

Charles University in Prague
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Diploma thesis

**How teachers lead effective classroom discussions in English lessons at
upper-secondary schools**

Vedení efektivní diskuse v hodinách anglického jazyka na střední škole

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Study programme: Training Teachers of General Subjects at Lower and Higher Secondary
Schools

Branch of study: English Language

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this diploma thesis, “*How teachers lead effective classroom discussions in English lessons at upper-secondary schools*”, is an original project created by me, under the supervision of Mgr. Martin Mikuláš, Ph.D., using sources cited in the reference list. Furthermore, I declare that this thesis has not and will not be used to gain any other academic degree.

Prague, 16th April 2021

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ABSTRACT

The diploma thesis deals with leading discussions in English lessons at upper-secondary schools. In the theoretical part, procedures ensuring effective discussions are described based on previous research findings. The empirical part of the thesis explores how teachers tackle starting, conducting and concluding discussions in real classes and how students evaluate their teachers' efforts. The research is conducted by observing teachers and their classes, by interviewing teachers and by collecting feedback from students in questionnaires. Results comparing the theory with the in-class practice are provided. The conclusion summarizes the common tendencies and differences between the lessons, and the effectiveness of the approaches observed.

Key words: discussion, lesson, effectiveness, upper-secondary, leading

ABSTRAKT

Diplomová práce se zabývá vedením diskuzí v hodinách anglického jazyka na středních školách. V teoretické části práce jsou na základě předchozího šetření popsány postupy zajišťující úspěšnou diskuzi. Praktická část práce zjišťuje, jak se učitelé v praxi vypořádávají s uvedením, průběhem a ukončením diskuze, a jak žáci hodnotí snahu svých učitelů. Výzkum je proveden metodou pozorování učitelů a jejich tříd, rozhovorů s učiteli a zpětnou vazbou od žáků provedenou dotazníky. Výsledky srovnávající teorii s reálnou praxí jsou uvedeny. Závěr práce shrnuje společné tendence i odlišnosti jednotlivých hodin, a efektivitu pozorovaných postupů.

Klíčová slova: diskuze, vyučovací hodina, efektivnost, střední škola, vedení

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1 Introduction

The aim of this diploma thesis is to discuss how to properly employ a very important part of classroom instruction that is used widely and frequently, but unfortunately not always effectively. There are many benefits to discussion which will be introduced later in the text, and also many obstacles that discourage teachers from using them more often or even make them resign on this area of instruction at all.

In this thesis, I am arguing in favour of utilizing classroom discussion and finding ways to overcome these hindrances, for there are steps and strategies to do so. I chose the topic since the skill of discussing issues is of major importance to the students not only in academic settings, but also later in their private lives. I myself have been witness to many well-intended discussions that went awry, and therefore do not wish to repeat those mistakes if they can be avoided.

A successful discussion needs preparation. The theoretical part of the thesis should be able to lead the reader through the process of accomplishing one. It includes defining the main term, *discussion*, and showing its benefits for the students. Furthermore, it points out common challenges when leading a discussion and how to cope with them, offers useful techniques and strategies to use in class and describes selected criteria of an effective discussion. The empirical part then offers examples of authentic lessons observed at upper-secondary schools in the Czech Republic that were focused on this phenomenon; interviews with teachers carried out after the lessons; and feedback from students collected by using questionnaires – all of these combined with analysis of the effectiveness of the procedures.

It should also be noted that in the context of the Czech Republic English is taught as a second, non-native language. The requirements and objectives for discussion are therefore very different to ones placed on it in the mother tongue context, where the main focus is on understanding and absorbing the content and not development of language skills.

2 Theoretical part

2.1 Defining discussion

As this thesis deals with discussion, it is necessary to define what is meant by this term. When examining classroom speaking, there are several formats that tend to be used interchangeably or are blended together - namely conversation, dialogue, debate and discussion. Some authors make distinctions between these terms and some synthesise them. Generally, it would serve as a great discussion topic itself to clarify what exactly discussion is.

James Dillon for instance observes conversation to be carefree, aimless and effortless, whereas discussion is in his mind highly disciplined and concentrated talk (Dillon 13).

David Bridges accentuates that discussion is more serious than conversation, for it requires the participants to be mutually responsive to various views expressed and also disposed to be affected by opinions one way or another in so far as (on some criteria) they merit acceptance or approval (Bridges 15).

Nicholas Burbules sees conversation as more informal and less structured than dialogue and dialogue in his view focuses more on inquiry, increasing understanding and tends to be more questioning than conversation (Burbules 17).

Brookfield and Preskill blend in their definition all of these labels together while taking into consideration reciprocity and movement, inquiry and exchange, cooperation and collaboration and formality and informality. They define discussion as an “alternately serious and playful effort by a group of two or more to share views and engage in mutual and reciprocal critique” (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 39).

Another educator, Jack C. Richards, lists discussion among different genres of spoken interaction and describes it as “an interaction focusing on exchanging ideas about a topic and presenting points of view and opinions” (Richards 421).

Herman and Nilson suggest in their book multiple definitions, such as “a student-active, constructivist teaching method in which students construct new knowledge based on their experience and prior knowledge in the process of expressing their thoughts”; “an

exchange of different interpretations, explanations, approaches to a problem, or possible solutions, followed by an evaluation”; “a collective analysis of arguments or claims”; or “the expression of varying opinions, positions, or perspectives, along with justifications” (Herman & Nilson 1).

Finally, Scott Thornbury argues that discussions and debates are “generally more structured than conversation, and involve arguing for and against a particular point of view” (Thornbury 69).

As can be seen, there is not a single definition that could be agreed on or a single right answer. In this thesis, I will try to frame discussion according to its qualitative criteria.

2.2 The difficulty and need to lead discussion well

There seems to be agreement among educators concerning the difficulty of leading classroom discussions. In Henning's view, leading a productive discussion that both engages learners and enhances their understanding may be the most complex and challenging task in teaching (Henning 90). Similarly, Frederick claims that it is “indeed the most challenging teaching methodology facing college and university teachers”, and that instructors most often say they do this teaching skill least well and need the most help in this area, even though it is the second most frequently used type of instruction – after lecturing (Frederick 99). Along the same lines, Davis sees the skills of initiating and sustaining a lively and productive discussion as one of the most challenging activities for an instructor (Davis 63).

Discussions often do not fulfil their potential and allow for many problems that will be addressed later in the text, when they are poorly planned and taken either as a filler activity or an easy substitute for serious efforts to develop students' oral skills. There are conversation classes accompanying regular English language ones in many countries around the world, both at secondary and tertiary level; these typically serve as an example of this issue. They are very often a set of unfocused activities, and their goal is to engage learners in content that will help them to participate in the discussion, while having a little impact on genuine development of their speaking skills (House 198). Besides, discussions

that are not planned well may wander into digressions and muddled thinking which makes the students feel their time has been wasted (Frederick 101). When a discussion fails, students not only lose the learning experience, but also the good opinion of the whole technique, and feelings of boredom and confusion are the only things they take away from the lesson (Herman & Nilson 8). Therefore, it is essential that its nature and features are addressed systematically and the risk of it getting out of hand is minimised (Thornbury 69, Richards 420).

Because of the difficulties that can arise when leading a discussion and the complexity of this task, many teachers dread to employ them. Their fears could be summed up into two main issues groups – the need to cover the material and the terror of losing control. In more detail, it is then the problem of asking a quality opening question and of continuing with related follow-up questions promptly to sustain the discussion, dealing with shy as well as dominating participants, handling digressions and dialogues with combative students, responding to inappropriate comments, working with silence and reluctance to take part in a discussion, fear of not knowing the answer themselves, or bringing a discussion to an end and improvising to connect the ideas to reach a sensible conclusion. All of these are skills that educators need to learn in order to become confident leaders of classroom discussions (Frederick 99).

Even though it is true that stimulating discussions are spontaneous and unpredictable, quality ones need a careful planning. Learning benefits of discussion accrue only when teachers know how to plan and lead them effectively, otherwise they fail (Davis 63, Herman & Nilson 4).

2.3 Why to employ discussion

The efforts put into organizing discussions are outweighed by many benefits. First of all, students are engaged in active learning and therefore do more than just listen passively in class. They learn more when intensely involved in their own education and have the opportunity to think about and apply what they are learning (Howard 4-5).

A considerable advantage for students' future life is the development of capacity for the clear communication of ideas and meaning. Through discussion, they learn to provide examples to illustrate complex propositions; communicate meanings not immediately clear to other participants; think and speak metaphorically; recognise aspects of their own communication styles that create difficulties for others; or articulate convincing arguments while remaining open to new perspectives (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 67).

Furthermore, discussion helps to widen horizons and make learners more empathic. They learn to appreciate new perspectives, walk in someone else's shoes, and trust more as they listen to their peers sharing their experiences, burdens and ideas. It supports development of new interests and opening up to adopt classmates' views during engrossing and intense discussion. All in all, it takes students out of themselves to see the world differently again (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 69).

Equally important is the encouragement to listen attentively and respectfully. Students need to comprehend that a good discussion participant is not only the one who speaks a lot while putting forward interesting arguments, but that listening is just as important. Without attentive listening, the discussion does not move forward and the participants feel ignored and not respected. It is the teacher's role to conduct the instruction properly and make sure students understand this crucial notion. It also offers opportunity to summarise and reframe each other's comments - this ability is a core process of intellectual inquiry (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 59).

Participating in discussion also helps students to become critical thinkers. It forces them to distinguish between facts and opinions, identify misstatements and omissions of important facts. Teachers can help to guide students in this area and offer strategies to recognise those (Ruggiero 24-26).

Research findings provide evidence that discussion pedagogy enhances oral communication skills and that active participation in class discussion can be linked to students' reports of improved skill development (Dallimore, Hertenstein & Platt 163-166). In addition, in classes where English is taught as a second language, participation in expressing, structuring and explaining meaning can be an important element for improving language fluency. Therefore, opportunities to join extended interaction in a real context are necessary for the development of the second language communicative competence. Social

interactions have, according to the research related to second language learning, essential and educational role in second language development, hence discussion is relevant for it entails an interaction between multiple speakers (Abdulbaki, Suhaimi, Alsaqqaf & Jawad 119-120). Penny Ur calls discussion a vehicle for fluency practice and adds it may be the main aim of this technique in a foreign language course (Ur 1-3).

Another claim in favour of discussion is that it increases intellectual agility. Learners know that what is required of them is an ability to think swiftly, react to unanticipated comments, think quickly to formulate a counterresponse or to defense against arguments that are new to them – all of these are reasons why some of them fear this activity. On one hand, discussion is not a performance in which students have to show brilliance in reacting intelligently, immediately and articulately to every move; on the other hand, follow-up questions to what they say should be expected, for people will want to know what is behind their thinking or what the evidence is for their claims (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 61). Students' contributions and their subsequent defence thus foster swift thinking.

Finally, incorporating discussion into one's own instruction shows respect for students' voices and experiences. They will feel their opinions are recognised and valued and that they are treated as equals by the teacher. Some students tend to downplay their own experience in comparison with “book knowledge”, which for them seems to be more relevant and of greater importance. It is thus the discussion leader's task to encourage them to share it as an important subject of study, even though it should not be seen with an uncritical eye – individual experiences can be interpreted in multiple ways and if we aim for the educational dimension of discussion, students should be guided to analyse them critically (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 63-64).

2.4 Common problems in discussions and their solutions

2.4.1 Reluctance to participate

The imbalance in participation is one of the most common challenges for teachers. While some students dominate the discussion, shy ones remain silent for the whole activity – although it is not only timidity that keeps students from joining. Further reasons

may include lack of knowledge, little trust in one's own language skills, boredom, general habit of being passive, introversion, anxiety, depression, difficult class relations, or fear of being embarrassed in front of their peers or the teacher.

Some of the solutions for the problems in question will be addressed later in the text – for instance choosing a quality or controversial topic to avoid boredom, or students' prior preparation to fight lack of knowledge. In this section, I would like to propose my solutions to tackle the general problem of inability or fear to contribute to the discussion.

I consider it essential for the teacher to communicate to the students the shared understanding of difficulties to participate. The teacher can relieve the students by describing the situation from their own perspective. They can tell their students that the teacher now asked a question and understands that what might be happening in their heads is the following: instead of considering the topic, students start to focus on their own feelings of discomfort and panic of not knowing what to say if they are called on; or they quickly start developing the first idea that occurred to them even though it does not really fit. Their brain might also be affected by a complete “blackout” that paralyzes their whole thinking, or they silently prepare the answer word by word and rehearse how exactly they will say it to impress the teacher, whilst the discussion moves somewhere else in the meantime. Other possible problems might be that students hear a part of someone's contribution and they stop listening to the rest because they want to prepare for their subsequent turn – therefore, it does not match then, or they do not know how to continue after another student just stole their idea.

It seems vital to me that the teacher acknowledges existence of these issues and students can perceive them more as a problem consultant than the person whom they ultimately aim to impress. When the teacher and students are thus allies, the teacher can propose solutions to these problems.

I argue for convincing students to abandon these rescue strategies and automatic blocks which can help them to reply something speedily, but what will be of questionable quality and will not move the discussion forward. I suggest a simple remedy that relieves students of increased stress levels and fear of embarrassing themselves – an option to “pass”. The option to pass the word to another classmate if they are indeed at loss what to contribute to the discussion, naturally connected to the notion that the teacher will not

think the student is slow-witted, frees learners of the pressure to start looking for a suitable answer immediately and gives them time to properly consider the topic. As a result, students devoid of stress should come up with more quality responses and listen to each other attentively, as they know they will not be forced to react at once.

I believe it is also important that the teacher emphasises an effort is valued the most and the skill in discussing issues needs to be learnt over time, so it is really a trial and error process. The teacher should appreciate every attempt to join the discussion from the shy students and never show dissatisfaction with the contributions, otherwise their efforts might be discouraged for the future sessions. In this way, the trust from these learners will gradually grow and their newly-gained confidence will help them to participate more and more successfully.

To make students participate often, the discussion leader should also consider meta-discussion about the benefits of discussion for their future lives. When students understand and internalise that apart from the improved second language speaking skills there are also skills of presenting and defending a point of view, taking and sustaining a turn, or summarizing a position, which are valuable, if not crucial, outside the classroom in their future jobs and relationships, they will be more eager to learn those in an informal training ground with the teacher who is on their side.

When these students are motivated to join the discussion, it is advisable to facilitate it for them. An option is to ask questions that have no wrong answers – for instance easy recall questions on the assigned homework or students' emotional reactions; or brainstorming on what they already know. Giving learners time to gather their ideas first by engaging in conversation in pairs or small groups or by writing down their answers quickly serves well, too (Herman & Nilson 39-40). Furthermore, the discussion can be enlivened by use of modern technology, which can serve as an ice-breaker for some shy students – to name one for all, Mentimeter enables to carry out a quick live class poll to a controversial topic question or create a word cloud showing classmates' immediate reactions (Figure 1). A little prompt like this can mean a big difference in students' desire to participate actively.

Why use a word cloud?

Mentimeter



Figure 1: Mentimeter word cloud (<https://www.mentimeter.com/blog/audience-energizers/live-audience-word-clouds>)

Yet another situation regarding silence in class is one of relationships among students. When there is a new collective forming or the old one is marked by uneasy relations or hidden bullying, the most important thing for students becomes to create or maintain the “culture of cool”. To participate in discussions is to declare one is interested in learning or is willing to cooperate with the teacher, which is not considered cool by their peers and might mean loss of friends and status (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 214). Even if the situation is not that serious, this is a very common problem even in its light form – no one wants to be marked as a swot. As a solution to this problem, I suggest cold-calling (i.e., calling on learners whose hands are not raised) – students might know the answers and would like to join the discussion, but the peer pressure prevents them from speaking. If they are cold-called, they have no other choice but to participate and are not in danger of losing face. Needless to say, the teacher needs to be very sensitive in these matters and establish their strategy on the classroom environment.

2.4.2 Monopolizing students

The solutions concerning non-participants suggested in the previous section should even the distribution of participation within a class, nevertheless there still can be students dominating the discussion either in terms of number of contributions or their length.

Teachers should be aware of a norm called *the consolidation of responsibility*, first identified by Karp and Yoels and consistently confirmed by further research. It means that “in any college classroom, regardless of size, a very small number of students (three to seven) will account for 75-95 percent of student verbal contributions” (Howard 13). They accept responsibility for classroom discussion and as a result, active listening becomes unnecessary for other students and only a few viewpoints emerge. It is important to intervene quickly to prevent it from becoming a default participation norm.

There are several reasons why some students speak too much. It can be caused by their personality traits – for instance extroversion which drives them into constant speech. Also, some talky learners do not mind being aggressively competitive or impolite because the readiness to jump into speech and dominate debates is expected and rewarded by the society. Others may want the teacher to perceive them as prepared for the lesson and smart, or they might crave attention (Herman & Nilson 35, Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 215).

Sometimes, teachers cut off a deepening dialogue between two participants too early in fear of their controlling the floor, even though such a focused conversation can have a potential to take the discussion to a new level of complexity. Intervention should be made primarily if other students feel prevented from joining, which can be recognised from behaviours such as raising hands, rolling eyes, frowning, carrying on side conversations or their written feedback on the discussion (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 213).

Several remedies are at hand in these cases. The instructor can for example very simply pass the word to other students, saying “We have heard some great ideas from the girls so far, what do boys think about it?”, or physically move away from the dominator(s) towards the silent students, which will shift them into the new centre of attention. Good strategies may also prove to limit the number of contributions of individual students, be able to talk only about ideas of other people after they have been stated, or introduce a rule of allowing others the floor before speaking too often. Another option is to reduce teacher talk and instead of commenting on the dominator's contribution, invite other learners to

respond or react to them. The teacher can also assign roles in the discussion, some of which are characterised by periods of silence, and rotate them fairly. If all of these practices fail, it is advisable to talk to the person privately outside of class, which may prove as the most effective solution when handled carefully (Brookfield & Preskill 2005: 217-219, Howard 69-70).

