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**ROZVOJ KRITICKÉHO MYŠLENÍ ZA POUŽITÍ
VIZUÁLNÍCH MATERIÁLŮ**

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Thesis

**DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
WITH VISUAL MATERIALS**

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

V Plzni dne 29. června 2012

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis deals with the topic of critical thinking development in connection with questions about pictures. The aim of the thesis research is to find out whether the participants, English language learners, are able to think critically about the picture content and respond to questions which are of different difficulty levels and require different views of the picture. The research was realized with ten participants who responded to nine questions about one picture in English language and then they answered six interview questions in the Czech language about experience with questions around pictures, which are connected with questioning to picture in common English language classes. All the answers were recorded and the results show that critical thinking and the ability to answer complex questions about pictures of the participants are limited and need to be improved and developed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of the thesis is "Developing Critical Thinking Skills with Visual Materials". Specifically, the topic covers the development of critical thinking skills in connection with pictures.

I have decided to research the topic because pictures and visuals in general are my favorite tools used in English language teaching. Also as a student, I prefer when the learning process is supported with visual materials. Another reason for my interest in pictures in connection with the ability of learner to think critically is the fact that the present state maturita exam requires, in the speaking part, tasks, which require learner's visual literacy and ability to describe pictures from different points of view. However, in my teaching practice, I found out that majority of students had problems with describing pictures beyond the obvious such as simple descriptions of things, people and activities which were obvious.

Therefore, the aim of the research is to find out whether language learners are able to deal with different types of questions associated with pictures, especially questions which include not only the obvious picture content but also more difficult and complex types of questions. The research study finds problematic questions and offers some implications for teaching to develop skills which support learner's ability to perceive pictures from different viewpoints and deal with more difficult questions to picture.

The theoretical background covers pictures in language teaching, picture reading and visual literacy. There is also covered the topic of critical thinking from the point of view of different authors and the topic of speaking and questioning, which are tightly connected with the research. The next chapter describes the whole course of the research. It includes information how the picture, questions, were participants were selected. It provides information about the participants and also describes the research tools, data gathering and the research process itself. After the methodology part the results of the research are given along with and commentaries. The implications are presented in the consequent chapter. It contains advice about the use of pictures based on the research results. The research limitations and suggestions for possible further research are also note. The thesis ends with a conclusion which briefly summarizes the key ideas of the project.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter provides the theoretical background for the research presented further. It covers the topic of pictures, the ways of showing pictures in language classes and their use in language teaching. The chapter also covers different ways of reading images from the point of view of different contexts and personal experiences. It also looks at visual literacy, the ability to understand the meaning of images and to communicate visuals, which is discussed in connection with developed skills, visual literacy and critical thinking. Critical thinking is covered from the point of view of different authors. The chapter also deals with the topic of speaking as a language skill in connection with pictures. The last topic of the theoretical background is the topic of questioning, specifically reasons for asking questions and important criteria for effective and clear questioning.

Pictures in Language Teaching

According to Harmer (2007), there are many different objects, pictures, cards and other things, which can be used presenting and manipulating language. These objects help to involve students in activities during language lessons, because they can provide students with a good starting point for language work and speaking activities (p. 177). Wright (1989) writes that pictures in language teaching class help in different ways. The things people see play a big part in human perception and getting information. Pictures help to motivate learners and complete sense of context of the language. Pictures also provide learners with a specific reference point and stimulus (p. 2).

According to Wright (1989), there are five basic points, which are discussed with pictures in language teaching. The pictures must be well prepared and usable for next time. The classroom organization must not be too difficult to set up. The used materials must be interesting, meaningful and as authentic as possible. It is also important to consider whether the picture activity will provide an opportunity to use a sufficient amount of language (p. 3).

There are many different types of images, which can be used during language lessons. According to Scrivener (2005), the jargon in English language teaching for

pictures is flashcards and they are usually something that can be shown in front of the whole class (p. 333). It can be a drawn picture or a photograph. The pictures can be taken from books, newspapers, magazines or other paper media. In class teachers can also use pictures in the form of flashcards, large wall pictures, pictures drawn on the board, projected slides or images, small cue cards or illustrations in textbooks (Harmer, 2007, p. 178).

All kinds of images can be used in class for differed types of activities and teaching styles. Drilling is one of methods of teaching English vocabulary. During drilling, pictures, mainly flashcards can be used in cue-response drilling. Apart from vocabulary drilling, flashcards can be also useful for grammar item drilling. In addition, large wall pictures, which are visible in details for the whole class, can be used during vocabulary practicing (Harmer, 2007, p. 178).

Pictures are also useful for many different types of communication training. These activities can be designed as games and students can draw pictures themselves. Some pictures, especially pictures of some action, can be also used for creative writing and support imagination and ideas of the students (Harmer, 2007, p. 178).

Generally, pictures are used in course books and media as to support a certain text or article. The picture gives the reader an extra dimension of the text and influences the whole impression of the text. It is important to realize the importance of images in study materials because they can work as a motivation and they have the power to engage students (Harmer, 2007, p. 178).

During English lessons, especially in writing or speaking tasks, students can get a picture to guess what happened before or after the situation in the picture. The picture gives each student a different impression and each student works with his experiences so results of these kinds of activities will be different. The following discussion then can engage the students in the task to follow. Therefore, pictures can be very often used as a source for discussion because there are many questions to ask and answer about pictures (Harmer, 2007, p. 179). Scrivener (2005) mentions image stories as a big support for speaking or writing tasks, for example to focus on certain grammar issue (p. 334).

The choice and use of pictures are also important aspects. The picture should be of as high quality as possible. When choosing a picture for a class, it is important make choice according to age and cultural conditions of the class not to offend the students. It is

important to make sure, that the picture is well visible to all students in details. Therefore, when the picture is not big or quality enough, it is better to make more copies for each student or for each pair of students. When preparing images for the class, it is practical to protect it against the destruction or damage. Therefore, it is better to laminate the picture or put it in some type of transparent covering (Harmer, 2007, p. 179). Scrivener (2005) mentions, that for better usage, all the pictures should be organized, for example according to topics (p. 333).

To sum it up, pictures for language teaching are called flashcards and they are used to involve students during English language class. They can be used for productive activities and other work in English class. Flashcards are used for vocabulary or grammar drilling or for communication training. Pictures work to support text and bring another dimension to the understanding of the text. Therefore, they are used to provoke discussions. The picture chosen for the English class must be visible enough for the whole class to engage all students.

Ways of Showing Pictures

There are different possibilities how to show images in classes. There are different technologies and classroom equipment which can help with the presentation of the images. The most common is a board or a flip chart. Some classes can also use the overhead projector or other computer-based presentation technologies (Harmer, 2007, p. 183).

The board is the most versatile equipment of the classroom. There is a traditional chalk-dust blackboard or a whiteboard with marker pens (Harmer, 2007, p. 183). The boards can be used in many different ways and they are the motivating point of interest in the class. The board is used as an explanation aid of grammar, game board or note-pad for different types of notes. Of course, the board can be also used as a picture frame for drawing pictures. The pictures which are drawn on the board are limited by the artistic abilities of the author, but it does not mean, that simple mood faces or stick men cannot be used as images for the class (Harmer, 2007, p. 184). In the same way a flip chart can also be used, which is portable and can be used in rooms, which do not have any board on the wall (Harmer, 2007, p. 186).

The overhead projector is used in the class to show the pictures to the whole class. The big advantage of this gadget is that not the whole picture has to be shown. One part of it can be covered so the students can talk about the unfinished comics story or the action in the other part of the picture (Harmer, 2007, p. 185). There is also a big disadvantage of this technology. There is a problem of natural light which lowers the quality and the visibility of the projected picture. Then the students can lose their attention (Harmer, 2007, p. 186).

If it is possible, the best way how to show the image to the whole class in high quality and adequate size, is to use the computer and overhead data projector, whereas anything that is on the teacher' s screen is visible to the whole class on a big screen or a white wall. The pictures can be shown separately or as a PowerPoint presentation with some text, audio or video support (Harmer, 2007, p. 187). Another technical help to the classroom is the interactive whiteboard which enables the students to work with the projected images (Harmer, 2007, p. 187).

Reading Images

For human mind, it is not automatic to think about the origin and formation of the message, which is read. However, visual messages do include number of elements, which are connected with its origin and process of formation. There are questions like who created the image, what the reason of the creation was, how it was created and how the reader is going to perceive it. These elements, which influence the way of creation and the perception of the readers, are called the immediate and the broader contexts (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 100).

