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Thesis

THE VALUE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF IMAGES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES FOR TEENAGERS: LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

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Plzeň 2017

Tato stránka bude ve svázané práci Váš původní formulář *Zadáni dipl. práce* (k vyzvednutí u sekretářky KAN)

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

V Plzni dne 26. dubna 2017   ………………………….

Lucie Křížová

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis is concerned with pictorial materials appearing in English language textbooks for teenagers. In particular, attention is devoted to the exploration of teenage learners' opinions regarding the visual aspect of language textbooks. Theoretical background covers information about previous research conducted in the field of pictorial materials in education. The subsequent part contains a description of the qualitative research. The research was conducted by the means of interviews with sixth-grade students. Its objectives were to establish potential differences in the perception of individual types of images. Moreover, the research strove to verify the appropriateness of the visual aspect of textbooks for the age group the textbooks are intended for. The research results indicate that teenage learners value textbooks with high numbers of photographs, hinting at considerable suitability of photographs for the age group in question. Furthermore, the findings also imply that it is beneficial to learn from a textbook which contains a variety in terms of types of images and image content.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF GRAPHS

I. INTRODUCTION

The topic of the thesis is "The Value of Different Types of Images in English Language Classes for Teenagers: Language Textbooks". The topic is concerned with the preferences of teenage English language learners regarding images in English language textbooks.

When contemplating the topic of the thesis, I desired to link English language teaching and learning to visual culture or arts, owing to my enthusiasm in connection with both these domains. The topic I eventually opted for enabled me to interconnect both mentioned fields of interest, intriguing me by the prospects of the exploration of the visual aspect of language teaching and learning materials in co-operation with the learners.

Throughout the course of many centuries, images have appeared in books. More recently, they commenced to be incorporated into textbooks, since they have been discovered to facilitate the learning process. At present, colorful images in language textbooks and textbooks in general have become a norm, forming substantial constituents of textbooks. Evidently, it is of considerable significance that the visual aspect of textbooks is appropriate for the learners the textbook is designated for, for instance adequate for their age.

The necessity to utilize language textbooks containing pictorial materials which are convenient for the learners directed me towards the idea of the exploration of learners' opinions and preferences regarding non-verbal components of English language textbooks. Therefore, the research aims at the ascertainment of students' preferences concerning images appearing in selected textbooks. Predominantly, attention is devoted to establishing potential differences in learners' perception of individual types of images. Moreover, the research strives to determine the extent to which the visual aspect of the textbooks is appropriate for the age group the textbooks are intended for.

Concerning the organization of the thesis, it comprises numerous chapters. To begin with, Theoretical Background provides the reader with an insight into the previous research exploring the field of pictorial materials in education. On that account, the chapter is grounded on quotations by a variety of experts and theoreticians. The succeeding chapter, called Methods, presents an outline of the research procedures and methods which I utilized in the process of research implementation. To follow on from that, Results and

Commentaries cover the presentation of the research outcomes accompanied by my commentaries and possible interpretations of the results. This is followed by the implications of the research in the upcoming chapter, which not only consists of advice to teachers based on the research results, but addresses also the limitations of the research and suggestions for further research. Finally, Conclusion finishes the thesis with an overview of the fundamental ideas of the entire project.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Theoretical Background presents a summary of the fundamental findings determined in past research of pictorial materials utilized in education. Most notably, the characteristics, appropriateness, roles, and the incorporation of images into English language textbooks is discussed. Simultaneously, a significant fact that images possess a considerable potential in facilitating learning in a variety of manners is mentioned. The whole chapter Theoretical Background provides readers with a possibility to gain an insight into the theoretical background of the issue.

Visuals

To begin with, the signification of particular terms should be clarified which are absolutely fundamental within this thesis, for instance visuals, pictorial materials, and comparable terms. Dictionary.com explicates visuals are "photographs, slides, films, charts, or other visual materials, especially as used for illustration or promotion" (Visual, n.d.). Comparably, Mareš (2013) provides a definition clarifying what pictorial material is. Namely, this overall term encompasses a wide range of materials – beginning with those which depict the reality with relative faithfulness (for instance photographs, sequences of a video program, realistic drawings), and ending with those providing rather a generalizing and more abstract representation of the reality, which are based on particular conventions (a simplified picture or a drawing, a map, a scheme, a diagram, a graph). Pictorial material is a material which is predominated by non-verbal elements. There are possibilities to take advantage of pictorial material, often didactically transformed, when learning (p. 131).

When discussing visuals, theoreticians utilize a multiplicity of terms to refer to the identical or nearly identical concept. Taking this into consideration, I have decided to utilize the terms visuals, visual materials, pictorial materials, images, pictures, and illustrations interchangeably throughout the whole thesis.

This thesis is concerned predominantly with those visual materials which are ordinarily incorporated into textbooks intended to facilitate learning English as a foreign language (EFL), omitting those forms of visual materials which do not commonly appear in English language textbooks. For this reason an outline of individual types of visual

materials has been suggested, loosely inspired by the classification by Průcha (1998), in which he elaborates on the structural elements incorporated in textbooks. According to him, pictorial components of textbooks encompass among others artistic illustrations, schematic drawings, models, photographs, maps, graphs, and diagrams (pp. 141-142). Pictorial materials which appear in EFL textbooks frequently occur in the following forms: photographs, drawings, and comic strips. The following sections of the thesis concentrate on providing definitions of the individual types of pictorial material, accompanied by an outline of their major functions and specifics.

Photographs

First of all, a photograph can be defined as "an image, especially a positive print, recorded by exposing a photosensitive surface to light, especially in a camera" (Photograph, n.d.). According to Berger (2009), a photograph is not a mere representation (in the sense identical to a painting being a representation), or an interpretation of the reality. Instead, photographs can be viewed as imprints of the reality, which have been redrawn from the reality utilizing distinct technology. Berger proceeds to argue that the same can be said regarding no drawing or painting, no matter how high the potential number of naturalistic details included within them might be, since paintings and drawings do not pertain to the image of the reality they depict (p. 66).

When discussing the appropriate number of details incorporated into a visual image, Arnheim (2009) claims that faithfulness as well as realism require to be utilized with circumspection. The reason being is that the visual material in question may fail to communicate the substantial features of the objects represented, therefore significantly complicating the comprehension of the image. A specific example of such failure can be observed on the unsuccessful endeavor of members of cultures unacquainted with photography to decipher their meaning. Demonstrating on this example, Arnheim explicates that despite the alleged correctness and faithfulness of photographs in depicting the real world, their ability to convey a comprehensible message cannot be taken for granted (pp. 140, 309-310).

In order to compare photographs with drawings, Doheny-Farina (1988) states that photographs are generally superior in depicting an overall view of a particular element and

can be extensively useful in providing background information (p. 240).

Drawings

A further common form of visuals encompasses drawings. Merriam-Webster defines a drawing as a picture, an image, or a similar form, which is produced by making lines on a surface, ordinarily without the use of paint. The materials utilized in order to obtain the final picture can involve a pencil, a pen, a marker, chalk, or other equipment (Drawing, n.d.).

Arnheim (1997) is convinced of the suitability of drawings for the depiction of highly abstract social and psychological concepts. He claims that drawings ordinarily depict elements found in our environment, including persons, objects, or happenings, in a manner which is more abstract than if they were recorded by means of photography. Furthermore, Arnheim adds that the decision regarding the relevant amount of abstraction (in other words the decision concerning the adequate degree of simplification as opposed to faithfulness) in illustrations necessitates educational practice accompanied by visual imagination on the part of the person responsible for the decision-making. He hints that the degree of visual complexity suitable for students, that is to say the precise form which can be apprehended by them, bears a relation to the students' mental development and acquaintance with the subject matter in question (pp. 135, 306).

Doheny-Farina (1988) mentions research in the field of effectiveness of visuals, especially one conducted by Dwyer. In a research focused on the utility of individual types of visuals in facilitating learning from text the suitability of different illustration types for distinct purposes was established. In comparison with photographs, the information learned through the assistance of line drawings seem to be more effortlessly recollected after some time. The incorporation of photographs into the text, on the other hand, frequently results in a greater clarity of immediate comprehension. The differences between distinct types of drawings – simple line drawings and shaded drawings – constituted a further area of the inquiry. During the course of the research different types of illustrations were discovered to contribute to the development of distinct mental skills. Detailed, shaded drawings, for instance, appear to improve overall knowledge regarding the subject matter. In contrast, more schematic drawings are generally more utile for presenting significant features since

they, unlike realistic drawings, present selectively the intended information, while lacking superfluous details and irrelevant information which might potentially result in the readers' confusion (pp. 240-248).

To sum up, although they bear similarities in a variety of aspects, different types of visuals might be more effective in distinct situations and for particular purposes. As the research demonstrates, amongst the advantages of the utilization of line drawings belongs the greater retention of information depicted through drawings.

Comic Strips

The last type of pictorial materials discussed in this thesis are comic strips. A comic strip can be defined as "a sequence of drawings, either in color or black and white, relating a comic incident, an adventure or mystery story, etc., often serialized, typically having dialogue printed in balloons, and usually printed as a horizontal strip in daily newspapers and in an uninterrupted block of such strips in Sunday newspapers and in comic books" (Comic strip, n.d.).

