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**PROJEKTOVÉ VYUČOVÁNÍ ANGLIČTINY JAKO  
CIZÍHO JAZYKA NA ZÁKLADNÍ ŠKOLE –  
OD TEORIE K PRAXI**

**Věra Hrušková**

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**Department of English**

**Thesis**

**PROJECT-BASED LEARNING OF ENGLISH  
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS –  
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE**

**Věra Hrušková**

**Plzeň 2014**

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Věra Hrušková

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The thesis deals with the topic of project-based learning used in English classes. The whole theoretical part describes the essential elements of the project method and simultaneously it demonstrates the benefits and also drawbacks of it. Then the implementation of project method into Czech curriculum is discussed, too. After that, the individual steps to create and plan a good project are illustrated.

The conducted research in primary school is described in the practical part of the thesis. The research, realized by the means of questionnaires, investigates learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the project method. It also analyses the attractiveness of learning through projects and emphasizes the weak points of the research and also suggests betterment of them for future.

Based on the results of the research, it is concluded that project-based learning increased interest in this method not only by the teachers but also by the learners. Finally, the thesis gives the information about the challenges which appeared during the project course and which were necessary to be solved.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary educational standards influence the option for selecting various types of teaching methods and approaches. Learners are expected to achieve so called key competencies, as for example the independence, cooperation or critical thinking. It implies that project-based learning seems to provide all of these demanded requirements. In addition to that, this approach brings real life tasks into teaching process. In other words, project-based learning is a complex educational approach to involve learners in ceaseless concerted probe. Within its structure learners cooperate to succeed in their investigation.

Project-based learning is distinguished by inquiry-based activities, which most of us have met during our own schooling, by its importance of cooperative learning. Inquiry is generally believed to be one of individual, slightly isolated activity. Additionally, project-based learning is different from traditional inquiry by its concentration on learners' own product creation to present image of what is being learnt.

When choosing the topic of this diploma thesis two essential factors played a significant role. First, as a teacher I found very interesting to try something which is new and unexplored for me and for my colleagues. Hence, project-based learning was a challenge and a good opportunity for new experience. Secondly, to involve eighth and ninth grade pupils of the primary school idea and the opportunity to attempt to learn in a different way seemed like a good idea.

The objective of the thesis is to demonstrate the theoretical knowledge about project-based learning which was used to plan a real project called *Czech Literature Presented in Comics*. In the practical part a brief explanation of the project and research methods are described. They are followed by analyzing the results of the research including the necessary commentaries. After that, the implications of the research and possible improvements and recommendations are recounted. Finally, the whole process is summarized in the conclusion of the thesis.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This part of the thesis explains Project-Based Learning in detail. It defines the term Project-Based Learning. Afterwards, the advantages and disadvantages of such a kind of alternative teaching are demonstrated. Then, it deals with the question of the Czech curriculum and the possibility of implementation of projects into it. Thereon, the thesis gives the readers insights into steps which have to be done to create a successful and seminal project. Eventually, the significance of using modern technologies in Project-Based Learning and the magnitude of this alternative method in language classrooms are discussed.

### Definition of Project-Based Learning

For over one hundred year, educators such as John Dewey have apprised the general public of the merits of empirical, practical, student-directed learning. Dewey was aware of the necessity to change the traditional system of education. In his book *The Child and the Curriculum* (1966) he calls for changes to be done. Dewey (1966) sees “apparent deviations and differences between child and curriculum” (p. 7). According to him the world of a child and school is very unreal, the curriculum does not fulfill the demands of the child and finally, there is a lack of practical experience in the education (Dewey, 1966, p. 7). In a sense, the requirement of education to adjust to the constantly developing world is the fundamental argument for the fact that Project-Based Learning (PBL) is gradually becoming more and more attractive. PBL illustrates an endeavour to originate new teaching methods that mirror the background in which children live, learn and are taught.

There is no one chartered specification of the term PBL. From the historical perspective, the word “project” has been used for a long period in business and in some particular forms of education with a relatively indeterminate meaning. John Stevenson (1922) adds that later the term “has been accepted by the United States Department of Agriculture as an outlined plan for carrying on a piece of cooperative work“(p. 40). He also provides a definition of the term project as following: “A project is a problematic act carried to completion in its natural setting” (p. 43). Although it is a very simple definition the principle of PBL is sketched there.

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) defines for instance PBL as “a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully

designed products and tasks” (Buck Institute for Education, [BIE], 2013, p. 4).

Nevertheless, this definition includes a variety ranging from short projects of one to two weeks based on one subject in one classroom to all year-long, interdisciplinary projects that require community participation and adults outside the school.

William Bender (2012), for example, specifies the term PBL as follows:

... is instruction in which student generated questions and projects drive the curriculum and instructional timeframe, and the primary focus is study of highly motivating topics, reflective of real-world problems, resulting in authentic application of the products produced. ... an excellent, teacher generated, project assignment within an instructional unit of study, is not PBL.

Another specialist, Inaam Mansoor (1997), who deals with PBL, understands project learning as “a collaborative approach to teaching and learning in which learners are placed in situations where they use authentic language to accomplish particular objectives” (p. 10). He also adds that learners have to a certain extent a free choice in their planning; working on tasks, and even assessing their progress and performance.

To sum up, in each of these definitions which are mentioned above some common features can be found. All of them agree with the statement that PBL adopts a stance of a complex and authentic method of teaching in which the learners become more important and their interests are more at the forefront than by an ordinary teaching. It also incorporates the following motivational features:

Tasks are varied and include novel elements, problems are authentic and challenging, students exercise choice in deciding what to do and how to do it, they collaborate with peers in carrying out the work, and the work leads to closure in the form of production of the final product. (Brophy, 2004, p. 238)

### **Pros and cons of PBL**

As any other methods, PBL is also not possible to be perfect. It has its advantages and disadvantages, too. Nevertheless, PBL encourages learners to blossom their ingenuity for living in a knowledge-based and highly technological culture. The classical school conception of passively learning facts and repeating them out of context is no longer

acceptable to make learners survive in today's world. Clarifying highly complex tasks requires learners to have both fundamental skills and digital age skills. With such a combination learners become leaders and managers of their learning process, guided and mentored by a competent teacher.

It follows that PBL is effective because learners have the opportunity to cultivate their own projects as answers to questions they have produced on their own. This provides them with personal interest in the activity, and is instrumental in acquiring a deeper awareness of the material. PBL is also helpful in developing learners' independence and creativeness, responsibility, self-control and time management. They learn to cooperate with others and respect others' opinions and needs. Nevertheless, not only the learners benefit from PBL. In an ordinary classroom learning comprises a teacher more or less speaking to their learners with minimal interaction other than to elicit or answer a regular question. However, PBL introduces the teacher as a facilitator who provides a platform for more dialogues with each individual learner. Hence, learners and teachers have a chance to know each other closer than in classical teaching. PBL offers learners' and also teachers' hearts and breaks ice between them.

With each new project that is propounded and presented, teachers receive a glimpse into the interests, passions and motivators of their learners. Everything about a given project – the selected topic, the manner of presentation, the learners' cooperation– give teachers crucial information about the learning habits of their class. Another benefit of PBL is the ability to involve the entire school and even the community in the project. The learning process is no longer curtailed to the walls of the classroom, and can happen beyond the traditional classroom context, giving teachers a bigger range of tools to work with.

Hence, PBL loses its effect when learners are not inspired to complete their projects. Any lack of interest or motivation will lead them off the path and they may get disconcerted. Gaining unsuitable materials may be responsible for posing some unforeseen troubles. This implies that teachers should be prepared for various types of problems and alternatives, and they should apply their pedagogical knowledge and appropriate methods to provide their learners with what they need to benefit from PBL.

However, PBL is not invariably the most productive exemplar of a successful method of teaching and cannot automatically be implemented into every learning process. Sometimes it also proves to be challenging to persuade poorly motivated learners,

especially those with lack of learning success, to such an alternative form of learning. Furthermore, if the learners do not also have any previous experience with the suggested topic of PBL it is demanding to apply the project method, unless the teacher, before anything else, propounds assignments that the learners can execute and subsequently employ as a basis for the project itself. In other words, it is essential that learners have a closer relationship with the topic of PBL they are supposed to work out.

Albeit, there exists a great amount of possible troubles when making PBL and it is important that the teachers prevent them if possible. A large part of them is around PBL management issues. For instance, research and subsequent debates about topic between teacher and learners or teachers themselves generally seem to last more time than was expected. This entails that analyzing ideas comprehensively also takes more time than predicted and the project becomes artificially and unreasonably too long. Nevertheless, it is essential that learners get sufficient time for free discussion of their research, yet teachers have to monitor time in order to keep their learners to work productively. Another example is that teachers step in and start managing the project instead of allowing students to conduct their independent learning. An opposite problem is when teachers allow learners' excessive independence without providing them with structured information of project requirements or feedback. Next, evaluation can cause some difficulties when making projects. Teachers encounter difficulties when creating a system of evaluation that a majority of their learners will comprehend. The results teachers expect of their learners are not always in accordance with teachers' requirements and then the evaluation of such project results can be arduous.

To sum it up, similarly to other teaching methods also PBL has its advantages and disadvantages. No method is perfect. Some people may consider PBL not a method of teaching, but a method of making use of knowledge and acquired skills. On the other hand, supporters of PBL argue that it is a natural way of learning. Nevertheless, thorough preparation right motivation and enthusiasm are indispensable components leading to the success of PBL.

### **Czech curriculum and the implementation of PBL**

The word "curriculum" comes from a Latin word and into English it is possible to translate it as "run" or "a course for racing" (Kábrt et al., 2000, p. 147). However, nowadays its sense has been shifted. Many people have a tendency to associate the term with "curriculum vitae." Nevertheless, the fundamental meaning today is more similar

to the term “syllabus.” In education the term “national curriculum” is well known. It is a general and state guaranteed frame which determines the objectives (the knowledge children have to acquire) and the content (learning material) for children in the period of their compulsory and further education. One of the most important documents for schools are “Framework Educational Programmes,” in short FEP. The documents give description of obligatory educational standards across different periods: pre-school education, basic education and secondary education.

In terms of basic education the FEP evaluates the main features which are required for a successful completion of each stage of education. It is given that:

A friendly and helpful atmosphere encourages pupils to learn, work and fosters activities that suit their interests, and provides them with space and time for active learning and for a full development of their personality.  
(Jeřábek, & Tupý, 2007, p. 10)

In this statement the occasion to use PBL in the lesson is supported. For, PBL is in harmony with all the requirements. However, this statement is not the only one which endorses PBL. Actually, the general objectives set a target of helping the pupils to develop their key competencies, engage in teaching that is closed to their real life and to facilitate their way to practical performance of learning. (Jeřábek, & Tupý, 2007, p. 10) This implies that contemporary situation in the Czech educational system provides very favorable conditions for implementing the method of PBL into the curriculum and also into the school plans.

### **Project organization**

Doing a project is undoubtedly a complex task. Therefore, there exist certain procedures which are necessary to be done to achieve a compiled project. First, to get the idea forms the basis of a good project. Secondly, the project has to be designed in detail. As the next step, the realization of the project comes. Eventually, the promotion of the final product is done.

**Initial impulse.** Miscellaneous professions have various ways of seeing the world around them: writers see a world crowded with stories, and teachers who do PBL see a world full of projects. This is where the primary flash of inspiration for a project originates: from teachers’ enthusiasm, or, indeed, from learners’ ardour. The substantial thing is that there exists somebody who is impressed by the concept, and the person’s

motivation is infectious. However, there is much more to projects than enthusiasm but if teachers and mainly their learners do not commence an activity that they feel passionate about, the project will not be much exhilarating, and the quality of the work will suffer the consequences.

Valenta (1993) states that the basis of a project is an idea called a “concentration.” This concentration includes determination of common cores, foundations, situations or particular ideas which the curriculum is supposed to be surrounded with. By PBL the following types of cores are found: a problem, a specific stimulus, and a general theme.

Also launching the idea of a project with an event is an effective way how to excite learners’ interest for participating in it. Rather than directly familiarize learners with a project, the primal impulse can be aroused by designing an extraordinary action that takes learners out of their everyday school stereotypes, and lets them know something special is about to happen. These preliminary events are supposed to attract learners’ attention, and provoke them to wish to learn more. Such events include for example a trip, a guest speaker, or a video. The overall goal is to grab the hearts and minds of learners.

**Project design.** For most teachers the curriculum requirements constitute the greatest barrier to doing PBL. Hence, it is felicitous to cooperate with colleagues when preparing a project. Once teachers get the idea for the project and discuss it with their colleagues, it is the right time to commence the design of the project.