The immediate context is the context which is directly related to the formation of the message. Every message or image has its own author, reader, subject and a reason why it was created. Before the image is made, it must be clear, which type of technology will be used and what genre of the picture it would be. The author focuses on some objects and decides what to emphasize. Therefore, the immediate context means that those all elements are clear just from the source itself and there is no need of any other medium to explain it (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 100).

The broader context is a point of view which includes larger area of elements than the immediate context does. The broader context is influenced by other life factors. It includes cultural attitudes, social statuses, economical circumstances and historical origins of image readers and producers. These factors influence the production of an image and also the later interpretation of it by readers (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 100).

The reader usually does not need to distinguish the immediate and the broader context to understand the message of an image. However, to understand the communication of the meaning of the image, it is necessary to take into consideration both types of context and read both contexts more carefully (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 100).

In the following paragraphs, the particular elements of the mentioned contexts such as the author, the purpose, the medium, the genre, the subject, the audience, the arrangement, the historical, social and cultural context of the visual are described (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 100).

In some cases, it is easy to define the author of the image, but usually, it is not. There are plenty of visual materials, which we can see around us every day. These are advertisements of any size and design, different images on postcards and covers of different products. In case of these materials, the author is usually unknown. However, the reader is able to identify some information about the author according to the image itself because it is usually not so important to know the exact name of the author. More important it is to know the purpose and author's point of view because it defines the way he or she works (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 101).

Another element of the image context is its purpose. It is necessary to realize, that there is usually more than one communicative purpose. The purpose depends on the context and situation. It is also important what the artist was thinking when he or she was creating the image (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 101).

The way the image is created is one of the important elements which influence the way people perceive it. The method, which was used to create the image, is called the medium. The medium is the technology or style, which is used to create the message. The different types of media can be described as stationery, photography, painting or drawing (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 103).

The genre of the image defines the image according to the medium. The genre tells what kind of image it is and how it was created. One of the genres is the genre of new photos, whereas any kind of painting is a kind of interpretation and copy of the real picture. Any film or TV performance is also a kind of interpretation of the reality. Another genre, which is very frequent and decorates human environment in the modern world, is advertisement. However, the ability to define the genre of the image is tightly connected with the ability to read and identify the message which is the image supposed to communicate (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 103).

The image always contains a subject. The subject of the image is the thing which is depicted by the image and strongly defines the way the reader perceives it. The subject carries the big part of the message, a load of emotions and other stimulus the audience perceives (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 103).

The mentioned audience is another element of the image context. Sometimes, it is possible to identify the audience, but usually it is not; and it is also not important to know the real audience. More important is the audience which was expected by the author of the image. It was already mentioned, that the author creates the image with a certain purpose. Therefore, it is important to think also about the people who were supposed to read the image. The author cannot be sure about the reaction of the audience, but he or she can work with information about the group, which is supposed to read the image message and use it to address them successfully (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 104).

Another element is the arrangement of the image or so-called composition. The composition is the organization of the image. The organization of the image mainly refers to the way the image is placed within its frame and available space. The visual composition deals with the placement of the subjects. Some items of the image are left out; some are emphasized. Some subjects are placed at the front of the picture; some items are in the background. The chosen composition definitely influences the way the audience will understand it. The author decides which subject is more important and should get the advantageous position in the frame, and which one should not (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 105).

The composition includes two basic types of the organization within the frame: the closed and open form. The closed form of the organization means that the whole image and important subjects are inside the frame and the audience can fully focus on them. The

open form of the image organization makes the audiences think of something out of the frame (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 105). The open form has many different ways. The image, or the subject of the image, can be deformed in different ways. The subject, especially the people, can be looking at something that is not visible in the image. The open form means that the image is not self-contained, which means, that there is something more about the picture and the reader should think about it (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 106). The open form is often used in different advertisements (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 107).

In some images, the historical context also influences the way the audience perceives them. All visuals are created in some time, place and historical context. The historical context can help the reader to understand the message of the image but it is not any guarantee of the only one and correct interpretation. The way the reader will understand the image depends not just on the time when the image was created, but also on the time when the reader perceives the image and what is happening in the world at the time of the image perception (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 108).

There is also cultural and social context. Those two contexts are important especially in interpretation of advertisements. Social and cultural context includes male and female stereotypes and ideals and other social and cultural stereotypes (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 109).

There is also economic context, which can help the reader fully understand the image. The economic aspect is the most visible in the matter of advertisement images. Advertisers spend money to influence and change shopping habits of people, but there are also other types of advertisements. Some advertisement images are used not for a profit or market but to inform people about some serious issues. The common topics of this kind of images are hunger, human rights, violence or incurable diseases. The aim of this type of advertisement is usually to shock people and take attention of people to make them think about the problem (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 110).

When analyzing an image, also the personal background influences the way the image is read. The personal point of view is influenced by memories, experiences and natural quick reactions of the reader. Therefore, the personal response comes before thinking about the immediate or broader context of the image. The personal response differs from a reader to a reader because the mind of every person is original and differs

according to life experiences and knowledge. When reading an image, it is important to realize, that there are given elements within the image. However, there are also many other elements outside the image, for example, the elements inside reader's mind (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 111).

To sum it up, there are many elements which influence the way the reader understands and analyzes the image. The reader perceives the immediate context in the picture and can think about the broader, wider context, which is not so clear. Therefore, the readers work with their experiences and knowledge to understand the image in the wider context and they analyze the possible author of the picture, the purpose of taking the picture and the medium carrying it. Readers also discuss the genre and possible audience of the image. However, the most important is the subject of the image itself and the arrangement of the picture. In addition, every image has its own historical, social and cultural context which defines it and influences the way it is read.

Visual Literacy

Visual literacy is the ability to understand the meaning of images as well as the ability to communicate using visuals. It is a visual communication and it is based on the process of sending and receiving picture messages. To be successful in reading images, the reader must use critical skills and criticism. To be visually literate means to be able to interpret images and produce images, which can successfully communicate the message to the audience. In other words, a visually literate person is able to use a visual language (Bamford, 2003, p. 1).

According to Thibault and Walbert (2003), "literacy" refers to the ability to "read" signs other than words, like images or gestures. The wide usage of images in our culture makes visual literacy a vital skill.

The visually literate person is able to look at an image critically and think about intention of the author of the image. The skills of the critical thinking can be applied to any type of image, films, maps and other visuals. Visually literate viewer gathers ideas contained in a picture and is able to place them into certain context and consider its validity (Thibault & Walbert, 2003).

Visual Literacy and Skills

According to Bamford (2003), visual literacy develops skills needed to interpret images. To be visually literate means to be able to visualize internally, to communicate using visuals and to be able to do an interpretation of the image.

Visual literacy also includes the ability to make judgments. The image reader must be able to think about the accuracy, value and validity of the image. To be visually literate includes the ability to work with sense of visuals, which were created by the reader himself, or also by other people. The ability to read images is necessary for successful communication with world and understanding of the wide range of meanings.

To understand the subject matter of images means to be able to think about the image and analyze it from many points of view. The image reader must be able to gain the meaning from the image and take into consideration the cultural context. The reader must be aware of style, composition and syntax of the image. A visually literate reader also perceives the aesthetic merit of the work and techniques, which were used to create the image (Bamford, 2003, p. 1).

According to Thibault and Walbert (2003), the visual literacy includes more than one skill. The image reading includes two basic levels. The first, basic level contains simple decoding of words and sentences and basic identification of the subject in a photograph or graphic. For students is important the reading comprehension to understand the sense of what was read. The understanding requires the knowledge of certain vocabulary in an area and critical thought.

The second higher-level skills are skills of visual literacy which require critical thinking. These skills are crucial for student's success in any area which covers information through visuals. The higher-level skills also help students to understand the sense of images in texts or Internet resources (Thibault & Walbert, 2003).

Importance of Visual Literacy

Pictures and visuals are becoming a predominant form of communication in different spheres of human's life. Learning, teaching and media use more and more visuals and the importance of visual literacy is increasing. It means that the visual literacy is

becoming one of the key abilities for obtaining information, getting knowledge and education (Bamford, 2003, p. 2).

Linguistics and Visual Literacy

Visual literacy also deals with the linguistic point of view. It includes the syntactic and semantic principles. The syntax means the way the blocks of images are built, structured and organized. There is a big number of elements of the syntactic structure of visuals. It is a camera placement, graphic composition and arrangement, framing, motion, depth, colors, light and shadow, perspective, size, lines, shape, contrast, symbolism, metaphor, the relationship of the visual with text, background and many other syntactic elements (Bamford, 2003, p. 3).