As far as the specifics of comic strips are concerned, the format frequently comprises humor embedded in an attractive combination of text and images. Haines (n.d.) mentions the potential of comics in encouraging English learners to read, thus producing considerable improvements in their vocabulary knowledge as well as in a variety of other areas of language learning. In order to support reading, Haines emphasizes the substantial role of engaging learners' imagination and interest, and asserts the convenience of the format of comics for the purpose in question. To be precise, comic strips encompass text which is conveniently divided into manageable chunks, resulting in an increased accessibility of comics for English learners. Furthermore, the text involved in comics is accompanied by visual support, the presence of which facilitates readers' comprehension (para. 2-3). What is more, owing to the incorporation of a story line into comic strips, learners are likely to be intrigued by the plot, demonstrating their eagerness concerning the continuation of the story by not ceasing to read. This also contributes to retaining words, expressions, and grammatical forms in one's memory in a more relaxed and effortless manner. Doing this, comics do not disregard spoken and even informal language, enabling students to familiarize themselves with authentic language (Csabay, n.d., pp. 92-93).

To conclude, comic strips involve a multiplicity of specific features which cause this format to be a significant asset during EFL learning, which is a characteristic shared by comic strips as well as other pictorial materials.

Value of Images in English Language Lessons

The value of images in lessons lies in the variety of ways in which visual materials can facilitate the learning process. Harmer (2007) claims that pictures and graphics have always been used by teachers to support learning. He provides a list of forms in which pictures can appear in English language lessons – flashcards (smallish cards which can be held up for students to see), wall pictures, cue cards (small cards to be used during pair- or group-work), photographs or illustrations (typically appearing in textbooks), projected slides or projected computer images, and pictures drawn on the board (p. 178).

The use of visual materials in lessons brings numerous advantages. Petty claims visual information to be more effective than those verbal in nature. Not only are visual materials easier to remember and aid conceptualization but they also attract attention and initiate interest (Petty, 2004, pp. 271-272). Čáp and Mareš (2001) mention the functions of visual material in connection to didactic text. One image can possess more of them simultaneously. At least five functions can be identified. Firstly, images can have decorational function. Images with decorational function bear primarily aesthetic value and their content is unrelated (or almost unrelated) to that of the didactic text. Secondly, there is representational function. Pictures possessing representational function, in contrast to those with decorational function, provide a partial or full depiction of the content of the text. Their significance lies in supporting the process of creating adequate pictorial concepts. Thirdly, pictures can bear organizational function, which aims at organizing existing knowledge and concepts in a convenient manner. Visual materials with organizational function are for instance pictorial manuals depicting certain procedures. The fourth function of images is interpretational function. Its goal is to facilitate understanding of the content that is being studied, especially of those concepts that are most complicated to comprehend, for instance abstract systems. The last function mentioned by Čáp and Mareš is transformational function. Pictures with this function include mnemonic components which enable the learner easier recalling of information (Carney & Levin, 2002, p. 7). The

process consists of three steps each of which is represented by one of three Rs. Firstly, the learner *recodes* acquired knowledge in an appropriate and easily remembered manner. Secondly, they *relate* the information to a well-organized context. And lastly, they systematically *retrieve* the necessary piece of information from their memory (pp. 498-501).

In addition to the functions which have been mentioned, visual material contains further roles – the functions which emphasize the relationship of the picture to the learner's psychological states and processes. Affective-motivational function of pictures strives to arouse the learner's interest in the subject matter. Furthermore, an image can induce a mood suitable for learning or make the learning process more lively. This is achieved by providing a surprising, unexpected component, or one which facilitates comprehension, which triggers pleasant feelings on the learner's part. In this way, a well-designed illustration has the potential of positively influencing the learner's interests, attitudes and learning motivation, whereas a poorly-designed one has ordinarily the opposite impact (Čáp & Mareš, 2001, pp. 501-502). Park and Lim (2005) demonstrate the significance of visual illustrations through an experiment during which illustrated texts have been proved to positively affect learners' post interest regarding the theme of the illustrated text (pp. 692-693).

An additional role is that of getting and maintaining the learner's attention. Along with that, however, comes the danger of redirecting the attention towards noticeable details within the visual material, thus complicating the process of comprehension of the picture in its entirety (Čáp & Mareš, 2001, p. 502).

In the course of time, research has been carried out, concentrating on the effectiveness of learning from text accompanied by visual materials. Peeck (1987) concludes the results of 46 studies in which learning from illustrated text has been discovered to have been more effective in 98% cases, as opposed to learning from a text without illustrations (as cited in Čáp & Mareš, 2001, p. 502). Considering all this evidence, it is certain that images have a substantial potential in facilitating learning. In sum, images are significant especially with relation to enabling understanding, supporting memory, as well as attracting attention, initiating interest and increasing motivation.

Functions of Visuals Related to Learners' Psychological Processes

Čáp and Mareš (2001) mention certain functions of visual materials which underline the connection of images to psychological states and processes of the learning individual (p. 502). These are of a great significance in relation to the topic of learners' motivation and preferences of visual materials utilized in English language textbooks. Due to their considerable importance, these functions are discussed in more detail in the following section.

To begin with, the functions in question encompass the affective-motivational function. Čáp and Mareš (2001) mention the fact that learning is not only connected with cognitive and rational aspects, but also it is a matter of emotions (p. 501). Pessoa (2009) adds that emotionally charged pictures, words, stories, etc. – in other words materials which incorporate emotionally arousing information – generally facilitate our recollection. He supports the claim by providing a description of an experiment in the course of which participants were expected to recall pictures inducing distinct levels of emotional arousal. In the experiment it was determined that participants were capable of remembering highly emotional pictures better, even in a long-term horizon (Memory and learning).

With respect to the emotional state during learning, Čáp and Mareš (2001) argue that based on experience of numerous pupils learning frequently fails to be accompanied by pleasant feelings. Therefore, an absolutely substantial role of images might include inciting the learner's interest in the subject matter, creating a mood appropriate for learning, or including an unexpected, surprising element which brings variation and brightens up the course of learning. A further significant role comprises facilitating comprehension and enabling the learner to experience contentment owing to their understanding of the topic in question. Due to the fact that learners wish to experience pleasant feelings during learning, an illustration has a potential to influence learners' interests, mindset and motivation to learn, both in the positive and negative sense depending on the quality of the illustration, which might or might not be well-designed (pp. 501-502).

Secondly, there is the attentional function. Its objective is attracting or directing attention to the material (Park & Lim, 2004, p. 688). Visual materials should operate as devices for both attracting and maintaining learners' attention. A well-designed picture which succeeds in taking psychology into account directs the student's attention towards

substantial aspects within the picture, enabling their orientation in the issue (Čáp & Mareš, 2001, p. 502). Mašek (2002) adds that formal features of an image are one of the substantial factors determining didactic usefulness of the picture. To provide a tangible example, the learner's attention can be attracted to significant details when the arrangement of essential segments within the picture is arranged symmetrically. Another possibility which could capture learners' attention is to enrich the picture by including a dramatization component, in other words an element containing an action or story. A further device which has a potential to direct the learner's attention is the utilization of color and contrast. That is to say, the manipulation with these features and their placement within the picture directs the attention towards certain details (pp. 56-57, 77).

On the other hand, Čáp and Mareš (2001) mention that noticeable components, striking colors of certain elements, or a multitude of details within an image bring with them the danger of distracting the learner's attention or complicating their comprehension of the picture as a whole (p. 502). Mašek (2002), discussing first and foremost audiovisual didactic materials, also underlines the necessity to eliminate non-essential elements, of which only an insignificant number should be included, in order to focus the learner's attention towards the most substantial aspects of the material (p. 78).

A further function visual materials can hold is the cognitive-regulational function. Visual materials support cognitive processes and can potentially serve the purpose which is parallel to the function advance organizers have when a learner is studying a verbal text. To formulate it differently, in some illustrated texts there is a picture which provides the student with assistance, enabling them to orientate more effectively within the text which is studied. Images facilitate the process of bridging the breach between the knowledge the learner has already mastered and the information that they are not yet acquainted with (Čáp & Mareš, 2001, p. 502).

As it has been indicated in this section, functions related to the psychological states and processes of learners have a substantial potential in ensuring an increase in motivation and attention of students, along with their orientation in the text which is accompanied by images. Therefore, it is certainly rewarding to make the proper use of visual materials with these functions, incorporating them into the learning process.

History of Textbooks and Visual Materials in Textbooks

Amongst fundamental pedagogical documents used on a daily basis and the most significant methodological materials utilized at schools, textbooks are not only in the very center of the focus of educational theory, but also its practice (Zormanová, 2014, p. 191). Their content and concept have been evolving throughout history. In the following section the history of textbooks and images in textbooks is recounted, with special attention devoted to language textbooks.

Mazáčová (2000) claims that textbooks pride themselves on an extensive history. As an instance of a textbook from antiquity she mentions *Institutio oratoria* (The Institutes of Oratory) by Marcus Fabius Quintilian (40-96 AD). It is a textbook concerned with the manner by which rhetoric should be taught. An extensive advancement in the field of textbook production was enabled by the invention of book printing in the 15th century (pp. 231-232). At those times textbooks did not contain images. The first books taking advantage of the incorporation of visual materials were illuminated manuscripts. Bradley (2006) defines the art of illumination as manually-created book decorations in which colors and metals are utilized. Manuscripts were illuminated in a wide variety of styles, the Golden Age of the technique being the fourteenth century. Their objective was to make books beautiful, thus increasing their appeal to the reader, which is an intention in accordance with the endeavor of textbook authors (Book I, Chapter I).

A milestone in textbook development (and the concept of language textbooks) was the attitude of Johannes Amos Comenius – a prominent and internationally-acknowledged Czech educator. In his work Comenius devoted considerable attention to the role of textbooks, and was one of the founders of the theory and the formation of modern school textbooks (Mazáčová, 2000, p. 232).