In the course of history a number of projects have arisen. There exist various points of view for categorizing projects. In the following lines the overall overview is provided. The sorting is inspired by the publication *Teorie a praxe projektové výuky* written by J. Kratochvílová (2009). In terms of project mover spontaneous, synthetically prepared and the combination of both of the previous types is possible. According to the purpose of the project four subgroups are mentioned. Those are the problem-based, construction-based, evaluation-based, and drill-based projects. If the sources of information are taken into account, there exists projects which are free (hence, the learners obtain the necessary information on their own); bounded (the information material is provided to the learners); or it is a combination of the previous ones. Another viewpoint is determined by the total length of the project. In this case it is significant to distinguish among short-term, medium-term, and long-term projects. The first ones last at the maximum of one day; the medium ones about one week; and the long-term ones from one week to one month. However, the extraordinarily long-term projects are supposed to last more than a month.



The environment of the project is also important. Therefore, a school project, a home project, or a combination of both is possible. Another classification, according to the number of students involved, offers individual or collective projects. Finally, when considering the manner of the organization, the projects focused on one or more subjects come into consideration.

Developing a class project requires thoughtful planning and preparation. Mansoor (1997) refers in his guide to a team of people who after working on projects with learners at many levels established a framework for creating projects. Thus, there is a great amount of aspects to be taken into consideration when creating a project. A good project:

- builds on previous work;
- integrates the four skill areas;
- incorporates collaborative teamwork, problem solving, negotiating and other interpersonal skills;
- challenges learners to engage in independent work;
- challenges learners to authentically use English in new and different contexts outside the class;
- involves the learners in choosing the focus of the project and in the planning process;
- engages learners in activities where they need to acquire new information that is important to them;
- has clearly articulated outcomes;
- incorporates self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teacher evaluation;
- enhances the development of real-life skills (Mansoor, 1997, p. 14).

Good projects get to the heart of a discipline and they are presumed to comply with particular steps. As first, it is very helpful to commence the design of the projects with peruse of the curricular goals. Thus, the project is supposed to meet these goals, too. The value of the project for the learners and for the class as a whole has to be also taken into consideration. For project teachers who are beginners it is convenient to utilize some projects that have been already done by highly experienced colleagues. Nevertheless, if designing own projects the timeline is necessary to be prepared - the clear beginning and ending date. As follows, teachers make sure that the timeline is communicated to the others who may be participating. After finishing the timeline another

plan for sharing the results and for assessing the projects is created. As a next step, the implementation of the project itself comes. Finally, evaluation of the effectiveness of the project and sharing the results with other participants at the end of the project is involved.

The National Academy Foundation (NAF) (2012) suggests other priorities for designing a good project. It is called *The Six A's* and includes the following categories: authenticity, academic rigor, adult connections, active exploration, applied learning, and assessment practices (p. 14). Authenticity is filling learners work with great importance and enthusiasm. Such projects clarify a problem or question that has value to the learners, include a problem which is dealt with adults at work or in a community indeed, and demand learners to accomplish something that has personal and social value beyond the classroom. When projects feature academic rigor, learners face challenges that engage their minds. NAF (2012) determines academically rigorous projects as follows:

Lead students to master and apply content standards and knowledge central to one or more disciplines or content areas. Challenge students to use methods of inquiry central to one or more disciplines (for example, to think like a scientist, historian, etc.). Require students to develop higher-order thinking skills and habits of mind (for example, searching for evidence, taking different perspectives) (p. 15).

Regarding adult connections, effective PBL involvement insist on significant engagement of adults beyond the classroom. While teachers still assume the determinative function in PBL experiences, the most outstanding projects also include other adults from the broader school society. These persons can encourage the project in a range of various performances, including “guest speaker, content expert, interviewee, mentor, project coordinator, and guest artist, client, and presentation audience member” (NAF, 2012, p. 17). Some projects supported by a great deal of adults serving in some of these roles. For project designers, the fundamental goal is to achieve eventualities for useful contact between learners and adults dedicated to their learning and rise. This is followed with the next point, which is named active exploration. Principally, learners are engaged in genuine research, using miscellaneous methods, sources, and media. The penultimate A is for applied learning. It conducts learners to obtain and apply competencies awaited in high-performance work organizations, e.g. cooperation, exchanging information,

problem solving; necessitates learners to blossom organizational capabilities and self-management skills; and is related to learning that is founded in real-world matters and environments as well. Eventually, the last A is for assessment practices. Thus for well-designed projects which find imperative to ask learners to reflect on a regular basis on their learning by means of explicit project criteria; expect adults from outside the class to appraise learners' performance and to lend support to learners to consolidate their sense of real-world standards; and provide eventualities for continuous assessment of learners' outcomes via a range of various methods, including for instance exhibition or portfolios.

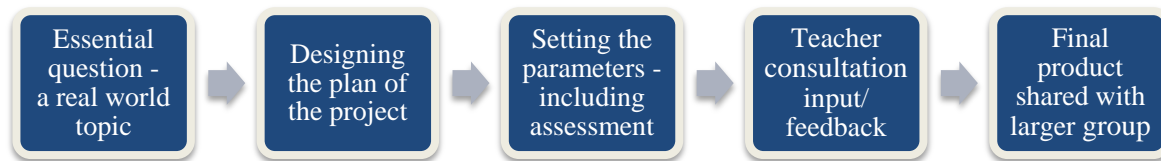
There exists great deal of advice how to implement a good project. The George Lucas Educational Foundation, its Edutopia staff (2007) to be more exact, suggests the following steps which are detailed in subsequent information. Thus, it is essential to adhere to this process of creating a project. First, teachers start with the essential question. It tries to find a real-world topic, a topic that is closer and has meaning for their learners. Secondly, a plan for the project has to be designed. It is recommended to involve the learners in the planning, "they will feel ownership of the project when they are actively involved in decision making" (Edutopia Staff, 2007). Then, a schedule is created. The timeline of the project is designed. As the next step, monitoring of the learners and the progress of the project is in the forefront. Teachers are supposed in this phase to facilitate the process and the love of learning, teach the learners how to work collaboratively, provide resources and guidance, and assess the process by creating team and project instructions. Further, the assessment of the outcome builds a necessary part of the whole process. Teachers provide diagnostic feedback, give learners feedback, and the results also help them to teach more effectively. Whenever possible, self-assessment should get an opportunity to be done, too. Finally, the evaluation is done. To enable an effective evaluation, Edutopia Staff (2007) provides several pieces of advice: "Take time to reflect, individually and as a group. Share feelings and experience. Discuss what worked well. Discuss what needs change. Share ideas that will lead to new questions and new projects."

When regarding all the information which has been provided above, it is obvious that designing a project is a very demanding work that requires time and enthusiasm of the participants and also the support of milieu. An integral part of a good project is a well-designed assessment which is addressed further.

Assessment constitutes an integral part of PBL. With scheduled preparation and working procedure, teachers gain advantage of assessment opportunities during the whole course of the project. Formative assessment gives a unique opportunity to ascertain what the learners become aware of and appreciate, so that the teachers are able to better assist the progress of profitable learning. Concentration on assessment also helps to think extensively about how excellently the project functions. Nevertheless, an intricate project utilizes diversified assessment methods, ranging from formal to informal evaluations. Boss & Kraus (2008) provide a classification of assessment into five categories which have been suggested by another author Lois Bridges, and each of these assessments involves different teacher behaviours. Those are monitoring, observing, interacting, analyzing, and reporting. According to Bridges monitoring is comprised of the use of agenda, stock lists, or project reports to assess learners' headway. Observing signifies monitoring to what learners execute and mean. Interacting requires posing questions to encourage learners to deeper reflecting. Analyzing is composed of collecting and analyzing products of learners' learning. And reporting is designated for organizing performance data to contribute with learners, parents, and others.

Monitoring and asking questions are common procedures for assessment; however, digital tools can improve learners' advancement in sundry ways. In case those teachers modify their assessment methods through the use of mobile devices, they will assemble even more information to their instructions. Contemporary learners are supported to handle and examine a never-ending source of digital information. Yet teachers are also obligated to superintend the basic literacy skills, such as the ability to read fluently and with comprehension. Even in *Top Ten Tips for Assessing Project-Based Learning* (2011) there is mentioned that: "Using iPods and other digital devices to assess reading progress is one strategy to help diverse learners become more confident readers and producers of information" (p. 9).

Developing assessment strategies takes time and practical training. Fortunately, there is no want of resources to facilitate teachers with do-it-yourself professional progress. Nevertheless, more advantageous seems to be the opportunity to discuss and deepen the understanding of assessment practices with the colleagues. The following chart summarizes the fundamental measures of a project process.



*Figure 1.* PBL Strategy. This figure provides a brief description of steps which are necessary for a successful project.

### **Technology and PBL**

To be successful in the contemporary world learners need new skills, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. It is relatively a new concept which is much discussed nowadays. Collaboration, technology literacy, information literacy, invention, self-direction and even critical thinking and reasoning are an integral part of these skills. It is evident that these skills are well practiced in PBL and using technology provides many opportunities for learners to interact with fellow classmates or real-life audience outside of their own classroom. Learners can interact with classmates by working on technology activities together, such as working on a software programme, writing and revising a story with a partner, or creating an electronic book report using multimedia software such as PowerPoint. Today's learners face the technological challenges every day. Current models for utilizing technology, such as laptop or tablet initiatives, extend learners' admission to digital tools. Suzie Boss and Jane Kraus assert that: "Project-based learning – powered by technologies – is a strategy certain to turn traditional classrooms upside down" (Boss, S. & Kraus, J., 2008, p. 11).

21<sup>st</sup> – century projects are incessantly comprised of research, and for most research questions learners refer directly to the Web. Reliable directories, search engines, a variety of bookmark tagging tools, and citation "engines" encourage learners to make sense of and organize what they need from the ever-expanding Web. However, technology literacy is not the only skill learners are focused on to develop. They also cultivate their communication skills to breach cultural incomprehension and discover concordance. They also learn to be responsible for their working hours because they are aware of the fact that other schoolmates are depended on them to meet their deadlines. They learn how to learn together. Projects prepare learners for the world beyond school indeed. Suzie Boss and Jane Kraus (2008) add to it:

Belonging to a community of practice can make your professional life more productive and satisfying. ... A project-based learning collaboration among

students is a lot like a professional learning community among teachers. ...Both groups develop the skills and dispositions necessary in the “real world,” including communication, problem solving, project management, motivation, and persistence. Both build bonds as they share triumphs and disappointments (p. 32).

By the time a successful project comes to the end, teachers and learners will get the feeling as if they have “been somewhere” together. Like all useful processes, a project should leave the participants with vivid memories, souvenirs and pieces of work they have collected along the way. Boss, S. & Kraus, J. (2008) bring it to perfection when they assert that: “Good projects don’t lead to a dead end” (p. 159).

### **PBL in a language classroom**

Teachers of foreign languages have to think not only about the teaching profile but also about methods which have the power to increase the efficiency of the process of learning a foreign language in accordance with the requirements of the national curriculum. In recent years, teaching of foreign languages has become influenced not only by hastily running technology development but also by different attitudes to education. That implies that PBL is a good choice for a change. Stoller (2002) asserts that language teachers endeavour to reach the following objectives:

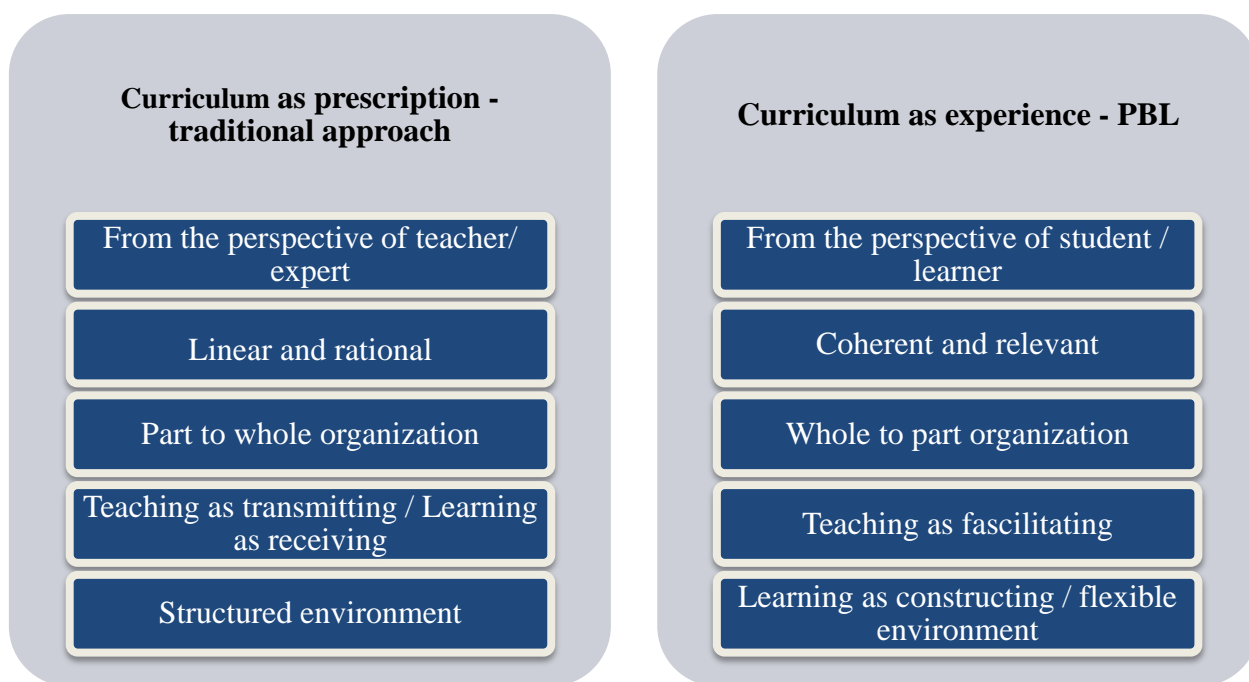
- to encourage students to use language to learn something new about topics of interest;
- to prepare students to learn subject matter through English;
- to expose students to content from a variety of informational sources to help them improve their academic language and study skills;
- to provide students with contextualized resources for understanding language and content;
- to stimulate the rigors of academic courses in a sheltered environment;
- to promote students’ self-reliance and engagement with learning (p. 113).