The semantics of the image refers to wide issues in the world, which influence the meaning of the image. According to Bamford (2003), visual semantics refers to the way images fit into the cultural process of the communication. It includes all relationships between forms and meanings, forms and structures, cultural meaning of different icons and symbols, and social aspects (Bamford, 2003, p. 4).

Visual Literacy and Critical Thinking

Visual literacy is not about a certain amount of skills, grammatical knowledge or simple learning. The literacy is about a social practice. To teach visual literacy means to make students educated in perception and in visual and linguistic vocabulary. The education in visual perception makes students to be able to think critically and solve problems. Those two abilities can be applied in many other different areas of learning and life (Bamford, 2003, p. 4).

Teaching visual literacy means to work with students and develop a set of their abilities. Teachers make students think critically in relation to visuals. Students must be able to talk, write and use vocabulary of an image, while they are supported by suitable questions, texts and contexts, which should be provided by the teacher.

To develop visual literacy and critical thinking, the teacher must choose interesting variety of images which provoke questions and discussions naturally as much

as possible. Students must get an opportunity to use their own experiences and knowledge and express their own opinions and attitudes. The teacher must provide the images in creative and innovative way to create as many opportunities for responses as possible (Bamford, 2003, p. 5).

Critical Thinking

Five Elements of Critical Thinking

It is possible to see critical thinking skills from different points of view. Let us look at the critical thinking from the point of view of the professor of the American literature of Hope College in Holland, Michigan - David Klooster. According to Klooster (2000), there are five different aspects and points of view, which are important for the definition of the term “critical thinking.”

Critical thinking is an independent type of thinking. Education usually takes place in different social groups. In those groups, members create their own opinions and values they believe in. Students have to be able to deal with different questions and problems just on their own. On the other hand, it does not mean that critical thinking has to be original, creative or unique. It is possible to agree with some opinions and consider them as one's own ones. The most important is to be aware of one's own values, opinions, and the ability to use them. This ability is called the independence of the thinking and it is one of the most important qualities of critical thinking (Klooster, 2000).

There is another important quality which must be taken into consideration in the system of critical thinking. It is the information - the unit, which is not the aim of critical thinking but it is its base. It means that students need to gain a big amount of information, facts and ideas about a certain topic before they can start thinking about it critically. An informational base is also necessary to activate student's curiosity and make them interested in the topic. When some informational base is built, students are ready to start thinking about the topic on their own. Critical thinking takes the amount of students knowledge, which he gained through their education', and transforms it to a usable and meaningful tool for creating personal attitudes. It is also possible to say that if students are able to use the knowledge to create some personal ideas or points of view, this

information is more likely to become a relatively permanent part of their knowledge (Klooster, 2000).

The third aspect of critical thinking is curiosity. To describe curiosity, it is a kind of emotion which is natural to humans and to many species of animals. It is a stimulus, which makes people or animals want to gain still new and new information. In addition, Klooster (2000) is aware of the fact that curiosity is a natural part of humans' emotions and the base of living. If there is an interesting thing, place or information, it is natural that people start to think about it and, if possible, they start to seek it. Critical thinking is based on this natural need. There are some problems or questions and critical thinking seeks to solve them. Therefore, when developing critical thinking, one of the main aims of the teacher is to make the students be curious about problems of given topic.

Critical thinking starts when the student joins the problem and starts thinking about its solutions. Therefore, teachers should find out real problems of the students and than help the students to formulate them. However, the process of collecting information must come before that.

The fourth component of critical thinking is according to Klooster (2000) the ability to find reasonable arguments. It is important to know that an argument contains three main items which do relate to each other. The first item is the main idea, the statement, which is supported by the second item, the reasons. Each reason is supported by some proofs.

People, who are able to think critically, can find solutions to certain problems and give good reasons and proofs why they have chosen the solutions. Each problem usually has many different ways of solutions; therefore, the main aim of the critical thinker at the area of the argumentation is to find a reason why this solution is the best one even when different points of views are considered. During the argumentation, the critical thinker should also be able to accept other arguments or to find a new argumentation to disprove them.

The fifth aspect of critical thinking is the connection of the thinking results with the society. Some of the thoughts that are created during critical thinking processes are communicated with people around us. It is necessary to share ideas and thoughts with others to reach the excellence level. In the other words, if the thoughts are shared, they are being improved and processed (Klooster, 2000).

To summarize the Klooster's description of critical thinking. There are five elements of critical thinking: the independence of thinking; the information as the base of critical thinking; the human curiosity, which powers it; the ability to find arguments and the connection of critical thinking with the strong influence of the society.

Critical Thinking

It was mentioned, that it is possible to see critical thinking from different points of view. Although, the Klooser's elements of critical thinking are very important, there is also another way of definition of the critical thinking by Edward Glaser (1941).

Glaser (1941) wrote that the ability to think critically involves three basic things. The first one is the ability to consider problems in a thoughtful way. The second important think is to know the methods of logical reasoning, and the third thing involves some skill in applying those methods (Glaser 1941).

According to Glaser (1941), generally, the critical thinking requires ability to recognize problems and ways of meeting them, to gather information and recognize assumptions. The critical thinking also requires comprehension and accurate and clear usage of language. The critically thinking person is also able to interpret data, work with arguments and evidence and recognize, whether there are some logical relations and then draw conclusions and generalizations. Subsequently, the conclusions and generalizations are tested in context of experiences and qualities of everyday life and the accurate judgment is done (Glaser, 1941)

To complete the matter of the critical thinking, I would also like to quote the definition of the critical thinking, which was defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking in 1987, by Michael Scriven and Richard Paul:

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness.

Speaking

Speaking is one of the productive skills (Harmer, 2007, p. 276). The English speakers must be able to speak in a variety of situations and genres and use conversational strategies (Harmer, 2007, p. 343). According to Scrivener (2005), it is very important for speakers to distinguish genres and speaking situations. A genre is a type of speech which is expected in particular place, with particular people and context, to achieve a certain result and use the right channel. For the speaker, it is important to choose the right style, manner, tone, quantity, volume, directness and formality to be successful in different speaking situations (p. 163).

There are two functions of speaking: the transactional and the interpersonal function. The transactional function is the function of speaking in situations of exchanging goods or services. The interpersonal function is for all relations and interactions between people (Harmer, 2007, p. 343).

The speaking event also has the purpose: the interactive or the non-interactive. The interactive purpose of speaking skill includes all the situations, which require contact and direct communication with other people, whereas the non-interactive purpose of speaking includes just one communicator (Harmer, 2007, p. 343).

Speaking situations are planned or unplanned. The planned situation is a prepared lecture or wedding speech. The unplanned speaking situation is any conversation, which flows spontaneously between people who met (Harmer, 2007, p. 343).

Therefore, according to Harmer (2007), speaking situations can be classified according to their purpose, participation and planning. There are also different conversational strategies, which help the speaker to have a successful face-to-face interaction. The speaker must be able to use some discourse markers to buy time, to start a turn and mark the beginning or the end of a conversation (p. 343).

The conversation requires also the ability to use phrases to open and close the conversation, shift the topic and to interrupt the busy conversational partner, if necessary. In face-to-face conversation, students must use a range of repair strategies. The repair strategies include abilities to use phrases to ask for repetition, to paraphrase and get round the problem of not knowing a word. However, students are not expected to use all

discourse markers and repair strategies at all levels, but they are expected to develop conversational skills as their English improves (Harmer, 2007, p. 344).

Scrivener (2005) mentions the issue of accuracy and fluency in speaking. For a teacher it is crucial to distinguish situation, which requires the accuracy or the fluency. Scrivener (2005) calls it a "key skill" of every teacher to be able to focus on accuracy or fluency according to the situation and task in the speaking class (p. 160).

It is important to make students speak during the English lesson. There are some factors, which influence the speaking task. To make students talk, it is important to make good atmosphere in the class, to follow the appropriate level of the speakers and choose the right task according to it. The topic of the speaking task is very important and if it is not well chosen, it can limit the speaking during the class. In addition, the organization of the speaking task itself is very important and if it is not well done, the speaking aim can be ruined (Harmer, 2007, p. 345). Teacher must be sure that the students understand exactly what they are supposed to do in the speaking activity. It includes the ability of the teacher to give clear instructions and possibly demonstrate the principle with a student in front of the class (Harmer, 2007, p. 348).