2.4.3 Material is not studied before the lesson

Ways to organise students' preparation for the discussion based on pre-reading or other forms of gathering information are described later in the text. This section aims to deal with the situation when the efforts to make students come prepared for the discussion fail.

In emergency cases, there are ways to deal with the situation on the spot – these include letting the diligent students summarise the input information for their group/class or have the learners skim the assigned text at the beginning of the lesson to get quickly oriented in the topic (Svinicki 50). Obviously, these strategies should not be used regularly, since they would gradually contribute to students' failing to see the reason to prepare for the discussions at all. If this is a problem for a class, it requires to be dealt with systematically and uncover the reasons behind the lack of preparation.

A study carried out by Mary Hoeft let students themselves rate the reasons that led to their preparing and also non-preparing for the lesson. Besides, it asked them to give advice to teachers on what would make students prepare more. The most common recommendations included using frequent quizzes to make students see the direct impact of their preparation; worksheets to guide them through the information; and frequent reminders of assignments. A subsequent study was carried out to verify how using these tips helped students to do the assigned reading. The former two, quizzes and reading journals with worksheets, indeed proved to increase the preparation time (Hoeft 1-15). Accordingly, teachers can incorporate a short quiz at the beginning of the discussion to revise the content input and make students focus on the topic, which has been consolidated by the worksheet. Apart from these suggestions, an option is to ask the learners themselves about the form of their discussion preparation and ways to make them interested. Students

who are invited to co-create the rules are generally more compliant to observe them afterwards.

It is crucial to think deeply how to motivate students to prepare for the discussion, since it enormously enhances its quality, and informed contributions prevent from other problems that might occur.

2.4.4 Excessive teacher talking time

The problem of an excessive teacher talk arises primarily when there is silence in the classroom, which makes the teacher nervous. They should understand that silence is an indispensable part of the discussion since it enables students to form their own ideas, and should be on no account perceived as a failure.

Teachers should avoid the so-called “talk-talk loop” in which they ask a question and, owing to no response from students, they ask more questions in hope of encouraging the students to join, or even start to answer it themselves. It may feel uncomfortable, but the teacher should resist speaking more, for it confuses the class and discourages students who were about to contribute (Scrivener 146). Instead, the teacher should allow for silence which can seem long to them – there is a difference in perception of “long” by students and teachers. Students need time to reflect on the idea, formulate their opinions and find suitable (second) language to express it. Therefore, teachers should not panic at prolonged silence and explicitly encourage it by sharing its benefits with students.

2.4.5 Conflicts and arguments

If the discussion is quality and the students are involved and eager, conflicts will inevitably appear. They should not, like in the previous case, be understood as a problem in the first place. Teachers may dread conflicts, but they can be used to make the discussion more productive and contribute to student learning if handled effectively (Wolfe 81).

Firstly, it is advisable to have ground rules set up, which will be discussed later in the text, and remind students of the principles of civil discourse. The conflict can then be taken advantage of. One technique is to write down arguments on the board, so that emotions are dispersed and students have time to think. If it does not resolve the conflict,

the activity can be used as a basis for another task, for instance, having groups further investigate various sources and information. If the resolution depends on certain facts, other authority or reference to a text can be used. If, on the other hand, different values are the cause of conflict, the teacher needs to emphasise that there may not be a right answer and help students become aware of the different cultural norms and values involved. This will ultimately develop students' critical thinking skills (Wolfe 81, Svinicki 51).

A beneficial option might also prove to make students switch the positions and argue for the opposite view than they hold, which would help them understand the points of the other side, teach them being empathetic and might contribute to their calming down or even (partly) changing their view. I argue for this activity since in the contemporary world full of polar opposites, where people take stances so readily and are unwilling to even listen to the other side, let alone trying to understand their reasons, students need to test what it is like to ponder over a problem using various viewpoints and to experience changing the view themselves.

2.4.6 Lack of ground rules

Having set up ground rules for communicating in a discussion is incredibly beneficial for the whole process, as it helps to prevent from all sorts of problems that often impede it. Another reason to employ them is that it prevents from copying the ills of society to the classroom – namely that the stronger, more confident and often less polite people dominate and continue to widen the gap.

If the teacher decides to create the rules together with students, an exercise in which learners research their own previous experience to generate the rules is suitable. Firstly, students individually think of the best and worst group discussion they have ever experienced, and determine what exactly was so satisfying or difficult about them. Next, students work in groups of four and share their features while seeking commonalities. Their task is to suggest one specific thing a group could do for each characteristics of a good or bad discussion they agree on. The last stage reunites the class, and groups take turns to share their ideas. The whole class then decides on which rules they want to try out (Brookfield 86).

Naturally, the rules will differ in each class, but some examples include the following: do not label, stereotype, blame or judge; challenge the idea and not the person; do not engage in other conversations when someone else is speaking; support your statements with evidence and data; respect the right of others to have different values and opinions from your own; balance talking and listening; treat others as you yourself would like to be treated; distinguish between intent and impact – your positive intent may have negative impact on others (Herman & Nilson 45).

2.5 Techniques and strategies for enhancing the quality of a discussion

This section offers some useful ideas for teachers to make a discussion flow easier and therefore become more effective.

2.5.1 Peer evaluation

One activity to draw students' attention to the quality of contributions is peer observation and evaluation in the form of the so-called observer ring. While a group discusses the topic, several students chosen as observer-evaluators sit with them and monitor the process. They simultaneously complete evaluation/observation sheets (Figure 2) and report their findings afterwards – they share their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the discussion and make recommendations for future improvements. It is thereafter the teacher's turn to give their feedback, and finally the systematic enrichment of language is worked on (Green, Christopher & Lam 138). In this manner, students are likely to pay attention to the feedback of their peers and more willing to remedy the problems pointed out.

Behaviour:		Number of contributions to the individual categories:			
Student (Name):		A	B	C	D
Number of contributions					
Responding supportively					
Responding aggressively					
Introducing a new (relevant) point					
Digressing from the topic					

Figure 2: Evaluation/observation sheet

2.5.2 Starting a discussion in various ways

There are diverse means of initiating a discussion. It can be started through controversy which challenges students to think differently and invites various points of view to the topic. The teacher can play the devil's advocate role, point out differences in points of view, or have learners to present hypothetical contrary opinions.

Another way to get a discussion started is to use varied range of questions. These can be factual, interpretative, causal effect, evaluative, critical or comparative types of questions, depending on the topic and situation.

Using common experience as the basis of a discussion ensures that everyone knows something about the topic. The group can discuss an issue that is common to all of the members without exception, or the teacher can mediate the experience by offering for instance a video or reading that will provide new input for all and can be used as a starting point.

Yet another form is to use a problem or case that needs to be solved or made some progress on. Teachers should not be discouraged when students say “I don't know” – it does not mean the end of interaction. The teacher can rephrase the question or give some example. The problem should be broken into sub-problems and the individual aspects like the formulation of the problem, solutions or evidence tackled one by one in order for it to be effective (Svinicki 41-45).

2.5.3 Starting a discussion with a springboard

The following two exercises ease the start of a discussion for the students. In the first one they respond to strongly worded contentious opening statements which serve to produce strong emotional responses or challenge some fundamental assumptions of students, and therefore generate conversation. Learners look for answers to questions like What led people to think this? Why would they hold this opinion? Is it justifiable? or How might it be challenged?

Another activity is to give students slips of paper with incomplete sentences, their task being to choose one (or more) and finish it. Afterwards, these are used as a stepping stone to the deeper discussion. Some examples of sentences are as follows: The idea I most disagree with is... The most crucial point is in my view... The question I would like to ask the author of the text is... What I would like to discuss about this topic is... (Brookfield 86-87).

2.5.4 Facilitating participation through conversational roles

Sometimes students can be given roles to help them participate in a discussion with a particular aim. These roles should be fairly rotated. The ones used commonly include: Theme/Problem poser (introduces the topic of a discussion), Summariser (gives summary on common themes or shared concerns every 10 minutes), Devil's advocate (listens for consensus and offers a contrary view), Umpire (watches for insulting or offensive comments that contradict ground rules, and unchallenged biases), Evidential assessor (asks for evidence of empirical generalizations) or Synthesiser (finds links between individual

contributions) (Brookfield 90-91). When students get a specific task to focus on, they are responsible for this one area of a discussion and they feel the need to get involved.

2.5.5 Trying the unknown through role reversals

A useful technique to put students in a different role than they are usually used to is the activity of role reversal, that can be used from time to time or for parts of the lesson. First step is to collectively identify strengths and weaknesses of both talkative and quiet discussion participants. Students then identify themselves belonging into one of these groups; since they see both of them have some advantages, they should not feel ashamed of theirs anymore. The next step is to reverse the roles – the quiet learners are to lead the discussion, ask questions and give opinions, while the talkative ones take notes or join only after some time has passed (Richards 423).

2.5.6 Creating a basis for in-depth study through question brainstorming

This activity provides students with practice in developing different kinds of questions and shows them that some types lead to richer discussion than others.

Students in smaller groups are given a statement for which they are to brainstorm as many questions as possible, no criticism allowed in this phase. These are written down on the blackboard and subsequently considered, the promising ones developing the discussion further are underlined by the students. Individual groups then decide on a few questions they would want to respond to, according to which questions seem the most interesting, important or promoting further ideas, and find ways to respond to them. As a result, students in the final reflection realise the power of a well-framed question for creative thinking (Brookfield & Preskill 2016: 107-109).

2.5.7 Helping students to build on each other's ideas by using “Gallery walk”

This is a special type of discussion that is structured. Sheets of paper with various prompts (outlined problems, questions, ideas to brainstorm, incomplete mind maps, etc.) are stationed around the classroom. Students in smaller groups start each at one spot and

together record their ideas and answers on the paper. After a certain amount of time, the groups rotate to a new paper in order to build on their classmates' ideas and write down theirs in the same way (Herman & Nilson 18). After all the groups visited all the papers, the class is brought together to reflect on their experience and comment on each other's thoughts and possible inspiration.

2.5.8 Teaching students to take and defend a stance on issues

The activity of deliberative polling helps students to explore various viewpoints on an issue, to practice defending a stance and develop critical thinking. They are polled about their initial points of view on a certain issue. They are then given materials that present them with several clearly differentiated stances. After studying the information, the discussion leader begins to lead a session in which participants explain their reasons for taking that stance, direct comments to each other instead of the moderator, ask questions and articulate their assumptions. The teacher should ensure that all of the stances are given approximately equal time. Once all the points of view have been explored, students share whether some of them changed their opinions as a result of the process (Brookfield & Preskill 2016: 219-221).

2.6 Criteria of an effective discussion

It is a contentious issue whether there can be criteria to measure the success of a discussion – take for example an impromptu discussion that engages the whole class and generate a high number of informed contributions even without any preparation. Generally, though, there is a set of elements that ensure a high probability of success in this field. The aim of this section is therefore to present a list of them that could serve as a guide for teachers to get ready for a discussion.

2.6.1 Classroom climate

The teacher might not be responsible for everything that happens in a discussion, but his role is indispensable when it comes to creating the ambience.

A huge part of the effectiveness of discussions depends on the teacher's communication with the class. They are directly able to relieve students of stress and motivate them to participate eagerly as much as possible, given that they internalise the classroom setting is a unique opportunity to try out practices that may stress them later in life if not learnt now.

It is teacher's privilege to free students from the negative blocks they might be carrying from the past discussion experience, in which they were humiliated or put down, and usher them into a whole new setting where a discussion is perceived as a positive experience and no one approaches it with fear.

Fear is one of the crucial problems students face in the discussion technique: it can be a fear of the teacher, classmates or even of oneself. One may be disappointed of not reaching their full potential or ashamed of their own inability to participate sufficiently. Indeed, it is the teacher's job to reduce all the fears to minimum by acknowledging that this process is difficult and takes time; no one was born a great discussion participant. Not being too harsh on oneself is a prerequisite for further development devoid of accompanying dread.

I believe that the human connection the teacher has the power to create is crucial for the whole success of this technique and even so individual strategies will enhance it, this is the basis to build everything else on.

2.6.2 Quality of topic and text

The selection of a quality topic and materials for a discussion is an obvious condition to ensure interest of the learners. Such a topic will most often include issues that connect with and validate their experiences, primarily developmental issues of identity, relationships, self-esteem, autonomy or career aspirations (Frederick 103). Other topics may include their interests such as hobbies, entertainment popular at that time or topical media cases.

It is also refreshing if students are invited to select their own topics of interest and research methods (preparation for a discussion) they find interesting – they can bring their

own materials they want to work with, which will ensure they know the content at the same time (Scrivener 330).

2.6.3 Preparation on the part of students

The need for students to come prepared for a discussion and ways to motivate them have already been discussed earlier in the text – there is no way students can advance their learning and utilise the good discussion strategies the teacher prepared for the lesson if they know nothing about the topic.

Again, when there is a solid explanation given to the students regarding the importance of preparation and if they understand its purpose, they are much more likely to take it seriously. Teachers may infer that it is apparent, but students at secondary school already study long enough to have built habits, one of them possibly being to rely on others to come prepared for the lesson. Talking openly and purposefully about its significance is the first step to their reconsidering the automatized ways and seeing their responsibilities from a fresh perspective.

Additionally, the teacher may assign homework on the preparation material. It can take many forms – to mark novel, provocative or puzzling passages; to formulate two questions for other students; to mark the most difficult point to understand; to choose quotes that will generate conversation; to answer questions that will serve as a basis for the discussion; or write initial thoughts in a journal (Herman & Nilson 15).

The reading or listening (or any other) materials should be selected from up-to-date sources that are relevant for learners, or students can be asked to find their own (Scrivener 330). Students respond well to novel stimuli such as research and outside ideas, so using these in the preparation stage will enhance their curiosity (Herman & Nilson 28).

2.6.4 Staged questions

The way discussion usually moves is from the concrete to the abstract, from a mere description to analysis and evaluation, from “what” to “why”. The teacher should establish

a common ground at the beginning of a discussion, so that students are oriented and reminded of the content (Frederick 105). However, they should then move to the more abstract levels and push students to embrace this thinking, since they tend to gravitate towards the concrete.

The manner in which teachers ask questions is essential in this case. They too often ask low-level cognitive questions that focus on recall of factual information rather than on fostering deeper students' understanding. Teachers need to realise that effective questioning is a pedagogical strategy and plays a critical role in the quality of a discussion (McComas & Abraham 1).

McComas and Abraham articulated a taxonomy of question types in which questions are divided into four quadrants: high or low order, and convergent or divergent. A low order one requires the learner only to recall a fact – an example can be “What colour is the lion in that picture?” A high order question requires understanding the situation in context – an example is “Why do you think the lion is that colour?” A convergent question is close-ended, has a narrowly defined correct answer and requires little reflection – for instance “What other animals can you think of that use colour as camouflage?” A divergent question is open-ended, requires application of knowledge to analyse a problem, and can have multiple answers – for example “If the lion had been born with a much darker skin, what do you predict would happen to it in the wild?” Consequently, these types can be mixed:

- Lower level convergent: “According to our study of plant physiology, what conditions are required for photosynthesis to occur?” (Knowledge level)
- Higher level convergent: “In what way do plant cells differ from animal cells?” (Comprehension and application level)
- Lower level divergent: “How might life be different if peace was declared in the middle east?” (Analysis level)
- Higher level divergent: “Suppose you are the President of USC – how would you devise a plan to increase the retention rate of minority first-year students?” (Synthesis and evaluation level) (McComas & Abraham 1-5).

Research has shown that the typical teacher asks between 300-400 questions per day (Levin & Long 29). Naturally, it is not feasible to have them all prepared, but the teacher should devote some time to formulating crucial higher level questions that move the lesson forward, challenge students and arouse their curiosity beforehand when preparing for a discussion.

2.6.5 Active listening and connections among contributions

It can be argued that what is central to a good discussion are not the individual contributions, as students often think, but the connections between them. A discussion needs to be a collective process that goes beyond individual contributions if it is to be satisfying. Interaction, that is building on, contradicting, responding, or amplifying, is what keeps a discussion away from being low-quality, superficial and repetitive (Hollander 317-319).

In order to achieve the desired interaction, students need good reasons to listen to each other. The teacher can also in this case simply genuinely communicate the importance of it to the class. In addition, they can frequently ask students to react to one another, or instruct them to address their contributions directly to their classmates instead of the teacher. Furthermore, the discussion content can be included in exams, quizzes or assignments like papers, reports, works of art, projects or journal entries. Finally, the teacher can randomly call on students to summarise the progress of a discussion on a regular basis during the lesson, giving them yet another reason to listen actively (Herman & Nilson 16-17).

2.6.6 Enough time to think

The importance of having enough time to think before contributing to a discussion has been already mentioned in the section on excessive teacher talking time.

Most students need 15 seconds or longer to be able to craft their response and teachers should not immediately call on the first student that raises their hand. Waiting just a few more seconds can significantly increase the number of students willing to join. The additional thinking time will benefit both the introverted and extroverted participants, helping the latter to consider their ideas more carefully (Herman & Nilson 23-24).

2.6.7 Focus on second language development

Discussion has a high number of benefits for the development of students as personalities as well as their skills, nevertheless the main reason to employ it into one's second language (in this case English) instruction is probably to enhance oral fluency and possibly achieve additional goals that are set, such as to automatize certain expressions. Thus, in order for a discussion in English as a second language to be effective, language development needs to be systematically worked on and not taken as a phenomenon that will magically improve on its own.