From another point of view it is imaginable to divide the objectives, according to the contribution of PBL, into two categories – linguistic objectives and extra-linguistic aspects. In a somewhat simplified statement the object of communicative language teaching can be marked as a complex development of all language skills. For this purpose

PBL enables to apply the aspects of authentic communicative interaction. The development of listening skills in PBL is supported by multimedia, native speakers, and/or authentic videos. For practicing reading skills authentic texts and visual materials are crucial. Learners work with various articles, web sources, leaflets, books and also with dictionaries and other language handbooks. On the other hand, speaking skills find their place in PBL in the form of individual speaking of the learners themselves, dialogues, interviews, discussions, surveys, and presentations. Finally, writing skills are encouraged by activities as for example taking written notes, writing reports, summaries, making presentations or posters, and outputs of the project (Patton, 2012).

PBL is also characterized by significant potential by developing a range of extra-linguistic skills. Learners learn the fundamentals of research work, develop intellectual operations, e.g. analysis, synthesis, generalization; they use inductive and deductive methods.

During the processing of group projects teachers are instrumental in the growth of necessary social skills and interpersonal relationships. The alternative method of teaching strengthens students' motivation and their attitude to foreign language and the whole extra-linguistic reality. It is useful, even desirable to eliminate language shyness, and make the language self-belief by a successful authentic communication in an authentic environment even stronger. On that account, it is not impossible to assert that PBL has attainable positive impacts on learners more than a traditional approach in teaching. The following table summarizes the main characteristics of PBL and traditional pedagogies. The needed information is provided by Debra Gerdes (2013) in the visual summary of the differences.



*Figure 2.* Comparing traditional and project-based approach. This figure provides a brief description of differences between traditional education and PBL.

PBL represents one of the possibilities how to increase the efficiency of teaching process when acquiring a foreign language. Although, it is quite difficult to objectively appraise the growth of efficiency, there is no doubt that the mere interpretation of the learner as an active participant of the project enables them to respect their specific needs and interests much more better. From the practical point of view it means to change the habituated attitude of teacher, as a leader, to a range of activities in the foreign language teaching. Obviously PBL means greater demands on the preparation and implementation of such a kind of teaching; however, the overall effect becomes highly predominant over the expended effort.

### **Conclusion**

Through PBL learners acquire comprehension of new contents based on their involvement, examination and survey of primary sources and additional learning materials. They reinforce and illustrate new knowledge and skills through self-directed learning and active involvement in the overall learning process. However, in closing there are some misconceptions among teachers that have to be rebutted. John Larmer (2011) is in his article occupied with five of those misconceptions:



1. PBL is the same as “making something,” “hands-on learning” or “doing an activity;”
2. PBL isn’t standards based. It focuses on “soft skills” like critical thinking and collaboration, but doesn’t teach enough content knowledge and academic skills;
3. PBL takes too much time;
4. PBL is only for older students ... or fluent English speakers ... or those who don’t have learning disabilities;
5. PBL is too hard to manage and/or it would not fit with my teaching style.

Ad #1 – The first statement just describes what is called a project. However, PBL is an approach that directs students learning through driving questions and learner inquiry to identify the information which is necessary to answer a question or invent or create something new. Ad #2 – In current well-designed projects learners attain content knowledge and academic skills as well as they ascertain how to solve difficulties, cooperate in teams, express themselves creatively, and discuss their ideas. When planning a project teachers should observe the steps which have been described above. Ad #3 – Larmer (2011) asserts that: “It is true that projects take time, but it is time well spent.” However, not all the projects are required to take months to be fully accomplished – some are possible to take only several lessons. The time spent on planning can be saved by cooperation among teachers, dividing the roles in the projects, modification of projects from other sources, or running the same projects again in later years. Ad #4 – PBL is for learners of all ages. The only dissimilarity is that teachers have to be able to manage projects differently according to the age and language level of their learners. Projects increase motivation and develop all the skills. Learners profit from the peer interaction that a project offers. On the other hand, for learners with some disabilities teachers are supposed to use various support strategies as they would use in other situations, such as differentiation, providing more time, or individualization. Ad #5 – Using the alternative method of teaching does not mean to condemn the entire range of traditional practices realized during regular lesson. There still exists space for textbooks or teacher-directed lessons. Nevertheless, learners’ cooperation, the ability to work in teams and manage time and tasks is encouraged by PBL, too. It brings the real world closer to learners and increases their curiosity and responsibility for their activities.

PBL is a teaching approach that has a meaningful aptitude to change completely teaching from an uninteresting and ordinary process of passive learning to one where learners eagerly engage in searching needed sources and developing deeper knowledge of a subject matter. In the twenty first century PBL has experienced renaissance and it has become more popular and required in many schools. As an alternative method it brings something new into the learning process and it still attracts a great amount of new enthusiasts.

The chapter provides essential information about the definition and conception of PBL. It also outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the approach. Afterwards, it illustrates the contemporary situation in Czech education within the meaning of implementation of PBL into the educational system. It is dedicated to steps which are necessary to be done to achieve successful results of PBL. Finally the interconnection of PBL and modern technologies and the significance of using PBL in language classrooms are discussed. The thesis continues with a chapter which provides clear description of the research methodology of the practical part of the thesis.

### III. METHODS

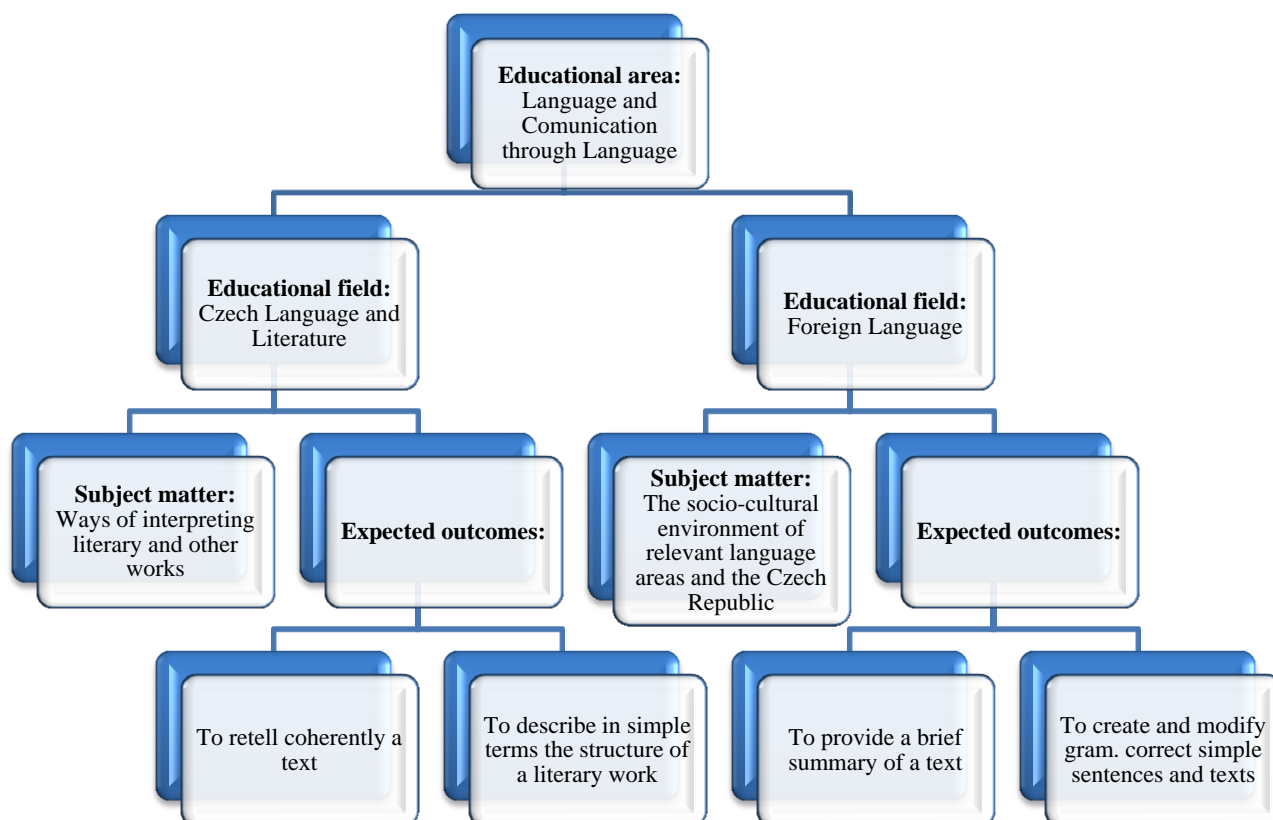
This chapter outlines the research methodology applied for this study. Firstly, a brief description of a long term project which has been realized at a primary school is demonstrated. Then the research methodology, description of the procedure of collecting data, and the explanation of the procedures used to analyze the data are provided.

PBL in English language teaching should not be comprehended as something extraordinary or additional. Not only it encourages English knowledge, but it also supports a personal growth and development. In addition to those facts, it is also generally acknowledged that language learning is alleviated through positive classroom atmosphere, mutual trust and interesting topics. These aspects have been taken into consideration in the project called *Czech Literature Presented in Comics*. For it is essential for learners to become familiar with a piece of culture in the foreign language and have the possibility to compare it with their own culture, the project has been carefully planned to be both enjoyable and educational. The purpose of the research was to outline the attractiveness of PBL for the learners and to map the differences between traditional learning and PBL.

#### **Project Description**

The project, *Czech Literature Presented in Comics*, was a semi-structured project realized at a primary school Kamenná in Aš from November to beginning of March. From the time period it is obvious that the project can be classified as a long-term project. The participants were the eighth and ninth grade learners of English who had the possibility to form their groups on a totally voluntary basis. Hence there were created ten groups with a total number of thirty-two learners. Albeit, the group roles were not specified at the beginning of the project; the members of each group divided their roles utterly without the intervention of the teacher. No individual was left without any role in the team.

In fact, the idea to make such a project was a stroke of luck. In the class of ninth grade learners an article from *Gate* magazine, which is a magazine for primary learners, was discussed and there a comic about *Hamlet* presented as a comic was found and on the basis of this comic a discussion about comics started. After it some of the learners suggested to make something similar. With a Czech teacher it was decided to join English and Czech language and to try to make English comics of Czech literary works. The essential thing was to abide by RVP outcomes and to find some inspiration, because neither of the involved teachers was familiar with a project planning. However, many useful electronic sources which served as a great impulse for the project were found.



*Figure 3.* RVP areas. This figure provides a hierarchy overview of areas used for the realization of the project.

At the very beginning the objectives of the project had to be specified. For this purpose five general areas were defined:

1. What is to be achieved by the end of the project?;

2. Why do we want to achieve this?;
3. Where will it happen?;
4. Who will be involved?;
5. When will it be completed?

The first question was the most complex. By the end of the project learners should have increased their:

1. communication skills
  - a. to formulate their ideas and opinions - e.g. within the team, on the website, or when creating the comic - about the form and structure of assigned tasks;
  - b. to listen to other learner's or teachers' utterances;
  - c. to participate in discussions in their team;
  - d. to comprehend a literary text;
  - e. to use information and means of communication and technologies for efficient communication;
2. social skills
  - a. to be aware of the responsibility for their own decisions;
  - b. to cooperate with other members of their teams;
  - c. to respect different opinions and criticism;
3. language abilities
  - a. to identify identical, similar or different features of pieces of information in L2;
  - b. to read with a comprehension in L1 and also in L2;
  - c. to develop a positive attitude to their mother tongue and also to English;
4. learning abilities
  - a. to organize their own process of learning and time spent for it;
  - b. to seek for information;
  - c. to use their acquired knowledge in real life – creative activities;
  - d. to try to make a positive attitude towards literature and aesthetic perception – making comics.

