

UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY  
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**CREATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS OF ADULT  
LEARNERS AT ENGLISH CLASSES**

**RADOŠIE UZDEVUMI PIEAUGUŠO AUDZĒKŅU RUNĀŠANAS PRASMJU  
ATTĪSTĪŠANAI ANĢĻU VALODAS STUNDĀS**

DIPLOMA PAPER

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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.

Signature

Arina Burkova

26 May 2008

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## ABSTRACT

The Diploma Paper discusses the use of creative activities for developing speaking skills of adult learners. Speaking skill is regarded to be one of the basis measures of knowing a language, and foreign language learners often find speaking the most important skill they can acquire in foreign language learning. Taking into account widely spread European cooperation and the standards application in the original, an increasingly large number of professional start studying the foreign language, in particular English as one of the main languages of communication in business.

The present research is conducted on the basis of a case study, which examines a case of teaching speaking skills to adults through creative activities in Language Centre “Pygmalion” in the period from January till March 2008. The data were collected through observations and questionnaires.

The Paper examines the possibilities of facilitating the foreign language studies of adult learners, focusing on the application of creative activities in the classroom as a potential way of helping adult learners overcome inhibitions, reveal their potential. A case study was conducted on the use of creative activities in the process of teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners at elementary level.

The case study proved that the involvement of creative activities in the foreign language study process facilitated the development of the speaking skills if the study process included a variety of creative activities that were focused on learners’ needs, were context – based and involved the use of learners’ communicative skills.

## ANOTĀCIJA

Diplomdarbā aplūkota radošo uzdevumu izmantošana pieaugušo audzēkņu runas prasmju attīstīšanai. Runas prasme tiek atzīta par vienu no svarīgākām prasmēm valodas zināšanā. Skolēni, kas apgūst svešvalodas bieži uzskata runāšanu kā vissvarīgāko prasmi, ko viņi var apgūt mācoties svešvalodu. Ņemot vērā arvien plašāku sadarbības izplatību Eiropā un konsultāciju nepieciešamību no pirmavotiem, aizvien vairāk profesionāļu sāk mācīties svešvalodas, īpaši angļu, jo tā ir viena no galvenajām lietišķās komunikācijas valodām.

Pētījums tika veikts balstoties uz atsevišķa gadījuma pētījumu valodu centā "Pygmalion" laikā no 2008. gada janvāra līdz martam. Datu ieguvei tika izmantotas šādas metodes – novērojums un anketešana.

Darbā ir raksturotas iespējas, kā uzlabot svešvalodas nodarbības, koncentrējoties uz radošo uzdevumu pielietošanu nodarbībās, kā uz potenciālo veidu, lai palīdzētu pieaugušajiem audzēkņiem pārvarēt aiztures faktorus un atklāt viņu spējas. Praktiskās daļas pamats tiek orientēts uz radošo uzdevumu izmantošanu pieaugušo audzēkņu angļu valodas kā svešvalodas runas prasmju attīstīšanas pamatlīmenī.

Praktiskā daļa pierāda, ka radošo uzdevumu izmantošana svešvalodas nodarbības attīsta pieaugušo audzēkņu runas prasmi pamatlīmenī, ja mācību process ietver radošos uzdevumus, kas ir orientēti uz audzēkņu vajadzībām, ir kontekstuāli pamatoti un ietver audzēkņu runas prasmju izmantošanu.

## INTRODUCTION

Social, economical and cultural transformation and the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century have required the elaboration of new educational model. It has considered being a concept of life long education. This concept has been elaborated due to inexhaustibility of human cognitive needs. Present changes in all areas of human activities and also aging of knowledge, increasing rate of renovation in career, growth of informative volumes have led to eternal knowledge renovation. Continuing education by adult, matured people has become an increasing tendency of the present time.

The rapid development of modern technologies is determined by the fact that knowledge received within the limits of higher education becomes obsolete practically within a few years.

It is worthwhile to note that modern education in Latvia, in particular technical, also lags behind as minimum for several years. Therefore, the personnel related to the use of technologies and technological processes have to improve continuously its knowledge on on- going basis.

In view of Latvia's accession to the EU there are introduced new requirements to quality of goods produced and services rendered. It became an urgent necessity to introduce the quality management system according to EN/ ISO 9001 standards. Implementation of each such quality management system implies the necessary due diligence and mastering of a series of European rules and standards in the sphere of occupational safety, production sanitary and environment protection. Professionals should be ready to communicate with foreign colleagues and should be able to explain the work processes. All this proposes the necessity of possible acquaintance with the relevant documents in the original language. Thus, to study foreign languages becomes the most vital demand practically of every educated person. Being aware of such a demand and the related opportunities for the growth or carrier, more and more people take up foreign language studies.

Many adults undertake affords in continuing their education in language sphere, starting learning foreign languages in matured age. It is due to growth of world international processes: society liberation, expansion of international trade and opportunities of cooperation with foreign partners in such areas as economics, politics and culture.

However, adults experience more difficulties in studying foreign language, which apparently is connected with previous unsuccessful experience in foreign language learning and also with strict demands.

Proceeding to study a foreign language adults expect quick practical results, which they might use as soon as possible in their particular professional activities. Traditional methods of teaching often lower the level of motivation already at the very beginning of studies.

To the mind of the author of the Diploma Paper (DP) traditional methods are built according to the principle “sportsman-judge”. This principle is put into effect by making students do a series of abstract, strict exercises. Any attempts to apply these system methods in respect of adults, in major cases, do not give any results.

The sole method to overcome this obstacle is to apply quite a different principle of training, which the author of DP named “sportsman-trainer”. Such an approach implies joint overcoming the difficulties, encountered, on the basis of equal and confidential relationship. The development of such relations requires an active use of the specific students’ experience in the process of teaching, the application of particular exercises and lessons oriented towards the result identified earlier. Many adults perceive language learning as a serious and solemn process. This is a common misconception. Very often it becomes a main barrier for people to start learning language, because they do not feel themselves to be prepared for drilling grammatical structures and vocabulary. One of the best ways of learning foreign language and not getting bored with it is to introduce creative activities in the course of studies.

Taking into account wide spread European cooperation and the necessity to receive operative consultations covering the issues of European rules and standards and their application, the ability of speaking fluently a foreign language becomes more and more important. Ways and means should be sought to facilitate the process of studies for adults, one of them being the use and involvement of creativity and releasing the creative potential inherent in any person.

The above allows formulating the following **hypothesis**:

The development of the speaking skills of adult learners at the elementary level is facilitated if the study process includes a variety of creative activities that are focused on learners’ needs, are context – based and involve the use of learner’s communicative skills.

**The aim of the Paper** is to analyze the role of creative activities in speaking skills development of adult learners at the elementary level.

In order to reach the set aim the following enabling **Objectives** are set out:

- to explore the theoretical literature regarding principles of adult education
- to analyze creative methods for developing speaking skills of adult learner
- to find and design creative activities and implement in the English language teaching classes
- to observe students during the English language teaching classes
- to make a questionnaire and give it to pupils participating in creative activities at English lessons
- to find out the level of efficiency of chosen activities

**Research questions:**

- What is the nature of creativity and its place in the study process?
- What are the needs and interests of adult learners?
- What could be creative activities in foreign language studies?
- How to develop speaking skills in the adult classroom?
- How the creative activities influence development of students' speaking skills?

The present research is conducted on the basis of a **case study**, according to K.Yin (2003), which examines a case of teaching speaking skills through creative activities in “Pygmalion” language centre in the period from January – March 2008. **The target group** of the research is sixteen adult learners whose English language proficiency level is Elementary.

The research data are collected by means of carrying out an observation and by means of applying a questionnaire regarding the development of speaking skill through creative activities, which was spread among the learners who took part in the case study.

The present Diploma Paper consists of four chapters.

The first chapter represents the androgenic model of teaching foreign languages, principles of adult education with practical examples, characteristics of adult learners, strategies to help motivate an adult learner and the needs of adult learners in studying foreign language.

In the second chapter there are provided: a definition of what creativity, the definition of creative activities, their characteristics description, and information regarding possible outcomes of creative activities. Also, there are several approaches of how creative activities could be applied and illustrated in the classroom.

The third chapter describes who the elementary level students are and deals with their communicative language functions.

In the fourth chapter there are provided analyzes of practical activities and observation notes.

# **I PECULIARITIES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF LANGUAGE STUDIES FOR ADULTS**

Today, education must serve the needs of adults as well as young people. Adults participate in educational activities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the workforce and to master emerging technologies, as well as to acquire basic skills, learn English, and enrich their lives. For the teachers it is important to recognize teaching and learning strategies appropriate to adult learners. Any attempt at identifying a definition of “adult” will ultimately yield that there is no single defining factor that applies in every case, one that we can use to say this person is an adult and another person is not. It quickly becomes clear that there are multiple criteria for determining who is and who is not an adult. We can look on this issue from different points. According to J. Dean (2004), first, we can look at physical development and maturity. People could be considered adults because they are physically and sexually mature, but usually do not meet other criteria of adulthood. Second, we can talk about legal age-related definitions of adulthood. Third, are social roles that adults are expected to play in their communities and society. Examples of social roles are being economically self-supporting, maintaining a home, getting married and having children, and being a responsible member of the community. Fourth, are internal hallmarks of adulthood such as development stages and cognitive abilities. As was already noted, it is clear that these various criteria of adulthood offer no unified picture. A person can meet one or several of the criteria and still be called (or not called) an adult. The implication for adult educators is that we are sometimes faced with learners who exhibit some but not all of the characteristics of an adult. We must, however, treat these learners with the same respect for their autonomy that we would a person who clearly exhibits all the characteristics of adulthood.

The above mentioned factors are the main reasons why the author of the research moved from pedagogic to andragogic strategies in teaching process.

## **1.1. ANGRAGOGIC THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Nowadays, according to the data from European Adult Education Survey (AES) coordinated by Eurostat 2008, the population of adult learners in educational institutions

has reached extremely large numbers. An appropriately chosen approach can help students become more self dependent, especially when the teacher understands characteristics of adult learners, their needs, motivation and its role in the workplace, strategies and creative activities for promoting motivation in adult learners. This chapter tackles each of these aspects, as also will discuss the adult learner, andragogy (andragogy- the methods or techniques used to teach adults) , principles of adult education, characteristics of adult learners, strategies to help motivate adult learners to learn a foreign language.

In comparison with children, adult have special needs and requirements as learners. Malcolm Knowles (1991:14) considers that:

Adults are autonomous and self-directed. They need to be free to direct themselves. Their teachers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them.

In other words, the teacher should consider students' needs and let them work on assignments that reflect their interests. Knowles also thinks that it is must be shown to participants how the learning process will help them reach their goals.

Andragogy and pedagogy both deal with problems of a teaching process. However, the word *andragogy* is preferred rather than *pedagogy* to describe adult learning. Both are based on the Greek word *agogos* (guide), but for andragogy it is combined with *andros* (man, adult) and for pedagogy it is combined with *pedos* (boy).The word “*pedagogy*” has two meanings:

1. the function or work of a teacher; teaching; and
2. the art or science of teaching; education; instructional methods.

And so that seems to be more briefly, while the term “ *andragogy*” means exactly the methods or techniques used to teach adults.

In this connection the author of this paper will further refer to the teacher of adult learners as to the instructor. According to Peter Jarvis (1999:24-26), andragogy recognizes the maturity of the learner and:

- is problem-centred rather than content-centred;
- permits and encourages active participation;
- encourages past experiences;
- is collaborative between the teacher and the learner;
- is based on an evaluation agreement;
- prompts redesign and new learning activities based on evaluation;
- incorporates experiential activities.

One of the founders of andragogy Knowles (1991: 15) sees in the following way:

**TABLE1.**The main differences between pedagogy and andragogy

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Traditional Pedagogy</b>	<b>Andragogy</b>
<b>Concept of Self</b>	Total dependency submissive authoritarian relationships do not accept responsibility for learning. Fulfills passive role in educational activities. Self-identity created through external determinants.	Responsible, autonomous and independent. Partnership with educator (joint exploration of knowledge). Co-responsible for own development. Actively involved in
<b>Experience</b>	Little life experience that can serve as source for learning.	Rich experience - wider range, varying quality. Strong source of development during education <i>Experience increasingly a source of</i>
<b>Readiness to learn</b>	Is a function of the learner's age (educator must decide when it is time to know certain things and	Experiences and a need to handle an actual life situation more effectively
<b>Learning orientation</b>	Subject-centered orientation to learning. Must learn a process to acquire prescribed subject matter. Time perspective: the knowledge	Student-centered orientation to learning. Experiences a life-, task- or problem-centered orientation to learning. A need to apply knowledge immediately
<b>Motivation to learn</b>	Extrinsic motivation (reward or punishment)	Intrinsic motivation due to a need for self-actualization

Knowles's comparison of andragogy versus pedagogy shows that all activities applied in the teaching process, in our case – in teaching a foreign language; need to allow maximum participation by learners, so they can apply their experience and values in the learning process. As for an example are taken two groups of adult learners learning English for being able to communicate with foreign partners. Group A consists of five officers of Fire Rescue Service, group B consists of nine office workers. The topic, according to curriculum is "Office equipment". For the group B the topic might be essential one because the office equipment is the matter they use in their every day life. But for the group A, where officers need to exchange their experience with foreign colleagues the syllabus "office equipment" could be beneficially substituted with "fire equipment", for instance. The appropriated vocabulary like: *extension ladder, ceiling hook, standpipe, fire plug* and etc. might be rather essential than: *filing cabinet, switchboard,*

*letter tray* and etc. In the Case Study of the present paper the author will study this example in details.

