information from different sources by themselves and mastering work with language sources and with the texts of different specializations. Moreover, students are guided towards experiencing literary works of art on their own and developing positive attitudes towards literature and towards English language in general. (MŠMT, 2013) The objectives are a basis for the outcomes that are further formulated in FEP EE as expected outcomes for receptive language skills.

At the end of primary education, students are expected to be able to read simple texts of appropriate length. Next, they shall understand the content and meaning of simple authentic and non-authentic materials and find required information in them. Likely, they shall infer the meanings of new words from simple texts. And, at last, students shall understand common signs in public places such as warnings or orientation signs. (MŠMT, 2013)

Characteristics of the Learners in Upper Primary School

In order to lead a successful reading lesson, teachers should bear in mind the personality of their students and choose the texts and the activities according to their individual characteristics. The major factor that teachers need to consider is the age of their students because students of different ages have different needs, competences, and cognitive skills. (Harmer, 2001)

Teaching students in upper primary school, particularly eighth- and ninth-graders, might sometimes be a challenging task. Teachers can experience discipline problems, their students may be less lively and not so enthusiastic about learning as younger learners. However, these problems may be only a matter of age. Students of this age undergo physical and emotional changes and it reflects in their behaviour. They often search for individual identity and friend approval may be more important for them than the attention of the teacher. They may also have personal or family problems that they bring into class. (Harmer, 2001)

However, teachers should not be too preoccupied with these problems and should rather exploit activities that would respect the characteristics typical of this age group. As Harmer (2001) suggested "Teenagers, if they are engaged, have a great capacity to learn, a great potential for creativity and a passionate commitment to things which interest them" (p. 39). It is then upon the teachers to find out what subject is interesting for them and select relevant and involving texts that would encourage students to respond with their own thoughts and experience. It is highly inadequate to let students just answer questions and do abstract learning activities. It is better to lead activities that require independent decision making or discussing issues that teenagers are interested in. (Harmer, 2001)

Reading Process

As stated above, reading is a complex process including the text and the reader. Readers differ one from another and they are influenced by various factors. Thus, the meanings that readers get from a text are different. To become better readers, students need to practice reading a lot and the difficulty of reading should be continually increased. However, similarly to listening, writing and speaking, some problems may be encountered while reading process.

Causes of Inefficient Reading

The difficulties that cause inefficient reading relate to the personality of the reader, the text being read and the outside factors. Although they may not appear at the same time, each of them can greatly influence the reading process, namely the reading speed and the reading comprehension.

The reader. First, I will mention the factors connected to the personality of the reader. A major problem is vocabulary deficiency. If students have a poor knowledge of vocabulary, they can hardly understand the text. It is a big problem of most of the beginner readers and in first stages of reading the vocabulary deficiency may cause a de-motivation to read. Next problem is lack of interest. If students are bored they do not read the text with pleasure. The boredom can be caused by an uninteresting text or by an immediate physical or mental state of the student. Another problem consists in lack of concentration. According to Brown (1966), "Some readers have never developed proper techniques for dealing successfully with distractions, have never disciplined themselves to give concentrated attention to anything for any length of time" (p. 21). These issues are quite common in the present since commercials or station breaks may have decreased the ability to concentrate for extended periods of time. Other obstacles are vocalizing words while reading, word-by-word reading or looking back at the text while reading. (Brown, 1966)

The text. The biggest problem connected to a text is its difficulty. However, it is not easy to assess. In general, if a text contains a number of unknown words, words and sentences are too long or if the text is of an uninteresting topic, it is often considered as difficult. Moreover, if the text is of an unknown content for the reader, it is also difficult. It follows that teachers should choose texts that are appropriate for the language level of their students and select them in order to create students´ interest to read them. By interesting topic teachers can raise students´ attention to read the text and it is a good step for a better comprehension.

Outside conditions. The last factors that can reduce reading comprehension are outside conditions of the classroom. They decrease students´ attention. These are for example temperature, noise in the classroom or in the street, movement or poor lighting.

To reduce these obstacles, teachers may take preventive measures. In order to eliminate outside factors of the classroom they can prepare the classroom in advance by arranging desks, switching on the lights and then by observing students while reading and interfering if needed. To deal with other obstacles, they should choose interesting texts of appropriate level. Another way of helping students is to pre-teach vocabulary that is in the reading. However, the best way how to deal with these problems is to teach students some strategies or skills they can apply while reading. These techniques are in the first stage of learning a foreign language proposed and taught by language teachers. In the next stages, the students themselves choose the technique that is most helpful for them. If children develop good reading habits, it will be very helpful for them in the next stages of learning a foreign language.

Reading Skills and Strategies

In short, reading skills are tools that help children to come across a text successfully, to deal with problems and to understand the meaning of the text. The skills improve reading comprehension and motivate students for further reading. Fluent readers use most of the reading skills unconsciously and automatically, however, weaker students might have problems when they are confronted with a more difficult text. (Mikulecky, 2008)

Teachers can help students to develop appropriate reading skills under some conditions that were further elaborated by Mikulecky (2008). At the beginning, teachers should focus on one skill at a time and explain the purpose of it to students. Afterwards, teachers work on an example of using the skill with the whole class and then they let the students practice it on their own. Discussion follows and in the next classes, teachers assign individual students to work on more exercises that focus on the same skill, however, with increasing complexity. In future lessons, teachers lead the students to apply the skill to a variety of texts. (Mikulecky, 2008)

According to Lindsay and Knight (2006), students need to develop different reading techniques such as skimming and scanning, using dictionaries, guessing meaning of the unknown words from the context, predicting what will happen in the text, applying knowledge of other languages or using knowledge to draw conclusions. Some of the skills will be dealt at the end of the theoretical part.

As soon as the students apply the skills independently, they become a strategy. Afterwards, students have freedom to decide which strategy they would apply to different texts. The strategies may vary according to the nature of the text, the students´ purpose and the context of situation. (Wallace, 1992) If students learn to apply reading skills and strategies, reading will become more fluent and reading comprehension will increase. All these factors will enable students to gain benefits of reading.

Benefits of Reading

There exist many advantages to readers. Reading extends vocabulary, recalls previously learned vocabulary, improves spelling and concentration and develops imagination and creativity. Furthermore, it introduces the facts about foreign speaking countries of the target language, teaches children facts about the world, facilitates the development of prediction skills, makes readers smarter and develops language skills.

Reading has a positive impact on recognition, acquisition and fixation of language means. The more the children read the more words they learn. But it is not just the vocabulary they learn. They come into contact with typical phrases they have never met before and can acquire them in a receptive way. Next, reading extends knowledge of grammatical and syntactic structures typical of the target language. As a consequence, children become better at writing. Moreover, if children read a lot, they gradually become better at it and are thus more motivated for subsequent activities. (Henrich, 1988)

Reading in the Classroom

To lead the reading lesson successfully and guide students efficiently while reading, teachers should follow some steps while preparing and leading the lesson. First, the aim of the lesson needs to be stated. Next, the most important decision comes. It is the choice of

the text. While choosing a text, teachers need to consider the topic of the text, language level of their students and the difficulty of the text. To avoid much of the difficulties that could arise while reading, teachers should choose texts that are interesting with vocabulary and grammatical features that students understand. Furthermore the texts should not be too long since long texts tend to make students tired. (Lindsay & Knight, 2006)

Students of foreign language have sometimes problems with dealing with the text they know nothing about. Giving students a text without any previous introduction might result in failure. In order to interact effectively with the text, teachers should provide students with some background information concerning the content as well as the context. This information may cover the genre, topic, etc. All this is done to activate students´ schematic knowledge; to remind them of what they already know about the topic in order to reach a satisfactory interpretation of the text.

A common way how to facilitate students´ orientation to context and content is through text-related activities. There exist three types of reading activities – pre-reading activities, while-reading activities and post-reading activities. They prepare students for reading, guide them through reading and help them to organize the information already read and test the comprehension. Most contemporary reading materials reflect these stages, however, in different ways. (Wallace, 1992)

Pre-reading activities. Pre-reading activities serve to establish a purpose for reading, motivate students for subsequent reading and activate their schematic knowledge. It may appear in a form of set of questions that precede the text. Other ways consist in activities that prepare students for linguistic difficulties in a text or to introduce them to the cultural factors or conceptual difficulties. This can be done by pre-teaching vocabulary or grammatical structures and pre-teaching ideas or concepts that students know a little about. (Wallace, 1992)

There are a variety of activities that students can engage in. Teachers can use brainstorming, role plays, word association activities, discussion or using maps, diagrams or pictures in the text. Aebersold and Field (1997) proposed other tasks, for example content mapping or semantic mapping. While content mapping students write down any information they know about the topic and then mark similar sentences in the text. While semantic mapping students write down the words connected to the topic and then mark

words that are similar. Another preparation activity consists in previewing a text when students establish their own expectations about the text. (Aebersold & Field, 1997)

While preparing pre-reading activities, teachers should be careful that the activities relate to the objectives they have planned. The activities should correspond to the type of the text so it helps the students to select a reading strategy appropriate to the text. (Wallace, 1992)

While-reading activities. While-reading activities check students´ comprehension of the text and guide them through reading. As students have to fulfil different tasks, they are lead towards more active approach to reading and they become aware of the reading process as well as their reading strategies.

Teachers can choose from three types of while-reading activities based on teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction or on the text only. Teacher-student interaction activities consist in asking students questions when they read. The questions can be also written in a text after individual paragraphs. During student-student interaction activities, students work together to reach a specific goal. Lindsay and Knight (2006) introduced for example jigsaw reading or problem solving. Jigsaw reading involves two students who have a part of a text and they ask questions in order to find out what is in their partner´s text. Problem solving involves more students who have different texts about a topic and they share information to solve a problem. (Lindsay) Text-only activities may have a lot of forms. Teachers can give students jumbled sentences of paragraphs and ask them to arrange them to make a text. Another activity consists in presenting students with a text with empty spaces and students fill in the word to make a meaningful text. Other activities may include predicting text content, identifying the main ideas of the text and individual paragraphs using visual aids, skimming and scanning for specific information, organizing information into a graphic organizer, guessing word meanings from the text, etc. (Lindsay & Knight, 2006)

Post-reading activities. Post-reading activities aim to work further with the text and help students to organize the received information. This stage offers employing other skills such as writing or speaking. Most frequent activity consists in answering questions that follow the text. These may be right or wrong questions or multiple questions. However, as

Wallace (1992) claimed, these questions can be answered without reading the text at all because students can draw answers from their schematic knowledge. Other frequent activities include writing tasks, for example writing a letter to the author, changing the end of a story or the text can serve as a model for writing. Other texts might lead to vocabulary and grammar development activities or speaking activities such as role-plays. (Lindsay & Knight, 2006)

Developing Attitudes to Reading

In classroom, reading often focuses on specific skills, however, the development of positive reading attitudes may be overlooked. It could have a negative impact on future progress of students. According to National Association of School Psychologists (2004), students with positive reading attitudes enjoy reading and become lifelong readers. However, students with poor attitudes toward reading tend to avoid reading and sometimes even refuse to read at all. It follows that it is very important to develop positive reading attitudes to avoid any such inconvenience. There are lots of possibilities how to develop them. However, a key role in it is played by teachers. It depends upon their approach to what extent this idea is going to be fulfilled.

Role of a teacher. For some teachers, teaching reading might be a difficult challenge. According to my opinion, a crucial aspect for teaching reading is motivation. An initial step to create motivation is to discover what is interesting for students, what they like or what they need. If the teachers find out what subject is motivating for students, they can choose adequately challenging and so motivating texts. Moreover, they can apply different ways to promote motivation.

The first one is to demonstrate students how teachers value reading, to show the importance of it. Because only if the teachers prove that they are motivated themselves, they can support the motivation of students. The second way consists in teaching students some reading techniques. Teachers should provide students with advice how to use texts to get information. They should familiarize children with steps that are essential for reading a text successfully or how to deal with problems. If students know how to read and how to solve problems they become better readers. Other ways consist in providing students with

a variety of reading materials, providing reinforcement while students read, helping students realize that reading has positive outcomes and helping them acquire basic reading skills. (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2004)

All these factors will facilitate students´ competences and support positive perceptions about themselves as readers and then reading for learning can easily turn to reading for pleasure. An important note must be made at this point. If children do not read for pleasure in their mother tongue they will not do it in English. It means that teachers of mother tongue should also follow the pieces of advice mentioned above. If these points are fulfilled and children read for pleasure, fluency has time to develop. (Wallace, 1992)

Reading Assessment

Teachers have different roles in the reading classroom. They plan reading activities, guide and encourage students while reading and, at last, they assess reading. Reading assessment or reading testing can be of different types. They can vary from alternative methods to traditional methods. If teachers want to take an overall picture of their students´ reading abilities, they should use both types.

