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**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE
THE 11TH FORM'S STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN THE LESSONS
OF ENGLISH IN RIGA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL**

DIPLOMA PAPER

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**EMPĪRISKAJĀ METODĒ IZSTRĀDĀTO AKTIVITĀŠU IETEKME
ANĢĻU VALODAS RUNĀTPRASMES APGUVĒI 11. KLASES
SKOLĒNIEM RĪGAS TEHNĪKUMĀ**

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

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ABSTRACT

The present diploma paper explores the effect of activities based on the experiential approach on enhancement of learners' speaking skills and reduction of their stress and shyness while speaking. Its purpose is to develop the activities based on experiential approach and explore how they are beneficial to learners' progress in speaking and motivation for active participation in the learning process. The theoretical part is devoted to the nature of speaking, the theory of experiential learning and its application in the classroom. The empirical part focuses on the results of the case study. The analysis of the results of pre-evaluation in comparison with the results of mid-evaluation and post-evaluation demonstrated that the learners of experimental group improved their speaking skills and reduced the shyness while speaking. It could be concluded that the activities based on experiential approach have a positive impact on learners' speaking skills.

Keywords: speaking skills, improvement of speaking skills, reduction of stress and shyness of speaking, experiential learning, activities based on experiential approach

ANOTĀCIJA

Diplomdarbā tiek pētīts, kā empīriskajā metodē izstrādātās aktivitātes uzlabo skolēnu runas prasmes, samazina stresu un baiļu sajūtu no runāšanas. Mērķis ir izstrādāt uz empīrisko metodi balstītas apmācību aktivitātes un izpētīt, kā tas veicina skolnieku runas prasmju attīstīšanu un vai motivē aktīvi piedalīties apmācības procesā. Teorētiskajā daļā ir pētīta runas prasme, empīriskās apmācības teorija un tās pielietošana apmācībās procesā. Empīriskajā daļā atspoguļoti metodes pielietošanas rezultāti. Sākotnējās pārbaudes rezultātu analīze, salīdzinot ar starppārbaudes un gala pārbaudes rezultātiem, pierādīja, ka skolnieku grupai, kuri bija iesaistīti eksperimentā, uzlabojās runas prasme, samazinājās stress un bailes no runāšanas. Tiek secināts, ka, iekļaujot apmācības procesā empīriskajā metodē izstrādātās aktivitātes, tiek panākts pozitīvs rezultāts skolnieku runas prasmju attīstībai.

Atslēgvārdi: runas prasme, runas prasmju attīstīšana, stresa un baiļu samazināšana runājot, empīriskā mācīšanās, izstrādātās aktivitātes balstoties uz empīriskās apmācības metodes

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, teenager learners often prefer non-verbal communication, they use different social media platforms and usually choose texting rather than speaking on the phone. However, effective speaking skills remain essential in order to find a good workplace, solve different kinds of problems, exchange information and express emotions. In a modern society, it is not enough to use only the native language for speaking, two or three foreign languages are not uncommon and English is certainly the first in this list.

While working on the development of learners' speaking skills in a classroom, teachers of English face some difficulties such as lack of time to listen to all students adequately during the lesson, shyness of students who are not always ready to speak on a topic, and speaking tasks in course books which are not always interesting for learners and designed without taking into consideration the features of particular group. It is obvious that teachers and students mainly belong to different generations, which often becomes an obstacle during the lessons. For example, some teachers consider using technologies is not acceptable, or use the lesson to explain a theme instead of providing learners with the possibility of exploring it themselves. It is absolutely clear that in the digital environment and upon the availability of diverse sources of information the situation where a teacher constantly stays in the center of the classroom and gives lectures or explains the topics is not efficient. In teacher-centered classrooms, students are not provided with enough space for speaking as a teacher is of importance, but learners become listeners. Harmer (1998) writes about 'Student Talking Time (SST)' (Harmer, 1998: 6) and 'Teacher Talking Time (TTT)' (Harmer, 1998: 6) during the lesson and he notes that 'TTT can have uses – helping students to acquire language – but should not predominate at the expense of SST' (Harmer, 1998: 6).

Lack of motivation can often prevent learners from speaking and one of the most important tasks of the teacher is to increase this motivation. It is only possible, when learners are regarded as full organizers and participants of the lesson and are encouraged to use own experience and learn from experiences of each other, but not only the teacher. It is also very important to remember that the speed of life has increased compared to the previous century and learners are used to this speed and as a result often are not able to concentrate on the tasks of the same type for a long time. It is necessary for teachers to plan diverse tasks for the lessons and to make the process unpredictable.

One more problem which appears during the lessons of English is that students often fulfill the tasks automatically without understanding the goal and taking part in the process of analyzing and evaluating their results and mistakes. That is why for example in terms of speaking tasks, students are not interested in what they are saying and how they are saying it, but in the mark the teacher will put.

Experiential learning could be used as a tool during lessons of English to improve learners' speaking skills. 'Learning is a fluid, ever – changing process, derived from and linked to other experiences: it is like a river or a film' (Beard and Wilson, 2018: 7).

One of the ideas of experiential learning in the classroom is that during the lessons, learners have to share experiences with each other and gain new experiences, but not only fulfill tasks given by the teacher because it is one of the ways how to make learners remember what they have learnt and be interested in the process of learning. Teachers often forget that learners coming into a classroom have their own experience and a lesson could become a perfect space for sharing it. It is also worth taking into consideration that when learners interact with each other, the process of learning does not stop, but becomes more attractive and unique.

Confucian philosophy "I hear I forget, I see I remember, I do I understand" could help explain the kernel of experiential learning. By "doing" is understood something more than physical activity 'Doing something involves the whole person, as a sensing, thinking, feeling human within an environment. To do something is to try it out, perhaps to practice it' (Beard and Wilson, 2018: 122).

The aim of the present diploma paper is to develop activities based on experiential approach in order to facilitate and improve learners' speaking skills, reduce the fear of speaking and increase motivation among students to be active participants in the English lessons in Riga Vocational School.

To reach the aim of the Diploma Paper the following objectives have been set:

- to explore the theoretical literature on the nature and teaching of speaking skills and experiential approach in the lessons of English as a Foreign Language;
- to demonstrate the difference between formal and non–formal education;
- to demonstrate the advantages of experiential approach as a traditional tool of non–formal education versus formal education;

- to highlight the importance of different less formal attitude towards the learning process for the 21st century in order to achieve the higher motivation and interest of current generation students;
- to analyze reading and speaking tasks of the course book “Solutions. Upper-Intermediate Student’s Book. Tim Falla, Paul A.Davies, 2013” (2nd edition) in terms of their relevance for experiential approach;
- to develop speaking activities based on experiential approach and practise them with the group of learners of Vocational school of B1 level of English;
- to test the speaking skills of learners prior, in the middle and after applying the experiential approach in order to check its efficiency for improving the speaking skills;
- to make questionnaires for teachers and learners about speaking activities during the lesson and experiential approach.

The research questions of Diploma Paper are:

- how experiential approach can be useful to improve learners’ speaking skills;
- how experiential approach can be useful to reach the learners of the current generation;
- how experiential approach can be applied in the classroom and increase students’ motivation to take part in the learning process;
- how the activities based on experiential approach can be applied in the lessons of English to enhance learners’ speaking skills and reduce their stress of speaking in the group of students of Riga Vocational School.

The hypothesis of the Diploma Paper is: the activities based on experiential approach could improve learners’ speaking skills and reduce their stress and fear of speaking in a group of 11th form’s students in the lessons of English.

The method of the research chosen for the present Diploma Paper is a case study. The case study was implemented in the Riga Vocational School where the author of the present paper works as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language. The group of learners of the 11th form in quantity of 14 people was chosen as an experimental group. The level of English of majority of learners was B1, but there were students of a little bit lower or higher level. Learners came to Vocational School after finishing nine years of Primary School in different towns of Latvia. The choice of the particular group and the completeness of the case study were determined by the regular availability of the group for the period of case study as due to the specificity of Vocational School groups were occasionally occupied in practical trainings and the wish of the

learners to be a part of the case study. A case study is supposed to demonstrate the progress of speaking skills with the help of experiential approach. For this purpose, learners' speaking skills were tested prior, in the middle, and after the experiential approach was applied, and the results were compared in order to test the efficiency of this approach.

The methods of data collection include: questionnaires for learners and teachers about speaking activities during the lessons and experiential approach, a course book, data from speaking tests prior, in the middle, and after experiential approach.

The paper consists of introduction, four chapters, conclusion, theses, and bibliography. Chapter 1 is devoted to the theoretical background of speaking skills. Chapter 2 describes the different approach to formal education in the 21st century and the peculiarities of the learners of the current generation. Chapter 3 explains the essence of experiential learning and its appliance in the lessons of English. Chapter 4 analyzes the results of the tests prior, in the middle, and after appliance of experiential approach and analyzes the efficiency of the approach, describes and analyses speaking tasks applied in the experimental group and analyzes the answers received from the questionnaires.

1. THE NATURE OF SPEAKING

Luoma (2004) distinguishes the difference between speech and writing. She writes that ‘speakers do not usually speak in sentences. Rather, speech can be considered to consist of idea units, which are short phrases and clauses connected with and, or, but or that...’ (Luoma, 2004: 12). According to Luoma these short phrases can be ‘simply spoken next to each other, with possibly a short pause between them’ (Luoma, 2004: 12). She also mentions that the grammar of the spoken language is usually simpler than the one of the written language because speakers are usually trying to reach the listeners in real time (Luoma, 2004). Ochs (1979) distinguishes planned and unplanned speech. In planned speech the speakers are previously prepared to speak (presentation, lecture), while unplanned speech is characterized by short sentences usually they are said in respond to other speakers. However, sentences of planned speech are shorter and less complicated than in writing because they are intended to be understood immediately.

It is also mentioned by Luoma that ‘Situations that involve planned speech tend to be relatively formal, whereas unplanned speech situations can range from formal to informal’ (Luoma, 2004: 13). This fact has to be taken into consideration by teachers while preparing speaking tasks for learners in the classroom. The Centralised Exam in English language is the formal occasion, but the learners do not have time to prepare for their answers and that is why the speech is supposed to be unplanned and less formal. Learners have to be ready for unplanned speech, in the interview part, when unexpected questions are asked and students have to answer in real time and in the monologue part, when students have two minutes to prepare the monologue after reading through a short unknown text related to a particular topic.

Richards (2008) mentions that he uses the expanded version of Brown’s and Yule’s classification of functions of speaking. He distinguishes three functions: ‘talk as interaction; talk as transaction; talk as performance’ (Richards, 2008: 21). As examples of talk as interaction Richards introduces ‘polite conversation that does not seek to develop the basis for future social contact, casual conversation that serves to mark an ongoing friendship, polite conversation that reflects unequal power between the two participants, sharing personal recounts’ (Richards, 2008: 23). For talk as transaction, Richards provides the following examples: ‘classroom group discussions and problem-solving activities, a class activity during which students design a poster, discussing needed computer repairs with a technician, discussing sightseeing plans with a hotel clerk on tour guide etc.’ (Richards, 2008: 25). The examples of talk as performance according to

Richards are ‘giving a class report about a school trip, conducting a class debate, giving a speech of welcome, making a sales presentation, giving a lecture’ (Richards, 2008: 27). To achieve better results in speaking it is crucial for teacher to understand what kinds of speaking skills to concentrate on during the lessons. Richards (ibid.) specifies that talk as interaction is the most difficult skill to teach. ‘Talk as interaction is perhaps the most difficult skill to teach since interactional talk is a very complex and subtle phenomenon that takes place under the control of unspoken rules’ (Richards, 2008: 29). Richards (2008) offers to provide learners with situations in which they could apply a small talk. He also writes about the importance of keeping speaker’s interest to continue speaking. It could be done with the help of specific phrases. Richards identifies them as “feedback expressions” (ibid.) and gives examples: ‘That’s interesting’, ‘yeah’, ‘really’ (ibid.).

Providing examples of activities to teach talk as transaction, Richards writes that they ‘include ranking, values clarification, brainstorming, and simulations’ (Richards, 2008: 30). He also mentions that while fulfilling communication tasks, practicing transactional use of language accuracy often becomes an issue, and suggests different steps focused on its improving (ibid.).

For teaching talk as performance, Richards (2008) offers to provide students with examples through video, audio or written texts and analyze these examples answering the following questions: ‘What is the speaker’s purpose? Who is the audience? What kind of information does the audience expect? How does the talk begin, develop, and end? What moves or stages are involved? Is any special language used?’ (Richards 2008: 36).

1.1 Conversational Maxims

Li (2015) writes that Grice’s Cooperative Principle provides teachers with opportunity to achieve a positive outcome from learners’ spoken English.

The author of the present paper has realised that students of 11th form of vocational school unconsciously violate some of maxims while speaking. It might happen because English has become a global language. Nunn (2006) mentioned that teachers of English have to take into consideration that the diversity of contexts for English to be used in is extending. The other reason could be the fact that teenagers often socialize in virtual space where they use different rules for communication and even create special vocabulary and then apply it in a classroom for all types of oral tasks.

For example, preparing presentations, learners sometimes use Google to translate their thoughts from their native language and then while presenting it is not possible for listeners to grasp the idea because the sentences translated in Google are not comprehensible enough and they are not as explicit as required. So, in this case students violate the maxim of manner not being perspicuous. Sometimes expressing their opinions on the subject, learners want to say a lot and very often they start telling the things which are not related with a topic. In this situation, they violate several maxims at once: maxims of quantity, relation and manner because the learners' contribution is more informative than required, they are not relevant and they do not demonstrate the capacity to be brief. One more very common example of violation is when learners use the source they have not checked before for presentations, meaning that they do not follow the maxims of quality and could not be sure that the source is reliable and truthful enough and they have adequate evidence to present in public.

Sometimes students violate maxims communicating with their teachers. For instance, learners call to agree about tutorial time. It often occurs that they do not introduce themselves and start their conversation with the question "Where are you?" without following the maxim of quantity because a teacher does not obtain sufficient information to answer a question.

As it was stated by Yang (2017) the violation sometimes occurs because a speaker wants to attain a definite result or effect. In case of the telephone conversation described above a student needs to meet a teacher as soon as possible, probably, to correct a mark.