Andragogic instructors should be flexible and creative for achievement better result. Knowles (1991: 126) points out that the primary function of the instructor of adults is to manage, or to guide, andragogic processes, not to manage the content, which is the traditional approach in pedagogy.

Student-centred learning that was mentioned in the table, further Knowles (1991: 16) characterizes as following:

When examining adult education the instructor must look at student demographics and predictions, principles of adult learning, characteristics of the adult learner, strategies used when teaching adults and strategies to motivate adult learners.

In other words, creative activities in education process allow for maximum participation by the learners, therefore supporting active learning strategies and creative thinking. Peter Jarvis (1999: 14) emphasises the need for the adult learner to be actively involved in creative activities applied in the classroom.

There are different peculiarities of the organizations language studies for adults. The main principles of teaching adult learners based on Knowles's andragogic theory are put in practice and observed by the author of the DP in the practical part of the Paper (see page 42). Below follow the above mentioned principles:

- *present information in a manner that permits mastery. This means 'bit-size chunks' of information rather than everything in one huge swoop.*
- *present new information if it is meaningful and practical.*
- *use feedback/frequent summarization. Let the adult learner know what is being done correctly and keep the summaries of completed activities alive and strong as reinforcement.*
- *accept that people learn at different rates. Some people will have to be told two or three times how to do a task, others will have to be shown rather than told, and they may have to be shown only once or four or five times.*
- *believe that learning results from stimulation. It is necessary to show students that this learning is beneficial to them and it must be set a stage for their success, including stimulation them to continue.*
- *enhance learning through positive reinforcement. Tell the learners what they are doing correctly, build on the idea that we all like to succeed.*
- *support the team environment to improve learning. Some people like to work in groups, because that emulates the traditional workplace situation. However,*

*trouble can brew if these learners are expected to meet outside of class to work on group projects.*

Adult learners differ from children or teenagers to a considerable degree. It was the main reason why the teachers moved from pedagogic to andragogic strategies in teaching process. Knowles (1991: 28-29) believes that characteristics of adult learners include some of the following attributes:

- have first-hand experience;
- have set habits and strong tastes;
- have a great deal of pride, but their ways of showing it varies;
- have tangible things to lose so are very cautious in the educational environment;
- have preoccupations outside the learning environment;
- have developed group behaviour consistent with their needs;
- have established a rational framework (values, attitudes, etc.)
- respond to reinforcement, especially positive reinforcement;
- have strong feeling about the learning situation;
- in most cases can change to better themselves;
- have a strong need to apply what is learned – and apply it now;
- want to be competent in their application of knowledge and skill.

The above attributes make a clear picture of adult learner. Children and adults learn for different reasons. First of all, motivation varies. Adults are not motivated by excellent marks, they are motivated by the result of their learning and, what is most important, by applying immediately their knowledge into practice. That is why they prefer practical activities over theory-oriented exercises. Adults learn best when they use what they already know and add new skills into their stock of knowledge. Most adult learners bring a great deal of personal experience to the classroom. This can be an actual benefit in discussions. Also, they have set habits and strong tastes, which can serve both as a tool and as barrier for classroom activities. By being flexible to adapt learners' habits and needs to the organisation of teaching process, the instructor can serve as motivating force. Peter Jarvis (1999: 31) suggests the following strategies to help motivate adult learners:

- put materials into “bite-size chunks” which people are able to understand;
- use the whole-part-whole concept, showing the overall picture followed by the details and then a refresher with the overall picture;
- make the material relevant, as close to the actual requirements of that person's job;

- explain why certain assignments are made and their relevance to the overall course or training sessions;
- provide plenty of documentation for the learner, usually in the form of hands-on experience and paper documentation;
- let the students work in groups, since they would rather ask other students for assistance rather than ask the instructor;
- add a little ‘spice to their life’ by giving them some degree of options and flexibility in their assignments;
- make certain the student is equipped with enough knowledge and skill to complete the assignment, rather than setting the person up for failure.

The above mentioned strategies show that the level of self dependence of adult learners becomes higher because of the feeling of understanding of giving tasks and purposes, what makes the work of teacher and student easier and helps to increase the motivation level of learners.

Stephen Lieb from University of Hawaii <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu> assumes that motivation factors can also be a barrier:

Typical motivations include a requirement for competence or licensing, an expected promotion, job enrichment, a need to maintain old skills or learn new ones, a need to adapt to job changes, or the need to learn in order to comply with company directives.

He notes that adults have many responsibilities that they must balance against the demands of learning. Because of these responsibilities, adults have barriers against participating in learning process. These are lack of time and money, lack of information about opportunities to learn, scheduling problem, and problem with child care or lack of confidence. For example, let’s consider a typical problem of lack of confidence of adult learning foreign language at the elementary level. A student used to be a successful learner of foreign language at school. After several years without practice student realizes that he or she is not able to communicate at the elementary level, let alone to solve problems connected with work environment. A fear of returning to classroom and starting everything from the very beginning could be strong one. The main task of motivating instructor is to encourage the learner not to give up learning. Lieb (<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu>)classifies a motivating instructor by four following categories:

- conducts experiments for better comprehension;
- has empathy, which includes understanding and consideration;
- shows enthusiasm, for the course, content, students, and profession in teaching;

- demonstrates clarity, whether it be in classroom teaching, explanation of assignments, or classroom discussion.

He also believes that these skills can be improved upon through practice and effort. Further he gives an explanation for each category.

Offering experiments. The instructor must keep in mind that some of adult students will have experiences, often first-hand experiences, which are relevant to the topic. Usually adult learners have a set agenda for being in a learning environment: they want this newly acquired skill or knowledge to help them solve a problem at work, build on already existing skills, learn new skills, advance in their jobs, upgrade to a new job or get promoted. For example, not everyone is to be born as successful speaker. A student of English as a foreign language works as an export manager for the company producing agricultural equipment. He is a good specialist in his field and he is quite familiar with specific terminology. However, the problem is that he cannot speak to the audience; still he has to present his product to the foreign market. For this purpose adults participating in the case study of the DP were given a basic knowledge of making a public speech, which includes several stages of making a presentation with appropriate phrases (see page 46).

Having empathy. One of the more troublesome issues of adult learners has to do with what activities and how much time and other resources they are expected to commit. The major barrier for these adult learners is time – they just do not have the time to commit to endless hours of outside class assignments. For that reason the instructors must be absolutely clear in their expectations and require only work which demonstrates mastery of the desire to achieve the goal. For example, problem of time may occur in mixed level classes. When a learner finds the task too easy or on the contrary too difficult to commit, he or she may lose an interest to the assignment at all. At this stage it is important to give students a reasonable amount of work, make sure these assignments are within their grasp.

Showing enthusiasm. An enthusiastic instructor is a person who cares about values his or her subject matter and teaches it in a manner that expresses those feelings with the intent to encourage similar feelings in the learner. Emotions, energy, and animation are apparently visible in this person's instructions.

For example, being an English teacher of learners at the elementary level, instructor may face with routine work, because their speaking skills are not developed enough for having interesting conversation. However, it is very important to understand that students are getting excited of being able to communicate even at the elementary level. And it is vital for instructor not to lose enthusiasm and encourage student to keep on talking.

Demonstrating clarity. Demonstrating clarity is really the power of language and organization. It can also be defined as “thinking on your feet” or articulating well. The demonstration clarity is also an ability to show that the object is well-known and situation is clear, to way to show the competence. Certain words such as “um” or “ah” spoken a couple of times in an answer to a question leave serious doubts in the adult learner’s mind regarding the competence of the instructor.

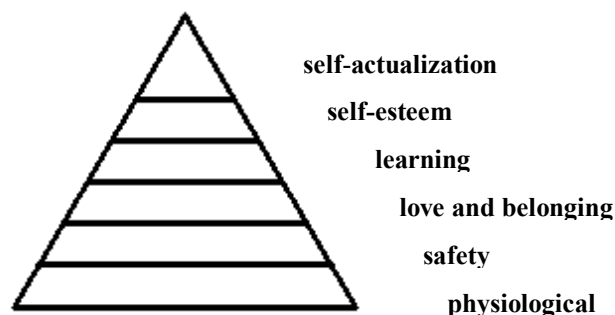
For example, to be an English teacher does not mean to know everything. When the instructor supposes to answer the question, he or she does not know it is not a sign of incompetence to say, for example like it does the author of the DP: “All right, I am not ready to respond immediately, we will put it down to a sticker and I will find the answer until next session.”

However, whatever theories might be followed, strategies applied in helping to motivate the adult learner, it is necessary to study and take into account learners’ needs as well as peculiarities of different age groups.

## 1.2 LEARNER’S NEEDS AND INTERESTS

In adult education the starting point in studying program planning are the adults’ interests and needs. Perhaps, the highest expression of the art of the adult educator is skill in helping adults to discover and become interested in meeting their needs.

Jarvis (1998:14) presents a ‘hierarchy’ of general human needs:

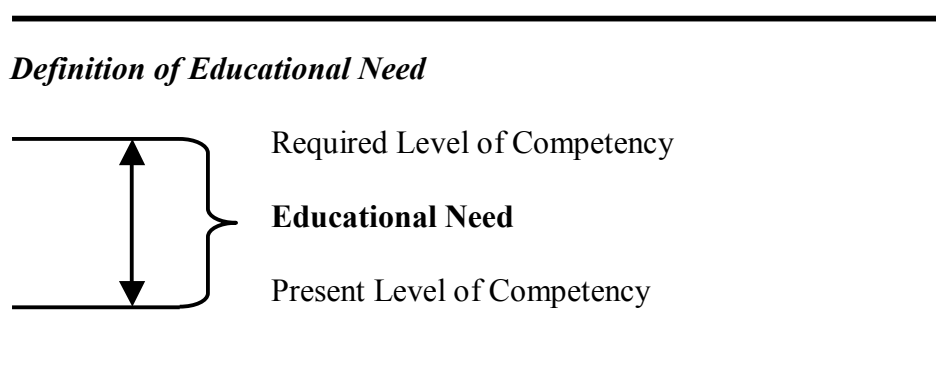


**Figure 1 .** ‘Hierarchy’ of general human needs

It is shown that the human being has a basic need to learn, a need that may be as basic as any of the needs identified by Jarvis (1998: 14). The author of the DP agrees with Jarvis that the need to learn is quite fundamental to humanity and that it manifests itself during the process of the formation of the self, so that in any formulation of human needs the learning need should be specified.

An educational need is something people ought to learn for their own good, for the good of an organization or for the good of society. Knowles believes that it is the gap

between adults' present level of competencies and higher level required for effective performance as defined by themselves, their organization or society. This definition Knowles portrays graphically in the following table (1980:88):



An educational need is the difference what learners want themselves to be and what they are – the distance between a goal and a reality. Zmeyer (Змеев) (2003:107) replicates Knowles and considers that for defining an educational need it is necessary to create a functional model of competence. An adult learner needs to achieve a functional model of competence in order to change his or her life conditions. The model of competence on Zmeyer's opinion is knowledge, skills, abilities and valuable orientations, which are crucial for certain social role performance. Therefore, an adult learner supported by the educator should classify and then seize the level, type of knowledge, skills and features, which effectively could be used in solving certain array of problems. It could be either specific professional program or liberated array of competences. Next step is to analyze the present level of competence, prior trainings in the area where the learner will be educated. It becomes essential to define an actual stock of knowledge, skills and abilities which are already seized by a learner. The present level of competence is to be compared with required model of competence for choosing an appropriate course of education.

Knowles considers that an educational need can be defined broadly or narrowly. If a learner's need is to be knowledgeable about the great works and ideas of literature, philosophy, science and the art it means that he or she wants to be broadly educated. Or for example, if a person is about to lose his or her job because the organization requires the ability to communicate with foreign partners, then the educational need is rather narrow and specific. The more exactly learners can define their educational need, the more intensely will they be motivated to learn. And the more matching the needs of learners are with the goals of their organizations or society, the more will effective learning take place.

In this connection, foreign language learning can be considered to specific educational need. Adults learn English for a variety of reasons. Some simply learn

language and culture, some to escape from difficult circumstances at home, but most learn English for getting better job, still others already have jobs but are under necessity to increase their language skills in order to keep their work place.

Heather McKay and Abigail Tom (1999:2) consider first two groups of learners as following:

Some, who do not need the language for employment, attend classes primarily for social reasons. For them, the language class provides a respite from the loneliness of staying at home.

In present Diploma Paper the author focuses on adult learners who are motivated to learn English for improving their environment conditions.

Motivation reasons are strongly connected with the learners' approach to learning process. Some of them are short-term visitors, staying for a few months at the language courses and studying English only for a particular situation; others stay for a few years, and still others for the rest of their lives.

Adults are strongly motivated and indeed it becomes a great advantage for teacher to teach adult learner. Adult students are not required to attend classes nor pass exams. Their motivation is generally based on their perception that what they are learning could be immediately applied at their daily life. At this stage a teacher could improve their motivation by providing interesting and creative activities.