Students may have several problems when it comes to fluency, for instance the feeling of having nothing to say, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, lack of appropriate language or lack of practice in conventions of conversational interaction. To enable the students being fluent, the teacher can take certain measures to help them. The feeling of having nothing to say should be taken care of by the prior preparation for the lesson, having time to think and staging the questions, starting with ones focused on information rather than opinion. The fear of making mistakes can be tackled by the teacher's placing low priority on correctness and correction (the mistakes can be dealt with in subsequent lessons), and by emphasizing that mistakes are inevitable in fluency activities. The lack of confidence may be treated by convincing students of the value of trying to express themselves beyond their apparent linguistic limits. The lack of appropriate language can be dealt with by pre-teaching key vocabulary and training students in specific communication strategies. Finally, to combat the lack of practice in conventions of conversational interaction may require analysing a video tape of native speakers engaged in a heated discussion, asking students to pay attention to the speed and pitch of speech, or non-verbal communication such as gestures (Parrott task 20).

Another common feature is that students revert to the language with which they feel comfortable and do not aspire to make progress in this field. In this case, the teacher needs to encourage students to push themselves more. They need not only time to consider how to incorporate new vocabulary, grammar or expressions, but also motivation to attempt this. They can be given slips of paper with phrases they have to include in their speech.

Competitive element can also function well, for example awarding points for the target language used (Richards 420-421).

Just as importantly, teachers should ensure that students are equipped with a range of expressions to join a discussion, such as expressing an opinion, qualified agreement or hedging, which are regularly reviewed and topped up (Thornbury 105).

2.6.8 A discussion should not end abruptly

A discussion should be concluded in some way, so that students feel a sense of achievement and that their time has not been wasted in pointless chatter. The teacher can randomly select a student to summarise the lesson's main points and invite his classmates to add anything important that was left out. Another option is to let all students write one-minute paper in which they mention the most valuable, surprising or useful thing(s) learnt during the lesson (Herman & Nilson 17). The last minutes can be, in a similar way, used to having the students summarise for themselves what they have learnt, and then lead a short group reflection with feedback in which students share their experiences from the lesson and how they perceived this approach.

3 Empirical part

The aim of the empirical part is to present four authentic upper-secondary school lessons focused on open class¹ discussion, evaluate their effectiveness and compare the concepts introduced in the theoretical part with real practices observed in individual classes.

3.1 Research design

3.1.1 Participants

There were four teachers with their classes chosen for this study. The participating teachers were selected to represent various schools and both the sexes, and their classes to be of different grades. Because of the extraordinary conditions concerning the covid-19 pandemic, which were underlying the whole research, I tried to work with Austrian teachers as well as Czech ones to be able to observe at least some real-space lessons. However, the measures in Austria eventually did not allow for visitors to enter schools physically.

3.1.2 Procedure

The data for this research were collected by observing individual lessons of the teachers with their classes.

All of the teachers were asked to deliver one open class discussion lesson on the topic of their own choice, while I did not affect the content of the lesson or activities used in any way. The only condition was that the open class discussion lasted for at least half of the lesson time.

The original design of the research was the observation of classes held in real space, however the covid-19 pandemic did not allow for this. The situation in the Czech Republic caused upper-secondary schools to be closed, therefore I had to adjust the research design accordingly and observe online discussions instead. I am aware that online discussions differ greatly from those held in real space, and the sources, from which I drew

¹ An open class activity or work is carried out with the whole group participating together with the teacher, rather than in pairs or closed groups.

when writing the theoretical assumptions, distinguish between them as well, dedicating them separate chapters. Nevertheless, the need for improvisation and adjustments within the constantly changing measures appeared to be inevitable. Conversely, the topic of online discussion is rather an unexplored realm and, in this respect, the findings can prove highly beneficial.

In order to observe at least some of the real-space lessons, I decided to carry out a part of the research in the neighbouring country, Austria, where the situation allowed for students to return to schools already in February, and where I had some teaching contacts from my Erasmus+ exchange stay. However, the situation in Austria allowed for neither physical visit of observers in schools, nor online observations, and all my attempts to connect with the local teachers' lessons in Google Meets failed.

Apart from observing the lessons, the data were also collected by questionnaires filled in by all of the students after their discussion class, and interviews realized with the teachers immediately after the lessons. The students filled in questionnaires modified to online Google Forms questionnaire in the Czech language to guarantee they understood the content perfectly. The questionnaire sample containing both the open questions and scale assessment can be found in the Appendix.

3.1.3 Analysis

Analysis of the lessons observed verifies the following three hypotheses:

- A. If the majority of the following criteria of an effective discussion are fulfilled, the discussion is assessed as effective by me, students and the teacher likewise:
 - A quality topic and preparation materials
 - In-class or home preparation by students
 - Safe classroom climate
 - Staged questions asked by the teacher
 - Enough time provided by the teacher for students to think about the individual questions

- A high level of student participation (i.e., higher than consolidation of responsibility)
 - Connected student contributions
 - Language development worked on explicitly
 - A conclusion of the discussion
- B. If the majority of the criteria of an effective discussion listed above are not fulfilled, the discussion is assessed as inefficient by me, students and/or by the teacher.
- C. If the discussion is assessed as effective, the differences in its perception by me, students or by the teacher are minor.

3.2 Lesson observations

3.2.1 Lesson 1

General information

Lesson 1 took place at the grammar school Gymnázium Arabská on 16 February. It was a Tuesday morning class starting at 11:30, and it was led by a young female teacher in her thirties. The class was comprised of 16 first-grade students, 9 males and 7 females, aged from 15 to 16 years, their general language level being B2 according to the teacher. As for the specifics of this group, there is one boy with the Asperger syndrome (diagnosed) and one extremely shy girl (teacher's observation, not diagnosed). The meeting was held through the Zoom video conferencing tool, and the students were notified in advance that they would be observed.

Description of the lesson

The topic of the lesson was the book *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, which has been read by the students for the past several months. All the students are to have read it and seen the film version by this time, since it is a lesson concluding this topic.

The lesson starts with a warm-up activity which takes twenty minutes altogether. The students are asked to use their homework, i.e., filled-in Venn's diagrams, and two students who admitted failing to come prepared for the lesson are asked to use their notes instead.

The teacher asks the students to work in breakout rooms in pairs and discuss the similarities and differences between the book and its film version for two minutes. Then, the same procedure is repeated with four students in a group. Finally, new groups of eight students are formed by the teacher, using the snowball technique. The students in the breakout-room groups do not contribute much, usually one or two confident speakers dominate the floor, and the pattern repeats as the group gets bigger, with the same students repeating their ideas again. The discussion gets livelier only when the teacher is present in the breakout room as well.

After that, the teacher brings all the students back and calls them on individually by their names so that they can share their ideas while making notes on the “board”. The teacher is very positive, enthusiastic and makes good use of the only non-verbal behaviour possible in this situation, namely smiling and nodding her head frequently.

The second part of the lesson is a debate/discussion between two groups of students. Firstly, the teacher presents a text summarizing the windmill conflict in the book and asks several students to take turns reading it aloud for the class. In the next step, students are asked to read instructions for the debate: there are two factions engaging in a lively debate on whether the windmill is really necessary or not.

After dividing the class into two halves, the factions meet in the breakout rooms for five minutes to brainstorm arguments and prepare a short introductory speech presenting their group's opinion. In one group, students seem to be confused and it takes them some time to remember which stance they are to be defending. In the second group, the discussion is led and dominated by one strong student while the others seem to agree with him completely, nodding their heads and smiling.

Once the group is in the main room again, the teacher asks one student from each group to deliver the speech – she deliberately chooses shy students, who do not like being the centre of attention. At the same time, she asks others not to interfere in these speeches. Although the teacher is very encouraging and uses phrases like “No, it is great! Go on,

please, it is very good!”, the speeches are very short, consisting of one sentence only or only a few ideas expressed in short sentences. It is unclear whether this is caused by the character traits of the students or their not being prepared enough for the speeches.

The teacher praises both the students for their speeches and the students are instructed to return to the breakout rooms to prepare counter-arguments for the final discussion now that they know the viewpoints of the other group. This phase takes three minutes and proceeds in a similar manner like in the previous breakout-room meeting. It means that one group is rather slow and a lot of silence occurs, and the other group is fast with proposing arguments thanks to only one or two students who dominate.

Finally, after the preparation stages the debate happens at the end of the lesson. The teacher creates a warm atmosphere by her facial expressions and asks all the students to bear in mind that the debate should stay polite and if they want to comment on someone's contribution, they should raise their real or online hand. The teacher calls out the dominating student to start off the debate.

The debate itself takes seven minutes and is very lively. The teacher does not waste time and calls on the students from both the factions alternately. The quality of contributions is very good and all of them, without an exception, are connected to each other. The students listen to each other attentively and react to one another mostly with informed contributions. One student seems to be dissatisfied and accuses the other group of lying repeatedly, but s/he does not present any proof of such behaviour. Ten students speak during the debate, two dominating students raise their hands frequently and therefore speak three or four times. In addition, six students (37,5 %) do not participate at all. The teacher does not intervene apart from calling on individual students. She asks no questions or additional questions (Section 2.4.4).

In the end, the teacher mentions running out of time and invites the students to fill in a Mentimeter survey focused on self-evaluation during the discussion. The survey items focus on students' activity, politeness, contributing and responding to someone else's comment. The teacher praises the whole class for interacting in the debate, and the whole lesson ends in a pleasant atmosphere.

Interview with the teacher

This section features authentic responses from the teacher.

How long have you been teaching and at what types of school?

“I started teaching in 2008 at language schools, and at this grammar school in September this school year.”

How long have you been working with this group of students?

“Since September.”

Do you do discussions on a regular basis? Do you have any rules set up?

“I mostly do one-to-one discussions or in small groups because I use the think-pair-share method. The only rules I want them to follow is that they have to speak English in the breakout rooms because it is quite different from the normal school where you can hear them. And I want them to ask for details and use the time I give them.”

Did you assign any preparation/homework to this discussion?

“Yes, it was the Venn diagrams. But I did not also assign it on Google Classroom, so I just relied on the fact that they would do it because I told them, but as you saw they did not. Two of them said they did not but there were more.”

How did you choose the topic?

“We are reading the book since November - I gave them a list of recommended books, they voted and Animal Farm won. So some time ago we finished reading it and they were assigned to watch the film. Then I came to the idea of the debate, and I think it was a good grand finale lesson for the book.”

Do you prepare questions beforehand or on the spot?

“I prepare them beforehand but sometimes there are some questions that come to my mind when we speak so I ask them extra questions. But usually it is just one question during the lesson. But I have got the scenario for the whole lesson and they receive the questions on Google Classroom one minute before the lesson starts.”

Was the discussion effective in your view?

“Well, the thing is that some of them did not read even one chapter and did not watch the film, I am hundred percent sure about that because they always said they have nothing to add. But there are also some people who know it but are not willing to share, so it is quite

difficult. But I think it went well, I am glad they joined the discussion, and I think it gave them the picture of what it was really like even though they did not read it.”

What was the general aim of the discussion?

“The aim was obviously to sum up the book. Also I wanted each of them to be active throughout the whole lesson, that is why I chose the method. And maybe to learn something more about the debates, because we did not really do them in a controlled way. We sometimes have whole class debates, but those were not controlled.”

What was the biggest challenge for you when leading this discussion?

“The first challenge was that I knew that they are not ready for the first activity. So I was thinking about how this is going to run. And then I did not write down which group I assigned to be Snowball's faction and which one to be Napoleon's. And I knew that M. and E. will be the main speakers, they always are. So that was also why I had to call their names. I always ask some extra information from the others but they are the ones who always have something to add and it would be like a loop, it would never end. If they are able to bring new ideas, I am glad. But there has to be some information below.”

Would you do anything differently?

“I was thinking about it beforehand, whether the debate would not be enough for the lesson. But I suppose that we have to have a warm-up activity anyway, and I think I would do it the same way, maybe I could have given them some roles in the group. So maybe give E. the role of the note taker to ensure the people who are mostly passive are active.”

Is there any advice about leading discussion you would give to teachers who fear it?

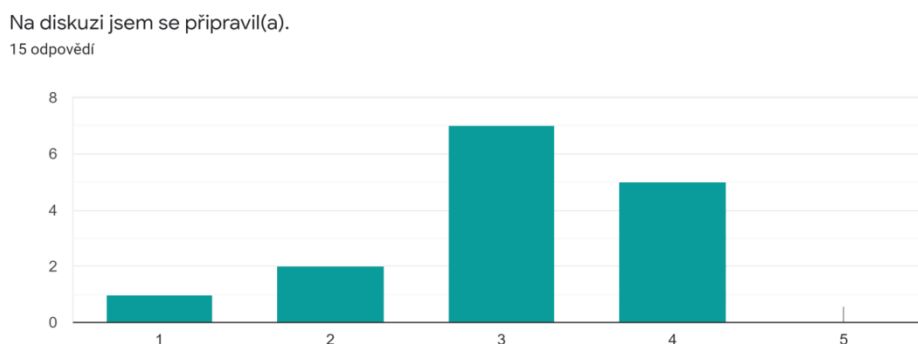
“If you never try, you never know. It is definitely getting better for me by the time. I think the key is that the teacher should give the students power. Maybe you have noticed that I did not really say anything about the content. I do not add anything to the content most of the time. So if they do not want to say anything, I just tell them “Okay, it is your time, I am not doing it for you.” So they know that they have to think about it to get to the end of the activity. So just keep trying and do not be afraid.”

Feedback from the students

The questionnaire was filled in by 15 out of 16 students, hence the return ratio is 93,75 %. This section aims to point out contrasting answers from the open-questions

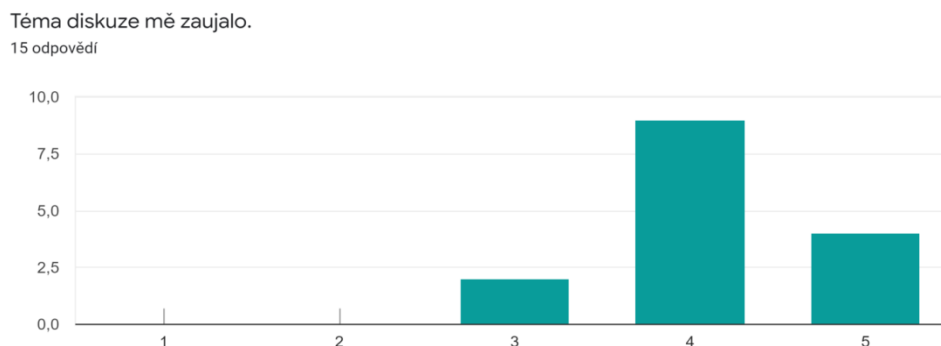
segment, together with the graphic representation of the scaled questions (1- least, 5- most). The complete open-question evaluation is to be found in the Appendix. Since the answers are in Czech, I translated them into English.

As far as the preparation for the debate is concerned, it cannot be compared reliably since some students might include only preparation for this lesson and some of them also reading the whole book. Striking is the reply of two students stating they have not prepared at all, given that the class have been dealing with this topic for four months already.



Graph 1: “I prepared for the discussion.”

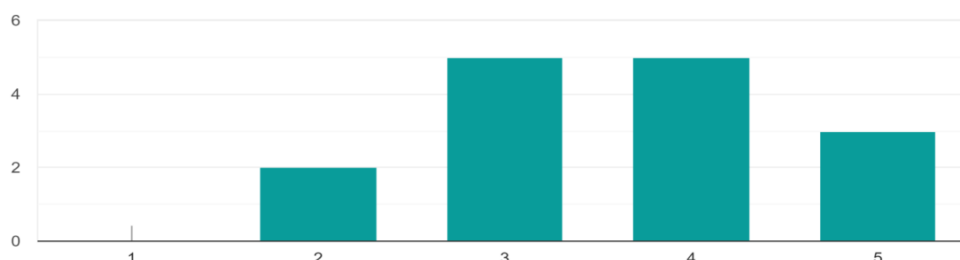
The students enjoyed this topic very much, mentioning it was “interesting and funny”, “creative”, “different from other lessons”, “enabled us to empathize with the characters of the book”. One student mentions that “the discussion was one-sided and one faction had a much better position to present their arguments”, which does not fit with the matter of the topic.



Graph 2: “I enjoyed the topic of the discussion.”

The question exploring if the students feel they were given enough time to think about individual questions or stages shows opposing answers, some of the students claiming they did and some of them would need more time.

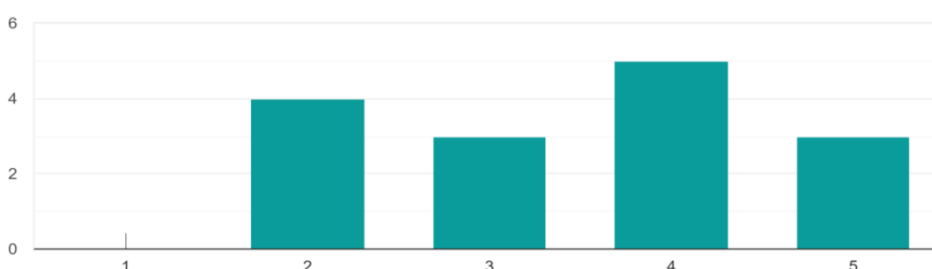
Dostal(a) jsem dost času k promýšlení odpovědi na otázky.
15 odpovědí



Graph 3: “I was provided enough time to think about the questions.”

Considering the development of language skills, the answers differ. Some students mention that they “spoke fluently before” or “knew all the words already”, some students state that they are “faster in reacting to questions”, “one discussion did not change much but if used frequently, it would surely have positive results” and “it forces me to think more quickly and communicate in real time”.

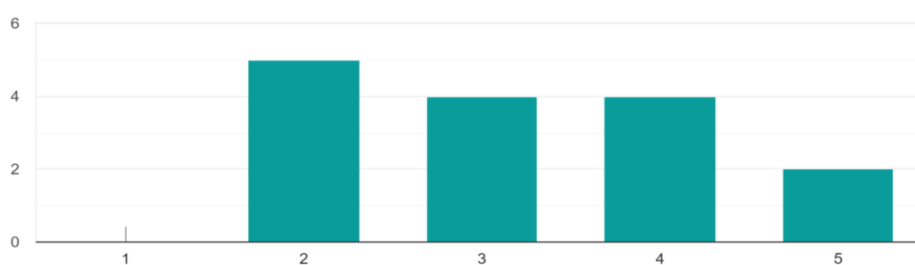
Diskuze mi pomohla zlepšit plynulost nebo jiné jazykové dovednosti.
15 odpovědí



Graph 4: “The discussion helped my fluency or other language skills.”

