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**DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH PICTURE-BASED
DISCUSSIONS IN FORM 11**

DIPLOMA PAPER

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**UZ ATTĒLIEM BALSTĪTU DISKUSIJU IZMANTOŠANA
RUNĀŠANAS PRASMJU ATTĪSTĪŠANAI 11. KLASĒ**

DIPLOMDARBS

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I declare that this study is my own and does not contain any unacknowledged work from any source

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ABSTRACT

The Diploma Paper "Developing Speaking Skills through Picture-based Discussions in Form 11" was written to find out how picture-based discussions can develop students speaking skills, and prove the hypothesis that carefully organized and prepared picture-based discussion motivates students to speak and develops students' English speaking skills in class 11.

People daily life is connected with different visual elements, and one of these elements is pictures. The author of the Diploma Paper decided to use pictures as visual aids in discussion activities, introducing a different activity – picture-based discussion. It was done to make learning process more interesting, in this case, to make discussions more interesting, motivating students to participate in picture-based discussions actively and develop English speaking skills.

The Paper provides description of the secondary school age group, elements of speaking and the role of motivation in speaking activities, the definition and meaning of discussion and picture-based discussion, purposes of using pictures in discussions, and also how to select pictures and where to find them. Additionally, the Paper provides the information how to evaluate students' speaking skills in picture-based discussions and the case study.

The case study was carried out in Agenskalna Grammar school in form 11. This form consisted of 12 pupils. Data collection methods were as follows:

1. 1 author's self-designed questionnaire for pupils with the aim to find out their interests and needs, to clarify their learning styles and strategies and attitude towards discussion activities;
2. 1 author's self-made post-questionnaire for the pupils to find out their attitude towards second picture-based discussion and students' self-evaluation of their participation in it.

Also the author carried out 2 picture-based discussions with the aim to observe students' activity and speaking skills during the particular discussions.

During the research it was found that students have positive attitude towards picture-based discussion. Findings show that picture-based discussions can motivate students to speak, express their point of view, ideas and in that way developing English speaking skills.

ANOTĀCIJA

Diplomdarbs “Uz attēliem balstītu diskusiju izmantošana runāšanas prasmju attīstīšanai 11. klasē” tika veidots, lai noskaidrotu, vai uz attēliem balstītu diskusiju izmantošana spēj attīstīt skolēnu angļu valodas runāšanas prasmes un pierādītu hipotēzi, ka labi organizēta un sagatavota uz attēliem balstīta diskusija motivē studentus runāt un uzlabot runāšanas prasmes 11. klasē.

Cilvēku ikdiena ir saistīta ar dažādiem vizuāliem elementiem, un viens no šiem elementiem ir attēli. Diplomdarba autore nolēma izmantot attēlus kā vizuālus elementus diskusijās, tādā veidā ieviešot savādāku diskusiju veidu – uz attēliem balstītu diskusiju. Tas tika darīts, lai padarītu mācīšanās procesu interesantāku, šaja gadījumā lai padarītu interesantākas diskusijas, tādā veidā motivējot studentus aktīvi piedalīties uz attēliem balstītās diskusijās un attīstīt runas prasmes.

Diplomdarbs sniedz aprakstu par vidusskolas vecuma posmu, runāšanas elementiem un motivācijas lomu runāšanas aktivitātēs, diskusijas un uz attēliem balstītu diskusijas definīciju un nozīmi, attēlu lietošanas mērķus tajās, un arī kā izvēlēties attēlus un kur tos atrast. Vēl diplomdarbs sniedz informāciju, kā novērtēt skolēnu runāšanas prasmes uz attēliem balstītās diskusijās un šīs aktivitātes pētījums praksē.

Pētījums tika veikts Āgenskalna ģimnāzijas 11. klasē. Šī klase sastāvēja no 12 skolēniem. Datu vākšanas metodes bija sekojošas:

- Skolēnu anketēšana ar mērķi noskaidrot viņu intereses un vēlmes, lai noteiktu viņu mācīšanās stilus un stratēģijas, un attieksmi pret attēlu balstītām diskusijām.
- Skolēnu anketēšana pēc diskusijas, lai noskaidrotu, kāda ir viņu attieksme pēc otrās attēlu diskusijas un kāds ir viņu pašnovērtējums par piedalīšanos tajā.

Autors arī veica 2 uz attēliem balstītas diskusijas ar mērķi novērot studentu aktivitāti un runas prasmes uz attēliem balstītu diskusiju laikā.

Pētījuma laikā tika noskaidrots, ka skolēniem ir pozitīva attieksme pret uz attēliem balstītām diskusijām. Rezultāti rāda, ka uz attēliem balstītas diskusijas spēj motivēt skolēnus runāt, izklāstīt savu viedokli, idejas, tādā veidā attīstot angļu valodas runas prasmes.

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INTRODUCTION

The English language has become a very important language in people lives. It has become the language of the world and it is one of the official languages of the European Union. Information is being exchanged in English among the countries in the context of foreigner affairs, and good contacts with other countries in economics, culture, politics and tourism much depend on successful cooperation.

Successful cooperation among people also depends on how well they communicate among each other. Good speaking skills are the basic element to get successful conversation or discussion. That is why teachers should practise and develop this issue already at school, however, there are many aspects that should be taken into account to get successful speaking activity. It should be interesting activity, students should be motivated to speak and activities should be well-organized. One way how to make speaking activity interesting and students motivated is to use visual aids.

In the language teaching classroom the visual aids can be considered as a great help in learning language. One significant part of the whole term - visual aids are pictures which are available in many forms and can be used in different language teaching and learning activities, also for developing speaking skills.

Anderson (2003) points out that "...usually, up to 65 percent of school students can be classified as "visual learners." Visual learners assimilate information better when they can see images and motion pictures of what they are trying to learn. In essence, an image is worth 1000 words." This means that choosing one particular speaking activity as discussion, that are introduced with texts, statements and listening activities, there is also a possibility to introduce discussions with pictures, in that way, meeting visual learners' needs.

Pictures are all around people and students everyday, in the street, at home and even in our leisure time. Therefore, it is important and useful way how to involve the students' in the picture based discussions which allow students to practise the skills which are related to speaking and motivate them to express their opinions, so they are prepared for the future studies and successful career.

Moreover, students in form 11, at age of 16 and 17 are curious and inquisitive, they desire opportunities to express originality, and also are interested in both concrete and abstract exercises

Therefore, teaching and learning process, where already there are traditional discussions on texts, titles from newspapers or other problem solving discussion activities can be supplemented with picture based discussions. If the teacher prepares the pictures that are relevant to students' needs and interests, the process is well organized and planned then it is a great chance and a way how to improve secondary school students' speaking skills.

The Aim of the Diploma Paper is to examine how pictures can help to motivate students and develop their English speaking skills in class 11 through participation in picture-based discussions in English lessons.

To achieve the Aim of the Paper the following objectives were stated:

1. To study theoretical literature and do analysis on psychological peculiarities of adolescents' age group.
2. To do analysis of the theoretical literature about speaking skills, discussion techniques and picture types and purposes of using it.
3. To design 2 questionnaires and observation sheet of picture based discussion in the form 11.
4. To introduce the picture based discussions in the English lessons and test their relevance to the students' needs and interests.
5. To analyse and interpret the results of the case study (questionnaires, discussion activities, observation).

The research questions of the Diploma Paper are the following:

1. What is speaking and speaking skills?
2. What are peculiarities of secondary school age group?
3. What are the purposes of using pictures in discussions?
4. How to select and find pictures for the discussions?
5. What are the aims of a picture-based discussion?
6. How to plan and organize picture-based discussions?
7. How to provide feedback and evaluation of picture-based discussions?

The hypothesis of the paper is carefully organized picture-based discussion motivates students to speak and develops students' English speaking skills in form 11.

According to Nunan's (1992) classification of language learning research methods, a case study was used.

Data collecting methods were the following:

- 1 author's self-designed questionnaire for pupils with the aim to find out their interests and needs, to clarify their learning styles and strategies, and attitude towards discussion activities;
- 1 author's self-made post-questionnaire for the pupils to find out their attitude towards second picture-based discussion and students' self-evaluation of their participation in it.

Also the author carried out 2 picture-based discussions with the aim to observe students' activity and speaking skills during the particular discussion;

The Diploma Paper consists of two parts – theoretical and practical part.

The theoretical part includes 5 chapters:

Chapter 1 describes what is speaking and its elements, also – what is the role of motivation in speaking activities.

Chapter 2 deals with description of secondary school age group.

Chapter 3 describes pictures role and purposes in learning process and discussion. The chapter also provides information about selection and sources of pictures

Chapter 4 outlines the meaning of discussion and picture-based discussion. It describes the aims of picture-based discussion planning and organization of it, roles of a leader and interaction skills, also, problems that may appear through discussion and feedback and evaluation of picture-based discussion.

Chapter 5 deals with the case study in Agenskalna Grammar school. It describes the results of questionnaires and observations of 2 picture-based discussions.

1. SPEAKING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

Brown (1994) defines speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking.

To the author's of Diploma Paper opinion, speaking is a complex process. Speaking is the only skill that cannot be learnt individually, people need to communicate with others, but for this process, people need to have several skills.

Kramina (2000) describes skills that are necessary for effective oral communication which must be learned through a developmental process:

1. Cognitive skills – the skills to plan and organize a message;
2. Linguistic skills – to formulate a linguistic utterance;
3. Phonetic skills – the skills to articulate the utterance appropriately.

To learn to communicate effectively cannot be done in a short time. Pupils at school learn this process for many years. As speaking is a complex process, it contains many elements that teachers should take into account in teaching process. These elements are described in the next subchapter.

1.1. Elements of Speaking

Speaking does not consist only of one element, it has a structure that consists of many elements, for instance intonation, fluency, grammar aspects and others.

Harmer (2003) points out that essential element of speaking is fluency, however the ability to speak fluently presupposes not only knowledge of language features but also the ability to process information and language 'on spot'.

According to Harmer (2003:269), the elements necessary for spoken production are the following:

Connected speech – effective speakers of English need to be able to not only to produce the individual phonemes of English (as in saying *I would have gone*) but also to use fluent 'connected speech' (as in *I'd've gone*). In connected speech sounds are modified (assimilation), omitted (elision) and added, or weakened. It is for this reason that teachers should involve students in activities specifically to improve their connected speech.

Expressive devices – native speakers of English change the pitch and stress of particular parts of utterances, vary volume and speed, and show by other physical and non-verbal means how they are feeling (especially in face-to-face interaction). The use of these devices contributes to the ability to convey meanings. They allow the extra expression of emotion and intensity. Students should be able to deploy at least some of such features and devices in the same way if they are to be fully effective communicators.

Lexis and grammar – spontaneous speech is marked by the use of a number of common lexical phrases, especially in the performance of certain language functions. Teachers should therefore supply a variety of phrases for different functions such as agreeing or disagreeing, expressing surprise, shock, or approval. Where students are involved in specific speaking contexts such as job interview, we can prime them, in the same way, with certain useful phrases which they can produce at various stages of an interaction.