It is necessary to educate learners in sphere of effective communication, and it would not be enough to provide them with pure theory. Teachers have to remember that to encourage their students to speak and communicate meaningfully, it is necessary to stop dominating in the classroom. Li (2015) noticed that it often happens that there is no oral interaction between teachers and students and learners just 'keep listening and study passively' (Li, 2015: 43).

1.2 Schema theory for speaking

Schema theory allows students to use their prior experience and connect it with new information with the goal of better comprehension. 'The decoding and coding of new information are determined by the old schemata and by the inosculation between these old schemata and the new information inputs' (Ying and Yu, 2013: 681). Anderson (2010) describes schema through its influence on memory. He provides an example from Brewer and Treyns (1981) of one

experiment with thirty participants. They were placed in one room and told that it was the experimenter's office and they had to wait until the experimenter returned. The experimenter came back in thirty five seconds and participants were placed into a nearby room, where their task was to describe the experimenter's room. The experiment showed that learners while describing the room were influenced by their experience about what the typical office is. The majority of participants could remember that the room had a chair and a table which are traditional for all offices. Only a few participants could recall the bulletin board in the room. Some of participants wrote that there were books in the office, which was not true. Anderson calls this experience – “default assumptions” and writes that ‘A schema is a way of encoding those default assumptions’ (Anderson, 2010: 136).

After analyzing scientific literature connected with “Schema theory”, the author of the present paper has come to a conclusion that it has been mainly applied for practicing learners' reading and listening skills in the form of pre-reading and pre-listening tasks. It is also possible to use this theory in the field of speaking. Before students are able to start speaking about the topic they need to be provided with opportunity to activate the schemata related to this topic. It could be done during the lessons with the help of activities prior speaking. The goal of these activities should be directed toward the activating of schemata relating to a topic to prepare learners for speaking.

Ying and Yu (2013) write that in case learners do not have schemata connected with new information, the process of acquisition will be complicated, at the same time, if students have relevant schemata, without its activation new information would not be adequately comprehended. They describe an experiment in a class where schemata theory was applied. The class was devoted to earthquakes. In the beginning, learners explored the topic from different perspectives activating their schemata related to a topic: the danger of earthquake, survival, the description of famous earthquakes. It was the space for students to merge their previous experience about the topic with the new one. Then they had to organize the schemata and make it more specified discussing the topic in groups. The next step was to prepare a presentation regarding one aspect and perform in front of the class. Other learners were able to ask questions and also felt free to express their opinions as their schemata had been activated during the previous activities of the lesson (Ying and Yu, 2013). In conclusion of the experiment Ying and Yu (2013) write that with the help of schemata strategies learners create new schemata combining it with the old schemata. ‘This kind of new schemata does not center on vocabulary

but topics, thus students can make improvements ideas and in language' (Ying and Yu, 2013: 686).

1.3 Speaking skills using the experiential approach

While teaching English as a foreign language, educators encounter the situation when learners feel unconfident while speaking. They often forget the words, make illogical pauses or just refuse to speak. It happens because of a lack of environment for learners to train their speaking skill on a daily basis. The internet could become this environment. However, only few students have international friends to speak with, and communicating with a stranger on the Internet is insecure. The necessary environment can be created by a teacher in the classroom with the help of experiential approach. In order to encourage learners' speaking skills students have to feel that they take an important part in the process of the lesson. The lesson becomes an open space for sharing the experiences and learners' experiences are highly valued. The educator provides the instructions for students to start speaking, the other part of the lesson belongs to students who interact in order to fulfill the instructions. It is written by Kolb and Kolb that 'Making space for students to take control of and responsibility for their learning can greatly enhance their ability to learn from experience' (Kolb and Kolb, 2005: 209). Work in groups will give more freedom of expression for each student and they will be less stressed, it will also help to lower the anxiety towards speaking. Oradee states that 'The atmosphere in working in groups can lessen their fear in making mistakes when speaking English. Students in the group can support others in the team needing help' (Oradee, 2012: 534). It is also crucial for the teacher not to interrupt the process of students' communication in groups and give them opportunity to finish the task giving support when necessary. 'While the students are involved in an activity, there should be no teacher intervention' (Oradee, 2012: 534).

As it is stated by Bahrani and Soltani (2012) speaking activities in a classroom often occur in by means of drilling - in the form of dialogue when learners ask and answer predictable questions. It is far from actual communication. 'Authentic communication involves an information gap; each participant has information that the other does not have' (Bahrani and Soltani, 2012: 28). In order to involve students into the process of actual communication, one of the approaches could be when the topics of conversations are chosen by learners themselves during the lesson and the questions are created by learners. Teachers provide students only with

materials and sources of information they are supposed to work with. As a result while communicating with each other learners will not be familiar with the topic of conversation and consequently would not be able to predict the questions. Bruner (1961) thinks that the right presentation and explanation of information play a significant role and it will enable children to understand information traditionally intended only for adults.

It is worth mentioning that a lot of teachers are afraid of giving their students more freedom to fulfill the tasks, and prefer to control everything during the lesson instead of being assistants. As a consequence, learners do not rely on themselves and do not have motivation to communicate during the lesson, ask and answer questions, and share their experiences. They are waiting for teachers to tell them what to do and how to do. In order to avoid this situation, teachers have to trust their learners and let more capable students assist their classmates who need this assistance, teachers also have to be ready to guide the learners without teaching them. According to Bruner (1961), teachers should empower children to solve different problems by themselves. Teachers should mediate the learning process instead of just asking their students to learn by heart. It would perfectly work if a lesson is designed in a manner learners could independently discover disordered information prepared by a teacher (Bruner, 1961). Vygotsky (1978) defined the Zone of Proximal Development – ‘the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). In other words, Vygotsky believed that in order to achieve a task, learners need the assistance of adults or peers.

It is also very important for teachers not to expect the equal contribution of all learners during the lesson. ‘Do not expect all students to contribute equally to the discussion or to use every grammar point you have taught’ (Bahrani and Soltani, 2012: 29).

2. DIFFERENT APPROACH TO FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2.1 Reaching the current generation

It is obvious that the learners representing the current generation (hereafter “current generation”), the teachers of 11th–12th forms work with, has particular features that have to be taken into consideration by educators during the lessons. As it is stated by Howe and Strauss (2007) the current generation needs to be given distinct goals in order to achieve the perfect results. It is also mentioned that they prefer cooperation and do not consider their partners being their opponents (Howe and Strauss, 2007). It means that they would feel confident while working in groups during the lessons and will cooperate with great desire instead of trying to find the points of weakness in their classmates in order to be better. According to observations of the author of the present paper, group work is very efficient with the current generation. It helps to involve learners of different levels and create the atmosphere where students help each other and learn from each others’ experiences. The role of the teacher becomes very important while working with current generation. Educators become mediators or facilitators and they have to accept the circumstances where teachers do not explain everything during the lessons, but provide students with materials to use for communication, necessary support and freedom to explore the topic by themselves. The teachers have to organize the convenient and less formal atmosphere in the classroom.

Howe and Strauss (2007) also specify that representatives of the current generation require regular feedback. Feedback could become an integral part of the lesson as it would help learners to analyze independently the tasks and their work and identify the positive and negative achievements while fulfilling the tasks developing critical thinking and skill to make decisions. Feedback is also a good tool to improve students’ speaking skills as they will have to express their opinions and feelings. For learners who have anxiety regarding speaking, feedback is a challenge to reduce the fear of speaking taking for a model the students who have more freedom of self expression. Feedback is usually organized by a teacher who asks different questions about the course of the lesson without providing evaluation. It is also possible to allocate a student who will be responsible for preparation and realization of a feedback part of the lesson. This decision could be very effective with current generation in order to satisfy their need to be special. As it is

written by Howe and Strauss ‘As abortion and divorce rates ebbed, popular culture began recasting babies as special and stigmatizing hands-off parental styles’ (Howe and Strauss, 2007: 45). Taking into consideration this characteristic, in order to reach their students, educators in the classroom have to create the atmosphere where learners could feel their specialness because they are involved in the process of organization and course of the lesson. This atmosphere will also help students to feel independent of parental influence.

The current generation is technologically advanced. Educators have to remember about this characteristic while planning the lessons. There are more chances to reach these learners implementing tasks based on work with smart phones, computers and information from the Internet.

In conclusion it could be stated that the current generation is possible to reach by teachers of the previous generation applying particular approaches during the lessons taking into account the characteristics listed above. To achieve successful results while working in a classroom of current generation learners, educators have to stop being predominant and provide their students with possibility to take responsibility for the lesson and share experiences.

2.2 Formal and non-formal education – the interconnection

Experiential approach is typical for non-formal education, which is why it is significant to explain its purpose and highlight the difference between formal and non-formal educations in order to identify its positive effect on formal education.

It is possible to separate three major forms of education: formal, non-formal and informal education. Formal education is implemented at schools. Formal education requires a strict curriculum, teachers, textbook and learners who attend classes according to a time-table. This system is huge and very often it is not possible to take into consideration the personality and objectives of each student. Teachers usually take the central role in formal education and learners are not able to participate actively in the learning process. Non-formal education is something very different; it is more flexible regarding the curriculum. The focus of non-formal education is primary on the needs and interests of learners. Non-formal education implies different roles of students and teachers, students become participants of the learning process, but teachers are not in the center any more, they become instructors. Students learn informally spending time with

their classmates or actively participating in everyday life (Council of Europe and European Union, 2011).

Experiential approach is mainly used while applying non-formal education. The European Steering Committee for Youth gave a definition of non-formal education: 'Non-formal education may be defined as a planned programme of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competencies, outside but supplementary to the formal educational curriculum' (Bois-Reymond, 2003: 12). It is also mentioned in the definition that participation is voluntary and trained leaders carry out the programme. Systematic monitoring and evaluation are crucial and it is also possible to get the experience gained certificated (ibid.). Erasmus + is the programme allocated by European Union 'in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020' (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2019: 5). The programme is implemented through several actions with the help non-formal methods and experiential approach. The outcomes of Erasmus+ are specified in a programme guide published by European Commission and some of them are connected with interconnection between formal and non-formal educations. It is written that 'greater understanding of interconnections between formal and non-formal education, vocational training and the labour market respectively' (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2019: 29), 'reinforce synergies and transitions between formal, non-formal education, vocational training, employment and entrepreneurship' (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2019: 31). Shala mentions that for the period 2014–2020 EU has allocated 14,7 billion Euro to the Erasmus + programme (Shala, 2016).

The experience of the author of the present paper shows that the theme of interconnection is topical at the meetings organized by European Commission. For example, during "European Youth Week" in April 2019 one of the session was "Erasmus + Opportunities in Vocational Education and Training". The representative of different countries discussed the positive effect of non-formal education on vocational education.

It could be concluded that the issue of integrating the elements of non-formal education into formal education is timely for European Commission and this question is quite significant on European level. It is absolutely clear that in the 21st century formal education has to be transformed. As it is stated by European Commission non – formal education is supposed to help young people in finding good possibilities for learning and presenting their skills, as a result young people will be more actively participating in the life of society. 'At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the situation of young people in Europe is complex and diverse. Non-

formal learning and education – and youth work in general - has the potential to address many of the issues that concern young people’ (Council of Europe and European Union, 2011: 4).

Shala (2016) writes that one of the main tasks of education institutions nowadays is to search for new and innovative directions to improve the quality of education. He assumes that one of the ways could be transforming education into ‘less formal’ (Shala, 2016: 119). The main reason for this is that through non–formal education it is possible to reach the needs of learners as individuals. Implementing the programmes of non–formal education the EU sets a goal by 2020 to reduce the school dropouts below 10% (Shala, 2016: 122). Non – formal education exploits the experiential approach and this approach could become the tool of transforming education into a less formal system.

3. THE ESSENCE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Looking through the literature devoted to experiential learning the author of the present paper has come up with conclusion that there is no universal definition that would exhaustively explain its essence. This fact leads to several difficulties while using experiential learning by teachers because it is often not obvious if learners have learnt anything and if the lesson was adequately designed to provide learners with opportunities for learning.

Chapman (1995) writes about experiential education and underlines that it could not be limited with a particular series of activities. He also emphasizes that experiential approach becomes clearer in the context of style and it is possible to investigate any theme with the help of these techniques. Chapman mentions that the main issue is that learners are placed into situation that is different from the one they usually face in the classroom (Chapman, 1995). ‘Students are actively engaged exploring things for themselves rather than being told answers to questions’ (Chapman, in Warren, et.al. 1995: 236). Teachers in this situation provide students with necessary assistance. Concluding his perspective about experiential education Chapman writes that he sees it as an approach which gives students opportunity to explore the topics they are interested in and consider to be significant. He also points out that teachers applying this approach have to trust their learners and believe that they are able to learn from their own experience, but not from someone else’s (Chapman, in Warren, et.al. 1995).

Proudman indicates that ‘Experiential education engages the learner emotionally’ (Proudman in Warren et.al., 1995: 241). He also offers to ‘think of experiential education as emotionally engaged learning’ (ibid.). He writes about the importance of emotional investment in experiential learning and he is absolutely sure that if this fact is not taken into consideration the effectiveness of this approach decrease. Under emotional engagement he understands the fact the learners are not told what they have to do as they have freedom to explore the questions and topics of their choice (Proudman, in Warren, et.al. 1995).

Moon (2004) cited Jarvis who wrote in 1992 that in the process of learning present and prior experience play significant role. He thought that prior experience gives us a clue how to react to a present one (Moon, 2004). Moon (2004) writes about two features of experience individual and social. ‘The nature of experience is individual in the sense that it is an individual who experiences it, but it is also social, in that all experience is mediated by the social surroundings’ (Moon, 2004: 22). She also writes about external experience – something that is

learnt outside ourselves and internal experience – something that is brought by students from what they already know. She supposes that we learn through assimilating the material of learning (Moon, 2004). ‘When there is information external to the person, the material of learning is conceived as external experience. We learn through the comparison of external experience with the current internal experiences that we bring to bear on the material of learning. Internal experience is the relevant prior knowledge and experience’ (Moon, 2004: 30).

Moon (2004) cited Newman who looked at experiential learning in the context of education. He distinguished between strategies to experience of learners that they receive from their everyday life and experience that is built with the help of different techniques as role play and simulation (Newman, 1999 in Moon, 2004).