In 1658 Comenius' *Orbis sensualium pictus* (The Visible World in Pictures) was published, the novelty of which lay in the inclusion of illustrations accompanying the text – that is to say each chapter is introduced by an illustration relating to the theme in question, which is interconnected with the text through numerical references (Kvítková, 2012, p. 23). As Comenius formulates it in *The Great Didactic* (1657), "words should not be learned apart from the objects to which they refer; since the objects do not exist separately and cannot be apprehended without words, but both exist and perform their

functions together" (p. 204). The quotation refers to Comenius' conviction that the meaning of words is more easily learned from a combination of words and objects or their visual representations. Moreover, Comenius was convinced knowledge about the world is better acquired within coherent scenarios rather than from isolated objects. Therefore, the textbook *Orbis sensualium pictus* includes Latin vocabulary presented within a coherent text and an accompanying summarizing picture (Mandl & Levin, 1989, p. 5).

Průcha (2002) claims Comenius' *Orbis sensualium pictus* is considered an innovative didactic aid consisting of a combination of learning from verbal components (text) and pictorial components, which remains customary in present-day textbooks (p. 270). However, in contrast to contemporary textbooks in which images tend to fulfill the illustrative function, by doing which they catalyze the learner's interest in the subject matter, Comenius' objective was to attain enhancement in the field of visual culture, simultaneously creating a panoramic depiction of the world comprehensible to the youngest generation. He utilized the illustrative encyclopedia in order to sharpen learners' senses and to capture attention (Spousta, 2007, p. 90).

Proceeding to more recent history, as Skalková (2007) mentions, especially the second half of the 20th century brought with it a considerable growth in the textbook production. The 70s featured developing intense interest in textbook formation. Since that time functions of textbooks in the learning process have been explored and numerous empirical studies concerned with textbooks have been carried out, bringing with them a variety of issues which remain relevant at present time. Among them are inquiries regarding the psychology of didactic illustration. The attention focused on the research in the area of textbooks has been widespread throughout all developed countries since the 70s (pp. 104-106).

Discussing the current trends in the textbook appearance, Rottensteiner (2010) claims that in the course of the last two decades textbooks have been subject to striking changes. These include for instance a more widespread occurrence of visual materials in textbooks as a result of the reduction of print media prices. Simultaneously, the text phrases are becoming shorter, and increasingly enriched by the incorporation of visual materials (p. 3895). As can be observed, visual materials have gradually gained significance as an element of textbooks. Indeed, nowadays colorful illustrations and photographs in textbooks have become commonplace, regardless of whether the textbook

is designated for children or adults. As Mandl and Levin (1989) formulate it, "illustrations have become an indispensable component in teaching material" (p. 6).

As it has been demonstrated, the approach towards textbooks and their content has been evolving throughout history. As far as the incorporation of pictorial materials into textbooks is concerned, by no means has it been always certain. The form of textbooks as seen nowadays is relatively recent. Irrespective of their form, textbooks have certainly occupied a prominent position amongst didactic aids throughout the course of the last centuries (Mazáčová, 2000, p. 231).

Roles of Language Textbooks in Language Classes

Having concentrated on the history of textbooks and the development of the incorporation of visual materials into textbooks in the previous section, it is time to focus attention to the functions performed by textbooks in English language classes.

The opinions of experts regarding the significance of textbooks diverge. As Harmer (2007) formulates it, the usefulness of textbooks has been a topic of disputes among methodologists, some experts highlighting and praising the merits of textbooks and defending their use, while others condemning textbooks as inappropriately restrictive, insufficient in the field of authenticity, or emphasizing other reservations. Whereas some teachers advocate a textbook-free approach to language teaching, the vast majority of present-day language teachers throughout the world utilizes textbooks in their lessons (pp. 181-182).

Richards (n.d.) considers textbooks an essential constituent of language programs, whether they function as a supplement to the teacher's instruction or they constitute the foundation of much language input students receive. Richards states that the majority of language teaching programs currently happening throughout the world could not take place without the incorporation of commercial textbooks into their curricula, and lists numerous roles of textbooks and advantages of their use. To begin with, textbooks provide a language program with a structure in the form of a systematically planned and developed syllabus. The use of a particular textbook ensures that learners pertaining to different classes acquire similar content, consequently enabling students across classes to be tested in an identical manner. Provided that a well-developed textbook is utilized, learners along with their

teachers may benefit from the fact that the material in question has been previously carefully tried and tested, that it manifests sound learning principles, includes convenient pacing, and generally maintains quality. Similarly, high standards regarding design and production are ordinarily the case when discussing commercial textbooks, rendering them visually appealing to learners and teachers (pp. 1-2). Ur (2012) adds that children and adolescents, who are nowadays accustomed to colorful and eye-catching visual materials, might be demotivated by black and white or uninteresting design. Taking into consideration the importance of interest in the learning process, an attractive appearance of textbooks is of considerable significance (p. 201).

As far as the support of teachers is concerned, the use of textbooks is efficient, since it spares teachers' time which would otherwise be devoted to the production of their own materials. Furthermore, textbooks and teacher's manuals can potentially assist teachers with limited teaching experience at their disposal, providing them with supplementary training and guidance. Last but not least, textbooks frequently contain a variety of learning resources for learners and teachers, including workbooks, CDs, comprehensive teaching guides, etc. (Richards, n.d., pp. 1-2).

On the other hand, it is certain that numerous objections can be raised against textbooks. Potential disadvantages of textbooks encompass high prices, deficiencies in terms of involving inauthentic language, and demonstrating an idealized notion of the world while avoiding controversial topics. What is more, a textbook may fail to reflect the needs of the learners in question. The inadequacy may emerge from an incorporation of uninteresting topics (Richards, n.d., p. 2), irrelevant or culturally inappropriate content, limited range or proficiency levels, etc. Lastly, slavish and uncritical pursuit of the guidance offered by a textbook is likely to result in a reduction of teacher's role to one of a mere mediator of the textbook content, therefore having negative impact on teaching (Ur, 2012, p. 198).

Although it is evident that textbooks have certain limitations, they also possess the potential of becoming a utile tool in English teaching and learning. Even though much is dependent on the manner by which they are employed in lessons, a textbook may perform a variety of substantial functions. Possibly one the most essential roles of language textbooks is observed by Cunningsworth (1995) who claims textbooks support learning, specifically facilitating students' learning processes, and function as mediators between the

target language and the learner (as cited in Richards, n.d., p. 4).

Choice of Visual Materials

There is undoubtedly a variety of ways in which visual materials can have a positive impact on learning. In other words, it is evident that learners can benefit from visual materials which are utilized in classes. However, for the materials to be an asset during the course of the learning process, it is necessary that special attention is paid to the choice of appropriate pictures which are to be used in the lessons. In this section, the aspects which should be taken into account when selecting images are discussed.

To begin with, Ur (2012) hints that the age of learners has impact on which visual materials are appropriate in English language lessons. She considers the materials with pictures to be invaluable, and claims that this is the case especially with classes of younger learners, for whom the fact that a textbook includes colorful illustrations might be of a higher significance in comparison to older students (p. 201-202, 212).

There appears to be a relationship between visual design of images and the learners' motivation. According to Ur (2012), children and teenagers are nowadays accustomed to colorful and eye-catching material in books, television and websites. Consequently, black and white or uninteresting design is likely to demotivate them (p. 201). Maňák and Knecht claim that the key function of textbooks seems to be their ability to motivate students to learn. Therefore, it is essential that textbooks are interesting for the learners and manage to initiate curiousness on the students' part, as well as encourage interest in the subject in question (Maňák & Knecht, 2007, as cited in Zormanová, 2014, p. 193).

On a related note, Scrivener (2005), discourages teachers from using any materials with teenage classes which might be considered childish by the learners. According to him, where adult students are satisfied working with certain materials, the identical materials are often rejected by teenagers since they view them as unsuitable or patronizing (p. 330).

On that account, the choice of visual materials is undoubtedly of a great significance. Harmer (2007) mentions three qualities of pictures which should be taken into consideration when deciding on which images to use in lessons. In the first place, pictures need to be suitable for the learning purpose in question. Secondly, they should be appropriate for the particular class or classes they are being used by. This means for instance the necessity of visual materials to be age-appropriate. If they fail to be relevant in

relation to the learners' age, the students might consider them childish and lose interest in them. Similarly, another significant aspect is cultural appropriateness of the pictures. Failing this, images might be deemed offensive. Lastly and most importantly, pictures, including their necessary details, should be visible from the distance in which the learners are seated (p. 179).

The necessity of a conscientious choice of visual materials in relation to the learners (their age, etc.) has been discussed in the previous paragraphs. Another aspect to be taken into consideration is the appropriateness of the images in connection with the learning purpose. Mareš (2013) elaborates this notion by emphasizing the importance of selecting pictures in accordance with their desired educational function. Specifically, the following functions can be included: representational function, organizational function, interpretational function and transformational function (p. 150).

Lastly, for the smooth course of the learning it is essential that visual materials, along with the details, can be seen without difficulties by the learners. Maňák and Švec (2003) mention the requirements which should be kept when showing visual materials or real objects to the learners. One of the requirements is the necessity of demonstrating the object in such a manner that each of them can comfortably perceive it (p. 80). Among significant factors determining the quality of the learning belong also the formal features of the visual materials and the quality of the means of expression chosen for a didactic purpose (Mašek, 2002, p. 56).

To conclude, when selecting visual materials for classes it is essential to bear in mind not only the learning objectives and the visibility of the pictures, but also the learners themselves for whom the materials are designated. The reason for that is the risk of the learners considering the visual materials inappropriate for their needs, which is likely to have a negative impact on their motivation, as well as their interest in the subject matter. Therefore, it is certain that substantial attention must be paid to the selection of appropriate and suitable visual materials for the use in classes.