Negotiation language – effective speaking benefits from the negotiation language teachers use to seek clarification and to show the structure of what we are saying. Teachers often need to ‘ask for clarification’ when we are listening to someone else talk. For students this is especially crucial. A useful thing teachers can do, therefore, is to offer students phrases such as the following: “I am sorry, I didn’t quite catch that.”, “What exactly does X mean?”, “Could you explain that again, please?”

One way of how to get students to practise this language is to give individuals cards which each have one of these phrases written on them. Students then have to use the language forms written on their cards to interrupt.

According to Harmer (2003), if part of a speaker’s productive ability involves the knowledge of language skills, success is also dependent upon the rapid processing skill that talking necessitates. These processing skills are:

Language processing – effective speakers need to be able to process language in their own heads and put it into coherent order so that it comes out in forms that are not only comprehensible, but also convey the meanings that are intended. Also language processing involves the retrieval of words and phrases from memory and their assembly into syntactically and proportionally appropriate sequences. One of the main reasons for including speaking activities in language lessons is to help students develop habits of rapid language processing in English.

Interacting with others – most speaking involves interaction with one or more participants. This means that effective speaking also involves a good deal of listening,

an understanding of how the other participants are feeling, and a knowledge of how linguistically to take turns or allow others to do so.

On-the-spot information processing – quite apart from our response to other's feelings, learners also need to be able to process the information what others tell to them. It should be remembered that this instant purpose is very culture-specific, and is not prized by speakers in many other language communities (Harmer 2003)

Dealing with all these elements is not an easy thing for language teachers. Acquiring another language, in this case, the English language, is not a simple matter, however, students need to be assured with all possibilities to develop their speaking skills.

1.2. The Role of Motivation in Speaking Activities

As Harmer (2003:51) states: “motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. It may be defined as a ‘need’, or a ‘reason’ for doing something.”

Good speaking activities are highly motivating. If all students are participating fully, if they get feedback from the teacher, the teacher has set up the activity properly, has also created encouraging and stress-free atmosphere, so that it means that students are on the way of getting satisfaction from these activities and afterwards students will get this incredible satisfaction (Harmer 1998).

In addition, there are two types of motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

According to Tudor (2004), in educational psychology there is a distinction between “intrinsic” motivation which is guided by an interest, and which comes from within the individual and “extrinsic” motivation which is guided by external stimuli.

In this case external drive also may be pictures that are a great stimulus for speaking and developing communication skills. This way of discussion activity may be something new for students because according to author's observations, picture-based discussions are not very often used in a classroom, in fact, discussions are not new in classrooms, but using pictures as stimulus may be something unusual and in one way interesting.

Also Tudor (2004) adds that motivation plays an important and perhaps a crucial role in language learning and teaching. If students are motivated, there is a good chance

that they will learn language they are studying. But in the cases when the students are not motivated to talk and express their opinion, the discussion class may fail.

Dobson (1992) defines 4 main classroom sources of motivation:

1. The joy of discovery – to discover something about language itself.
2. The satisfaction of control – feeling of confidence, accomplishment.
3. The joy of remembrance – to do something that is already known.
4. The elation of use – usage of English outside the classroom.

According to previous studied resources on motivation, the author considers that motivation is a very important part in the speaking process. Teachers should think about how to motivate students with interesting and new approaches to the learning process. One way could be picture-based discussions but why to use pictures will be the main topic in the chapter 3.

Before introducing the particular activity in the classroom, it is important to know the audience, in this case, students of secondary school. It is useful to know, how they learn at age of 15-18, what are their peculiarities. This topic is described in the next chapter.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL AGE GROUP

Secondary school is the time when pupils are going through the developmental stage called adolescence. It is also called emotional time because it is a period of emotional changes. This is also a time of physical development and students start to recognize themselves as adult people. The author chose to characterize this period because the case study will be done in secondary school

According to Puškarevs (2001) adolescence (lat. adolescere = to grow) is a traditional stage of human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. Adolescents go through puberty, the process of sexual maturation. Teenagers (13-19) are usually adolescent, though in some individuals, puberty may extend a few years beyond the teenage years, and in some individuals, puberty begins in the pre-teen years. Adolescence is divided into 3 stages: early (12 to 14 years), middle (15 to 17 years), and late (18 to 20 years).

As there are three stages of adolescence, the author chose to do the research on middle and late adolescence because the case study will be done in secondary school where generally are pupils from age 15 to 18. Usually adolescence is described from three aspects - physical, social and cognitive.

Tobin (2001) declares that in relation to body development, appearance, and activity students of secondary school age exhibit:

- Increased interest in the physical aspects of the body, including its functions and changes.
- Generally a more advanced physical maturity on the part of girls than of boys at the same chronological age.
- Conformity with "in" styles such as clothing and hair style.
- Extreme restlessness with great need to release physical energy.
- Talkativeness.
- Responsiveness to a variety of leisure.

Adolescence is also a period when we can see the most exaggerated emotions and find very great creativity in pupils. Adolescents grow and their needs become accordingly different from what they were before. In this period students may prefer interaction with peers during learning activities and show interest in various things, also in other cultures.

Tobin (2001) points out that in relation to students' intellectual experiences, students of secondary school age tend to:

- Be curious and inquisitive.
- Prefer active over passive learning activities.
- Relate intellectual activities with immediate and short-range goals.
- Prefer interaction with peers during learning activities.
- Desire opportunities to express originality on an individual basis.
- Be interested in both concrete and abstract exercises.
- Desire opportunities to participate in practical problem-solving situations.
- Show interest in races and cultures other than their own.
- Challenge "idealistic" teaching.
- Show strong intense interests, not always sustained, in various pursuits.

In this period students in secondary school seek for approval, respect and support. It is important for them to feel encouragement from their friends and classmates, to understand that they are part of a group, society they live in. Therefore working in groups students are more closer to their classmates, feel their support and can ask for a help.

Exchange of opinions, common acceptance of decision, discussion and conversation is a way how each individual can become involved in the process of interaction with other people. Picture-based discussions is a chance to learn how to formulate one's own thoughts, express agreement or disagreement, argue and defend their point of view, and in that way, develop English speaking skills.

Adolescents need also social contacts and friendship to develop successfully. This is also a time of important conflicts in family, so it is important to develop social skills to help them.

Harmer (2003) also points out that if students are engaged, they have a great capacity to learn, a great potential for creativity and a passionate commitment to things which interest them.

It means that one way how to encourage students to express their thoughts is to introduce discussion activities in the lessons where they have an opportunity to argue and defend their ideas. One way how to let express students' ideas is picture-based discussions. As teaching of teenagers may require using a combination of creativity, pictures may bring new opportunities how to involve pupils to give and share ideas of different kind of topics. Also the teacher should provide pictures that are relevant to pupils' interests and offer opportunities to talk about the things that are topical to students and that develop their speaking skills.

3. PICTURES AS A TOOL IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Almost every magazine or newspaper nowadays is full of different kind of pictures and photos. These visual aids attract attention of people and provide interest in the topic. People enjoy looking at pictures.

According to Goodman (2006), pictures are enjoyable, they set the scene or context, inform and interest us, pictures is a key resource. As well as enjoying these visual aids they pictures also form a key resource for accessing the different learning styles that each student has. Using pictures really appeals to visual learners who may suffer in a speaking and listening based classroom. They also offer an opportunity for movement and a multi-dimensional perspective which will reach kinaesthetic learners.

G. Gerngross (1992) points out that at first people make use of their visual sense to colour in the context against which words derive a part of their value. Pictures, then, are crucial to understanding whether they are actual representations or images in the mind.

3.1. The Purposes for Using Pictures

It is important to have a wide range of resources as possible in the classroom so that the students can have a rich base and stimulus for their language development.

In addition of previous mentioned facts that pictures are interesting, informing and enjoyable Gerngross (1992) states several descriptions why to use pictures. They are as follows:

- Pictures aren't based on level. Of course we can choose certain pictures to access a certain area of vocabulary if we wish but any picture can be the base of any kind of activity, including discussions, at any level.
- As people take enjoyment from pictures in everyday life, also students take enjoyment from the pictures in the discussion. They will add a touch of intrigue to the class and make the lesson much more dynamic as imaginations are aroused. This is especially useful with those students who find it difficult to use their imaginations. The pictures provide a support and ideas.
- Picture stories also add pace to English classes. The students' reaction to a picture is almost immediate whereas the same reaction from written texts would take much, much longer. The students are interested and enthusiastic right from the beginning of the class.

According to Wright (1990) verbal language is only a part of the way people usually get meaning from contexts. Things people see play an enormous part in affecting them and in giving information to them. People predict and interfere not only from what they hear and read but also from what they see or having seen. Specially, pictures contribute to:

1. Interest and motivation;
2. A sense of the context of the language;
3. A specific reference point or stimulus.

There are also other supportive opinions about using pictures in a language lesson. For instance, Bowen (1991) states that learning is a complex process and pictures provide a great help in simulating the learning of a foreign language. Students must use ears as well as eyes.

In addition, Bowen (1991) draws attention to the number of benefits of using pictures in the classroom:

1. Pictures vary the pace of the lesson.
2. Pictures encourage the learners to lift their eyes from their books, which make it easier and more natural for one to speak to another.
3. Pictures enrich the classroom by bringing in topics from outside world, which are made real and immediate by the pictures.
4. A learner with creative imagination will learn a new language easily and enjoyably through the use of pictures while sometimes it can appear to be difficult to learn just from a pupils' text book.
5. Pictures make a communicative approach to language learning easier and more natural.
6. Pictures help to teach all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They allow the teacher to integrate these skills constructively.
7. Pictures inspire imaginativeness in both the teacher and learners.
8. Pictures provide variety at all levels of proficiency. A collection of pictures in the various media caters for all ages of learners and all types of groups from beginners to the most advanced and most highly specialized.

These benefits clearly show that pictures are effective tool that can be used in English lessons, particularly in discussions.

3.2. The Selection of Pictures

When the picture is planned to be the basic material for the lesson, for example, in acquiring picture-based discussion, the most important step for the teacher would be to evaluate whether it is possible to get a lively response to the picture.

According to Bowen (1991), there are several factors to be considered before selecting a picture:

- **Appeal.** The content of the picture should capture the interest and imagination of the class members.
- **Relevance.** The picture should be appropriate for the purpose of the lesson.
- **Recognition.** The significant features of the picture should be within the learner's knowledge and cultural understanding.
- **Size.** A picture to be held up in front of the class should be large enough to be seen clearly by all learners. The details of the picture should be visible even from the back of the room. Pictures, intended for group or pair work can be proportionally smaller.
- **Clarity.** A crowded picture can confuse and distract. The learners should be able to see the relevant details clearly. Strong outlines and contrast in tone and colour are important in avoiding ambiguity.

However, these are important factors that teachers should take into account, there is also importance to choose and apply the particular picture to the language learning activity in a more meaningful way – teachers should consider whether the pictures rise interest and motivation in learners.