Moon (2004) provides the list of connotations of experiential learning, she emphasizes that it is usually ‘active phase of the learning (“action”, “doing”, “experimentation”, and so on)’ (Moon, 2004: 120). It is also written that for experiential learning it is crucial to give space for depth reflection. She points out that theorists agree that deep reflection leads to more fruitful results of learning (Moon, 2004: 97).

3.1 Four stages of experiential learning by David Kolb

According to Kolb (1981) experiential learning involves four stages. He writes that ‘The learners, if they are to be effective, need four different kinds of abilities’ (Kolb, 1981: 235). The first is ‘Concrete Experience abilities’ (Kolb, 1981: 236) when learners are supposed to get a new experience or reconsider an existing one. The second stage is ‘Reflective Observation abilities’ (ibid.) when students try to understand the experience got before. The third stage is ‘Abstract Conceptualization abilities’ (ibid.) when a person is meant to learn from the experience and it becomes a foundation for a new idea. The last stage is ‘Active Experimentation abilities’ (ibid.) when students need to apply and use the idea they previously came up with. Kolb mentions that ‘the learners, as a result, must continually choose which set of learning abilities to bring to bear on various learning tasks’ (Kolb, 1981: 236). Based on these stages Kolb (1981) also distinguished four learning styles: ‘the Converger, the Diverger, the Assimilator, and the Accommodator’ (Kolb, 1981: 238). Kolb (ibid.) supposes that people choose a style suitable for them. ‘As a result of our hereditary equipment, our particular past life experience, and the

demands of our present environment, most of us develop learning styles that emphasize some learning abilities over others' (Kolb, 1981: 237).

According to Kolb (1981), Convergers are less interested in interpersonal issues and they prefer to be concerned with things. They are successful in finding solutions and will easily apply theoretical ideas in practice. Kolb (1981) writes that these learners usually have defined interests and this learning style is typical for engineers.

Divergers contrary to Convergers are emotional and prefer interacting with people. They like to collect information and are able to see the situation from different perspectives. These students will successfully produce new ideas because they have the imaginative ability. They like the process of brainstorming and working in groups as they are ready to listen to other opinions. It is important to remember that these learners would require a feedback (Kolb, 1981).

Assimilators are more interested in abstract theories and ideas than in practical possibilities (Kolb, 1981). According to Kolb, 'It is more important that the theory be logically sound and precise' (Kolb, 1981: 238). They are successful in understanding and organizing a cascade of information they could explore and teachers have to provide these students with time to process this information. In a classroom they usually wait for broad explanations from teachers and prefer lectures (Kolb, 2005).

Learners with accommodating style rely on their intuition more than logic or the ability to analyze. These learners like to cooperate with other students and tend to trust other learners for information. They prefer to experiment with various approaches and be engaged in new experiences (Kolb, 2005).

Understanding of these peculiarities learners have and knowing the four stages of experiential learning, educators could design their lessons in order to involve students accordingly. It is also possible to concentrate learners' attention on the learning style which is not their preferable one and give them possibility to improve it during the lessons.

3.2 Experiential approaches in the classroom

The experiential learning classroom is often called a "student-oriented" or "student-directed" classroom. Warren writes that 'The goal in the student-directed model is to empower rather than to hold power over' (Warren, et.al. 1995: 250). In such type of classroom teachers have to stop being authorities and become a member of the group. Educators will provide students with

freedom in order learners could find the solution to the problems they face in the learning process. Teachers have to allow students to learn from their mistakes and foresee the space during the lesson for analyzing the mistakes. There are tangible advantages of using experiential approaches in the classroom. Learners become more motivated and able to take responsibility for the process of learning. This approach provides students with possibility to learn from their mistakes. A very important feature of the “student-oriented” classroom is rearrangement – students cannot stay in the same position during the lesson – they will have to move and sit in a circle for general discussion, sit in groups for brainstorming. So, classical position of tables and chairs when a teacher is on stage, but students are in the audience is not suitable anymore. Wurdinger and Rudolph (2009) propose educators to discuss the roles of educators and learners with their students before they start using the experiential approach in the classroom.

However, as it is written by Moon (2004), experiential learning in the context of formal education faces several difficulties. Usually learners are not ready to become responsible for the learning process themselves because they are used to the situation when teachers tell what exactly they are supposed to learn. Warren (1995) points out that teacher can decide to help learners to move forward only in situations when students are not able to organize the classroom anymore and get stuck due to lack of experience. Using this approach in the classroom could be unacceptable and stressful for many teachers because they have to be ready to deviate from the plan they had for the activity and be flexible enough to change the course of the lesson.

Wurdinger and Rudolph (2009) describe five approaches which could be used applying experiential learning in the classroom. They mention ‘project-based learning, problem-based learning, service learning, place based education, and active learning’ (Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009: 3). They are sure that these approaches motivate students and provide them with excitement in the process of learning (Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009: 1). They also list the principles underlying the five approaches: ‘hands – on learning, using a problem solving process, addressing real world problems, encouraging student interaction with each other and the content, engaging in direct experiences, and using multiple subjects to enhance interdisciplinary learning’ (Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009: 3). The authors mention that these principles are essential to experiential learning. It is possible to use them in diverse proportions while using five experiential approaches in teaching. The author of the present diploma paper has concentrated on one approach – active learning. Bonwell and Eison (Bonwell and Eison, 1991 in Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009: 7) give a very broad definition of active learning, they state that it could be

anything when learners are involved in the processes of doing things and reflection on what they are doing. According to Meyers and Jones, “active learning provides opportunities for students to talk and listen, read, write, and reflect as they approach course content through problem – solving exercises, informal small groups, simulations, case studies, role playing, and other activities – all of which require students to apply what they are learning” (Meyers and Jones, 1993 in Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009: 7). Applying active learning strategy teachers have to be ready that the lesson they have planned may take an absolutely unexpected direction as learners are provided with the certain amount of freedom while expressing their opinions. According to Bransford, Brown and Cocking (Bransford, et.al. 1999 in Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009: 8), learners who are actively involved in the learning process can understand complicated things and are ready to use everything they have learnt in new situations. It is important to mention that experiential learning cannot be the only strategy used during the lesson, but as it is mentioned by Wurdinger and Rudolph (2009) as a result, learners will be more attentive and will have more understanding in connection with the topic in case when lectures are necessary in the classroom ‘because they have been allowed to experience it on their own terms’ (Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009: 9).

3.3 Assessment in experiential learning

Usually the purpose of assessment both for teachers and learners is associated with a mark which is received by students after they have fulfilled the tasks. To understand what mark to put for the test, for example, teachers often allocate points for different tasks and then calculate the sum of points got by learners assessing only the result not the process of the task’s fulfillment. Assessment in experiential learning is very challenging and it puts a lot of obstacles for educators. First of all, in experiential learning ‘the means are as important as the ends’ (Schwartz, 2012: 12). As it was mentioned by Qualters (2010) assessment only of outcomes is not possible in experiential learning, as ‘it is important to look at assessment as more than outcome measurement. While outcomes are important to measure, they reflect the end product of assessment, not a complete assessment cycle’ (Qualters, 2010: 56).

The second very significant obstacle of assessment is the flexibility of the activities of experiential learning. Educators cannot expect from learners to learn the same things while they are working on different projects or taking part in different simulations. The third obstacle

teachers face with while assessing experiential activities – the diversity and variability of learners.

Ewert and Sibthorp separated these variables into three areas: ‘Precursors, Concomitant, and Postexperience’ (Ewer and Sibthorp, 2009: 376). Precursors – prior experience and knowledge students bring into a classroom before they are engaged in experiential activities (Ewer and Sibthorp, 2009). Precursors also include the age and socio-economic status of learners, their ‘anxiety, motivations, and expectations’ prior experiential learning (Ewer and Sibthorp, 2009: 379). Ewert and Sibthorp (2009) write that all the factors mentioned above influence learners’ ‘readiness to learn and benefit from (or not benefit from) different lessons from the experience’ (Ewer and Sibthorp, 2009: 379).

According to Ewert and Sibthorp (2009) concomitant variables originate in the process of experiential education. They include: ‘Course specifics, Group characteristics, Situational impacts, Frontloading for evaluation’ (Ewer and Sibthorp, 2009: 379). Due to the personal peculiarities of students groups differ from each other and this diversity enhances the experiences both of an individual and a group. ‘Group characteristics include how a group interacts with the challenges and experiences presented by the course’ (Ewer and Sibthorp, 2009: 380). Ewert and Sibthorp (2009) write that the learning outcomes can be intentionally or unintentionally influenced by teachers and students by reason of the evaluation. ‘For example, if a pair of instructors knew that a particular group of participants they were leading were being evaluated on levels of self-esteem, they might reconsider how they planned and conducted the course’ (Ewer and Sibthorp, 2009: 381).

According to Ewer and Sibthorp (2009), postexperience variables appear after the experiential activities and it is possible to distinguish: “Social Desirability”, when learners, taking part in the process of evaluation, say what in their opinion a teacher intends to hear, instead of expressing the real feelings, “Postexperience Euphoria”, when the feeling of excitement doesn’t let learners identify the real feeling they have (Ewert and Sibthorp, 2009). Ewert and Sibthorp (2009) also write about ‘Postcourse Adjustment’ – learners need time to recognize the experience they have received, otherwise, they will not be able to come to adequate conclusions about the learning outcomes. They also mention that self – perception of learners before experiential activities is not possible to be compared to self – perception after the activities (Ewert and Sibthorp, 2009).

Qualters (Qualters, 2010 in Schwartz, 2012) offers to use the model proposed by Alexander Astin: “input”, “environment”, and “output”. In input part learners’ prior knowledge and experience are assessed, in the environment part students are assessed in the process of experience, and in the output part the advance after the experience is assessed (Qualters, 2010 in Schwartz, 2012).

Wurdinger (Wurdinger, 2005 in Schwartz, 2012) writes about three possible ways of self–assessment conducted by students. The first way is to involve learners in the process of choosing the criteria for assessing their work. The second way let learners record the progress of work with the help of portfolio. The third way is to allow learners to present the outcomes of learning in public (Wurdinger, 2005 in Schwartz, 2012).

Moon (2004) gives some examples of methods for assessing experiential activities. She mentions the usage of learning portfolio, presentation of learning outcomes, self–evaluation, an oral exam, ‘short answer questions of a ‘why’ and ‘explain’ nature’ and others’ (Moon, 2004: 166).

In conclusion it could be stated that assessment of experiential learning is a multi stage process with learners taking an integral part in it. It is not enough just to assess the results, assessment takes place prior, during, and after experiential activities.

The author of the present paper considers that prior assessment could be implemented with the help of oral test in order to identify and analyze strengths and weaknesses in learners’ speaking skills. During the experiential activities, assessment could be organized with the help of questions to students about what they have learnt and how they feel about the activities. The oral test could be implemented in the middle of the experiment described in the case study presented below. Presentation of learning outcomes would be the most suitable for the assessment after activities. One more oral test could be implemented after the experiment to check the learners’ progress. This choice stems from the fact that experiential activities described in the case study below are oriented on learners’ speaking skills, so assessment is supposed to be accomplished via speaking.

3.4 The disadvantages of preparation and speaking activities in a course book

According to the experience of the author of the present paper, speaking tasks in a classroom require a lot of time. Learners’ groups usually consist of 14 – 17 people, and it is obvious that in

order to listen to the opinions of all members adequately educators spend even more than one lesson which is 40 minutes long. Speaking activities in the course book “Solutions. Upper-Intermediate Student’s Book. Tim Falla, Paul A.Davies, 2013” (2nd edition) are designed in the combination with reading and listening tasks, and it is done with the purpose to activate learners’ schemata about the specific topic and prepare them for speaking. It is written in the instructions for teachers that a lesson is supposed to last 40 minutes. The lesson includes 7 – 8 activities with a lead-in and hot reflection. For example, Unit 2 C devoted to “squatters” consists of lead-in, one reading, three listening, one vocabulary, three speaking tasks, and reflection. In speaking tasks students work in pairs describing a picture, discussing the question and giving reasons for their opinion, they also have to develop their conversations based on the phrases of the previous exercises (Falla, T. and Davies, P. A. 2013: 17). It is possible to manage in case learners have 3-4 minutes for discussion only in pairs without going deeper into the topic.

Another issue is connected with the exercises of the unit, which as it was mentioned above, are supposed to activate the learners’ schemata. It is possible to cover them only superficially in the given time. It might mean that learners will not be able to form their opinion about the topic and it will be an obstacle for them in the speaking activities. For the learners who already have experience about the topic there will not be space to share it with others.

One more weak point of the tasks in a course book is that listening or reading activities to prepare learners to speak on the topic and speaking activities themselves are often perceived by learners as boring and monotonous because these activities are not based on the students’ experience and are usually fulfilled automatically. As a result, there is no possibility for all learners to become active participant of the lesson and be adequately involved. It occurs that students do not remember the topic of the lesson in some minutes after the lesson.

The fact that learners are not always inspired by the activities of the course book is also supported by the results of the students’ questionnaire presented in the fourth chapter of the present paper, when only some learners answered that they like speaking activities in a course book, but the majority of respondents answered negatively or did not know what to answer.

Taking into consideration everything mentioned above, it becomes obvious that the different approach is required to speaking activities in the classroom and tasks in the course book could be used as supplementary, but it is not always productive to organize all the lesson basing only on the materials of the course book.

4. CASE STUDY AT RIGA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

Analyzing the learners' answers during the speaking part of the Centralised Exam in English language it was mentioned by the author of the present paper that students need to be more adequately prepared to speak in unfamiliar situation when they are interviewed and evaluated by unknown people (teachers of English). Even regular practice of the speaking part in a classroom during the lessons does not guarantee maximum points. It happens because mostly students have never experienced interviews and monologues and they know how to behave only at the theoretical level. It is obvious that additional tasks have to be applied and designed by teachers in order to improve speaking skills of students. Experiential approach would be suitable in order to design the additional tasks aimed at understanding and exploring the finer points of interviews and monologues by own experience. The present case study is designed to test the efficiency of additional activities based on experiential approach and developed by the author of the present paper for improving learners' speaking skills. For this purpose a group of 14 students of 11th form in Riga Vocational School has been chosen. The learners of the chosen group demonstrate B1 level of English. Before, in the middle of and after applying the experiential approach in the classroom, students are supposed to have tests on speaking (pre-evaluation, mid-evaluation, post-evaluation) based on tasks of the Centralised Exam in English language of 2018. The tests consist of two tasks: interview and monologue. For the interview part, students have to answer five questions about the topic they have chosen. For the monologue part, learners have to read the text and prepare a monologue according to plan. The evaluation is implemented according to the Assessment scale for speaking applied for State Exam of English in 2018 (see Appendix 1).