Still there are some expected circumstances instructors could face with while teaching adults. First of all it is what adult learners bring to a class. Adults already know one language well it sounds and structure system. Knowing their first language well could both help but also delay learning a new language. In other words, using new language adult learners are afraid of being misunderstood, being corrected or even of feeling childish. Adult learners also bring experience gained during their lives. McKay and Tom (1999:3) believe that this knowledge of the world is a rich resource for the teacher who chooses to exploit it.

In other words, the teacher could use the students' previous knowledge as a certain base on which to create new knowledge. McKay and Tom (1999:3) note that those students who have studied a foreign language previously might be influenced by that experience. If their previous experience was successful, they are likely to assume that they will be successful again. Not only will they be more confident, but they will also have developed strategies to help them learn a new language. Students who have unpleasant experiences as learners are likely to expect more of the same.

At this stage it becomes essential to identify actual needs of a learner for making the most beneficial outcome from studying process. By means of simple questionnaire, which could be distributed amongst students, the instructor can get a clear picture of their foreign language needs. The author of the DP gave this kind of questionnaire to the adults at the beginning of the case study and analyzed learners' needs (see page 41).

By collecting and analyzing the questionnaire the instructor can organize the teaching process, taking into consideration students' needs. Having responded on their needs, students could achieve good results in language learning.

The author of the DP moved from pedagogic to andragogic theory because from the above mentioned it is clear how different are these approaches and how important is to understand the characteristic, needs and role of motivation of the adult learners. In order to organize better teaching process the instructor should support active learning, be active and creative himself and encourage creativity in his learners.

## **II CREATIVITY AND ITS PLACE IN THE STUDY PROCESS**

If one wanted to select the best novelist, artist, entrepreneur or teacher, one would most likely want someone who is creative. The *Handbook of Creativity* (1999:3) gives a precise definition of creativity:

Creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e. original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task contains).

In other words, creativity is a topic of wide scope that is important at both the individual and societal levels for wide range of task areas. At an individual level, creativity is relevant, for example, when one is solving problems on the job and in daily life. At a societal level, creativity can lead to new scientific findings, new movements in art, new inventions and new social programs. The economic importance of creativity is clear because new products or services create jobs. Furthermore, for individuals, organizations and societies would be beneficial to adapt existing resources to changing task demands to remain competitive.

While studying and exploring theoretical materials about creativity the author of present paper noticed that the interest in creativity research began to grow quite recently. And a few research institutes like Scientific Institute of Creativity and Institute for Creative Development concerned with creativity were founded.

Creativity is a feature which requires the simultaneous presence of a number of traits, such as: intelligence, perseverance, originality, the ability to think in a particular manner. Actually, none of these features are especially rare, but what is most difficult is to find them all present in the same person. Creativity, as all of human traits needs to be stimulated, especially at the study process.

### **2.1 TYPES, CHARACTERISTICS AND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

There are certain types and groups of creative activities. Thus activities vary in types and groups they could be applied in work with learners with different language proficiency levels.

The principle of functional creative activities is that the instructor structures the situation so that learners have to overcome an information gap or solve a problem. Littlewood (1991:22-38) considers that the range of functional communication needs that can be created for learners is limited by the nature of the classroom situation. It involves

mainly the sharing and processing of information. He groups functional creative activities according to the two main uses of language just mentioned: (a) using language to share information and (b) using language to process information (e.g. to discuss it or evaluate it). According to Littlewood (1991:22) creative activities within the classroom could be divided into the following main groups:

1. *Sharing information with restricted cooperation.*
2. *Sharing information with unrestricted cooperation.*
3. *Sharing and processing information.*
4. *Processing information.*

*Sharing information with restricted cooperation* is the type of creative activity with the simplest patterns of interaction. The situation is always that one learner possesses information which another learner must discover. The *Handbook of Creativity* (1999:33) recommends to introduce a 'game' element and to ensure that the interaction lasts long enough to provide sustained practice, the knower is not allowed to cooperate fully: he or she provides information only in response to appropriate cues. These are usually questions of a specified kind (e.g. yes/no questions). Since the learners must in any case interact according to strict rules, the activity becomes a communicative form of controlled language practice, for which the learners can be specifically equipped with the language they need.

Littlewood (1993:23) offers different variants of how the *Sharing information with restricted cooperation* may be carried out. These are:

- *Identifying pictures;*
- *Discovering pictures;*
- *Discovering sequence or locations;*
- *Discovering missing information;*
- *Discovering secrets;*

In the *Identifying pictures* activity, the vocabulary that the learners need is determined largely by the subject matter of the pictures. In addition, it could be elicited specific structures by manipulating the features that distinguish the individual pictures. For example, in order to distinguish the pictures, learners would need to ask and answer questions with 'What color ...?', 'How many ...?' and 'Where ...?'.

The example of *identifying pictures* activity could be as follows: Learner A has a set of four, five or six pictures which are all very similar in content, but contain a number of distinguishing features. Learner B has a duplicate copy of just one of these pictures, which he has either been given by the teacher or selected himself from a complete

duplicate set. Learner A must find out which of the pictures learner B is holding, by asking him questions about it.

The *Discovering identical pairs* activity produces similar kinds of interaction, except that the discoverer must now question several other learners. For example, a similar set of pictures is distributed among *four* learners, who thus have one picture each. A fifth learner in the group holds a duplicate of one of the pictures. He must question the others, in order to discover which learner has the picture, identical to his own. According to Littlewood (1993:25) these pair-seeking activities can be carried out with information which is presented in linguistic rather than pictorial form.

In *Discovering sequences or locations* the Learner A has a set of, say, six pictures or patterns. These are arranged into a sequence from one to six. Learner B has the same set of pictures, but these are not in sequence. Learner B must discover the sequence of A's pictures and arrange his own in the same way.

In activities, which involve discovering locations, the map or plan constitutes the learners' initial shared knowledge. As in other communication situations, the degree of communicative difficulty depends in large part on how detailed and informative this shared knowledge is. Littlewood (1993:26) considers that it is more difficult to describe and discover locations if the map is completely blank, than if a few streets and landmarks are named as reference points.

In the *Discovering missing information* activity, the *Handbook of Creativity* (1999:38) recommends to have information, presented in tabular form. For example, Learner A has a table showing distances between various towns or a football league table showing a summary of each team's results so far (how many games they have played/won/lost/drawn, how many goals they have scored, etc.). However, some items of information have been deleted from the table. Learner B has an identical table, except that different items of information have been deleted. Each learner can therefore complete his own table by asking his partner for the information that he or she lacks. Specific language forms are to be used. For example, the distances table would require forms such as 'How far is . . . from . . . ?' and 'Which town is . . . miles from . . . ?', while the league table would require forms such as 'How many games have . . . played?' and 'How many goals have . . . scored?'.

In the *Discovering 'secrets'* activity one learner has a piece of 'secret' information, which the others in his class or group must discover by asking appropriate questions.

The questions must be restricted to a certain kind, such as yes/no questions, in order to prevent the discoverers from simply asking directly for the piece of information. Littlewood (1993:29) considers that the lexical and structural content of the language in this activity is not predictable: it is up to the questioners to decide what kinds of information will help them to narrow the range of possibilities and discover the 'secret' as quickly as possible. There may be a time limit or, more often, a limit to the number of questions allowed.

The next group of activities *Sharing information with unrestricted cooperation* is elaborated to reduce the conventions that restrict the cooperation between learners. According to the *Handbook of Creativity* (1999:41) the learners' communicative relationship in this group of activities may be allowed to become fully cooperative, with the result that:

- More realistic patterns of interaction can emerge, producing a wider variety of communicative functions. Instead of only asking and answering questions, learners can now use language for describing, suggesting, asking for clarification, helping each other, and so on.
- Faced with the need to cope together with more demanding tasks, learners must develop a wider range of communication skills. For example, they must learn to take shared knowledge into account, to use feedback and reformulate messages when necessary, to compensate for language deficiencies through simplification or paraphrasing, and so on.
- The experience of cooperating through the new language, in order to overcome a mutual obstacle, can help to produce more positive relationships between learners and more positive attitudes towards the foreign language as a means of resolving difficulties.

Like in the case of the first group the *Sharing information with unrestricted cooperation* group includes several activities. According to the *Handbook of Creativity* (1999:44), these are:

- *Communicating patterns and pictures;*
- *Discovering differences;*
- *Following directions.*

In the *Communicating patterns and pictures* activity, where, for example, learner A has an assortment of shapes which he arranges into a pattern, learner B has the same shapes. They must communicate with each other so that B can reproduce as exactly as possible the same pattern as A.

In the *Discovering differences* activity the learner A and the learner B each have a picture. The pictures are identical except for a number of details. For example, two street scenes may be identical except that one of the people is in a different position, one car is a different color and there is a different number of clouds in the sky. The learners must discuss the pictures in order to discover what the differences are. Littlewood (1993:32) recommends more demanding variant: to distribute a number of pictures among a group of learners. Some pictures are identical, some are different. The learners must first discover how many different pictures there are before, perhaps, also discovering all the distinguishing features.

In the *Following directions* activity the focus has moved more clearly onto 'meanings to be communicated' for a specific purpose. Littlewood (1993:32) notes that:

They are mean to communicate because the interaction is more creative and unpredictable, learners will more frequently want to express meanings for which they have not been provided with ready-made linguistic solutions.

This means, that they will need to develop a wider range of communicative skills and strategies for getting these meanings across.

The goal of the *Sharing and processing information* group activity is share factual information. However, Littlewood (1993:36) notes that learners must not only *share* information, they must also *discuss or evaluate* this information in order to solve a problem. He also emphasizes the advantages of mentioned group of creative activities:

- The range of communicative functions that occurs is further widened.
- This further increases the unpredictability of the interaction.
- There is more scope for disagreement and negotiation.

Many of the activities in this group such as: *reconstructing story-sequences* or *pooling information to solve a problem* work on the following principle: each learner in a pair or group possesses information which is unique to him/her; he/she must share it with others; together, the different pieces of information provide the material for solving a particular problem.

For example, in *Reconstructing story-sequences* a picture-strip story (without dialogue) is cut up into its separate pictures. One picture is handed to each member of a group. Without seeing each other's pictures, the learners in the group must decide on

the original sequence and reconstruct the story. Littlewood also points, that there are two levels of language in this activity. The first is the language needed for description and narration and the second level is the language needed for discussion.

In the *Pooling information to solve a problem* activity a large number of activities are possible in which learners have to pool information in order to solve a problem.

Littlewood considers that many of these 'pooling and solving' activities can be organized in two distinct parts. First, learners are asked to pool information in order to complete a table or map. This part of the activity simply involves *sharing* information. Then, the learners are asked to solve the problem on the basis of the information that is now before them. For example, it may be a matter of two friends telephoning and discussing the shortest route from one point to another.

The last type of functional creative activity - *Processing information* - dispenses completely with the need to share information. Learners now have access to all the relevant facts. The stimulus for communication comes from the need to discuss and evaluate these facts, in pairs or groups, in order to solve a problem or reach a decision. The *Handbook of Creativity* shows that the comparative absence of the 'game' element may sometimes result in some 'slackening of the pressure to communicate'. On the other hand, since the problem is now inherent in the facts rather than a result of artificial rules, the activities are more similar to problem-solving situations outside the classroom. Littlewood points that in these activities, learners must not only analyze information, but also argue, justify and persuade, in order to reach a common decision. They therefore provide a context for a still wider range of communicative functions. They also make it still more necessary for learners to develop skills in managing the interaction at the interpersonal level.

To sum above groups and subgroups of creative speaking activities, learners must gradually become more creative with the language they have acquired.

Friederike Klippel (1995:4) has divided creative activities into the following groups:

- message-oriented activities,
- learner-centered activities,
- active learning activities.

Klippel (1995:3) maintains that the message-oriented activity is used to refer to those rare and precious moments in foreign language teaching when the target language is actually used as a means of communication.

In other words, the main objective of the using of message-oriented activities is to generate communication among learners in the classroom. Message-oriented activities could arise impulsively whilst discussing new dresses or someone's health condition. For example, Vineta, a student of the elementary level, was absent for last three lessons. "What happened to you Vineta?" "I got the flue". "It's true, the weather is dreadful. By the way, folks, what do you do when it pelt with rain outside?" And students are getting involved into discussion by using new expression – 'pelt with rain'.

*Learner-centered activities* are focused on learners themselves. Students' feelings and ideas are a focal point of such activities. For learners it is very important to experience real communicative situations. They enjoy learning to express their own view points and attitudes in which they are taken seriously. Learning to talk about their likes and dislikes may bring more understanding of their values and aims.

Learning is more effective if the learners are actively involved into the process. *Active learning activities* depend mostly on the material used in the study work. Students' curiosity may be stimulated by texts containing missed or muddled information, and this curiosity leads to put right or to complete. For example, students of elementary level were asked to produce a TV show program. This encouraged them to talk in the foreign language, to interview each other, use handy stuff for their assistance, i.e. a marker as a microphone, a pencil as a pointer. They all get excited and what is more important is that it leads them to the final goal – the production of a TV show program.

Sue Kay, a director of Lake School, Oxford (2001:9) classifies the above groups of activities as follows:

Message-oriented, learner-centered and active learning activities are not the kind of speaking tasks that require students to use conventional structures. These are the 'free' stage of Presentation, Practice and Performance approach. The stage of PPP approach could be achieved by using of an anecdote activity. Further on she provides a more detailed definition to what the anecdote activities are (2001:34).

An anecdote activity is an extended speaking activity which provides an opportunity for students to tackle a longer piece of discourse and to develop their speaking skills.