Alternative methods of reading assessment serve as an important feedback tool either for students and either for teachers. At present, we can come across different types such as portfolios, homework, self-assessment or teacher assessment. All the tools provide information about what language level students have. Even though alternative methods tend to be used more than in the past, traditional types of assessment are still much more common. (Aebersold & Field, 1997)

Traditional methods of testing reading test students´ comprehension and, in contrast to alternative methods, they may end up in a grade. Aebersold and Field (1997) enumerated different methods that are commonly used in assessing reading. They include multiple-choice questions, vocabulary tests, cloze tests, completion tasks or short answer questions.

Multiple-choice questions often follow a text and are a part of many language assessment tests. However, its use can be problematic since they often trick students by confusing the meaning of the text. Teachers should pay attention while preparing them and should carefully formulate the alternatives. The second type of traditional methods, vocabulary tests, often take forms of lists of words that need to be defined. However, as

Aebersold and Field (1997) pointed out, it does not test reading comprehension. It only tests students´ recall of the words. Another widely used type of assessment is the cloze test where students complete words that have been deleted from a text. To make the test valid, every fifth, sixth, or seventh word is usually deleted. A similar type is a completion test, however, in this type of test it is up to the teachers what words they choose to delete. The last type, short answer questions, often requires students to answer questions, using information from the text. The last two methods seem to be most advantageous since they test students´ comprehension of the text, demand production of language and reinforce writing skills. (Aebersold & Field, 1997)

Reading in Different Ways

Several types of reading can occur in a language classroom. However, each author divides them in different ways and uses various reference terms. Aebersold and Field (1997), for example, used the terms approaches and introduced extensive and intensive approaches towards reading. Scrivener (1994) operated with the same terms and added scanning and skimming. Lindsay and Knight (2006) suggested skimming and scanning, reading for detail, reading for pleasure or reading for general meaning. And Hadfield and Hadfield (2008) used similar terms such as skimming, scanning, reading for gist, reading for detail and extensive reading. In my thesis, I will introduce extensive reading and intensive reading and deal with skimming and scanning in detail.

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading, also called fluent reading or gist reading, consists in reading longer pieces of text to get the main idea of it. Readers are not so much interested in individual words or sentences. On the other hand, they concentrate on comprehension of main ideas. Reading is direct and fluent and readers often skip unknown words. (Scrivener, 1994)

The main goal of this activity is reading for pleasure. Students choose reading materials that interest them and the reading is done outside of class. (Aebersold & Field, 1997) In order to read for pleasure, the reading materials should be interesting and within students´ proficiency range. On this account Graded Readers are often used. To control the

results of reading, students may write a report on the text or make a presentation of it. In general, extensive reading is a good way to promote positive learning attitudes and motivate students for further reading.

Intensive Reading

Intensive reading, on the contrary, is typically used with shorter texts and the goal of it is to study the language in detail and comprehend the maximum of information. The reading is done in the class and the texts are often accompanied by tasks that require students to practice specific reading strategies or skills. (Aebersold & Field, 1997)

Skimming

Skimming, also called gist reading, is an important speed-reading technique that helps readers identify the general meaning of the text. It is common when readers want to find whether the information is worth reading or when they do not have the time to read every word. (Lindsay & Knight, 2006) According to Scrivener (1994), "Skimming is mainly concerned with finding key topics, main ideas, overall theme or basic structure" (p. 154). Nowadays, students employ it while reading printed materials such as newspapers, magazines, messages or while browsing the Internet.

To ease the process of skimming, teachers can provide students with some tips. First, it is useful to read the title, subtitles and subheadings first in order to find out what the text is about. Next, it is recommended to look at the visual aids in the text that would provide students with more information about the topic. Third, students should read the first and last sentence of each paragraph. And, at last, students should avoid reading every word or sentence. They should only look through the text and notice the key words. ("Skimming", n.d.)

Skimming, as well as other reading techniques, has lots of advantages. It saves time because it is much faster than normal reading. If it is frequently practiced students soon build up an ability to skim more difficult texts. Moreover, this skill will help students in later stages of learning since it allows them to study more efficiently. In addition, skimming is good while reviewing what has already been read.

However, it has got also some disadvantages. It gives reader only a general view of the content of the text. Details can be easily missed as well as the message or the communicative function of the text. It follows that it is less useful while reading detailed texts or materials containing statistics or reading science fiction where little details are crucial to understand the text. Neither it is good for reading poems since it often includes symbolic meanings. On the contrary, it is appropriate for activities like doing a research on some topic when we want to find relevant information or reviewing for a test when we want to recall information already learned. ("Skimming Techniques", n.d.)

Scanning

This type of fast-reading technique is used when readers want to find out a specific information from the text. To do this, readers move their eyes quickly over the text and stop when they find the word they are looking for. It is used while looking up a word in a dictionary, looking for arrivals or departures in a train timetable or reading a TV schedule to find out what time a television programme is on. (Lindsay & Knight, 2006) In general, scanning is very useful for finding out specific names, statistics, dates or facts.

As well as in skimming, students can follow some steps that would help them to come across the text more easily. First, after reading the question, students should keep in mind the word or phrase they are looking for. If the question requires numbers or proper nouns, students should look for them and avoid thinking about anything else. If they do it, the word or phrase is likely to appear more clearly than other words. Next, students ought to run their eyes over several lines at a time and when they find the information they are looking for, they should read the entire sentence to confirm the answer. Furthermore, it is useful to notice different types of writing such as bold, italic or different font or size. ("Skimming and Scanning", n.d.)

III METHODS

This part of the thesis is devoted to the idea how efficient students in an upper primary school are while speed-reading techniques. The research is done through experiment. This chapter covers the description of when the experiment was made, where it was carried out, what classes participated in it and, most importantly, what tools were used to gather information and how the experiment was realized.

The experiment itself focused on finding out to what extent students of the eighth grade and the ninth grade would deal successfully with speed reading techniques within a given limit of time. The experiment concentrated namely on skimming and scanning. Students were presented with four texts and asked to complete the tasks that accompanied them. Two texts tested their ability to skim and two tests tested their ability to scan.

The experiment was carried out at the first primary school in Plzeň. Two classes from the eighth grade and two classes from the ninth grade were engaged in it. I chose classes VIII C, VIII D, IX B and IX C. The total number of students who participated in the experiment was 78. There were 19 students from the class VIII C, 25 students from the class VIII D, 13 students from the class IX B and 21 students from the class IX C. The eighth-graders were examined on the 28th of February and the ninth-graders on the 10th of March.

School Profile

The first primary school in Plzeň is situated in a city part of Bolevec. Nowadays, it is the state primary school with more than 1000 students. The main goal of the school is to create a positive learning environment in order to motivate students for lifelong learning. It is open not only for students but also for their parents and other people who would like to attend educational, cultural or interest courses that the primary school offers through its community centre.

The first primary school in Plzeň is well-known for its educational specializations. Since it was founded, its students have had a possibility to choose between classes with extended education of computer technologies and classes with extended education of PE

such as athletics, football, archery, swimming or water polo. The last specialized classes are the ones with extended education of languages.

The school provides teaching English as a compulsory subject since the first grade. In the first grade and the second grade, English is taught through audio oral method and teachers use games, rhymes or drama to introduce English language to their students in a natural way. From the third grade to the ninth grade, English is taught in the extent of three lessons per week. In upper primary school, there is at least one class with extended education of foreign languages in each grade. Since the school year 2009/2010, the first primary school has offered English and German language combination and English and French language combination. Both second foreign languages are taught in the extent of three lessons per week in the classes with extended education of languages. Non-language classes have two lessons per week.

To support the education of foreign languages, foreign language lessons take place in language classrooms or in a multimedia classroom. All of them are equipped with video and audio devices, overhead projectors and computers. To practice the subject matters, special computer educational programmes for foreign languages are used. Furthermore, all students have access to school library where they can borrow authentic reading materials or Graded Readers. During lessons, students of foreign language are lead towards working with language portfolios and with magazines that facilitate obtaining different reading skills. Moreover, students in classes with extended language education have one conversation lesson with a native speaker per week during which they practise common conversational themes. It is also possible for students to visit different countries since the school organises trips to foreign countries every year. Students can visit Great Britain, France or Germany. And, at last, students can participate in foreign language conversational competitions that are held every year.

Classes Profiles

The experiment was carried out in two classes from the eighth grade and two classes from the ninth grade. Classes VIII B and VIII C in the eighth grade are both classes with extended language education. Ninth grade classes have different specializations. The class IX B has extended PE education and the class IX C has extended language education. All

the classes have three English lessons a week. However, classes with extended education of foreign languages have one lesson with a native speaker within the three lessons. In following paragraphs, I will draw a comparison between them.

In general, students from the eighth grade are of similar language skills and abilities. They have a very good level of English language that meets the requirements of the school curriculum. If they are engaged, they are willing to cooperate and they participate in classroom activities. They are curious about new facts and learn new issues fast. There are two students with a light learning disability concerning reading disability. However, one of them was missing in the day of the experiment.

The ninth-graders, on the contrary, have very different skills and abilities. Most of the students from the class IX B have an average or low level of English language. In general, they have poor knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar. They find it difficult to deal with writing tasks and reading and listening activities. However, if they are motivated they are very enthusiastic about activities and try hard to participate and succeed in each of them. There are two students with learning disabilities concerning reading disability and writing disability. In contrast to the class IX B, students from the class IX C have better level of English language. They are more confident while reading, listening, speaking and writing. However, they are not so enthusiastic about activities within the lessons. They are less concentrated and get easily distracted. There are no students with learning disabilities.

Materials Used

The experiment was done with the aid of four texts. Two texts were used for the skimming technique and two texts for the scanning technique. I drew the texts from the Internet and from textbooks Inspiration 3 and Inspiration 4. All texts are available in appendices. The web pages and the textbooks that I drew the texts from are available in the references.

The first text for skimming was downloaded from the web page www.niqes.cz. The national project NIQES focuses on testing students from fifth grades and ninth grades of primary schools in order to find out if they have minimal knowledge that meets the requirements in Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education. For the

purpose of testing the knowledge of fifth-graders and ninth-graders, a set of tests were created including the text that I used for the experiment. The skimming task in the first text consisted in finding the best Czech summary of a given text in English (see APPENDIX 1). The text is about a Japanese dog that was rescued after spending some time at sea after a tsunami. Originally, there were five alternatives from A to E. However, I eliminated the last option and used only four alternatives in order to make it accessible for the eighth-graders. The correct answer for the question is the answer B. Other alternatives differ from the correct one in some details. The paragraph A has different information at its end. It is stated that the dog did not display its feelings and that it would take a long time for him to recover. The paragraph C differs in a number of kilometres that the dog had to spend floating and in another information at its end which presents that the owner of the dog introduced herself and expressed her thanks to the coast guard. The last paragraph D has different information at the beginning where it is written that the dog managed to swim back to the coast where it was found by the coast guard. Moreover, different information is to be found at the end where the owner is referred to as Mrs. Ban.

The second text for skimming was drawn from a textbook Inspiration 4 (see APPENDIX 2). It is about good eating habits and the task was focused on matching eight statements preceding the text with the following eight paragraphs. Each paragraph contains a key word from the sentence that belongs to it.

As well as the second text for skimming, the first text for scanning was drawn from a textbook. This time it was a textbook Inspiration 3 (see APPENDIX 3). It is a factual text about Australia and the task consisted in finding the right information for the questions preceding the text. The text itself is divided into paragraphs and each paragraph is numbered.

The last text was drawn from the Internet. The text is a TV programme and students had to find answers in it in order to complete the questions preceding the text (see APPENDIX 4). The TV programme presents three TV stations with similar programmes. The vocabulary might seem exacting, however, the names of the programmes are highlighted in order to make the orientation easier.

Realization of the Experiment

The experiment was held on two days. I examined the eighth-graders first on the 28th of February and then the ninth-graders on the 10th of March. The experiment was similar for both grades and it lasted two lessons for each class. The first lesson was focused on the skimming technique and the second lesson on the scanning technique.