While analyzing the results of the pre-evaluation it was pointed out that the interview part was more successful than the monologue part (the *Table 4.1.* below). However, during the interview, learners very often asked to repeat questions several times and could not provide extended answers. During the monologue part, learners had difficulties defining the main issue of the text and very often had difficulties providing relevant and supported opinions. As a consequence, learners did not manage to receive the maximum five points for both tasks. Learners also did not perform with the highest results in vocabulary, grammar and fluency and pronunciation. Basing on the results of the test the group of five learners with the total points 12 and less were identified (hereafter as "the five learners"). The results of the speaking test described above have led to a conclusion that additional tasks are required in order to improve

learners' speaking skills and their marks. Additional tasks are also crucial to raise students' confidence in speaking because while implementing the test it was realized that learners are sometimes shy and make mistakes because of lack of self-confidence. The activities based on experiential approach are presented and described hereafter.

Table 4.1. The results of the pre-evaluation

St	T 1	T 2	V	G	F/P	Total (points)	Total (mark)
St 1	3	3	2	3	3	14	6
St 2	4	3	3	3	4	17	7
St 3	4	4	4	4	4	20	8
St 4	3	3	4	3	4	17	7
St 5	4	3	4	4	4	19	8
St 6	2	2	2	2	2	10	4
St 7	3	2	3	3	3	14	6
St 8	2	1	2	1	1	7	3
St 9	4	3	3	3	4	17	7
St10	2	1	2	1	1	7	3
St11	3	2	3	2	2	12	5
St12	2	2	2	2	2	10	4
St13	4	4	4	4	4	20	8
St14	4	3	4	3	3	17	7

(T 1) Interview (average) – 3,14

(T 2) Monologue (average) – 2,57

(V) Vocabulary (average) - 3

(G) Grammar (average) – 2,71

(F/P) Fluency and Pronunciation (average) – 2,93

4.1 Application of the experiential approach in the lessons of English

4.1.1 Experiential approach to improve learners' ability to speak on the spot using the words and definitions connected with the topic

The observations of the author of the present paper show that while speaking, learners sometimes forget a word and it becomes an obstacle for a successful answer. It is obvious that learners have to be explained how to substitute a word they do not remember with a definition (explanation with their own words) and the substitution has to happen automatically without illogical pauses in the middle of speaking. As it was clarified by the author of the present paper during the lessons, writing down the definitions dictated by the teacher and learning them by heart is not effective and many students fail to use them successfully. In order to achieve better results, learners have to understand how to make definitions by doing them. It is important to remember that all students have different experiences with the words they have to explain. In this situation it would be efficient to provide learners with space to learn from each others' experience. The activity described below is based on a book Solutions Upper Intermediate 2nd edition. The main aim of the activity is to enhance learners' confidence while speaking and improve their ability to spontaneously find the substitution of the word they do not know or remember while speaking.

Before the activity, learners had a few minutes to translate the words in the task 2 on page 5 (Solutions Upper Intermediate 2nd edition). In order to check learners' ability to provide definitions for the words, students were asked one by one to create their definitions of the words in the task 2 on page 5 (Solutions Upper Intermediate 2nd edition). There was no time to think, because the words were chosen by a teacher spontaneously. In 30 seconds another word was given to another student. Although learners were supposed to know the translation of the words, the majority of learners (10 out of 14) demonstrated the perplexity and lack of confidence. They tried to provide the definition, but in a very chaotic and not structured way, looking for the proper words and with mistakes. Three out of 14 learners refused speaking. Three out of 14 learners felt more confident and provided quite organized and meaningful definitions. However, they made mistakes and needed time to find the proper word.

In the activity, the teacher is allowed to provide only the instructions without helping learners with translation or necessary words. It is important for the teacher to announce that during the activity, learners are allowed to help each other. The activity is based on active approach of experiential learning described in the theoretical part. After reading through the words on page 5, task 2 (Solutions Upper Intermediate 2nd edition), learners are invited to sit in the circle and receive a piece of paper with a word from the task 2 and a definition prepared by a teacher from online Cambridge dictionary (see Appendix 2). Learners read their words and definitions one by one. Then one person reads only a definition and a person sitting next to him tries to guess a word

(students are allowed to ask for help of a learner who reads a definition). For example, student 1 reads: 'having a strong wish to be successful, powerful, or rich' (dictionary.cambridge.org). Student 2 next to him has to guess a word – “ambitious”. After all the students in the circle have tried to guess a word learners are given some minutes to look at their words once again and think of their own definitions then they one by one read out the definitions they have created. Then learners work in two groups, groups exchange the words and the definitions and group 1 has to write the sentences with the words of the second group and group 2 has to write the sentences with the words of the first group. As soon as time is over, learners of the first group read their sentences and the students of the second group one by one after each sentence provide the definition of a target word. After the first group has read all the sentences, the members of the second group read their sentences, but the learners of the first group provide their definitions of target words. For example, group 1 reads the sentence with a word “selfish”, group 2: provides their definition of a word selfish. Then learners of both groups have time to make any changes in definitions they think are necessary and present these changes. At the end of the lesson, students are invited to evaluate the activity by answering the questions asked by a teacher: Did you like a lesson? Have you learnt anything new?

The activity described above was the first attempt to apply the experiential approach in the experimental group. During the first part of the activity, when learners were sitting in the circle, they felt uncomfortable waiting for more involvement and explanations from the teacher and help of the teacher when they did not know the word. In this situation, as it was mentioned in the theoretical part of the present paper, the teacher's task is to step in and help learners not to get lost and continue the activity. The atmosphere of the second part of the lesson when learners worked in groups was different. Learners felt more confident and were ready to take responsibility for the course of the lesson without asking the teacher for additional explanations. It was mentioned by the author of the present paper that students with a little bit higher level of English helped the ones of lower level. The group of five students who demonstrated uncertainty and poor results during the pre-evaluation came out of shell and were more actively involved in the activity due to non-formal communication with the classmates.

After the activity, learners were put in the same conditions as in the beginning of the lesson. They had to provide the definitions for the words in the task 2 on page 5 (Solutions Upper Intermediate 2nd edition). Overall, learners felt more confident and had more fluency while providing the definitions and the quantity of mistakes was reduced. Three students who reduced

speaking in the beginning of the lesson managed to start speaking with the help of other learners, making a lot of mistakes and doing so chaotically. The author of the present paper considers it as achievement and improvement of the group.

Commenting the activity at the end of the lesson learners expressed mostly positive emotions. Some of them remarked that they felt a little bit strange and unusual during the first part of the lesson as the type of activity was not common for them. The second part of the lesson was very productive and learners mentioned that the communication with the classmates was useful and helped them to feel more relaxed and they liked this way of working during the lesson. The group of five students who had more difficulties and anxiety in speaking defined before the activity were able to express their opinions with the help of other students and teacher. Answering the question about the activity learners stressed that they liked the situation when they were provided with the certain amount of freedom.

4.1.2 Experiential approach through reading to improve speaking skills

The observations of the author of the present paper show that while answering the monologue part during the lesson or the Centralised Exam in English language learners have difficulties defining the main issue of the text. It happens due to several reasons: lack of time because students have only two minutes to prepare their monologues, learners often forget about key words and topical sentences to help them with the main issue and they spend too much time on reading the text. It is obvious that trainings during the lessons are required in order learners could improve the results for the monologue part. The application of experiential approach means that students would not need just to read the text and fulfill the tasks from the text book, but they will be provided with space to create their monologues in practice and reflect on each other's experiences. The main aim of the lesson described below is to improve learners' ability to work with a new text on the topic and stimulate learners' speaking on the main issue of the text.

Before the activity, learners had 5 minutes to find the definitions of topical sentence and key words to prepare themselves for the activity described below. The definitions were discussed in the class. Some students were familiar with these terms before the lesson, but some had not faced them. This task was supposed to activate the schemata of learners about topical sentences and key words. Pre-test for this activity was not needed because as it was mentioned above the problems

with identifying the main issue of the text were clarified during the students' answers during the Centralised Exam in English language and the lessons of English.

In this activity, learners were divided into four groups (three-four students in each group), they choose the number of the text: text 1, "Chalk and Cheese" on page 9 or text 2 about a history teacher on page 10 (Falla, T. and Davies, P. A. 2013: 9, 10). All students individually read the text and in one minute they have to write down five key words and one topical sentence. Then in their group students compare their key words and topical sentences and put them on one piece of paper. In one minute groups exchange the pieces of paper with key words and topical sentences. Each group basing on the key words and topical sentences in five minutes have to present the main idea of the text of the opposite group. While preparing their presentations groups are allowed to ask the opponents three additional questions. After each presentation the members of the opposite group give their evaluation. At the end of the lesson, groups receive the original pieces of the text and answer the question if they have managed to highlight the main issue of the text successfully.

During the lesson, students worked actively and independently. Learners were familiar with the situation in the classroom when they are responsible for the process themselves and consequently they felt surer about what they were doing. The teacher fulfilled the role of mentor and students were not limited with right and wrong answers. When learners received the original pieces of the text they could evaluate their work themselves instead of asking for evaluation from the teacher. Learners worked both individually and in groups and as a result all students were equally involved instead of asking only some students during the lesson. As a result, the schema of students about the purpose of the monologue task was enhanced. It is worth mentioning that the representatives of the group of five students who felt less confident during the pre-test were quite actively involved and could successfully take part in the presentation.

After the activity, learners were asked for feedback and answered the questions about their feelings about the activity. One of the questions was about what they had learnt. Some students answered that they had found out something new about topical sentences and key words. Some students answered that the activity helped them to understand more about how to identify the main issue or problem of the text. Three of 14 students mentioned that the main achievement of the task for them was the possibility to listen to the opinions of their classmates and find a common solution.

4.1.3 Experiential approach through the interview and presentation to improve speaking skills

As it was pointed out, during the lessons and the Centralised Exam in English language learners are very often shy and unconfident while answering the interview questions and performing their monologues. In order to make progress, a favourable working environment is very important. It is possible to achieve when a teacher fulfills the role of mentor and adviser during the lesson, but not a person providing universal truth. Students have to be sure that their ideas and thoughts will be adequately accepted and respected. It was also noticed that students prefer not to read the instructions for the tasks, and prefer to turn to a teacher for clarifications. The goal of the task described below is to let students feel responsible for the course of the lesson, encourage them to read carefully through the instructions for the tasks. They have to listen to each other, analyse and present information received improving both listening and speaking skills. Pre-test for this activity was not needed because as it was mentioned above the problems with lack of confidence and ignoring the instructions were clarified during the students' answers during the Centralised Exam in English Language and the lessons of English.

The lesson starts with an energizer. Students sit in a circle with a pile of postcards in the middle and they have to choose a postcard corresponding to their feeling at the moment and in one sentence explain their choice. Then the students are provided with written instructions where it is said that they have to find pieces of paper hidden in the room with five questions on them and instructions of the task. Questions are taken from the Centralised Exam in English language of different years. This part of the activity is important to provide learners with feeling that the tasks are not explained by the teacher, but it is their responsibility to understand it and fulfill it according to the instructions. After the questions have been found, learners' task is to pose these questions to as many people in the room as they can and record all the answers they hear. Then students form groups of 3-4 people and prepare presentation based on information about classmates they have gathered while posing questions. The names of students are not mentioned in presentations and after each presentation other students try to guess the names. According to the instructions, presentations have to be based on three parts: introduction, body part and conclusion. Learners are allowed to use the internet to help them to prepare presentations referring to the sources they have used.

It is very important to provide space for feedback. The first circle of feedback happens after presentation of each group. Teacher asks several questions about the presentation and learners provide their answers. The following questions were asked by the teacher: Was it easy or difficult to receive the answers from other students? What was easy or difficult? How would you evaluate your presentation in terms of content, structure and presentation skills? Some students answered that they did not have any difficulties interviewing their classmates and the interviewees were open minded and ready to communicate. Some learners mentioned that interviewees had difficulties while answering the questions and they were able to assist their classmates helping them with unknown words. Some learners pointed out that during the interview they managed to find out interesting facts about their classmates and had possibility to communicate with the classmates they had not communicated before.

During the lesson, learners were actively involved. In the beginning of the lessons learners were a little bit lost because they were not sure about a person to choose to ask their questions to. The educator stepped in to facilitate the situation and in some minutes learners managed to continue the interview part without assistance. While preparing the presentations learners willingly worked in a group and helped each other. Presentations were well prepared and learners with lower level of English were actively involved and their progress was very visible.

At the end of the lesson, students go back in a circle again. The teacher asks questions such as: Did you like the lesson? Why?/Why not? Have you learnt anything new? After debriefing, the teacher puts the postcards used in the beginning of the lesson in the middle of the circle. The learners' task is to choose any card they want corresponding to their feeling at the moment (it can be the same card as in the beginning of the lesson or other card). Students explain their choice and tell if their feelings have changed comparing to the beginning of the lesson and why. The majority of learners liked the activity because of the non-formal approach and possibility to take active part in the process of the lesson. Some students liked the idea with postcards because it helped them to express their feelings more precisely. In the beginning of the lesson, a lot of learners felt a little bit frustrated because they did not know what to wait from the lesson. At the end of the lesson, learners mainly expressed excitement because they liked the activity.

The mid-term evaluation is necessary at this point in order to analyze the results after application of tasks described above and define the learners' progress. The results of the mid-evaluation are shown in the table below. The improvement of 11 learners, including the five

learners identified in the pre–evaluation, could be marked in the area of interview. Three learners managed to receive maximum five points. Six learners succeeded in the monologue. In the area of fluency and pronunciation six students have managed to improve their previous results and one learner received maximum five points. Five learners demonstrated better results in vocabulary comparing to the pre–evaluation results. One learner received maximum 5 points. The only aspect which was not covered by the enhancement is grammar. Learners mostly had the same mistakes they had in the pre–evaluation. It means that additional steps and activities are necessary to change this situation. Three learners out of fourteen did not make any improvement according to the results of mid–evaluation. It could be concluded that the activities that provide the students with possibility to be actively involved in the process and share the experiences have the positive impact on the learners’ speaking skills.