The reason why we wanted to achieve the objectives was that it was a good opportunity to show the learners different aspects of language and to lend support to increase their social skills.

The space for the realization was clear from the very beginning. The project had been developed partly in school and partly outside the school. The participants of the project were partially the initiators of it, the eighth and ninth grade learners. Finally, the project was designed to be finished in approximately three months.

**Project course.** The project was separated into several parts.

Part # 1 - First of all, the learners selected their teams of no more than six people. They sat together and brainstormed the name of the team. Some of them used only the initial letters of their first names some were more creative. With the help of the Czech teacher they chose the literary work for their adaptation. The range was really miscellaneous including novels, fairy tales and even poetry. After that the teams had to read the literary work and individually prepare a brief introduction which had clear parameters: to try to devise English equivalent of the Czech title, to provide an introduction of the main characters and also to change their Czech names into English. The presentation was done during English lessons and from that point it started to be more obvious that the groups divided their roles in the team naturally and that the individual participants had accepted them without any troubles. After each presentation, the teams wrote all the essential information on a general outline that was specially made for this project. Also a website for this project was developed. It was a long term task because the groups were obliged to read the literary works. This initial step was assessed only orally by other groups and the English teacher and those who met all the requirements were rewarded with an appropriate emoticon.

Part # 2 - The next step was mostly done in Czech lessons. The teams learned how to write a summary and how to recognize the main ideas of a text. They spent two lessons practicing searching for the essence of the text or practicing writing. After Czech preparation, teams tried to do something very similar in English lessons. They got a worksheet with a text and their task was to write a brief summary of it, see appendix 3. They had to be able to cooperate in the team, be able to respect other opinions, observe silent communication. This part of the project was concluded with an individual task for each group. They wrote a brief summary of their chosen work and published it on the project website. In this case the learners were graded. For some groups finishing

the summarization in time was an impossible task because they were not able to communicate in their teams and divide the time properly.

Part # 3 - The next step was completely continued outside the school. It was the actual creation of the comic. The learners got about a month time frame to create the final comic and after that they briefly presented them in the class. The learners evaluated then the work of their peers and tried to find positives and negatives of their presentation and final work. Everything was done only orally. The learners tried to express their opinions intelligibly and politely. On the other hand, those who were assessed learned to accept other views and to deal with positive or negative criticism.

Part # 4 – The final part was about the presentation the comics not only at school but also to public. The best way to be chosen was the web site which was developed specially for the project. A competition was announced and the group with the best comic, according to public opinion and teacher's criteria, had the possibility to have their comic printed on a T-shirt. This competition also served as a great motivation during the project.

### **Research methodology**

There exist many techniques to gain information. According to StatPac (2014):“The most common research methods are: literature searches, talking with people, focus groups, personal interviews, telephone surveys, mail surveys, email surveys, and internet surveys.” However, the research which was created for this thesis was composed of questionnaires as one of the quantitative research methods. Both participating teachers and eighth and ninth grade learners were addressed as respondents to the conducted research. The questionnaires were comprised of peer - and self - evaluation which built the part of the final assessment; and of a debriefing method in the form of the project questionnaire. The object of the research was to outline the attractiveness of PBL to the learners and to map the differences between traditional learning and PBL.

The eighth and ninth grade pupils finished the questionnaires after the completion of the project. The total number of present participants was thirty-two. There were twenty-one girls and eleven boys in the project. More than half of the participants were English learners of language level corresponding with their age. The next part of the learners was made of those of a lower language level. Normally, the eighth and ninth grade learners are divided into two classes – A and B. A classes are so called IT classes because they have more IT lessons than B classes. These learners are also supposed to continue their studies

at secondary schools. However, in B classes there are learners who are believed to continue in apprenticeships education. Nevertheless, in language classes these differences are not essential and the classes are mixed. Hence, the project teams were mixed, too.

All the participants of the project started the research with a brief self- and peer-evaluation. The questionnaire was based on closed statements and the participants should have added the truthfulness of the statement. The second questionnaire was about the project evaluation. There were closed and also open questions and the room for comments and suggestions, where the learners could write their comments and suggestions to the project they had done.

Teachers were not omitted from the survey. During the whole project they were supposed to complete the checklist of the project course and finally, evaluate the whole process of the project and the cooperation with learners and colleagues. The peer-evaluation between teachers was done orally and the reflection of the cooperation is briefly described in the following section.

This part of the thesis has provided a brief description of the project including its objectives and course of the whole project. Then, it has sketched the research tools which were used for the research and the profile of the participants has been demonstrated, too. In the following section the results of the research and the appropriate commentaries are provided.



#### IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

In this part of the thesis the results of the research are presented. First, the results of the project questionnaire are analysed. Secondly, the obtained data of the peer- and self-evaluation are discussed. Finally, the brief evaluation of teachers' views is introduced. During the demonstration of the gathered information the strengths of the research are highlighted, and the weaknesses and limitations discussed.

The questionnaire about project evaluation was divided into two parts. The first six questions were closed and the participants should have chosen one of given answers. The second part created six open questions and the participants were supposed to write their own answers and to try to express their opinions as objectively as possible. The last, thirteenth, question provided a place for various comments and observations relating to the project. The objective of this part of the research was to map the interest in PBL and to compel the learners to express their opinions in an appropriate way. Sometimes, the answers were surprising and sporadically, slightly shocking.

Ad # 1 – The first question was only for warm-up. The participants should answer whether they liked to work on a project or not. The answers were quite clear. 40, 62% of the respondents liked the work, the same percentage of people was not sure, and finally, 18, 75% did not enjoy it.

Ad # 2 – In the second question the learners had to compare the PBL with a common lesson they know and most of them, twenty-one which is 65,63 %, concurred in the positive answer, 21, 88 % were against the statement and the rest, 15, 63 %, were not decided.

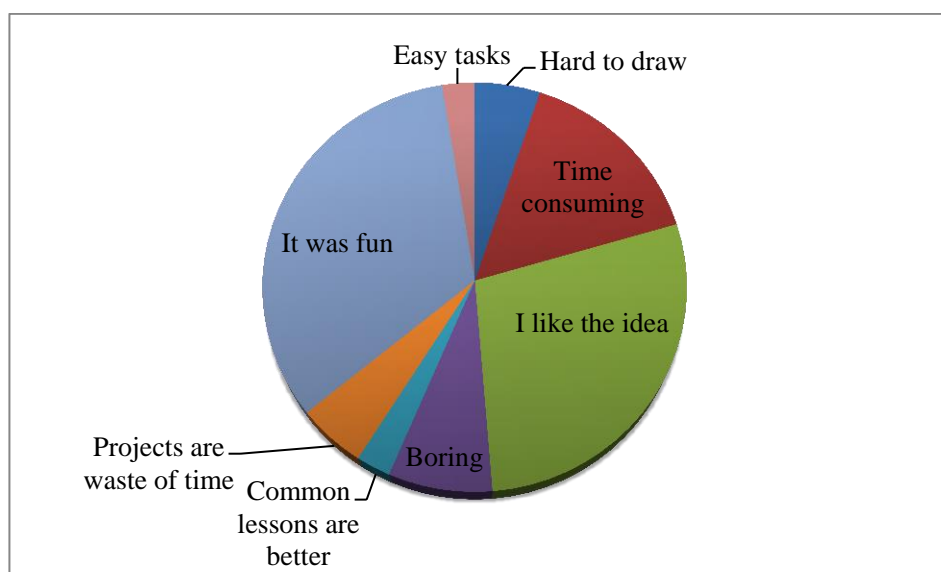
Ad # 3 - The positive and negative results of the third question were quite equal. However, some of the respondents avowed that they did absolutely not comprehend the question and they considered the project not to be learning but free lessons. Unfortunately, those learners were not able to understand that it was about a different type of learning.

Ad # 4 - A similar problem had to be solved in the fourth question. The same group of people, who did not understand the previous question, had the same troubles with this one. Nevertheless, 46, 88% of respondents agreed that the project tasks were more understandable for them than some tasks in common lessons, 34, 38% were not sure about the answer, and 18, 75% admitted that they did not consider the project more comprehensible.

Ad # 5 - From this question it is obvious that the majority of learners would like to do projects, and they evidently enjoyed it. Only 6, 25% answered negatively and 15, 62% were not sure. The aim of this question was to inquire the interest of the implementation of PBL into common lessons.

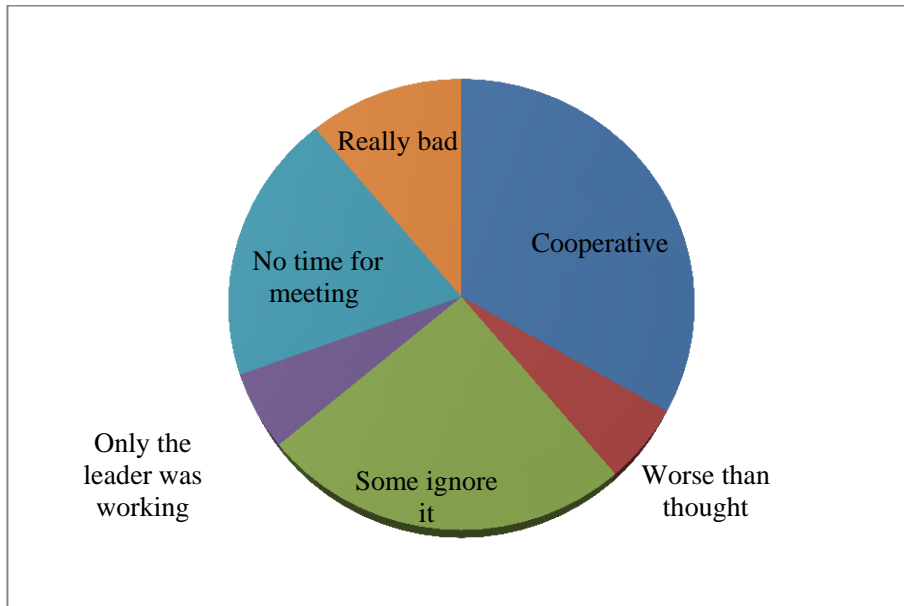
Ad # 6 - The last closed question was focused on the difficulty of the partial tasks of the project. More than half of the respondents were in an agreement and found the tasks not demanding. Nevertheless, 21, 86 % were of the opposite opinion and 15, 62 % were not able to make a decision. The following questions in the questionnaire were based openly; hence the participants had the chance to express their opinions more explicitly and not to be limited by the choice from three given answers.

Ad # 7 - In the first open question the respondents were asked to write their opinion on the project they had done. The views were various and both the positives and negatives were included. A frequent response, as it can be seen in the graph below, was that the project was time consuming or boring. There were also learners who would have preferred common lessons they know more than PBL because they thought that projects are only a waste of time. For many participants creating the comic was really hard to manage, too. Albeit, the final comics showed that the groups did a great job and some of the comics were extraordinary elaborated and well done; and it was evident that to complete the task was really time consuming but it was worth. However, a large number of survey participants admitted that yet it was fun and they appreciate the idea to make a project as other schools in our town, some even found the tasks easy. For better orientation see the graph.



Graph 1. What is your opinion about the project you have done?

Ad # 8 – Answers to eighth question were the most surprising of the whole questionnaire.



*Graph 2.* How would you evaluate the team work?

Even though the learners made the groups individually and freely at the beginning of the project, during the three months they had to face a problem they were not able to solve and this was – How to work together. To make an appointment with other group members was hard for them; they also admitted that only some of them contributed to overall success of given tasks or that only the leader of the group made the tasks or was not inclined to discuss the issues and had the final authority for decision. Several respondents even agreed that the cooperation was much worse than expected and some could only summarize the team work as really bad. It was alarming to find out how bad evaluation the team work got. Nevertheless, it showed that it is necessary for the learners to change the attitude to their peers and to practise the team work and cooperation more frequently in order to minimize the “gaps” learners in these social skills have. Although the majority part of responses was comprised of negative aspects of team work, there were found some exceptions, too. Really minimum, as compared with the negatives, was satisfied with the work in team.

Ad # 9 – In this question the participants undeniably responded that they really had more freedom to organize their tasks than in common lessons and they regarded it as a great advantage. Only two respondents, 6, 25 %, had the feeling that they did not have the chance to work independently and more freely.