Concerning the skimming experiment, I introduced the topic of the experiment first and asked students if they knew anything about this technique. Next, I provided them with the explanation of the term and presented some examples where they could use the skimming technique. Then, I gave them some advice related to the procedure of reading. The pieces of advice were further elaborated in the theoretical part of the thesis. In order to motivate students for the reading, we did a pre-reading activity. Next, students were given a text with tasks and the time limit was set. Both texts were done within seven minutes. In the course of the reading, I observed students and calmed down any disturbance. At the end of the lesson, students had an opportunity to share their feelings about the reading activities and I previewed next lesson.

The scanning experiment was done similarly to the skimming experiment. First, I introduced the reading technique and provided students with some examples and tips. Next, we did a pre-reading activity. Afterwards, I gave students the texts and set the time limit. Both texts were done within 8 minutes. I watched students closely and intervened if necessary. After the reading, discussion followed and I ended the lesson.

In the methodical part of the thesis, I focused on the introduction to the experiment and provided general information about the circumstances under which it was carried out. I presented necessary information connected to the experiment including the place where it was held, classes engaged, materials used and procedures leading towards the results. The outcomes of the experiment will be dealt in detail in the next part of the thesis.

IV RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

This chapter of the thesis deals with the results of the reading experiment that concentrated on skimming and scanning techniques. It introduces not only the results but also the most important findings and discusses them from different points of view. The results of the experiment are presented in bar charts that show the number of correct answers, wrong answers and no answers. The results of individual texts are presented in one bar chart separately for each class. Each text is discussed in the terms of all classes. The results of the skimming experiment are introduced first and the results of the scanning experiment follow. At the end of this chapter, all results will be summarized and the major findings of the experiment will be presented.

Skimming Experiment

Text 1

The first experiment consisted in finding the best Czech summary for a given English text (see APPENDIX 1). Four options were possible, however, only one was correct. The correct answer was the answer B. Following bar charts show how many students from each class chose the correct option and how many of them chose other options. First, the results of the class VIII C are discussed. The results of the classes VIII D, IX B and IX C follow.

The figure 1 demonstrates that students from the class VIII C were not quite uniform in their answers. Seven students decided for the option B, six students chose the option A and six students chose the option D. Nobody decided for the option C. All students made a choice.
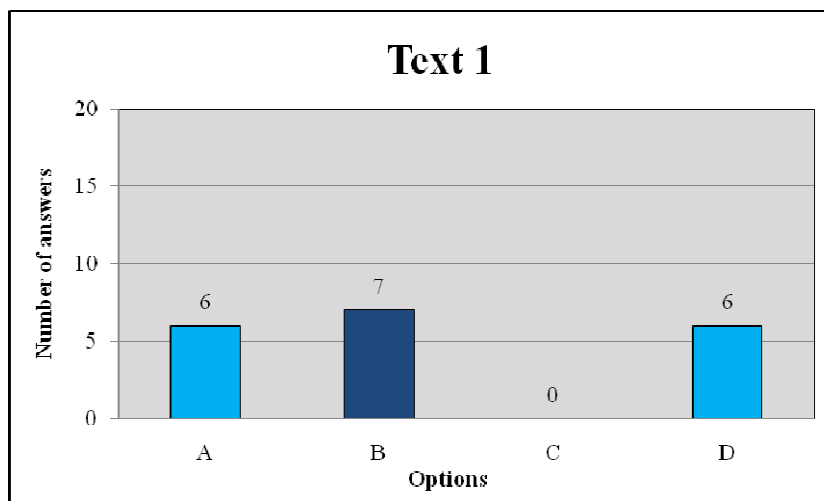
Figure 1. Results of the experiment of the class VIII C on skimming reading technique, Text 1.

These results were quite surprising for me. I expected more of the students to choose the correct answer for three reasons. First, students from this class have a very good level of English language. Second, at the end of the experiment, most of them agreed that the text belonged to the easier ones. And, at last, they admitted that they managed the task in time even with a time reserve. If the time limit was not the main problem as for example at other texts, it seems to me that students did not pay enough attention to the content of each paragraph.

As it was described in the previous chapter, paragraphs differ in details. However, the most important information for the students may have been the number of kilometres that appears in all of them except for the paragraph D. Students may have oriented themselves mainly according to this information and may have not paid attention to other aspects of the texts. It would explain why nobody decided for the option C since it contain a wrong number. The paragraph A introduces the correct number, however, the wrong information is to be found at its end. Students may have not managed to skim the whole paragraph and decided for this option only because of the number given. The paragraph D does not include any number of kilometres and the wrong information is at its beginning. According to me, students who decided for this option did not pay attention to the content or were pressed by the time limit. Another explanation may consist in misapprehension of the English text.

Students from the class VIII D managed the task much better. As the figure 2 presents, the correct option was chosen by a vast majority of them. Eighteen students decided for the option B, three students chose the option A, one student chose the option C and three students decided for the option D.
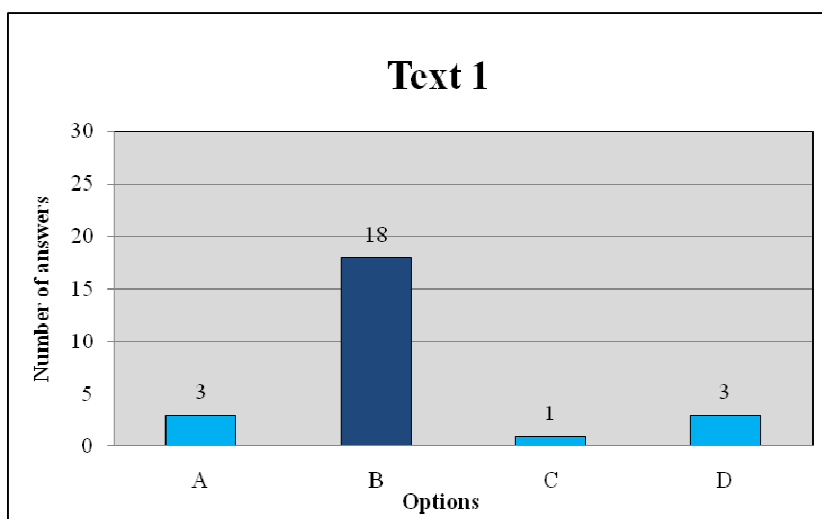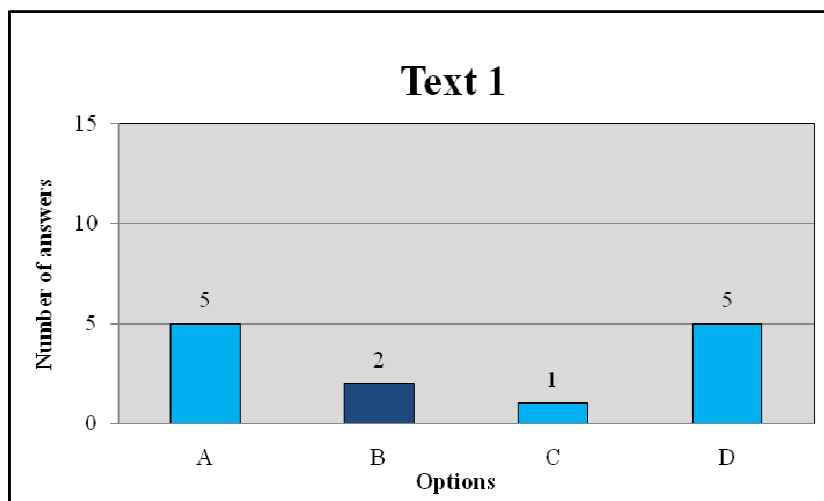

Figure 2. Results of the experiment of the class VIII D on skimming reading technique, Text 1.

These results confirmed my expectations. Similarly to the class VIII C, students from the class VIII D have a very good level of English so the English text was comprehensible for them. Moreover, after the skimming experiment, they admitted that they did not find the text difficult and that most of them managed to choose an option before the time limit expired. The results correspond to it and show that the time limit was sufficient for them and, on the contrary to the previous class, that most of them paid attention to some of the details in the text and managed the reading technique better.

The results of the class IX B are completely different from the results of the eighth-graders. The figure 3 demonstrates that the students were not successful in the task. Only two students out of thirteen decided for the correct option. It further presents that five students chose the option A, one student chose the option C and five students chose the option D.

Figure 3. Results of the experiment of the class IX B on skimming reading technique, Text 1.

These figures confirmed my expectations. As I stated in the class description, most of the students from the class IX B have a low level of English language. They have limited knowledge of vocabulary and of grammar and thus have problems with understanding longer pieces of texts. Considering the skimming experiment, students said that the time limit was not sufficient for them and they admitted that they chose an option at the very end of it. All these inconveniences are reflected in the results. They signify that students did not manage the reading technique. I would assign it to the number of words unknown for students. Since only one student chose the option C, students may have oriented themselves according to the number of kilometres mentioned in the text and may have chosen the option mainly because of this figure. It would explain why five students chose the first option where the correct number is included. However, the rest of the wrong answers belong to the last option. I would explain it by a lack of understanding of the text and by the time limitation that may have stressed students and that may have been the cause of their wrong choice.

The class IX C had different results. As it is seen from the figure 4, eleven students chose the option A and the rest chose the option B. No students chose options C and D.
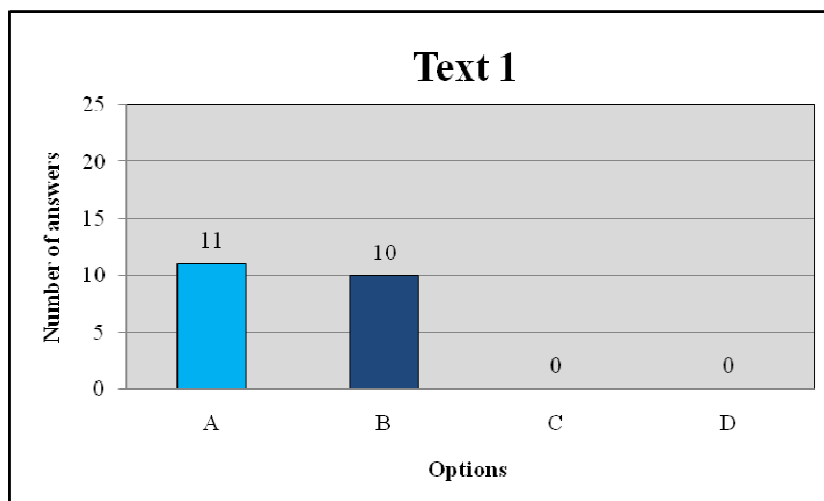
Figure 4. Results of the experiment of the class IX C on skimming reading technique, Text 1.

By contrast to the class IX B, students from the class IX C have better knowledge of English language and are more confident while reading. Most of them finished the task before the time limit ran out and admitted that the text belonged to the easier ones. These aspects are reflected in the results since almost half of the students chose the correct option. It may signify that students oriented themselves mainly according to the correct number of kilometres that both the paragraphs contain. However, students who chose the option A may have not paid enough attention to other information in the text or may have been stressed by the time limit and thus may have chosen the option in the last moment.

Text 2

Next text for skimming was about good eating habits (see APPENDIX 2). It consisted in matching sentences from 1 to 8 to the correct paragraphs from A to H. The experiment was done within seven minutes. The results are presented in bar charts where the horizontal axis presents the paragraphs and the vertical axis shows how many students matched the right, wrong or no sentences to each paragraph.