Specifics of Teenage Classes and Implications for Teaching

The work with teenage classes can be interesting and rewarding, yet it is ordinarily demanding on the teacher. The age group has certain specifics, which should be taken into consideration within the teacher's approach towards teenage learners, making use of

particular methods and approaches suitable for the age group in question. In this section attention is briefly devoted to the description of certain attributes typical for this age. The focus is placed on characteristics of teenage classes as well as implications for work with them. Since there is variance between authors defining the age group, throughout this thesis the term "teenagers" is utilized to refer to lower secondary students.

Not only do teenagers undergo considerable physical changes associated with puberty but also significant psychological developments. According to Čáp and Mareš (2001), puberty is a phase of sexual maturation and new integrating into society. During this period, teenagers are prone to increased lability, moodiness and irritability, for instance. An additional characteristic sign of this developmental stage is an urge to challenge and rebel against authority, testing boundaries, and to be extensively critical of both their surroundings and themselves. Moreover, teenagers tend to search for their place among their peers; the peer group suddenly acquires a higher significance, in contrast to their relationships to parents, on whom teenagers reduce their dependency (pp. 232-234). The substantial changes which have been mentioned are solely a minuscule sample of the broad variety of changes happening during the age.

Due to the major development occurring in teenage years, there are numerous reasons why teaching teenage classes might be demanding on the teacher. Scrivener (2005) lists some issues which potentially complicate educational situations. The difficulties include for instance the fact that teenage years are a complicated period of life during which young people are inclined to feeling insecurity in relation to themselves and often experience intense emotions, which rise and fall rapidly. Sexual or romantic feelings, for example, may have impact on the workings of techniques and activities in lessons. In addition to that, insecurity, increased awareness and uneasiness in connection with their own appearance (Čáp & Mareš, 2001, p. 233) might result in teenagers' having problems participating in fundamental activities – for instance speaking English in lessons might become an issue. The reason for the problems is teenagers feeling embarrassed or awkward when in those situations (p. 329).

A further area where difficulties frequently arise is discipline. According to Scrivener (2005), teenagers sometimes express aversion, especially towards demands and assignments that they view as imposed on them. When encountered with a requirement they disapprove of, they are inclined to state their opinions openly, voicing their

disagreement. Their willingness to formulate their viewpoints without restraint might even make an impression of rudeness. A related aspect which potentially causes difficulties is a relatively low level of motivation in classes, which might lead to diminished activity on the students' part. Scrivener claims this is particularly apparent during activities which teenagers perceive have been forced upon them. On the other hand, teenage learners can be extremely motivated and concentrated when it comes to topics related to their interests or to those bearing relevance to themselves (p. 329).

In response to problems with motivation and discipline, Scrivener (2005) emphasizes the significance of students' personal choice and contribution to lesson content. The suitability of this recommendation is not restricted exclusively to teenage classes but is also appropriate for any other age group. However, in comparison to adults, teenagers are generally less restrained when declaring their desires and tend to voice their views, objections, refusals, etc. instantly. Consequently, numerous issues that emerge as ill-discipline or rudeness might solely mirror the learners' irritation originating in their inability and powerlessness to influence the content of the lessons. At this point, it is convenient to mention Scrivener's conviction, namely that being allowed active participation in the selection of activities as well as some control over their course, makes students more likely to feel engaged, which facilitates learning (p. 329).

Apart from allowing personal choice, there are other suitable techniques for teaching teenage learners. As suggested by Scrivener (2005), it is desirable to request feedback from students on a regular basis, as well as to possess a willingness to listen and flexibility in response. Moreover, it is rewarding not only to lead the class but also to entrust the class with the possibility to be in control. Where appropriate and possible, responsibility for fundamental decisions should be shared, including decisions relating to topics, work methods, homework, tests, etc. Apart from these democratic, flexible approaches, teenagers require a secure environment and frequently respond well to clearly organized work. One of the significant teacher's roles appears to be finding a suitable balance which takes into account the diversity of the suggested approaches (pp. 329-330).

Scrivener (2005) formulates certain specific ideas which can be employed with teenage classes. Numerous of the suggested recommendations respond to the necessity of the students' personal choice and relevance for them. For instance, it is advisable to incorporate into lessons a selection of materials from current sources with high relevance

for the students, or to utilize materials brought in by the learners themselves. Similarly, it is valuable to consider project work concerning topics chosen completely by the students. Provided that external conditions and requirements enable it and the students are motivated and genuinely interested, possible larger projects can constitute, among other ideas, staging a play in English or preparing a local magazine in English (p. 330).

On the other hand, Scrivener (2005) advises against employing materials or activities which can be considered childish by teenage learners, or an excessive number of activities which put embarrassed learners in the spotlight. Instead, education brings an opportunity to experiment with a variety of activities based on group-work, as well as individual work. Furthermore, it is convenient to entrust teenage learners with responsibility – for instance in relation to discipline it is beneficial to anticipate certain problems by negotiating codes of behavior beforehand with the students. In an event of ill-discipline, it can be the students who provide guidance regarding which proceedings should be done (p. 330).

Further ideas for work with teenage classes proposed by Scrivener (2005) comprise various suggestions, for instance advising the teacher to be truthful, formulating what their opinions really are of individual activities and their value for students' progress in the field of education (or their superfluousness, on the contrary). The teacher having done that, the students should be permitted to agree whether or not they wish to work with the materials (p. 330).

To sum up, experiences of teachers indicate the fact that educating teenage students has its specifics and also the existence of certain approaches which are particularly suitable for the age group in question. Most notably, these encompass the significance of allowing learners' personal choice and encouraging active contribution to lesson content, as well as sharing the responsibility for key decisions relating to the course of lessons.

Theoretical Background Summary

Amongst the significant conclusions emerging from this chapter is the considerable potential of various types of images to contribute to the learning process. Owing to the awareness of theoreticians concerning the assets of the utilization of images in education, pictorial materials have become integrated into textbooks, nowadays constituting a

substantial component of English language textbooks. However, for them to be an asset in learning, images should possess characteristics which are suitable for the learners the textbook is designated for. Therefore, it is a necessity to devote considerable attention to the selection of appropriate images. The following chapter is concerned with a description of the methods I selected for the research, accompanied by a delineation of the research itself.

III. METHODS

This chapter is devoted to the delineation of the research methodology. In particular, attention is paid to the methods that were utilized in order to implement the research. Furthermore, the objectives of the research are explicated and detailed information concerning the procedures which were carried out is included.

Objectives

The objective of the research was to explore lower secondary students' opinions regarding pictorial materials in English language textbooks, gaining an insight into their preferences. In particular, effort was made to verify the extent to which the non-verbal components of three evaluated textbooks are appropriate for the age group they are designated for, specifically the sixth-grade students. During the research I was trying to establish which images the students perceive as appealing or interesting, and which they consider unattractive. I strove to determine whether there are any differences in the students' perception of individual types of images (for instance if they consider any type more appropriate and motivating). I also concentrated on examining which qualities make an image suitable to be utilized in textbooks.

Research Method

I opted for qualitative research because my intention was to obtain in-depth information regarding the subject matter. An essential part of the research was the endeavor to ascertain the reasons students had for their opinions. For this purpose qualitative research appeared more convenient in comparison to quantitative means.

In order to generate data I utilized the method of semi-structured interview. I had prepared a set of questions for the interviews. However, in the event of an interesting reply by one of the research participants, I was ready to divert from the prepared set of inquiries and pose an additional question with the intention of obtaining an elaboration on the response that had previously attracted my attention. In this way, the selected method enabled me to retain flexibility, since it was unnecessary to be limited by a confining set of

questions. On the contrary, the method made it possible to take into consideration the nature of the individual research participants' answers and alternate my reactions in accordance with their responses.

Questions

I designed the questions in accordance with the objectives of the research. In order to obtain more detailed information and with regard to the English language level of the research participants, the interviews were led in the Czech language. Therefore, I prepared the questions in the Czech language, translating them into English for the thesis. For the Czech version of the questions, see Appendix A. The English version of the questions was as follows:

Question #1 How old students is the textbook for? Why do you think so?
Question #2 Which pictures do you like, or which pictures are interesting in some way? Why?
Question #3 Which pictures do you not like? Why?
Question #4 Imagine that a story belongs to each of the pictures. Do you want to know what it is about? Which pictures make you interested in the story?
Question #5 Would you change anything about the pictures? What?
Question #6 Which of these textbooks would you most like to learn from? Why?

Recording Device

All the interviews were recorded with the use of a mobile phone. The recordings were done for practical reasons, since they enabled an acquisition of more detailed information originating from to the fact that I was able to repeatedly refer to the recordings also during the process of data analysis.

Textbook Selection

For the purpose of the research, I selected three English language textbooks to be

22

explored – *Project 1, Your Space 1* and *Motivate 1*. Each of the textbooks is the first book pertaining to a four-level set (with the exception of *Project*, which contains also a supplemental fifth book). All mentioned sets are designated for lower secondary learners of English, with the first book of the set intended roughly for the sixth grade, and corresponding to the A1 language level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). All textbooks have been approved by the Ministry of Education and are utilized in Czech schools. In order to enable comparison of distinct attitudes to pictorial material, my intention was to include textbooks by different publishers. Intentionally, I utilized textbooks which were published within the last decade, since they are topical. The last factor which I had to take into consideration when choosing textbooks was their availability. *Table 1* shows some basic information concerning the textbooks.