The anecdote activities encourage students to talk about things that really matter to them, more than exchanging the information they already know.

Kay offers two options how to carry anecdote activities out. In the first option she advises to give students a list of leading questions to read and ask them to tick the questions they can or want to answer. After the preparation time, students could be asked to work in pairs and to exchange anecdotes. In second option the teacher reads the leading

questions aloud. Students are asked to close their eyes if they wish and just listen and allow thoughts to come into their minds as the teacher speaks. Slow reading will allow students to memorize the activity.

In the first option is given time to think over what the students are going to say and how they are going to say it. Students can use dictionaries and make notes, but they should not write down what they are going to say. It will stimulate them to speak in their free way that actually will develop their speaking skills. In this option the time must be given in accordance with the students' level. At the elementary level the students try to use a more complex language structures when they have time to think, they hesitate less and commit less mistakes. In the second option, after the teacher reads the task the students will have time to prepare it in detail. Then the students can be put in pairs to exchange the anecdotes with their partners.

The author of the DP assumes that for elementary level adult learners the topic chosen should be by character universal. Thus, every student has something to say: a book they have read, a best friend, their family. However, students may find some difficulties to think of what to say on the spot. In anecdote activities by preparation of a leading question they could generate their ideas. The leading questions for elementary students could be the following:

- What was the name of a film?
- What was the name of the main character?
- What did you like most?
- What would you like to change if you were a film director?
- With whom were you watching the film?

In comparison with reproductive activities, where students are asked to answer a question and it is considered to be a fulfilled task, creative aspects in these activities involve students into communication process.

According to Sarah Cunningham and Peter Moor (2001) an anecdote activity could be performed by means of exchanging the information in pair work. Below is given an example of activity card. An anecdote activity cards could be distributed among students when they are divided into pairs. Each student has a task to tell the group about his or her partner. Before they start they are not allowed to share the correct information about themselves. For this purpose a teacher encourages students to use expressions like: I think, I'm not sure, I hope, I believe, etc. One of the features of creative activities is to avoid boredom in teaching process. Hence, the information in activity cards could vary in each pair of the students.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

S/he *always/usually/sometimes/never* drinks coffee in the morning.

S/he *always/usually/sometimes/never* watches TV at weekends.

S/he *always/usually/sometimes/never* gets up before nine o'clock on Sundays.

S/he *always/usually/sometimes/never* eats sandwiches for breakfast.

S/he *always/usually/sometimes/never* goes to the gym.

(from Cutting Edge Elementary 2001)

Friederike Klippel (1995:31) notes that when students are required to participate in a debate in foreign language it helps them to develop a specific use of speech.

According to V. Nevskaya (Невская) (1974:9-61) in the process of teaching a foreign language it is necessary to take into account not only language, but also psychological conditions which encourage the teacher as well as the student to develop a specific, intellectual use of speech, i.e. a creative utterance. It means that speech is considered to be not only a conscious expression of what, but also a particular type of creative activity which is directed towards speech development and improvement by means of the organizing thinking, i.e. by the necessity to solve creative tasks. Nevskaya also stresses that creative utterance theory is based on the teacher's ability to point a cognitive task to the students and to motivate them to use creative approach into the learning process. Nevskaya (Невская) (1974:48) suggests the following stages of creative activities:

1. The problem situation (students discover the problem independently).
2. The perception of the task (its conditions and aims).
3. Tests and mistakes (to analyze positive test results and to establish the cause of the mistake).
4. An estimation of the obtained results.

Below are described two examples of activities, by Nevskaya (1974), where students are required to use creative utterance.

A task was given to students where several points must be observed: 1. A private school has sold 4 acres of land to a construction company, which is going to build a recreation area for children. 2. After signing a purchase agreement, the school finds out that the company is carrying out the order of a building petrol pump. 3. The sold estate is very close to the private school. The task: to make all possible and impossible but prevent building the petrol pump. The task fulfillment requires an intensive and independent

thinking process. Students experience animated interest in solving the problem, they are eager to get to know the terms better. The advantages of such creative activity are the following:

- the activity develops an intellectual side of a personality (the ability to create own thoughts in strict and logical sequence);
- the activity develops creative imagination;
- the activity gives vent to observation and realization of personal impression in speech;
- the activity requires to use specific and precise vocabulary for communication.

Students are more eager to learn better being engaged by the material itself rather than by memorizing it.

The next example is based on two different approaches to a text by means of retelling. In the first case students use the traditional method of retelling, i.e. students reproduce the plot and details reflected in the text. In the second case a more complicated task is given with some additional requirements: to make their own script while retelling the text. In the first case students depend on the author, his attitude to the episode and their disability to influence the plot. It does not allow students to engage in creating individual images. Besides it does not develop or encourage any critical approach to the text.

When using creative activities (making scripts), students choose their own approach to the text and even create a new strategy.

There are certain activities, which are good for practicing speaking skills, as well as several ways to encourage students to speak in the classroom. Anne Lazaration (2001:105) believes that there are at least three activities that develop speaking skill.

- Discussions.
- Speeches.
- Role plays.

Discussions are most generally used activities in the classroom. Students are introduced into a topic and are then asked to get into pairs or groups to discuss the presented topic in order to come to a solution or a response. Students need to be clear what they are to discuss, why they are discussing it, what result is expected; and, besides, each student should know his/her role (e.g., time keeper, note taker, reporter of the results) in the discussion.

According to Lazaration (2001:107) there are two types of speeches. The first is prepared speech. A topic for the speech can vary according to students' level. Students should be given some leeway in determining the content of their talks.

In other words, the teacher can provide a structure for their speech and indicate the time for preparation. However, a prepared speech is that listeners could get bored during the speech. To avoid this disadvantage the teacher could ask listeners to reproduce the speaker step by step. Lazaration recommends video or audio taping while the students are speaking. She also stresses that students are usually surprised to see how they appear and sound on the tape and can often come up with their own ideas about how to improve their activity.

The second type of speech is impromptu speech. This activity requires students to use silence fillers such as: um, eh, well, sort of, so, etc. An appropriate example of how impromptu speech activity could use is the following. It could be very useful and even entertaining in the group with different interest and abilities. There is given a topic, with which some students are familiar and others know nothing about it. The topics could be the following: how to cook pancakes, how an automobile's engine works, how to play golf, etc. A topic is given to a person he or she is unfamiliar with just before being asked to speak. The student or even a group of the students should keep talking using hesitation markers and give as little actual information as possible. The author believes that it can be quite a humorous activity.

Another speaking activity is role play. Role play is particularly appropriate for practicing every day language, such as: complaining claims, etc. A conflict always lays in the basis of a role play. The topic for role play could vary, for example: there are two complaining neighbors. One neighbor complains about too loud music and another in his/her turn complains about forgotten garbage. The task is to come to a mutual decision. The main feature of a role play is that students can communicate without the teacher's help. The teacher could only ask other student, whether the participants came to a mutual decision or not.

It goes without saying that the use of creative activities and their application in the classroom requires the awareness of their characteristics.

For foreign learners of English outside an English-speaking environment the communication problem might cause serious difficulties. Students need to know that they will be able to use in real life what they have learnt in the lesson. Revell (1979: IV) considers:

Theories of communicative competence imply that teachers must do more than just supply learners with a number of language structures to manipulate. There are cases of people being unable to use a language after years of formal teaching.

Creative activities are designed to give learners a chance to experiment with their speaking skills in a foreign language. Jane Revell (1979: v) gives a definition of what creative oral activities are: 'Creative oral activities, in short, to bridge the gap between 'skill-getting' in the classroom and 'skill-using' in real life.'

Nevskaya(Невская) (1974:11) describes the general characteristics of creative activity. Aiming to create an utterance reflecting result of complicated apprehension procedure, one needs to apply logic and specific structure. Apprehension means gaining of objective knowledge concerning development of nature and society. During apprehension procedure there are solved three tasks:

1. A student gets knowledge on objective content of reality (by means of intellectual procedure).
2. A student establishes connections between new and known ideas, trying actively adopt new knowledge to actual requirements.
3. A student defines and utters his/her personal attitude to the studied subject (emotional procedure).

So, to build objective knowledge of content it is necessary to **realize** it. First, realization of new objective content assumes adoption of newly acquired knowledge to the system of already existing knowledge. Secondly, it requires some emotional experience on creation of personal attitude to the object under study. The structure of apprehension procedure maybe defined as the top form of specific for student psychological interaction between the student and the object under study.

Creative utterance is analysed during the foreign language study process and allows formulating the following classification, based on the peculiarity of the language form and content. Nevskaya lists the following characteristics of four types of activities.

**The first type** includes the formation of creative utterances that are not original both by form and by content (complete reproduction, citing). **The second type** includes the combination of known sentences, proverbs, and etc. for presentation of personal thoughts (original by content, but not original by form). **The third type** encompasses a creative utterances that are original by form, but not by content (statements are perceived as simple verbal reproduction), where thoughts of the student become an object of verbal memory. **The fourth type** includes creative utterances that are original both by form and content (the student selects an object of speaking him/herself and presents his/her personal thoughts and attitude to it.) The last type may be designated by the term 'complete creative utterance'.

Friederike Klippel (1995:4) recommends two devices in making up creative oral activities. These are information gap and optional gap. The information gap activities

encourage students to work with missing information and to find a solution. The following activities can be related to information gap: problem solving activities and guessing games. Problem solving activities, for example, encourage students to find solutions to various kinds of problems. Usually there is just one correct solution. However, creative approach in these activities leads to a discussion of several ways of solving a problem. The vocabulary which is needed for problem-solving activities depends on the student's level and the topic. Students will have to make suggestions, give reasons. Creative approach in such activities develops their speaking skills.

Guessing games are real communicative situations and consider fitting for students of all ages, because they combine language practice with fun and entertainment. 'The popularity of guessing games can be explained by their structure. Both chance and skill play a part in finding the solution.'(1995:31)

The basic rule of guessing games is quite simple: one student knows something that another one wants to find out.

Optional gaps are created by exercises incorporating controversial texts or ideas, which require the participants to describe their views on these ideas (1995:iv)

In other words, optional gap activities require students to share their feelings on a particular issue. Thinking strategies activity and debate games can be related to optional gap activity. In the thinking strategies activity different ideas have to be collected by students, then the ideas have to be put in right order and evaluated. This activity has main advantage – it helps students to be able to compare: this helps less than ...; we would prefer... because it has more advantages than... etc. The main aim of these activities is to make students talk and to encourage their imagination. Discussion games could help to create appropriate atmosphere in the class, to help students cooperate with each other.

Paul Seligson (1997:61) underlines the advantages of creative oral activities:

- Creative oral activities are relevant to students' interests, stimulate them to want to talk and are at the right language level.
- They contain an element of choice as to how students can do them and what they say, to allow them to express their own personalities.
- They are localized and often made or adapted by the teacher who knows his/her students best.
- Force students to listen to each other.
- Have a clear objective, e.g. a problem needing to be solved, so they know when they have finished and achieved what the teacher asked.

While participating in creative activities students usually respond well and very often are surprised by how much they can communicate with their vocabulary. To sum up, the main advantage of oral activities is that once adults have been encouraged to communicate by means of creative approach they will have much more confidence in their ability to do that again.

## **2. 2 THE USE OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

Creative activities can be used in the classroom at almost any time. However, there are situations in which they can be particularly beneficial. When students are feeling specific tense, especially when they are adult working people, creative activities can have comforting effect. Patricia A. Richard-Amato (1988:161) suggests: when tensions seem to be very high, the teacher can attempt an overt enhancement of self-concepts. For example: seating the students in a circle and having them concentrate on a person at a time, each student can say one thing they especially like about that person. This activity may break the ice and distract them from their routine.

Many factors must be taken into account while using creative activities. One of these factors is atmosphere within the classroom. In many activities students are asked to tell the others about their feelings, likes or dislikes. They are also interviewed by others students. But for many students speaking about themselves is not an easy task. It becomes impossible, if the atmosphere in the classroom is unfriendly, and they are more concerned about being misunderstood or even mocked. To avoid any embarrassment of a kind it could be worth to allow students to refuse to answer a personal question. One of the goals of using of creative activities is to build friendly atmosphere in the group. Only then the growth of understanding can be achieved.

In the beginning of a lesson or during the lesson with a new group warming-up activities will stimulate students' ability to talk and call students into the right mood before starting the main task. Many modern resource books recommend different kinds of warming-up activities. For elementary level students the following warming-up activity could be used. Each student writes his/her full name on a piece of paper. All papers are collected and distributed in a way that everyone receives the name of a person he/she does not know. Everyone walks around the room and asks the simple questions e.g. "Is your name...?" "Are you...?" When students have found their partner, they introduce him or her to the group. The purpose of such warming-up activities is to get to know each other at the

beginning. When students have talked to each other in an introductory activity they will be less hesitant to cooperate in further activities.

There are also different methods of how creative activities could be used. Richard Watson Todd (2003:50) a teacher at King Mongkut's University (2003:50) represents two methods of using creative activities in the classroom:

Applying non-teaching activities in language classroom. A source of original ideas for the language classroom is the techniques used in other kinds of education. For example, such task as how to maintain a car or to build a house is far from language teaching unit, but still the need to communicate where no clear connection to language learning can be very effective.

Varying students and teachers roles. Certain functions in the classroom are typically performed by the teacher, while others are more usually undertaken by the students. Watson Todd recommends exchanging some of these roles and letting the students run the activity often with interesting results. In other words, in activities where typical teacher roles are taken by students, they become more independent and, thus, more responsible for their learning.