As the figure 5 shows, students from the class VIII C were quite successful in the task. All students matched the sentences to the paragraphs except one student who did not match any sentence to the paragraphs C, D, F and H. These answers are presented as four yellow

bars. Eleven students completed the task successfully. It means that they had all their answers correct. Five students interchanged one sentence for another one, one student interchanged three sentences and the last student had all the answers wrong.
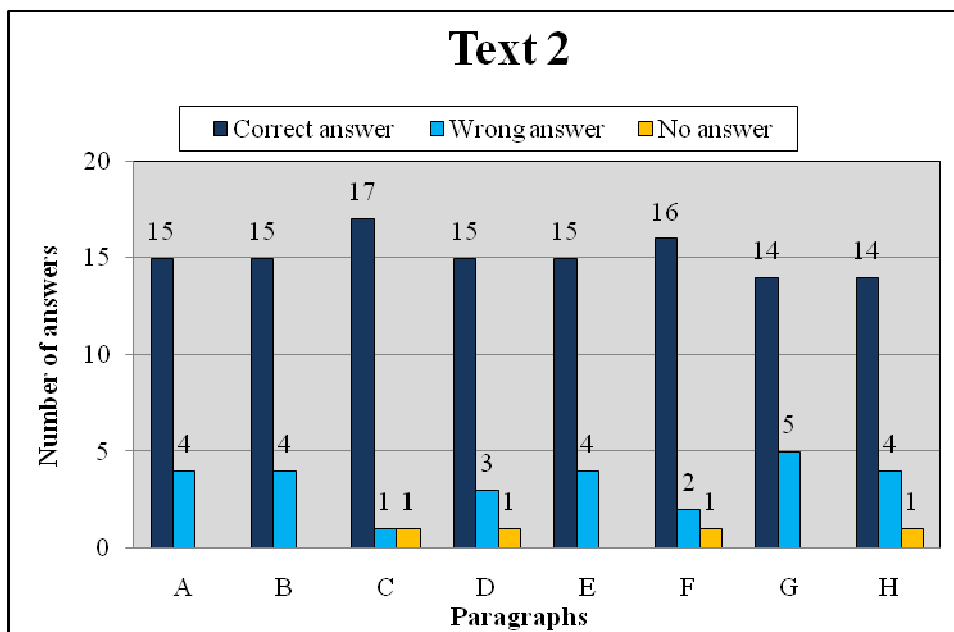

Figure 5. Results of the experiment of the class VIII C on skimming reading technique, Text 2.

The results quite confirmed my expectations since I considered this text to be the least challenging one because of its type of matching exercise. Students had the same opinion about it after the experiment when they said that the text was the easiest one. They completed the tasks before the time limit ran out. Concerning the interchange of sentences, two students interchanged sentences 7 and 1, one student interchanged sentences 8 and 6, one student interchanged sentences 6 and 3 and the last one interchanged sentences 7 and 4. Concerning the first interchange, the paragraphs contain information about drinking bottled water and fruit juice so students probably read the paragraphs briefly and did not notice different information in them. Other interchanges also arise from the similarity of paragraphs so the wrong choices are of the same kind as the previous one. Only one student did not have any correct answer. I think that he did not understand the task or he was not interested in it. Although there were some wrong answers, the results seem satisfactory for me.

The figure 6 demonstrates the results of the class VIII D. It shows that all students matched the sentences to the paragraphs except one who did not match any sentence to the paragraphs C, F, G and H. Ten of the students fulfilled the task successfully, it means that they had all the answers correct. Eleven students interchanged two sentences, two students interchanged three sentences, one student interchanged four sentences and the last student did not match any sentence for four paragraphs as has been mentioned. Two of his answers were correct and one was wrong.
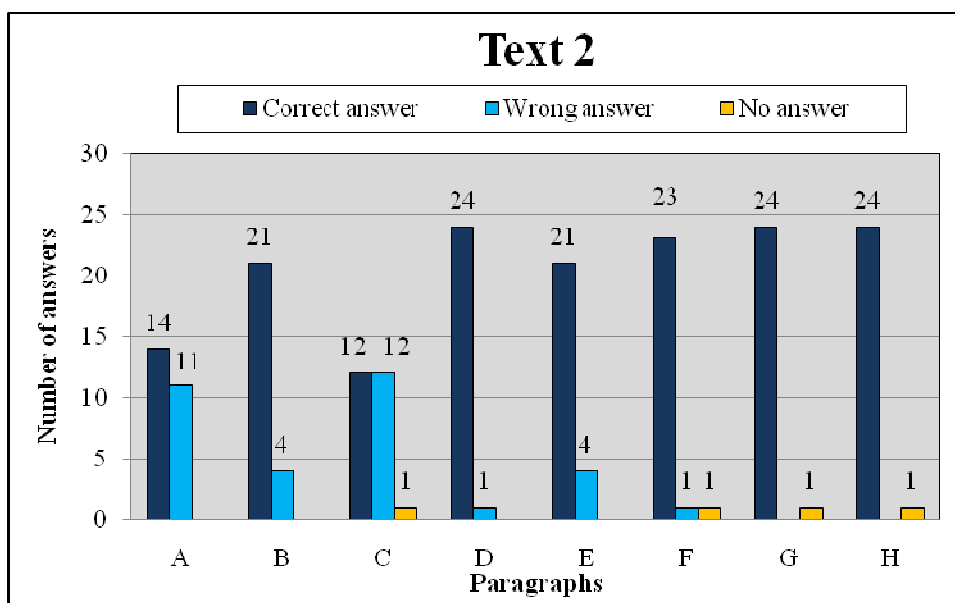

Figure 6. Results of the experiment of the class VIII D on skimming reading technique, Text 2.

These results did not confirm my expectations. I thought that more students would complete the task successfully because of their level of English. Moreover, as well as the class VIII C, most of them completed the task in advance and considered the text to be the easiest one. According to the bar chart, most of the wrong answers belong to the paragraphs A and C. In fact, the highest number of interchanges made belongs to these paragraphs when seven students made this mistake. I think that the reason why they did it is that the paragraphs contain similar information and words as well as the sentences that had to be matched with them. Both the sentences contain the words "healthy" as well as the paragraphs. Moreover, the paragraphs themselves contain the word "fruit". Students

probably did not pay much attention to the text, they only noticed the key words, matched the sentences with the paragraphs and moved on to the next ones. Other interchanges were made for the paragraphs A and E and B and C. Although it is true that while skimming students do not read all the words, some of the key information should be noticed and focused on. I think that these figures are a consequence of a lack of practise of skimming.

The results of the class IX B are different from the results of the eight-graders. The figure 7 shows that a proportion of correct answers to wrong answers is more balanced than at previous classes. Almost all of the paragraphs have a wrong answer. The number of paragraphs with no answer is also higher. In fact, four of the thirteen students matched all the sentences with the paragraphs correctly. However, the number of sentences interchanged is also higher. Two students interchanged two sentences, two students interchanged three sentences and two students interchanged four sentences. Remaining three students had almost all the answers wrong and they also did not answer some of the tasks.
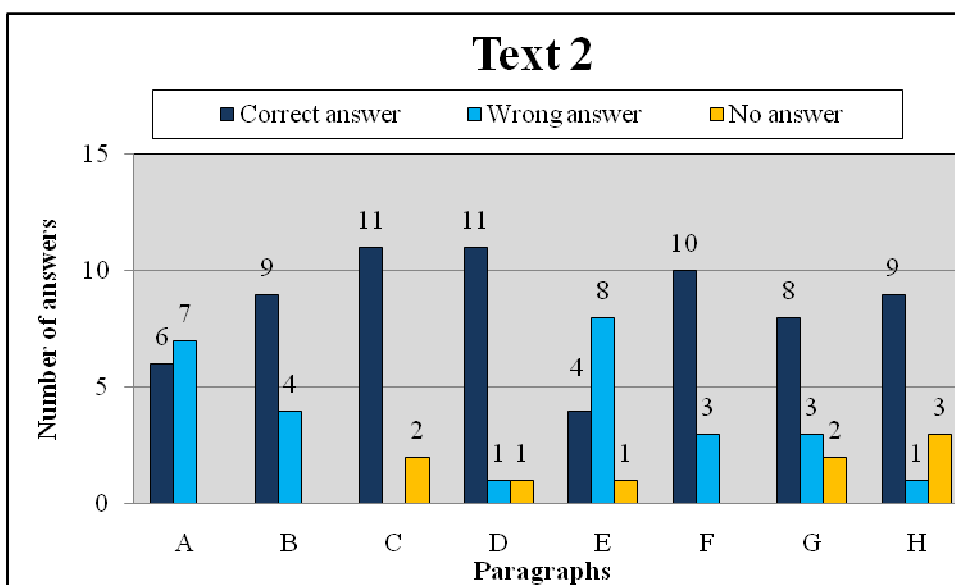

Figure 7. Results of the experiment of the class IX B on skimming reading technique, Text 2.

I expected these results because some of the students had difficulties in fulfilling the task in the time limit. As I stated above, students from the class IX B have a limited vocabulary and are not confident while reading. Moreover, as well as other classes, they

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have not practised skimming reading technique. All these circumstances probably contributed to the results. The figure 7 shows that the number of wrong responses is high as well as the number of no answers. Students probably did not understand the vocabulary and tended to read all paragraphs. They probably read slowly so they did not manage the task in time and may have matched the sentences with the paragraphs at the very end of the time limit.

The class IX C had very good results. The figure 8 shows that the number of correct answers is very high. The number of wrong answers is at minimum and there are only three paragraphs not responded to.
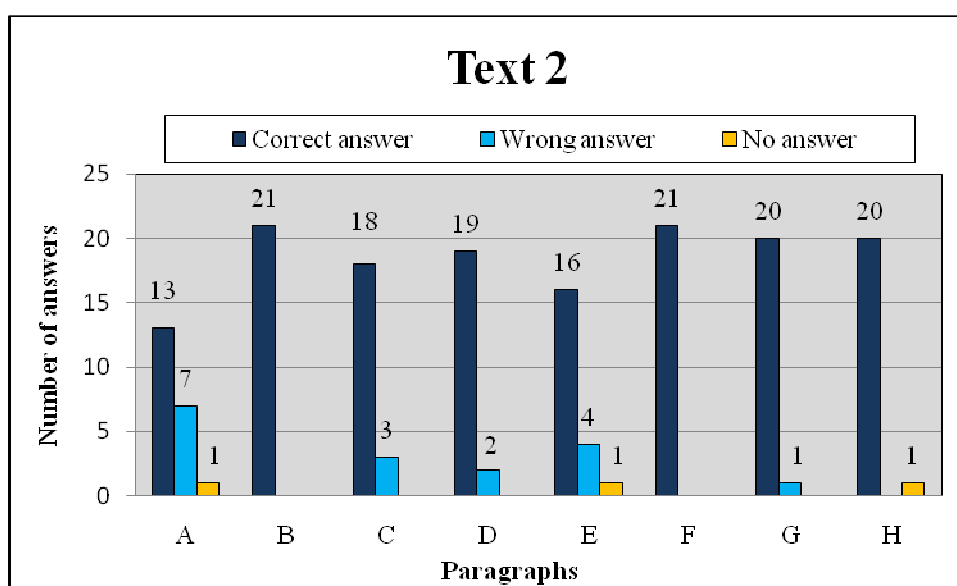

Figure 8. Results of the experiment of the class IX C on skimming reading technique, Text 2.

The results confirmed my expectations since the students have a very good level of English and they finished the task with time reserve admitting that the text was easy. In fact, twelve students out of twenty one had all the answers correct. Eight students interchanged two sentences, mostly sentences 8 and 4 concerning the paragraphs A and C and sentences 8 and 3 concerning the paragraphs A and E. The last student matched four sentences correctly, one answer was wrong and three sentences were not matched with the paragraphs at all. The reason for this result is that the student did not manage to do the task in time since he wrote on the sheet of paper that he needed more time to do it. Considering

the first case of interchange, students were probably confused by the similarity of the paragraphs and sentences. Both of them are about eating healthy and contain the words "healthy" and "fruit". Students probably noticed only these words while skimming and did not look at the paragraphs in detail to recognize what especially they were about. The next interchange has the same basis since the two paragraphs have similar meanings. Students matched the sentences with the paragraphs in the same way.

Scanning Experiment

Text 3

The third text is about Australia and the experiment consisted in looking up information in the text divided into paragraphs (see APPENDIX 3). There were nine questions and students had eight minutes to fulfil the tasks. Following bar charts show how many students from each class chose the correct answer and how many of them decided for wrong or no answer. The horizontal axis presents question numbers and the vertical axis shows a number of correct, wrong and no answers matched with the question numbers.