According to Harmer (2007), the student's reluctance to take part in the class and speak is the most common problem of any speaking class. Students are often shy and they do not want to express themselves in front of the other people in their class. For some students it can be a problem to give some personal details or opinions. Speaking itself, the quality of pronunciation and accuracy can also be a problem with students who are not sure about speaking correctly in all ways. Therefore, the worry about speaking badly can strongly limit student's participation in speaking activities (p. 348).

To help students to speak, it is important to give them time to prepare what they are going to say. Just a small quiet time can help to make students feel better about speaking. Sometimes, the change of the size of the group, where the student is supposed to speak, can help to eliminate the shyness of the student (Harmer, 2007, p. 348).

Teachers play many different roles in language speaking classes. Sometimes, the student can get to a dead end of language or ideas during the speaking task. The teacher can offer a student a discrete suggestion, in case it does not disrupt the speaking task. Then, the student feels comfortable in speaking and is motivated to speak next time again (Harmer, 2007, p. 347). Teacher can also play the role of a participant of the speaking

task. In this case, it is important to watch whether he or she does not dominate in the task. During the speaking activities, teacher should also act as a feedback provider. In this role, teachers must be very careful about error correction because frequent corrections can be demotivating. On the other hand, a gentle correction can be helpful (Harmer, 2007, p. 348).

Speaking and Pictures

According to Wright (1989), pictures can be used to promote speaking skills. Pictures have their role in speaking activities. They can function as a motivation and they contribute to the context in which the language is used. Wright (1989) writes that pictures can be described in three different ways: in an objective way, interpreted way and subjectively. Those three ways of talking about pictures offer different ways of used language in speaking (Wright, 1989, p. 17).

The limitation of used language in speaking activity depends on the way the speaking activity is designed. There are controlled speaking activities, where students are given certain structures of using the language. On the other hand, open speaking activities allow learners to be creative and add new ideas, start discussions, debates or provide a variety of interpretations (Wright, 1989, p. 18).

Questioning

Questioning is an activation teaching technique. Teacher questions are usually realized by interrogatives, but it is also possible to express it by the statement of the command. Therefore, question in teaching can be defined as an utterance, which should elicit a response from the learner (Ur, 1996, p. 229).

Reasons for Asking Questions

According to Ur (1996), there are various reasons why a teacher asks a question in the lesson. Questions serve to teachers to get ideas, facts or opinions from the learners. They also help to check understanding, learner's knowledge or skill. Questions also

stimulate logical, reflective and imaginative thinking and encourage learner's self-expression.

Another usage of questions is in lesson to engage learners and make them active in the learning. Via questions, weaker learners can get opportunity to participate more in classes. Asking questions directs attention to certain topic and helps to get more deeply into it. Afterwards, questions can be used to review and practice the learnt material (Ur, 1996, p. 229).

Criteria for Effective Questioning

Ur (1996) describes six basic criteria for effective questioning. To ask a good question, first, it is necessary to make a clear question, where the students will know what does the questions means and what kind of answer is requires. Secondly, it is important to focus on the learning value of the question, whether it brings responses, which will be useful in further learning, or is irrelevant (Ur, 1996, p. 230).

When asking a question, according to Ur (1996) it should be interesting, challenging and stimulating for the learners and it must be also suitable for most of the members of the class, who are supposed to answer. The teacher must think first, if the question is suitable also for weaker learners and not just for the advanced ones.

The questions should also provide extended and varied answers and the learners must be sure, that their answers will not be put down or ridiculed if they say something wrong (Ur, 1996, p. 230).

Bamford's Questions

Bamford's (2003) classification of questions is based on the subject matter of the question rather than hierarchy of thinking skills. Bamford classifies possible questions into five groups. There are questions about "issues" of the image, "information" about the image, "who" or which people are connected with the image, the "persuasion" questions and "assumptions".

The group of "issue" questions contains questions about the content of the image, the differences between the situation of the image and the perception of the situation in

the real world. The group includes also the questions about personal feelings of the reader about the image and the possible message, which should the image carry.

The "information" group includes questions about the information, which can and cannot be read from the image. These questions deal with the accuracy, reliability and reality of the image. It deals with possible manipulation and framing of the image and with the relation between an image and text (if there is any). This group also discusses the effect of the size of the image to the perception of the whole image.

The "who" part deals with the people, who are or might be connected with the image. It includes questions about the people depicted in the image, about their culture or experiences. There are also questions about the image creator and the reason why he took the picture. The "who" part also deals with questions about the audience, and the kind of audience that was the image intended for. The reader is also given a question about the point of view of the image and from whose point of view it is.

The next part is the "persuasion" part and it contains the questions about the reasons why was the certain media been chosen and why was for the certain purpose been chosen the particular image. There are also questions about the arrangement of the image and the possible aim of the certain arrangement. The questions also aim to hesitation about the information in the image, whether they are factual or not. Therefore, also the effect of omitted or hidden messages on the image understanding is discussed (Bamford, 2003, p. 6).

Finally, the last group of questions is the group of "assumptions". When reading the image, there are some facts, which are assumed. The reader can be questioned about the assumed attitudes, experiences or points of view. In the picture, one can also assume someone's voice, which is or is not heard (Bamford, 2003, p. 7) (Appendix A).

Another Question Classification

Another way of classifying questions about images is suggested by to Faigley et al. (2004). There are seven groups of questions: the questions about readers' feeling and symbolism of the image; the questions about the factual content of the image, the questions about the arrangement, author, purpose, medium, context and the genre of the image.

The first group includes questions, which activate readers' emotions and feelings about the image. It includes the question about reader's first response, about things that are for the reader important, interesting or emotionally moving. The reader is also asked about possible symbolism that he or she can feel in some elements of the image and, of course, the meaning of the symbols. This group includes all the questions about reader's subjective opinion about the image.

The second group contains questions about the factual and visible content of the image. There are clear questions about the general description of the image like what the content, the subject or subjects are. In this part, the reader can also be asked to describe similarities and differences of similar images the reader has already seen.

The group of arrangement deals with all the questions about the arrangement of the image in the visual space, about the compositions and all the effects that the layout has on the reading of the image.

The questions about the author and the purpose of the image create another group. The reader is asked to identify the author and typical features of his work. The reader can also compare the author's work to others. The matter of the author is tightly connected with the purpose of the image making, whereas there is one primary purpose and there can be other additional purposes, which can be described by the reader.

Another group of questions deals with medium, which carries the image. The questions are about the source of the image, the type of the medium, which carries it and what the reader expects from this kind of medium. Furthermore, there is also taken into consideration the audience of the image and its qualities.

The reader is also questioned about the context, which influences the reading of the image. The reader comments on the picture from historical, political, social, cultural or economic points of view.

The last question group is about the genre of images, which one it is and whether it conforms to the conventions or breaks from the expectations. There are also questions, whether the image is serious or comic and the reader explains why he thinks so (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 114,115) (Appendix B).

Making Questions Clear

Before teachers start asking questions about images, they must know, what the language level of the learners is and what level of difficulty of questions they should choose. According to Ur (1996), there are certain criteria of effective questioning, which must be kept. If the criteria are kept, the learners can understand the question properly and they know what kind of answer is expected.

Authors Faigley (2004) and Bamford (2003) talk about different types of questions and they give examples of particular questions. However, the questions by those authors can be difficult for learners, who are not trained in picture questioning. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt the questions according to abilities of students.

According to the mentioned criteria for effective questioning of Ur (1996), the questions must suit the learners. To make the questions clear and available for most of the members of the class, it is necessary to use an appropriate language level.

Theoretical Background Summary

To sum up the theoretical background of this thesis, pictures are an important tool in language teaching and it appears in the learning process in many different forms. For effective use of pictures in language teaching, it is important to prepare meaningful and interesting pictures and proper learning conditions. Pictures are used in different forms for grammar or vocabulary drilling or to provoke some kind of a communication activity. Pictures are generally found in different educational materials and support the teaching process. Therefore, their appropriate choice and way of showing is very important.

When reading images, there is an immediate and broader context influencing the perception of the readers. There are different elements of the context influencing the way pictures are perceived like the author, the purpose, the medium, the genre, the subject, the audience, the arrangement and the historical, social and cultural context of the pictures. Instead of these elements, also the complex personal point of view of every reader influences the way images are read. Visual literacy, the ability to understand the meaning of images and communicate visuals, is connected with reading images. Visual literacy is the ability to interpret images, make judgments, analyze and perceive the aesthetic aspects

of images. Visual literacy is connected with critical thinking. According to Klooster (2000), critical thinking includes the independence of thinking, the human curiosity, the social influence and the ability to find arguments as the base of critical thinking. Glaser (1941) describes critical thinking as the ability to consider problems, reason logically and apply those abilities.