Since there were no questions from the teacher in this debate, the students in this question probably refer to the general instructions to the debate or their classmates' contributions. Their views on the difficulty and motivation effect of the questions differ, some mentioning that “they repeated often”, “they were interesting but I am not sure if difficult enough” and “rather not, they were not logical, they did not have enough evidence and the discussion was therefore boring”; some saying they were “demanding and logical” and “forced us to think more deeply”.

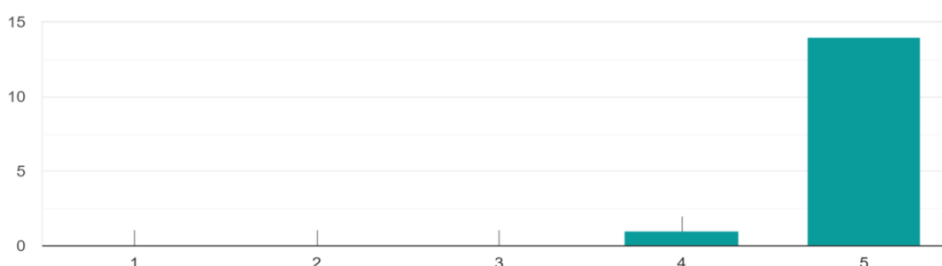
Otázky, které padly v diskuzi, pro mě byly dostatečně náročné a motivující.
15 odpovědí



Graph 5: “The questions asked in the discussion were challenging and motivating enough for me.”

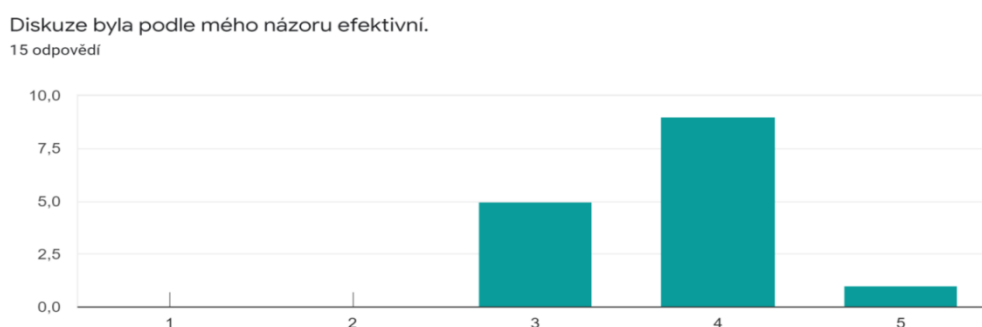
The atmosphere in the lesson was assessed as entirely positive by all of the students. They mention it is “pleasant and open”, “relaxed” and “comfortable”.

Atmosféra, kterou tento vyučující při diskuzi vytváří, je příjemná a bezpečná.
15 odpovědí



Graph 6: “The atmosphere created during the discussion by the teacher is pleasant and safe.”

Finally, the question concerning effectiveness of the discussion received mostly affirmative answers. The students state that it “taught them to debate with people with opposite views”, “everyone got opportunity to clearly and briefly state their opinion”, “a lot of people joined in” and “we fully seized the opportunity, thought about opinions of others and reacted to them”. Only a minority of students mentions that “there was not enough time for everyone”, “people who did not raise hands did not speak at all” and “not everyone could speak”.



Graph 7: “In my view, the discussion was effective.”

Results and discussion

In this section, the lesson is analysed with regard to the three hypotheses, common tendencies are summarised and possible recommendations are stated.

Firstly, the first hypothesis is examined. The topic was chosen very well, suiting both the learners' language level and the discussion needs. Students themselves were very satisfied with it, as can be seen from the questionnaires.

The preparation consisted of students' at-home reading and in-class argument gathering and ensured that the students were well-equipped with sufficient knowledge to join the discussion.

The classroom climate was exemplary, as the teacher was using both the encouraging phrases and non-verbal behaviour, and supported every effort on the part of the students.

As for the category of staged questions, there were no questions to be observed during this lesson. Despite the specific format of the discussion, I believe there were some

opportunities to conduct the discussion with questions that could have been used, for instance the moment of one student accusing the other faction of lying without any proof.

The time given to students to reflect on their ideas to the individual stages of the lesson was, in my view, not sufficient. The initial instructions were read by some of the students aloud, which does not support genuine focus on them – the students are more likely to focus on their (classmates') pronunciation instead of the meaning. Consequently, one group was confused, not sure what to do and which faction they belonged to despite the teacher's reassurance that everyone knew what to do, and her putting the instructions on the Google Classroom board. Furthermore, the work in one of the breakout rooms was slow and the students were mostly redirected to the main session before being able to gather their points or discuss them in greater detail. Students also did not have time to think over the tasks on their own. They worked in groups immediately after getting the instructions and hearing someone else's opinions might have disturbed them.

The level of student participation during the main debate was higher than the consolidation of responsibility due to the teacher's calling the students out. In this manner, she was trying to avoid the situation of strong students dominating, even though they still spoke several times. She also deliberately chose the shy students to deliver the introductory speeches to ensure they would join the lesson. Nevertheless, the breakout-room meetings were mostly dominated by the confident students and some students stayed silent for the whole lesson. In the end of the lesson, the teacher herself mentioned that “we know about the strong speakers and we have to catch up with them”, trying to prompt the students to be more active next time. All in all, if we look at the lesson through the lenses of any student but the dominating one, they participated with zero to two short contributions, which is not enough for a session focused on speaking.

On the other hand, as far as the connection of contributions in the main debate is concerned, this criterion can be characterized by utmost success, causing the debate to be truly meaningful. The students did not know which of them would be called out next and therefore they had a good reason to listen actively.

This lesson did not feature any explicit work on language development. Naturally, in this case the practice of spoken fluency was the goal, yet as the theoretical part explains, the fluency will not improve magically on its own and needs to be brought into focus. As

can be seen from the students' feedback, some students state they spoke fluently before or knew all of the words already – if students are not pushed to use new language or more difficult grammar, they revert to the language they already know and their speaking skills do not improve.

The lesson was concluded by students' self-evaluation. On the one hand, it made the students reflect on their efforts during the debate which is very beneficial for any future attempts of it. On the other hand, the topic of the debate – whether to build a windmill or not – and the argumentation strategies used by the students were not concluded in any way, which may have left some of the participants unconvinced about the purpose of such an activity.

	External observer	Students
Topic	S	4,1 = S
Preparation	S	X
Classroom climate	S	4,9 = S
Staged/motivating questions	U	3,2 = U
Time for students to think	U	3,6 = S
Level of student participation	U	N/A
Connected contributions	S	N/A
L2 development	U	3,4 = U
Conclusion of the discussion	U	N/A

Table 1: Summary of the criteria

(S= satisfactory for values over 3,5; U= unsatisfactory for values under 3,5; N/A = not asked; X = disregarded)

After assessing the individual criteria (Table 1), it can be seen that they are met exactly halfway, making it difficult to decide whether the discussion was really effective. Students' feedback describes it as rather effective and the teacher is likewise mostly satisfied with its course. From the general point of view, the lesson was well planned theoretically using engaging activities and forms of cooperation that logically led to the final debate. However, if we look at it from the point of view of a single student, there were many different stages and the work within them was mostly hasty with not enough time for everyone to participate and practise speaking skills. For this reason, I cannot assess the discussion as effective, and because the majority of criteria are not fulfilled, the hypothesis A does not apply.

Since the majority of criteria are not fulfilled, the hypothesis B applies.

The differences in perception of the discussion are not minor, whether it be from the point of view of individual students – their verbal opinions differed, mine or the teacher's. Therefore, the hypothesis C does not apply.

	External observer	Students	Teacher
Effectiveness	U	3,7 = S	S

Table 2: Summary of the perceived effectiveness
(S= satisfactory for values over 3,5; U= unsatisfactory for values under 3,5)

Generally, all of the activities were appropriately chosen and fitted into the overall design of the lesson, but each of them would need much more time in order not to stay incomplete and bring the expected outcome.

The solution might be to omit the first half of the lesson and devote it all to the debate and its preparation stages, in accordance with the saying “less is more”. Another suggestion is to let the students briefly repeat important instructions to ensure they really understand what to do – it might seem natural given their age and the reassurance from the teacher, but in practice the students very often do not listen carefully and get lost easily. The last piece of advice is to agree on the rules of work in breakout rooms in advance. The students need to internalise that they have to focus and start the discussion there

immediately and responsibly, and not waste three out of five minutes by getting oriented or commenting on things not connected to the topic (in this case background noises, which is on the other hand understandable). Once these obstacles are solved, I believe the discussion is much more effective and brings the desired results.

3.2.2 Lesson 2

General information

Lesson 2 took place at the grammar school Gymnázium Jana Nerudy on 8 March. It was a Monday morning class starting at 10:00, and it was led by Alexis Katakaidis, a young male teacher in his thirties. The class was comprised of 15 sixth-grade students (the year of graduation from the six-grade grammar school), 4 males and 11 females, aged from 18 to 19 years, their general language level being B2-C1 according to the teacher. The meeting was held through the Microsoft Teams video conferencing tool, and the students were notified at the beginning of the lesson they would be observed.

Description of the lesson

The lesson starts with organizational issues regarding presentations students delivered in previous lessons. The teacher announces students have around five minutes to share their opinions to this, but as three students, some of them repeatedly, contribute to this issue, this stage takes 15 minutes altogether. Another topic that is discussed during this phase is whether students should be evaluated mainly based on their language skills or the content in the same way.

After that, the teacher lets his students know that the main part of the lesson will be dedicated to a philosophical discussion in which they are to explore some questions and “get closer to something that might be considered a right answer for everyone, even though there will be different opinions”.

The teacher asks his first question: “What is duty and what duties do you have personally?” He divides the students in pairs into breakout rooms for three minutes. In the room that I observe, the discussion starts immediately, is lively and relevant. Both the students react to each other in turns and utilise all of the time given to share their opinions.

In the next step, the class is brought back to the main room and the teacher calls out two students to share their ideas with the whole class. Both of them take approximately two minutes to do so and explain their views exhaustively. The teacher creates a very pleasant atmosphere, smiles, nods his head, makes jokes (not at the expense of students) and uses phrases like “I thank you very much for the points that you are making”, “I really love how we are comfortable saying our opinions and I want to appreciate that” or “I am going to ask X if you would be so kind and express your thoughts”.

The teacher continues with a second question: “Do we have a duty to fight for democracy in our country?” He explains the instructions for the work in breakout rooms. The students are to form groups of three and each student will play a role. The one with their name closest to the start of alphabet (A) will defend the thesis, the second one (B) will be an opponent and the third one (C) will play a devil's advocate, pushing their classmates to argument better. The teacher repeats instructions twice to be sure everybody understands. This stage should last for four minutes, but in reality lasts seven in total.

I observe one group during this task, in which the devil's advocate role is played by the teacher himself. Student A has no problems defending the thesis, while Student B tries to put forward counterarguments and it is evident that it is difficult for her. Teacher C prompts both of the students to find new perspectives, but Student B states she in fact agrees with the thesis and therefore it is complicated for her to oppose. The teacher assures her it does not matter and that it is important to be able to defend a view with which we do not agree, for the sake of expanding the discussion.

Once the group is in the main room again, the teacher calls on two different students to share their real opinions, no matter what role they played in the breakout room. Both the students again take longer turns to explain their viewpoints, and the teacher summarizes their speeches using phrases like “So if I understand it correctly,...”, “So what you are saying is that...”. The teacher also gives opportunity to other students throughout the whole lesson, asking if anybody would like to comment, but the students do not share their ideas if not explicitly called on.

The teacher mentions twice during the lesson that he “sees already there will not be enough time to finish it”, but it does not matter in his view, for they will take this discussion as a springboard and will continue it next time.

After that, the teacher poses his last question: “What duties do you have to your country, if any, and why?” He asks the students to take a paper and quickly note down their ideas for two minutes. Once they are ready, he calls on one student and one volunteer to share thoughts on that. When they finish speaking, he sets homework: to write 8 lines as a reflection on this question. On the whole, six students talked during the open class discussion, three other students discussed the issues before the main discussion, and six students (40 %) stayed silent apart from the work in breakout rooms. There were no dominating students.

Finally, the teacher invites his students to send comments to the common chat, responding to the question “Is there a thought you heard from somebody else today that you liked?” The students do so, and the lesson is ended by the teacher praising the students, saying “Thank you everyone for your interaction today”, “I like that you were analysing the questions, that was lovely” or “It was very enjoyable for me today”.

Interview with the teacher

This section features authentic responses from the teacher.

How long have you been teaching and at what types of school?

“I have been teaching on and off for about 8 years, and it varied from 25 lessons a week to 8 nowadays. I have taught children from the age of 8 to 19, and I also teach student teachers at university programme Učitel naživo.”

How long have you been working with this group of students?

“Since September, so I saw them in person only about 6 times.”

Do you do discussions on a regular basis? Do you have any rules set up?

“I do them fairly often, I would say it is an integral part of my lessons, but it is not always a discussion that takes 45 minutes, sometimes it is longer and sometimes shorter. And we do try to discuss what a good discussion looks like, but today we did not go back to it.”

Did you assign any preparation/homework to this discussion?

“Not to this one, but sometimes I want the students to look at a video or read an article.”

How did you choose the topic?

“This topic is related to a series of lessons that I would like to teach, and it is going to help the students pass the exams, so it is one of the topics they will have to speak about in their school-leaving exam.”

Do you prepare questions beforehand or on the spot?

“Mostly before it. Sometimes I even think of the follow-up questions when I have more time for preparation. But I prefer to think of the follow-up ones too.”

Was the discussion effective in your view?

“Well, we would have to define the word effective, but I think that people took part and that we have reached some new height of understanding based on their reactions in the lesson and comments in the chat. But I was mostly satisfied with it.”

What was the general aim of the discussion?

“I think just cultivating us in terms of this particular question and motivating the students to look with more eagerness on the topic that we are going to be studying, which is Czech history.”

What was the biggest challenge for you when leading this discussion?

“I would not call it a challenge, but I regret that we have not had enough time to look at the last question, which I thought would be the most important and complex one, so I felt that had we have more time, then it would have been more effective.”

Would you do anything differently?

“Not really - I would have wished for the circumstances to be different – because this was a lesson that followed after high-stakes exams and I needed to have the students let off some steam before we could continue with the discussion. It would have been nice if we could have just looked at the discussion itself.”

Is there any advice about leading discussion you would give to teachers who fear it?

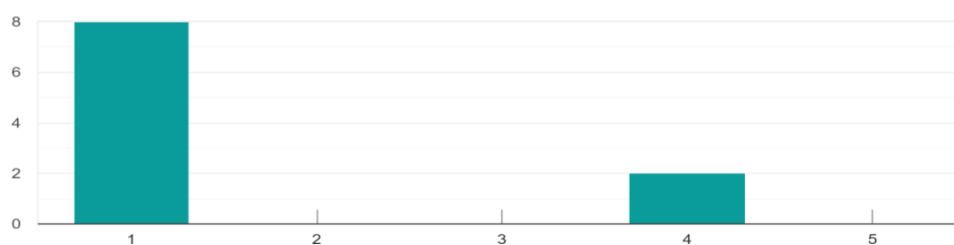
“Prepare questions in advance, try them beforehand with your friends, and see if they like it, if it inspires them.”

Feedback from the students

The questionnaire was filled in by 10 out of 15 students, hence the return ratio is 66,67 %. This section aims to point out contrasting answers from the open-questions segment, together with the graphic representation of the scaled questions (1- least, 5- most). The complete open-question evaluation is to be found in the Appendix. Since the answers are in Czech, I translated them into English.

As there was no homework set for the lesson and no prior preparation in the lesson, this criterion can be disregarded.

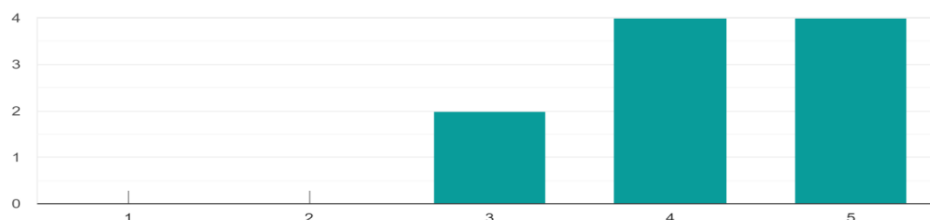
Na diskuzi jsem se připravil(a).
10 odpovědí



Graph 8: “I prepared for the discussion.”

All the students without exception appreciated the topic, describing it as “original and important”, “controversial” or “unusual and specific”. Other comments mention the good combination of philosophy and language, focus on civic responsibilities, the fact that the topic was not easy but it was neither too specific nor too abstract, or the fact that young adults encounter this topic often and think about it themselves.

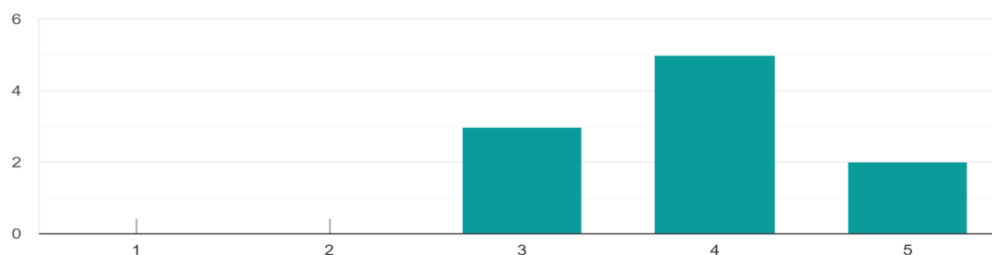
Téma diskuze mě zaujalo.
10 odpovědí



Graph 9: “I enjoyed the topic of the discussion.”