As the figure 9 shows, students from the class VIII C were quite successful in asking questions until the sixth one after which the number of correct answers decreases noticeably. Also, the number of questions unanswered is high. It is obvious when looking at questions seven to eight. The number of wrong answers is also high.
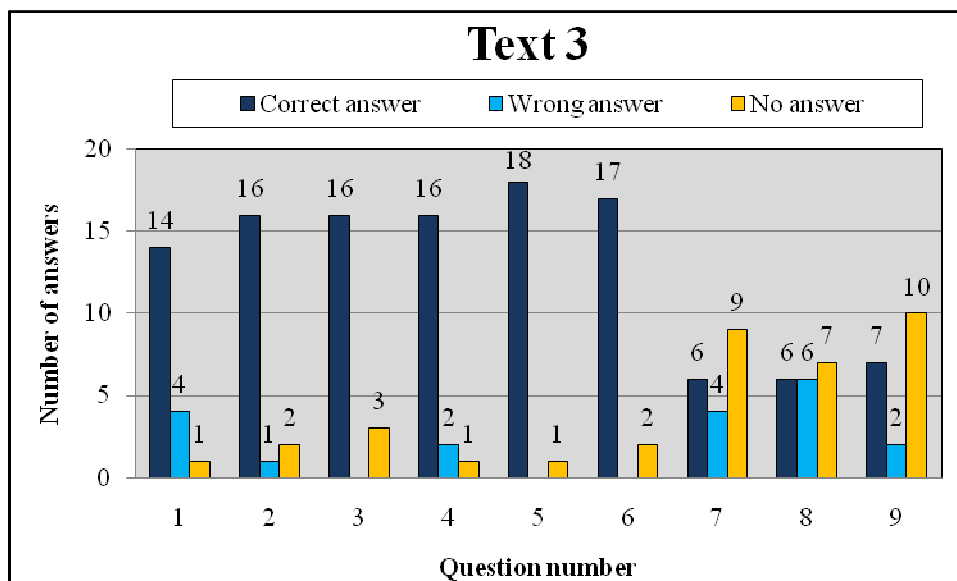
Figure 9. Results of the experiment of the class VIII C on scanning reading technique, Text 3.

These results confirmed my expectations since I had similar experience with students as a teacher while practising reading. The results show that students had problems to fulfil the questions since the time limit was too short for them. Most of them managed to do only the first six tasks and then they did not have time to do the rest. In fact, they admitted that the time limit was too short for them. I think that it was caused by slow reading when students did not focus on the key words they were looking for but tended to read all paragraphs. However, there can be another explanation of it. Students may have not realized at the beginning what information they needed to look for and may have not run their eyes over the paragraphs looking for these expressions. That probably slowed them down, too.

The number of wrong answers is also higher. In general, wrong answers were caused by finding out different information even of a similar form. For example, the first question required a number of Australian inhabitants. The question was often answered with a number, however, it corresponded to the number of years or kilometres. The same case happened at questions seven and eight when students had to find out the most important industry and the place where monsoons were common. Although they found the information in the correct paragraph, they interchanged other information for the correct one.

The results of the class VIII D are far better. As the figure 10 shows, students answered the first six questions quite successfully. However, the same phenomenon of questions not answered appears at the end. The figure demonstrates that a high number of students did not answer these questions at all.
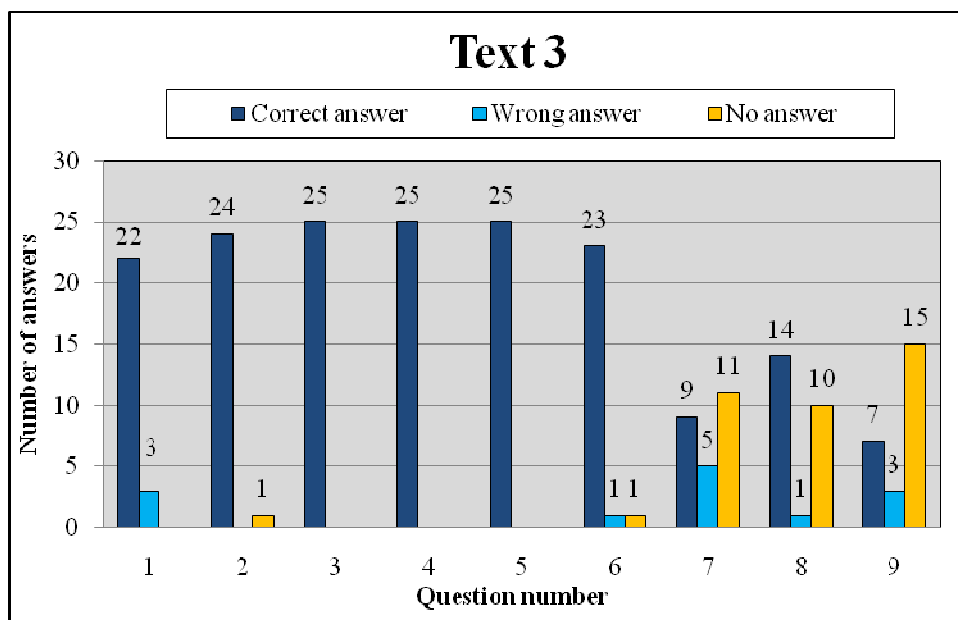

Figure 10. Results of the experiment of the class VIII D on scanning reading technique, Text 3.

As well as the previous class, students from the class VIII D had a difficulty to answer last three questions in time. Students probably read too slowly and were occupied with unimportant information or they did not realize what data there were looking for and lost concentration while reading. The number of wrong answers is low and if the wrong answers appeared, they were caused by interchanging the wrong information of a similar form for the correct one.

The results of the class IX B are totally different when compared to other classes. As the figure 11 demonstrates, correct, wrong and no answers occur at each of the questions. However, there is not such a visible increase of questions not answered to the end. They appear throughout the whole bar chart.
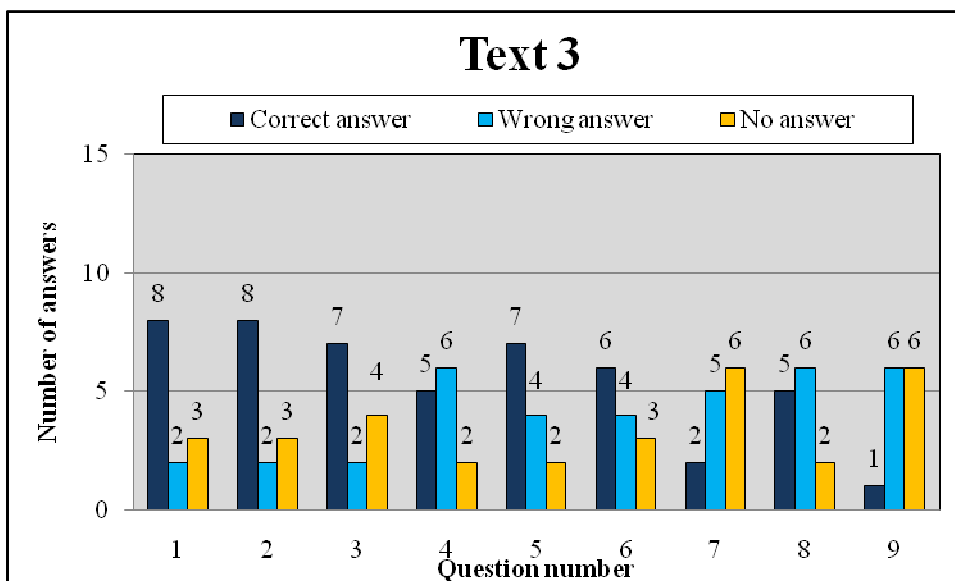
Figure 11. Results of the experiment of the class IX B on scanning reading technique, Text 3.

As seen from the results, students probably chose a different strategy how to deal with the text. They probably chose the questions to be answered at random or they went through them first and chose the ones that required names or numbers as answers. That would explain why questions 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 have the highest number of correct answers. In fact, these questions required numbers and proper names as answers. Other questions except the question 4 required answers of a different character and students probably got lost in the paragraphs and chose wrong answers or did not answer them at all.

The figure 12 shows the results of the class IX C. It is obvious that almost all students finished the task in time since there is a minimum of no answers. The number of the correct answers is also very high except for the question 7 that has the highest number of wrong answers.
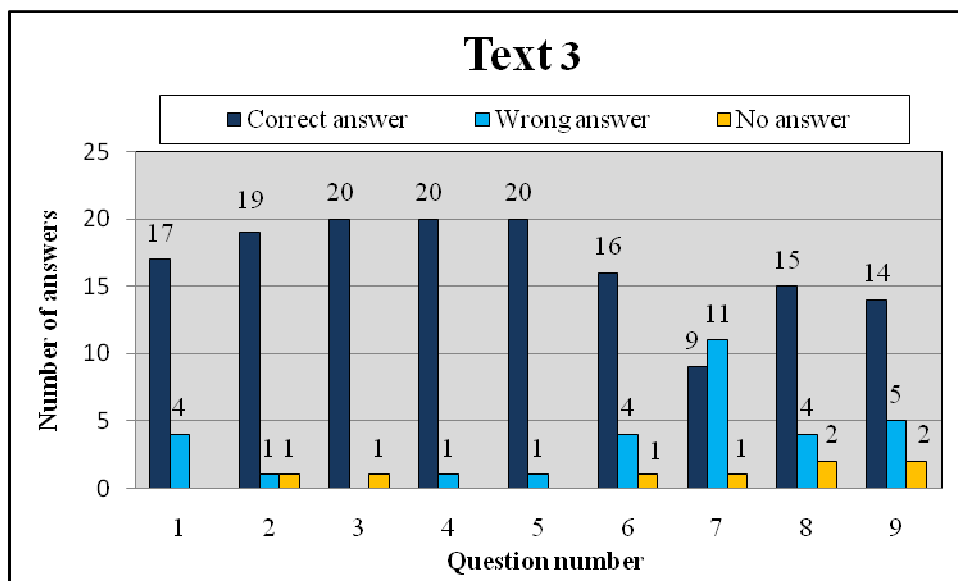
Figure 12. Results of the experiment of the class IX C on scanning reading technique, Text 3.

The results show that students did quite well in the task. The cause of the bad result at question 7 is that students chose wrong answers or were not specific about what the most important industry was. The highest number of wrong answers is to be found at questions that did not require numbers or proper names as answers. Students were probably stressed by the time limit and wrote down the answers without paying more attention to the paragraphs.

Text 4

The fourth text is a TV programme and the task consisted in finding out answers for nine questions (see APPENDIX 4). Students had eight minutes to fulfil it. The results are presented in bar charts where the horizontal axis presents the question number and the vertical axis presents how many students found correct, wrong or no answers.

The figure 13 demonstrates how students from the class VIII C did in the task. It shows that each question has a number of no answers. A number of wrong answers is also evident. Questions 1, 8 and 9 reach the highest level. Questions that reach the highest level of correct answers are questions 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7.
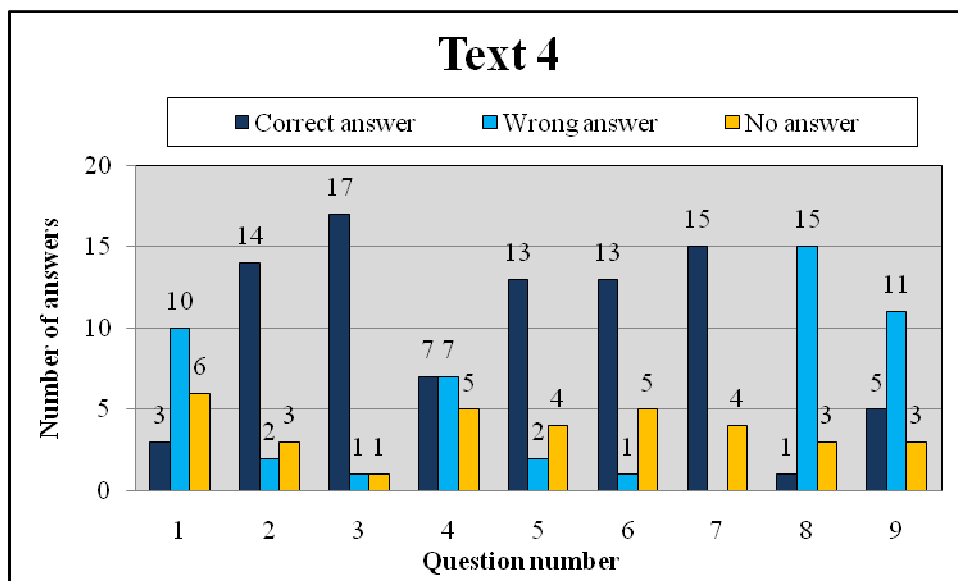
Figure 13. Results of the experiment of the class VIII C on scanning reading technique, Text 4.