Ad # 10 – This question, and also the following one, outlined the attractiveness of PBL. In the tenth question the most enjoyable parts of the project were ascertained.

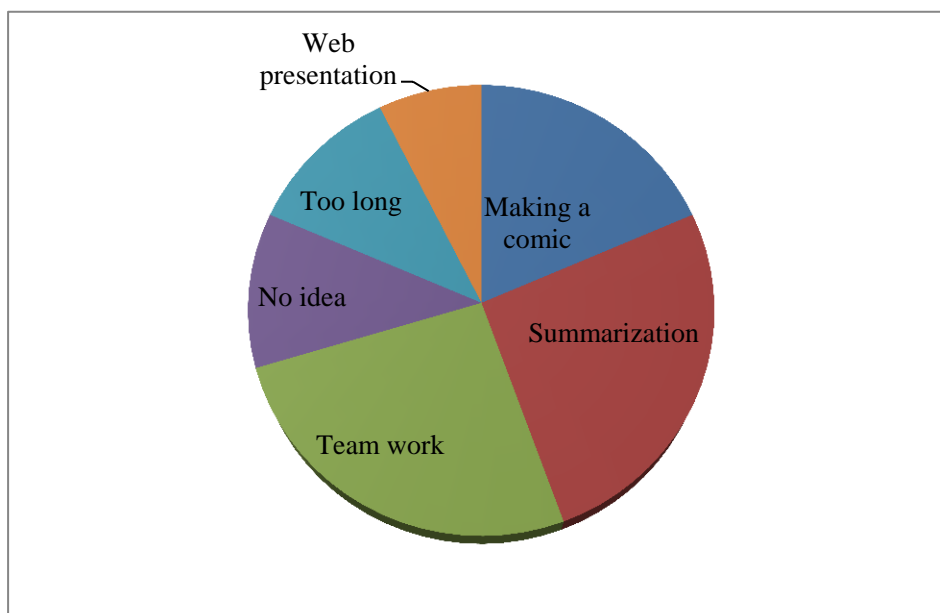


Graph 3. What was the most enjoyable part of the project?

There were some uncertain responses, as the graph shows, for the learners did probably not notice any part of the project they would have liked or appreciated. Two respondents answered that the summarization was the best they did. This information was slightly surprising, because according to reaction to this task during the project, it seemed to be the least engaging part. On the other hand, there were several responses which highly praised the team meetings because they had a lot of fun during the sessions. Maybe these were those learners who did not have troubles with their working in groups and were able to make compromises to achieve the common goal. The second largest group of answers consisted of belief that the initial part of the project was the best. This group of participants especially liked inventing the name of their group, searching for information about their chosen literary work. Finally, the majority acknowledged that creating the comic was the most pleasurable part for them. For these results I have my own theory. Most of the learners who participated in this project were A-class learners

and they have more IT lessons than other primary schools, as mentioned previously. To accomplish this intent it was necessary to dissolve the Art lessons and replaced them with Computer Graphics. Fortunately, there are many creatively gifted children in both eighth and ninth grade classes and they miss the Art lessons. Hence, to make a comic was a challenge and a pleasant chance to express artistically.

Ad # 11 – This question studied the least attractive sections of the project. As expected, writing the summarization and presenting it on the web was the most frequent response for this question. It was followed with the team cooperation which could be predicted from previous answers, especially from the eighth ones. For those, who are not creatively gifted, making the final comic caused the biggest troubles. The final group of answers was made by those respondents who found the project too long. This fact was mirrored in answers to next, and as well, last question. For better orientation see the graph.



*Graph 4.* What was the least enjoyable part of the project?

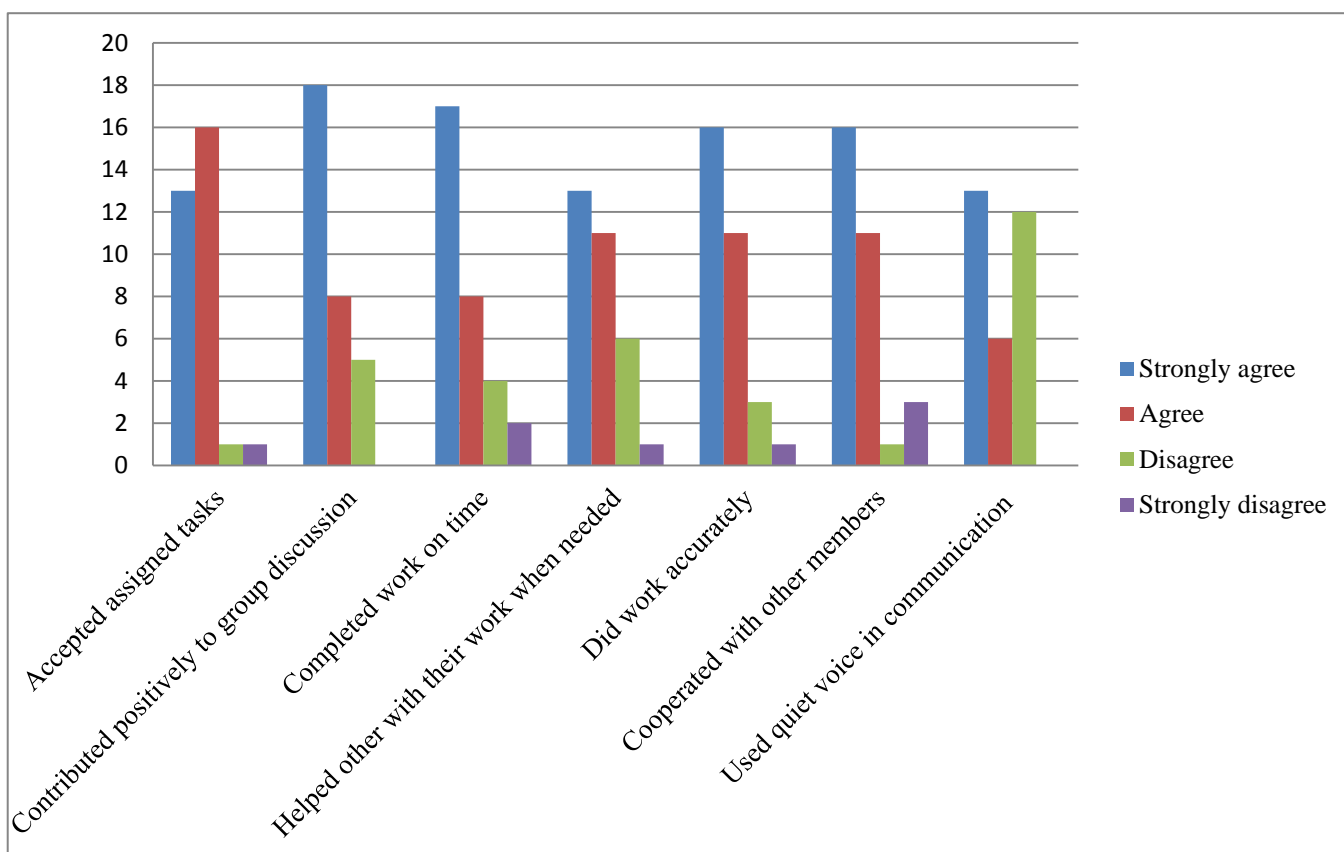
Ad # 12 – The concluding inquiry surveyed the interest of possible future projects. 78, 13 % admitted that they would like to take part in another project, however, 21, 88 % refused to experience PBL again. The reasons for their decisions were miscellaneous. Many learners found during the project out that the teams they had chosen were not the best choice they did. However, they would make other projects on condition they would work individually or in pairs. They also appreciated the atmosphere during

the project which was, according to them, more relaxed than normally in common lessons. Some of the respondents would limit the projects only on school. They would not do them at home for they cannot organize their time on their own because they are not used to do that. On the other hand, it is obvious that some of them are missing creative work because that was also one of the reasons why would they like to take part in another project. They have the feeling that the school restricts their abilities and skills. I liked one of the opinions: "Project is a good thing for better English with fun and more freedom." It is an answer from a girl who really did their best during the whole time of the project. A large group formed also people who acknowledged that projects give them a chance to spend more time with their schoolmates and to know them better. In other words, they appreciated the social and communication skills they had the chance to develop. A very funny and a bit selfish answer which engaged my interest was that some learners would do projects only in English lessons and not anywhere because only in this way the PBL stays original. Maybe the concerned person is afraid of the fact that the projects could become commonplace and lose their extraordinariness. Even suggestion for a next project was written among the answers. A person would like to make a sequel of the comic with more creative freedom. They would like to make an original version. The most interesting positive answer was that they like making projects because it is similar to tasks they should probably do at work. They just compared the project with work tasks and hence, they adopted a responsible stance on it. Those answers were given by learners who are thinking about their future and would like to achieve something positive in their life. From the previous reasons it is obvious that the project fulfilled the expectations. However, there were also several negative answers, as mentioned above. The most frequent was that it was not fun and that it was time consuming and that the common lessons are more preferred by those respondents than the PBL.

Ad # 13 – There was also an additional place for comments and suggestions left in the questionnaire. It was a bit surprising that some of the respondents did not like the electronic part of the project and they would only prefer to work with paper, magazines, newspapers, and books. Some were worried about the competition and the fact that they will get fewer votes because they do not have Facebook or other known social networks to invite more people to vote for their comic. Again, the learners and also teachers had to deal with this issue. Fortunately, it emerged that other troubles,

which had an affiliation with the competition, had to be solved, but this will be discussed further. On the other hand, some technically more demanding projects were suggested. The most tempting was the idea to make an English film. Nevertheless, the most serious problem seemed to be the team cooperation.

As already mentioned above, the biggest problem was working in team. For that reason, learners were asked to evaluate firstly themselves and then their peers. There were seven statements in the questionnaire and the respondents were obliged to assign themselves a value for each listed statement and then, to do the same for each of their group members. Four values were available there - # 1 stood for strongly agree, # 2 for agree, # 3 for disagree, and # 4 stood for strongly disagree. The inquiry was not anonymous and the learners were asked to answer as objectively as possible. The outcomes of each statement patently showed the weak and strength points of their behaviour in teams. Therefore, the following graph and analysis refer to conclusions gained from the self-evaluation.



Graph 5. Self - evaluation

Ad # 1 – The first statement examined the acceptance of assigned tasks.

In other words, the objective was to find out to which extent the individual team members were able to cope with assignments. The large majority of respondents agreed that they did everything they were asked to do. Even 40, 63 % of them were strongly confident about the fact that they did their best. 50 % had slight doubts about their work, however, they still agreed. 3, 13 %, one person, disagreed with the statement. And finally, two people, 6, 25 %, were aware of the fact that they ignored the given work.

Unfortunately, from the final results of total points of the whole project, it was obvious that there were more than three people who refused to accept the assigned tasks. Hence, it is evident that not all the respondents were self-critical as they were supposed to be.

Ad # 2 – The second proposition's intent was to analyse the use of communication skills and the level of participation of the learners within their teams. The results indicate that 56, 25 % had the feeling that they absolutely positively contributed to group discussion. 25 % only agreed with the statement and 15, 63 % took into consideration the fact that there were other peers who did more than they themselves in the team.

Ad # 3 – The third statement explored the ability to meet deadlines, punctuality to be more specific, and thoroughness of the respondents. As known from the on-going assessments of particular tasks of the project, the outcomes did not surprise at all. In the aggregate six respondents, 18, 75 % of all involved learners, admitted that they did not manage to do their work on time. On the other side, 78, 13 % did not see any problem to respect the deadlines. The reason why some of the participants were not able to submit the assignments on time was already mentioned in the previous questionnaire. Those learners just did not manage to organize their time because they were not used to do that. It was something new for them and they evidently underestimated the consequences.

Ad # 4 – This statement investigated the social abilities. The objective was to analyse the degree of cooperation and the ability to help others to achieve a common goal. In spite of the answers the respondents wrote in the questionnaire which evaluated the project work, the given responses in this questionnaire contradicted by those in the previous research. This time the learners cooperated almost without problems. 40, 63 % avowed that they always helped when it was needed. 34, 38 % of respondents nearly every time it was necessary encouraged their team. And only 21, 88 % of them acknowledged with a clear conscience that they did the task they were asked to do but they never did anything extra.