Table 4.2. The results of the mid-evaluation

St	T 1	T 2	V	G	F/P	Total (points)	Total (mark)
St1	4	4	3	3	4	18	7
St2	5	4	4	3	5	21	8
St 3	4	4	4	4	4	20	8
St 4	4	3	4	3	4	18	7
St 5	5	3	5	4	4	21	8
St 6	3	2	2	2	2	11	4
St 7	4	2	3	3	3	15	6
St 8	3	2	3	1	2	11	4
St 9	4	3	3	3	4	17	7
St10	3	2	2	1	2	10	4
St11	4	2	3	2	2	13	5
St12	3	3	3	2	3	14	6
St13	4	4	4	4	4	20	8
St14	5	4	4	3	4	20	8

(T 1) Interview (average) – 3,92

(T 2) Monologue (average) – 3,00

(V) Vocabulary (average) – 3,35

(G) Grammar (average) – 2,71

(F/P) Fluency and Pronunciation (average) – 3,35

4.1.4 Experiential approach through a mini–project to improve learners’ speaking skills

Nowadays, it is very important to provide learners with the opportunity to use technology during the lessons. It is necessary to demonstrate how technology can be applied for educational purposes, not only for entertainment. Technologies could also be used to improve speaking skills. The purpose of the lesson described below is to encourage the students to work in groups and according to the roles they have chosen, practise presenting and speaking skills, demonstrate how to use technology for educational purpose. At the end of the lesson, learners have to understand how to select relevant information and use it in order to fulfil the task. The particularity of vocational school is that students have to develop English connected with their profession. The lesson below is devoted to electricity, as the learners of experimental group are specialists in the sphere of electricity.

Students work in four groups. All groups receive the same task and have to answer several general questions about electricity and then present their answers. In order to find information, students are provided with a list of web-sites related to the topic. The form of presentation can be chosen by the learners themselves, but they are provided with a flip chart and three markers of different colours. The presentation has to involve three parts: introduction, body part, and conclusion. Learners in groups have to agree about the role they fulfill: a person who looks for information, a person who prepares a presentation. It is allowed that one role can be fulfilled by several members of a group. Students are asked to include the descriptions of the roles in their presentation and explain why a particular person has been chosen for a specific role. They have to keep in mind that all members of their group have to speak during the presentation and they are not allowed to read (see Appendix 3).

After presentations, students worked in the same groups again. They received the pictures and descriptions of old-fashioned electronic devices and their task was to upgrade the pieces of electronic devices with a specific function to win over the customers on the market and present their invention and give it the name and to create a slogan. Learners were provided with the detailed instructions. In common with the previous task, learners are provided with the list of web-sites they have to visit to explore and understand what the market of consumer electronics

offers (see Appendix 4). The presentation has to involve three parts: introduction, body part, and conclusion. In groups students agree on roles they fulfill: a person who is going to be a leader, a person who looks for information, a person who prepares a presentation. One role can be fulfilled by several members of a group and students are allowed to add any role they think would be useful for their successful work. Learners have to include the description of roles in their presentation and explain why the particular person has been chosen for a specific role. They have to keep in mind that all members of their group have to speak during the presentation and they are not allowed to read.

The observations of the teacher during the activity demonstrated that learners were very interested in the activity and were ready to take responsibility for the fulfillment of the task without a lot of additional questions to the teacher. It was mentioned by the teacher that learners were especially concentrated on the process of upgrading the device, but did not pay sufficient attention to the instructions where it was explained how to organize the presentation.

At the end of the activity, learners were asked to comment the presentation of any group of their choice by highlighting the pros and cons of the presentation in terms of content, structure, fluency and fulfillment of the instructions. The majority of learners liked the presentations of the opponent group, but the biggest minuses were distinguished in the part of structure. It was concluded by the students that it happened because the instructions were not carefully examined. Learners were also asked to evaluate the activity and all the comments were rather positive. Students mentioned that it was rather interesting to work together because all participants had different ideas and finally they had to organize them into one presentation. They also liked to use the internet as a source of useful information during the lesson.

4.1.5 Experiential approach through the interconnection of groups to improve speaking skills

In order to succeed in speaking, it is important to work on learners' ability to work with information on different topics even unfamiliar in order to extend the world outlook and be able to support diverse conversations. The goal of the lesson described below is to demonstrate different sources of information to students, improve their skill to select necessary data and form the questions on the subject. They are also supposed to communicate with students from other

groups from the school, pose questions and listen to their opinions. It will help to reduce stress and anxiety while speaking.

Learners are divided into groups of 3 – 4 people. Each group receives the list of 3 web-sites used in the Centralised Exam in English language for a monologue part and the instructions for the activity (see Appendix 5). Students have a few minutes to explore the sites and their task is to choose the text they are interested in and read it. As soon as the texts have been selected and read, the groups' task is to find one word to formulate the topic of the text and then create five questions connected with the text. It is explained that questions have to be possible to answer without reading the text. Then groups allocate one student who is going to be an interviewer; this student's task is to go to another group in the class and collect the answers to the questions. As soon as all the questions have been answered, the interviewer returns to his team. The team discusses the answers and they have possibility to make any changes in questions to make them more flexible to answer. The questions and changes are presented in front of the class and the members of a group who were answering the questions are allowed to provide their comments. As soon as the changes have been made, the experimental group went to another group of unknown learners at school outside the classroom. The students of the unknown group were previously divided into groups of 3-4 people by their teacher. The task of experimental group is to go to the unknown groups and pose their questions and write down the answers. After the cooperation with unknown group, learners of experiential group come together and present the answers they have received.

Observations of the teacher during the lesson show that this activity was one of the most difficult and interesting for the learners. In the first part of the lesson not all learners were actively involved in the process of choosing and reading the text. As a result, they were not satisfied with the text chosen by other members of the group, but there was no time to make changes. The second obstacle was the step of creating the questions because some the learners did not understand that the questions had to be general enough to be possible to answer without reading the text. For example, one group had chosen an article about a popular rap singer and their questions were connected with the fact of his biography. When they were supposed to go to another group in the class they realized that they had to change the questions and could not receive necessary answers. Learners who chose more general topic, for example, how to be successful, were more successful in creating their questions. The second obstacle for learners was the communication with the representative of another group outside the classroom. Some learners

of the experimental group were very shy and did not want to enter the unknown group. Finally, with the assistance of a teacher learners successfully completed the task and overcame the anxiety and shyness.

After the activity, the experimental group discussed the process in a circle and gave their feedback answering the teacher's questions: Did you like the lesson? Was it useful? Why/Why not? What did you learn about your classmates? Was it difficult to choose the web-site and a text? What was the easiest/the most difficult part? What would you change in a task? Learners had different emotions about the activity, but 10 out of 14 students specified that this experience was very unique and interesting for them because they have never experienced the situations when they had to interview the unknown people. Two learners mentioned that the activity helped them to understand that to communicate with people you do not know it is better to choose the more general topic because mostly people have their opinion about general issues. Some students said that they had difficulties communicating with the unknown group because some learners did not have the sufficient level of English to answer the questions, but to fulfill the task they tried to paraphrase the questions and find more simple explanations because only English was allowed in the classroom.

The post-evaluation would help to receive the broad picture about the efficiency of activities used in the frames of the case study. The results of the post-evaluation are demonstrated in the table below. It could be stated that the points of all students for the interview are higher than the results performed in the pre-evaluation and mid-evaluation. It also applies to the five learners identified in the pre-evaluation. It does not apply to the three learners who received maximum five points in the mid-evaluation. The results for the monologue task are lower, but they have increased in case of five learners in comparison with the results in the pre-evaluation and mid-evaluation. This improvement could be explained with the efficiency of the additional tasks implemented in experimental group described above. It was noticed by the author of the present paper during the post-evaluation that learners became more confident and had more freedom while expressing their ideas and opinions. It could be ascribed to a lot of space during the lessons the learners had to share their experiences and communicate. The improved results are also distinguished for fluency and pronunciation as learners managed to become less stressed and pronounced the words more clearly. The points for vocabulary also increased in the case of 6 learners including 2 students from the group of five identified in the pre-evaluation. The explanation could be the fact that during the activities the learners of experimental group worked

a lot with creating their own definitions, sentences and presentations when they could apply the experience they had and form a new one. The aspect of grammar was also improved in the case of three learners. As the result of regular feedback, students managed to be more careful while speaking and pay more attention to the correct grammar forms. It is obvious that the results of case study were positive and demonstrate the progress of the participants of experimental group in speaking.

Table 4.3. The results of the post-evaluation

St	T 1	T 2	V	G	F/P	Total (points)	Total (mark)
St 1	5	4	4	4	4	21	8
St2	5	4	4	3	5	21	8
St 3	5	5	4	4	5	23	9
St 4	5	3	5	4	4	21	8
St5	5	4	5	4	5	23	9
St 6	4	2	3	2	3	14	6
St 7	5	2	3	3	3	16	6
St 8	4	3	3	2	3	15	6
St9	5	4	3	3	4	19	8
St10	4	2	3	2	2	13	5
St11	5	2	4	2	3	16	6
St12	4	3	3	2	3	15	6
St13	5	5	5	4	5	24	10
St14	5	4	5	3	4	21	8

(T 1) Interview (average) – 4,71

(T 2) Monologue (average) – 3,36

(V) Vocabulary (average) – 3,85

(G) Grammar (average) – 3,00

(F/P) Fluency and Pronunciation (average) – 3,78

4.2 The exposition of the questionnaires for students and teachers

4.2.1 The exposition of the questionnaire for students

The questionnaire for students about their speaking skills and their attitude to sharing the experience with others was conducted in Riga Vocational School among 25 learners of 11th form who voluntarily expressed their wish to take part in the survey (Appendix 6). Learners were asked to answer the questions during the lesson in paper form. The survey was anonymous and learners had 20 minutes for their answers. Questionnaires were collected by a teacher in order to analyze the results. The aim of the questionnaire was to identify learners' favourite activity during the lessons of English, find out the learners' attitude towards speaking activities in their course books, and define the regularity of speaking practice in English of learners. The questionnaire tends to specify the learners' preferable form of work in the classroom and learn about their perception of experiential approach and attitude to sharing experience with their classmates.

The first question was about learners' favourite activity in English lessons. Students were asked to explain their choice in one sentence. The first figure demonstrates that the majority of students prefer listening. Some learners explained that they are used to listening to their favourite songs in English every day that is why listening tasks are favourite and the most common. The figure shows that reading takes the second position with 7 learners who ticked the activity. Several students clarified that they suppose that they have more concentration fulfilling reading tasks. Speaking shares the last position with writing among the favourite activities in English lessons, five learners for speaking and five for writing. Some learners commented that they like writing because they were not shy and could express their thoughts openly. Regarding speaking activities, several students mentioned that they prefer speaking in the classroom especially when there are diverse opinions presented by their classmates because it is interesting to listen to each other. Ten out of 25 respondents did not explain their choice leaving the empty space or writing "I do not know."

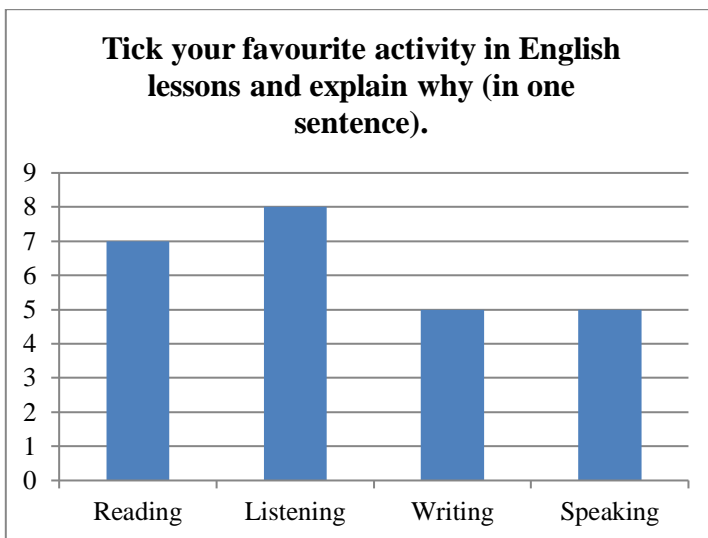


Figure 4.2.1.1. Question 1

The second question was designed to find out how many learners are able to speak English every day and the figure demonstrates that only six respondents out of 25 had this possibility. The majority of learners used the opportunity to speak during the lessons. Seven learners mentioned that they never spoke. It could be concluded that some learners did not have possibility to speak even during the lessons of English at school.

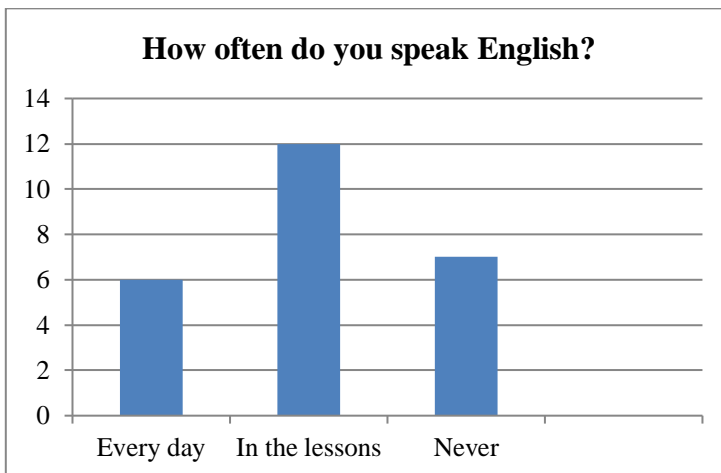


Figure 4.2.1.2. Question 2

Figure number three was designed to demonstrate the attitude of students towards speaking activities in the course book they use in the lessons of English according to the curriculum of school. It was found out that only four learners of 25 liked the activities, the majority of learners have difficulties to answer the question, and nine respondents did not like the

activities. It is obvious that activities in a course book do not satisfy the expectations of majority of learners.