The results were not surprising for me since I considered this text to be the most difficult one. Students confirmed my opinion when they admitted that the time limit was too short and that they did not understand some of the words. I think that the poor results arose from the time limit but mainly from the difficulty of the text. It would explain why so many students were successful in questions 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 and not in others. It is because these questions required information that the students understood, that was of a known content for them and that was evident at first sight. The third question, for example, required finding out a film starring Tom Cruise. It is probable that all students know this actor and when looking at the TV programme they found the answer without problems. The same case appears at questions 5 and 6 when students had to find out sports that take place outside and inside. All of them certainly know golf and ping-pong so there was no difficulty in answering those questions as well.

A high number of questions not answered or wrong answered probably refers to the problem of time limit and a lack of understanding the text or the content. This issue is evident at question 9 when students had to find out if there was a horror film on that evening. The answer was yes because the film Green Park by Stephen King was on. I think that students answered this question wrong mainly because they did not know who Stephen King is or maybe they did not know that the stories he writes are mostly of a horror kind.

Another example is to be seen at question 1 when students had to look up a show about investments. The answer for it was yes, however, students probably did not understand the word "bet" that appeared in the description of the programme.

The results of the class VIII D are quite similar to the previous class. As the figure 14 demonstrates, almost all questions contain correct, wrong or no answers. However, the number of questions answered correctly is generally low and at some questions wrong or no answers exceed the number of correct answers.
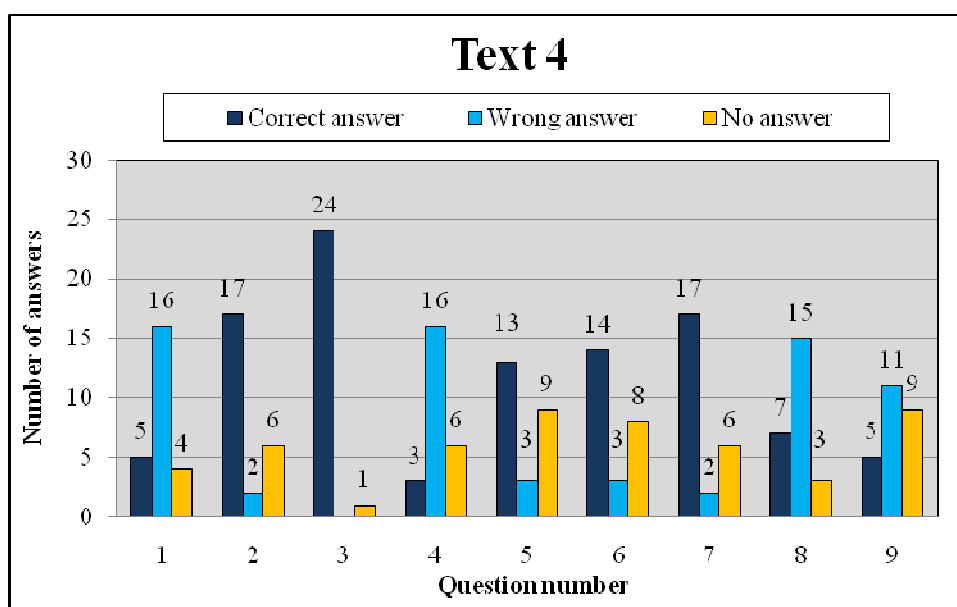

Figure 14. Results of the experiment of the class VIII D on scanning reading technique, Text 4.

The results are quite similar to the results of the class VIII C. That is why I would explain it by the reasons as I did in the previous analysis.

The results of the class IX B are completely different. As the figure 15 shows, the number of questions not answered or wrong answered is very high. In most cases, it even exceeds the number of questions answered correctly. When compared to other results, these results contain phenomena that have not appeared, yet. There is only one question that has most of the answers correct. It is question 3. Moreover, there is also a question that has no correct answers. It is question 8.
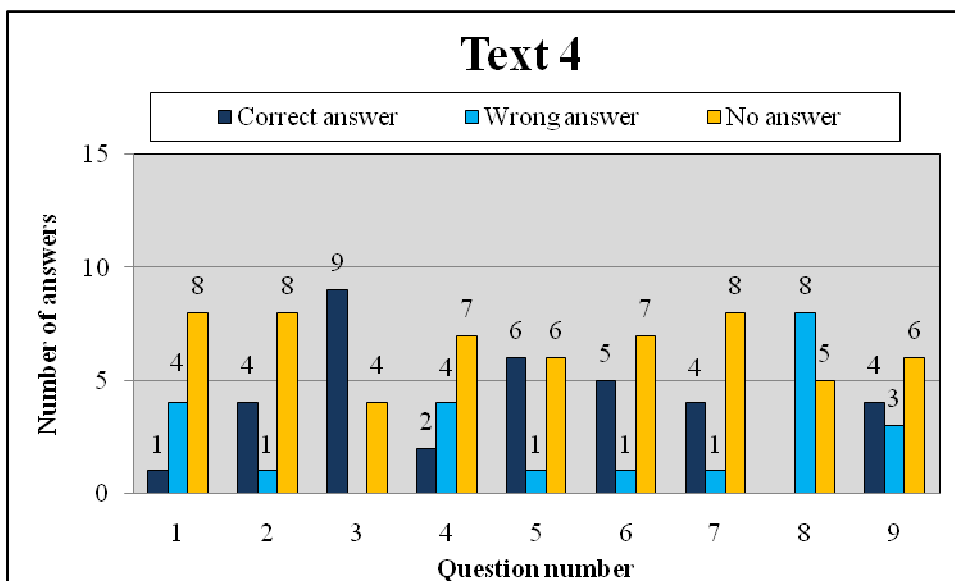
Figure 15. Results of the experiment of the class IX B on scanning reading technique, Text 4.

These figures confirmed my expectations. They show quite clearly that most of the students did not manage to answer the questions in time. The results are also a consequence of a lack of understanding the text. Moreover, students may have got lost in the TV programme and may have lost concentration and will to continue to answer the questions. All these facts show that students did not manage the reading task at all.

The results of the class IX C are better when compared to the class IX B. As the figure 16 demonstrates, all questions have correct answers which exceed the number of wrong and no answers in most cases. The best result is to be seen at questions 2 and 3. The poorest result is achieved at questions 1, 4 and 9.
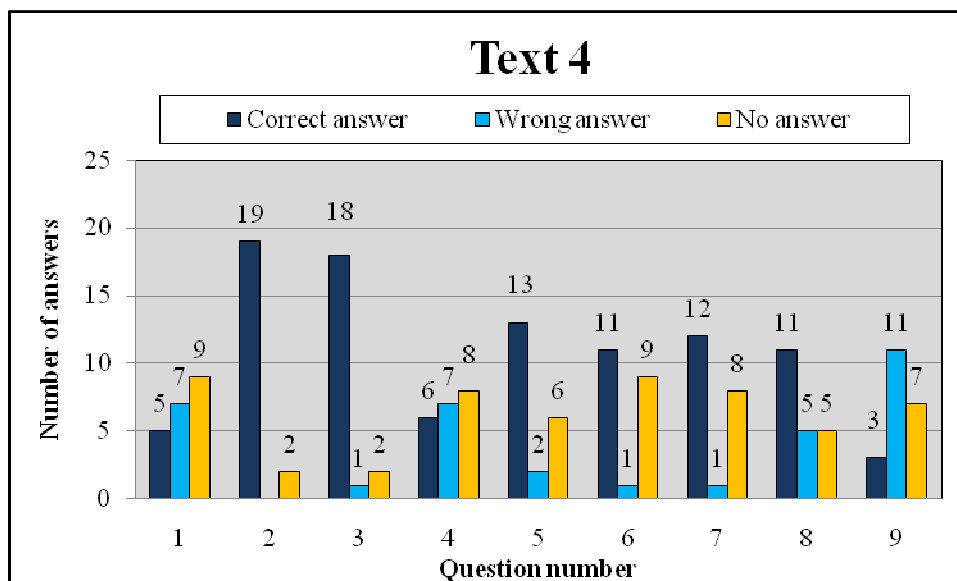
Figure 16. Results of the experiment of the class IX C on scanning reading technique, Text 4.

As the figure shows, students did not manage to complete the task in time because there is great number of questions not answered. Students confirmed this supposition after the scanning experiment. They also admitted that they did not understand some of the information at all. It can be seen at questions 1 and 9. The first one has a great number of no answers and wrong answers. It is probably because students did not understand the word "bet" in the description of the show. The last question is again the question on Stephen King´s horror film. I think that students answered this question wrong mainly because they did not know who Stephen King is or maybe they did not know that the stories he writes are mostly of a horror kind. However, there were also good results. The best were attained at questions 2, 3, 5 and 7. I think that the main reason for it is that students understood the questions and information about individual shows as well. However, the number of no answers at questions 6 and 7 surprised me since the questions required information about a sport that takes place inside and a documentary about modern art. Even though the words "ping-pong" and "art" were highlighted in the text, students probably did not notice them. It signifies that some of the students did not manage the scanning technique at all.

Total Results

Previously, texts for skimming and scanning were analyzed in terms for each class. Following graphs will summarize total results for all classes and will present the major findings. The results are presented in circle charts, answers are converted into per cents.

Skimming Experiment

The first text to be dealt with is the Text 1. As the figure 17 shows, 47 % of students chose the correct answer B. Next biggest number is represented by 32% of students who chose the option A. 18 % of students chose the option D and the last part is formed by 3 % of students who chose the option C. If we convert the percentage into numbers, then 37 students chose the correct option B, 25 students chose the option A, 14 students decided for the option D and only 2 students chose the option C.
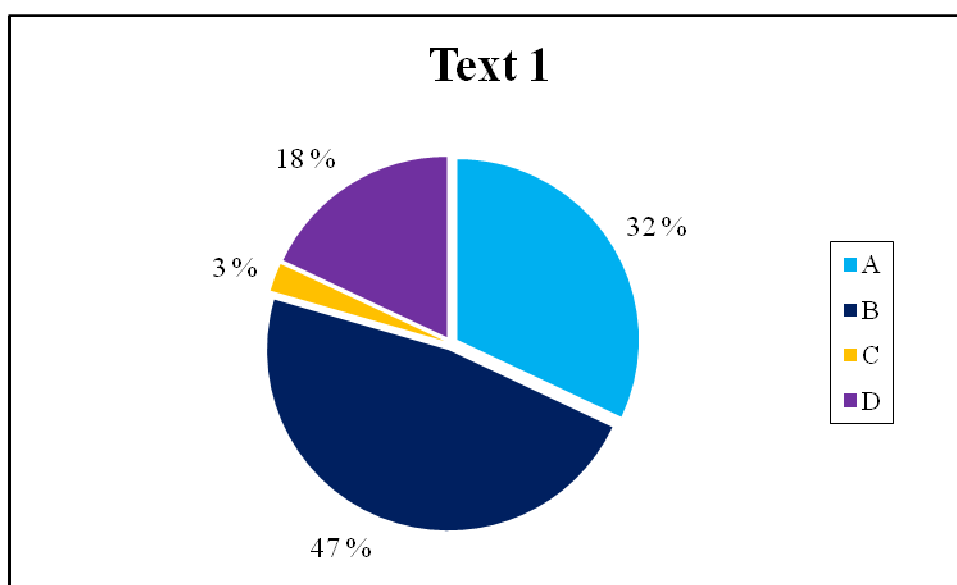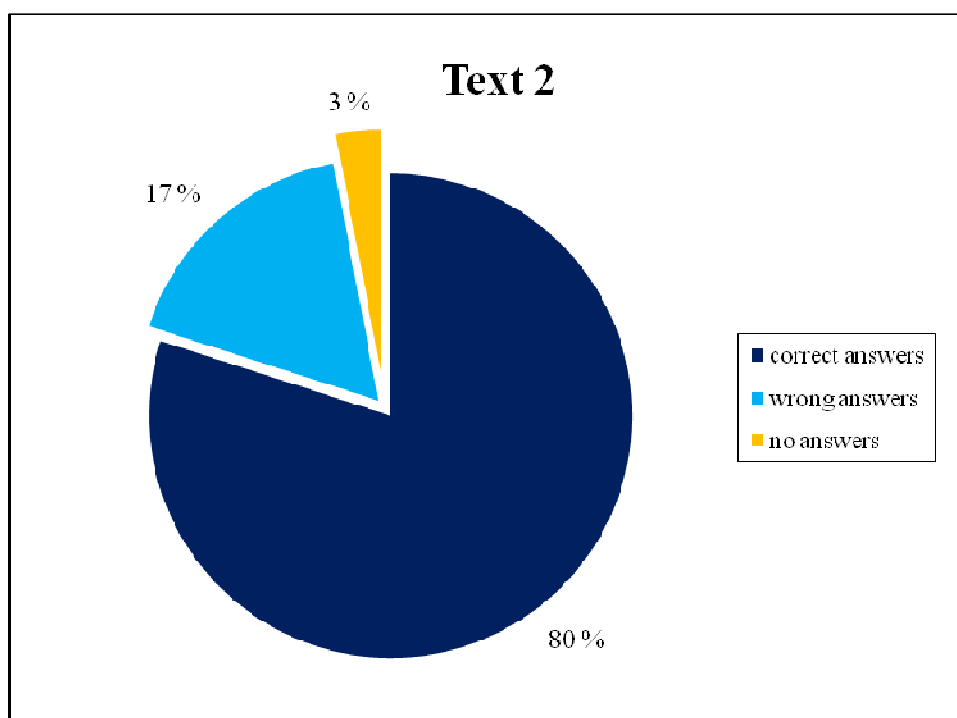

Figure 17. Results of the experiment of total number of students on skimming reading technique, Text 1.