Ad # 5 – The fifth assertion focused on the precision of the respondents. They were requested to decide to which extent they performed the tasks accurately. 50 % of responses strongly agreed with the statement. 34, 38 % were with slight uncertainty persuaded that they worked thoroughly. However, 9, 38 % affirmed the fact that they did a sloppy job and even 3, 13 % admitted that the tasks were not a challenge for them and that they just did not endeavour to finish their job before deadline or to try to make any effort. Unfortunately, some of the learners soon, after the start of the project, realized that they will have to struggle with the given tasks, with peers in their team, communication skills, etc. and for that reasons, they adopted a negative attitude to the whole project from the very beginning. It was shocking mainly due to reality that the learners were those people who initiated the project. There is apparent that the initial excitement of something new and unexplored faded quickly by some of the project participants. From that point the differences among the teams became more and more patent.

Ad # 6 – The cooperation with other members has been in fact discussed in the previous questionnaire. Hence, the results will be introduced briefly. 50 % of respondents were convinced about their total cooperation with their peers in team. 34, 38 % also agreed with the statement. This implies, 84, 38 % of all concurred with the actuality. Nevertheless, 3, 13 % was aware of their non-cooperation and finally, 9, 38 % simply admitted that they did not intend to take part in team works. It is a consequence of demotivation and unwillingness of a few learners. Although the negative answers formed only 12, 51 % of the total number it was also a bit demotivating for the teachers because they tried to find a solution of the problem, to discuss with those learners, but the learners really were not ready to make a compromise.

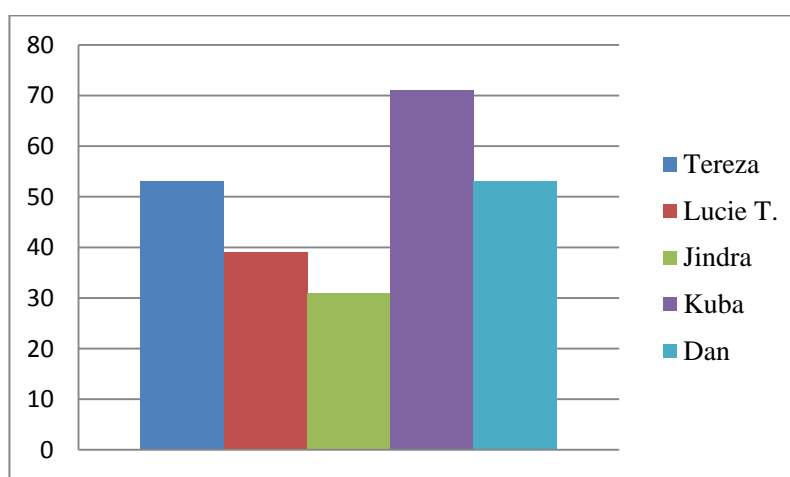
Ad # 7 – The last statement analysed the communication skills of respondents, particularly the ability to use quiet voice in their speech and discussions and hence, to be able to organize their discussion and be willing to speeches of others. Nevertheless, there were evident problems with compliance of this statement. According to responses, there were 37, 50 % of all learners who answered that they did not accept the rules of discussion and communication with other team members. On the other hand 40, 63 % of them were strongly persuaded that they fulfilled the expectations. And finally, 18, 75 % of research participants were quite agreeable of the assertion.

The self-evaluation has proved the weaknesses and strengths of the project participants. To sum it up, the most serious issues included the cooperation and

communication within the teams transpired. This fact was surprising even more for the learners than for their teachers. During the project the learners found out that there are good schoolmates who engage in solving the tasks without any problems and that there are the other ones who never do their best for the good of their team. Maybe, the results were shocking for them because they had some idea about themselves and during the project they came to a conclusion that they are not used to cooperate, communicate, or even to help others. However, many of them admitted that they are aware of the fact that it is necessary to improve their social and communication skills and that the project was a great opportunity to discover these weaknesses which they did not know they are endowed with.

The second part of the questionnaire was comprised of peer- evaluation. The statements of self-evaluation corresponded with those ones written in this part. The results of the research were analysed according to classification in the group. This implies, the responses to each of the statement of all the team members were added up and those learners who received the fewest points could be described as team leaders and the most responsible people in their group. Hence, all the data were processed separately for each comic group. The first three described groups are from the eighth class and the rest from the ninth class.

Ad # 1 – In this group both genders were represented. There were two girls and three boys there as it is shown in the graph below.

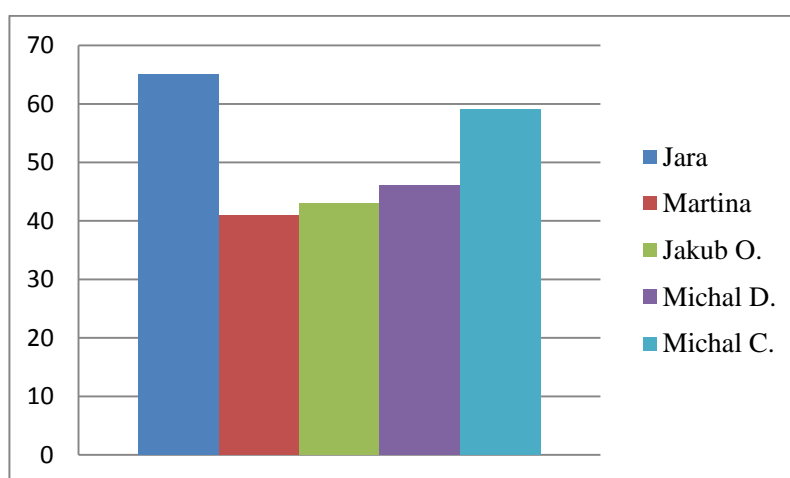


*Graph 6. Peer evaluation - team results - 1*

The team came to a conclusion that Kuba was the least cooperative of all. With his 71 points he greatly exceeded his schoolmates. Consequently, Kuba adopted

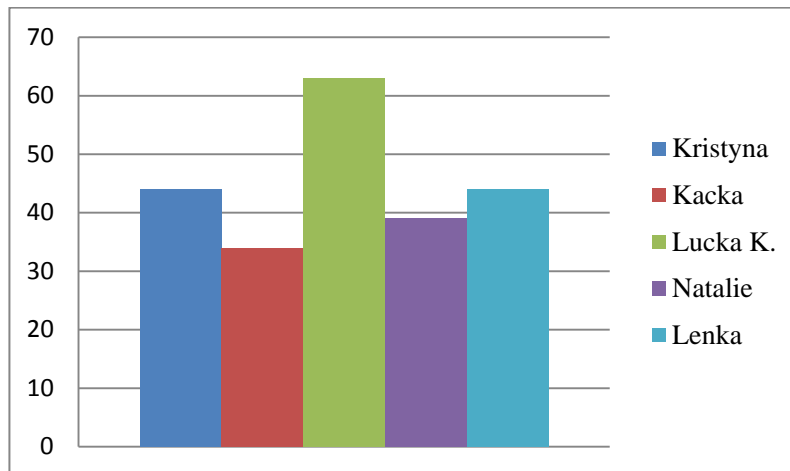
the function of silent observer. Dan and Tereza got the same 53 points, but each of them for another reason. Tereza was aware of the fact that she did not help the team very much. The reason was her frequent illnesses and impossibility to take part in discussions or team meetings. These facts she also mentioned in the previous questionnaire. Hence, she was presupposed to gain a large number of points. Additionally, Dan fulfilled the role of a member with creative but unfortunately very often unrealistic ideas and it was evident that he ranks the middle place in the team. Contrary to Dan's crazy ideas, Lucy with her 39 points won the second place in the imaginary scale because she was the completer of the project. Finally, the first place waited for Jindra who was the expert for language and his communication and language skills were items which his team members appreciated most.

Ad # 2 – The second team was mainly male. There was only one girl who finally seemed to be the leader of the whole group because she gained the fewest points in the peer-evaluation. She was followed by Jakub who functioned as a language specialist. He was in fact the only representative of A class in this group. The imaginary third place belonged to Michal D., a shy and calm boy who sufficiently did his job in the team. The penultimate place, 59 points, was prepared for Michal C., who, as Kuba in the first evaluated group, served as a silent observer. The most points were addressed to Jara. In the company he is considered to be a solitaire with his own imaginary world. Hence, it was surprising that he voluntarily joined this group. Unfortunately, this action was the only one he did for the team.



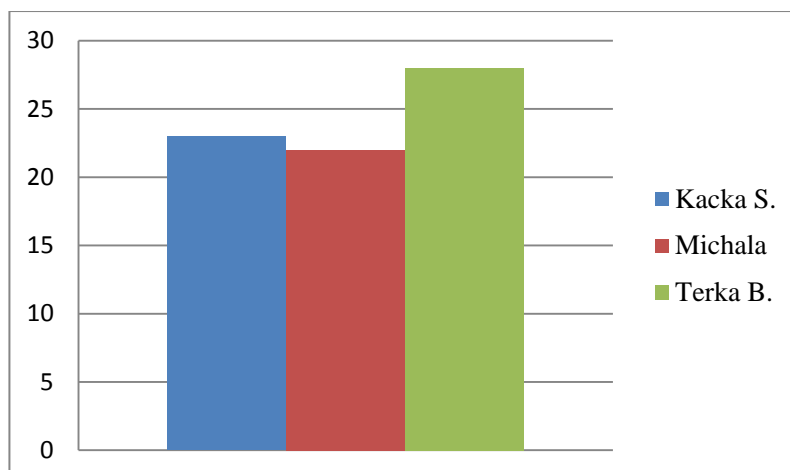
Graph 7. Peer evaluation - team results - 2

Ad # 3 – This team joined a new girl during the project. Unfortunately, Lucka did not fit very well in the team and that is why she gained 63 points. She functioned as an outcast and the reason was that some of the other members had disputes with her. This fact was already mentioned in the previous questionnaire. Nevertheless, the other four girls in the team gained approximately the same amount of points. Seemingly, they were able to divide their work appropriately, as the graph illustrates.



*Graph 8. Peer evaluation - team results - 3*

Ad # 4 – This was a three-member group of girls from the ninth grade.

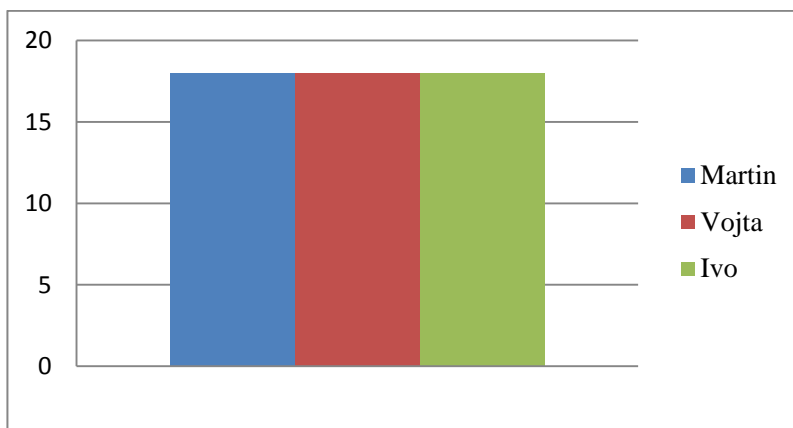


*Graph 9. Peer evaluation - team results - 4*

From the graph it is obvious that they made a balanced team which set the internal rules of their roles at the very beginning of the project. This implies that the cooperation

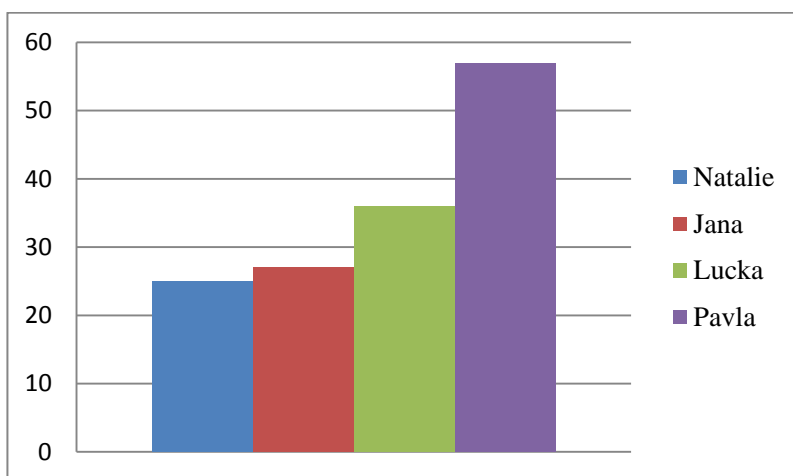
within this group was on a high level and this fact also corresponds to the final project which was one of the best made.

Ad # 5 – The fifth group, contrary to the previous one, was solely boyish. It also consisted only of three A class learners and all of them, with a big coincidence, received 18 points. One would believe in a wholly collaboration. Nevertheless, this perfect community had its serious weaknesses, but these will be mentioned further in the thesis.