3.3. Sources of Pictures

As mentioned in chapter 2.1., pictures are all around us. There are different kinds of sources where a teacher can find pictures for the discussions.

Gerngross (1995) has listed the main sources of pictures:

- **Pictures in the Internet**

The internet is a fantastic source of pictures and can be found related to any topic through major search engines.

- **Magazines**

Magazines are the major source of useful picture material of a high quality. These provide a constant supply of topical pictures in a wide range of styles, colour, black and

white, photographs and stylized images to name but a few. Full page pictures are big enough for class use, while others are more appropriate for individual work, or work in groups.

- **Newspapers**

Although pictures in newspapers are not reproduced very well, they are usually topical and linked with the text, which can lead to particular activities. The pictures can be cut out and text rejected.

- **Drawings**

For those more artistic teachers and students among us there remains the option of drawing our own picture for discussions. If students or teachers feel a need for more support however, there are pictures in the English language course books that we are currently using which we can adapt.

Apart from these picture types and sources, there is also a possibility to use:

- **Course books**

There are also already-made picture based discussions in course books.

- **Reproductions of art**

Students may discuss the associations, ideas or problems that may appear in particular work of art, also what the author wanted to say by this work.

- **Family photographs**

These pictures may be used as other pictures in the classroom as well. There can be shown some particular actions, like celebrating particular fest, in the pictures that arouse interest and initiates students to speak and share their opinions.

According to stated sources, there are many possibilities to find interesting and motivating pictures for students in form 11. To the author's opinion the best way is to find in magazines and newspapers because these sources provide plenty of pictures, and the teacher needs only to decide which one would be appropriate for the students interests.

When pictures are found then follows the next step – a picture-based discussion. How to organize and plan it, also its aims and role of leaders in it are described in the chapter 4.

4. PICTURE-BASED DISCUSSION

Usually, teachers use different kind of statements, titles from magazines or newspapers that show the topic or problem, and students discuss and find solutions to it. However, there is also a possibility to use different kinds of activities, and it is picture-based discussion that also may offer different topics for discussions only with the help of pictures. Therefore, in the process of defining, what is a picture-based discussion, the author searched for definition of discussion in general, only keeping in mind that in the picture-based discussion the teacher uses pictures to show the topic what is going to be discussed. First of all, a teacher searches for the pictures and topic, then introduces it to the class, and then students discuss the topic based on the picture.

Underhill (1984) points out that “..discussion is an interaction and communication which allows to experiment with the language and offers a lot of practice for students if they have a motivation to do it.” It means that in picture based discussion the picture is the tool that motivates students to speak.

According to Hadlaw (1995), having discussions in class is important. It allows students to develop their speaking skills and gives them a chance to interact with other students on a personal level. It is neither relating personal experiences which have little relation to theory or course objectives nor an opportunity for the keen students to score points. It is not just an extension of the lesson. A successful discussion environment displays the following characteristics:

- There is a warm, supportive, non-competitive atmosphere in the class, with no one student dominating.
- The teacher has prepared a plan for the discussion period.
- The students are prepared for the session, having done assigned readings, seen assigned films or pictures or gathered the required information.
- Every student participates.
- The instructor incorporates students' suggestions in the discussion.
- The students understand that the purpose of the session is to learn.

In general, discussion gives the opportunities for students to speak and improve speaking skills, put forward ideas and arguments for discussions and find solutions to it, and, also, to estimate the value of individual ideas.

Hollet (1989) has clearly stated out why the discussion is so important and useful. However, there are many things that teachers should take into account when dealing with any kind of discussion, like, organization and management of discussion.

Also Hollet (1989) adds that discussions seldom just happen but often results also from careful planning and good organization.

It means, in order to have a successful discussion class, the teacher should carefully think about the management of the discussion and aims of discussion activity, in this case, picture based discussion activity. Also it is important to consider the motivation place in discussion.

4.1. The Aims of Discussion

One of the main aims that can be achieved by successful discussion class is improvement and development of speaking skills. However, this is not the only one.

Young (1992) draws attention to three main aims of the discussion. These are:

- efficient fluency practice;
- learning from the context – from which is being said;
- learning how to participate in a discussion – involving clear and logical thought, debating skills, careful listening.

Besides the aim of almost every discussion is:

- to improve social skills;
- critical thinking;
- confidence and achievement.

According to Hollet (1989) discussion helps students to understand a subject or topic area more deeply and it also expands and clarifies knowledge. Discussion improves language skills and increases confidence in speaking. Moreover, it gives students the chance to hear the thoughts and ideas of other students, and it helps a group to make a particular decision or come to a conclusion. Also, it improves ability to think critically.

It means that discussion aims are not only developing speaking skills – expressing one's opinion and to make arguments which are based on facts and logical

consideration of the problem, but also encourages students to get to know each other better, to learn from each other and to create positive attitude to opposite point of view, to practise working in a team, group of different people. In fact, it gives a chance to practise tolerance that is so important in the process of communication.

Therefore Underhill (1984) states that the teacher's task is to state the aim before the discussion session and the strategies how to reach it. The aim may vary from the material that should be covered during the term, topic, time allowed to the discussion activity at school.

4.2. Planning and Organizing Picture-based discussion

According to Hollet (1989), the discussion must have a focus. All participants must have access to the same materials or information in order to make a contribution. It means all students must have the same pictures to discuss.

Harmer (1998) points out that good planning and organization of the discussion offer the teacher the foundation for the feeling of confidence, more positive and efficient response from the students because participants appreciate safe structure which students can rely on and are much more likely to remain interest.

Before introducing the particular discussion to the class, the teacher should take into account problems and factors that may appear during the lesson. Teachers must be aware that students may be reluctant to speak and to express their thoughts. Even more, they may not feel relaxed or interested in the topic they are going to cover from teacher's selected pictures. Also seating arrangement and setting groups are important issues.

There are several important elements that should be taken into account before the picture-based discussion is introduced to the lesson.

- **Choosing the discussion topic through pictures.**

Bickerdike (1995) declares that topic is the crucial factor in a discussion and the right choice of it can be a stimulating element for the learners' engagement in the discussion. The teacher must consider the topic and seek for the common ground.

It means that when the teacher has considered the topic, then there is the next step, finding appropriate pictures in different sources, like literature, magazines, Internet, and introduce them to the class.

Geidžs (1999) points out that the choice of discussion topic can be the responsibility to the teacher but it is much better to leave this task for the group so that is relevant to their interests and needs.

According to this, it is possible, that students themselves may choose the appropriate topic to their interests and bring the chosen pictures to school and then discuss the topics or problems that are shown in the pictures. If there is no chance to find relevant pictures, students may also make some drawings that show the interested theme.

However, as Ur (1981) states, the main point is not what to talk about, but why to talk about the particular issue. He advises to pay attention to the aim of the lesson. Students need a reason to speak more than they need something to speak about.

- **Structure and time management**

Time management is very important while introducing picture-based discussion in the classroom.

According to Young (1992) the teacher should take into account the time limit. It is not necessary that all groups finish the discussions, but it is necessary that the teacher maintains the energy level developed in the small group discussions. The teacher can try assigning roles to group members, such as spokesperson(s), a note-taker. In a small class, the teacher may choose to have all groups report on their findings. In a large class, this can quickly become boring. Limit the number of reports to two. The reports can be given verbally or written out on flip chart paper. In the latter case, the teacher can try posting the reports around the class.

According to Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) the discussion must consist and include all three basic phases - the beginning, the middle phase and the ending of the discussion. The time which is spent on each phase depends on the topic, introductory questions, activity of the students, the structure and type of discussion.

The author's observation shows that discussions can be either short or long. It means that it can take up the time starting from 10 minutes to 1 or more hours. It depends on the topic or problem, which is being discussed, and other factors. Taking into account the fact that the lesson at school is only 40 minutes long, there must be a careful planning of the time in order to reach the stated aim.

Short discussion also may be as a warming-up activity of the lesson. The pictures can help to introduce a new topic, to create a positive atmosphere and to enliven the lesson.

- **Seating arrangement**

Another important element is seating arrangement in the classroom during the discussion. It is necessary to have the chairs arranged so that everyone can have an eye contact. The discussion varies depending on whether the students sit next to the partner or face them across the table.

Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) suggests 2 ways of seat arrangement:

1. Open horse-shoe – this is acceptable if the group has 8 or more participants. This arrangement provides a better focus for a leader.
2. Circle arrangement – used when the group is small (5-7 people). It permits eye-contact and is used when the students must do the problem-solving activities. The teacher's role is less dominating.

Apart from these two variants, the students can be arranged in small groups at individual tables. It is easier for the teacher to work, to control the interaction and the whole process of discussion.

- **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming may be a good warming up activity before the discussion takes a part in the classroom.

According to Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) brainstorming is a useful as a way of establishing the groundwork of discussion: to generate a variety of ideas on a topic, to determine the extent of the students' knowledge on the topic and to develop critical thinking. To brainstorm for a discussion, the teacher gets the students to form groups and appoints a leader. The leader will then ask for ideas from the other members of the group, either seeking volunteers or going around to each. While each person is expected to contribute a response to the topic, a student may show when his or her turn comes. No comment or judgments are made of the contributions at this stage. The responses from the group members are merely recorded by the leader, either on paper or on a flipchart. When all of the ideas have been recorded, the group sifts through the responses, separating those ideas which are related and can be joined from those which are repetitious and can be eliminated from the list. The ideas are then put in an appropriate order - order of importance, chronological order - and then discussion begins.

- **Setting up group discussions**

According to Lightfoot (2007), there are several key things for teachers to consider when setting up group discussions in the classroom to ensure that it run successfully:

1. Teachers should give the students some planning time either individually or in small groups. It is often useful to discuss some associated vocabulary or functional language that students might find useful;
2. Teachers choose topics which students will find interesting. Using a variety of styles / types is one of key things for teachers to consider;
3. Teachers should vary group size and procedure. Some teachers do selection group discussions with very large groups of people – over ten in some cases. If students will be facing these types of group discussions in the future it is necessary to make sure that pupils get some practice doing them. It can also be useful to mix classes of students so they have practice doing discussions with people they don't already know.
4. Moreover, teachers need to encourage group discussions outside class time.

- **Setting up small groups**

Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) declares that students who are reluctant to speak up in large groups - in large classrooms may open up in smaller groups. Once the teacher becomes familiar with students, the teacher will be able initiate dynamic discussion by grouping students with differing learning styles. If the process is not possible, a random assignment of members is appropriate; however, the teacher should avoid putting friends in the same group as they might exclude others.

On the other hand, Harmer (2003) suggests creating groups according to friendship, by students' ability and level. Size of the group may vary from 4 to 8 students in each. Also small groups provide greater intensity of involvement and therefore the quality of language practice is increased, also emotional and intellectual involvement is increased.