As for the time to think about the individual questions, the answers are equivocal. Some students state it sufficed, some mention they would need more time but the lesson is limited for 45 minutes.

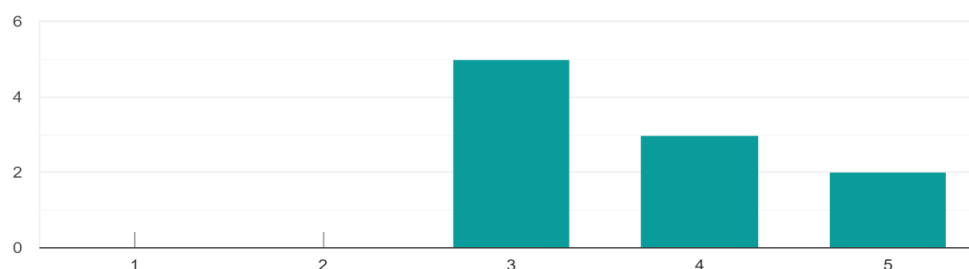
Dostal(a) jsem dost času k promýšlení odpovědi na otázky.
10 odpovědí



Graph 10: “I was provided enough time to think about the questions.”

Considering the development of language skills, the students mostly agree that it helped them, mentioning that “sudden calling out forces us to improvise... and we can try out this stressful situation”, “I had to use collocations that I normally do not encounter” or “I improve each time I have to create sentences without preparation and interpret my thoughts immediately”. Only two students state the opposite, that “today's discussion did not improve any specific language skills, but generally it is very beneficial” and “it widened my horizons, but I do not feel any improvement in fluency”.

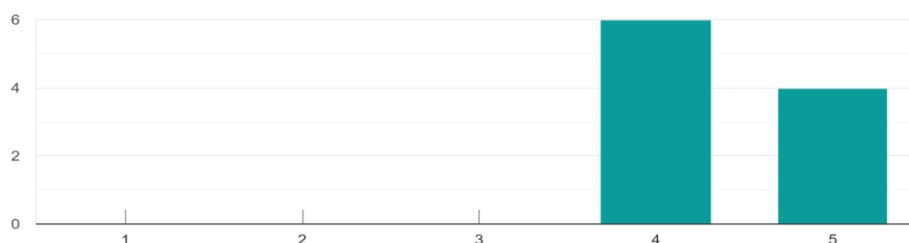
Diskuze mi pomohla zlepšit plynulost nebo jiné jazykové dovednosti.
10 odpovědí



Graph 11: “The discussion helped my fluency or other language skills.”

The questions asked in the discussion were liked by everyone. The students state they were “specific and perceivable”, “the question whether we have duty towards our country is relevant especially now in the time of crisis”, “I still think about the question *What is duty?*” or “everyone had a different opinion and we could discuss it”.

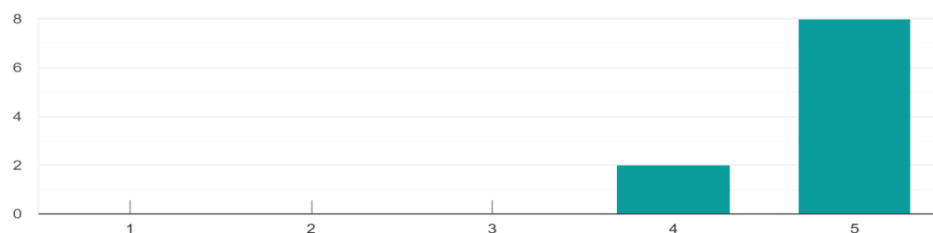
Otázky, které padly v diskuzi, pro mě byly dostatečně náročné a motivující.
10 odpovědí



Graph 12: “The questions asked in the discussion were challenging and motivating enough for me.”

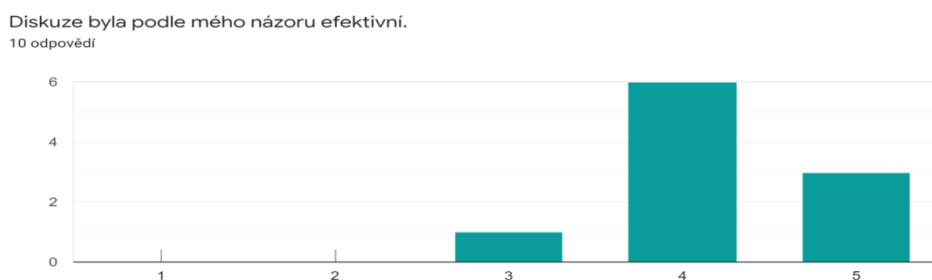
Classroom climate was assessed as “relaxed and very pleasant”, the students add that “I feel I can express myself freely without being judged”, “all of us get opportunity to share and the teacher supports even the shy ones” or “if we want to share personal opinions, it is welcome but the teacher never forces us to do so”.

Atmosféra, kterou tento vyučující při diskuzi vytváří, je příjemná a bezpečná.
10 odpovědí



Graph 13: “The atmosphere created during the discussion by the teacher is pleasant and safe.”

Finally, in the question about effectiveness of the lesson the students mostly agree it was (very) effective, but often mention lack of time – “generally, we did not have enough time to think over the answers, mostly because of time pressure”, “it was effective but we did not reach any conclusion because of lack of time – it is a pity, I think it is difficult to connect to the unfinished topic next lesson” or “we had to make haste”. At the same time, they appreciate, for instance, working in smaller groups, getting opportunity to express themselves or usefulness of thinking over such topics.



Graph 14: “In my view, the discussion was effective.”

Results and discussion

In this section, the lesson is analysed with regard to the three hypotheses, common tendencies are summarised and possible recommendations are stated.

Firstly, the first hypothesis is examined. The topic “duty and democracy” was chosen well – although philosophical and rather abstract, it was still appropriate for the learners' age and advanced language skills, mostly because of suitable narrowing the topic down to students' own experiences and lives.

There was no preparation for the lesson by students, either at home or in class. Nevertheless, in this case it did not hamper the discussion, for the purpose was initial gathering of ideas that the students already have. Therefore, no extra knowledge was needed and all the students could join the discussion from a level playing field.

The classroom climate was flawless. The teacher was very lively, greeted each student individually by their name on joining the session, made good use of both the verbal and non-verbal behaviour to show students they were taken seriously and their efforts were appreciated. The teacher created a pleasant working atmosphere, in which students did not

feel stressed on one hand, but on the other hand sensed that he requires a high level of performance, and tried to achieve it.

There were three questions asked by the teacher to be analysed. They were phrased in a simple manner, so they did not split students' attention. We can easily observe staging, starting with the first question falling into the lower level convergent type, continuing with the second one matching the higher level convergent type, and finishing with the third one representing the higher level divergent pattern. This sequence enabled students to join right from the beginning and also develop their thinking as the discussion progressed.

As for the time provided to think about the individual questions, students were given enough time to think about the issues in pairs or groups, but no time was provided for them to think about the matter on their own. This was not a problem for the most part of the lesson, but it could be seen well in the case of the student who had to defend a point of view counter to her beliefs – as she did not get any time to prepare her arguments, she was unable to think of proper ones on the spot. Another comment relates to the teacher talk which was not excessive, but still higher than necessary. If the teacher slightly reduced his teacher talk, the students could get more time to think over their answers in silence. Generally, though, it can be said that the students used the given time well.

The level of student participation was higher than the consolidation of responsibility due to the teacher's calling the students who have not spoken yet out. If we consider the whole lesson, not only the discussion part, 9 out of 15 students (60 %) joined the open class discussion with quite long contributions. I cannot assess students' work in the breakout rooms, since I only observed one, but this particular one was very effective and the students in general seemed to be aware of the need to use the given time to practise speaking skills as much as possible.

The individual contributions in the open class discussion were connected and the students listened to each other, as can be seen from phrases like “as X said,…” or “I agree with what Y mentioned…”. There was a pattern to be observed – after each task in breakout rooms, the teacher called out two students to share their views. In all the three instances the second student reacted and agreed with the first one and then proceeded to supply their viewpoint. Furthermore, the role-play design of the second question gave the

students a real reason to listen to one another as well, since they had to directly react to the defender/opponent/devil's advocate.

This lesson did not feature any explicit work on language development. Implicitly, the goal might have been spoken fluency and defending a point of view. In this case, I would say that the students benefited more from learning the general skill of presenting arguments/counterarguments than being able to use suitable language for it, because not a single student used any specific language/phrase for that. As explained in the theoretical part, if students are not pushed to use new language, they stay in their comfort zone and revert to the language they already know.

The lesson was concluded by students' commenting on each other's contributions in the chat. This procedure ensured that the students reflected on the content mentioned during the lesson, what they personally appreciated and it also showed the teacher if they listened to each other. The comments in the chat confirm that: *“I liked what X said about the fight for democracy - that we do not have to fight, but it is in our interest to do something when a problem arises“*, *“I liked the thought that in some cases, democracy might not be the only political system worth defending - if there is a better option“*, *“I couldn't think about many duties to my country and Y mentioned some that I didn't realise I also perceive as very important“*, *“I liked the question that X and Y brought up - what does it actually mean to FIGHT for democracy?“* or *“I like the diversity of the interpretation of "duty"“*.

	External observer	Students
Topic	S	4,2 = S
Preparation	S	X
Classroom climate	S	4,8 = S
Staged/motivating questions	S	4,4 = S
Time for students to think	U	3,9 = S
Level of student participation	S	N/A
Connected contributions	S	N/A
L2 development	U	3,7 = S
Conclusion of the discussion	S	N/A

Table 3: Summary of the criteria

(S= satisfactory for values over 3,5; U= unsatisfactory for values under 3,5; N/A = not asked; X = disregarded)

After assessing the individual criteria (Table 3), it can be seen that they are almost fully met. Students' feedback describes it as mostly effective and the teacher is likewise satisfied with its course. The lesson was well planned and although there was no time left to explore the last and most complex question properly, the students were given enough time to interact with each other, and used it well. For this reason, I assess the discussion as effective, and because the majority of criteria are fulfilled, the hypothesis A applies.

Since the majority of criteria are fulfilled, the hypothesis does not B apply.

The differences in perception of the discussion are minor, whether it be from the point of view of individual students – their opinions differed predominantly only in the question of time, mine or the teacher's. Therefore, the hypothesis C applies.

	External observer	Students	Teacher
Effectiveness	S	4,2 = S	S

Table 4: Summary of the perceived effectiveness
(S= satisfactory for values over 3,5; U= unsatisfactory for values under 3,5)

The common tendency of this lesson could be the lack of time, which was also mentioned by the students themselves. As far as the recommendations are concerned, to increase the time in which students can think over their views I propose reducing teacher talking time, especially wrapping the instructions into more unnecessary sentences. The teacher may feel more secure and have the feeling of the lesson proceeding more smoothly, but the complete silence (up to 20 seconds) is needed for the students to be able to concentrate and quickly form their ideas in their heads, as discussed in the theoretical part (Section 2.4.4); this is especially relevant when defending a point of view counter to their own beliefs. Another suggestion is to replace teacher's summarizing of students' ideas and inviting silent students to do it instead – this way the level of student participation increases and teacher talking time is further reduced. The last piece of advice is to briefly prompt the students to use some of the new language worked on in previous lessons, or at least to use some advanced phrases of agreeing/disagreeing, etc., in a lesson such as this one, when there is no space to pay closer attention to them.

3.2.3 Lesson 3

General information

Lesson 3 took place again at the grammar school Gymnázium Arabská on 16 March. It was a Tuesday morning class starting at 10:35, and it was led by Marek Lang, a young male teacher in his thirties. The class was comprised of 14 third-grade students, 13 males and 1 female (a class of computer programmers), aged from 17 to 18 years, their general language level being C1 according to the teacher. The meeting was held through

the Google Meet video conferencing tool, and the students were notified at the beginning of the lesson that they would be observed.

Description of the lesson

The lesson starts by the teacher showing the lesson plan to the students and asking one of them to read the general information – the short text is about the notion that mathematics ought to be one of the mandatory high school exit examinations, and therefore introduces the topic of the lesson to the students.

The teacher announces that the lesson will be full of discussion and elicits useful language for giving opinion – he wants to hear at least ten synonyms for the word “and”, two synonyms for “because” and a more formal expression for the latter two.

The first activity is held in the breakout rooms. The students in pairs think about the arguments for and against the compulsory mathematics final examination, and their task is to note down at least two for each side. This preparation stage takes six minutes, the students are active and discuss relevant ideas.

Once the group meets in the main room again, the teacher asks the students to present their ideas to their classmates and adds two rules – one student can speak for 60 seconds at the most and they should not repeat what has already been said. The teacher briefly repeats the instructions and then sends the students back to their breakout rooms just for 30 seconds, to agree on who will speak on behalf of the pair and which arguments they will present. As a next step, the teacher calls on all the individual rooms to present their ideas. This stage takes seven minutes, is very swift and the students share their views using long turns, sticking to the time limit and occasionally using the more advanced phrases for giving opinion.

Neither the teacher nor any of the students have their cameras turned on, so the non-verbal behaviour cannot be seen. Nevertheless, the teacher supports the students by phrases like “These are very interesting ideas that you give!” or “Awesome!”, and back-channeling (humming).

As a next step, the teacher gives the students time limit of two minutes and asks them to consider the arguments that they have just heard, decide whether they are in favour of or against the mandatory mathematics exit examination, and to write down their

strongest argument. The students work in silence individually. After that, the teacher asks everyone to raise their virtual hands if they are in favour, and fills in the class statistics – seven learners are in favour and seven against.

The open class discussion then begins. The teacher asks his students to express their opinion to the rest of the class using twenty seconds at the most. At the same time, the classmates should listen, write down arguments that agree or disagree with what the others maintain, and present them in the discussion. This stage takes eight minutes in total. The students raise their virtual hands without having to be called on, confidently present their views and very often react to each other.

After that, the teacher asks the students if there is anyone who has changed their opinion after the discussion – no one has.

The lesson continues with another seven-minute long discussion in which the teacher asks if a compromise can be made, if the current system in the Czech Republic is a compromise and why (not). Several students raise their hands and speak on their own, and as the lesson draws near the end, the teacher also calls on students who have not spoken yet.

Finally, the teacher ends the lesson with a short speech, saying that the issue is really complex, people have a lot of opinions and it is difficult to satisfy them all, and that is why we can see a lot of changes in the educational system – it will probably continue to be controversial in future as well. Then the teacher thanks the class for the productive discussion and the lesson ends in a pleasant atmosphere.

Interview with the teacher

This section features authentic responses from the teacher.

How long have you been teaching and at what types of school?

“I have been teaching for 10 years, at this particular school for 4 years, and before this I used to teach in a language school.”

How long have you been working with this group of students?

“It has been three years now.”

Do you do discussions on a regular basis? Do you have any rules set up?

“The whole class discussion is not very common in my classes, I prefer to divide the students into smaller groups. There are students like X, whose English is brilliant but he does not feel comfortable to express his views before the entire class, that means if it was in a small group, he would have said far more. When it comes to the rules, if I have a special activity, it always has to have rules, otherwise it would be a mess, but there are no special rules for general discussions that I carry out with them.”

Did you assign any preparation/homework to this discussion?

“No.”

How did you choose the topic?

“I wanted to have an issue that is close to them - if you know the students, you know what they feel strong about and what they want to talk about.”

Do you prepare questions beforehand or on the spot?

“I prefer shorter activities with precise questions prepared beforehand because that makes the students to be active.”

Was the discussion effective in your view?

“Well, it depends, when they talked in pairs of course it was, but I am not that sure whether the whole class discussion is effective, because there are a lot of passive moments, so I would have preferred to go through this in smaller groups, if I had been given the choice.”

What was the general aim of the discussion?

“It was that the students can discuss the compulsory high school final examinations.”

What was the biggest challenge for you when leading this discussion?

“Well, I did not feel like there was a challenge. Maybe, when it comes to the efficiency, I did not correct any students, and there have been some mistakes, but it would not have been productive if I had corrected them.”

Would you do anything differently?

“I guess it worked like this and the students discussed, they were engaged, and yes, of course we had more students who talked a little bit more, but this is normal if you have a whole class discussion.”

Is there any advice about leading discussion you would give to teachers who fear it?

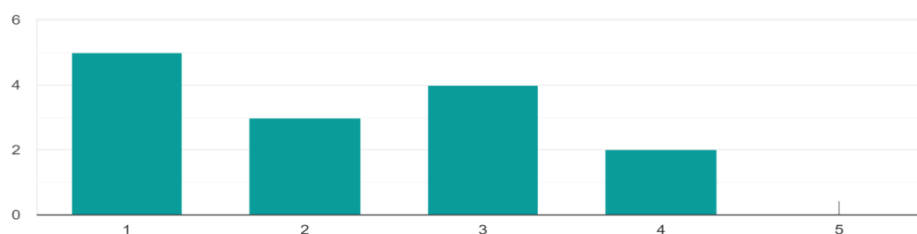
“Prepare well the activities you want to go through and do not expect the students to start speaking and giving arguments right at the beginning of the discussion, they need to have some time to think about their ideas, they need to take them down and discuss in smaller groups, and then once they have activated their knowledge and vocabulary, and they have some ideas, they can delve into the issue, but this must be there.”

Feedback from the students

The questionnaire was filled in by all of the 14 students, hence the return ratio is 100 %. This section aims to point out contrasting answers from the open-questions segment, together with the graphic representation of the scaled questions (1- least, 5- most). The complete open-question evaluation is to be found in the Appendix. Since the answers are in Czech, I translated them into English.