To understand the research properly, it was necessary to provide theoretical background about pictures the way they can be read and understood and visual literacy in connection with critical thinking principles. The following methodology chapter describes in details a research study that examines the relationship between these issues and the students' ability to answer questions about pictures.

3. METHODOLOGY

The main aim of the research is to find out which types of questions are suitable to ask when working with pictures to encourage speaking and develop critical thinking of learners. This chapter covers all aspects of the carried out research methods. It covers the way the research was realized and also includes information about the participants of the research. It is also important to mention the research tools which were necessary for the realization of the research.

Picture Selection

In the process of choosing the picture for the speaking task, there were several aspects to consider such as the size and quality of the image, the technology of the picture presentation and the content of the picture. The size and quality of the selected image (see Appendix C) was good-enough for the presentation of the picture individually and closely. The technology of the picture presentation was chosen traditionally, printed on the paper. The picture content was chosen to motivate learners as much as possible. The topic of the picture, the situation, the arrangement, the cultural diversity and possible moving content seemed suitable for the purpose of this research.

Question Selection

The works of Faigley (2004) and Bamford (2003) offer different types of questions about images. The questions identified for the research do not cover completely those of Faigley (2004) and Bamford (2003). I selected basic questions from the category of emotions, image content and context by Faigley (2004) and the category of issues, people and persuasion by Bamford (2003). The Faigley's (2004) category of genre, medium and arrangement of the image as well as the Bamford's (2003) category of information and assumptions were not used because of the participants the lack of experience with these types of questions. In addition, the original questions were not suitable for A2 level participants. Therefore, it was necessary to adapt the questions according to the learners to follow Ur's (1996).criteria of questioning of The original

questions were simplified from the grammatical point of view to be as clear as possible. The vocabulary, which was used in the original questions, was also simplified and there were used synonyms which should be clearly understandable to A2 level learners.

Interview Questions

The participants were also briefly interviewed after the questions about the given picture. The interview included six questions in the Czech language and participants could answer in Czech as well. The aim of the Czech questions was to make a brief discussion with participants about questions they are used to from their school English lessons and about possible problems with answering questions about images, whether there is a problem what to say or how to say it.

Research Participants

There were two basic criteria, which influenced the choice of the group of participants: the age and the level of their English skills. The English language level of this group of learners of the third grade of the secondary school is A2 according to their language abilities. The questions were given to ten English learners of the third grade of - SOŠ strojnická a SOŠ prof Švejcara in Pilsen, in the Czech Republic. The age range of the participants was from the age of 17 to 20 because of different years of starting secondary school. However, all the participants were students of the same class. There were 4 female and 6 male learners. Each participant was labeled by numbers from 1 to 10 and their first name. Surnames and other personal data were not relevant for this research and they were not mentioned.

According to the grade of the class, the learners were of A2 level in English. The level was not verified by any kind of a standardized test. None of the learners was experienced in using English language abroad for more than 3 weeks. The learners had been learning English language from 7 to 10 years. The following table provides more specific information on each participant.

Participants' Information

<i>Information About Participants of The Research</i>			
Participant Number	Name	Age	Studying English language (years)
1	Aneta	19	7
2	Lenka	19	7
3	Josef	18	9
4	Michal	18	9
5	Jirka	19	9
6	Simona	18	9
7	Jan	18	9
8	Jakub	19	8
9	Radmila	20	10
10	Tomáš	17	8

Research Tools and Data Gathering

Short Form

To collect basic relevant personal data, a short form was used. The form contained information about the participants' first name, age and English language level. The form was completed by the interlocutor before the questioning part of the research.

Picture

The color printed picture was shown to the participants just before the questioning. Participants were not given any information about the picture so their answers were based just on their own ideas and associations.

Recording Device

For the actual research it was important to record all reactions and answers of the participants for further analysis. The recording was done by a cassette voice recorder. All the participants agreed to being recorded for the purpose of this thesis.

Research Process

Before asking the specific questions, I informed the participants about certain rules about the research process. The participants were told that if they did not understand the question, they should say "pardon" and the question would be repeated or paraphrased. They were also told that if they felt they had already answered the questions completely, they should say "OK" and they would be asked another question. The instructions were given in the Czech language.

When the rules were set, the picture was shown to the participant and then the participant was given a set of questions in English, he or she was supposed to answer them in English too. After the set of questions in English, there was a set of questions in Czech. The participants were told to answer in the Czech language. All the questions were open-ended. The whole event was recorded. The recording device was switched on just before the start and then switched off immediately after the questioning. The following chapter presents the results of the research.

4. RESULTS

This chapter provides the results of the research. The research findings consist of participants' answers to the research questions. All the questions were open; therefore, the answers are summarized. . Here I provide the picture used during the research to make it easier for the reader to follow the results.



(Sleeping family, Kolkata, March 26, 2007,
http://static.flickr.com/2086/2262624867_982305f3bf.jpg)

The first question asked was: "What is your first reaction to the picture?". All participants understood the question. Three participants answered this question by simply describing the picture. This description included mainly general description of things and people present in the picture - people, man, woman, child, dog, cat; and the basic characteristics- poor, homeless, dirty. Three participants answered by mentioning the terrible social situation of the people in the picture. They mentioned poorness of the people, poorness of the country, lack of money, missing home and life in the street. Three other participants answered by expressing their feelings about the situation shown in the picture. They used adjectives: surprised, unhappy, scared, and shocked. The expressed feelings were supplemented by reasons, which were the poorness and life in the street. One participant did not have any idea of what to answer so he said only "I do not know".

The second question was: "What is in the picture?". All the participants understood the question. All the participants answered by giving a general description of

the people and things in the picture. Half of the participants talked about males and females in the picture; half of the participants mentioned just "people" or "homeless". Three participants described the people as a family or a mother, a father and babies. One participant described the people as "gypsies". Six participants mentioned also the action in the picture "sleeping" or "living in the street". One participant expressed her own emotions about the people in the picture saying she was sorry for them. One participant discussed the street life and destitution in connection with unemployment and the lack of money. Half of the participants mentioned the animal walking in front of the camera as a cat or a dog. One participant suggested the dog was looking for some food.

The third question was: "What do you find interesting or important about the picture?". All the participants understood the question. Three participants claimed that the topic of children living in such conditions with their parents, sleeping just on the ground, having no bed etc. was interesting. One participant stated that it was interesting that people had children in this social situation. One participant thought that it was important to see poor people in India, sleeping on the street. One participant said that it was interesting that the people lived together this way and they still loved each other. Two participants considered the animal in front of the camera, which was not wholly captured an interesting feature. Two participants answered that they did not find anything important or interesting about the picture at all.

The fourth question was: "What topic does the picture present?". All participants understood the question. Four participants answered that the picture covered the topic of poor people in poor countries of the world. Three participants answered that the topic was the homelessness and life of homeless people. One participant stated the topic "the poor people". One participant mentioned that the picture portrayed the homelessness of the minority of gypsies. One participant stated that it addressed the topic "social situation". One participant was not able to answer the question about the topic of the picture and therefore he answered that he did not know.

The fifth question was: "Can you tell me something about the people in the picture?". All the participants understood the question. Three participants talked about the bad situation of the people in the picture, which is connected with the lack of job and money. Three other participants discussed that the people in the picture did not have any property except for clothes and blankets. Two participants described that the people in the

picture were in a bad situation, they had stress and problems and lived on the street but they felt it as a normal way of life. Those two participants discussed that those people in the picture had a lot of time, they could do whatever they want to and they were happy. One participant answered that the people in the picture were poor gypsies of the age about 20 or 30 years. One participant answered this question by describing the appearance of the people – their color of the hair and clothes.

The sixth question was "Can you tell me something about the social and economic context of the picture?". All the participants understood the question. Two participants answered that the people in the picture were very poor. Two other participants mentioned the lack of money and the poorness which was connected with the society of the country which was poor and so the poor people were not uncommon there and they were used to it. One participant mentioned the bad economic situation in connection with the lack of furniture and food. One participant answered that the bad economic and social situation was caused by unemployment and the people were getting social help from the state. One participant answered that those people had low social status because they did not have work and money. One participant discussed that the people were of a low social status because they had been discriminated. Two participants were not able to come with any idea so they answered that they did not know.