Table 1: Details about textbooks

Textbook	Publisher	Year of Publication	Predominant Types of Pictorial Materials Appearing in the Textbook
Your Space 1	Fraus	2014	Mostly drawings, some photographs, some comic strips
Project 1	Oxford University Press	2008	Mostly drawings, some photographs, some comic strips
Motivate 1	Macmillan	2013	Mostly photographs, some drawings

Picture Pages

For the purpose of the research I assembled three A3-sized pages, which I planned to show to the research participants during the interviews. Each picture page was compiled with the use of images from one of the English language textbooks which have been mentioned. For easier orientation and reference, I assigned a letter to each picture or a group of pictures. Since the intention of the research was to evaluate the appropriateness of images, I incorporated solely images, removing text from the pages. Had I not eliminated verbal components, the participants of the research would potentially evaluate the difficulty of the text, instead of concentrating on the appropriateness of the pictorial

material. Text is included only in those cases, when it is closely interconnected with pictures (for instance comic strips, presenting new vocabulary in some of the textbooks). For all the picture pages that were utilized in the research see Appendices B-D.

Picture Selection

When selecting individual images to be included, I opted for involving pictures from units dealing with the topics of free-time activities and sports. Intentionally, I chose the topics with respect to the content which should be covered in classes for lower secondary English learners. Both topics of sport and free time pertain to the themes specified by the Czech Republic Framework Education Programme for Basic Education (Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání, RVP ZV) as suitable for the language proficiency level in question (Národní ústav pro vzdělávání, 2016, p. 27).

Moreover, during the process of picture selection I made effort to preserve the overall visual aspect of the respective textbooks, involving instances of the main types of pictorial materials and the main visual styles which appear throughout the textbook. Owing to the fact that alteration in terms of size is known to make a different impression, I decided against alternating the size of individual images. The result is that the newly-created picture pages involve pictures of a size comparable to the size in which they originally appeared in the textbooks.

Research Participants

The participants of the research were sixteen students of the sixth grade of 14th Zakladni skola in Plzen. There were three boys and thirteen girls. Their age range is between eleven and twelve years old. All the research participants belong to the same English class, more specifically a class specializing in languages. In comparison to the remaining students of 14th Zakladni skola, the classes with language specialization start learning English earlier – in the first grade. Moreover, the classes in question can, in the majority of grades, benefit from a higher number of English classes per week (14. základní škola Plzeň, 2016, pp. 23-24). The factors which have been mentioned result in a higher language proficiency level of the class which participated in the research. Currently, the

class utilizes *Project 3* in their English lessons, having gone through *Project 1* and *Project 2* in the previous two years. I was teaching this particular class during my teaching practice; therefore, I had known the students before conducting the research.

Research Procedure

Before proceeding to the individual interviews, the participants were informed about the research in general along with the necessary details concerning the procedures which would be utilized in the research, including the fact that the interviews would be recorded. The participants agreed to being recorded and their parents gave their consent to the participation of their children in the research.

I conducted the research on March 7 and March 8, 2017 at 14th Zakladni skola in Plzen. Immediately before starting each interview, I encouraged the student that they ask at any time should they fail to understand a question. I started recording immediately before commencing each interview and switched the recording device off on finishing the interview.

As far as the course of each interview is concerned, I commenced by demonstrating the A3-sized picture page of the first textbook, which was being examined, explaining that all the images were taken from one English textbook. Throughout the interview, I referred to the textbook by a number I had assigned to it earlier, therefore the research participants were not told the name of the textbook. Showing the picture page, I asked the student Questions #1-5 successively about this picture page. Having finished this stage, I proceeded to demonstrating the second picture page, repeating the same set of questions with reference to the second picture page. Lastly, I went through the whole procedure with the third picture page. To conclude the interview, I showed all three picture pages simultaneously, asking Question #6. The English version of the questions has been mentioned. For the Czech version of the questions, see Appendix A. The following chapter provides results of the interviews.

IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

This part of the thesis presents the results of the research. The description of the research participants' responses to the individual interview questions is followed by my commentaries and interpretation of the obtained data.

Question #1

Question #1 was as follows: How old students is the textbook for? Why do you think so? The question aims at determining what visual styles and types of images students consider appropriate for their age group, while simultaneously establishing the reasons for the mentioned opinions. It strives to enable a verification to what extent the pictorial materials in the evaluated textbooks are appropriate for the respective age group.

To begin with, I sorted students' answers into three categories: intended for younger learners than the research participants (grades 2-5), for learners of the same age as the respondents (grade 6) and for older learners (grades 7-9). The youngest age estimated in relation to one of the textbooks was grade 2 (in relation to *Your Space 1*), while the oldest was grade 9 (in relation to *Motivate 1*).

The first evaluated textbook was *Your Space 1*. Out of the sixteen participants, nine considered *Your Space 1* to be designated for younger learners than themselves, four mentioned the textbook could be for their age group, and three considered it appropriate for older students than themselves. As far as *Project 1* is concerned, the results are influenced by the fact that the research participants have personal experience with this particular textbook, having worked with it in the past. This resulted in some students' recollection of the images, and stating that this textbook was intended for younger classes. Therefore, numerous students, ten to be specific, claimed the textbook was designated for younger learners, while five deemed it appropriate for their age, and a single student believed *Project 1* was for older students of English. Lastly, *Motivate 1* was evaluated as a textbook designated for the oldest students, where a single student guessed that the textbook was for younger learners than herself, four saw it as intended for their age group, and ten students considered it appropriate for older learners than themselves. One research participant did not answer this question since she did not know.

Overall, in comparison to the other textbooks, *Motivate 1* was considered to be for older students, while both *Project 1* and *Your Space 1* were predominantly estimated to be appropriate for younger students than the research participants. The textbook which was most frequently evaluated as intended for the sixth-grade was *Project 1*. The research participants' responses are demonstrated in *Graph 1*.

Graph 1: Question #1 How old students is the textbook for?
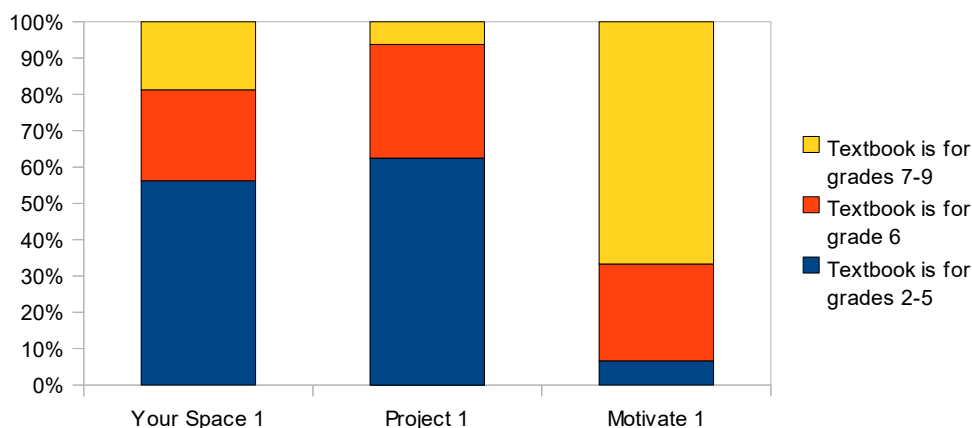
It is time to proceed to presenting respondents' reasons for their estimations regarding the age group for which the textbooks are designated. Some of the reasons which were given to support the belief that a textbook is intended for younger learners than grade 6 are the following: the incorporation of images depicting simple content which the respondents had learned earlier, or pictures in which everybody is optimistic, the occurrence of images resembling animated movies, and the incorporation of comic strips. Furthermore, the explanation why a research participant perceives a textbook being designated for younger learners was sometimes supported by mentioning a specific image. The pictures mentioned repeatedly in this relation were predominantly two pictures from *Your Space 1:* Picture E (a simplified drawing in striking colors) and Pictures G (colorful drawings depicting vocabulary).

To proceed to an older age group, the reasons which were utilized to explicate why a textbook is intended for the age group of the research participants differ radically from the ones which have been presented up to the moment. The most frequent statements to support this opinion were: the incorporation of depictions of more complicated picture

content, and older children, the incorporation of both drawings and photographs, the inclusion of photographs (rather than drawings), and pictures resembling real life.

Lastly, the explications utilized to support the opinions that a textbook was designated for older learners than the age of the research participants strikingly resemble the reasons which supported the statements that a textbook is for sixth-graders. The explanations mentioned are as follows: the incorporation of representations of more complicated picture content, and of photographs (rather than drawings), and the nearly complete absence of drawings. An image which was mentioned in relation to this age group was Picture A (a drawing of a girl) in *Your Space 1*. This image was utilized in order to argue that the textbook is for older students because of the appearance of the girl. One more set of images was repeatedly mentioned – Pictures G (drawings resembling a comic strip) in *Motivate 1*. This set of pictures, on the contrary, was by numerous students contrasted to the remaining images, and utilized to argue that it fails to fit into a textbook intended for older students.

Question #2

The question (Which pictures do you like, or which pictures are interesting in some way? Why?) is aimed towards establishing students' preferences regarding pictorial materials. By ascertaining which images the respondents perceive appealing or interesting I strive to determine which pictures are appropriate for their age group. The findings could encompass information regarding the types of images which were repeatedly mentioned as appealing, or information regarding any potential characteristics shared by those images.

To begin with, in most cases the research participants stated one or two images which they perceived as particularly appealing or interesting. Only occasionally a student stated they were uncertain as to what to respond. Initially, *Your Space 1* was evaluated. The most frequently mentioned images were Picture E (a simplified drawing in striking colors, five times), Picture B (a drawing portraying children juggling with eggs, four times), and Picture A (a photograph of a hamster, three times). Concerning the reasons which explicate the liking of Picture E, the respondents appreciated not only the colors utilized but also the fact that the depicted action was easily identifiable, that the image was different from others and that it was a drawing. Explicating the popularity of Picture B, students

mentioned the fact that the depicted action was humorous, interesting, and that they appreciated the utilized style of drawing. The preference of Picture A was repeatedly explained by the students' liking of animals.