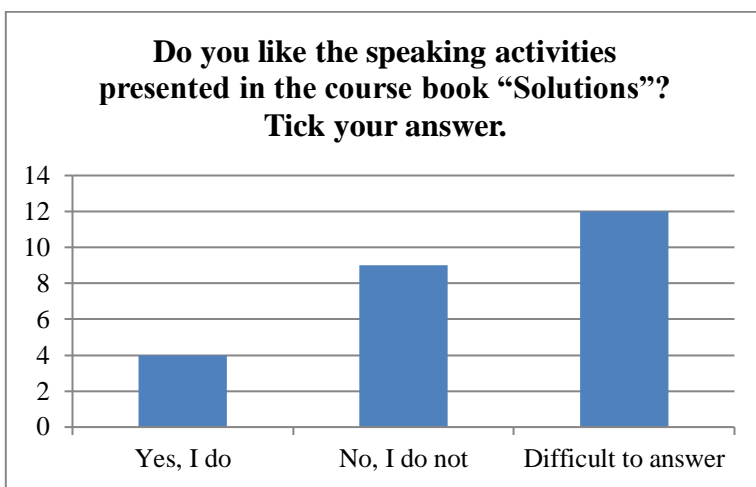


Figure 4.2.1.3. Question 3

Figure number four showed the self-assessment of learners about their speaking skills. The majority of students evaluated them as average and nobody answered that they had fluent speaking skills. There are no respondents who ticked the answer "Very low". Figure five confirms the results of the fourth question. 11 out of 25 respondents answered that they felt unconfident when they to speak on public, 10 students felt shy and none of the students ticked that they were confident.

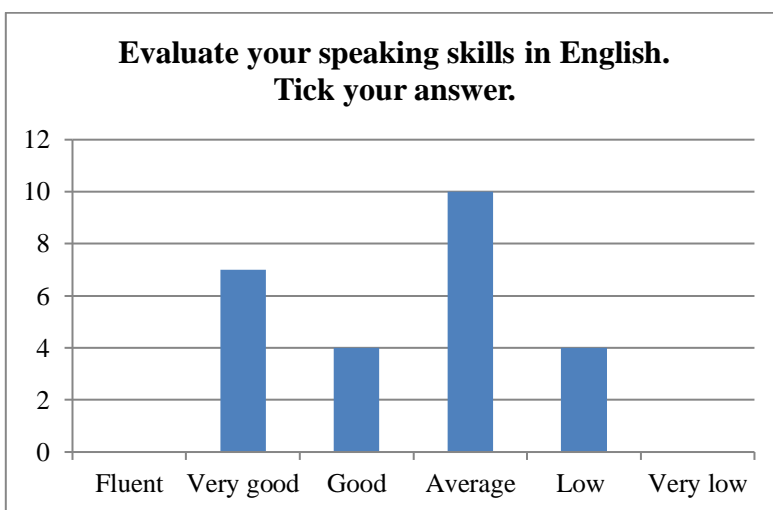


Figure 4.2.1.4. Question 4

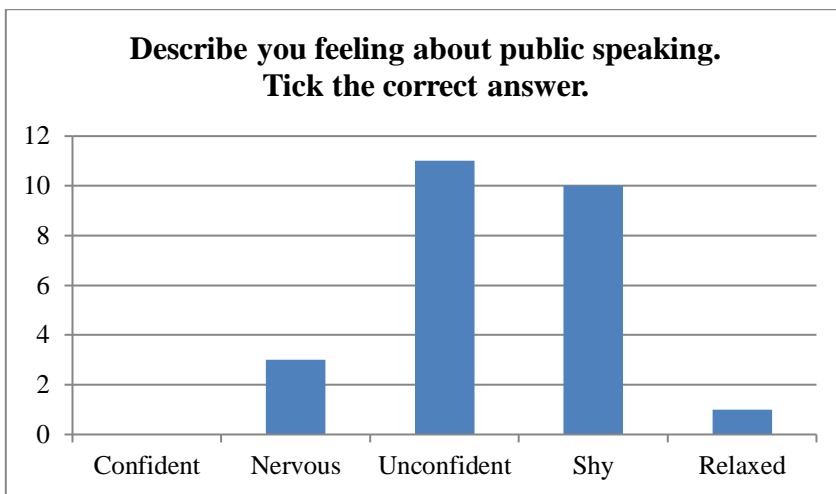


Figure 4.2.1.5. Question 5

Figure six represents that 12 out of 25 learners preferred to express themselves through presentations in groups and only five respondents would choose the monologue and 8 students choose a dialogue. These results are supported with the numbers of Figure number seven which illustrates that learners like to work in groups or pairs rather than individually. 13 learners preferred groups, 7 respondents worked in pairs and 5 learners ticked individual work.

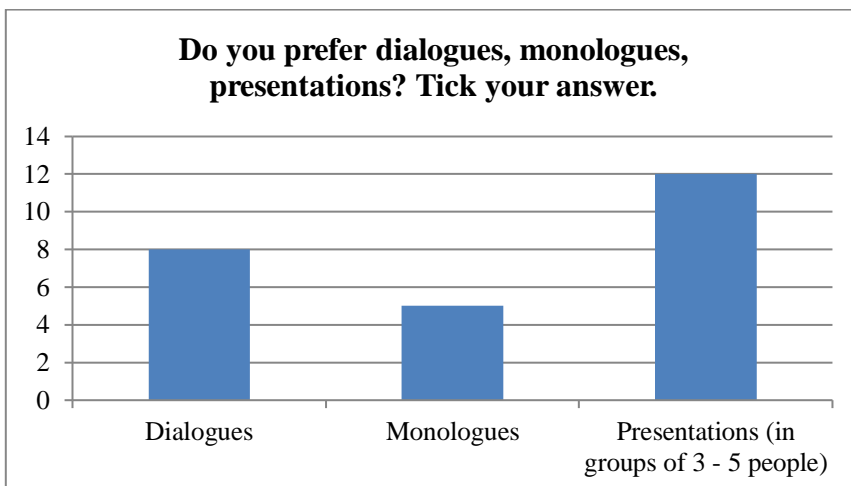


Figure 4.2.1.6. Question 6

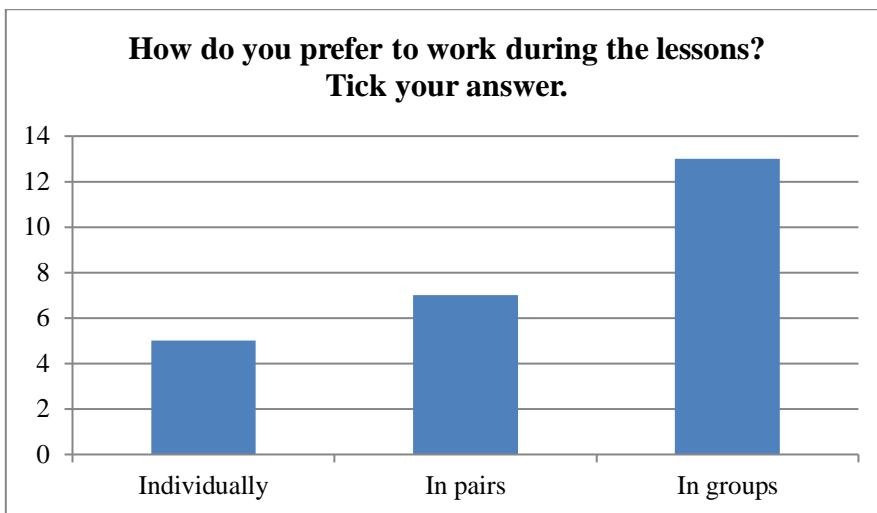


Figure 4.2.1.7. Question 7

Figure eight illustrates that learners mainly do not prefer lectures in the lessons. Only 3 respondents gave a positive answer and 4 students did not know how to answer. 18 respondents did not like lectures during the lessons.

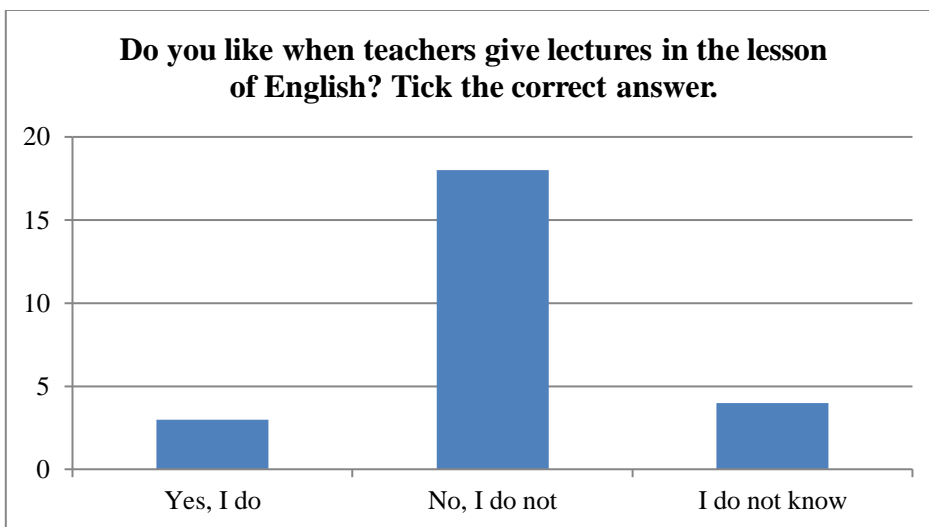


Figure 4.2.1.8. Question 8

Figure nine shows that none of the learners had heard about experiential learning, but figures ten and eleven demonstrate that the majority of respondents like the process of sharing the experience. Some learners explained that they liked to listen to each other during the lesson because there was no opportunity to communicate with all classmates out of the classroom. Some learners explained that they were shy to express themselves in front of their classmates.

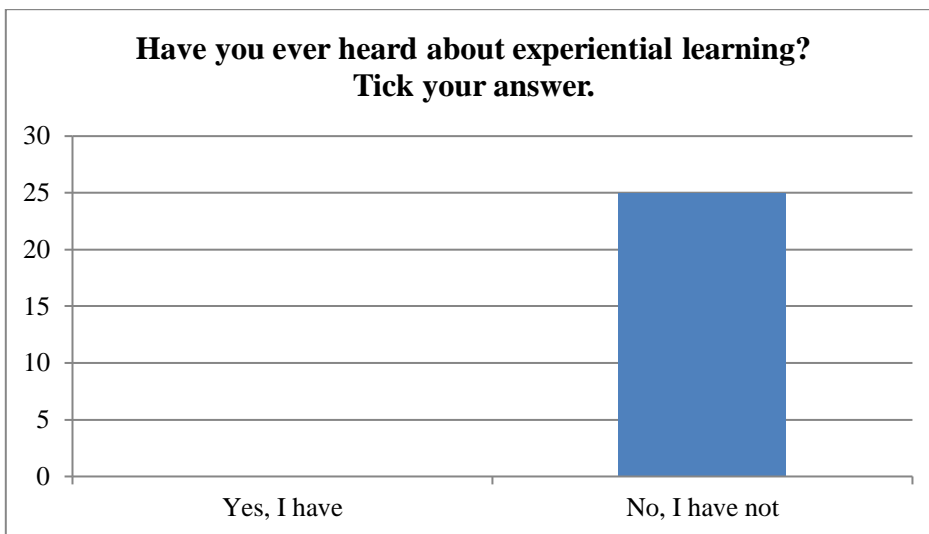


Figure 4.2.1.9. Question 9

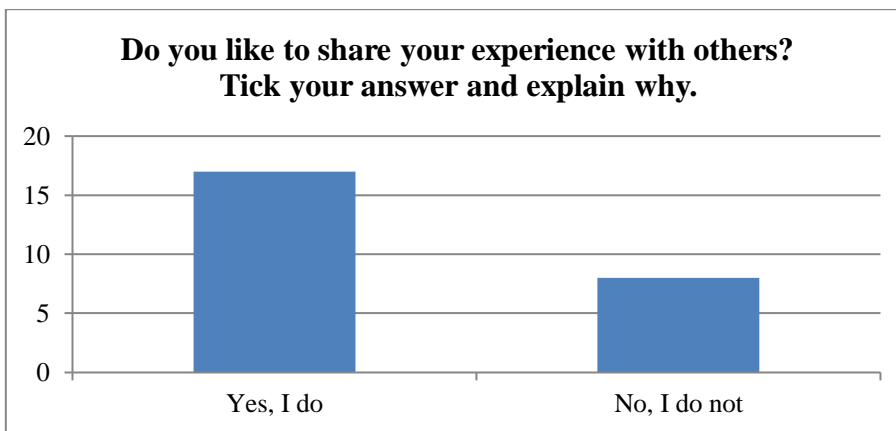


Figure 4.2.1.10. Question 10

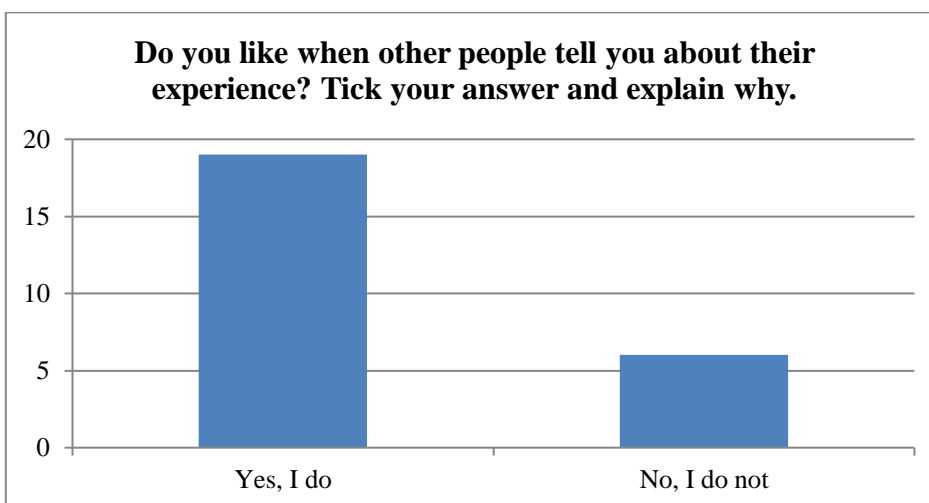


Figure 4.2.1.11. Question 11

It could be concluded that mainly students are not confident about their speaking skills and do not have the possibility to practice their English on an everyday basis. They feel shy and uncertain about speaking in public. Respondents choose sharing the experiences rather than lecturing.