As there was no preparation set for the lesson, this criterion can be disregarded.

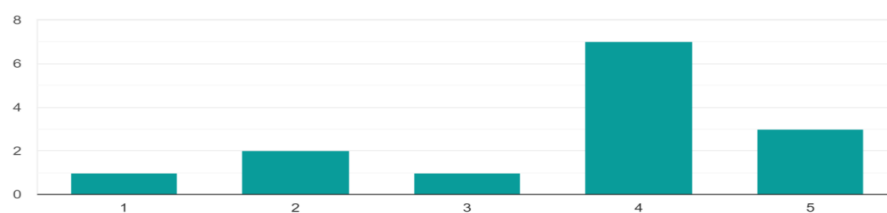
Na diskuzi jsem se připravil(a).
14 odpovědí



Graph 15: “I prepared for the discussion.”

The students mostly enjoyed the topic of the lesson greatly, mentioning it was “topical”, “relevant for us”, “easy to discuss” or “I liked it very much because we could talk about our point of view and not something we learn because of the curriculum”. Only three students state they did not like it very much, one of them mentioning he did not know enough about it to be able to create an opinion.

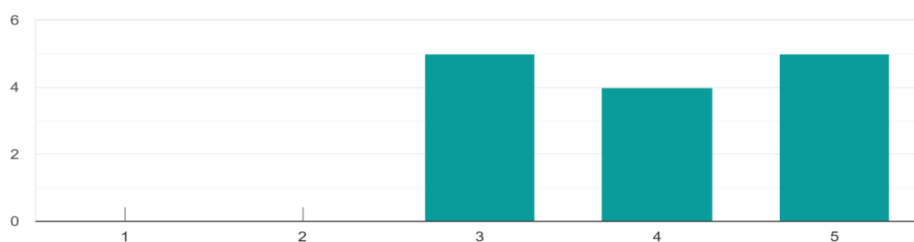
Téma diskuze mě zaujalo.
14 odpovědí



Graph 16: “I enjoyed the topic of the discussion.”

The question exploring if the students feel they were given enough time to think about individual questions or stages shows unanimously (within the oral evaluation) that they did.

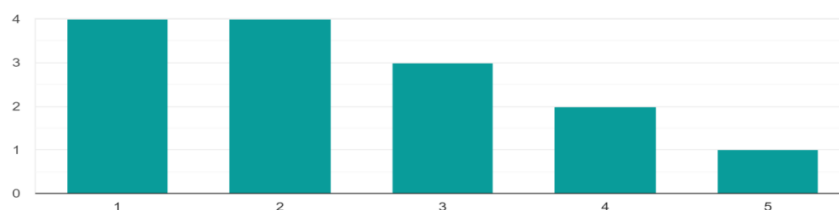
Dostal(a) jsem dost času k promýšlení odpovědi na otázky.
14 odpovědí



Graph 17: “I was provided enough time to think about the questions.”

Considering the development of language skills, the answers differ. Half of the students mention that a single discussion cannot change much, and the other students think it helped them, mentioning for instance that “yes, predominantly because I had enough time to think over and prepare my answers”.

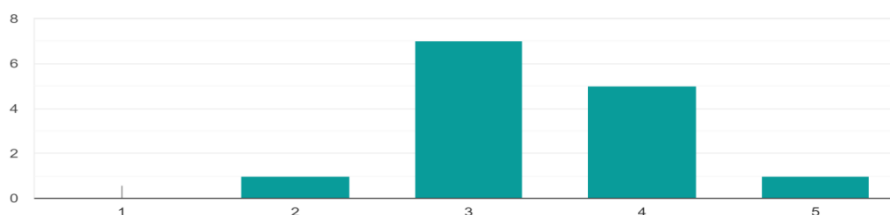
Diskuze mi pomohla zlepšit plynulost nebo jiné jazykové dovednosti.
14 odpovědí



Graph 18: “The discussion helped my fluency or other language skills.”

The questions asked in the discussion were mostly considered demanding and motivating enough. The students state they were “relatively general”, “controversial” and the topic “complicated”. One student writes that “the demand of one's own ideas increases brain activity and expressing an opinion is a tough nut to crack, let alone fighting for it”.

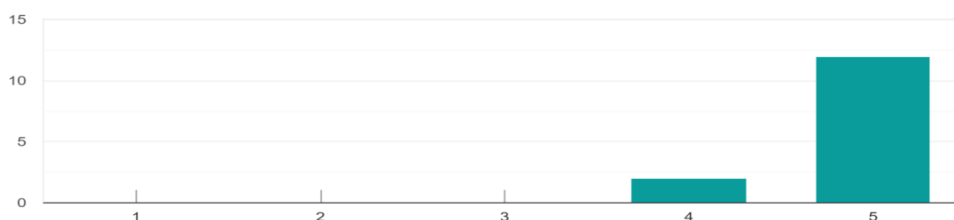
Otázky, které padly v diskuzi, pro mě byly dostatečně náročné a motivující.
14 odpovědí



Graph 19: “The questions asked in the discussion were challenging and motivating enough for me.”

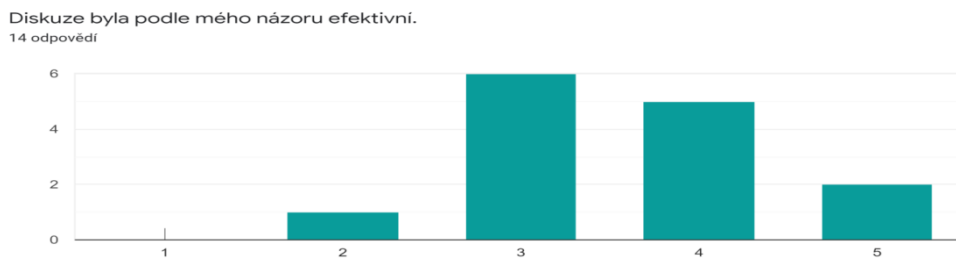
Classroom climate was assessed as “pleasant” by all of the students, one student adds that “I do not fall asleep in the lessons and surprisingly I have enough energy”.

Atmosféra, kterou tento vyučující při diskuzi vytváří, je příjemná a bezpečná.
14 odpovědí



Graph 20: “The atmosphere created during the discussion by the teacher is pleasant and safe.”

Finally, the question concerning effectiveness of the discussion received mostly affirmative answers. The students mention that “we somehow summarized everything that was needed”, “I got to know my classmates' opinions” or “extremely, there were many opinions to discuss and contradictory views were in ideal number”. Surprisingly, two of the students write that it was not effective at all, because no one changed their opinion – as if that was the main point of discussion.



Graph 21: “In my view, the discussion was effective.”

Results and discussion

In this section, the lesson is analysed with regard to the three hypotheses.

Firstly, the first hypothesis is examined. The topic was chosen very well, as it is relevant for the students taking the final examination the following year themselves. It also suited this class, for it is a class of computer programmers on one hand, but the one of the two focused on humanities on the other hand. Therefore, it was apparent that there would be different opinions on the issue generating a fruitful exchange of ideas.

There was no prior preparation for the lesson by the students, but the time provided for in-class preparation and argument gathering was more than sufficient and ensured that the students were well-equipped with knowledge to join the discussion.

The classroom climate was very good. The teacher was very energetic and made good use of verbal behaviour to show students their effort was appreciated. He might have turned his camera on which could possibly create better connections with the class and minimise a sense of isolation or loneliness on the part of the students, but the atmosphere was pleasant nevertheless.

The questions asked by the teacher were as follows: *What are the arguments for and against the compulsory exam? Are you in favour of or against it? Has your opinion changed after the discussion? Can a compromise be made? Is the current system a compromise and why (not)?* We can observe staging, starting from the easier questions (higher level convergent) and continuing to the more abstract ones (higher level divergent).

As for the time provided to think about the individual questions, this time the students were indeed given a sufficient time to think about the issues both in pairs and

individually in complete silence. This arguably contributed to their being able to react to each other so well.

The level of student participation was high. Twelve out of fourteen students actively engaged in the various stages of the discussion, explaining their views exhaustively, and the remaining two had the opportunity to practise speaking at least in the breakout room. The teacher gave firstly the students opportunity to contribute without calling them on, and did so only in the end of the lesson. Furthermore, a great strategy to avoid strong students' dominating the floor proved the employment of maximum time limits for expressing a view of 60 and 20 seconds, even though the latter one was not strictly enforced. This rule ensured that the discussion proceeded quickly and smoothly forward, majority of students had a chance to join, and it possibly also motivated them to join when they knew they were only required to speak for a short period of time.

The individual contributions in the open class discussion were very well connected, as can be seen from phrases like “I generally agree with X, but...”, “I would just like to counter X's argument that...”, “I would say X had a very nice idea of...” or “I would like to respond to X.” The structure of the contributions in the main discussion (presenting a point of view) was as follows: A, B to A, C to A, D to A, A, E to D, B to A, F, E, A to A (building on his own contribution) and confirms that the students listened to each other attentively.

As for the work on language development, this lesson featured the revision of more advanced ways to express one's opinion. At the beginning, the students supplied expressions such as *in addition*, *what is more*, *moreover*, *furthermore*, *as well*, *on top of that*, *besides*, *too*, *also* instead of “and”, and *since*, *as*, *for* instead of “because”, and used some of them during the discussion.

The lesson was concluded by the teachers' short speech on complexity of this issue, and served as a reassurance for the students that it is okay to have different opinions on it.

	External observer	Students
Topic	S	3,6 = S
Preparation	S	X
Classroom climate	S	4,8 = S
Staged/motivating questions	S	3,4 = U
Time for students to think	S	4 = S
Level of student participation	S	N/A
Connected contributions	S	N/A
L2 development	S	2,4 = U
Conclusion of the discussion	S	N/A

Table 5: Summary of the criteria

(S= satisfactory for values over 3,5; U= unsatisfactory for values under 3,5; N/A = not asked; X = disregarded)

After assessing the individual criteria (Table 5), it can be seen that they are fully met. Students' feedback describes it as mostly effective and the teacher is likewise satisfied with its course. The lesson was very well planned and the students were given plenty of time to practise their spoken fluency skills. For this reason, I assess the discussion as effective, and because all of the criteria are fulfilled, the hypothesis A applies.

Since all of the criteria are fulfilled, the hypothesis does not B apply.

The differences in perception of the discussion are minor, whether it be from the point of view of individual students, mine or the teacher's. Therefore, the hypothesis C applies.

	External observer	Students	Teacher
Effectiveness	S	3,6 = S	S

Table 6: Summary of the perceived effectiveness
(S= satisfactory for values over 3,5; U= unsatisfactory for values under 3,5)

Since the discussion was utterly effective, there are no recommendations to be given.

3.2.4 Lesson 4

General information

Lesson 4 took place at the grammar school Gymnázium Botičská on 13 April. It was a Tuesday morning class starting at 10:00, and it was led by a female teacher in her forties. The class was comprised of 13 third-grade students, 5 males and 8 females, aged from 17 to 18 years, their general language level being B1 according to the entrance exam test. The meeting was held through the Microsoft Teams video conferencing tool, and the students were notified at the beginning of the lesson that they would be observed.

Description of the lesson

The lesson starts with greeting the students by the teacher and asking how they are doing. No one has their camera switched on. The teacher then announces that the class is going to watch a TED Talks video and pre-teaches several vocabulary items by showing them used in sentences and letting the students guess the meaning from context. The students very often reply in Czech, using Czech sentences to describe the words. This stage takes ten minutes. The teacher does not use any encouraging phrases, and her body language cannot be seen, but her voice sounds pleasant and she reacts to the students by saying “yes” or “right”.

Then, the teacher plays the eight-minute TED Talks video with English subtitles called “*The next outbreak? We're not ready*” featuring Bill Gates, without any specific

task assigned while watching it. After that, she calls on individual students and asks several comprehension questions, such as: “According to Gates, why the greatest catastrophe is not a war but pandemic?”, “Why are we ready for a war?” or “Was the global community prepared?” The students answer using short sentences, and since they get the answers right, it can be seen that at least the ones asked understood the content of the video.

After that, the teacher states that the discussion is going to take place now, and shares her screen to show to the class several pictures of Czech politicians and chief hygiene officers in office during the covid-19 pandemic. This stage takes the remaining 20 minutes of the lesson time. The teacher asks many questions to the students, some of them based on the pictures: “Who is in the picture?”, “Do you think Andrej Babiš has managed the crisis in the Czech Republic?”, “When did the pandemic begin?”, “What measures were introduced by Babiš in March?”, “What was happening in summer?”, “How was the situation before Christmas?”, “Was it a good idea to loosen the restrictions?”, “What could have been done differently?”, “Why did Babiš loosen the restrictions?”, “What does changing of healthcare ministers say about the situation?”, “What were the reasons for dismissals of the ministers?”, “What do other countries think of us because of that?”, “What do you think of the minister of education?”, “Do you agree with Plaga's steps?”, “Are you looking forward to go back to school?”, “What do you think of testing?”, “Can you imagine being tested twice a week?”, “Who is the greatest critic of Plaga? And what is the problem?”, “Do you support Babiš or Plaga?”, “What is on the poster?”, “Do you like the design of the poster?”, “Why might the poster scare people?”, “What about the current crisis worries you the most?” or “What gives you the most hope?”.

The students do not raise hands to answer the questions, the teacher therefore calls them on. The students give mostly one-word (yes or no) or one-sentence answers, and the teacher eventually answers all the questions herself, using several more sentences for each. The students often state that they do not know the answer because they do not care about politics, but in fact, they neither respond to the questions concerning their general opinion on the crisis or description of what was happening during the past year.

After asking the question, the teacher almost never provides silence for the students to think about it; when no one answers, she immediately asks additional questions which are the same ones, only reformulated, or very often translates the questions into Czech (not

because of the difficulty of the questions – she translates also A1 level questions such as “What do you think?” or “Who are the people in the photos?”). Students never respond to each other, mainly because they do not share any information or opinions on which they could subsequently build.

During this stage, the teacher openly states her opinions: “That shows us that Mr. Babiš is not a democratic leader, he is very pushy.”, “I think the poster is really bad, I think it is awful!”, “This is really sad and again, it shows the complete lack of strategy”, “Mr. Babiš is a famous populist.” By the continuity of questions and use of voice tone, she maneuvers the students into tarnishing the prime minister; and if they answer in congruence with her views, she enthusiastically agrees and adds her further opinions.

Finally, the lesson time is over and the teacher does not conclude the lesson in any way, only thanks the students for their attendance and attention and dismisses the class.

Interview with the teacher

The interview was conducted in Czech on request of the teacher, and translated to English by me.

How long have you been teaching and at what types of school?

“I have been teaching for 20 years already; firstly company courses, then at a private university and now it is this state secondary school.”

How long have you been working with this group of students?

“Since September.”

Do you do discussions on a regular basis? Do you have any rules set up?

“I do them rarely, but with better groups I sometimes do unplanned discussions, since they like to discuss things more.”

Did you assign any preparation/homework to this discussion?

“No.”

How did you choose the topic?

“I am not sure, maybe I got the idea because I have been vaccinated the other day, but to be honest, there was no deeper thought behind it.”

Do you prepare questions beforehand or on the spot?

“It depends, I prefer to have some questions prepared beforehand, but today almost all of them were thought of on the spot.”

Was the discussion effective in your view?

“To be honest, I really do not think about it in this way. I cannot say if it was effective. I admit there was not any deeper aim behind it, I mainly wanted to try it and see how it works. But if I have to decide, I would say within this group it was effective.”

What was the general aim of the discussion?

“It was to see if this weakest group is able to discuss something, but there was no deeper aim, for example to reach some conclusion, I do not have such high aspirations.”

What was the biggest challenge for you when leading this discussion?

“The most difficult was to persuade the most introverted students to say something – paradoxically, they are more willing to be active in this online instruction than they usually are. They are science-oriented and they perceive the English lessons as a necessary evil.”

Would you do anything differently?

“I would prepare it better, maybe more of the questions.”

Is there any advice about leading discussion you would give to teachers who fear it?

“Do not be afraid, there is always some positive effect, for instance that students get used to other types of work than just the frontal instruction.”

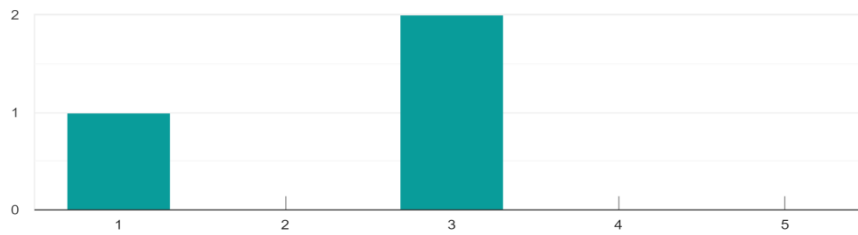
Feedback from the students

The questionnaire was filled in only by 3 students, hence the return ratio is 23 %. The informative value is, for this reason, low. This section aims to point out answers from the open-questions segment, together with the graphic representation of the scaled questions (1- least, 5- most). The complete open-question evaluation is to be found in the Appendix. Since the answers are in Czech, I translated them into English.

As there was no preparation set for the lesson, this criterion can be disregarded.

As for the topic of the lesson, two students mention they enjoyed it because “it was topical”, one student states that “politics is not exactly my cup of tea”.

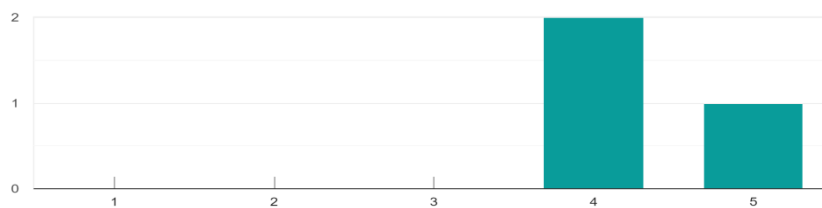
Téma diskuze mě zaujalo.
3 odpovědi



Graph 22: “I enjoyed the topic of the discussion.”