Graph 10. Peer evaluation - team results - 5

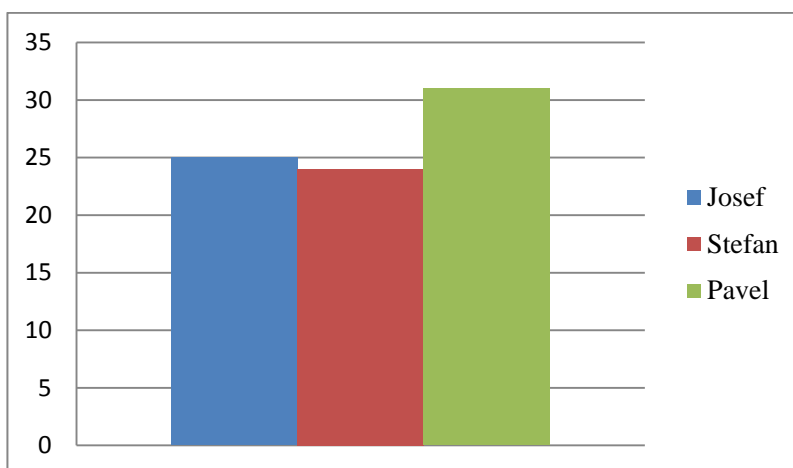
Ad # 6 – This team was consisted of four girls, one from A class and the rest from B class. However, the leader of the group seemed to be the only A class girl Natalie who gained 25 points for her work within the team, as it can be seen in the graph below.



Graph 11. Peer evaluation - team results - 6

She was followed by Jana, who served as the second leader of the group with her 25 points. Lucka, who was awarded with the third place, got 36 points. She was the creative team specialist. Finally, the last place, with 57 points, waited for Pavla. This girl did not take part in team tasks and functioned only as a silent member of the team who did not even try to help or participate in any work they had to do.

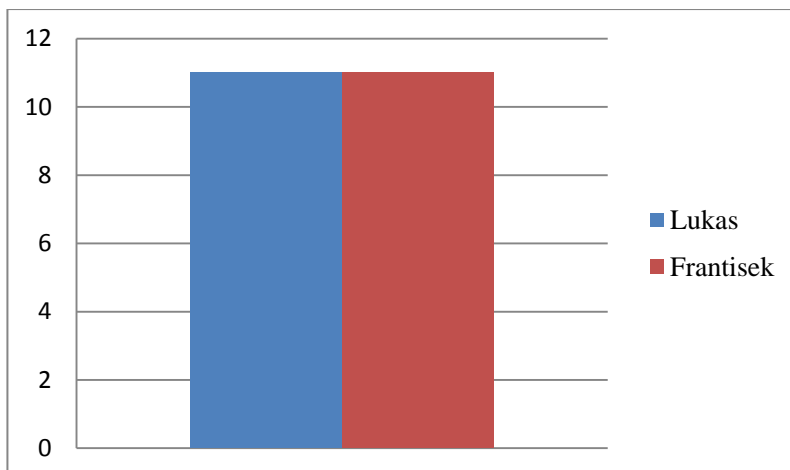
Ad # 7 – As the fifth group this one was also made only from three boys. The evaluation results were nearly the same for two of the members



*Graph 12. Peer evaluation - team results - 7*

Josef, the artist, acquired 25 points, Stefan, the resource investigator, got 24 points. These two boys were able to cooperate together; however, the last third of their group, Pavel, absolutely damaged their reputation with the summarization task which was an absolutely failure.

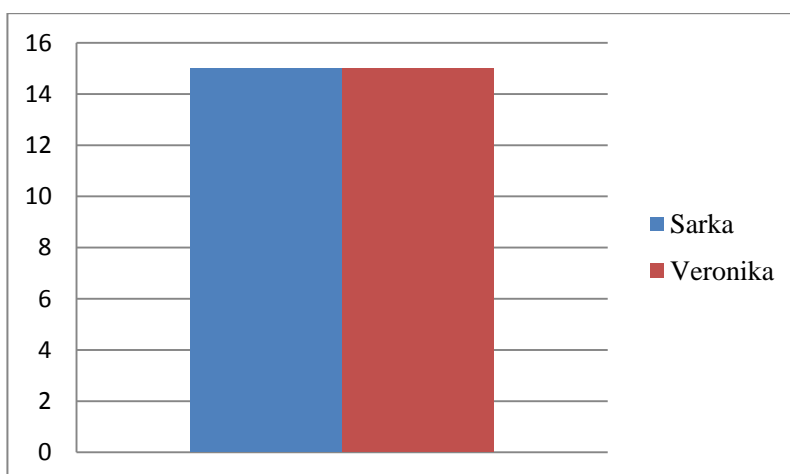
Ad # 8 – This was one of the least numerous groups in the project. There were only two boys from A class, very good friends who are used to work together and they understand themselves very much.



*Graph 13. Peer evaluation - team results - 8*

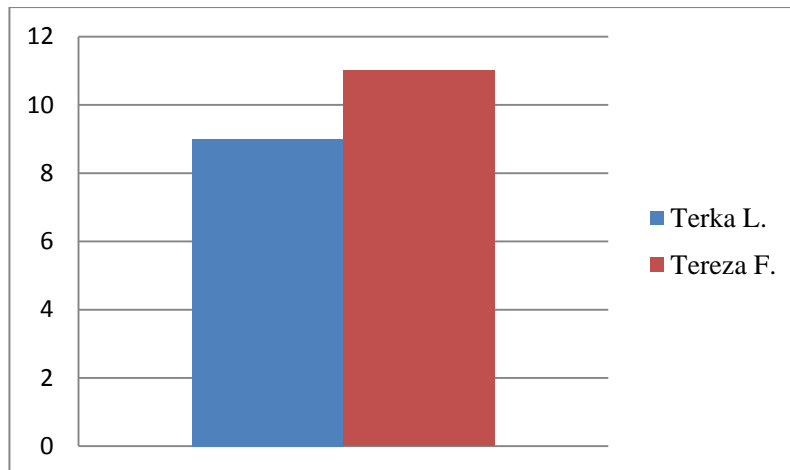
It is no wonder then that both of the boys rated each other at the same level. It was a very friendly group with a positive attitude to given tasks.

Ad # 9 – However, these two A class girls were the opposite of the eighth team. They voluntarily formed a group of two people; however they did not work together during the project. Yet they gave each 15 points.



*Graph 14. Peer evaluation - team results - 9*

Ad # 10 – The last team was also created of two A class girls. Nevertheless, these girls were more responsible and precise in their work. There is no doubt then that there were not differences between the assessments of both of them. After all, it is not surprising because these girls were among the favourites of the whole project, who fulfilled all of their duties conscientiously.



Graph 15. Peer evaluation - team results - 10

Regarding the teacher evaluation it was done in a different way. The whole course of the project was evaluated only orally and it was based on a discussion between the teachers. However, because of the fact that the project was mostly English and Czech language played only a minimal role the reflections and comments of the Czech teacher included the fewer part of the overall assessment.

For better orientation a *PBL Essential Elements Checklist* retrieved from BIE websites was used. It supervised the course and development of the project. The rating scale was comprised of Yes/No answers. Nevertheless, the teachers had the possibility to add any kind of information or comments they considered important to mention. The whole sheet was divided into six larger areas and the teachers were supposed to complete it. There were the following areas included:

1. Focus on significant content;
2. Development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills;
3. Engaging students in in-depth inquiry;
4. Organizing tasks around a driving question;
5. Establishing a need to know;
6. Encouraging voice and choice;
7. Incorporating revision and reflection;
8. Including a public audience.

Ad # 1 – It was essential to focus on the RVP standards and objectives which were set at the beginning of the project. There were no serious shortcomings emerged.



Ad # 2 – 21<sup>st</sup> century skills which were discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis made a significant part of the whole project. However, these skills were also a part of the evaluation in the questionnaires. The only issue that was noticed during the project was the problem in communication and collaboration within some of the groups which was finally proved in the peer- and project-evaluation the learners completed.

Ad # 3 - This was sometimes a really hard work because the learners were not used to do project, hence such a work was new for them and some of them tried to boycott it. The reason for their behaviour was simple. They thought that doing a project is a good opportunity for doing nothing and getting good marks. But they were wrong. This means that the initial euphoria had passed and only the reality was left and that appeared to be an inseparable problem for some of the learners.

Ad # 4 – The organization around the driving question, a question that captures the task learners were completing, was found in a crisis in some moments. The biggest problem was seen in the motivation of the learners. It was necessary to reorganize some tasks during the whole project and adapt them accordingly to given conditions. In simple terms, the idea of the project slightly differed from the reality.

Ad # 5 – To attract the attention to the project was a quite simple task because the learners were in fact the initiators of the project. But more important was the endeavour to keep their level of curiosity and enthusiasm; at the beginning of the project this level was on its highest. However, as time passed the enthusiasm lost on its importance and greatness. Yet it was not only the learners who were guilty for such a situation. Unfortunately, the teachers probably underestimated some of the indications the learners gave to them.

Ad # 6 – The learners appreciated that they had the freedom in organizing their activities and their time. Nevertheless, they also admitted that the freedom was a bit misleading for them. They were not used to plan their tasks and time for work. Hence, respecting the deadlines seemed to be a really serious problem.

Ad # 7 – During the whole project learners received points for completing the individual assignments. The total number of points was one hundred. The teams knew why they received just as many points because after each task a brief evaluation was done. The first assignment was also evaluated with emoticons, see below, and the summarization presented on the project websites and the final comic was also graded. Finally, as a motivation, those team who received the most points from the teacher during

the whole project and participated with their comic in a public voting that was created on the project websites got T-shirts with their comic. Unfortunately, despite numerous attempts to inspire and motivate the teams and their members, some of the learners still ignored the given tasks and they were not willing to accept any compromise.



*Figure 4.* Emoticons used for evaluation.

Ad # 8 – The public propagation of the comics was at a very high level. Not only that the whole school had the possibility to look at the comics in the English classroom, they also had the possibility to find them on the project websites, because all the classes got the website address of the project. The report of the comics spread very quickly according to a large number of visitors which was detected on the website. Nevertheless, the highest participation was during the voting of the best comic. With the support of good people some leaflets about the competition were printed and spread at and out of the school. Although, our project had to face several inconveniences, unfortunately, also from colleagues, the results of the project were generally better than expected.

*Czech Literature Presented in a Comic* was the first comic we have done. Hence, it is quite logical that there appeared situations during the project we had to improvise and find another way to achieve our intent. However, English and Czech teachers' cooperation proceeded without any major problems. The only disappointment the project experienced was the unprofessional conduct of IT colleague. Although it was a school project, the learners did not have any opportunity to visit the project websites at school because the IT teacher denied the access to the websites. The reason and purpose of the behaviour remains a mystery and a big let-down.

To sum up, the whole survey of the project, whether it was a project questionnaire or peer- and self-evaluation or teacher reflection, has proved that in general, both learners and teachers were delighted with doing a project. It showed all the participants that learning can be also fun and not only done at the desks and in front of the board. The great advantages of PBL were seen in spending more time with peers, having

more freedom in organizing the tasks, doing something new and more complex.

On the other hand, PBL demonstrated the weak ability of communication and cooperation in some teams, the incapability to organize the time, and finally the effort of some learners and colleagues to boycott the whole process of the project.

Hence, in the following chapter the advice for other teachers and the process of doing the research and analysing the data is provided. Finally, the suggestions for improvements of the research are outlined.

## V. IMPLICATIONS

In this part of the thesis the implications for teaching is discussed. In other words, the results and ascertainment of the research which were essential for teachers and learners are outlined. This is followed by discussion about limitations of the whole research, and the weak points of the process of creating, gathering and analysing the data is illustrated. In conclusion, various suggestions for betterment of the study are propounded.

### **Implications for Teaching**

There is no doubt that PBL is a teaching method that is fairly new at our schools and that a great amount of teachers take a negative attitude against it. However, there certainly exist supporters of this alternative. At the school which participated in the project was and still PBL is perceived as a waste of time by many teachers. Nevertheless, this fact and several coincidences inspired the language teachers to attempt to design a project. It was a big challenge for them but it was worth the effort. The essential finding for teachers was that most of the learners were appreciative of teachers' endeavour to change their approach to learning. The biggest surprise was that the learners finally had the feeling that they did something they only heard about from their friends at other schools. PBL offers positive and also negative experiences but from the learners and teachers' points of view the benefits triumphed over the negatives. Both the teams and also the teachers learnt something new from each other and the imaginary icebergs between learners and teachers were broken. In spite of the all nice experience, there were some situations which were a great disappointment. Two teams did not complete the whole project because of their boycott. The reasons were described in previous chapters. However, a more serious problem the teachers had to solve was that in the public voting the learners tried to fake the votes. Hence, it was necessary to tighten the rules and give permission for only one vote from one IP address. This implies that teachers have to be really alert and ready to improvise. Although there were those issues that had to be solved the fact that in general the project was successful and that the learners wish to attend another project was the most encouraging information. Hence, the research has shown that it is possible to face challenges and that the effort to change learning paid off because the curiosity and longing for new knowledge was aroused not only by the learners but also by their teachers.