4.2.2 The exposition of the questionnaire for teachers

The questionnaire for teachers was developed with the aim of determining their opinion about learners' speaking skills and identify some problems learners and teachers face implementing speaking activities in the classroom (see Appendix 7). Several questions were focused on teachers' opinion regarding the speaking activities in the course book. Ten teachers-respondents were supposed to answer the question about the most convenient environment in the classroom for developing learners' speaking skills and demonstrate their experience with experiential approach.

The first chart demonstrates that the majority of the respondents were very experienced teachers and had worked as teachers for more than 10 years. One teacher had worked more than 15 years. Two teachers had the experience of more than 5 years and for one teacher's work experience was from 1 to 5 years.

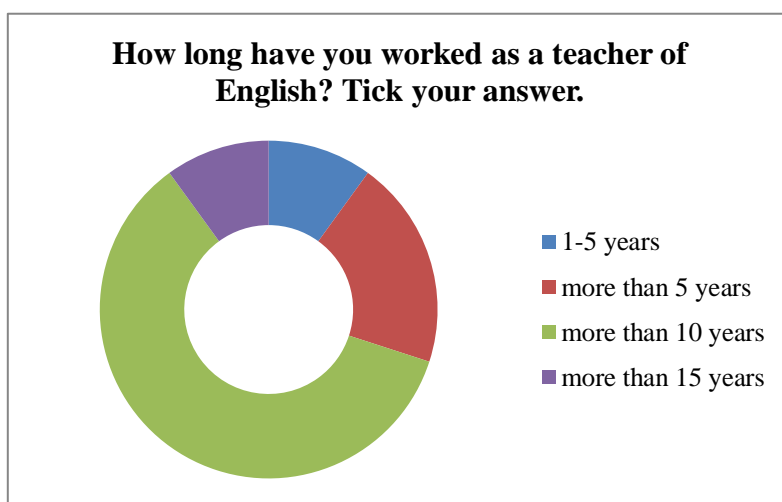


Figure 4.2.2.1. Question 1

The second charts illustrates that teachers mostly evaluated the secondary school learners' speaking skills as average. It corresponds to the students' answer in "The Questionnaire for Students" where the majority of respondents answered that they have average speaking skills. Only one respondent supposed that learners had very good speaking skills, two teachers considered that the level is good and three teachers thought that the level was low.

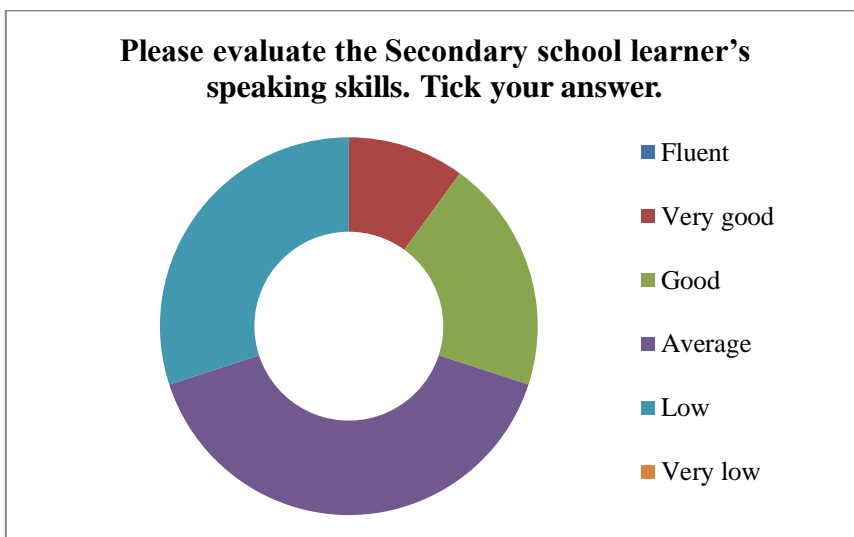


Figure 4.2.2.2. Question 2

In the third chart, it could be mentioned that teachers did not use speaking activities designed in a course book every lesson, but the majority of respondents, 7 out of 10, used them only sometimes.

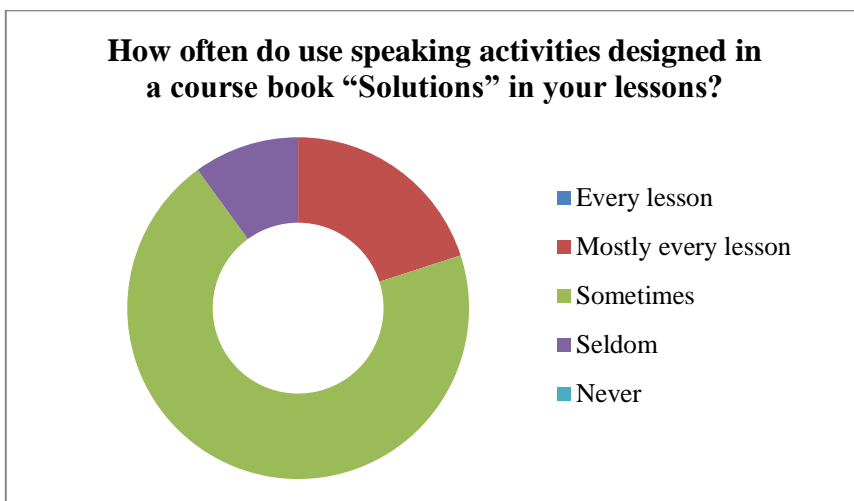


Figure 4.2.2.3. Question 3

The fourth chart presents the opinion of teachers about sufficiency of preparation activities in the course book before speaking. Four respondents consider them insufficient and four teachers were satisfied with activities presented in a course book, but preferred to prepare additional tasks themselves, 2 out of 10 teachers found the preparation tasks absolutely sufficient. It could be concluded that preparation tasks of the course book need to be diversified.

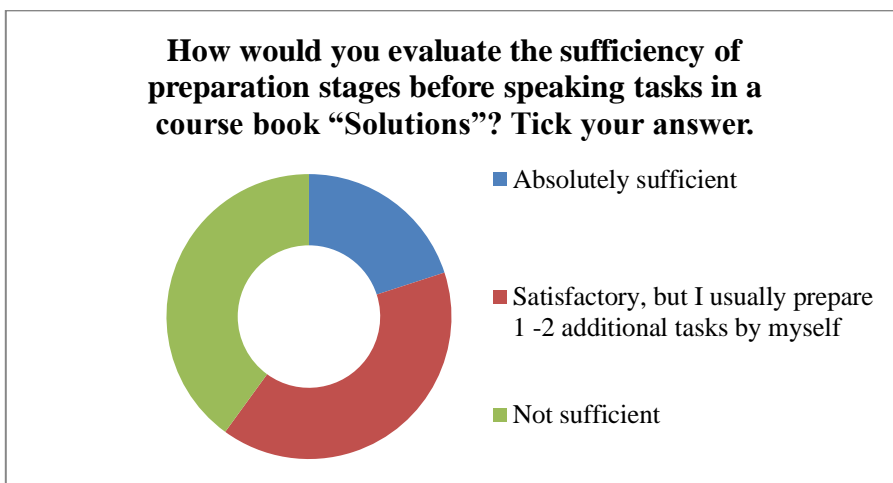


Figure 4.2.2.4. Question 4

The fifth chart illustrates that the majority of respondents, 6 out of 10 thought that speaking tasks in a course book were not varied enough. It could mean that other types of activities have to be designed in addition to the tasks in a course book.

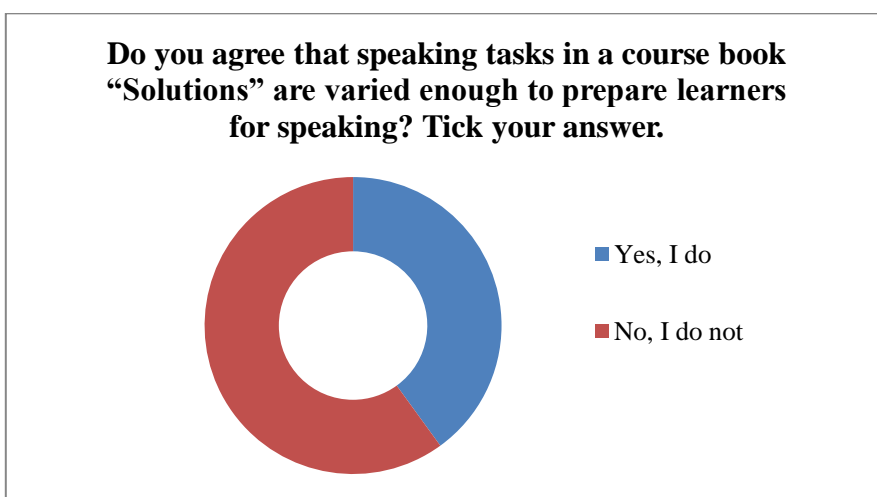


Figure 4.2.2.5. Question 5

The sixth chart shows that 4 respondents always designed their own additional speaking activities and 4 teachers did it sometimes. Only 1 teacher never designed their own additional speaking tasks. The seventh chart illustrates that all respondents considered that learners had problems in speaking, the majority of teachers thought that the main reason was stress, 3 teachers supposed that learners felt shyness while speaking and 2 respondents thought that the main reason of problems was the lack of possibilities for learners to practise speaking every day. It means that one of the main aims of the lessons should become the overcoming of these problems.

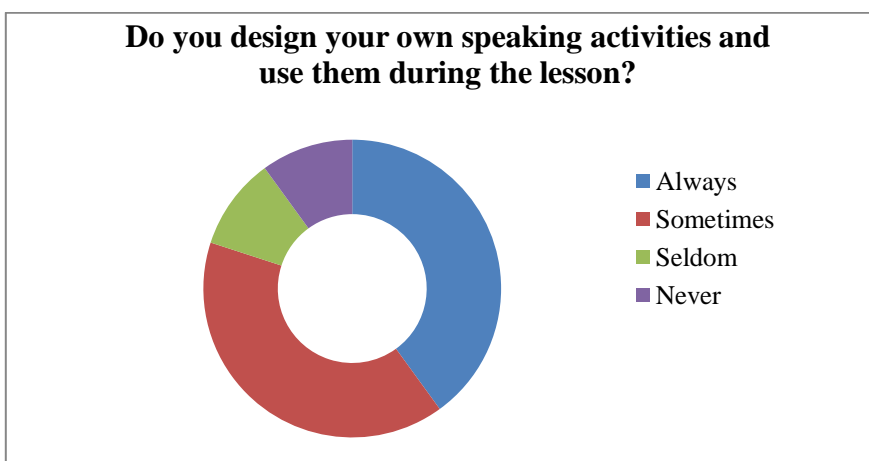


Figure 4.2.2.6. Question 6

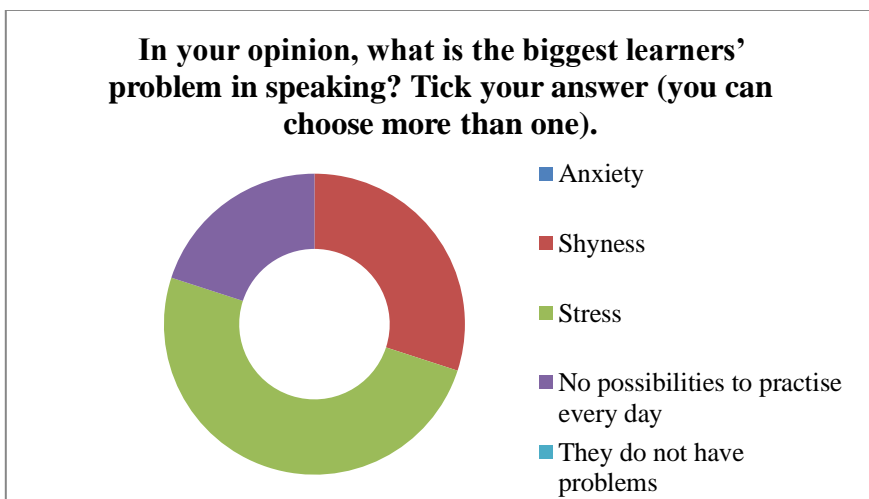


Figure 4.2.2.7. Question 7

The eighth question is about problems the teachers face while teaching speaking. The respondents mentioned that speaking activities are very time consuming and it is not always possible to give space for all learners to speak within one lesson. Among the problems teachers

named the shyness and uncertainty of learners. The respondents also mentioned that the process of designing additional speaking activities takes a lot of time and it is not always possible to realize due to the schedule.

The ninth chart demonstrates that the majority of respondents consider that the student-oriented classroom would be the most appropriate environment for learners to improve their speaking skills. It corresponds to the results shown in the 10th chart with 6 teachers out of 10 who do not often use lecture in the lessons.

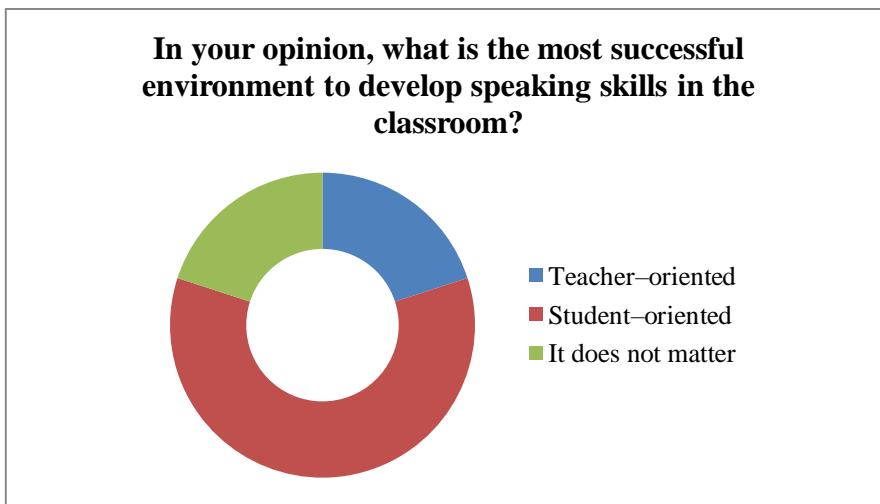


Figure 4.2.2.9. Question 9

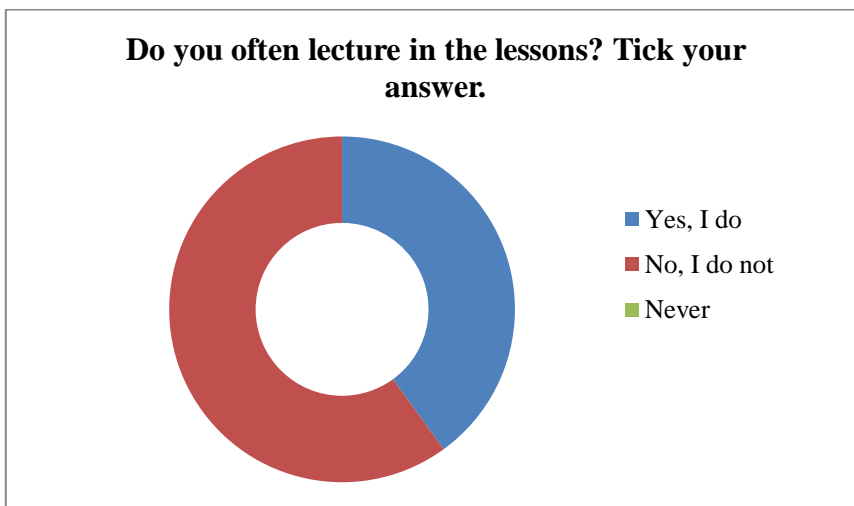


Figure 4.2.2.10. Question 10

The last two questions of the questionnaire were devoted to the experiential approach and it is possible to elicit that teachers consider that it is important to provide space for learners to share their experiences during the lesson. However, none of the respondents replied that they had used an experiential approach.