It is must be decided in advance how to organize the students and the classroom so that the setting up of an activity can be carried out as quickly and smoothly as possible. Students learn best when they are interested in what they are doing. That means that they will not speak English if it feels irrelevant or they do not want to. Students often are not aware of the importance of English as an international language. Paul Seligson (1997:15) suggests number of creative approaches to make students interested and motivated:

- List all the pop singers and groups they like who sing in English or have English names.
- List TV programs they like which have titles in English.
- Ask students to tell all the English words they already know or see regularly around the town, e.g. the names of products (cheeseburger), advertising (Levi's), signs (Exit), etc.
- Give students a map of the world with the countries marked on it where English is spoken as a first official language.
- Give students a long list of words from their language to show how many are the same in English, e.g. taxi, coffee, football, etc.

Paul Seligson stresses that especially the last activity makes students think they already know a lot and learning how to say the words encourages interest in English pronunciation.

There is another good way how to make students talk and to generate their creativity is to play games in a foreign language. Games are especially beneficial for developing language flexibility. Not all of the games can be considered creative. Creative games, some examples are presented below, give students an opportunity to produce more imaginative language, less carefully predicted and controlled by the nature of the game. Games are often associated with fun. Patricia A. Richard-Amato (1988:147) considers, while it is true that games are usually fun, one must not lose sight of their pedagogical value, particularly in foreign language teaching.

Michael Carrier (1994:10) believes that games are in fact hidden types of drill, but they need not be perceived as such by the learners as long as the teacher stresses the game aspect in introduction to the activity. It may be important that the students are not told that they are going to practise, for example speaking skills in a game, as this might destroy their motivation.

Of all reasons for using creative games in language teaching, motivation is one of the most important. If games are designed for students to use their creativity, then there is likely to be a large measure of emotional satisfaction, which can have a strong motivational effect.

Games is something used in classroom to add the change to the regular classroom activities and even to break the ice. Occasionally they are used to introduce new ideas. Their most important function is to give practice in communication skills. Although some are quiet, contemplative games, others are noisy and require much verbal or physical involvement. Some are meant for small groups, others for large groups. Often classes can be divided into smaller units and several games can be played simultaneously. Also there are a great variety of games that develop speaking skills.

Friederike Klippel (1995:73) suggests using discussions games, he also stresses that discussion games develop fluency and freer speaking. Further are given a couple of examples of discussion games.

1. Aims: skills – speaking. Language – discussing, giving reason, names of jobs.

The students work together in groups. Each group member writes down the ideal job for him/herself and for everybody else in the group. The job lists are read out and discussed in the groups. Students explain why they feel the ‘ideal jobs’ suggested for them would/would not be ideal.

2. Aims: skills – speaking. Language – contradicting, giving reasons.

Students whose favourite colours are the same should work together. They describe to each other why they like this particular colour better than any other. Students leave their groups

and pair up with someone from a different group. Each partner argues for his/her favourite colour and tries to convince the other one of its qualities.

The main purpose of such games is to get students to talk and to stimulate their interest and imagination. Discussion games more than others generate creativity and make the students think about their values and priorities. Nearly all of them demand a certain degree of flexibility in foreign language and are structured in such a way that everybody will get in turn.

Paul Seligson (1997:48) stresses that since creative games stimulate the interest it is worth to stop games at their peak before they peter out, the lesson loses pace and students lose interest.

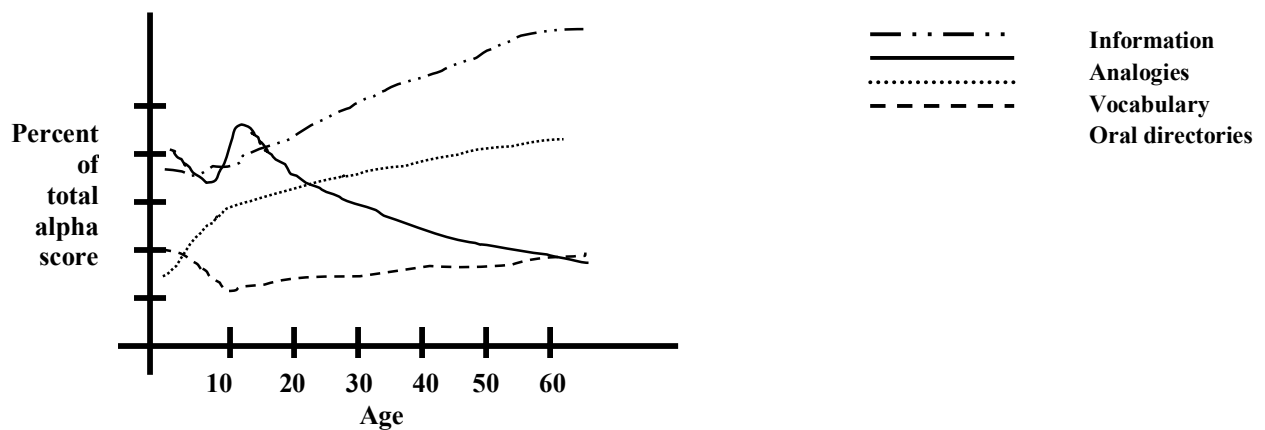
There are many disagreements about the effectiveness of different approaches to teaching vocabulary items. Learning vocabulary could not be a boring and routine work in studying languages, but on the contrary it could excite and fascinate. Curiosity is one of the main factors that forces people to learn more. It does not matter whether students are children or adults. Grown ups as much as children, perhaps even more, are eager to play games. Games can be used to consolidate the given material as well as to add entertainment to the regular classroom activities. The game imitates the stability of real life where rules of game are to be stable traditions and norms of life.

### III SPEAKING SKILLS OF ADULT LEARNERS AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

Grundy (1995:5) claims that there is no such thing as an absolute beginner of English. Thanks to the status of English as a world language almost everyone is aware of isolated lexical items such as 'computer', 'jeans' or set phrases 'made in China', and sentences 'out of order' etc. But as soon as student has come to the English class it means that he or she is eager to know more. Previously, it was discussed about students' needs to learn English. To improve foreign language knowledge and to start from the very beginning are two different things: who is the adult learner at the elementary level, and what functions of foreign language do they need. The adult beginner will always have some clear reason for willing to learn language. It may be recreational or occupational, and it is important for the instructor to identify this reason. Frequently, the language taught will need to be orientated towards this goal, even in the earliest stages. Adult English learners at the elementary level often strongly believe that they are still beginners at their age because they are not good learners. Other adult beginners will have ideas about how they learn best and how successful they are likely to be. Also, the instructor should be aware that adult students are invariably people who have been hard at work all day. There is often a wide ability range in adult beginners' classes. This can result in a group developing mutual support strategies, but more often it causes stresses and frustrations within the group. Age, health and other personal circumstances also influence adult learner. Adult classes often include students ranging in age from 18 to 60 or more. Students may feel they have little common ground among them. Younger students may perceive those who are older as slow and rigid, while older adults may feel that younger ones are frivolous and irresponsible. Health, particularly for the older adults, may be a complicating factor. Difficulties with hearing, eyesight and memory need to be taken into account.

The *Encyclopaedia of Psychology* (2000:98) says that measurements of learning and thinking suggest that under most circumstances changes with age on these dimensions is small. What differences do appear seems due to changes in attention, motivation, and physiological state of the individual, rather than changes in ability to learn or think. Generally, the amount of information an individual possesses increases with age. To the extent that new problems contain elements of prior, similar problems, the older, more experienced individual has an advantage.

The *Encyclopaedia of Psychology* (2000:98) gives a scale that summarises all mentioned into one figure.



**Figure 2.** Correlation between age and percent of total alpha score

It is shown that young adults do better in performance (eye-hand coordination) and reasoning tests (analogies), while scores on information and vocabulary are highest in later years.

Most people spend a great deal of their everyday lives in conversation. What are the functions of foreign language for students at the elementary level? It is obvious that learners of English, who wish to learn the spoken form of the language, need to be able to express their transactional intentions. Brown and Yule (1991:12) claim:

Spoken language may have a primarily transactional function (though few speakers produce language which is not to some extent ‘recipient-designed’, that is carefully produced so that the listener can understand it, taking into account of the listener’s state of knowledge).

It means that the primarily transactional language has mainly a message-oriented function. The primarily transactional spoken language is concerned to get things done in the real world – check-in at the hotel, visit to a doctor, shopping etc. In each case the speaker is determined to make his or her message clear.

In other words, the student at the elementary level should be able to express him/herself in the target language, to cope with basic interactive skills, like exchanging greetings, thanks or apologies, and to express the ‘needs’ – request information, services etc.

### 3.1 DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

There are number of issues instructors and students need to aware of in order to develop speaking skills. A number of issues and possible solutions provided by Brown and Yule (1991:5-42) were selected by the author of the DP and put in the table:

**Table 2.** The issues instructors and students need to aware for developing speaking skills

Issue	Possible solution
Knowing how to speak a foreign language requires knowledge but also skill.	Students need plenty of practice.
For many people one of their greatest fears is public speaking. When instructor asks students to speak to the whole class and in a foreign language, the potential for stress is greater. Such stress or fear can create a block to the concentration necessary for speaking in a foreign language.	A relaxed and friendly atmosphere is to be the best for practising speaking a foreign language. Students need to be able to concentrate and also to feel relaxed enough to experiment with the language. Fun activities and language games, especially at the beginning of the class, will help set the right atmosphere.
Similarly, some students are particularly shy about speaking a foreign language.	Getting students to do speaking activities in small groups and pairs will provide a safer environment for practice and for taking risks. Encouraging students to practise with classmates should increase confidence.
If the whole class is expected to listen while one student speaks, not much practice is achieved.	Speaking in pairs or small groups will maximise the opportunities for practice. Pairs and small groups also reflect the format for real-life task.
Correcting every mistake will only increase shyness and fear of speaking.	Being selective about what and when the instructor correct will help.
Outside the classroom people usually speak because they <b>feel motivated</b> to say something. In the classroom students often speak because the instructor tells them to.	When providing speaking practice in the classroom, the instructor needs to ensure that students have both motivation to speak and some information or ideas to exchange. Creating or exploiting information gaps can provide a reason to speak
Outside the classroom people usually speak because they <b>have something to say</b> . In the classroom students often speak because the instructor tells them to.	When organising speaking practice, providing the means and opportunity to get some ideas before having to speak will help ensure that students have something to say. This could mean giving students the chance to think about a topic first. Introducing the topic to the whole class

	though an informal chat or picture may also help generate ideas for the topic.
Students may feel that do not have the words they need.	A vocabulary lesson or vocabulary homework related to the speaking topic before students are expected to speak should help.
Students' shyness may stem from a lack of confidence in how to pronounce words and phrases.	Providing students with a clear model of hoe to pronounce new words or phrases and then getting the whole class and individuals to repeat these should help with this.
While some students are too shy to speak, others might dominate speaking practice.	Set students observation tasks to monitor each other, for example observing for equal participation in speaking tasks.
Many aspects of speaking are not always taught in books, for example, how to introduce a new topic to the conversation.	Encouraging students to observe proficient speakers doing similar tasks, especially if the dialogue is transcribed will raise their awareness and provide useful models of aspects of natural interaction. Listening skills practice could be extended in this way.

The above mentioned issues illustrate problems what may occur in the speaking class and possible solutions are provided. It is very essential for the instructor to aware of these issues in order to develop learners speaking skills.

Many course books represent different ways of provoking students to speak a foreign language in the classroom. But the one thing that they have in common is that they all believe that the best way of developing speaking skills is through discussions, e.g. speaking activities.

Harmer (1998:87) claims that there are three basic reasons why it is good idea to give students speaking activities which provoke them to use all kinds of language units they know. These reasons are:

- **Rehearsal:**

Harmer (1998:87) thinks that “getting students to have discussion gives them a chance to rehearse having discussions outside the classroom.” Having them take part in, for example, role-play ‘at the airport check-in desk’ allows them to rehearse such a real-life event in the safety of the classroom. This is the way for students to get the feeling of what communicating in the foreign language really feels like.

- **Feedback:**

Harmer (1998:89) also claims that “...speaking tasks where students are trying to use all and any language they know provides feedback for both teacher and students.” It means that instructors can see how well their class is doing and what language problems they

have. Students in turn, can see how easy they find a particular kind of speaking and what they need to do to improve. Speaking activities can give them real confidence and satisfaction.

- ***Engagement:***

Good speaking skills can and, actually, should be highly motivating. Harmer (1998:88) notes that if all the students are participating fully, they will get “tremendous satisfaction” from it. Many speaking activities, such as: role-playing, discussion, problem-solving etc. are basically enjoyable and involving.

Having observed three main reasons – rehearsal, feedback and engagement on Harmer’s opinion could bring good results into the whole study process.

However, incorrect organization and preparation for speaking activities may create negative reaction and as a result, students may feel unwillingness to participate. Harmer (1998:91) emphasizes that “the first thing to remember is that people need time to assemble their thoughts before any discussion.” The ability to give spontaneous responses is challenging in our native language, let alone the language people are starting to learn.

The following stages in the organization of the speaking activity could possibly not only turn language lesson into an interesting discussion, but also could have strong educational purpose.