The seventh question was: "Who made the picture and why?". All the participants understood the question. Three participants answered that the picture was made by a magazine/newspaper photographer who wanted to point out poor people and life on the streets. Two participants discussed that the authors of the picture were people who wanted to point out the situation and help. One participant answered that the picture was made by a visitor because it is an interesting scene. One participant responded that the people in the picture made the picture themselves because they wanted to point out their misery. One participant labeled the picture as a photography taken by a tourist. Two participants were not able to answer the question so they said they did not know.

The eighth question was: "Who is the picture for?". All the participants understood the question. Three participants answered that the picture was made for rich people and families to make them know how poor people live. Two participants responded that the picture was taken for all people around the world to know what the street life is like. Two participants answered that the picture was made for common people who can help the

people in this bad social situation by providing some money, food or clothes. One participant answered that the picture was created for a magazine or newspapers. One participant responded that the picture was made for people. One participant did not know what to say so his respond was "I do not know."

The last question about the picture was: "Is it a photo of a real situation?". All the participants understood the question. All ten participants responded that it is a photo of a real situation. Seven participants said that it was a photo of a real situation because it was a situation which really happens to people in some places in the world, where the social and economic situation is not very good and people with no money, work and home are common. One of the participants even mentioned concrete places like Asia, India and Mongolia. One participant explained that the photo was real because it just seemed natural. One participant answered that it was a picture of a real situation because the economic situation today is very bad and it is hard to find work. One participant responded that the picture was real because he saw similar pictures in some magazines and newspapers.

Czech Interview Results

The interview questions were given in the Czech language to find out additional information relevant to the research. In this part, the Czech questions are translated to English language and the results are described in English too. For original Czech questions, see Appendix E.

The first question of the interview was: "Are you used to questions about picture from your English lessons?". All the participants answered that they are used to questioning in connection with pictures in their English language classes.

The second interview question was: "What is the difference between your experience with pictures and questions from English language classes and the picture and questions in our research?". Five participants answered that there is no difference between their experience with pictures and questions in English language classes and the picture and questions in the research. Four participants mentioned that the picture in the research is more realistic than the pictures they had experiences with from the English classes. One

participant said that the picture shows a much more difficult situation than pictures she is used to from English classes.

The third interview question was: "How do the questions differ from question to picture you are used to from language lessons?". Seven participants answered that they did not feel any difference between the question they are used to from English language classes and the questions from the research. One participant felt the difference in the difficulty of the questions and found the research questions more difficult than the questions of English language classes. Two participants answered that they found it difficult to answer questions about the author and the audience of the photography.

The fourth interview question was: "Which types of questions do you usually get to a picture in English language classes?". All participants were used to the question: "What is in the picture?". Five participants were used to question: "Who is in the picture?". Three participants were used to questions encouraging the description of places, activities and the topic of the picture. Two participants were used to questions about clothes of the people who are present in the picture. Two participants were used to questions which are aimed at interesting things about the picture and reasons creating the picture.

The fifth interview question was: "What was a bigger problem for you - what to say or how to say it?". Seven participants said that they had problem what to say. Three participants had problem how to say what they wanted to say.

The last interview question was: "Was there something you did not say because you did not know how?". Nine participants answered that they expressed all ideas they wanted to. One participant said that he had problems with vocabulary to describe the picture.

Commentaries

The question about the first reaction to the picture expected, that the participants express their feelings, emotions or some previous experience. However, three participants started automatically with the description of the picture, which does not correspond with the aim of the question. Other three participants mentioned poorness of the people in a very simple way - mentioning only that the people in the picture are poor. One participant

was not even able to respond to this question. It was obvious that they are not used to questions like this in connection with pictures.

There were only three participants who used some adjectives to show expected reaction to the picture like "surprised, unhappy, scared, shocked". Those participants even provided reasons for their feelings about the picture. Therefore, in this question, those three participants showed the ability to think critically about the image and followed Glaser's (1941) definition of critical thinking as the ability to consider a problem and respond logically.

To sum it up, it was obvious that most of the participants were not used to this type of the question which requires a certain level of critical thinking skills and students personal response and reaction are awaited. Some of the participants avoided answering the question by simple descriptions of the picture or the people in the picture. It can be concluded that participants are obviously used to describing pictures as a system of physically organized things or as a situation of people in some action. This reality might explain why most of the participants automatically started with the picture description instead of dealing with the question itself.

The participants did not have any problem with answering the second question: "What is in the picture?". There was no problem with the description of the people and things in the picture. It is obvious that participants are used to this type of questions in connection with pictures. There was no hesitation because the participants were supposed just to name things and actions which were visible. Half of the participants mentioned the animal but there was only one participant suggesting what the animal was probably doing. This could be defined as one of Klooster's (2000) very important elements of critical thinking - the human curiosity.

In two cases of the answers the participants mentioned things which were not so obvious and the participants showed their critical ability, according to Klooster (2000), to find arguments about the social status of the people. They discussed the problem of the social status of the people in connection with unemployment and the lack of money and the possibility that the people were gypsies. This idea development was not very extensive, but it was present and it would be possible to work with that further.

The third question was to find out if the picture contains something important or interesting for the participants. Eight participants really found something interesting or

important about the picture. Three participants discussed a very interesting topic in relation to the children in the picture. The idea of children living on streets and sleeping on the ground is interesting for Czech participants because it is not possible to raise children in such conditions. One participant mentioned, as an interesting thing, that people were having children in bad social situations. It seems, that the problem of the social environment is a topic, which is discussed very often and the participants were aware of the fact that growing children on the street is not possible. Of course, as I expected, the picture of people who live in worse conditions than people of the Czech Republic, provoked emotions and curiosity, which Klooster (2000) mentioned as an important element of critical thinking. One participant pointed out that poor people in India are so poor that they have to sleep on the street. It was the only one participant taking into consideration the possible place of the photo even though the interlocutor did not ask. To start a discussion about differences across societies, it would be appropriate to let all the participants know where the picture was taken. However, this participant demonstrated his ability to apply information he has, which is important, because, according to Klooster (2000), information is a basic unit of critical thinking. Another interesting answer was that it was interesting that people lived together this way and they still loved each other. This idea would be great to discuss and make the participants think about the connection of love and money. Again, this interesting answer is a result of the emotional content of the chosen picture. Two participants considered the animal which was not captured completely interesting. The incompleteness of the picture is a great way to develop critical thinking through Klooster's (2000) human curiosity. Two participants did not find anything important or interesting about the picture at all. This fact probably shows that the picture with its content of poor people does not have to be interesting for somebody. On the other hand, the important thing of the picture is not a problem of interestingness and it might show that the participant just did not know how to deal with the picture and its content.

The fourth question discussed the possible topic of the picture. The participants mentioned the topic of poor or homeless people as the most common ones. The poorness and homelessness were quite obvious about the picture so it did not require a lot of thinking. One participant mentioned that the homelessness is connected with the minority of gypsies, which seems to be influenced by social problems of minorities in the Czech

Republic, which are being discussed very often. Once the topic "social situation" was mentioned. In this case the question why the term "social situation" is connected to the bad situation and whether there could be also the picture with the same topic showing the better living conditions could be asked. However, the ability of the participants to think about the nationality and social conditions show that there is an ability to think critically but it needs some more effort to be developed more. It is quite good, that there was one participant who was not able to state the topic of the picture. It seems he had never been asked to identify a topic of a picture.

The fifth question required the participants to say something about the people in the picture. This question seems to be appropriate for learners who do not have many experiences with picture description, because the learners can start with simple description, as one participant did and then move to more complex points of view. Three participants discussed the problem of the people in connection with unemployment. These participants seemed to be able to find suitable arguments, which are one of the elements of critical thinking according to Klooster (2000). Answers to this questions brought interesting results, because four participants discussed, that even though the people did not live in very good conditions, they felt it as a normal way of life and they even could enjoy the free time and were happy. It seems like the participants are able to think critically in some cases and consider the situation from a very opposite viewpoint than it seems at the beginning. .

The participants were supposed to discuss the social and economic context of the picture. This question seems to be a difficult one and is probably not appropriate without any previous preparation, because there were two participants who were not able to respond at all and the rest of the participants responded with hesitations. However, the participants were able to respond by stating the basic fact about poverty and the lack of money in connection with unemployment, the poor country and society in general. It seems that most of the participants would be able to discuss it more, but they would definitely need some support as vocabulary, brainstorming or explanation what the terms of social and economic context refer to. To complete the results commentary, one participant discussed that the reason of the people being of a low social status is discrimination. Again, this topic is possibly discussed very often; therefore, the

participant discussed these contexts from the point of view of minorities. It is positive because it shows the ability to see the problem from different viewpoints.