### **Limitation of the Research**

The research was done at only one primary school and reflects opinions and experience of limited amount of participants. Hence, it is not possible to generalize the results and form in general valid conclusions because the research introduces only the outcomes of two classes from one school.

There were many factors that had to be taken into consideration when giving the questionnaires to the learners. The first was the fact that not all the teams were able to finish all the tasks and therefore, some of their given answers did not have to be objective. On the other hand, this issue was solved itself, for those participants of the project just denied to answer some of given open questions. The next determinant of the limitation was the heterogeneous structure of involved classes. There was a huge contrast between A and B classes and this matter also influenced the course and results of the project. Unfortunately, the biggest barrier for B classes was the English language. Albeit all the tasks and also questions in the research were explained also Czech, in order to avoid any possible ambiguities, the effort did not have too positive effect on the results of some respondents' work. Another problem that emerged was the low communication and language skills of some learners. Despite numerous attempts to make the questions easier, see the translation in mother tongue or elucidation of the meaning of the questions, some of the respondents were not able to answer the questions properly. They still did not comprehend what they were asked to do and their answers were absolutely not applicable, or their language skills were at such a low level that it was impossible to deduce anything from the responses. The other circumstance which was necessary to take into account was the willingness to complete the questionnaires objectively and responsibly. To achieve the best possible results of the research the learners were asked to fill in the questionnaires separately in two days so that the respondents have more time for thinking about the answers and do not allow them to be weary of all the final tasks they were supposed to do. Finally, in analysing the data it was significant to take into consideration the fact that the respondents did not have much experience with PBL.

To sum up, the most momentous limits of the research can be seen in lack of practice in PBL, in the fairness of the participants, their volition to respond all the questions sensibly and intelligibly and finally, also in formulation of some of the questions which seemed to be puzzling for some respondents.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

If given suitable opportunity, I would without doubt be considering conducting the research with more classes or more primary schools in our town and subsequently make a comparison of the overall results to outline the situation of PBL in more detail. Hence, the attitude to PBL would in that case bring more relevant significance of information.

It was also discovered that two statements in peer-evaluation questionnaire were similar and caused troubles to the respondents because they felt confused. The ambiguous assertions were those ones which asked about helping the peers and cooperate with other members. It is also true that some of the respondents notified me of the statements they thought to be similar. As a next improvement I would also avoid making the project evaluation anonymous. Actually, the respondents wrote only the names of their groups, but I would ask them to write their names. From my experience during the project the learners were not as shy as I supposed them to be. First I thought that the initial problem that could come would be completing of peer-evaluation. However, I was totally wrong. The learners were really open with their answers about the other team members.

When conducting the analysis it came into my mind that next time it would be much better to try to make the questionnaire electronic. Firstly, it looks more attractive for the respondents than the paper form and simultaneously it develops respondents' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as for example the computer literacy; and secondly, it also makes the data processing simpler.

With this final part of information, this chapter, engaging in describing limitations of the executed research, feasible implication for teaching and suggestions for future research, is completed and with it also the adding of new facts and conjectures. The last chapter is dedicated to a conclusion which is used as a brief summary and for emphasizing of crucial moments discussed in this thesis.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The thesis provides awareness about project-based learning as one of teaching methods used in the educational area nowadays. The theoretical part elucidates the elemental components of PBL including the definition of this approach, emphasizing its advantages and disadvantages. After that it outlines the interconnection of project-based learning with Czech educational standards. This discussion is followed with a description of individual parts of project planning and the whole theoretical part is concluded with a brief reference to using technology, eventually the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills which are a much debated topic in contemporary education. Therefore, the whole theoretical part is intended to serve as a basis for the following practical investigation of the initiated project including the research of attractiveness of PBL at one particular primary school which did not have experience with this method before.

The practical part firstly describes the overall process of the realized project and then analyses the data gathered after the project. The results proved that the participants appreciated the endeavour of introduction a new method in their classes, although they also admitted that it was demanding for some of them. The course of the project and also the peer-evaluation showed that the communication and language skills and cooperation was by several teams' serious weak points which have to be practised. During the project there also appeared some troubles that had to be solved. To the most serious plagiarism of one team, faking the polls in a completion and unprofessionalism of a colleague can be included. The final part of the thesis is dedicated to implication of the given research and it also provides the overview of limitations and suggestions of the study.

The gained knowledge suggests that PBL is a method that is worth to be taught and used. Nevertheless, there were several weak areas in the project which have to be bettered. The organization of the project was realized by two teachers who did not have any experience with PBL and this fact mirrored in some situations. But, the final acclaim was more positive than negative; and it showed that it is worth to try new things and to broaden not only teachers' but also learners' horizons.

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## VIII. APENDICES

### Appendix 1: Project evaluation

#### PROJECT EVALUATION – Czech Literature Presented in Comics

Group name:

Class:

Date:

*Decide which answer suits the way you worked during the project. Then complete the sentences.*

1. Did you like to work on the project?	YES	NO	NOT SURE
2. Was the project work more interesting than common lessons?	YES	NO	NOT SURE
3. Do you think that you have learned something new during the project?	YES	NO	NOT SURE
4. Was the project work more understandable than common lessons?	YES	NO	NOT SURE
5. Do you think that projects should be a common part of learning?	YES	NO	NOT SURE
6. Were the partial tasks of the project difficult for you?	YES	NO	NOT SURE

7. What is your opinion about the project you have done? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How would you evaluate the team work? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you think that you had more freedom to organize your tasks than in common lessons? Be more concrete. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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10. What was the most enjoyable part of the project? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. What was the least enjoyable part of the project? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Would you like to take part in another project? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Place for your comments and suggestions. \_\_\_\_\_

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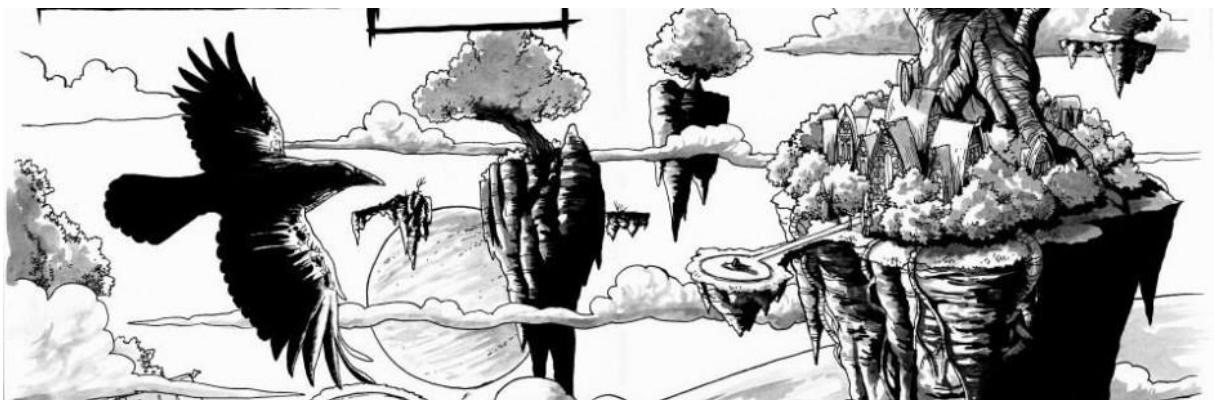
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## Appendix 2: Peer- and self-evaluation

### PEER EVALUATION – Czech Literature Presented in Comics


Name:


Class:

Date:

*Write the names of your group members in the numbered boxes. Then, assign yourself a value for each listed statement. Finally, do the same for each of your group members and total all the values.*

**Values: 1= strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree**

Statement	Yourself	1.	2.	3.
<i>Accepted assigned tasks</i>				
<i>Contributed positively to group discussion</i>				
<i>Completed work on time</i>				
<i>Helped other with their work when needed</i>				
<i>Did work accurately</i>				
<i>Cooperated with other members</i>				
<i>Used quiet voice in communication</i>				
Totals 				

Statement	4.	5.	6.	7.
<i>Accepted assigned tasks</i>				
<i>Contributed positively to group discussion</i>				
<i>Completed work on time</i>				
<i>Helped other with their work when needed</i>				
<i>Did work accurately</i>				
<i>Cooperated with other members</i>				
<i>Used quiet voice in communication</i>				
<i>Totals</i> 				



*The questionnaire was inspired by one created by Chad Mark, 2013.*

*<http://www.dailyteachingtools.com/images/500PeerEval.jpg>*

# Appendix 3: Summarization worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period \_\_\_\_\_


## Summarizing

A summary is a restatement of only the main points of a passage. A summary is always much shorter than the passage it is based on.

Read this passage. → Circle the most important words and phrases. → Write 8 of the most important words or phrases on these lines. → Use the list to create a summary restating the main points.

Sometimes, during a football game, we see players committing fouls on purpose, often behind the referees' backs. Players might grab a face mask, kick a player who is down on the ground, unnecessarily push someone from behind, or even sucker punch a member of the opposing team.

At such times, it is no wonder that fans in the stadium begin shouting at the players, fighting with each other, damaging the seats, and throwing trash onto the field.



\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_



Summary

## Appendix 4: Teacher’s evaluation

### PBL Essential Elements Checklist

Whatever form a project takes, it must have these Essential Elements to meet BIE’s definition of PBL.

Does the Project . . . ?			?
<p><b>FOCUS ON SIGNIFICANT CONTENT</b> At its core, the project is focused on teaching students important knowledge and skills, derived from standards and key concepts at the heart of academic subjects.</p>			
<p><b>DEVELOP 21st CENTURY SKILLS</b> Students build skills valuable for today’s world, such as critical thinking/ problem solving, collaboration, and communication, which are taught and assessed.</p>			
<p><b>ENGAGE STUDENTS IN IN-DEPTH INQUIRY</b> Students are engaged in a rigorous, extended process of asking questions, using resources, and developing answers.</p>			
<p><b>ORGANIZE TASKS AROUND A DRIVING QUESTION</b> Project work is focused by an open-ended question that students explore or that captures the task they are completing.</p>			
<p><b>ESTABLISH A NEED TO KNOW</b> Students see the need to gain knowledge, understand concepts, and apply skills in order to answer the Driving Question and create project products, beginning with an Entry Event that generates interest and curiosity.</p>			
<p><b>ENCOURAGE VOICE AND CHOICE</b> Students are allowed to make some choices about the products to be created, how they work, and how they use their time, guided by the teacher and depending on age level and PBL experience.</p>			
<p><b>INCORPORATE REVISION AND REFLECTION</b> The project includes processes for students to use feedback to consider additions and changes that lead to high-quality products, and think about what and how they are learning.</p>			
<p><b>INCLUDE A PUBLIC AUDIENCE</b> Students present their work to other people, beyond their classmates and teacher.</p>			

!!! **POZZOR** !!!  
Vyhlášíjeme soutěž

o nejnápaditější komiks  
našich osmáků a devátáků.

Hlasovat můžete na:

**projekt.hruska-as.cz**



**od 10.3. do 16.3.**



Za Vaše hlasy děkujeme

!!! **POZZOR** !!!



**!!! WARNING !!!**

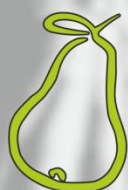
We announce the competition

about the most creative comic

of our 8th and 9th grade pupils

vote on:

**projekt.hruska-as.cz**



from 10.3. to 16.3.



*Thanks for your votes*

**!!! WARNING !!!**

## **IX. SUMMARY IN CZECH**

Práce se zabývá projektovou metodou vyučování v anglickém jazyce. Teoretická část popisuje elementární znaky projektové metody a zároveň demonstruje její výhody i nevýhody. Následující část popisuje implementaci projektové metody v českém vzdělávacím systému. Konec teoretické části je věnován individuálním krokům, které jsou potřebné pro správné organizování a plánování úspěšného projektu.

Výzkum, který byl prováděn na základní škole, je podrobněji popsán v praktické části práce. Cílem výzkumu bylo analyzovat postoj a atraktivitu této metody u žáků a učitelů zainteresovaných v česko-anglickém projektu. Závěr praktické části komentuje slabé stránky výzkumu a podává návrh na jeho vylepšení.

Během celého projektu se objevily nepříjemnosti, které bylo nutné vyřešit a které jsou popsány v závěrečné části práce. I přes tyto překážky z výzkumu vyplývá, že projektová výuka vzbudila zájem o tuto metodu nejen u učitelů, ale i u jejich žáků.