The instructor starts speaking activity by asking students to name, for example, the last film they saw. Did they enjoy it? Was it hilarious? Boring? Violent? The replies the instructor gets at this point will be quite monosyllabic, but at least the topic has been introduced and the students generally enjoy thinking about movies. Next, the instructor asks students to concentrate on the issue of violence in films. Is there too much? Should anything be done about it? At this stage students could be put into groups. In one group, the students have to think and make notes about the level of violence in cinematography and what effects it might have. In another group, students have to think of and make notes about the ways of preventing the portrayal of violence in films. In another group, students have to think and make notes about the reasons why the level of violence in films is quite justifiable and raises no concerns. When students have a chance to think of ideas, the instructor asks for an opinion about violence from one of the groups. When a student has given it, the instructor encourages other students to ask questions about that opinion. Then, the instructor asks a different student to say what can be done about it, and that student, in turn, is questioned. Finally, the instructor asks a student from the ‘violence isn’t worrying’ group to disagree with the idea that violence in movies is a bad thing.

There are many discussion possibilities. The important thing is that students need to be involved into the topic. Harmer (1998:95) considers the basic pattern of speaking activity is:

Engage–Activate–Study – that is the teacher gets students interested in the topic, the students do the task while the teacher watches and listens and they then study any language issues that the teacher has identified as being problems.

Speaking activities may form one part of much longer sequence which includes reading or listening and, after the activity, study work. Activities are often used to provide welcome relief from more formal work.

## IV CASE STUDY

To determine the effectiveness of the use of creative activities in the study process a case study was carried out during January – March 2008 with sixteen elementary level students at the “Pygmalion” Language Centre. The target population consisted of two groups. There were eight students in each group. The age ranged from 26 to 45.

Eight of the participants had the higher technical education. Six students had the higher economical education. Two students had the higher juridical education. Twelve of them had one or two years of previous experience in studying English, the rest of the participants had studied English at school. All of the participants were bilingual (speak Latvian and Russian fluently) and for four students English was the second foreign language. The one group consisted of Fire Rescue Officers. The second group consisted of office workers (secretaries, three managers, a deputy director and a director).

The researcher was working with two groups, which had two lessons per week on Wednesdays and on Fridays. The duration of the lessons was 90 min. The first group had lessons in the morning, the second one during the day.

In order to achieve better results in language learning and identify actual needs of participants the author of the DP at the beginning of the case study wrote and distributed among students a simple questionnaire, which could help the instructor to get a clear picture of the foreign language needs. The questions were the following:

1. How often do you speak \_\_\_\_\_ (the foreign language)?
2. How often do you listen to \_\_\_\_\_ (the foreign language)?
3. How often do you read \_\_\_\_\_ (the foreign language)?
4. How often do you write \_\_\_\_\_ (the foreign language)?
5. Who do you speak with?
6. Where do you speak?
7. When do you speak?

The questionnaires were collected and analyzed by the author of the DP in order to organize the teaching process, taking into consideration students' needs and previous experience in foreign language learning.

The atmosphere in the classrooms was quite informal. Students showed willingness to study. Still the problem of behavior was taking place from time to time. Students were communicating among themselves in their native language. For provoking students to

communicate in English instead their native language was elaborated a system of yellow-red cards was elaborated. When student spoke a native language for the first time in a lesson he or she was given a yellow-warning card. When student spoke a native language for the second time he or she was given a red card. At the end of the lesson the red cards holders were given an extra home assignment. Those who did not have any colored cards were freed from home task. Students accepted the rules of the game and in three months period they rarely had any warning cards.

During the period of case study the researcher worked with students following principles of andragogy and used different types of creative approaches and activities.

The author of the DP observed different principles of teaching adult learners, which were based on Knowles's andragogic theory:

- *present information in a manner that permits mastery. This means 'bit-size chunks' of information rather than everything in one huge swoop.*

For example: to the group of adult learners at elementary level was given the topic – 'extreme adjectives'. First of all, it was explained to learners why sometimes it is favourable to use adjective 'astonishing' instead of 'very surprising' or 'furious' instead of 'very angry'. It is preferable to focus learners' attention on the topic only, but not by means of drilling new vocabulary but giving, for example, some short stories, which provoke emotions. Then it would be beneficial to ask questions like: What stories do you find: amazing, terrifying, annoying or worrying. It is worth presenting only one idea or concept at a time and show how one step moves to the next.

- *present new information if it is meaningful and practical.*

If the learner sees no connections between the job or interest and the given activity, the learner might lose interest and not succeed in the class. The concept that people learn by doing must be observed. It was worth giving them activities, which corresponded to their work environment










- *use feedback/frequent summarization. Let the adult learner know what is being done correctly and keep the summaries of completed activities alive and strong as reinforcement.*

Summarizing sometimes stands for reproductive drilling of material under study. Still the subject under study could be summarized in different ways. For example: in order to invest creativity in summarizing of present perfect tense the learners were asked to create questions and interview the partner using present perfect tense instead the following statements: ride a camel or elephant, go twenty-four hours without food, go diving, spend over 500 euro in one day and etc. The opponent has an option whether to tell lie or

truth. The task was to find out who the liar is. This activity turned summarization into fascinating activity

- *accept that people learn at different rates. Some people will have to be told two or three times how to do a task, others will have to be shown rather than told, and they may have to be shown only once or four or five times.*

In comparison with children adult learners know their abilities quite well. To let instructor know the best way they memorizing new foreign words, the following handout made by the author of the DP was distributed among learners:

<p><b>divorce rate</b> – šķiršanas procenti  <b>an acquaintance</b> - paziņa  <b>to entertain</b> – izskaidēt  <b>an order</b> - pasūtījums</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>A</th> <th>B</th> <th>C</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>acquaintance</td> <td>best friend</td> <td>chat</td> </tr> <tr> <td>aunt</td> <td>birth rate</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>classmate</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>average</td> <td>borrow</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>common</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	A	B	C	acquaintance	best friend	chat	aunt	birth rate		classmate			average	borrow		common		
A	B	C																	
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<p><b>divorce rate</b> – number of divorces over a certain time  <b>acquaintance</b> – someone you know, but not a friend  <b>bowl</b> – a round deep dish for putting food in  <b>chat</b> – have a conversation with a friend</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="863 1037 1010 1160">  </td> <td data-bbox="1082 976 1265 1160">  </td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>countryside</b></td> <td><b>harvest</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="863 1223 1082 1395">  </td> <td><b>business meeting</b></td> </tr> </table>			<b>countryside</b>	<b>harvest</b>		<b>business meeting</b>												
																			
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By means of this creative questionnaire students were getting involved in the discussion of how they memorize not only foreign words, but also names and numbers.

- *believe that learning results from stimulation. It is necessary to show students that this learning is beneficial to them and it must be set a stage for their success, including stimulation them to continue.*

At this stage learners were forced to realize the final goal of their studying. The joke or life-example was very essential. For example: for provoking students learn extreme adjectives there was given a fragment of the interview of famous boxer Vitaly Klitchko

after successful fight with an opponent: “He is good fighter. I’m good too. I’m strong, but he was not so strong. I won.” So, to avoid such an experience it was showed to the students why it is necessary to learn extreme adjectives and explained that it would enrich their language and would help them to become successful speakers.

- *enhance learning through positive reinforcement. Tell the learners what they are doing correctly, build on the idea that we all like to succeed.*

It is very important not only to build a positive atmosphere in the classroom, but also make them believe in themselves, let them know that they already know a great deal and after all, convince them that since we have been born we all are winners. For example: Laura, strong elementary adult student was asked of how many languages she could communicate in. She said: “Latvian, Russian and when I was a little girl I knew a bit of Polish”. English was not mentioned. Then the author of the DP pointed: “But, Laura, we have been successfully communicating in English for ten minutes. So, you should add English language to your list.”

- *support the team environment to improve learning. Some people like to work in groups, because that emulates the traditional workplace situation. However, trouble can brew if these learners are expected to meet outside of class to work on group projects.*

A group of learners especially when they are colleagues may consist of people with different occupations: chiefs, assistants, deputies, secretaries, like it was in the target groups of the case study. Teaching foreign language unlike, for example, chemistry implies personal communication. At a chemistry lesson a learner can speak about Mendeleev table without involving personal emotions, but a language lesson requires communication based on personal attitudes. That is why the questions like: ‘Did you sleep well?’, ‘what is your favourite meal?’, ‘do you have kids?’ were inherent part of learning speaking skills. Indeed certain subordination must be observed but for learners own comfort it was asked to leave their hierarchy outside the classroom, because in the classroom they are students and their main bond is to learn foreign language.

The author of the DP analyzed the above mentioned principles in the real situation, in the language classroom because the study process was based on andragogic theory with the use of creative activities for developing speaking skills of adult learners.

The creative activities were studied and analyzed by the author of the DP in theoretical part of the paper (see the second chapter) and that is why the following activities were chosen for the research and presented as a part of syllabus:

- An anecdote activity
- Audiotaping
- A prepared speech
- Information gaps

### **An anecdote activity.**

Topic: a little gossip.

Skills: reporting on issue, describing one's feelings

Group: two groups (A and B)

The students of the group A were given an audio tape to listen to a native speaker doing the same anecdote activity (see appendix 2). The students were given five minutes to prepare. Students were excited to tell about their cousins, neighbors, chiefs and secretaries. They were communicating, but making a lot of mistakes e.g. pronunciation, prepositions, the third person's, etc. The mistakes were taken down by the teacher and discussed at the end of the activity. After some time the novelty of the activity wore off and learners lost the interest in the activity. Other four students were unwilling to speak and to share their experiences, saying that had come to study not fool around.

The same activity was repeated with the other group – group B. Students made the similar mistakes, however, this time students were asked to take notes and to record mistakes of their fellow students. After the activity was finished the students exchanged the notes and mistakes were discussed first in pairs and then in the group.

The researcher observed both groups and had made the following conclusion - in group A students were afraid of making mistakes. It influenced poorly the results of the activity. In group B, the approach chosen in correcting mistakes was highly beneficial. The students were not afraid of making mistakes, they tried to communicate the content, their speech, although faulty, was fluent, and they were not afraid of communication.

### **Audiotaping.**

Topic: “my last journey to...”

Skills: expressing personal insights and opinion

Group: a group of eight students

Students were given the task and they were told that they were going to be recorded. Students reacted in a variety of ways; in most part the reaction was more negative than positive. Some asked the teacher not to record their speech as they would be confused and would make mistakes. It took some time to calm them down and to talk them into allowing recording their speech. When the take was run students were more concentrated with “weird sounding of their voices” and less with the performance they had presented. However, after the initial short period of shock they started criticizing their own speech. The request was to express criticism in English; it was not easy and at times students fell back on their mother tongue for gaps fillers like: lūk, nu kā būs, vai, etc. As a result, during the next lessons they were embarrassed and even talkative students kept silent.

The activity showed to the researcher that criticism had reduced the eagerness of learners to take up some new activities, to be creative and gave grounds to conclude that at the elementary level the analysis and criticism of the performance of adult learners should be gradual, carefully timed and learner - friendly. Learners of a foreign language are eager to compare themselves with native speakers, irrespective of their level. In creative activities any kind of criticism introduced gradually, after learners have become used to the situation that they are asked to experiment, to show their potential without looking back at their peers. In particular adult learners should be made aware of the fact that practice makes perfect, that the study process is not a life – and – death situation and that an error is only a feedback showing what a person is able to achieve at a given point in time. Self-demanding sentences like: I can’t do this, it is silly. It will not work etc. should be left aside; the focus of attention should be on the effort and attempts to become better.

In the theoretical part the author of the DP wrote about typical problems adults might come across when learning foreign language. The typical are a lack of confidence of adult learning foreign language at elementary level and problems speaking to the audience.. That is why to do the below mentioned activity ( A prepared speech) students were given a basic knowledge of making a public speech, which included several stages of making a presentation with appropriate phrases such as:

- **Opening a speech**

- *I appreciate the opportunity to address this distinguished group...*

- *I am pleased to be here today ... etc.*

- **Establishing the topic**
  - *My presentation will briefly review...*
  - *The topic I will cover include... etc.*
  
- **Drawing audience's attention to some particular topic**
  - *As I noted earlier ...*
  - *Personally I find it necessary to emphasize ... etc.*
  
- **Closing a speech**
  - *Thus I dare to conclude...*
  - *Thank you for the attention... etc.*

After pre-teaching new phrases students were asked to make their own presentation of things they use every day like: mobile phone, shampoo, iron or toaster. The instructor explained that whatever the occasion or the subject matter is, it is good to feel confident and cope with the situation. Also, it was very important to explain the benefit of such an activity, where they were able use their colleagues as an audience and instructor for the correction

### **A prepared speech.**

Topic: brainstorming.

Skills: presenting a topic, asking questions, sum up information

Aim: to make whole group work together on a particular topic.

Group: group of five students.

Students were asked to prepare a topic that they would be willing to present in the classroom. While the speaker was presenting his/her topic other students were asked to put down questions they would like to ask. Students were more concentrated about their prepared speech and were not attentive to the speaker on the podium. All questions were just a repetition of what have already been said. Those who asked questions did not always attend to the answers. Thus, a creative activity turned into reproductive one, largely due to the inhibitions and concerns of not losing one's face that is characteristics for adult learners.

In group activities is essential for the person who asks the question to listen to the answer, not just ask all the questions without neither thinking, as it does nor encourage any creativity in discussing the presentation of the colleague. In order to promote a more

creative approach to the activity underway, students were requested to ask follow – up questions. After follow-up questions, each learner was given a task to tell the whole group at least two interesting things what they have learned about the interviewer. This allowed to involve all the participants as all of them had to participate and contribute.