The seventh question was about the person who made the picture and the reason why he made it. It can be also considered a difficult question because two participants did not know how to answer and other participants were answering with hesitations. Even though the participants understood the question, it was difficult for them to make up the answer because the author of the picture was not present in the picture and the response was fully based on the guess of the picture readers. The strong hesitations showed that the participants were not used to talking about things, which are not visible in the picture directly. However, three participants guessed it was a media photographer, who wanted to point out the misery and life on the streets. Two participants labeled the purpose of the picture as a way of help very poor people, because when people see the scenes of real life, they can decide to help. One participant responded that it was a tourist taking photo because it was interesting for him. All the responses were finally quite creative and the participants found a way how to respond. However, the answers were in very simple sentences and the authors of pictures should be discussed in common English language classes more.

The eighth question was about the audience of the picture. Three participants mentioned that it was for rich people and families which had connection with previous question where the picture should serve as a way how to show the misery to people who have better lives and could help. Two participants mentioned that instead of money the help can be provided by some food or clothes. It can be considered a participant's ability to deal with problems. Two participants mentioned that the pictures are simply for people who read some magazines or newspapers. This answer was very simple and critically thinking participants should be able to talk about the audience of the picture more. However, the participants considered the questions a difficult one so the ability to respond to it fully requires some training and support.

The last question was about the reality of the photo. All the participants agreed that it is a photo of a real situation. This was mentioned also in the Czech interview in connection with the fact that the participants are not used to realistic pictures from their materials. They were also supposed to give some reasons to support their answer. Most of the participants agreed on the fact that such situations really happen to people in the world

and they also adds problems with the money and employment. These answers were sufficient and all participants but one did not have any problems with it. It seems like the participants were going through different viewpoints during the research and the final question gave them opportunity to sum it up in a certain way. It shows that the participants were able to adapt to the questioning style and realize more facts about the picture when guided properly. Therefore, advanced questioning should be included in English language classes to develop critical thinking and visual literacy of the learners.

Czech Interview Commentary

The initial question of the Czech interview showed that all the participants were used to questioning in connection with pictures in their English language classes. It showed that pictures are a naturally part of English language classes and participants are used to speaking tasks in connection with pictures. This result was expectable because the participants work in their English language classes with textbooks which do contain visual materials and tasks connected with them.

The second interview question discussed the difference between participants' experiences with picture questioning and the research. Half of the participants answered that they cannot see any difference between the picture type and questioning during English language classes and the research. However, the following commentaries that there are some differences. It seems that those five participants did not realize the differences immediately. Four participants mentioned the difference in the picture type, which was described as a more realistic one. This fact can signify that the pictures which are usually used during English language classes are not perceived as real-life pictures but as pictures which were made for a particular reason but they do not show the situation as it is in reality. It is possible that learners perceive this artificiality of the images in learning materials, which might be demotivating and as a consequence, they may not feel any need to think about the pictures in wider contexts. One participant described the picture as a difficult one. Of course, it could be discussed whether the picture, which was chosen for the research, is not too difficult and emotionally and contextually complex for learners who are not trained in discussing complex pictures.

The third interview question was focused on the differences between the questions the participants are used to from English language classes and the questions of the research. Most of the participants answered that they did not really feel any difference. Again, the following commentary shows that the questions, the participants are used to from English language classes, are much simpler and more limited from the point of view of wider contexts and emotions. It seems that the participants do not perceive the differences in questions which could have been expected when we take into consideration that the participants are not experienced in this type of questioning. However, there was one participant who felt that the research questions were generally more difficult. Two participants determined questions about the author and the audience of the photography as the most difficult ones, which shows, that the questions about the person taking the photo can be considered as a problematic type of questions and they should be used when the learners gain some experiences.

The fourth interview question aimed at discovering particular concrete questions and types of questions which are usually used in English language classes. All participants mentioned the question "What is in the picture?", which was answered in the research study without any problems. It signifies that if there are some types of questions, which are being trained and practiced, participants do not have any problems with the content of the answer. The question about people who are present in the picture, place of the picture and activities taking place in the picture is the same case. Those are all obvious contents of the pictures. All are clearly visible and answering those questions does not make the learners think critically or at least think about the picture. Only two participants mentioned questions about interesting things and reasons of picture creation. These questions can be considered as questions which are suitable for the development of critical thinking and visual literacy training. These results confirmed my expectation that the range of the questions used in connection with pictures in English language classes is limited to questions about visible content of the pictures. However, if I take into consideration the fact, that the participants are from the same class, it is possible, that in some cases questions that are more complex were used but it was so rare that the participants just did not realize it at the moment of the research interview.

The fifth interview question found out that most of the participants had a problem with what to say and just three participants admitted problems with how to say what they

wanted to say. Again, it confirms my expectation that critical thinking and visual literacy of the participants were not developed through the usage of visual materials, concretely pictures. The learners are used to use the language, but if there is some context or content of the picture which requires thinking about the picture and visual literacy, they start thinking about what to say and finally, the result is very short, brief and uncertain.

The last question of the Czech interview found out that all the participants but one expressed all ideas they wanted to. This is a very important fact of the whole research. It means, that all the "I do not know" answers really meant that the participants had no idea how to respond. It also shows, that the answers, which were often very limited, short and said with hesitations were really the only answers the participants could provide. Of course, not all the answers of all the participants were insufficient from the point of view of critical thinking and visual literacy, but the weaker, short questions created the majority.

To sum up, the results showed that the participants' critical thinking is not developed sufficiently. On the other hand, the participants were able to respond somehow even though the responses were not very extensive and were usually given with hesitations. It is visible, that the participants would be able to make some progress if they would be lead systematically. In participant's minds are some basic ideas which could be developed successfully if effective tools were used. The following implications for teaching show possible ways how to work on learner's ability to respond questions, on critical thinking development and how to work with pictures in general.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The chapter of implications covers possible advice to teachers based on the research results. The advice and pedagogical methods are based on the literature of general methodology and literature dealing with the usage of pictures in the process of language learning. The chapter covers some limitations of the research and suggestions for possible further research.

Implications for Teaching

This short research showed that most of the participating learners of English language are not used to respond to questions which require a more complex view to the image. There are many aspects of pictures which can be taken into consideration and discussed when using pictures in English language class.

It is impossible to make learners deal with all difficult types of questions presented for example by Bamford (2003) or Faigley (2004) at once. It is necessary to build these abilities systematically. When the skill should be learned, the three-step principle of skill learning described by Ur (1996) should be taken into consideration. Ur writes that the skill must be verbalized, described and demonstrated by the teacher and perceived by the learner first. The second step is the automatization during which the learners are monitored while practicing. Finally, as the result, the learners are able to use the skill on their own, becoming more proficient and creative (Ur, 1996, p. 20). The last mentioned step, the result of the teaching activity, is the most important point and the teaching methods and organization should follow it. Ur (1996) suggests some ways of presenting new meanings like giving detailed descriptions, examples, illustrations, demonstrations, contexts, similar and very opposite meanings and idea associations (Ur, 1996, p. 63). Those ways help the learner to get through the mentioned process of automatization and get to the autonomy stage.

Pictures should not be discussed only as pictures of "things" "people" and "activities". Picture can be discussed more deeply to develop learners critical thinking. They should train expressing their own opinions, using information they already have and seeking new one they are interested in. Learners should be able to provide support to their

arguments and communicate it to the society. These are all skills which need to be trained and if they are trained, learners know what to answer and the "I do not know" phrase does not appear very often.

To develop learner's ability to see the picture from more points of view, Wright (1989) provides five different viewpoints of the picture which could be used when building it the skill. He shows the picture as an illustration of different sentence structures; vocabulary source; the source of descriptions, expressions and emotions; description of situations; and source of listening, reading, writing or speaking development. Wright mentions a great potential of pictures and using them in those ways can help the learners to start developing the ability to see images from various viewpoints (Wright, 1989, p. 5). Wright also describes "bringing the outside world into the classroom" by working with simple images and getting to more complex ones (Wright, 1989, p. 139).