Regarding *Project 1,* Pictures A (photographs depicting sports), Pictures D (colorful drawings presenting vocabulary), and Picture H (a part of a comic strip) seemed to attract most attention. To be precise, seven respondents appreciated Pictures A, six were impressed by Pictures D, while three liked Picture H. The reasons behind the choice of Pictures A was the liking of sport, a notion that it was beneficial to see pictures depicting sports the respondent is not familiar with, and the fact that the image was a photograph. Those who preferred Pictures D and H, on the contrary, highlighted the drawing style and the colors.

In *Motivate 1,* Pictures F (photographs portraying unconventional sports) and Pictures G (drawings resembling a comic strip) were clearly the most favored images, both considered interesting or appealing by seven students. The reasons listed in connection with Picture F were predominantly the unconventionality of the portrayed sports which aroused their attention, and the fact that the picture was a photograph. Pictures G were valued for their drawing style, explicitness, presence of humor and story in the image.

Question #3

The aim of the question (Which pictures do you not like? Why?) is gaining an insight into the opposite of the students' preferences, determining to establish which images seem inadequate for their age group. The obtained information could include ascertainment as to the types of images which the students disliked, and whether the pictures share any identical characteristics.

To start with, with reference to *Your Space 1* seven respondents answered that they liked all the images portrayed on the picture page. The remaining students listed one, two or three pictures they did not consider appealing. Picture E (a simplified drawing in striking colors) was mentioned by four students, Pictures A (a photograph of a girl), D (a photograph of a boy), and H (very simple blue and white drawings) were each mentioned by two students. The reasons explicating the deficiencies in the popularity of Picture E were alleged peculiarity of the image and the failure to appreciate its the drawing style,

along with the the opinions that the employed drawing style was suitable for a younger age group. Regarding further images which were frequently mentioned, the research participants considered Pictures H insufficiently ornamented, disliking their excessive plainness, while Pictures A and D were criticized for the lack of knowledge concerning the depicted persons and alleged strangeness or unattractiveness of the individual portrayed elements.

In connection with *Project 1,* six research participants responded that they liked all the depicted images. Amongst the students who listed one or more picture they fail to appreciate, the most frequently mentioned image was Picture F (a drawing of a man, disliked by five respondents), followed by Picture I (a photograph of a girl, disliked by three respondents). Concerning the clarifications the research participants provided, they mentioned their dislike of the employed drawing style (Picture F), the insufficient quality of the photograph (Picture I), along with their failure to understand the portrayed images, and peculiar impressions the visuals in question had on them (both Pictures F and I).

With regard to *Motivate 1,* the highest number of respondents, namely eight, stated their approval of all the depicted images, while one further student revealed his neutral attitude towards all the pictures. The most frequently discussed images were Pictures F (photographs portraying unconventional sports, disliked by four respondents), and Pictures G (drawings resembling a comic strip, disliked by two students).The arguments explicating the choices were that the research participants considered them peculiar and difficult to describe (Pictures F), or intended for a younger age group (Pictures G).

Question #4

Question #4 reads: Imagine that a story belongs to each of the pictures. Do you want to know what it is about? Which pictures make you interested in the story? By posing the question I strive to determine which pictures are motivating for students to desire to learn more. In particular, I was interested whether any type of images, or pictures possessing certain similar characteristics, appear to provoke more curiosity in students, thus rendering them appropriate for the incorporation into English language textbooks for the given age group.

Each research participant listed one or two images, that they view as motivating, in relation to each of the evaluated textbooks. Concerning *Your Space 1,* Pictures F (photographs of girls talking with each other, mentioned by nine respondents) were the most frequently listed images, followed by Picture B (a drawing portraying children juggling with eggs, mentioned eight times) and Picture E (a simplified drawing in striking colors, mentioned four times).

Proceeding to *Project 1,* Pictures A (photographs depicting sports) and J (a photograph resembling a part of a comic strip) were both mentioned by five students as the images in which the attached story would be intriguing. A slightly smaller number of respondents, four to be specific, listed Picture H (a part of a comic strip).

To follow on from that, in *Motivate 1* it is predominantly Pictures E (photographs showing children on the phone, mentioned seven times), Pictures G (drawings resembling a comic strip, mentioned six times), and Pictures F (photographs portraying unconventional sports, mentioned three times) that arouse curiosity.

Question #5

The question (Would you change anything about the pictures? What?) aims at determining the extent to which the respondents are satisfied with the visual aspect of the evaluated English language textbooks, simultaneously ascertaining any potential suggestions for improvement regarding the visual aspect of the pictorial materials, finding out the students' preferences.

To begin with, with reference to *Your Space 1,* twelve research participants mentioned they would leave the images without alteration. The remaining four respondents deemed it convenient to alter colors in Pictures I (colorful drawings presenting vocabulary), and facial expressions in Picture F (photographs of girls talking with each other), to embellish Picture H (very simple blue and white drawings), and make Picture E (a simplified drawing in striking colors) less childish.

The visual aspect of the remaining textbooks appears rather satisfactory, since fifteen respondents stated that they would leave the picture page of *Project 1* unaltered, the last student suggesting universal utilization of more striking colors in the pictures. Regarding *Motivate 1,* fourteen students stated they would not change the images in any

way. Two research participants would appreciate Pictures F (photographs portraying unconventional sports) to be replaced by different photographs, or would appreciate more colors in Pictures C (photographs presenting vocabulary), claiming the images are insufficiently attractive.

Question #6

Question #6 reads: Which of these textbooks would you most like to learn from? Why? It aims towards enabling comparison between the evaluated textbooks, and finding out the respondents' preferences along with the reasons for them. The question might assist by the verification of the appropriateness of the textbooks for the research participants' age group.

On hearing the question, some research participants mentioned one textbook they would most enjoy utilizing. Some respondents listed two textbooks they would appreciate, unable to decide upon a single most appealing textbook. The results, which are demonstrated by *Graph 2*, showed that the highest number of students preferred *Motivate 1,* since the textbook in question was mentioned by ten respondents, followed by *Project 1* which was mentioned by six students. *Your Space 1,* with mere four research participants desiring to study based on this textbook, had the least popularity amongst students.

Graph 2: Question #6 Which of these textbooks would you most like to learn from?
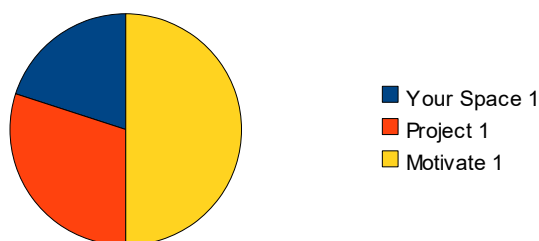
The reasons explicating the preference of *Motivate 1* were to a certain extent connected to age-related matters. To be specific, the respondents repeatedly claimed they preferred images in this textbook due to their designation for older learners, the content being more difficult, and the images being predominantly photographs, rather than drawings. Generally, photographs seem to be associated with an older age group.

Furthermore, one student expressed her gratification over learning more demanding topics, since they enabled her to achieve more significant advancements in learning.

Commentaries

The following pages include commentaries of the results which have been presented. Due to the fact that the individual questions are related to each other, I decided to present the commentaries in clusters, commenting on two or more different questions simultaneously and comparing the results of those questions. In my opinion, this attitude might reveal findings and connections which would otherwise remain unnoticed.

Commentaries to Question #1 and Question #6

To begin with, the responses to Question #1 (How old students is the textbook for? Why do you think so?) indicate that the visual aspects of *Your Space 1* and *Project 1* are appropriate for learners by a few years younger than the age group of the research participants. *Motivate 1,* on the contrary, was predominantly perceived to be appropriate for older learners. The findings of Question #1 roughly correspond with those of Question #6, since the responses to the latter showed that it was *Motivate 1* which the highest number of students would enjoy utilizing. It was followed by *Project 1,* rendering the visual aspect of the textbook also to a certain extent, although limited, appropriate for the age group.

As it has been remarked, the statements the sixth-graders utilized in order to explicate their beliefs that a textbook was for their age group strikingly resemble those they used to argue the textbooks were for older students. In contrast, the explications regarding designation for younger students were noticeably dissimilar. This might originate in a desire of this age group to be perceived as older than they are, and to distinguish themselves explicitly from younger children. As I interpret it, teenagers might feel underestimated when utilizing a textbook with a high number of images which they could consider childish, therefore unsuitable. The assumption that students of this age desire to be viewed as older appears to be supported also by the general preference of *Motivate 1* (in

Question #6), that is to say the textbook including a higher number of photographs than the other evaluated textbooks.

It can be observed from the responses to Question #1 that the sixth-graders clearly predominantly consider photographs as suitable for older students or for those of a comparable age. Comic strips and drawings, on the contrary, are generally perceived as intended for a younger age group. This perception of the individual types did certainly contribute not only to the belief that *Your Space 1* and *Project 1* are designated for younger learners, but also to the smaller popularity of these textbooks amongst the respondents (Question #6).

The aims of both questions concentrated on the verification of the appropriateness of the evaluated textbooks for the respondents' age group. As is has been mentioned, the findings hint that the visual aspect of *Motivate 1* might be more convenient than those of the other textbooks. Moreover, the answers and the explications provided by the respondents confirmed that students' age has a considerable impact on which textbooks they find visually appropriate.