These results show that students were not much successful in dealing with the text. Although most of the students agreed that the text belonged among the easier ones, less than a half of them chose the correct answer. Some of the students were limited by relatively unknown vocabulary, the time limit or they did not pay enough attention to the content of the paragraphs. However, the text itself was created to test students of the ninth grade so its difficulty should not be taken into consideration so much. If I consider these aspects I must say that students managed the reading technique only partially.

The figure 18 demonstrates the results of the skimming experiment on the text 2. It shows that 80 % of the answers were correct, 17 % of them were wrong and the last 3 % of answers were not even made.

Figure 18. Results of the experiment of total number of students on skimming reading technique, Text 2.

These results show that students managed the skimming reading technique better. Most of them finished the task before the time limit ran out. So, there were no big problems with the time limit. However, the number of wrong answers might be assigned to a lack of concentration or a lack of attention towards the text since this number was caused by

interchanging the answers. If I consider these aspects I must say that these results are satisfactory and that students managed the skimming reading technique well in this case.

To sum up, the figures show the fact that if students understand a text, they do not have much difficulties in answering the skimming tasks in time. On the other hand, even if students understand the text, they have often problems to deal with the reading technique properly. They make mistakes that are probably caused by a lack of attention or a lack of appropriate strategy which has not been sufficiently developed at students in this upper primary school.

Scanning Experiment

The figure 19 presents results of the scanning experiment on the third text. It shows that a majority of answers were correct, 14 % of them were wrong and 16 % of answers were not even made.
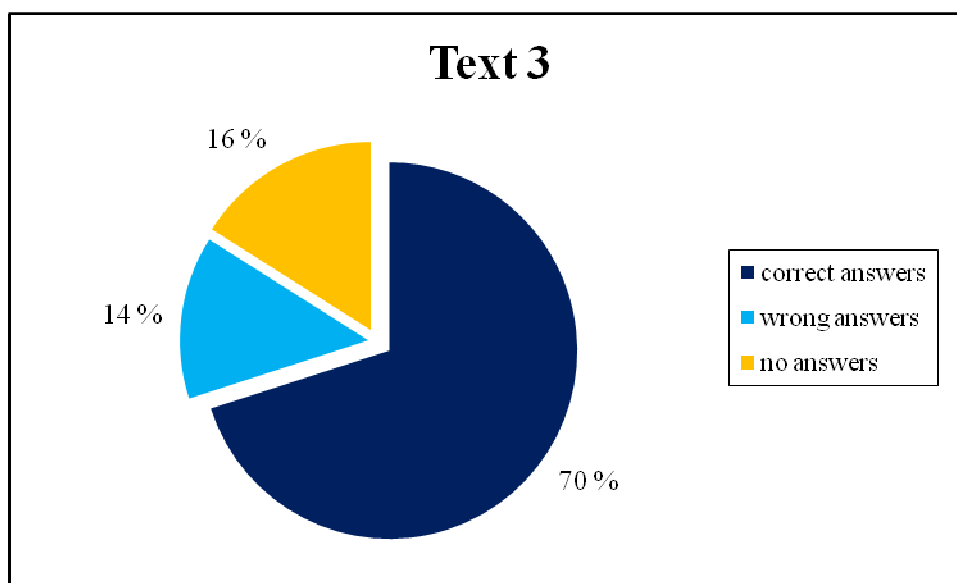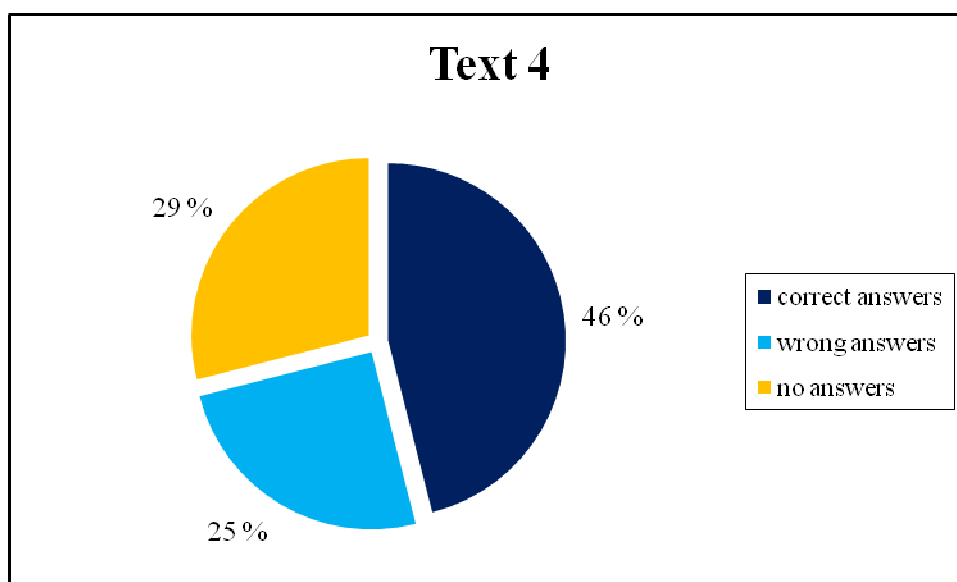

Figure 19. Results of the experiment of total number of students on scanning reading technique, Text 3.

It follows that students answered the questions mostly correctly. However, the number no answers is very high. It demonstrates that the time limit was too short for students. This

fact was confirmed by most of them. The number of no answers might be assigned to the fact that students tended to read the paragraphs slowly or got lost in some of them so they did not manage to answer the rest of the questions. The number of wrong answers shows that even if students managed to choose an answer in time, they did it wrong. This fact might rely to a lack of concentration or inaccuracy of answers. When I consider the facts, it follows that students did not manage to answer all the questions in time and, generally, they do not read fast enough and make a number of mistakes.

The figure 20 shows the results of the scanning experiment on the last text. It presents that the numbers are more balanced. 46 % of the answers were correct, 25 % of them were wrong and 29 % of them were not even made.

Figure 20. Results of the experiment of total number of students on scanning reading technique, Text 4.

The last text was in fact the most difficult one. The results confirmed this fact. It follows that a high number of students did not manage to answer all the questions in time. It was partly because of the time limit and partly because of the difficulty of the text. However, the names of the programmes were highlighted in the text and the text offered a number of clues leading to the answers. So, if I consider these facts, it is evident that

students did not read fast enough and made a number of mistakes. So the scanning reading technique was not managed.

To sum up, the scanning experiment showed that students do not manage scanning reading techniques properly since they read slowly and when confronted with a challenging text they make a number of mistakes because they cannot find a balance between comprehension and time management. Again, I would assign it to a lack of practising this technique in the course of school education.

In this chapter, I presented the results of the experiment and provided commentaries for each one of them. The commentaries took into account various causes of inefficient reading that reflected in the results. These were for example time limitation, difficulty of the texts or factors related to the personality of the students such as lack of concentration or lack of vocabulary. In the last part of this chapter, the total results were presented together with and the major findings were commented on. The following part of the thesis will deal with the implications and limitations of the research.

V IMPLICATIONS

This chapter of the thesis elaborates the results of the skimming and scanning experiment, however, from a different view than the previous chapter. The first part of the chapter provides advice for teachers based on the results of the experiment. The second part introduces limitations of the research and discusses the problems and weaknesses in the phase of carrying out the experiment and analyzing the data. The third part of the chapter presents suggestions how the experiment might be improved.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of the experiment have shown that students do not manage the reading techniques properly. Concerning the skimming technique, students did well in it as far as the time limitation was concerned. However, even though they managed to choose the answers in time, they made a lot of mistakes. The mistakes were mostly caused by a nature of the text but also by personal limitations of the students. Concerning the scanning experiment, students did not manage to answer all the questions in time. It shows that they read slowly and found it hard to deal with the texts either because of its difficulty or because of their personal limitations such as vocabulary limitation or a lack of concentration.

As discussed in the previous chapter, these faults are probably caused by a lack of practising these techniques in the course of school education. Therefore, the results of the experiment could be important for all teachers of foreign languages. In the next paragraphs, I would suggest some tips that would help to change the situation for the better. First, I will present some tips for the skimming skill and then for the scanning skill.

Teachers of foreign language definitely play a major role in the developing of reading skills of their students. Therefore, they should lead lessons where skimming would be practised more. To ease the process of skimming, they should provide students with some tips how to manage the skill better. The pieces of advice were previously discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis. Next, they should provide students with different types of materials, especially the ones of a daily use such as newspapers, advertisements, magazines or TV programmes in order to get students accustomed to them. Next, they

should follow the steps of leading reading. This factor was also discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis. However, the most important thing is to practise the skill a lot in order to let students become better at it.

Concerning the scanning technique, teachers should also lead lessons where it would be practised more. It is true that reading texts are usually accompanied with scanning exercises in the textbooks. However, according to the results of the experiment, doing only these exercises is not enough to train students in the scanning technique. Therefore, it would be better to reserve more time for practising it. Moreover, teachers can provide students with some tips about the scanning technique. These tips were further elaborated in the theoretical part of the thesis. Next, they should choose texts that would vary in nature and difficulty and they should follow the steps of leading reading in the lessons.

Limitation of the Research

Even though the results confirmed my expectations, they should not be generalized too much for some reasons. First, the experiment was carried out in one primary school. If the experiment was done in different schools, the results could be different. Next, almost all students except for thirteen students from the class IX B were from classes of language specializations. It certainly affected the results as well.

Concerning the phase of carrying out the experiment, I encountered some problems. At the beginning of the experiment, at the first class, it was rather hard to control all of them while doing the experiment. Some of the students tended to copy off their neighbors. That is why I decided to carry on the next experiments in a bigger classroom where everyone had his or her own desk to sit at. Next problem occurred when some of the students asked questions about the texts. It disturbed some other students and they probably lost some time focusing on the text. So, at the next lessons, I explained the conditions of the experiment, answered possible questions and emphasized that asking questions in a loud voice was forbidden during the experiment. Another limitation related to the motivation of students. Even though we did pre-reading activities in order to motivate them, some of the students were not certainly interested in the texts. Another problem appeared when the time limit ran out. As some of the students did not finish all the tasks in the third and fourth

text, they tried to write them down at the last moment. Thus, I had to interfere and change the conditions of submitting the sheets of paper.

Concerning the phase of analyzing the data of the experiment, I encountered some problems, too. The biggest one consisted in analyzing the causes that lead towards the bad results such as, for example, the wrong results. I drew conclusions according to the nature of the text, the character of the class and the opinions of the students who shared their feelings with me after each experiment.

Suggestions for Further Research

As I encountered different problems during the experiment and when analyzing the data, I can provide suggestions for the experiment to be improved. In the first stage of preparation for the experiment, it would be better to select texts of a similar character. It would ease the process of processing and analyzing the data. Moreover, it would convenient to select texts of a content that would be interesting for students. Next, it would be better to prepare the classroom for the experiment in advance by arranging desks so that each student would sit separately from another one. And, at last, it would be better to conduct the experiment in smaller groups of students. However, if it was not possible, it would be more convenient to choose a person that would help to observe the students during the experiment in order to prevent them from copying information from their classmates.