To support the work with more difficult images, Goldstein (2008) recommends to give learners basic terminology to describe pictures or some aspects of the pictures (Goldstein, 2008, p. 69). For example, Goldstein's (2008) "Questions to a Portrait" where he works with questions which could be asked the portrait of a person or people is a very interesting procedure of developing speaking skills around pictures. The questions are about the age, place, thoughts, emotions, present and future activities and reasoning of things visible in the picture (Goldstein, 2008, p. 125). Learners are supposed to answer the questions as if they were the person in the picture and so they can better start thinking about the wider context of the picture. I would strongly recommend such a type of supportive questions.

When mentioning questioning, it would be definitely useful to follow Ur's (1996) criteria for effective questioning where the questions must be clear so the learners immediately know what kind of answer is required. Questions must stimulate thinking in a more complex way (as I have already mention - to get out of the borders of visible items in the picture) and must be motivating and interesting for the respondents. The learners must be able to answer the question; therefore, the teacher should take into the consideration the knowledge and language and vocabulary level of the learners when choosing the topic of the picture and picture itself. Ur also mentions teacher's reaction as

an important aspect of effective questioning, so the learners must be sure, that there will be their responses will be recognized (Ur, 1996, p. 230).

Limitations of the Research

The research cannot be generalized too much because there are some weaknesses and problems which limit the value of the research results. One of the weaknesses of the research was the low number of participants. Only ten students of one class were chosen to participate on this research. It is clear that more participants would bring more results which could be generalized. There was also a weakness regarding the language level of the participants. It was obvious that the participants were of different levels of English skills. Therefore, the choice of the participants of similar research should have been done more carefully. The problem is, that even though the participants are chosen from the same class, they are usually not at the same English language level. It is caused by different language experiences, private studies and other factors of previous language studies. Another weakness of the research was the low number of questions given to the participants. For the complexity of the research it would be better to use all the questions which are offered in literature.

It would also be better to choose more than one picture to make the research more complex. more pictures covering various topics would be more appropriate. In this research, it is possible that the type of the picture could have limited some participants from the point of view of needed vocabulary or from the ethical or emotional point of view. Furthermore, the interview in the Czech language could have been longer and more aspects should have been discussed.

Generally, to make the research more complex, it would be better to do the whole procedure more than once with different participants, but, of course, of the same language level.

Suggestions for Further Research

There are many ways how the same study might productively be expanded and improved. The most important expansion would require more participants. When

choosing participants for the following research expansion, it would be necessary to choose participants of the same language level. To add another interesting result, the same number of male and female participants could be chosen.

The expansion would be appropriate also in research questions. Literature on the topic offers more types and suggestions of questions than it was used in this research. It would be appropriate to use all types of questions by Bamford (2003), Faigley (2004) and alternatively by other authors dealing with questioning about pictures to get much more complex results.

The whole procedure of the research could bring some more additional results and information if it was done more than once. For example, the research could be realized first in the first year of the secondary school and then in the last year. Of course, this procedure would change the course of the research because there would be some changes in the proficiency language level. However, such possibility of further research would bring new information about learners critical thinking and visual literacy development in secondary schools.

For further research it would be better to use a video recorder instead of an audio recorder to discuss the non-verbal communication of the participants in a more detailed way and obtain some additional research information.

6. CONCLUSION

The topic of the thesis was about the development of critical skills in connection with visual materials, especially pictures. The theoretical background dealt with pictures in language teaching which are used to present and develop language. The theoretical part also covered the topic of visual literacy, critical thinking, speaking and questioning.

The main aim of the research was to discover whether the research study participants, the English language learners, were able to respond to different questions about certain a picture. The research was preceded by the preparation procedure which included the selection of an appropriate picture, the choice of questions of different complexities and selections of research participants. Then the participants were given a set of questions about the picture in the English language and interview questions in the Czech language to get other relevant research data. The results suggest that the critical thinking skills of the participants were not developed sufficiently. However, the participants were able to respond to the questions with some limitations so there are some ideas which could be developed if effective tools were used. The thesis offered implications for teaching which were based on methodology literature of Ur (1996), Wright (1989) and Goldstein (2008). The research was limited by a low number of participants, questions and pictures. There were also differences in the participants' language level even though they were of the same class. Therefore, the research results cannot be generalized too much. To expand the research productively, it would be necessary to choose participants of the same level, balance male and female number of participants, choose more questions and realize the whole procedure more than once. If the teaching implications would be realized in English languages classes, the abilities of learners are suggested to improve.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Classifications of Questions by Bamford (2003)

Issues.

- What issues are being show in the image?
- How is the way the issue is show in the image similar to or different from how you see this issue in the world?
- What might this image mean to someone who sees it?
- What is the message of the image?

Information.

- Where has the information in the image come from?
- What information has been included and what information has been left out?
- What proportion of the image could be inaccurate?
- What information presented is factual/manipulated/framed?
- What is the relationship between the image and any text?
- What impact does the size of images within the picture have?

Who.

- What people are depicted in the image (even if there are now actual people)?
- Who created the image and for what purpose?
- Who is the intended audience for the image?
- Whose point of view does the image take?

Persuasion.

- Why has a certain media been chosen?
- Why was a particular image chosen?
- Why was the image arranged that way?
- Is the information contained in the image factual?
- What devices have been used to get the message across to the viewer?
- How has the message been affected by what has been left out or is not shown?

Assumptions.

- What attitudes are assumed?
- Whose voice is heard?
- Whose voice is not heard?
- What experiences or points of view are assumed? (Bamford, 2003, p. 6, 7).

Appendix B

Classifications of Questions by Faigley, George, Palchik and Selfe (2004)

Emotions and feelings.

- What is your first response?
- What strikes you as important, interesting, or emotionally moving in the image?
- Can you identify element of the image that could be seen as symbolic?

Image content.

- What is the subject or content?
- What does the image remind you of?
- Have you seen anything like it somewhere else? Where? How is this image similar to those others? How does it differ?

Arrangement of the image.

- How is the image arranged in the visual space?
- Can you diagram its overall composition?
- What effect does this arrangement have on the way you read this image?

Author and purpose.

- What is the primary purpose?
- Are there additional purposes you need to consider?
- Can you identify the author? If so, what else has he or she done?
- Is this image like the author's other work or is it different? What accounts for the difference?

Medium and audience.

- What is the medium and what do you normally expect from images in this medium?
- Where does the image come from?
- What do you know about the audience?

Context.

- What are the larger historical, political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of the image?

Genre.

- What is the genre?
- Does the image conform to the conventions of that genre or does it break from the expectations?
- Is this a serious or comic image? How do you know? (Faigley, George, Palchik, & Selfe, 2004, p. 114,115).

Appendix C

Research Picture



(Sleeping family, Kolkata, March 26, 2007,

http://static.flickr.com/2086/2262624867_982305f3bf.jpg)

Appendix D

Research Questions

- What is your first reaction to the picture?
- What is in the picture?
- What do you find interesting or important about the picture?
- What topic does the picture present? - Can you tell me something about the people in the picture?
- Can you tell me something about the social and economic context of the picture?
- Who made the picture and why?
- Who is the picture for?
- Is it a photo of a real situation? Why? / Why not?

Appendix E

Interview Questions in Czech

- Jste z výuky jazyka zvyklý/á na otázky k obrázku?
- Jaký je rozdíl mezi vaší zkušeností s obrázky a otázkami z hodin angličtiny a obrázky a otázkami z našeho výzkumu?
- Čím se naše otázky liší od otázek k obrázku, na které jste zvyklý/á z výuky jazyka?
- Jaké typy otázek obvykle dostáváte k obrázku v hodině angličtiny?
- S čím jste měl/a větší problém - s tím co říct nebo jak to říct?
- Je nějaká informace, kterou jste neřekli, protože jste nevěděli jak?

SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá tématem rozvoje kritického myšlení ve spojení s otázkami, které jsou pokládány k obrázkům. Cílem výzkumu je zjistit, jestli jsou studenti anglického jazyka schopni kriticky nahlížet na obsah obrázku a odpovídat na otázky, které mají různé stupně obtížnosti a vyžadují různé úhly pohledu na obrázek. Výzkum proběhl s deseti účastníky, kteří odpovídali na devět otázek k jednomu obrázku v anglickém jazyce a následně na šest otázek v českém jazyce o zkušenostech s otázkami k obrázkům z hodin anglického jazyka. Všechny odpovědi byly zaznamenány a výsledky ukazují, že kritické myšlení a schopnost odpovídat na komplexní otázky k obrázkům je u účastníků omezená a je potřeba ji zlepšovat a rozvíjet.