Commentaries to Question #2 and Question #3

When it comes to discussing the appropriateness of different types of images for the given age group in relation to the students' preferences, it can be clearly seen that the choices and preferences vary considerably. In other words, while some students claim colorful drawings are childish and the utilized drawing styles fail to appeal to them, others consider them interesting and appealing. This is a result which does not come as a surprise.

Similar is true about photographs. Whereas some respondents missed more striking colors in photographs, deeming the colors uninteresting, which resulted in their disliking of some photographs, numerous other students generally preferred photographs to drawings. On the whole, it appears that the respondents do not condemn drawings as a general rule, since they mentioned various potential assets of the incorporation of drawings into textbooks. The fact that photographs are preferred by some, drawings by others, and a combination of both types of images is popular too, leads to a conclusion that a variety in terms of types of images is valuable.

The research has shown that students devote considerable attention to the content of images. This can be observed in some students' claims that they appreciate pictures in which something which they like is portrayed (for instance animals, sports). Moreover, learners appreciate when they can easily identify the content of images – when they understand the portrayed content and the reasons of its presence in the textbook. Some students tend to be taken aback by depictions of unconventional content or unusual elements of pictures, whereas others consider them interesting. As can be observed from the results of the research, unconventional depictions certainly tend to attract attention – both in the positive and negative sense. As I interpret it, it is rewarding that learners' attention is attracted because this may facilitate learning.

In some cases, certain images were evaluated quite positively by numerous respondents, while simultaneously, the completely identical images provoked fairly negative response amongst many other students. This concerns Pictures F (photographs portraying unconventional sports) and G (drawings resembling a comic strip) in *Motivate 1* and Picture E (a simplified drawing in striking colors) in *Your Space 1*. All three pictures are fairly noticeable, which seems to invoke strong positive or negative feelings. The fact that they are noticeable, might be due to the depicted unusual content in Pictures F, and to the utilization of striking colors and the general failure of Pictures G and E to match with the other images on the whole picture pages.

From the results it appears that the presence of humor or a story in pictorial materials is beneficial. Moreover, it is obvious that students take notice of utilized colors and the amount of details in images.

The incorporation of Questions #2 and #3 into the interviews confirmed the suitability of individual types of images for the age group in question. The responses showed that the research participants appreciate all types of images, not refusing any type entirely, rendering all of them suitable for the age group. Regarding the characteristics or images which were considered appealing, it is among others humor, stories, striking colors, and depictions of unconventional but easily recognizable content.

Commentaries to Question #4 in Connection to Question #2

It can be observed that the images which make students interested in the story tend to depict a certain action. The research has shown that comic strips appear to have a considerable potential in encouraging learners' curiosity, therefore facilitating learning by motivating students to desire to find out more information concerning the pictures. It is certain that some students realize this, since a respondent stated that comic strips tend to be intriguing and interesting, their stories enabling learners to learn something. Furthermore, it can be observed that photographs were mentioned more frequently than drawings in relation to this question. This fact hints at a possible bigger potential of photographs to motivate learners to learn about stories attached to images.

When comparing the responses of what learners consider appealing or interesting (Question #2), and which pictures make them interested in the story (Question #4), the results of the two questions roughly correspond. However, significant differences can be seen in the perception of photographs which either appear as parts of a comic strip consisting of photographs, or are simply photographs of two people communicating with each other. All pictures which can be described this way (namely Pictures F in *Your Space 1*, Picture J in *Project 1,* and Pictures E in *Motivate 1*) appeal to a minuscule number of students, while simultaneously they were claimed to make numerous respondents interested in the attached stories. A potential explanation of this might be a reason mentioned by one respondent explicating her interest in Pictures E in *Motivate 1.* She noted that the pictures in question do not reveal what the story is about, which arouses her curiousness. At the same time, these photographs did not attract the research participants' attention when responding to Question #2, possibly owing to the colors in photographs not being so conspicuous in comparison to those in drawings.

On the whole, reflecting on the aims of Question #4, the aims were fulfilled due to the fact that the responses showed that comic strips and photographs might provoke more desire to find out the story behind the images. Also, significant curiousness-arousing elements seem to include depictions of interesting activities taking place in the pictures.

Commentaries to Question #5 in Connection to Question #3 and Question #6

The responses to Question #5 have brought a smaller number of suggestions for improvement of the visual aspect of textbooks than I had been hoping and expecting. The individual responses demonstrate individual opinions of respondents, and due to their limited number, I am not entirely convinced of a possibility to draw any generalizations and conclusions from such a restricted collection of coincidental pieces of information. The limited number of students who would make some alterations regarding the images might be a result of learners' lack of inspiration or uncertainty as to which improvements they could suggest.

When compared with the responses to Question #3 (Which pictures do you not like?), the scarce findings obtained from the answers to Question #5 seem to confirm the results ascertained in the preceding questions. The findings indicate for instance that some students perceive striking colors and a sufficient amount of details as important, along with an overall non-childish appearance of images in textbooks for their age group. The findings of Question #5 hint that the highest level of satisfaction with the images is in relation to *Project 1* and *Motivate 1*. These results correspond to those ascertained in Question #6 (Which of these textbooks would you most like to learn from?).

Key Findings

The key findings include the fact that out of the evaluated textbooks the visual aspect utilized in *Motivate 1* appears to be the most appropriate for the age group in question. A significant contributing factor explicating why this is the case is the incorporation of predominantly photographs (rather than drawings and comic strips) into the textbook. Photographs generally seem to be associated with an older age group than the other two types of images. The popularity of *Motivate 1* appears to be age-related, since teenagers tend to desire to be perceived as older than they are.

However, the research has demonstrated that all the mentioned types of images have a potential to facilitate learning, which renders them appropriate for the incorporation into textbooks. For instance, comic strips and photographs appear to be considerably efficient in encouraging the motivation of the students to learn more about the story behind

the images. The research results indicated that numerous respondents value a variety in terms of image content as well as types of images. Further apparently beneficial components include the incorporation of humor, stories, unconventional content as well as striking colors and a sufficient amount of details into the images in language textbooks. The following chapter concentrates on the implications of the research.

V. IMPLICATIONS

This chapter links the research findings to the theoretical background information concerning the utilization of pictorial materials in language textbooks. It discusses pedagogical implications of the research, providing advice for teachers based on the research results. The chapter also covers limitations of the research and some suggestions regarding the manners by which this research could be successfully expanded.

Pedagogical Implications

The research indicated that the visual aspect of some of the evaluated textbooks is not entirely appropriate for the age group the textbooks were designated for. This is due to the fact that the utilized images considerably fail to correspond with the notions which sixth-graders would appreciate and consider suitable for their age group. Certain pictures were considered childish by the students, therefore unsuitable for their age group. The incorporation of such images is at variance with Scrivener's (2005) suggestion regarding the use of materials in English language lessons. When working with teenagers, he discourages teachers from the utilization of any materials which might be perceived as childish or patronizing and refused by the learners as unsuitable (p. 330).

When required to work with materials which teenagers consider childish, it might result in their loss of interest in the images (Harmer, 2007, p. 179). Considering the fact that pictures have a potential to facilitate learning, it is of considerable importance that images in textbooks correspond to what learners perceive as suitable. When selecting which English language textbooks will be utilized in their lessons, teachers or other people responsible for the selection of materials should bear these findings in mind.

Considering the types of images which are suitable for the age group, the research results demonstrated that photographs are generally preferred by teenagers over drawings and comic strips. This choice hints at a considerable, potentially higher, value of the incorporation of photographs into language textbooks for teenage learners. However, numerous assets which other types of images can bring into the learning process were also mentioned. Consequently, it is beneficial for teenage learners to study based on textbooks which include multiple types of images.

As far as image content is concerned, the research results showed that the elements which are generally considered appealing and interesting include depictions of interesting or unusual activities taking place in the pictures as well as the incorporation of humor and stories into the images. Regarding stories, Csabay (n.d.) claims that they facilitate learning by motivating students to find out the continuation of the story (p. 92), which is in accordance with the research results. Furthermore, it is certainly advantageous to include images which concern learners' interests. This is due to the fact that topics related to their interests or otherwise relevant for learners, contribute to their motivation and concentration in lessons (Scrivener, 2005, p. 329).

From the research results, supported by literature from the field of methodology, it appears that relevance for the learners and a variety in terms of both image content and types of images are some of the key aspects which facilitate learning. When it comes to choosing textbooks for English lessons, it is beneficial to act accordingly, opting for a textbook the authors of which had these findings in mind during the process of textbook compilation.

Limitations of the Research

Although the research brought some interesting findings, there are certain factors which diminish the validity of the research results. One of them is the small number of research participants. The fact that the research was conducted solely with sixteen students from one class with language specialization signifies that the extent of the obtained data is fairly limited, which makes generalizations problematic. For the research results to provide more credible conclusions, it would be ideal to involve more students from a variety of classes, not exclusively with language specialization.

I observe a further problematic point in relation to the respondents' personal experience with learning based on *Project 1* two years previous to the research. This inevitably resulted in some students' recognition of the images from this textbook, which might have had impact on their answers, most significantly concerning Question #1 (How old students is the textbook for? Why do you think so?).

Another potential distortion of respondents' replies might have originated from the presence of some text on the picture pages. Instead of basing their assessments solely on

the images, the research participants might have obtained some information about the textbooks also from the small amount of text which was left on the picture pages, for instance information concerning the difficulty of vocabulary. In theory, this might have influenced their responses to Question #1.

Lastly, it would have been convenient to extend the research in terms of the number of questions posed and the number of textbooks examined in the research. Both alterations would enable an acquisition of a bigger amount of detailed information, potentially enabling a verification of the answers, and comparisons of more textbooks.