Student responsibilities during discussion

Geidžs (1999) points out the following rules that should be reminded to the participants of the discussion:

- If the students want to express their opinion, they should raise their hand.
- It is suggested that to make research beforehand on the subject that will be discussed.
- The participants should not interrupt the speaker beforehand but wait till they have finished.
- It is good to be friendly and feel respect to each other even if the opinions are different.
- Students are supposed to ask questions to each other during the discussion and to make comments if necessary.
- The participants should encourage each other to speak.
- The students must listen to each other. Moreover, careful listening helps to improve aural comprehension, to recognize main ideas, to fix in mind information which is useful and to analyze what is being said.

When all these things have considered, organized and planned by the teacher, then it is the time to introduce the discussion itself. However, before that, it could be useful that teachers also consider leader roles and interaction skills through discussion process.

4.3. Roles of a Leader and Interaction Skills

In general a good discussion leader is considered to be one of the key elements that may affect the outcome and procedure of the discussion in the classroom.

According to Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995), the discussion leader needs:

- to keep the discussion focused
- keep people participating
- encourage people to express their perspectives while being respectful of the opinion of others
- help maintain a friendly and enjoyable atmosphere for the group.

Moreover Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) add some basic guidelines for leaders to keep in mind:

- leaders should come prepared with some open-ended questions. Questions that can be answered yes or no tend to cut off discussion quickly;

- questions should be used to guide the discussion and keep it on track, but leaders should be ready to let the discussion flow naturally. It is often found that the prepared questions will come up naturally as part of the discussion;
- leaders should remind participants that there are not necessarily any right answers to the questions posed;
- leaders should not be afraid of criticizing the problem, but trying to get the group to go beyond the "I just didn't like it" statement;
- leaders should try to keep a balance in the discussion between personal revelations and reactions and a response to the problem itself. Every reader responds to a picture or problem in ways that are intimately tied to his or her background, upbringing, experiences and view of the world;

There is a distinction between teacher-led or student-led discussions. If the initiative belongs to a teacher, then they take up the role of the leader.

Harmer (2003) declares that teachers need to play a number of different roles during the speaking activity – discussion, and there are three particular roles if teachers are trying to get students to speak fluently:

- Prompter: students may sometimes get lost, cannot think of what to say next, or in some other way lose the fluency we expect of them. Teachers can leave students to struggle out of such situations on their own, and indeed sometimes this may be the best option. However, teachers may be able to help them and the activity to progress by offering discrete suggestions. If this can be done supportively – without disrupting the discussion – it will stop the sense of frustration that some students feel when they come to a “dead end” of language ideas.
- Participant: teachers should be good animators when asking students to produce language. Sometimes this can be achieved by setting up activity clearly and with enthusiasm. At other times, however, teachers may want to participate in discussions themselves. That way they can prompt covertly, introduce new information to help the activity along, ensure continuing student engagement, and generally maintain a creative atmosphere. However, in such circumstances teachers have to be careful that they do not participate too much, thus dominating the speaking and drawing all the attention to themselves.
- Feedback provider: when students are in the middle of speaking activity, over-correction may inhibit them and make communicativeness out of the activity.

On the other hand, helpful and gentle correction may get students out of difficult misunderstandings and hesitations. Everything depends upon teachers' tact and relevance of the feedback they give in particular situations.

This means when students have completed an activity it is vital that teachers allow them to assess what they have done and tell students what, in teacher's opinion, went well.

Apart from the teacher roles there are several skills that should be taken into account when leading discussions.

Also Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) describes discussion leading requires 6 specific skills that can be learned:

Contributing – to provide needed information, to open and answer the questions, to offer new ways to the problem.

Crystallizing – to explain, to clarify, to restate the essences of remarks, to interpret and listen.

Focusing – to keep contact with audience, explain procedures, begin and close the discussion.

Supporting – to encourage, praise, use gestures, avoid interruption and facilitate participation.

Apart from that, Davids (1985) gives classification of specific interaction skills that are regarded as essential to discussion group participants:

1. Organizing skill – an awareness of the effect on the discussion of the size, composition, seating arrangement;
2. Attending skills – the ability to identify the members who have not contributed yet in order to facilitate their participation;
3. Contributing skill – the ability to contribute, interfere during the lesson;
4. Responding skill – the ability to select contribution to facilitate the management of the task;
5. Listening/observing skill – the ability to identify in oneself or other members personal abilities, perceptions, concerns that influence the discussion;
6. Role-taking skill – flexibility in the use of role;
7. Group-coping skill – accumulation of all previous skills, so that the learner can manage the process and the content of discussion. It means –

the participant has become skilled in interpersonal behavior to help bring the group assignment to a fruitful conclusion.

It is not possible to acquire all these skills in discussion or in several discussions. Teachers can help students to start to practice and develop one to two skills in one time. When students have acquired one or two particular skills then teacher can teach and students can practice other ones.

4.4. Possible Problems that May Appear Through Discussion

Although carefully planned discussion is very important before leading and performing it, there are some drawbacks that may appear in every discussion. Teachers should consider many details and issues, and sometimes it is very difficult to remember all needed things or problems that may appear. Here are listed several important issues that every teacher should remember when preparing and leading a discussion.

Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) points out several drawbacks:

- Students who do not contribute

Teachers can encourage all students to make a contribution without forcing them to speak. Increasing the period of time teachers normally wait after asking a question. There is no need for automatically calling on the students who raise their hands first. Waiting for other students to respond, especially those who do not ordinarily contribute is one way how to involve passive students. Students may give to a teacher some nonverbal feedback indicating their willingness to respond: eye contact, facial expressions and gestures indicating they know the answer, a hesitant raising of the hand. Varying group size is often a very effective way to help all students find their most comfortable discussion environment.

- Students who dominate a discussion

Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) declares that sometimes one or two students monopolize the discussion. Often these students do not intend to silence their classmates; these students simply have a lot of ideas or a special interest in the subject. Without discouraging their enthusiasm, a teacher has to try to get other students involved. Teachers should consider the following tips, like, asking the dominant students to lead the discussion, explaining that the role of the discussion leader is to get others to talk, talking with the student privately and explaining that the teacher appreciates his or her comments, but that his or her outgoing personality prevents others from expressing their

views. Also, asking for particular participant's help in getting responses from the other students, and remembering that breaking the class into small, informal groups can encourage others to 'interrupt' a dominant student's monologue are a good ways how teachers could react.

- Drifting away from the topic

Frequently, the discussion gets sidetracked. Teachers should be attentive to the direction it is taking and ready to steer it back on course if it strays. Acknowledging the importance of the unnecessary remarks and suggesting that interested students might agree to discuss it with you after class, also, taking a few minutes to summarize the progress of the discussion are possible ways that teachers could react. Moreover, teachers can ask questions that lead students back in the discussion.

- The deadly silence

Sometimes teachers may be surprised by the silence that appears in the classroom. Hadlaw and Armstrong (1995) suggest teachers to be patient; allow students the time to consider particular questions. If all discussion stops, a teacher can ask what the silence means. If the topic is exhausted, also considering dismissing the class five or ten minutes early is one of the ways how to react. However, the students may get the impression that teachers are unable to manage class time. If there is a considerable portion of the class left, there are several possibilities to:

1. Ask a controversial question or introduce a new angle.
2. Start a new topic.
3. Explain how the topic relates to the rest of the course or to the mid-term or the exam.
4. Start a review of the material covered so far.

The author's of Diploma paper opinion is that problems may always appear and many solutions come from teacher's experience and knowledge. Teachers should know that there exists such drawbacks, but there is no use to put serious concerns only on these minuses. Not taking into account some of the problems, discussion generally promotes goodwill and friendship among students. Students enjoy sharing and learning from one another. The discussion groups and activities are foundations that encourage active communication between students. Such communication skills could be assets to future teamwork and group project work. Thus classroom discussions, as picture-based discussions, give an effective stimulus to students to share their ideas and point of views and in that way developing English communication skills.

4.5. Feedback and Evaluation of Discussion

Lightfoot (2007) suggests several forms how feedback can be provided:

- Students can observe each other doing group discussions and give each other feedback on the specific areas of input that teacher have covered.
- Additionally, Lightfoot (2007) points out that students can do a 'Reflective group feedback exercise' where at the end of the group discussion they discuss how effective each of the participants was during the discussion. Again, giving students some focused questions to guide this stage will help them.
- Teachers could also try video-taping the group discussions and playing sections of these back to the class to analyze. Some students find this extremely useful.
- Finally, teachers can monitor the groups and make notes for feedback on whole groups or individual performances. Keeping a record of these will help the teacher and the students to see where they have improved.

According to O'Mally and Pierce (1996), evaluation of speaking can take many forms, from oral sections of standardized tests such as the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) or the English as a Second Language Oral Assessment to authentic assessments such as progress checklists, analysis of taped speech samples, or anecdotal records of speech in classroom interactions. Evaluation instruments should reflect instruction and be incorporated from the beginning stages of lesson planning. For instance, if a lesson focuses on producing and recognizing signals for turn-taking in a group discussion, the assessment tool might be a checklist to be completed by the teacher or learners in the course of the learners' participation in the discussion. Criteria should be clearly defined and understandable to both the teacher and learners.

Another way how to evaluate speaking is self evaluation. Although fear of bad marks can sometimes be motivating, it's surprising to find the amount of power that students feel when assessing themselves.

According to Scrivener (2001), it can be a real awareness-raising activity. Distribute a list of criteria and ask students to first write a short line comparing themselves against each criterion (in English or in their own language) – a reflective view rather than just a 'yes' or 'no'. After the writing stage, learners can meet up in small groups and talk through their thoughts, explaining why they wrote what they did.

5. CASE STUDY IN AGENSKALNA GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The research of Diploma Paper was done to confirm that carefully organized and prepared picture based discussion motivates students to speak and improves students' English speaking skills in class 11.

The case study was carried out in Agneskalna Grammar school in form 11 during author's teaching practice from January 28 till March 20 in 2008. Form 11 had 5 English lessons per week. 12 pupils were involved in this research.

The case study involved 4 stages:

- The author's self-designed questionnaire for pupils with the aim to find out pupils' learning styles and interests (see appendix 1).
- The students' self-evaluation questionnaire on students' speaking skills after the picture based discussion in order to find out their attitude and participation during it (see appendix 5).
- The discussion on students' self-collected pictures to find out their interest on topics for further picture-based discussions.

The author also did an observation of picture-based discussions with the help of observation form with the aim to observe pupils' activity and participation in speaking activity.

The pupils of form 11 were chosen because this is the age when pupils are curious, prefer active over passive learning activities and prefer interaction with peers during learning activities that are appropriate for discussion activities (see chapter 1). Moreover, the author of Diploma Paper was teaching English to these pupils during the school practice.

There were 10 girls and 2 boys in the form 11. They were 16 and 17 years old. The pupils were active and had good knowledge of English. One half of the students have been studying together since form 7 as it is Grammar school and the other half of the students since form 10. Apart from this, pupils knew each other well, however, they left the impression that they still are getting to know each other more deeply. Pupils of this form were friendly, and during breaks they were usually chatting to each other. When a break was over, almost all the class prepared for the lesson, only two girls usually had too overtaken by chatting that the teacher had to remind that the lesson had started. Other discipline problems did not appear.