### **Information gaps**

Topic: Create a story

Skills: giving and following the descriptions, asking questions

Group: group of eight students

The group was divided into smaller subgroups. Each group was given one of the four pictures that had been selected for the (see Appendix 3). The groups had to memorize everything they could about the pictures – who was depicted in the picture, what was going on there etc. They were allowed discuss the details in their groups. The pictures were collected and one student from each group was asked to join a new group, thus regrouping the students from into new subgroups. Students were given the task of piecing the picture together – each of them had seen a different picture however, taken together, the pictures told the story about Mr.Napkin. The task was to work out what the story was. The students started describing their pictures to each other and very soon got involved by speculating on how the pieces could be connected. The final outcome caused a lot of merriment and the gala story was quite hilarious.

Summary: The story-telling activity helped to generate an entertaining atmosphere in the classroom. As the students were not singled out for individual performance they could share their experiences with their peers, they relaxed and could focus more on the content. The activity showed that such exercise as information gaps activity where the whole group involved could be successfully used as a warming – up activity.

The following two examples of activities are given to show how creative approach was used by the author of the DP for vocabulary improvement.

#### **I.**

Topic: Singular / plural pronouns - *this, that, these, those*.

Task: to show the difference between singular and plural pronouns, to teach new vocabulary.

Aim: to give more opportunities for students to discuss a topic and to communicate on it.

Group A was given pictures with explanations as follows:

“This **lipstick** is expensive but it’s very nice”;

“Is that your **diary**?”

“Do you take these **pills**?”

“Those **gums** are good for your teeth”;

“Is this a fine for your parking lot?;

A ladies’ vanity bag purse filled with all the necessary things was used in the exercise with group B. A lady student was chosen to be the imaginary owner of the vanity bag who would pick out things for the vanity bag. Other students sat watching the proceedings offering some remarks concerning the imaginary owner of the vanity bag and the contents of the vanity bag:

“This is my new pink **lipstick**. I love this color.”

“This is my **diary**. This thing is very important to me”;

“These **pills** help when I have a headache”;

“These are my favorite **gums**. I like blackcurrant taste”, etc.

The imaginary owner of the vanity bag was given the task to pretend that there were items that she did not want to be shown. While picking out things from the bag she made comments like I pretended that those were the things I did not mean to show. While picking out things from my purse I have made comments like: Oh, this thing I am not going to show you. The reaction was predictable: “Please show!” That was a fine for the parking lot. Then the items were left on the table and the imaginary owner stepped away. Pointing to the items on the table students were asked questions: “What is that?” and “What are those?”

During the following part of the lesson the new vocabulary was repeated and the topic “What a ladies’ vanity bag may hide?” discussed in a summary. In group A 20 percent of students understood the difference between singular and plural pronouns and remembered the new vocabulary.

In group B all of the students understood the difference between singular and plural pronouns and there was eighty five percent of the new vocabulary was recalled. Moreover, the students asked questions like: “do you often have your **headaches**?”, “is **pink** your favorite color?” or “do you like **blackcurrant** juice?”

The researcher concluded that the element of game and the personal touch allowed group B to better attend and remember the study material. Moreover, the students had picked up the new vocabulary that was not the focus of attention during the exercise e.g. “pink, headache, blackcurrant, parking lot, important, etc.”

## II.

Topic: wh-questions

Task: To observe word order.

Aim: to use creative activities in facilitating the recall of the material studied

A quiz survey was prepared for this exercise (see appendix 1). Before giving the students quiz survey students were introduced to expressions denoting various degrees of probability, such I as: most probably, I guess, let me see, I'm sure, I have no idea, etc.

For elementary students it is difficult to answer wh- questions, because they have to use words, which are not given in the question. It is also difficult because students are required to give a full answer e.g.” Where does he live?” “He lives in Riga.”

Summary: students were getting involved in the discussion; they were more interested in finding out the correct answer and they practiced Wh-questions.

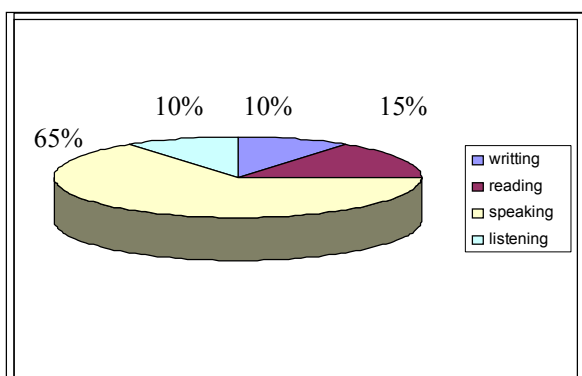
## ANALISYS OF STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRES

In order to reveal the existing situation of students' speaking skills at the beginning of the study period the student were asked to take part in the questionnaire in order to understand the present situation, their preferences, strong and weak sides.

The first questionnaire (see Appendix 5) consisted of six questions, but only three were chosen for the research. The author of the DP was particularly interested in these questions because the replies could show real problematic aspects of the language target group has and, thus, help to organize teaching process better. The following questions were asked:

- What aspect of language is the most problematic for you?  
(speaking, reading, writing, listening)
- What aspect of language usage makes you feel most comfortable in the classroom?  
(speaking, reading, writing, listening)
- What aspect of language usage made you feel less comfortable in the classroom?  
(speaking, reading, writing, listening)

Gathering and analyzing students' replies the author of the research saw that 65% of students showed capacity in speaking activities and lack of desire to participate in spoken tasks (see Figure 3).

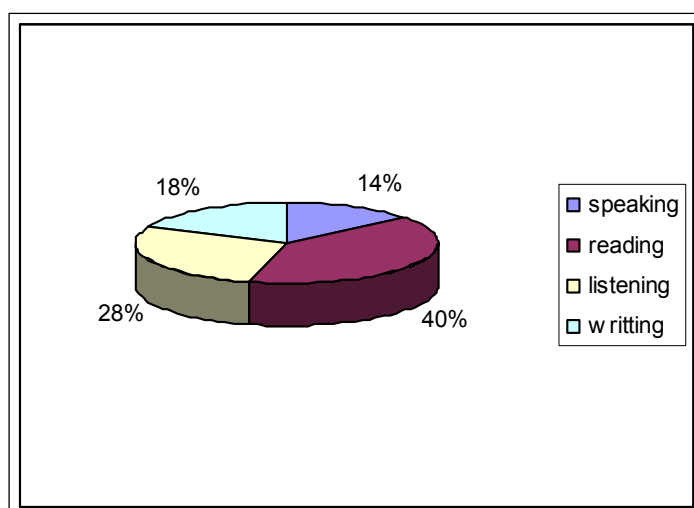


**Figure 3.** *Students' self evaluation of problematic aspects of the target language*

Responding to the first question 65% of the students indicated having most problems with speaking. The most common explanations among the students were mentioned a lack of speaking practice, low level of grammatical structures and poor vocabulary, boring activities. 15% of student said to be having problems with reading. Here again was mentioned lack of vocabulary, phrasal comprehension, some mentioned reading as a boring activity.

Writing and listening seemed to cause troubles to 10% of participants accordingly. Here students mentioned lack of spelling knowledge and difficulty of recognizing foreign words in fluent native speakers' speech.

In the second question students were asked about the aspect of language which usage makes them fell most comfortable (see Figure 4). The most part of the students (40%) admitted that while reading they fell more comfortable because do not have to worry about pronunciation, spelling mistakes, they can return to the text and read it again.



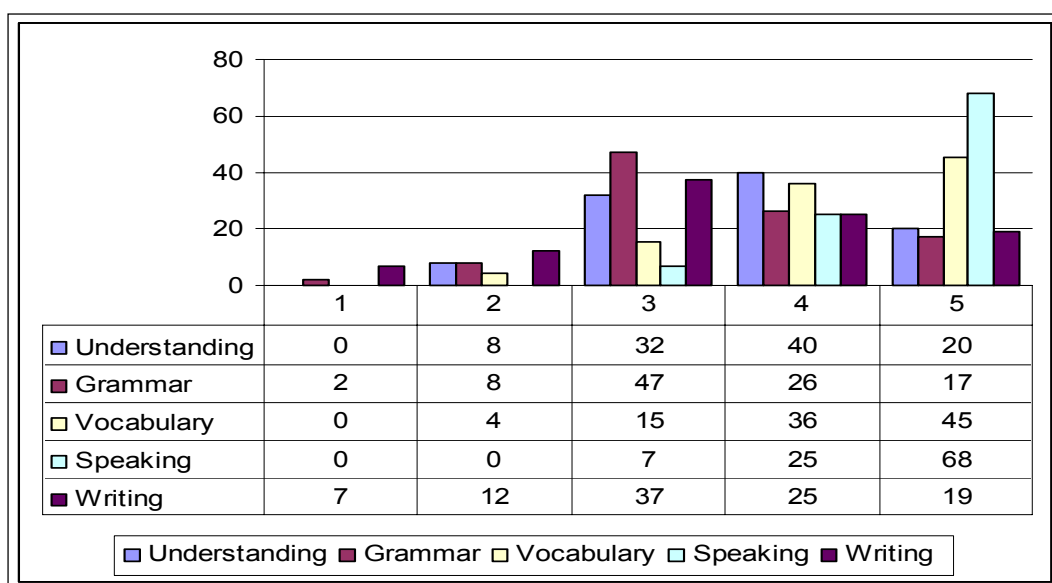
**Figure 4.** *Students' self evaluation of most comfortable usage of language aspects*

While listening 28% of the students feel more comfortable because they are allowed to listen to the recording two times and they usually discuss the topic before listening. Also some added that they have possible answers and tasks in front of them.

18% of the students like writing activities because they are not checked at once, and will get feedback in written form also. There is possibility to check words in the dictionary or use samples to look in.

Speaking aspect usage does not cause so many problems only for 14% of the students. They said that they are communicative persons and like talking even with mistakes, some added that they do not think so much about grammar when speaking as when writing.

The situation was clear for the researcher. The case study could be successfully conducted because the main assumptions that speaking skill is problematic for learners were proved by the survey data. In order to get the feedback from students and see how participants evaluate activities, their progress and participation the second questionnaire (see Appendix 6) was given to them at the end of the case study. Questions of the second questionnaire were based on students' feelings and observations based on the completed language course.

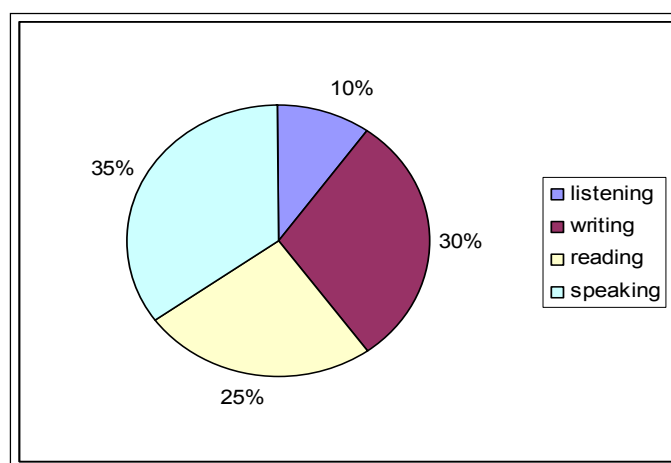


**Figure 5.** *Students' self- evaluation of the progress*

In the second questionnaire students were asked to evaluate their progress regarding five aspects – grammar, vocabulary, speaking, writing and understanding. This question was one of the most important to the author of the DP, because from the gathered data it could be clear how the use of creative speaking activities facilitated the development of adult speaking skills. Students were asked to circle numbers, where number 5 was for

“significant progress” and number 1 - for “almost no progress”. The results were the following (see Figure 5): students believe that there was greater progress in speaking (68%) and vocabulary (45%). Students noticed small progress in writing and grammar. That is because the emphasis during the experiment was put especially on speaking and vocabulary. If the teacher is working with the students during all the year then she/he tries to develop all skills equally and just involve creative activities when students need to practice speaking. From the evaluation the researcher can see that students feel the progress in speaking and vocabulary, and it proves the aim of the paper.

Some questions in the second questionnaire were repeated from the first one intentionally in order to see if there were some changes in students’ attitude to the problematic language skills.



**Figure 6.** *Students’ self evaluation of problematic aspects of the target language after the case study*

The gathered data (see Figure 6) proves that though creative activities adult learners improved their speaking skills and changed attitude towards this skill. At the beginning of the research speaking was a troublesome aspect for 65% of the participants. The final answers show that the amount declined till 35%. The above mentioned change in percentage allows the author of the DP be certain that the hypothesis formulated in the beginning is proved.

In the Questionnaire No 2 students were asked to answer open questions and express their opinions about speaking activities and a course itself. Here students mentioned the usefulness of the speaking activities, enjoyment of lessons and friendly atmosphere. The most important comments for the author of the DP were that students feel progress and use oral language more free, do not afraid to express their opinion in foreign language.

The author of the DP used different creative activities during the course and followed andragogical principles of teaching. The analyses of the theoretical materials were useful for practical part, because the teaching process was organized according to previously studied principles of andragogy and creativity itself.