The question exploring if the students feel they were given enough time to think about individual questions shows that they did.

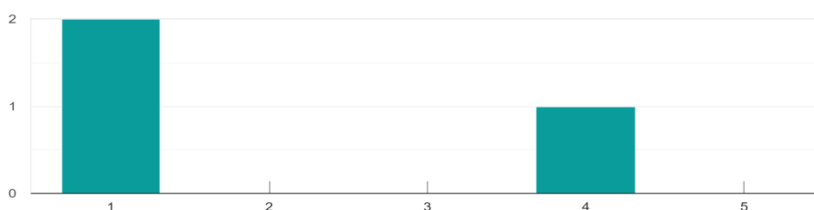
Dostal(a) jsem dost času k promýšlení odpovědi na otázky.
3 odpovědi



Graph 23: “I was provided enough time to think about the questions.”

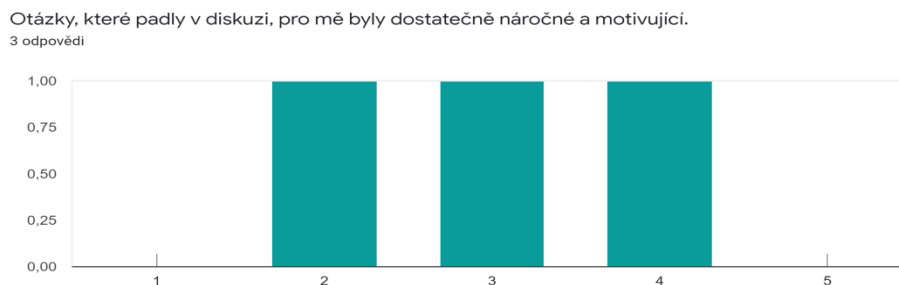
Considering the development of language skills, the answers differ. One student states that “one discussion does not change anything”, one mentions that “I get better used to making conversation in English” despite the fact that no real conversation took place during the lesson.

Diskuze mi pomohla zlepšit plynulost nebo jiné jazykové dovednosti.
3 odpovědi



Graph 24: “The discussion helped my fluency or other language skills.”

The questions asked in the discussion were again assessed differently, one student writes they were “demanding enough” and the other thinks the opposite.



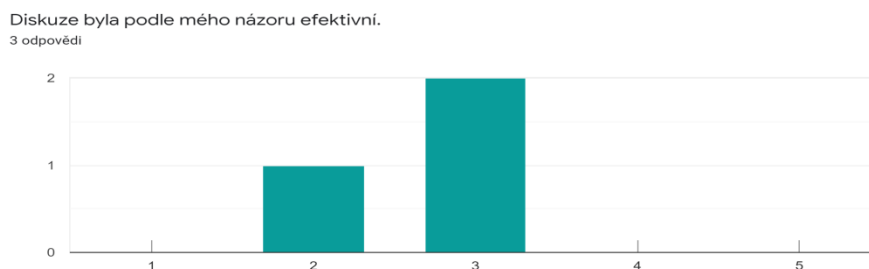
Graph 25: “The questions asked in the discussion were challenging and motivating enough for me.”

Classroom climate was assessed as pleasant by all of the three respondents.



Graph 26: “The atmosphere created during the discussion by the teacher is pleasant and safe.”

Finally, the question concerning effectivity of the discussion received rather negative answers.



Graph 27: “In my view, the discussion was effective.”

Results and discussion

In this section, the lesson is analysed with regard to the three hypotheses, common tendencies are summarised and possible recommendations are stated.

Firstly, the first hypothesis is examined. The topic of coronavirus crisis in the Czech Republic was chosen well, suiting both the learners' language level and the discussion needs. If it were subsequently worked with in a different way, its potential might have been exploited.

There was no preparation assigned for this topic. Consequently, the students were not oriented in the problematics of politicians and hygiene officers in office during the pandemic in the Czech Republic, and were unable to contribute to the discussion. The video shown at the beginning of the lesson served as a good lead-in activity for the topic, however it was not further developed; the discussion suddenly turned to the Czech politicians instead. Therefore, it cannot be considered as an in-class preparation for the topic.

The classroom climate was generally good, as the teacher frequently agreed with the students and sounded satisfied even with one-word yes/no answers. Nevertheless, students of different opinions on the Czech politicians' handling of the crisis might have felt intimidated to share them publicly, especially those contrary to the teacher's. The teacher should have avoided stating her opinions and manoeuvring the students into it.

The questions asked by the teacher were numerous, ranging from comprehension factual questions to questions seeking student's views on both personal and impersonal matters. The combination of personal-belief questions on a rather sensitive topic, which political views undoubtedly is, and stating the teacher's opinions openly, was unlucky.

Furthermore, as the teacher admitted herself, the questions were mostly thought of on the spot, and were neither structured in any way, nor staged.

As for the time given to students to reflect on their ideas, it was, in my view, not sufficient. Since the teacher very often translated the sentences into Czech or asked similar questions to fill in the silence, the students did not have enough time to contemplate possible answers.

The level of student participation was higher than the consolidation of responsibility, but it was because the teacher called on individual students. All the students were called on, yet they answered extremely shortly or did not answer at all.

The short student contributions were not connected in any way, since the students did not share any opinions. In fact, I am reluctant to call this activity a discussion; it rather resembled an interrogation in which the interviewer does not get sufficient answers and therefore asks more and more and falls into the talk-talk loop (Section 2.4.4).

This lesson featured some focus on language development, namely vocabulary, at the beginning of the lesson. However, it served as a pre-teaching for the listening activity, and the words were not used in the rest of the lesson during the discussion stage. Therefore, it can be disregarded as a means of enhancing the students' active vocabulary. Moreover, the teacher was principally talking the whole lesson on her own, and the students did not practise any fluency skills.

The lesson was concluded neither by the teacher, nor by the students. My general feeling was that of a fragmented lesson which had no aim, and during which the students did not learn any other views than those of the teacher.

	External observer	Students
Topic	S	2,3 = U
Preparation	U	X
Classroom climate	S	5 = S
Staged/motivating questions	U	3 = U
Time for students to think	U	4,3 = S
Level of student participation	U	N/A
Connected contributions	U	N/A
L2 development	U	2 = U
Conclusion of the discussion	U	N/A

Table 7: Summary of the criteria

(S= satisfactory for values over 3,5; U= unsatisfactory for values under 3,5; N/A = not asked; X = disregarded)

After assessing the individual criteria (Table 7), it can be seen that they are not met. For this reason, I assess the discussion as ineffective, and because the majority of criteria are not fulfilled, the hypothesis A does not apply.

Since the majority of criteria are not fulfilled, the hypothesis B applies.

The differences in perception of the discussion are not minor, whether it be from the point of view of the teacher or mine; the students' point of view is in this case disregarded due to the low informative value. Therefore, the hypothesis C does not apply.

	External observer	Students	Teacher
Effectiveness	U	2,6 = U	S

Table 8: Summary of the perceived effectiveness

(S= satisfactory for values over 3,5; U= unsatisfactory for values under 3,5)

Several solutions are at hand. Firstly, the teacher might have used the potential of the topical subject matter and kept it separated from the Czech political scene, for instance, by building the lesson on the introductory TED Talks video, which was chosen very well. Secondly, the students need to be equipped with information to be able to discuss – the teacher should have assigned some homework on the topic, or let the students gather the necessary information during the lesson. Another suggestion concerning the questions is to prepare several quality questions beforehand instead of a large amount of questions generating no responses. Further piece of advice is to provide students with silent time to contemplate the answers, and do not translate sentences which are clearly below students' language level. All of these suggestions should increase the level of student participation and also cause the contributions to be connected. Finally, the discussion could be concluded by the teacher or the students themselves in order to feel some sense of achievement.

4 Conclusion

This diploma thesis aimed to explain that an effective discussion is not a matter of chance, and cannot be approached with attitudes such as “let's hope that students will be talkative today”, “let's try it – either it works or not” or “I did my best in providing the chance to speak – if students do not use it, it is their own fault”.

As a matter of fact, discussion needs careful planning and leading on the part of the teacher, and then even a class comprised of reluctant learners can experience a great discussion. Students need a good reason to take part in the activity, and a skilful teacher is able to provide it. The teacher may know why the discussion is beneficial, but if they do not share it with the students, they will very likely not participate. Why should it stay “a secret of the chef”? The reasons to employ and join discussion, as described in the theoretical part, can be shared with students as well as all the other communication that needs to be realised in order to ensure that students are aware of the benefits of individual steps and strategies.

The diploma thesis examined the theoretical procedures and strategies which should with high probability ensure an effective discussion, and provided examples of several authentic lessons to compare the theoretical assumptions with real in-class practice. It aimed to mediate the external observer's, teacher's and students' evaluation and point of views on the same lesson, and to offer an image of how a discussion lesson can look like within various conceptions.

Findings show that there were some common tendencies to be observed with all the teachers. All of them, with the minor exception of Teacher 4, were able to create a warm classroom climate in which students did not feel intimidated to join the discussion.

In the same way, they chose topics which were generally suitable and interesting for the students.

None of the teachers assigned any homework preparation prior to the lesson, which resulted in two types of scenario: either the students gathered the necessary information during the lesson by means of pair-work or group-work and were sufficiently equipped with knowledge or opinions to contribute (Lesson 1, 2, 3), or they did not orientate themselves in the topic and were unable to join (Lesson 4).

In contrast, other areas were dealt with in different ways. Various strategies regarding questioning could be observed, ranging from no teacher interventions during the discussion in the style of debate (Lesson 1), through restricted amount of prepared staged questions (Lesson 2, 3), to a considerable amount of unplanned questions without staging (Lesson 4).

The majority of teachers also provided less time than needed for students to think about the individual questions (Lesson 1, 2, 4), with an exception of Teacher 3.

As for the level of participation, the majority of teachers achieved to include a number of students higher than the consolidation of responsibility, mainly because they called them on and did not wait for their own will to participate.

The contributions were connected and students listened to each other attentively, with the exception of Lesson 4, which ensured that the discussion moved forward and developed.

On the other hand, the length of the students' contributions varied significantly; students in Lessons 1 and 4 joined the discussion with very short contributions, whereas students in Lessons 2 and 3 sustained their turns for a notably longer time, most often minutes.

Only Lesson 3 featured explicit work on the second language development connected to speaking skills, as opposed to the rest of the lessons which provided students with multiple opportunities to practise language fluency, with an exception of Lesson 4, but did not explicitly focus on its development.

Three of the lessons were concluded in various ways: self-evaluation, reacting to classmates' ideas and teacher's concluding speech; whereas the fourth lesson was not concluded in any way.

The research provides evidence for the beneficial role of all the criteria, with a special focus on prepared staged questions and sufficient time for students to think about the topic and individual questions asked by the teacher.

The findings discussed above have important implications for second language teachers. The most significant finding shows that teachers tend to underestimate the time layout of the lesson and dedicate less time to the individual stages of the lesson than needed. Having the whole lesson dedicated to a single discussion can seem impracticable,

but the contrary phenomenon seems to be true: the preparation stages take a lot of time and the open class discussion itself needs periods of silence for students to be able to arrange their thoughts and contribute to the discussion effectively.

Furthermore, the findings show that discussion can be utterly effective provided that all or most of the criteria are fulfilled (Lesson 3) and very ineffective if only minority of them is met (Lesson 4). The crucial criteria seem to prove the preparation on the part of students in any form, quality questions asked by the teacher, and ample time to think about the questions; from these, other matters will arise, such as high level of participation and contributions which are connected to each other.

5 Appendix

Authentic student answers from the open-questions segment

All appendices are available also online under the link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dZ9k6DJKnU9FaH2Qgd4Uq-UVkCW6vpOs/view?usp=sharing>

Lesson 1

Kolik času jste strávili s přípravou na hodinu? Odhadněte počet minut/hodin.

- ✓ 0
- ✓ 10 minut
- ✓ 20
- ✓ 5 hodin
- ✓ 30 minut
- ✓ Nevim presne ale ne moc
- ✓ 20 minut
- ✓ do půl hodiny maximálně
- ✓ 2 hodiny
- ✓ 20min
- ✓ pokud nepočítám úkoly a myslíte jen přípravu učebnice, sešitu a propisky, tak jen jednu minutu
- ✓ 5-15min
- ✓ 30 min.

Jak se vám líbilo téma diskuze? Vysvětlete proč (ne).

- ✓ toto téma bylo velice zajímavé a zábavné
- ✓ Líbilo, protože to bylo jiné než jiné hodiny.
- ✓ 8/10
- ✓ Velice se mi líbila, byla to zábava.
- ✓ Líbilo se mi to, protože to bylo zajímavé téma.
- ✓ Velmi se mi toto téma líbilo, jelikož o něm mluvíme už delší dobu.
- ✓ celkem se mi líbilo
- ✓ Líbilo se mi to. Učíme se takhle komunikovat anglicky.
- ✓ Diskuze byla hodně jednostranná a myslím si že i z hlediska knihy a filmu měla jedna strana mnohem větší možnost pokládání solidních argumentů
- ✓ Mě se téma líbilo. Animal farm probíráme už nějakou dobu a všichni věděli o čem to je
- ✓ Líbil se mi, tak jako vždy. Paní učitelka je velice pozitivní a baví mě breakout rooms... v žádných jiných hodinách si takhle se spolužáky nepovídáme
- ✓ Ano, bylo to zajímavé a zábavné
- ✓ Téma diskuze nebylo špatné, dalo nám to možnost ještě více knize porozumnět a vcítit se do těch charakterů.
- ✓ Téma diskuze se mi líbilo, protože bylo kreativní.
- ✓ Téma bylo trefné a dobře vymyšlené

Dostali jste dost času k promýšlení odpovědi na jednotlivé otázky?

- ✓ ano
- ✓ Ano

- ✓ Ano ale neškodilo by i vic
- ✓ Minutka navíc by neškodila
- ✓ Spíše ne
- ✓ Času bylo dostatek, i když je možné, že jsme si něco třeba nestihli promyslet a říct.
- ✓ Mně osobně by vyhovovalo mít o něco více času.

Zlepšila diskuze vaši plynulost v mluvení nebo jiné jazykové dovednosti? Jak?

- ✓ ano, lépe se mi mluví
- ✓ ne, všechna slova jsem znal
- ✓ nevím
- ✓ Ne, playnule jsem mluvil již předtím
- ✓ Doufám ze ano
- ✓ Spíš ne
- ✓ asi ano, řekla bych, že jsem rychlejší v reagování na otázky
- ✓ Učíme se správnou výslovnost některých slov.
- ✓ Jedna diskuze toho asi moc nezměnila, každopádně je to zajímavý a zábavný koncept hodiny. Kdyby se to dělo častěji, tak si myslím, že by to určitě mělo pozitivní výsledky.
- ✓ Určitě, člověk musí rychle uvažovat co řekne a jak to zformuluje
- ✓ tak obecně, čím víc mluvíte v jazyce, který se chcete naučit, tím víc se ho naučíte... úplně nechápu point of this question, samozřejmě, že tyto diskuze pomáhají, k čemu by pak byly :)
- ✓ Taková diskuze mi pomáhá více spíš jinde než v plynulosti mluvení nebo jazykové dovednosti, ale trochu ano.
- ✓ Nutí mě to rychleji přemýšlet a zdokonaluji se ve vyjadřování. Při psaní v angličtině mám větší čas na rozmyšlenou a mohu opravit případné chyby a vylepšovat úroveň, zatím co při mluvení jsem nucena okamžitě přijít s reakcí a komunikovat v reálném čase. Také mám možnost odposlouchávat od ostatních a učit se od nich.
- ✓ Ano. Když mluví v reálném čase, musím rychle odpovídat a nemůžu nad svými odpověďmi dlouho váhat.
- ✓ Diskuze mě naučila nepoužívat tolik slovo like

Byly pro vás otázky, které padly v diskuzi, dostatečně náročné/motivující? Uveďte příklad(y).

- ✓ nejsem si jistý
- ✓ ano
- ✓ ne
- ✓ Ano, dalo se o nich přemýšlet.
- ✓ Byly zajímavé, ale nevím jestli úplně dostatečně složitě
- ✓ Ne, protože se otázky často opakovaly.
- ✓ možná, rozuměla jsem všemu, ale na něco bych asi odpovědět nedokázala
- ✓ Otázka o rozdílech a podobnostech filmu a knihy.
- ✓ Otázky od spolužáků mi nepřišly moc konstruktivní, ale zajímalo by mě jak by na to, že někdo lže (bez důkazu), šlo slušně odpovědět
- ✓ Spíš ne, mě přišli až moc nelogické, neměli moc důkazů a byly spíše typu „nemám ho rád, proto to je špatně“, ta diskuze je potom taková nudná
- ✓ ano I guess
- ✓ Byly náročné a logické, ale i vtipné a divné. Např. že nemusíme vědět, co děláme, a nebo že prostě lžeme.
- ✓ Donutili nás se více zamyslet, nevím, jak se vyjádřit k této otázce.
- ✓ Ano. “Apart from the arguments given in the text, can you think of any other?”
- ✓ Za mne nebyly otázky ani moc těžké, ani moc lehké.

Jak hodnotíte atmosféru v hodině? Cítíte se příjemně v hodinách tohoto učitele?

- ✓ atmosféru hodnotím velice kladně
- ✓ ano
- ✓ cítím se příjemně
- ✓ Příjemná, ano
- ✓ Velmi dobrou, vsichni se zapojovali.
- ✓ Ano, velice dobrá atmosféra.
- ✓ cítím se komfortně
- ✓ Ano, atmosféra není špatná.
- ✓ Ano cítím
- ✓ Určitě ano
- ✓ naprosto
- ✓ Atmosféra byla celkem dobrá, AJ patří mezi mé nejoblíbenější předměty.
- ✓ Na tyto hodiny se vždy nejvíce těším, atmosféra je vždy příjemně uvolněná, pomáhá mi to se alespoň na moment odreagovat od všeho stresu z jiných hodin. Líbí se mi, že mám možnost komunikovat se svými spolužáky i s vyučujícím, lépe se tak na vzájem podnáváme a může být i zábava.
- ✓ Ano, atmosféra je příjemná a otevřená.
- ✓ cítím se velice příjemně

Jak efektivní byla diskuze podle vašeho názoru? Vysvětlete proč (ne).