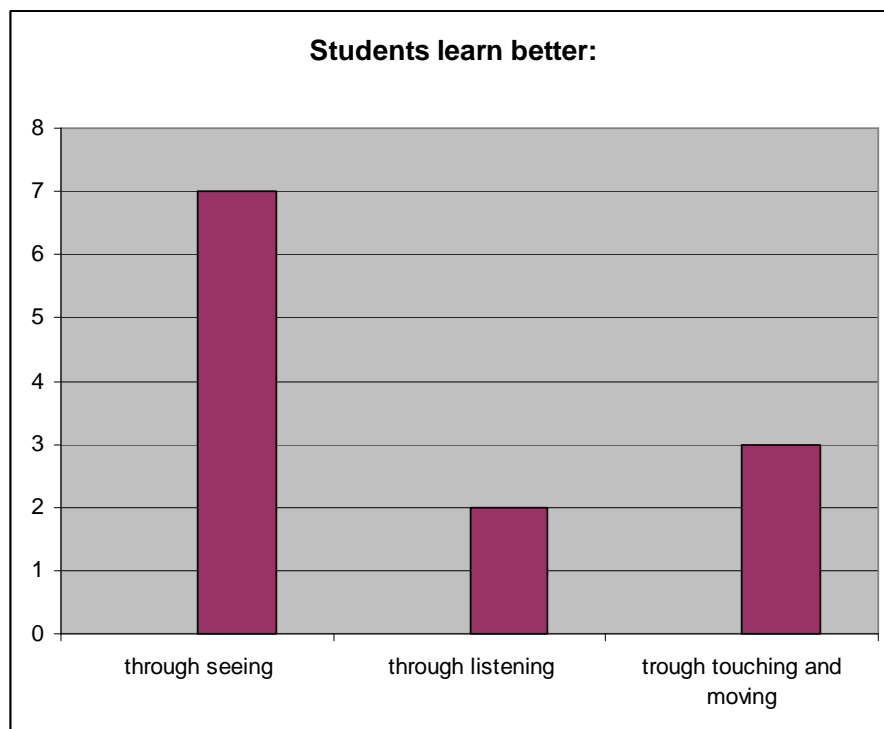
5.1. Questionnaire on Students Interests and Needs

The questionnaire was carried out to find out students' interests and needs in form 11, moreover, to find out their learning styles and whether they are visual learners. Also, it was carried out to find out whether discussions with pictures will be more interesting and motivating to express their point of view and ideas, and in that way - developing English speaking skills.

The questionnaire was given to students to fill in before picture-based discussion and it consisted from 8 questions (see appendix 1).

The first question was the multiple choice question, and it was asked to find out students' learning styles. If students would choose the first variant they would be visual learners, if the second then - auditory learners, if the third question - then kinesthetic learners. The results are published in the figure 1.

Figure 1. Students' learning styles

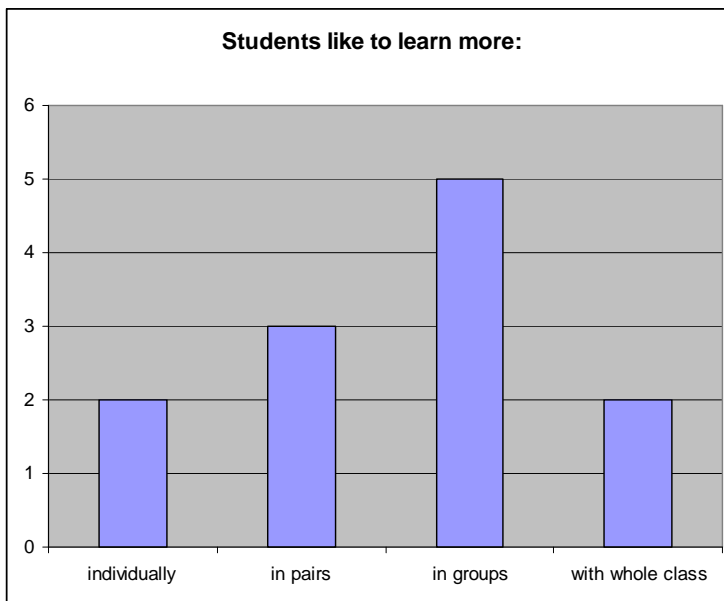


The results of the first question show that 7 pupils from 12 learn better through seeing. It means that more than half of pupils are visual learners. 2 pupils better learn through listening which shows they are auditory learners, and 3 pupils learn better through touching and moving which means they are kinaesthetic learners. The results show that

picture-based discussions are appropriate for the particular students, because visual learners will be satisfied with pictures, auditory learners will be able to listen to their partners while they are discussing the topic and then give their point of view, and concerning kinaesthetic learners, teachers also can organize picture-based discussions where students can draw the pictures them-selves.

The second question showed how pupils usually like to learn: individually, in pairs, in groups or with whole class. The results can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2. Students' learning strategies



The results show that the main part of students like to learn in groups. As discussions usually are organized in groups, the picture-based discussion activity provides this opportunity. As 3 people like to learn in pairs, they should not have objections to learn in small groups because both working in pairs and working in groups are cooperative learning strategies. The results also show 2 pupils like to learn with whole class. In this case the teacher can be flexible, and at the beginning of the discussion can ask some questions in connection with a picture to the whole class, for instance, “What can you see in this picture?”, or “What do you think will be the topic according to this picture?”

Next question was asked to find out whether students of form 11 like to participate in discussions or not. 10 pupils answered “yes”, one student wrote “sometimes, if the discussion is interesting” and 1 wrote that he/she does not know. The results of this question show that most of pupils like to participate in discussions which

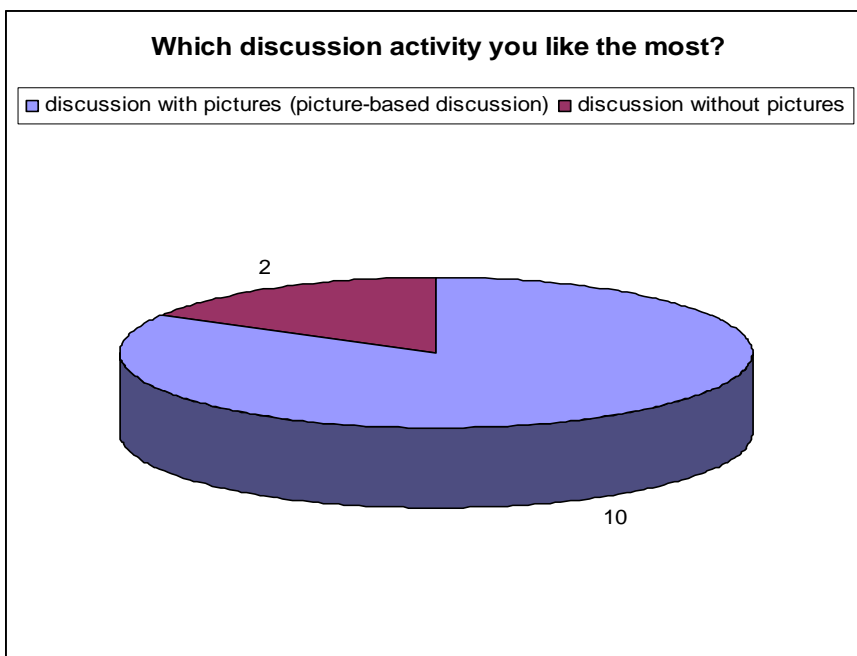
mean that teachers should organize discussions in the classroom. Students do not have any objections. Usually if the pictures are interesting and they provide interesting topic, then all pupils should participate in it actively, also those two students will participate actively because they did not give a negative answer which means that everything depends on pictures and topics that are going to be discussed in the classroom. If it does not happen, then the teacher can analyze what was wrong and then next time provide better results.

Next question “*Do you find participating in discussions useful for your speaking practice?*” was carried out to understand whether pupils find it useful to participate in discussions, whether discussions develop their speaking skills. All 12 pupils gave a positive answer. It means they all consider it useful to take a part in discussions. Pupils in secondary school usually are motivated to learn to speak and also to learn and practise other English skills. Generally most pupils understand that the English is a very important language nowadays. They also know that they will have the exam in grade 12 and they want to be prepared for it.

The following question “*Have you participated in picture-based discussion?*” was asked whether pupils have already participated in discussion that is organized and introduced with pictures. 10 pupils gave positive answers and two gave other answers and these were: yes, but not very often, usually we have discussions without pictures; yes, but only 1 time this semester. These answers show that students are familiar with picture-based discussions but they happen rather rarely. Students were familiar with these activities because their course book Matrix for upper-intermediate learners offers already made picture-based discussions, however, these activities do not appear often there.

The next question was asked to find out which type of discussion activity they like the most: discussion with pictures or discussion without pictures. Discussions with pictures are picture-based discussions, and discussions without pictures are those discussion activities that are organized with the help of statements from magazines or newspapers, also statements from books and other sources without any picture. The results are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Pupils' attitude toward different discussion activities.

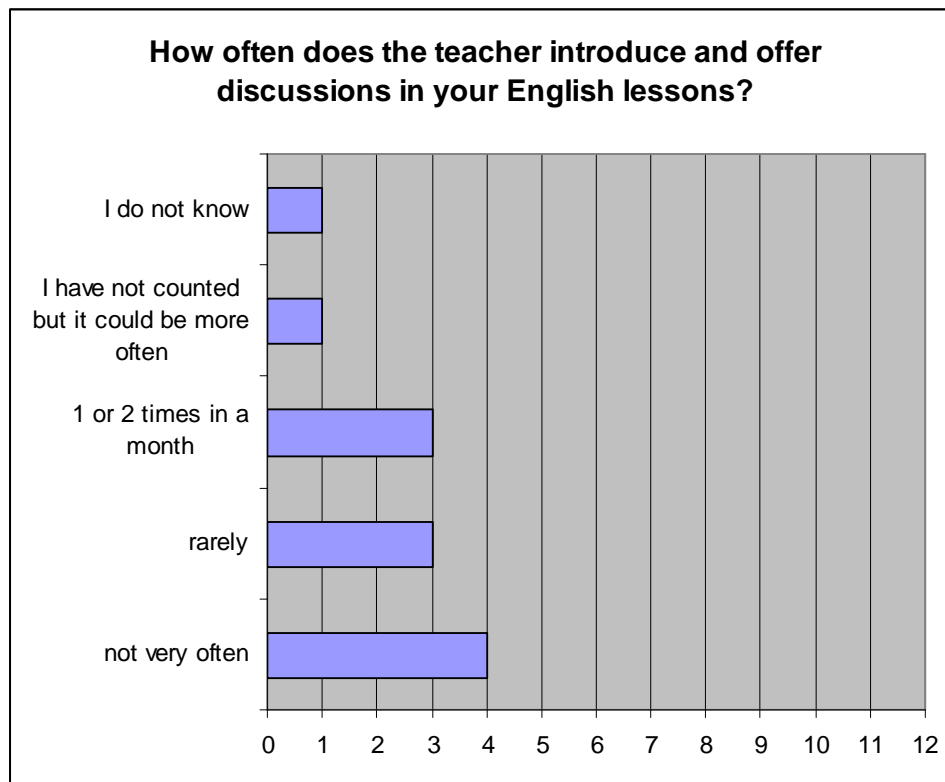


The results show that 10 pupils like discussion with pictures or picture-based discussion the most, only 2 pupils prefer discussions without pictures. It means that teachers may organize and introduce picture-based discussions in the English classes; it will meet students' needs and interests. As two pupils gave the answer that they prefer discussion without pictures, teachers can organize discussions also without pictures. The learning process can be varied according to students' needs and interests, and in this case, teachers should take into account that there are different kind of learners in the classroom. Teachers should not practise only one type of activity. The picture-based discussion is meant to motivate students to learn because this particular activity is something unusual and it makes the learning and speaking process more interesting.