In this chapter, I provided pieces of advice for teachers based on the results of the experiment. It contained some tips for leading reading English language lessons on skimming and scanning better. Next, I presented the limitations of the experiment concerning the problems or weaknesses that I encountered while carrying out the experiment or analyzing the data. The last part included pieces of advice that would improve the experiment. Next chapter will summarize the main ideas of the thesis.

VI CONCLUSION

This thesis was written in order to find out how efficient students in upper primary schools are while skimming and scanning. The basic information about reading was presented in the theoretical part that further elaborated the term from various points of view and presented different types of reading techniques that students can first encounter in primary schools including the skimming and scanning techniques. The main hypothesis of the thesis was that students read slowly and have difficulties with these reading techniques. The hypothesis proved to be true.

The experiment showed that students do not manage these reading techniques properly. Considering the results of the skimming experiment, it was concluded that students are able to fulfil the skimming tasks in time. However, even if they fulfil the tasks in time, they have often problems to deal with the reading technique successfully since they make a lot of mistakes. Considering the scanning experiment, it was concluded that students read slowly and when confronted with a challenging text, they cannot find a balance between comprehension and time management so their results are quite unsatisfactory.

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APPENDIX 1

Přečti si následující text a vyber odpověď A-D, která nejlépe shrnuje jeho obsah.

Japanese tsunami dog and owner reunited

A dog was rescued after spending three weeks floating at sea after a huge earthquake and tsunami. Its owner recognized the dog when she saw a TV news report on the rescue on Friday. The dog was found by a Japan Coast Guard crew on a roof drifting some 1.8km off the coast. The roof is believed to have broken off the house and been washed out to sea by the devastating tsunami. The two-year-old dog called Ban had an emotional reunion with its owner at an animal care centre. Local media reported that Ban immediately jumped up and was very excited when the owner appeared. "We'll never let go of her," said the owner, who wished to remain anonymous.

(A)

Pes Ban plující na troskách odplaveného domu na volném moři byl tři týdny poté, co se zázračně zachránil po obrovském zemětřesení a ničivém tsunami, nalezen japonskými záchranáři 1,8 km od pobřeží. Po odvysílání televizní reportáže o záchraně zvířete si pro něj jeho šťastná majitelka přijela do veterinární stanice. Velice zesláblý a vyčerpaný pes však neprojevoval žádné emoce a – jak informovala místní média – bude ještě chvíli trvat, než se zotaví natolik, aby mohl skákat a radovat se jako dřív.

(B)

Japonská pobřežní hlídka objevila v moři necelé dva kilometry od pobřeží psa, který na utržené střeše odplaveného domu po obrovském zemětřesení a ničivém tsunami přežil tři týdny na volném moři. Po odvysílání televizní reportáže o záchraně psa Bana si pro něj jeho majitelka přijela do centra péče o zvířata. Místní média přinesla zprávu o jejich šťastném a radostném setkání, jméno majitelky však zůstalo tajemstvím.

(C)

Majitelka psa Bana se se svým miláčkem shledala po třech týdnech od ničivého zemětřesení a tsunami. Zvíře bylo nalezeno posádkou pobřežní hlídky na utržené střeše

odplaveného domu dobrých 18 km od pobřeží. Díky reportáži odvysílané japonskou televizí se paní a její pes znovu našli. Majitelka psa Bana poté vystoupila v místních médiích, kde se představila a osobně poděkovala záchranářům za záchranu svého psa.

(D)

Japonská média přinesla zprávu o psovi, kterého po obrovském zemětřesení odplavila vlna tsunami daleko na volné moře. Statečné zvíře dokázalo připlavat zpět k pobřeží, kde ho zesláblé a vysílené objevila pobřežní hlídka. Díky profesionálnímu zásahu japonských záchranářů a zájmu médií se pes a jeho majitelka znovu po dlouhých třech týdnech radostně setkali. Místní média odvysílala reportáž s paní Ban, která si přijela pro svého psa do centra péče o zvířata.

APPENDIX 2

Přečti si odpovědi A-H a přiřaď k nim tvrzení 1-8.

1 Bottled water is purer than tap water.

2 A vegetarian diet is the healthiest.

3 Eating cheese gives you nightmares.

4 Dried fruit is not as healthy as fresh fruit.

5 Margarine contains less fat than butter.

6 A food label which includes the words "low fat" indicates a healthy choice.

7 Neither fruit juice nor diet drinks are bad for your teeth.

8 Experts disagree with each other about what healthy eating is.

A

In fact, the main messages about healthy eating have stayed the same for some time. For example, 15 years ago experts were saying that we should reduce the amount of fat that we eat. And over 50 years ago they were emphasizing the importance of fruit and vegetables. They appear to disagree because the media often exaggerate when reporting scientific research.

B

In fact both are. Fruit orange juice contains sugar, which can damage your teeth. Diet drinks are often acidic, which means that they can cause tooth decay. The best drinks for your teeth are water or milk.

C

As part of a balanced diet we need to eat at least five portions of different fruit and vegetables a day. It doesn´t matter whether they are fresh, frozen, tinned or dried (but fruit juice only counts as one portion a day). The only thing which dried fruit lacks, and fresh fruit has, is vitamin C, but both are equally healthy.

D

If often seems from advertising that this is true. However, while butter and margarine contain different kinds of fat, they both contain a similar amount of fat.

E

x

It´s not what you eat but when you eat that matters. Scientists agree that it´s not a good idea to eat just before you go to bed. You can´t relax properly while you´re digesting food.

F

It depends. Vegetarian diets can be very healthy. But if your vegetarian diet consists of chips and biscuits, then that´s a different matter. Make sure that your diet includes food with the protein, vitamins and minerals you normally get from meat.

G

Not at all. "Low" products must contain 25% less fat than usual, so people suppose that they are OK. But these types of food are often very high in fat to start with. So a "low fat" product can still have quite a high amount of fat.

H

This is a popular myth. Although some people think bottled water tastes of smells better, there´s nothing to prove that it´s always purer than tap water. In fact, in the USA it´s believed that 25-30% of bottled water comes from tap water. And do you realize that bottled water can cost up to 10,000 times more than tap water?

APPENDIX 3

Odpověz na následující otázky z textu.

1 What is the population of Australia?

2 How long have the Aborigines lived there?

3 How many Aborigines live there today?

4 What is the longest river?

5 What is the highest mountain?

6 Where is Tasmania?

7 What is the most important industry?

8What is Australia´s typical climate like?

9 Where are monsoons common?

AUSTRALIA

1

Australia is the largest island, the smallest continent, and the sixth largest country in the world. Its total area is 7,686,900 square km – about the same size as the USA (excluding Hawaii and Alaska). Australia lies to the south of Asia, with the Indian Ocean to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east. The population of Australia is 20 million and the capital city is Canberra, in the south-east of the country. The official language is English, and the currency is the Australian dollar.

2

The Aborigines have lived in Australia for about 50,000 years. In 1788, the British founded a prison colony on the east coast of Australia, and, as more Europeans arrived in Australia, the Aborigines were driven from their land. There are now only about 250,000 Aboriginal Australians, approximately 1% of the total population. The government is now making major efforts to preserve the Aboriginal culture. Over 70% of Australians live in

cities or towns, mostly on the south-east and south-west coasts. The largest (and oldest) city is Sydney, with a population of 4.2 million.

3

Australia is famous for its "outback", the hot dry land of the interior. About two-thirds of the country is rocky desert or semi-desert. On the eastern coastal plains there are areas of grasslands, largely watered by Australia´s longest river, the Murray-Darling (3,696). Australia also has several mountain ranges; its highest mountain is Mount Kosciuszko (2,228) in the south-east. The island of Tasmania lies off the south-west coast of Australia and off the north-east coast is the Great Barrier Reef. This coral reef is over 2,000 km long, and is the largest living structure in the world.

4

Well-known Australian animals include the kangaroo, koala and platypus, and birds such as the emu and the "laughing" kookaburra. The tropical rainforests in the north have a huge variety of birds, including the extraordinary cassowary (Australia´s largest bird), crocodiles, large lizards – and snakes. And the Great Barrier Reef is home to hundreds of sharks and thousands of tropical fish.

5

Australia´s major industry is mining (including coal, copper, gold and iron). Tourism is also an important industry, thanks to the climate, scenery and wildlife. Most of the country is too dry to grow crops, but some areas produce sugar cane, wheat, and grapes for wine. Australia is probably best-known for sheep-farming – huge numbers of sheep are raised for their wool and meat.

6

Australia´s typical climate is warm, with lots of sunshine and little rain. Average temperatures in Sydney are 8 to 16 C in July and 18 to 26 C in January. Much of the Australian interior has ca continental climate, with high temperatures during the day which drop considerably at night. There are often monsoons in the tropical north, and hurricanes and cyclones on the north-east and north-west coasts. But droughts are also common – more than 33% of the country has less than 26mm of rain a year.

APPENDIX 4

Přečti si otázky a následně vyhledej odpovědi v TV programu.

1 Is there a show about making good investments?

2 You are thinking about traveling to the USA for a holiday. Which show should you watch?

3 Your friend doesn´t have a TV, but would like to watch a film starring Tom Cruise. Which film should you record on your video?

4 Peter is interested in wild animals. Which show should he watch?

5 Which sport can you watch that takes place outside?

6 Which sport can you watch that takes place inside?

7 You like modern art. Which documentary should you watch?

8 How often can you watch the news?

9 Is there a horror film in the evening?

CBC	FNB	ABN
6.00 p.m.: **National News** - join Jack Parsons for your daily news roundup.	6.00 p.m.: **In-Depth News** - In-depth coverage of the most important national and international news stories.	6.00 p.m.: **Travel Abroad** - This week we travel to sunny California!
6.30: **The Tiddles** - Peter joins Mary for a wild adventure in the park.	7.00: **Nature Revealed** - Interesting documentary taking a look at the microscopic universe in your average speck of dust.	6.30: **The Flintstones** - Fred and Barney are at it again.
7.00: **Golf Review** - Watch highlights from today's final round of the Grand Master's.	7.30: **Ping - Pong Masters** - Live coverage from Peking.	7.00: **Pretty Boy** - Tom Cruise, the prettiest boy of them all, in an action packed thriller about Internet espionage.
8.30: **Shock from the Past** - This entertaining film by Arthur Schmidt takes a poke at the wild side of gambling.	9.30: **It's Your Money** - That's right and this favorite game show could make or break you depending on how you place your bets.	9.00: **Tracking the Beast** - The little understood wildebeest filmed in its natural surroundings with commentary by Dick Signit.
10.30: **Nightly News** - A review of the day's most important events.	10.30: **Green Park** - Stephen King's latest monster madness.	10.00: **Pump Those Weights** - A guide to successfully using weights to develop your physique while getting fit.
11.00: **MOMA: Art for Everyone** - A fascinating documentary that helps you enjoy the difference between pointilism and video installations.	0.30: **Late Night News** - Get the news you need to get a hard start on the upcoming day.	11.30: **The Three Idiots** - A fun farce based on those three tenors who don't know when to call it quits.
12:00: **Hard Day's Night** - Reflections after a long, hard day.		1.00: **National Anthem** - Close the day with this salute to our country.

SHRNUTÍ

Cílem diplomové práce bylo vyhodnotit, jak studenti na základních školách zvládají techniky rychlého čtení, zda jsou schopni odpovědět na určitý počet otázek vztahujícím se k textu v daném čase a do jaké míry jsou tyto odpovědi správné. Měření proběhlo formou experimentu za použití čtyř textů. Subjekty experimentu se stali žáci dvou tříd z osmého ročníku a dvou tříd z devátého ročníku na 1. základní škole v Plzni.

Výsledky experimentu potvrdily původní hypotézu, že žáci ovládají tyto techniky čtení nedostatečně. Co se týče první techniky rychlého čtení, z experimentu vyplývá, že žáci sice zvládají splnit otázky v časovém rozmezí, ale odpovědi takto získané jsou ve velké míře nesprávné. Co se týče druhé techniky rychlého čtení, z experimentu vyplývá, že žáci čtou pomalu a v časovém rozmezí proto nestihnou odpovědět na všechny otázky vztahující se k textu. Míra zodpovězených otázek a správnost odpovědí se snižuje se zvyšující se obtížností textu.