- ✓ velmi efektivní
- ✓ byla protože to zlepšilo naše mluvicí schopnosti
- ✓ 4/10 nebylo moc času pro všechny
- ✓ 7/10, lidé kteří chtěli nubo museli mluvit, takmluvili, ale lidé kteří se nepřihlásili nebo nemluvili, tak nemluvili vůbec.
- ✓ Byla velmi efektivní protože se zapojilo hodně lidí.
- ✓ Záleží na definici efektivity v tomto případě, asi spíš ne.
- ✓ byla dost efektivní
- ✓ Část už jsem zmínil, dalším problémem je to, že ne každý žák se může dostat ke slovu
- ✓ Asi ano, těžko říct
- ✓ dobrý
- ✓ Byla celkem efektivní, celkem dobře to proběhlo, i přes drobné problémy.
- ✓ Každý měl možnost se zapojit a vyjádřit svůj názor a myslím, že jsme toho plně využili, zamysleli jsme se nad názory ostatních, reagovali na ně a nestála řeč.
- ✓ Diskuze mi přišla efektivní, každý měl prostor jasně a stručně sdělit svůj názor.

Lesson 2

Kolik času jste strávili s přípravou na hodinu? Odhadněte počet minut/hodin.

- ✓ 0
- ✓ 0 minut
- ✓ žádný
- ✓ na hodinu jsem se nepřipravovala (nebyl domácí úkol...)
- ✓ 15-25
- ✓ 10 minut

Jak se vám líbilo téma diskuze? Vysvětlete proč (ne).

- ✓ Docela se mi líbilo, ale já obecně moc nemusím filozofii, takže za to asi výběr témata nemůže.

- ✓ Docela se mi líbilo, protože bylo neobvyklé. Nebylo to něco typu "smysl života". Byla to konkrétní otázka.
- ✓ Líbilo. Měli jsme spoustu nápadů a bylo jednoduché je rozvíjet dál. Ne že by se jednalo o jednoduchou otázku, ale nebyla ani moc konkrétní ani moc abstraktní.
- ✓ Pro mě bylo zajímavé se nad tímto tématem trochu zamyslet, protože předtím jsem o tom moc nepřemýšlela.
- ✓ líbilo se mi, protože DUTY je něco s čím se setkává každý z nás, a mi jako čerstvě dospělí/dospívající o tom stále přemýšlíme (rovnováha mezi tím jak se máme chovat, jak se chceme chovat...)
- ✓ Osobně moc nejsem na taková filosofická témata, protože mě většinou nenapadá, co na to odpovědět. Ráda ale poslouchám argumenty ostatních.
- ✓ líbilo se mi, líbí se mi kombinace filosofie a výuky jazyka, těžší téma nás nutí užívat složitější pojmy a slova a tím se více učíme
- ✓ Líbilo se mi velmi. probírat takovéto kontroverzní téma v Aj je vždy zážitek. A jelikož pan profesor to výborně vedl, velice jsem si z toho odnesl.
- ✓ Líbilo se mi, protože bylo originální a diskutovali jsme otázky, které jsou důležité, i když si to často neuvědomujeme.
- ✓ bylo pěkné, protože se zaměřovalo na naši občanskou odpovědnost

Dostali jste dost času k promýšlení odpovědi na jednotlivé otázky?

- ✓ ano
- ✓ Ano
- ✓ Spíše ne
- ✓ Určitě bych ocenila více času, ale to bychom museli mít delší hodinu. Takhle jsme se dobrali k nějakému závěru, i když jsme nestihli detailně probrat všechny myšlenky.
- ✓ Raději bych měla trochu více času na rozmyšlenou.
- ✓ určitě... pár minut navíc by se hodilo, ale jsme limitováni na 45 min. výuku
- ✓ Ano, čas byl vždy tak akorát.

Zlepšila diskuze vaši plynulost v mluvení nebo jiné jazykové dovednosti? Jak?

- ✓ Pomohlo mi to vymýšlet argumenty, se kterými jsem nesouhlasila (to je podle mého názoru dovednost, která občas přijde vhod).
- ✓ Myslím, že ano. Ať už posloucháním zdatnějších spolužáků nebo při diskuzi v menší skupince. Musel jsem používat jazyková spojení, se kterými se běžně nesetkám.
- ✓ Přirozeně. Pokaždé, když musím vytvářet věty bez přípravy a interpretovat své myšlenky rovnou, tak se zlepšuji.
- ✓ Myslím, že jsem dnes nezlepšila konkrétní jazykové dovednosti, ale obecně si myslím, že diskuze je pro učení velice přínosná.
- ✓ náhlé vyvolání - student je nucen improvizovat + během hodiny zažíváme momenty kdy mluvíme v soukromí bez profesora a jiné kdy nopak přímo před profesorem - můžeme si vyzkoušet obě varianty - jedna víc stresová jedna míň
- ✓ Určitě mi rozšířila obzory a dala podněty k přemýšlení, ale zlepšení v plynulosti mluvení u sebe nepocítuji.
- ✓ v rozšíření slovní zásoby
- ✓ Ano, jelikož je to složitější téma, musím mluvit a zároveň hluboce uvažovat.
- ✓ Určitě ano. Pokaždé když mluvím, ať už špatně nebo dobře, tak mám pocit, že mi to nesmírně pomáhá.
- ✓ možná větnou skladbu

Byly pro vás otázky, které padly v diskuzi, dostatečně náročné/motivující? Uveďte příklad(y)

- ✓ Ano, byly dostatečně zajímavé. Líbilo se mi, že každý měl na danou otázku jiný pohled a mohli jsme je opravdu probrat.
- ✓ Ano, hlavně díky tomu, že byly konkrétní a dobře uchopitelné. Například "Co vnímám jako svou povinnost"
- ✓ Ano. Nejzajímavější mi přišla úvodní otázka. Co je povinnost a co jsou mé povinnosti?
- ✓ Ano, byly, protože o tomto tématu sama od sebe moc nepřemýšlím.
- ✓ ano byly, např. máme DUTY towards our country? Hlavně teď v době krize - dobrá otázka
- ✓ Ano, určitě byly dostatečně náročné. (otázky ohledně povinností)
- ✓ ano, jazykově příliš ne, ale co se zamýšlení nad tématem týče (viz jaké mám povinnosti vůči mému státu?) ano
- ✓ Ano, byly. Hned první otázka: "What's the duty?" je velice těžká na zodpovězení.
- ✓ Některé ano. Například otázka toho, jestli je moje povinnost postavit se za demokracii.
- ✓ myslím si že ano, protože nad otázkou What is duty? pořád přemýšlím

Jak hodnotíte atmosféru v hodině? Cítíte se příjemně v hodinách tohoto učitele?

- ✓ Ano
- ✓ Atmosféra je většinou příjemná, pokud chceme sdílet osobní názory, tak je to vítané, ale nikdy nás do toho nenutí.
- ✓ Uvolněná a velmi příjemná. Hodiny s Alexem jsou skvělé, všichni dostaneme prostor se vyjádřit a podporuje i ty z nás, kteří se občas trochu stydí.
- ✓ Atmosféra byla příjemná. Oceňuji, že máme zapnuté kamery. Většinou se v hodinách cítím příjemně.
- ✓ Ano, naprosto
- ✓ Ano. V těchto hodinách se cítím příjemněji, než v jiných.
- ✓ ano, velmi příjemně, myslím si, že zapnuté kamery dělají příjemnou atmosféru
- ✓ Ano, pan prof. Katakalis je velice zkušený a milý profesor. Spolužáci i učitel - všichni společně tvoříme dobrou atmosféru.
- ✓ Cítím se, že se můžu svobodně vyjádřit, že mě ve třídě nikdo nesoudí podle toho, co řeknu, a že se nás snaží intenzivně zdokonalovat v angličtině. Hodiny jsou příjemné, zábavné a mám pocit, že si z nich vždy odnesu i něco užitečného do života a nejen do angličtiny.
- ✓ jasně

Jak efektivní byla diskuze podle vašeho názoru? Vysvětlete proč (ne).

- ✓ Diskuze mi přišla efektivní, ovšem ráda bych měla různorodější skupiny k probírání otázky.
- ✓ Efektivní bylo, že jsme se rozdělili do menších skupin, kde jsme měli vícemnožství mluvit. Neměli jsme obecně moc času na to, abychom si rozmysleli odpovědi, ale to zejména kvůli časové tísní.
- ✓ Dostatečná. Neměli jsme celou hodinu a proto jsme museli spěchat, ale shodli jsme se na nějaké odpovědi.
- ✓ Zatím jsme se nedobrali žádného konkrétního závěru (otázkou je, jestli to vůbec jde), ale každý dostal prostor se vyjádřit, což je dobře.
- ✓ Byla efektivní
- ✓ Byla velmi efektivní. Každý měl co říci.
- ✓ byla efektivní, jen jsme nedošli k závěru, neboť nám nezbyl čas (to je škoda, myslím si, že je těžké se do již rozpracovaného tématu vrátit další hodinu)
- ✓ Měli jsme málo času, tudíž jsme dle mého názoru to neprobrali úplně detailně. Taková poloviční efektivita.

- ✓ Myslím, že byla efektivní, a že každé popřemýšlení nad takovými záležitostmi je užitečné.
- ✓ na diskuzi by bylo třeba více času jinak v pořádku

Lesson 3

Kolik času jste strávili s přípravou na hodinu? Odhadněte počet minut/hodin.

- ✓ 0
- ✓ Žádný. Teoreticky jsem čerpal z knih, které jsem přečetl. Ty jsem však nečetl kvůli diskuzi
- ✓ 3 minuty
- ✓ na tuto konkrétně asi 2 minuty
- ✓ 0/0 (ani jsme nevěděli, co se na hodině bude dělat :D)
- ✓ Nepřipravoval jsem se na hodinu, nečekal jsem toto téma
- ✓ 0 minut
- ✓ 5-10 minut, ale o diskuzi jsem nevěděl.

Jak se vám líbilo téma diskuze? Vysvětlete proč (ne).

- ✓ Líbilo se, velmi aktuální
- ✓ tak normálně
- ✓ byla to příjemná změna
- ✓ Docela ano, je to pro nás relevantní.
- ✓ Nic moc. Nebylo příliš zajímavé.
- ✓ Téma se mi líbilo moc, jelikož jsme mohli mluvit o našem pohledu na věc a ne o něčem, co se učíme kvůli osnovám
- ✓ Ano
- ✓ Téma je dobré, rozhodně se o něm dobře diskutuje.
- ✓ Nezajímavé téma.
- ✓ Líbilo, protože téma bylo pro nás aktuální.
- ✓ Bylo dobré, zajímavé
- ✓ Ano.
- ✓ megamoc, byla to velmi komunikativní a aktivní hodina
- ✓ Moc se mi nelíbilo, protože jsem to neměl dostatečně prostudované, abych si utvořil názor. Mohlo však být horší.

Dostali jste dost času k promýšlení odpovědi na jednotlivé otázky?

- ✓ Ano
- ✓ ano
- ✓ asi ano
- ✓ Ano.
- ✓ Ano, možná až moc času.
- ✓ minutku déle by nás nezabílo
- ✓ ano, tak akorát

Zlepšila diskuze vaši plynulost v mluvení nebo jiné jazykové dovednosti? Jak?

- ✓ určitě
- ✓ jedna diskuze neudělá rozdíl
- ✓ myslím, že jedna diskuze toho moc nezmění

- ✓ ne
- ✓ Ne
- ✓ ano, především proto, že jsem měl dost času si odpověď promyslet a připravit
- ✓ Ano, procvičil jsem si to.
- ✓ Jedna diskuze ne, ale já diskutuji pravidelně a tím si zlepšuji jazyk.
- ✓ Ne.
- ✓ Plynulost ne, spíš trochu rozšířila slovní zásobu.
- ✓ Ne, nemyslím si, že není možné udělat tak velký progres na základě půlhodinové diskuze.
- ✓ Ne, protože jsem nic neřekl.
- ✓ Bereme-li v potaz podobné diskuze jakožto jeden dlouhodobý celek, tak tato možnost časté komunikace zajistě zvyšuje schopnost vyjadřování. Nelze tak však hodnotit pouze jednu hodinu.
- ✓ Nemyslím si. Možná, kdyby se jednalo o jiné téma, vázající se na mě neznámé slova.

Byly pro vás otázky, které padly v diskuzi, dostatečně náročné/motivující? Uveďte příklad(y).

- ✓ ne
- ✓ Spíš ne
- ✓ ano, je to složité téma
- ✓ Ano
- ✓ ano
- ✓ Ano - má být maturita z matematiky povinná
- ✓ Ano, ale byli relativně obecné. Všichni mají nějaký názor na toto téma tudíž, když pokládáte takové otázky tak tím těžko změníte názor.
- ✓ Ne.
- ✓ Ano. Je aktuální systém kompromisem? Může se vymyslet kompromis?
- ✓ ano, nevzpomínám si na příklad.
- ✓ Ano. Obecně maturita z matematiky je kontroverzní téma.
- ✓ Ano, potřeba vlastních nápadů vždy zvedne mozkovou aktivitu, vyjádřit pak vlastní nápad je občas také oříšek, natož za něj bojovat.
- ✓ Na to, jak moc si nejsem jistý svým postojem na tuto otázku, ano.

Jak hodnotíte atmosféru v hodině? Cítíte se příjemně v hodinách tohoto učitele?

- ✓ Ano
- ✓ Cítím se příjemně
- ✓ Normálně a ano
- ✓ ano velmi
- ✓ ano, je to fajn
- ✓ příjemná
- ✓ Ano, cítím. Atmosféra je příjemná, na hodinách neusínám a překvapivě mám dost energie.
- ✓ Ano, je to dobrý učitel
- ✓ Atmosféra je dobrá. Ano, cítím se příjemně.
- ✓ Cítím se velmi příjemně v hodinách pana Langoše.
- ✓ Velmi kladná, ano cítím - Mr. Lang je jeden z nejlepších a nejefektivnějších učitelů, co jsem kdy měl.
- ✓ Ano.
- ✓ Ano, komunikativní hodiny jsou vyhovující, zvláště při jazycích.

Jak efektivní byla diskuze podle vašeho názoru? Vysvětlete proč (ne).

- ✓ velmi efektivní
- ✓ Adekvátně vzhledem k tomu, že se nikdo nepřipravoval.
- ✓ středně efektivní
- ✓ vůbec, nikdo nezměnil svůj názor, navíc jsme neměli čas na přípravu
- ✓ Dost efektivní
- ✓ Hodně efektivní, jelikož jsme měli možnost mluvit o něčem, co se i nás bude brzo týkat.
- ✓ Hodně, protože jsme tak nějak shrnuli vše, co je potřeba
- ✓ Diskuze byla dobrá, a jazyk také, ale opět otázky jsou hodně obecné.
- ✓ Nebyla diskuze moc efektivní, většina lidí stále nezměnila svůj názor.
- ✓ Byla efektivní, skoro každá diskuze je efektivní, pokud padnou dobré argumenty pro i proti.
- ✓ poloefektivní až dobrá.
- ✓ Ano, dozvěděl jsem se názory svých spolužáků.
- ✓ Megamoc, názorů bylo hodně, bylo o čem debatovat a protikladné názory byly v udeálním počtu.
- ✓ Byla spořádaná a pomohla mi zamyslet se nad tématem a nápady ostatních.

Lesson 4

Kolik času jste strávili s přípravou na hodinu? Odhadněte počet minut/hodin.

- ✓ 0 minut
- ✓ 0
- ✓ 10

Jak se vám líbilo téma diskuze? Vysvětlete proč (ne).

- ✓ Moc mě to nebavilo. Politika není zrovna můj obor.
- ✓ Docela se mi líbilo
- ✓ líbilo, jelikož bylo aktuální

Dostali jste dost času k promýšlení odpovědí na jednotlivé otázky?

- ✓ Ano
- ✓ ano

Zlepšila diskuze vaši plynulost v mluvení nebo jiné jazykové dovednosti? Jak?

- ✓ Řekla bych, že jedna diskuze na mých jazykových dovednostech nic nezmění.
- ✓ Ne
- ✓ ano, jelikož si lépe zvykám na konverzování v angličtině

Byly pro vás otázky, které padly v diskuzi, dostatečně náročné/motivující? Uveďte příklad(y).

- ✓ Nerozumím otázce
- ✓ Ne
- ✓ otázky mi přišly dostatečně náročné

Jak hodnotíte atmosféru v hodině? Cítíte se příjemně v hodinách tohoto učitele?

- ✓ Ano
- ✓ atmosféra byla velmi přátelská a příjemná paní profesorka

Jak efektivní byla diskuze podle vašeho názoru? Vysvětlete proč (ne).

- ✓ Nepřišla mi efektivní.
- ✓ Záleží jak definujete efektivitu diskuze?
- ✓ nebyla tak efektivní, kvůli distanční výuce

ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE DISCUSSION

1) How much time (number of minutes/hours) did you spend with preparation?

Most Least

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

2) How did you like the topic? Explain why (not)?

Most Least

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

3) Do you feel you were given enough time to think about individual questions?

Most Least

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

4) Did it help your fluency/any other language skills? How?

Most Least

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

5) Were the questions asked in the discussion challenging enough for you? Give examples.

Most Least

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

6) How do you assess classroom atmosphere with this teacher? Do you feel comfortable in this teacher's classes?

Most Least

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

7) How effective was the discussion in your opinion? Explain why (not)?

Most Least

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

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