## CONCLUSION

The present research allowed to identify the main features that characterize an adult learner are:

1) an adult learner realizes him/herself to be more and more independent, self-managed individual;

2) an adult learner accumulates a greater stock of vitally important (everyday, professional, social) experience, which becomes an important source of education of its own and his/her colleagues;

3) the motivation to study is defined by the desire and intention to resolve the vitally important problems and attain particular aims with the help of educational activity;

4) an adult learner strives for urgent implementation of knowledge, abilities and skills;

5) the educational activity of an adult learner to a greater extent is stimulated by temporary, spatial, routine, professional and social factors.

6) an adult learner is more inhibited in the study process by the position the person holds, the self-image, concerns about ones reputation that can be overcome by creative activities that are practices on equal grounds and on partnership basis.

Learning efficiency in the andragogical model to an immeasurably greater extent depends on motivation of the learner, compared with the pedagogical model, as the learner himself plays a leading role in the motivation formation and determination of the aims of learning.

The involvement of creative activities in the foreign language study process allows facilitating the development of speaking skills, however activities should be based on the context of adult life and they should be expressly related to the learners needs. A significant role is played by inhibitions and assumptions of what is relevant and what is irrelevant in the study process, as at times it may obstruct the progress in foreign language learning if the adult learner disagrees with a teacher on the relevance of particular activities and exercises. The use of communicative skills that adult learners have, significantly stimulate the process of studies, as in the course of developing their speaking skills adult learners are aware that the primary purpose of their foreign language studies is communication in a foreign language.

Results of case study prove the following:

- Introduction of broad range of creative activities provide adult learners with more to handle various aspects of communication and stimulates the development of their speaking skills;
- The instructor should be very careful in indicating and correcting of mistakes made by students during creative activities as adult learners prove to be particularly sensitive to criticism.

The present research shows that the motivation of adult learners to master a language plays crucial role in gaining success and, once persuaded, adult learners are ready to participate in creative activities that differ from the traditional approaches and procedures they must remember from their own study years at school. The ultimate aim of adult learners is to participate in and to maintain meaningful communication. If the study activities are related to their needs and are related to the realities and practical aspects of adult life, adult learners are more motivated to participate in creative activities during the class. Creative activities provide, also, opportunities for positive personal relationships that may develop among learners and between learners and the teacher. These relationships can help to create an environment that is supportive for the individual in his or her efforts to learn.

Results of the research had proved the hypothesis. The present research has validated the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the research that the development of the speaking skills of adult learners at the elementary level is facilitated if the study process includes a variety of creative activities that are focused on learners' needs, are context- based and involve the use of learners' communicative skills.

## THESES

1. The development of globalization processes: the liberalization of society, the expansion of international trade and opportunities of cooperation with foreign partners in such areas as economics, politics, and culture – poses new requirements for professionals in all walks of life, proficiency in foreign languages being among the most relevant.
2. Adult learners who start studying a foreign language, at times experience more difficulties, which apparently are connected with some earlier unsuccessful experience in foreign language learning, the fear of failure and apprehension about their ability to cope with the new tasks.
3. The number of adult learners at educational institutions is constantly growing and particular approaches are required to help students become more motivated. An adult learner has an intrinsic motivation due to a need for self- actualization.
4. Andragogy and pedagogy both deal with problems of the teaching process, however andragogy is more focused on the learning process of adults, recognizing the maturity of the learner and it is problem – centered rather than content centered.
5. An adult learner needs to achieve a functional model of competence in order to change his or her life conditions. The model of competence is knowledge, skills, abilities and valuable orientations, which are crucial for the performance of certain social roles.
6. In the process of adult education the instructor must take into account students needs, peculiarities of adult, strategies used when teaching adults and a more creative approach to organizing the study process.
7. Creativity is vital at both the individual and societal levels for wide range of task areas. At an individual level, creativity is relevant, for example, when solving job related problems and issues of daily life.
8. The principle of functional creative requires that the learning situation is structures in a way that learners have to overcome an information gap or solve a problem. Functional creative activities can be grouped according to the main uses of language: (a) using language to share information and (b) using language to process information.

9. Creative activities are designed to give learners a chance to experiment with their speaking skills in a foreign language – creative oral activities to bridge the gap between “skill – getting” in the classroom and “skill – using” in real life.
10. The implementation of creative activities in the foreign language study process allows facilitating the development of speaking skills, however the activities should be based on the context of adult life and they should be expressly related to the learner needs.
11. The motivation of adult learners to master a language plays a crucial role in gaining success and, once persuaded, adult learners are ready to participate in creative activities that differ from the traditional approaches and procedures that they might have been exposed to earlier. The ultimate aim of adult learners is to participate in and to maintain meaningful communication.
12. If the study activities are related to their needs and are related to the realities and practical aspects of adult life, adult learners are more motivated to participate in creative activities during the class. Creative activities provide, also, opportunities for positive personal relationships that may develop among learners and between learners and the teacher.

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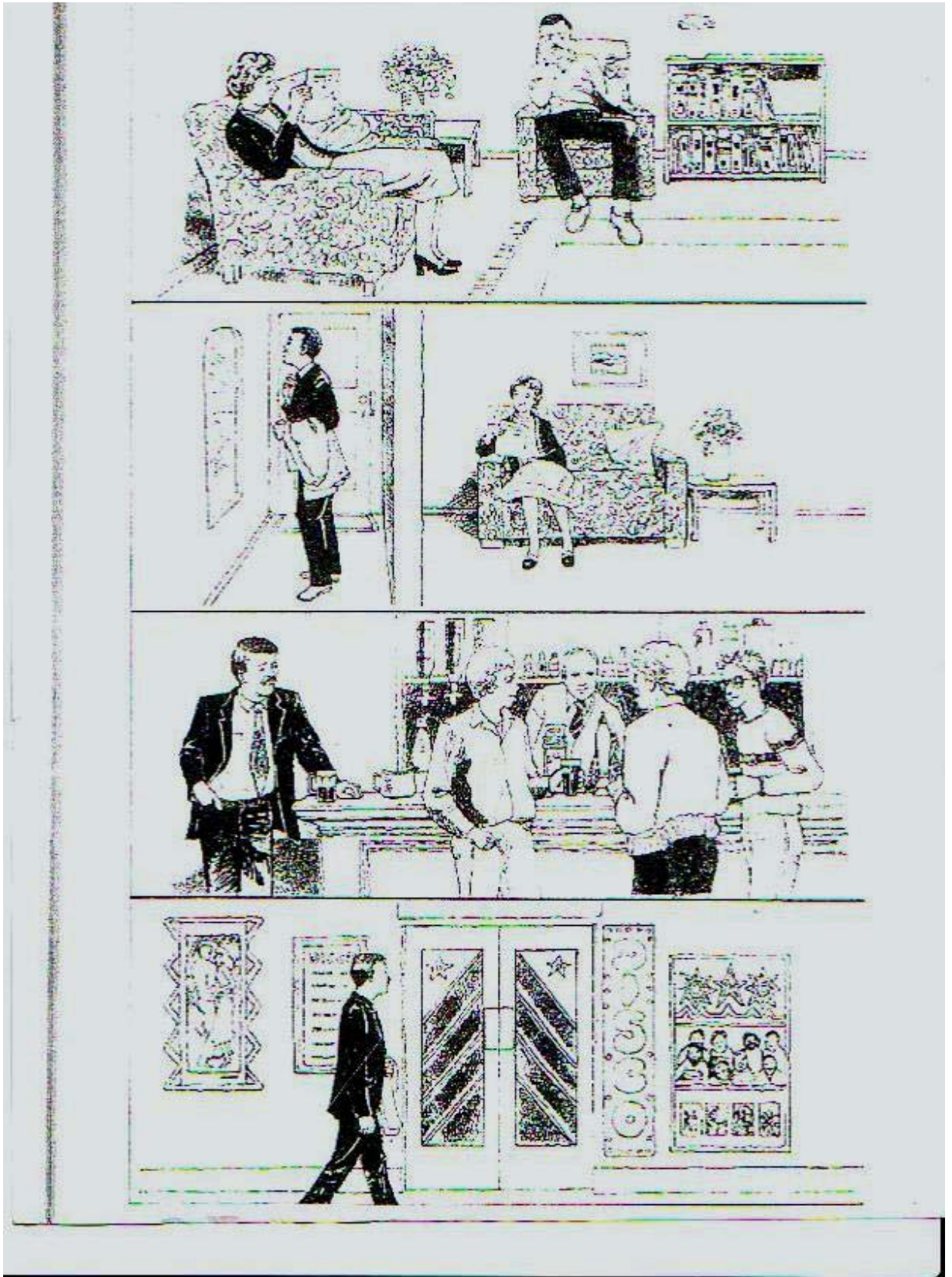
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APPENDIX 1

“Information gaps”

A story about Mr. Napkin



**Sarah:**

Eva Browning is getting married for the third time on September the tenth. Fancy that! She only got her second divorce in the spring. What a dreadful woman she is! Her first marriage only lasted six month – and that was only in 1999. At this rate she will lose count of her husbands before she’s forty. Actually, she may lose count but I certainly won’t.

(2001: Cutting Edge, Elementary level, students’ cassette)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is Cristiansand?
  - a) in Holand
  - b) in the USA
  - c) in Norway
2. \_\_\_\_\_ the St. Patrick's Day is celabrated?
  - d) 8 th of November
  - e) 17 th of March
  - f) 1<sup>st</sup> of August
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the prime – minister of England?
  - a) Judy Foster
  - b) Tony Blair
  - c) Johnnie Walker
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is “splenius”?
  - a) the part of human's body
  - b) TV show
  - c) The part of the engine
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is Alan Milane?
  - a) a composer
  - b) a writer
  - c) an actor

**OBSERVATION SHEET**

**An anecdote activity**

**Mistakes:**

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**Fluency**

**Points \_ poor satisfactory good very good**

**(Comment)**

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**Student's attitude (emotions, behavior)**

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**Audiotaping**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Karlis</b>	<b>Anna</b>	<b>Angela</b>	<b>Sergej</b>	<b>Arturs</b>	<b>Oskars</b>	<b>Vita</b>	<b>Inga</b>
<b>Topic (story)</b>								
<b>Mistakes</b>								
<b>SS Feedback</b>								
<b>Comments</b>								

**Prepared Speech**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Karlis</b>	<b>Anna</b>	<b>Angela</b>	<b>Sergej</b>	<b>Vita</b>
<b>Topic (speech)</b>					
<b>Mistakes</b>					
<b>Asked questions (How many What kind of q.?)</b>					
<b>Two things student remember</b>	<b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> <b>4</b>	<b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> <b>4</b>	<b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> <b>4</b>	<b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> <b>4</b>	<b>1</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> <b>4</b>

**Vocabulary – Plural pronouns**

*Ladies' vanity bag.*

<b>Students' Name</b>	<b>Use correct form of pronoun ( YES/ NO)</b>	<b>Use new vocabulary the same sentences (YES/ NO)</b>	<b>Use new vocabulary also in different new sentences</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1</b>				
<b>2</b>				
<b>3</b>				
<b>4</b>				
<b>5</b>				
<b>6</b>				
<b>7</b>				
<b>8</b>				

**Questionnaire No 1**

Dear Student!

My name is Arina. I am writing my Diploma Paper. The topic is “Creative Activities for Developing Speaking Skills of Adult learners at English Classes”. That is why I would ask you to fill this questionnaire at the beginning of the course. I would highly appreciate your contribution to my work!

Your answers are confidential and anonymous.

1. Why do you need to study English?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Where have you studied English before? How long?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What activities did you like at English lessons?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What activities you did not like at English lessons?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What results you want to reach during this course? What is the most important thing you want to learn

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What aspect of language is the most problematic for you?  
(please, tick the square which corresponds to your opinion )

reading

speaking

writing

listening

\_\_\_\_\_ ( comments)

4. What aspect of language usage makes you feel most comfortable in the classroom?

reading

speaking

writing

listening

5. What aspect of language usage made you feel less comfortable in the classroom?

reading

speaking

writing

listening

6. What do you expect from the teacher of English? What is most important for you?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!! ☺

***Questionnaire No2***

Dear Student!

This is the second questionnaire you are asked to fill regarding my Diploma Paper. This is done in order to get a feedback from you about the experience during the lessons with me as a teacher.

Your answers are confidential and anonymous.

**1. How often?**

(Circle the number which corresponds to your opinion.)

4 = Always, 3 = Usually, 2 = Sometimes, 1= Seldom or Never

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| * Participation in the activities       | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| * Possibility to speak, express opinion | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| * Enjoyment of the activities           | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| * Friendly and free atmosphere          | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**1. Your evaluation of the activities**

(Please mark the boxes which correspond to your opinion)

- ◇ Very interesting and unusual
- ◇ quite interesting
- ◇ cannot define attitude
- ◇ Difficult to do
- ◇ Boring

\_\_\_\_\_ ( comment)

**2. How would you evaluate your progress?**

(Circle the number which corresponds to your opinion.)

1 – almost no progress ..... 5 - significant progress

Understanding	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking	1	2	3	4	5
Writing	1	2	3	4	5

**3 What aspect of language usage made you feel most comfortable in the classroom**

- reading
- speaking
- writing
- listening

**4 What aspect of language usage made you feel less comfortable in the classroom**

- reading
- speaking
- writing
- listening

**5 What is your opinion about classroom speaking activities?**

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**6. What are your general comments after the course? (changes ,Attitude to some activities, language skills, English studies)**

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**Thank you!!! ☺**