The aim of following question “*How often does a teacher introduce and offer discussions in your English lessons?*” was to find out whether discussions appear often or rarely in the English classes.

The results are shown in figure 4.

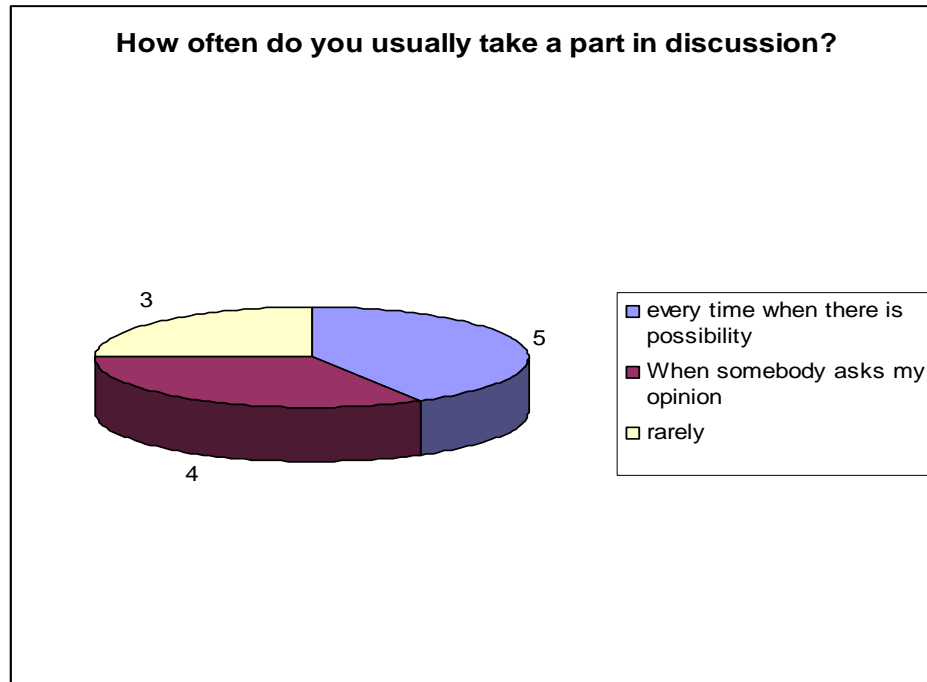
Figure 4. Discussions in English Lessons



The results were the following: 4 pupils said that not very often; 3 pupils said that 1 or 2 times in a month, 3 said – rarely; 1 said that I have not counted but it could be more often; and 1 gave the answer ‘I do not know’. The results show that mostly discussions happen rarely or not very often in their English classes. It means that discussions, and if students mostly like the picture-based discussions, could be more implemented in English lessons.

Finally, the last question was asked to find out how often do students take a part in discussions that happen in English classes. This question was asked to find out what are students’ attitude towards discussions, whether they participate in it when there is possibility or only then when they are asked for opinion. The results are shown in the Figure 5.

Figure 5. Students' participation in discussions.



The results of the last question show that mostly students are active, only 3 students participate in discussion rarely, however, to the author's opinion it is normal situation in the classroom. Usually there are more active pupils and also pupils who are not so active. If the teachers monitor, facilitate and encourage other students when necessary, the situation can be changed.

Generally, pupils in form 11 have positive attitude towards discussions, and mostly they appreciate picture-based discussions. Also they consider it useful for their speaking practice to participate and take a part in a discussion activity. However, these activities rarely happen in English classes and could happen more often because pupils like and they find it interesting to participate in discussions.

Next stage of the case study included introducing 2 picture-based discussions to the students of form 11. First discussion activity was more like introducing discussion activity where students try out discussing, sharing point of views and ideas, responding to other ideas and other speaking practice that is shown in observation sheet (see appendix 3). Students were not introduced with speaking elements they should practice. During the first discussion the teacher observed students and put the results in the self-made observation sheet. After filling it in, the author cut it into pieces according to names and gave them back to students for analyzing. Students could ask questions on terms if they had problems to understand it and other questions concerning the results.

The analysis provided better results in the second picture-based discussion. Students knew their minuses or lacks and tried to develop and improve previous lacking elements.

5.2. Picture-based Discussion 1

The theme: “Is it easy to be famous?”

The aim of this activity was to motivate students to share and express their ideas and point of view with the help of picture or pictures, in that way developing their speaking skills.

Steps: First step was to find appropriate picture for the pupils to discuss. There were several sources where to find pictures but the author of the Diploma Paper chose to select the picture from magazines, because this source offer a lot of pictures and the teacher should only decide which to choose. As students are adolescents, the teacher took into account their characteristic features when choosing the picture and topic. This is the time when students also search ideals and sometimes they find it in famous people. According to this fact, the teacher selected the picture which is connected with this theme. The chosen picture can be seen in the appendix 7. There is a famous person, surrounded by fans who are asking for autographs. The selection of the picture was not easy because magazines offer a lot of pictures. The teacher searched for the picture whose message was topical and would provide interest and respond from students. Firstly, it seems that it is a good thing to be a famous person, however, there are a lot of disadvantages, for instance, no private life and stress. Moreover, usually students at age of 16 and 17 may have a favourite famous person whom he or she admires. The author of the Diploma Paper thought that it would be a great chance for students to think and discuss the issue that may be very interesting for them, and also think how it is in true life to be a famous person. Is it really so fascinating to be a star as it sometimes could be considered?

Next step was dividing students into groups and introducing the particular picture to the pupils. As there were 12 pupils in the class, the teacher decided to divide them in 3 groups with 4 people in each. The teacher prepared 12 colourful list of paper – 4 green, 4 red and 4 blue and gave students to select. Then students made their groups according to their colours. Then the teacher gave the copied pictures to each group and asked students to brainstorm their ideas answering the following questions:

- Do you know the person who is in this picture?
- What do you think is happening here?
- Is this girl happy?
- What is the message of the picture?

Students shared their ideas, while the teacher wrote the main ideas on the board.

Brainstormed ideas were the following: pupils knew the famous person, people who were surrounding the girl were some agents or fans, the girl was not very happy but bothered about something which she could see in newspapers, and the message could be connected with the life of famous people.

The following step included introducing with the concrete theme. The teacher said that the theme would be “Is it easy to be famous?”

The next step was that the author of the Diploma paper gave a role of time manager and the role of secretary who puts down general ideas of the particular group. The teacher also gave a list of further questions on the same picture to each group. The questions were the following:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being famous?
2. Is it easy to be famous?
3. Would you like to be famous?
4. What would you like to ask to the famous girl from the picture?

Also the teacher gave the time for the discussion and it was 20 minutes. The time managers also kept the time for the picture-based discussion.

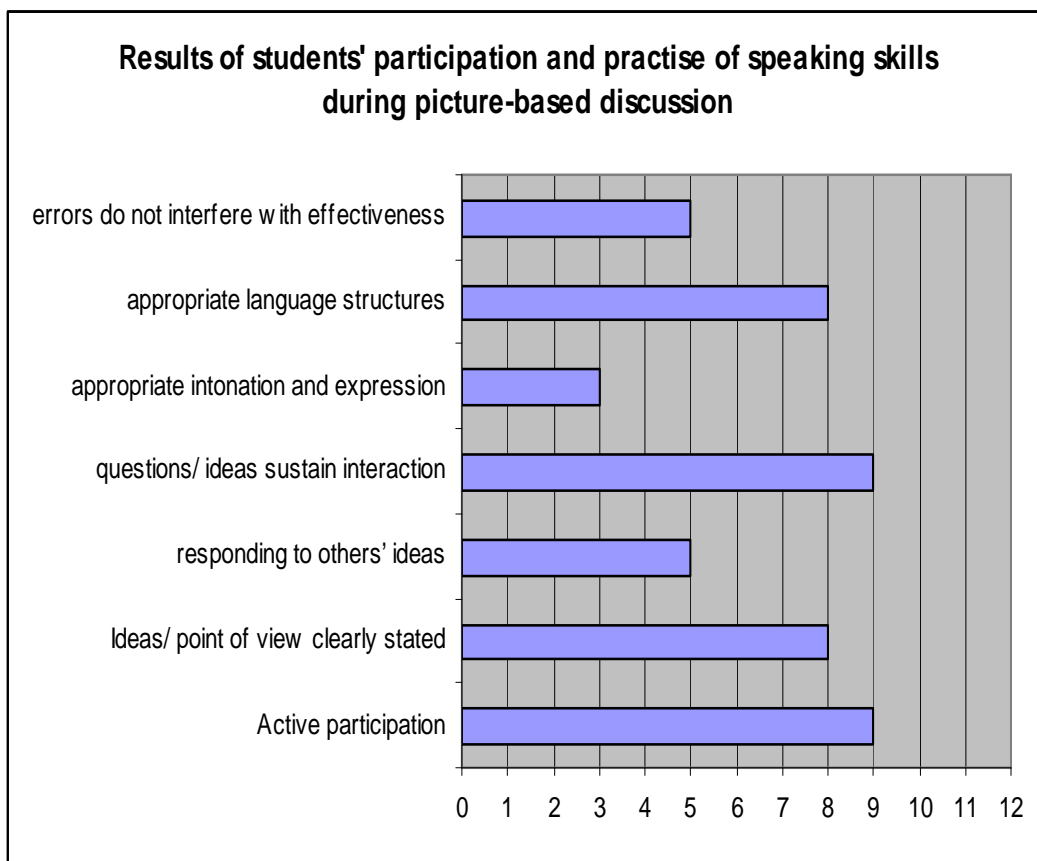
During the picture-based discussion the teacher was monitoring the groups and was following how many pupils expressed their point of view and other issues that are shown in observation sheet (see appendix 3). All the students were participating actively and there were not any problems who might appeared in the classroom during the discussion.

After the discussion the teacher asked the point of view of each group. Students shared their ideas. There were no situations when pupils did not have what to say. The teacher did not ask only the point of view of the secretary, if other wanted something to add, the teacher did not object.