All the mentioned reservations indicate that the results of the research are not to be overly generalized, since generalizations might consequently issue in simplifying, and potentially misleading conclusions.

Suggestions for Further Research

An obvious improvement of the research could be accomplished by a considerable increase in the number of research participants. Provided that the research involves respondents from a variety of schools and a high number of classes, both with and without language specialization, the amount of the collected data would be substantially bigger. This would result in a higher credibility of the findings, therefore enabling generalizations.

An additional potential expansion of the research includes the participation of students of different ages in the research. Apart from sixth-graders, also seventh-, eighth-, and nine-graders could be involved, each grade evaluating the visual aspect of textbooks designated for their age group, that is to say seventh-graders voicing their opinions regarding *Your Space 2, Project 2*, etc. Such research might enable an insight into the development of teenagers' notions regarding the appropriateness of images during the process of maturation.

A further alteration which springs to mind is concerned with the choice of textbooks to be incorporated into the research. The suggestion does not exclusively involve an evaluation of the visual aspect of textbooks which are designated approximately for the sixth-grade, but also an evaluation of textbooks intended for distinct age groups – for instance primary schools, high schools, and adult learners. This shift in the research concept might bring an interesting comparison of the visual aspect of textbooks for

different age groups, focusing on the question whether the visual aspect of a textbook intended for a distinct age group than grade 6 would be more popular among the sixth-graders.

Having addressed the topics of implications and limitations of the research, and suggested possibilities for further research, I proceed to the conclusions in the succeeding chapter.

VI. CONCLUSION

Both the research and the thesis in its entirety address the topic of pictorial materials appearing in English language textbooks for teenagers. In particular, attention was devoted to the exploration of teenage learners' opinions concerning images in textbooks, with the intention of establishing their preferences regarding pictorial materials. The research strove to determine how the perception of individual types of images differs. In relation to that, effort was made to verify the extent to which learners deem the visual aspect of textbooks appropriate for their age group.

The research results demonstrated that the visual aspect of some of the examined textbooks fails to be considered appropriate by the learners, indicating a smaller suitability of these textbooks for the age group in question. In contrast, images in a textbook which encompasses predominantly photographs were generally perceived more adequate by the teenage learners. The findings point to a potential bigger suitability of photographs for the incorporation into language textbooks designated for the mentioned age group. However, the research results also indicated that a variety concerning image content and types of images is especially valuable. Therefore, the inclusion of other types of images is convenient as well, since they possess a potential to facilitate the learning process. Further aspects which contribute to learning encompass the incorporation of humor and story into the pictorial materials in language textbooks.

Even though the credibility of the research is diminished by certain factors, most notably the low number of research participants, the ascertained feedback from students is of considerable importance due to the fact that it is crucial to learn from materials which are adequate and relevant for the learners. Under distinct conditions, materials might be considered childish by the teenage learners and refused on the grounds of unsuitability. To conclude, the insight into learners' perception of pictorial materials in English language textbooks is the key area where I see the value of this thesis.

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Appendix A

The Czech Version of the Questions for the Research Interviews

Otázka #1 Pro jak staré studenty je tato učebnice? Proč si to myslíš?

Otázka #2 Které obrázky se ti líbí nebo jsou něčím zajímavé? Proč?

Otázka #3 Které obrázky se ti nelíbí? Proč?

Otázka #4 Představ si, že ke každému z obrázků patří nějaký příběh. Chceš vědět, o čem je? U kterých obrázků tě příběh zajímá?

Otázka #5 Pozměnil(a) bys na obrázcích něco? Co?

Otázka #6 Ze které z těchto učebnic by ses nejvíc chtěl(a) učit? Proč?

The Page Compiled from Pictures from *Your Space 1* (the left half of the page)

The Page Compiled from Pictures from *Your Space 1* (the right half of the page)

F

Poppy's world 5A

.11 All my friends like sport – and
's a sports competition at school

5

9

10

3

I

swim under
water ☐

play the
guitar ☐

ride a
horse ☐

do karate ☐

(Hobbs & Keddle, 2014, pp. 26-63)

Appendix C

The Page Compiled from Pictures from *Project 1* (the left half of the page)

A

Most schools
sports day in t

B
7

C

D

SHELDON   SHELDO

7 play the violin

8 collect stamps

I don't like
sport.

E

She doesn't like sport
and I don't like Maths.

9 go skiing

10 go swimming

F

11 go to dance class

12 watch DVDs

50

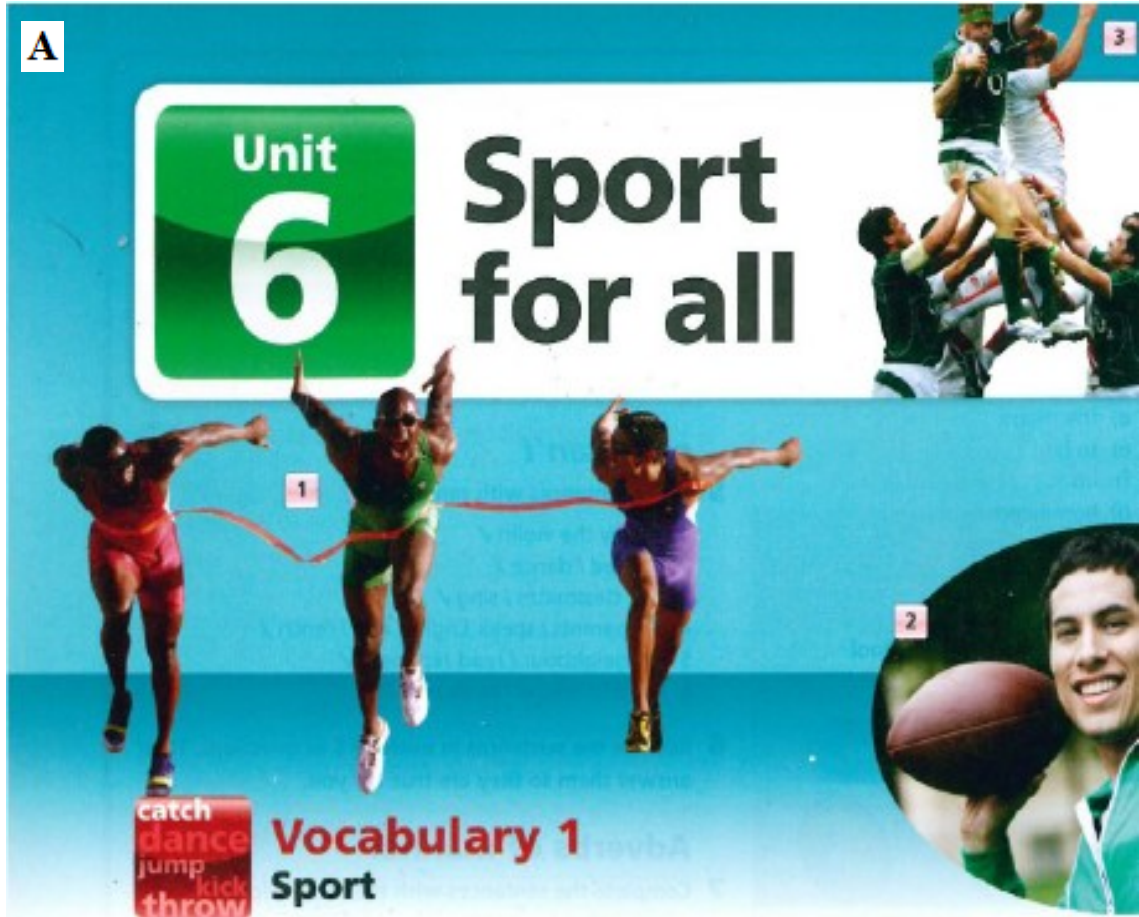**The Page Compiled from Pictures from *Project 1* (the right half of the page)**

have a
the summer.

H

Oh, where do you play? Do you go to the sports centre?

No, we don't. We go to the park.

I

K

Mark's hockey lesson

the volleyball match

Julie's violin lesson

Sam's party

the tennis game

the school concert

G a piano

a double bass

J

Do you play a musical instrument?

Yes, I do. I play the violin.

(Hutchinson, 2008, pp. 41-51)

The Page Compiled from Pictures from *Motivate 1* (the left half of the page)

The Page Compiled from Pictures from *Motivate 1* (the right half of the page)

(Heyderman & Mauchline, 2013, pp. 39-79)

SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tato práce se zabývá obrazovým materiálem v učebnicích anglického jazyka pro žáky 2. stupně ZŠ. Pozornost je věnována zejména zkoumání názorů žáků na vizuální stránku učebnic. Teoretická část obsahuje poznatky předchozích výzkumů týkajících se obrazových materiálů ve vyučování. V praktické části je popsán kvalitativní výzkum. Ten byl realizován pomocí rozhovorů se žáky šestého ročníku ZŠ. Cílem výzkumu bylo prozkoumat případné rozdíly ve vnímání jednotlivých typů obrazových materiálů. Dále bylo cílem ověřit, zda je vizuální stránka učebnic vhodná pro věkovou kategorii, které jsou učebnice určeny. Závěry výzkumu ukazují, že žáci šestého ročníku preferují učebnice s velkým množstvím fotografií, a naznačují tedy, že tento typ obrazových materiálů je pro danou věkovou kategorii velmi vhodný. Zjištění rovněž vypovídají o tom, že je užitečné učit se podle učebnice, která obsahuje pestrou škálu obrazových materiálů, a to pokud jde o typy obrázků ale také jejich náplň a témata.