Observation: The aim of observation was to observe and then analyze how active were the students, whether they participated actively in the picture-based discussion. It was also done to evaluate students' speaking skills, their ability to express their point of view and other speaking elements that are shown in the appendix 3. and the figure 5. The process happened during the picture-based discussion for 20 min while students were working in groups and were discussing the given questions. Notes were put down in author's self-designed observation sheet (see appendix 4).

The results are shown in the Figure 5.

Figure 6. Picture-based Discussion 1



The author's point of view is that the results are rather positive. 9 students participated in picture-based discussion actively, also their ideas and questions sustained interaction with other pupils. Also 8 pupils stated their ideas clearly and used appropriate language structures. The biggest part of the class was stating their ideas less than responded to other ideas. Those pupils who were not very active tend to respond to others' ideas. However, only 3 students used appropriate intonation, for instance, when asking questions.

After the lesson the teacher copied the observation sheet (see appendix 4) and one copy cut into 12 pieces. Each piece had the name of one pupil and all the results of student's actions during picture-based discussion. The results were given back to the students in the next English lesson for analyzing their speech, activity and other speaking elements before the second picture-based discussion activity. The results were given individually because each student had rights not to discuss his or her results with others. In that way students could see their weak points. Weak points were those who had not got a tick in the table. Students might also ask questions if they did not know the meaning of any term that is in the table with the results. Pupils also could pay attention what they should do during next picture-based discussion, for instance, use intonation or other expressions.

5.3. Picture-based Discussion 2

The theme: *“Modern Technologies Are Available to Everyone..”*

The aim of this picture-based discussion was to develop students' speaking skills more depending on previous results where students could see their strong and weak points.

Steps: first step was the same as in the previous discussion activity – searching for the picture that could provide interest in pupils and motivate them to respond to the picture and participate in the following discussion actively. The picture again was selected from one magazine and scanned into the computer to get colourful copies for each group of students. The selected picture can be seen in appendix 8. The author chose this picture because nowadays people are surrounded with modern technologies and almost every person is somehow connected with it. Today it is difficult to find a person who has not a mobile phone. If a man goes into simple shop, for instance, in Narvesen in Railway station building, then the first thing that he could possibly notice would not be many goods but a big TV screen on one of the walls where are appearing different advertisements. The second thing probably could be 3 computers on the little desk with Internet connection; if a man pays some money, he can use it as much as he likes. Many people has got laptops and probably one old lady could simply lay in grass and search her favourite song in the Internet as it is shown in the picture.

The following step was again dividing students into groups and introducing the picture. The teacher gave the colourful pictures to each group and asked the questions. This time students answered on following questions:

- What can you see in the picture?
- Have you ever seen similar sight like this in real life?
- What do you think is the message of the picture?
- How modern technologies affecting our lives?

The teacher also put down the main ideas on the board and afterwards concluded the results. The teacher also wrote the theme on the board.

The next step included further discussion in groups. This time the teacher divided students into groups according to their numbers. Students counted 1,2,3. Then all 1 were one group, all 2 were the second and all 3 were the 3 group. The teacher also gave the roles of time manager and secretary who put down main ideas of group. The time was 20 minutes. Students also get the questions for the discussion. The questions were the following:

1. Where people may come across modern technologies?
2. Are modern technologies available to every person? In what way?
3. What are advantages and disadvantages of modern technologies?
4. Do you think modern technologies will affect people lives in the future more?
5. Can you imagine yourself in the place of the old lady?

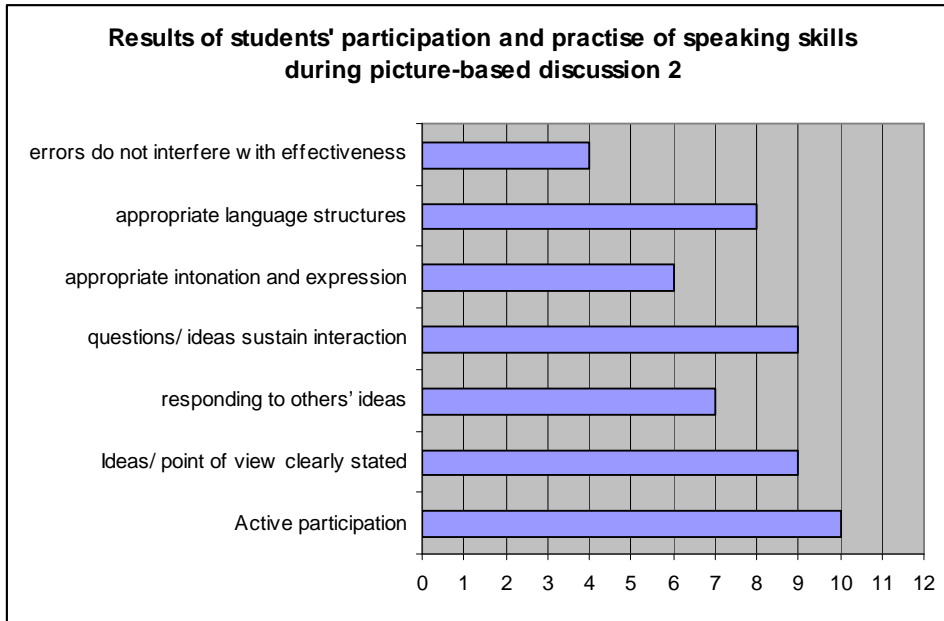
Students were discussing the questions for 20 minutes. After that the teacher asked to share with main ideas of each group.

At the end of the lesson the teacher also asked whether pupils were satisfied with pictures, what feelings did they have during discussion – positive or negative. It was done to understand whether students were satisfied with picture and its message. Mostly students were satisfied with pictures and topic.

During the picture-based discussion, the teacher also was observing and monitoring pupils.

Observation: The teacher was observing 20 minutes and were putting notes in self-made observation sheet (see appendix 4). In general students were participating actively and the results are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 7. Picture Based Discussion 2.



The results of this observation show that students were more active than previous picture-based discussion. This time 10 pupils were participating more actively. 9 people stated their ideas clearly and 7 were responding to other ideas. It that the main part who were stating ideas clearly also responded to other ideas. This time 6 people used also intonation that is for 3 people more than previous time. Only the number of using appropriate language structures, for instance, the correct tense and word order in the sentence, remained the same. Also little errors that did not interrupt the speech and its effectiveness were only to 4 pupils. However, in general, the results are more positive, which means the students did take into account their previous lack or minuses.

Comparing both picture-based discussions, it was clear that students participate more actively in the second and take into account previous results. The author's opinion is that teachers should definitely provide results for the students because they can see what aspects should be improved.

At the end of this discussion, the teacher cut the observation sheet again and gave the results back to students who could analyze their activity together with the teacher. The last stage of the case study included post-questionnaire for the pupils that is described in the next subchapter.

5.4. Post-questionnaire on Students Attitude towards Picture-based Discussion

This questionnaire was carried out to find out the students' attitude and feelings after picture-based discussion, also, whether they participated actively or did they avoid from participation in the discussion. It was more like students' self-evaluation questionnaire (see appendix 5). The post-questionnaire consists of 8 questions.

The questionnaire was designed as a table where students could tick appropriate variants for their actions and attitude. The last 8th question was designed as open question where students could answer in their own words. It consisted from two parts. To the first part students could answer 'yes' or 'no' but in the second part, if they answered 'yes', they should provide detailed answer.

The questionnaire was designed in English but if students would have any problems, the teacher would explain the meaning more precisely. According to their level, which is upper-intermediate level, they should not have difficulties to fill in the particular questionnaire.

The first question was "*Did you enjoy picture-based discussion?*" The aim of this question was to find out whether students liked this discussion activity. All 12 pupils gave positive answer 'yes'. It means students really enjoyed the picture-based discussion. If students have positive feelings towards this activity then the teacher can continue to introduce this kind of activities in the future. Students will enjoy the learning process.

The second and third question was asked to find out how active were pupils participating during the picture-based discussion.

The second question was "*Did you participate in the picture-based discussion actively?*" The results were the following: 8 pupils said that they participated actively, 2 pupils – sometimes and 2 pupils did not participate actively. The author's opinion is that all pupils usually cannot be active speakers in one classroom. Some pupils are more active than others. Some in the group are active speakers but some are active listeners, but it does not mean that active listeners are passive in discussions. They also participate actively, however, they can think that they do not because they do not speak actively.

Next question was "*Did you avoid from speaking in the picture-based discussion?*"

The results were the following: 6 pupils said that they did not avoid from speaking, 4 students said that sometimes and 2 said that they avoid from speaking during the picture-based discussion. It could be explained in different ways. Probably some pupils lack ideas when answering some particular questions. Pupils may also be afraid of making mistakes while speaking. Many students want to speak only correctly without any mistakes, that is why they afraid to speak at all. As 2 students gave positive answer on the question about avoiding from speaking, the teacher should facilitate more the students and encourage or help students to speak because if a person does not speak at all, then he or she would not develop their speaking and speaking skills.

The following question was asked to find out whether students expressed their ideas clearly so that others could understand it well. 7 pupils thought that they expressed their ideas clearly and other understood them well. 5 pupils answered 'sometimes' which means they were not confident about their clear ideas and point of view.

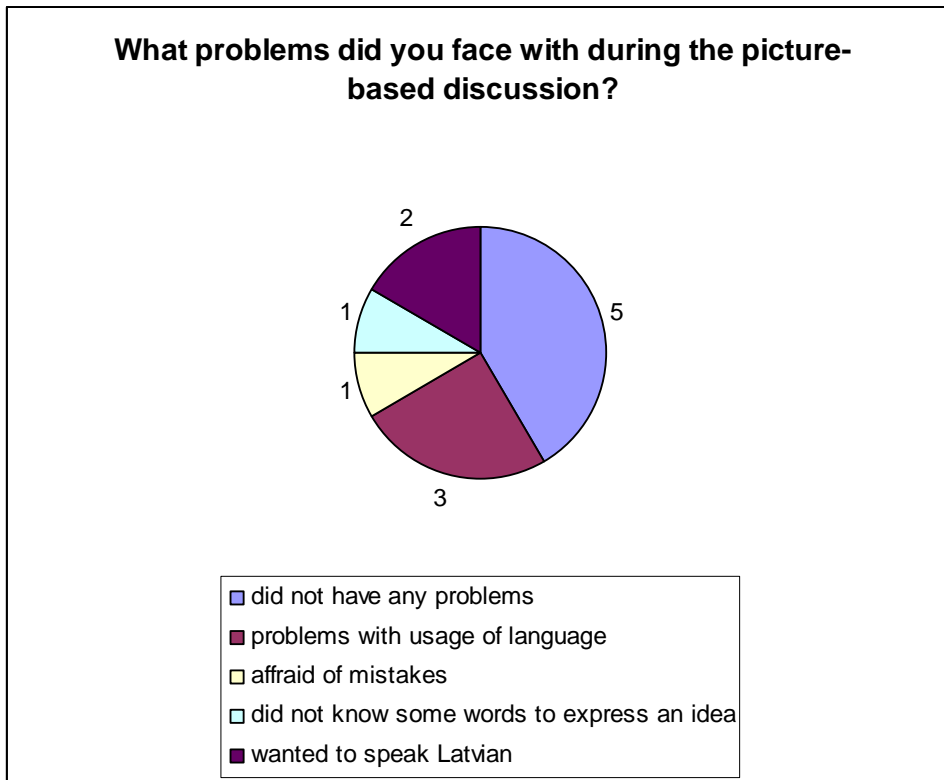
Next two questions were asked concerning pictures. The question number 5 was asked to find out whether pupils were satisfied with the picture, like size, clear visibility, in other words, visual elements that were visualized in the picture. All twelve pupils gave a positive answer to this question. It means they were satisfied with it: size, visibility and colours were appropriate.

Next question was asked concerning the message or topic of the picture. 11 students said that they were satisfied with pictures. Only one student answered 'sometimes' in the question about topic. It might be connected probably with questions. Probably one student had different point of view than others. Possibilities might be many and different.

The next question was asked with the aim to find out whether pupils would like to participate in picture-based discussion again. All the pupils gave positive answer. It provides great possibility for the author of the Diploma paper to practise these kind of activities also in the future. Students enjoy these kind of activities, and also they are interested in it. And if students are interested in something, they are also motivated to participate in such activities.

The last question was asked to find out whether students had any problems during participation of picture-based discussion. If students had any problems they had to write full answer, exactly what kind of problem were they faced with. The results are shown in figure 9.

Figure 8. Problems that appeared through picture-based discussion



The results show that 5 pupils did not have any problems while discussion. Meanwhile 3 students had some problems with usage of language. 1 person was afraid of making mistakes while speaking, and 1 person had problems when remembering some words to express ideas. 2 pupils wanted to speak Latvian during the discussion. However, the teacher noticed it and reminded to speak in English.

Problems may happen in every situation. It is normally that students face these previous mentioned problems. The teacher can see the situation, analyze it and organize further work with students to prevent these minuses. If pupils did not have any lacks then there would be nothing to do in future. Students would have perfect speaking skills. However to get better achievements students need to practise and then develop their ability to express their point of view, ask questions and give answers on it and other. At the moment students are in the learning process, they can develop their speaking skills and become better and better.

5.5. Discussion on Students' self-collected Pictures

Last stage of the case study included the discussion on students' self-collected pictures for further topics what they are interested in. This stage was necessary to find out what are students' interests, what topics they are interested in.

Steps: Students were divided in three groups of 4 people. As there were 12 pupils then there were 3 groups organized. Pupils were divided according to colours. The teacher had prepared 4 green, 4 red and 4 blue slips of paper which students selected and then divided in groups according to colours.

Next step was that the teacher gave 1 magazine and scissors to each group and gave instructions that students need to find one picture that attracts them the most and what they would like to discuss afterwards. Pupils also had to think about appropriate theme of their pictures. Students had 10 minutes for this activity.

The following step included giving the questions to each group. The questions were the following:

- Why you choose this picture?
- What is the message of the picture?
- Do you think the picture and its message would be interesting for others to discuss?

For answering the questions students had 5 minutes.

Last step was discussion on pictures with whole class. Students showed their selected pictures and also said why they chose the picture, what is the message of it, and whether they would be interesting to others to discuss. Pictures can be seen in appendix 9.

The results were the following:

1. group chose the picture about robot-woman. The message of the picture was "How robots will affect people live in the future?" It was unexpected to the author that students do not ask such a questions as - whether there will be robots in the future everywhere or not, but already - how they will affect our lives. Also student were confident that this issue would be interesting to other pupils for further discussions.

2. group choose the picture with the Moon in it. This group was interested in future, too. The message of their picture was "Whether people will live on the Moon?"

3. group chose the picture with the tallest man in the world in it. The message of the picture was "Is it easy to be tall?" This group also add that they would like to discuss advantages and disadvantages of tall people life. Also the Latvian titles show

this man saves the life of one dolphin. Pupils wanted to show that there are some advantages definitely of being tall and having long arms.

The chosen pictures were really good and topics of these pictures were interesting. Also other pupils agreed that they would discuss these pictures more deeply.

This discussion gave an opportunity for the teacher to understand more deeply what are the interests of pupils in the form 11. They want to discuss issues that are not usual, for instance, the future life and people who are different from one another. They want to understand things that are around us. This will give a chance for the teacher to find pictures that are related to these topics and motivate students to participate in further picture-based discussions because if they are interested in something they will speak about it. They will speak and develop their speaking skills.

CONCLUSION

The Paper consists of two parts theoretical part and practical part. Theoretical part consisted of 4 chapters

First chapter dealt with the information on speaking process and elements of it, also the role of motivation in speaking activities. The author found out that speaking is a complex process that consists of several elements. The motivation plays a crucial role in speaking activities.

Next chapter provided information about students' age peculiarities in secondary school. The author concluded that it is important to take into account these characteristic features to organize speaking activities – picture-based discussions more effectively.

The third chapter described the role of pictures in speaking activities and discussions. The author found out that pictures can really make learning process more interesting and they can motivate students to speak.

The last chapter of theoretical part described the organization and planning of picture-based discussion, the roles of leaders and providing of feedback and evaluation. Teachers should carefully take into account these aspects to get well-organized discussions and good results of it.

Practical part consisted of the case study which included 4 stages – 1 questionnaire for students to find out their interests and needs, 2 picture-based discussions with the aim to observe students actions and participation and 1 post-questionnaire for pupils to find out their opinion or attitude towards the second picture-based discussion.

The results of the case study show that more than half of the pupils are visual learners which means that pictures are a great tool that can be introduced during the discussions. Also, the biggest part better learn in groups or in pairs that shows that discussions are appropriate activities for the students. Also it was found that students find it useful to participate in discussions and from two discussion activities, they better choose picture-based discussions. Moreover, they usually participate in discussions actively but the teacher usually offers these activities only once in a month or more rarely.

During two picture-based discussions, students could express their point of view, ideas on two pictures and topics. The observation show that after first discussion activity that was devoted to discussion about famous people students participated actively, however they found also some problems, for instance, use of mother-tongue or

they were afraid to make mistakes. After providing the results of their activity and lacks by the teacher, in the second picture-based activity about modern technologies, students tried to participate more actively and improve their previous lacks.

The results of post-questionnaire show that students enjoyed the picture-based discussion, and they would like to participate in it again. It means that were interested and motivated to speak.

Also Harmer (1998) describes that good speaking activities are highly motivating - if all students are participating fully, if they get feedback from the teacher, the teacher has set up the activity properly, has also created encouraging and stress-free atmosphere, so that it means that students are on the way of getting satisfaction from these activities.

To the author's point of view, the hypothesis of Diploma paper is proved. Findings show that mostly students participated fully, they got feedback from the teacher, they were satisfied with pictures and topics and they would like to participate again. If students participate actively - this means they speak actively and develop their speaking skills.

The author considers to organize and practise picture-based discussion in future because the case study showed that pupils enjoy these kind of activities and would like to participate in it again.

THESES

1. Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information.
2. There are several elements necessary for spoken productions as connected speech, expressive devices, lexis and grammar, negotiation language, language processing, interacting with others, on-the-spot information processing.
3. Good speaking activities where all students are participating fully and get feedback are highly motivating.
4. Adolescence is a period when we can see the most exaggerated emotions and find very great creativity in pupils, in this period students may prefer interaction with peers during learning activities and show interest in various things, also in other cultures.
5. Pictures are enjoyable, they set the scene or context, inform and interest us, pictures is a key resource, also, using pictures really appeals to visual learners.
6. Pictures contribute to interest and motivation, a sense of the context of the language, and a specific reference point or stimulus.
7. There are different sources of pictures as the Internet, magazines, newspapers, drawings, course books, reproductions of art and family photographs
8. Discussion is an interaction and communication which allows to experiment with the language and offers a lot of practice for students if they have a motivation to do it.
9. There are several important elements that should be taken into account before the picture-based discussion is introduced to the lesson as choosing the discussion topic through pictures, structure and time management, seating arrangement, brainstorming, setting up group discussions and student responsibilities during discussion.
10. Roles of a leader and interaction skills are very important in every discussion activity.
11. Evaluation of speaking can take many forms, from oral sections of standardized tests to authentic assessments such as progress checklists, analysis of taped speech samples, or anecdotal records of speech in classroom interactions.

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Appendices

Questionnaire on Students Needs and Interests

My name is Daiga Jaunģerķēna and I am doing research on developing speaking skills through picture-based discussion. I would be grateful if you answered these questions. The questionnaire is anonymous. The results will be published in my Diploma Paper.

5. You learn better:

- a. through seeing
- b. through listening
- c. through touching and moving
- other _____

6. You like to learn

- a. individually
- b. in pairs
- c. in groups
- d. with whole class
- e. other _____

3. Do you like to participate in discussions?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. other variant _____

4. Do you find participating in discussions useful for your speaking practice?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. other variant _____

5. Have you participated in picture-based discussion?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. other variant

6. Which discussion activity would you like the most?

- a. discussion without pictures
- b. discussion with pictures

7. How often a teacher introduces and offers discussions in your English classes?

8. How often do you usually take a part in discussion?

- a. every time when there is a possibility
- b. when somebody asks my opinion
- c. rarely
- d. other _____

Thank you for devoted attention!

Questionnaire on Students Needs and Interests

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- d. through seeing
- e. through listening
- f. through touching and moving
- other_____

8. You like to learn

- f. individually
- g. in pairs
- h. in groups
- i. with whole class
- j. other_____

3. Do you like to participate in discussions?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. other variant_____

4. Do you find participating in discussions useful for your speaking practice?

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- g. rarely
- h. other_____

Thank you for devoted attention

Appendix 3

Assessing speaking skills in class 11.

Name	Active participation	Ideas/ point of view clearly stated	responding to others' ideas	questions/ ideas sustain interaction	appropriate intonation and expression	appropriate language structures	er in wi ef
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Appendix 4

Assessing speaking skills in class 11.

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Name	Active participation	Ideas/ point of view clearly stated	responding to others' ideas	questions/ ideas sustain interaction	appropriate intonation and expression	appropriate language structures	er in wi ef

Post-questionnaire

Please fill in this questionnaire after you have participated in picture-based discussion. Put a tick (v) to the variant that corresponds to you. The questionnaire is anonymous.

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes	Your variant
1. Did you enjoy picture-based discussion?				
2. Did you participate in the picture-based discussion actively?				
3. Did you avoid from speaking in the picture-based discussion?				
4. Did you express your ideas clearly so other could understand you well?				
5. Were you satisfied with the picture (size, view..)				
6. Were you satisfied with the message/topic that picture was given?				
7. Would you like to participate in picture-based discussion again?				
8. Did you have any problems when you were participating in the picture-based discussion? If yes, what kind of problems were you faced with?				

Thank you for devoted attention!

Post-questionnaire

Please fill in this questionnaire after you have participated in picture-based discussion. Put a tick (v) to the variant that corresponds to you. The questionnaire is anonymous.

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