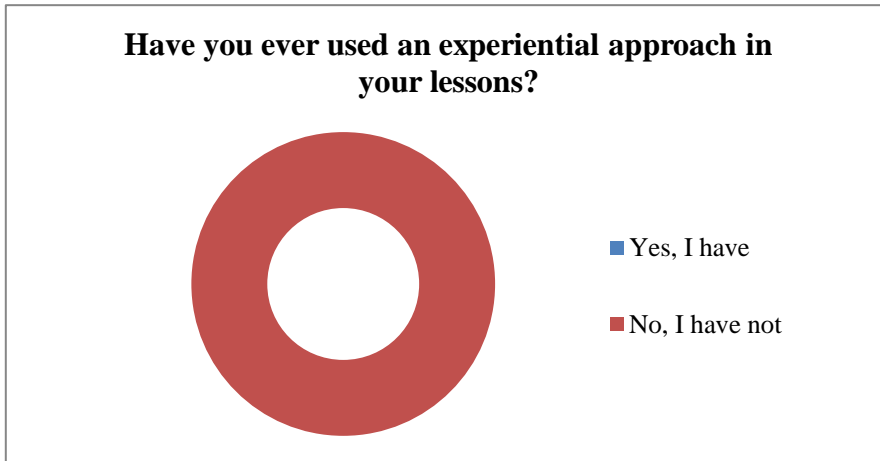


Figure 4.2.2.11. Question 11

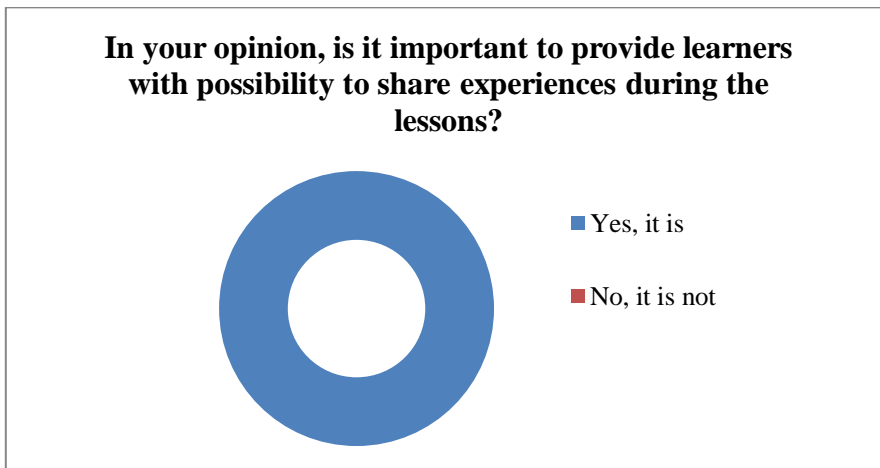


Figure 4.2.2.12. Question 12

It is possible to conclude that teachers mostly do not use only speaking activities proposed by a course book, they prefer to design additional tasks on their own. The majority of teachers face the shyness and stress of students when they are speaking. The respondents also support the importance of sharing the experiences during the lessons.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of activities based on experimental approach to improve the 11th Form's Learners' speaking skills was explored in the present paper. It was also investigated how the designed activities can help the learners to reduce stress and shyness while speaking. The hypothesis was made that the creation and implementation of activities based on experimental approach in the lessons of English could enhance learners' speaking skills and minimize their fear of speaking.

The theoretical part was devoted to the diverse nature of speaking, the characteristics of the learners who belong to the current generation and the experiential approach as one of the possibilities to reach these learners in the classroom and help them be more confident in speaking. It was stressed that through sharing the experiences, learners become more motivated and interested in the process of learning. It was also discussed that the experiential approach requires the different role of the teacher, who becomes the facilitator rather than the lecturer. It was also mentioned that the time for activating learners' schemata on the topic should be organized during the lesson based on experiential approach and teachers do not have to forget that students come to a lesson with the prior experience which should be used in the process of learning.

It was also pointed out that the experiential approach in the classroom requires different attitude to the learning process from students who will become active participants of the lesson and will be able to take responsibility for its course.

The question of assessment of students' learning from activities based on experiential approach was also raised. It was found out that learners play an integral role in this process and educators need to provide learners with possibility for self-assessment. It was also stated that the assessment of the result is not enough in an experiential approach, and that is the reason for implementation of prior, during and after assessment.

The aspect of interconnection between formal and non-formal education in the context of using the experiential approach was discussed in the theoretical part. The author of the present paper demonstrated the topicality of this interconnection through the variety of activities of European Union in the frames of Erasmus +” programme.

The short analysis of the preparation activities and speaking activities offered in a course book “Solutions” showed that they could seem monotonous for learners because all the units of

the course book are designed in the same manner. These activities are not sufficient enough to motivate speaking as they do not activate students' experience.

The observations of the author of the present paper and the analysis of the results of the pre-test presented in the case study showed that learners' stress and shyness often become an obstacle while speaking. Learners have difficulties with substitution of a word they do not know or remember with its definition. It was also identified that learners require a practice in identifying the key words and the topical sentence of the text. These factors prevent learners from achieving higher results while answering the interview and monologue during the Centralized Exam in English Language and in the lessons of English.

The analysis of the results of the questionnaire for teachers demonstrated that the majority of the respondents specified stress as the main problem learners face while speaking. The majority of the teachers also answered that they consider the student – oriented classroom as the most suitable to develop learners' speaking skills. The data collected with the help of questionnaire shows that the most part of the respondents design their own speaking activities additionally to the tasks in the course book and all the respondents consider that learners should be provided with the space to share their experiences in the lessons.

The analysis of the results of the questionnaire for students showed that the majority of the respondents feel unconfident and shy when they have to speak on public. The collected data shows that the most part of the respondents have possibility to speak only during the lessons. It can be identified that the learners mostly do not like when teachers lecture during the lessons. The majority of the learners answered that they like to work in groups and respondents mostly prefer when they have possibility to share their experiences during the lesson.

The activities based on the experiential approach described in the case study were designed by the author of the present paper and implemented in the experimental group. During the activities, learners had an opportunity to choose the topics they like, to work in groups and organize this work in the manner they prefer with minimum teacher's interference. During the discussions and presentations, learners were provided with the space to activate their previous experience, form the new one and share it with each other. One of the activities was organized in cooperation with another group of students the learners of the experimental group had not communicated with before. During that activity, learners were put in an unusual situation and they had to interview the representatives of the unknown group. It is also necessary to mention that students were asked to provide their feedback regarding the performed activities and this

feedback was the part of self-assessment and an opportunity for students to analyze the experience they received.

During the preparation and implementation of the experiential activities some issues which have to be taken into consideration while performing the experiential approach in the classroom were clarified by the author of the present paper. It is time-consuming, learners need space during the lessons to adapt themselves to the different approach, educators have to be ready to disengage from the plan of the lesson in order to create the most positive environment for learners to be the active participants of the lesson.

The results of the mid-evaluation and post-evaluation showed that the activities proposed by the author of the present diploma paper were useful for learners to improve their speaking skills and reduce the stress and shyness while speaking. It was also supported by the comments of the learners during the feedbacks when they expressed their positive emotions and confirmed that they felt more confident while speaking. However, the grammar accuracy was not considerably enhanced and this aspect is the subject of the development. It is also important to mention that the results received during the research were influenced by the limiting factors such as rather small amount of learners in the experimental group and small amount of time for the implementation of experiential activities.

Overall, it could be concluded that the experiential activities presented in the present diploma paper can be suitable for the further investigation. The author of the present paper expresses the hope that these activities may become a useful contribution for other teachers to implement them in their lessons.

THESES

1. The aim of the present paper was to develop activities based on the experiential approach and explore their effect on improvement of learners' speaking skills, reduction of speaking anxiety and enhance motivation to active participation in the English lessons.
2. The atmosphere in the classroom should be created to provide students with possibility to be active participants of the lesson and to take responsibility for the course of the lesson.
3. The activities in the classroom should provide space for learners to activate their prior experience, obtain the new one and share their experiences with each other.
4. The experiential approach requires a different role of the teacher who stops dominating in the classroom.
5. Regular feedbacks should become an integral part of the lessons in order to assess the learners' development.
6. In order to achieve the aim of the research, a case study was realized with the learners of an experimental group who were supposed to take part in the activities based on experiential approach.
7. It was hypothesized that the activities based on the experiential approach could enhance learners' speaking skills and reduce their stress and fear of speaking.
8. Different tools were used to collect the necessary data: the analysis of questionnaires for teachers and learners, pre-evaluation, mid-evaluation, post-evaluation, feedbacks, observations of the teacher.
9. The analysis of the questionnaire for the teachers demonstrated that teachers mostly face the problem of students' stress and shyness while speaking, the majority of teachers design additional speaking activities except the ones offered in the course book and do not often use lectures in their lessons.
10. The analysis of the questionnaire for learners demonstrated that the majority of students feel stressed and shyness while speaking, respondents mostly do not like when teachers lecture during the lessons and they like to share experiences with each other.
11. The results of the mid-evaluation, post-evaluation and observations of the teacher showed that the designed and implemented activities were useful for learners and helped them improve the fluency in speaking, reduce the stress and shyness and enhanced their active participation in the lesson.

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Appendix 1

Assessment scale for speaking

Task Completion (max. 10 points)		
	Task 1	Task 2
5	Responds to all questions freely, giving extended and appropriate answers.	Covers all task points in a fully satisfactory manner. The opinion expressed is well developed and thoroughly supported.
4	Responds to all questions, giving extended and appropriate answers.	Covers all task points quite satisfactorily. Gives a relevant and appropriately supported opinion on the issue raised.
3	Responds to all questions, but not all answers are extended and/or appropriate.	Covers all task points in a simple way. The opinion expressed may be insufficiently developed and/ or supported.
2	Responds to most questions, giving short and simple answers / uses memorised phrases.	Covers most task points. The conveyed meaning is not always relevant to the issue raised.
1	Provides mostly irrelevant answers, using single words and simple phrases.	Covers some task points. Gives mostly isolated, unrelated statements.
0	Not enough to evaluate.	Reading the original text aloud is not evaluated.

Vocabulary, grammar, fluency and pronunciation to be evaluated for the whole performance (max. 15 points)			
	Vocabulary	Grammar	Fluency and Pronunciation
5	Uses a wide range of vocabulary accurately and appropriately in the given context.	Grammatical accuracy is consistently high. Uses a range of complex grammatical structures. Minor errors occur rarely and are often self-corrected.	Expresses themselves fluently and with ease. Pauses are logically placed. Pronunciation is consistently accurate.
4	Uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to express themselves in the given context without frequent searching for words.	Grammatical accuracy is high. Errors in complex structures may occur which do not impede understanding. Sometimes self-corrects.	Expresses themselves quite fluently. Pauses may occur when searching for ideas. Pronunciation is accurate, minor errors possible.
3	Vocabulary range is sufficient to express themselves in a simple manner. Lexical limitations may lead to repetitions and some hesitation.	Uses a range of basic grammatical structures with reasonable accuracy. Errors in basic and complex structures can occur: some of which may interfere with understanding.	Expresses themselves with some hesitation, pausing for grammatical and lexical planning. Pronunciation errors are rare and do not impede understanding.
2	Uses a limited range of vocabulary to express themselves in the given context. Inappropriate word choice and use may occur.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic errors.	Expresses themselves with evident pauses. Speech is often disconnected. Pronunciation errors may impede understanding.
1	Vocabulary is insufficient to deal with the tasks. Has difficulty in making word choices.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns. Makes errors in basic grammatical structures which impede understanding.	Expresses themselves with much pausing. Produces very short, isolated utterances, impeding understanding. Pronunciation errors partly impede understanding.
0	Not enough to evaluate.		

Total Points: 25

<https://visc.gov.lv/>

Appendix 2

Experiential approach to improve learners' ability to speak on the spot using the words and definitions connected with the topic

Ambitious - having a strong wish to be successful, powerful, or rich

Argumentative – often arguing or wanting to argue

Assertive - someone who is assertive behaves confidently and is not frightened to say what they want or believe

Considerate - caring about and respectful of others

Dedicated - believing that something is very important and giving a lot of time and energy to it

Eccentric - strange or unusual, sometimes in an amusing way

Immature – not behaving in a way that is as calm and wise as people expect from someone of your age

Outgoing - friendly and energetic and finding it easy and enjoyable to be with others

Responsible - to have control and authority over something or someone and the duty of taking care of it, him, or her

Selfish - someone who is selfish only thinks of their own advantage

Sensible - based on or acting on good judgment and practical ideas or understanding

Serious - a serious person is quiet, thinks carefully about things, and does not laugh a lot

Sociable – sociable people like to meet and spend time with other people

Stubborn - a stubborn person is determined to do what he or she wants and refuses to do anything else

Unconventional - different from what is usual or from the way most people do things

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Appendix 3

Experiential approach through a mini–project to improve learners’ speaking skills

Answer the following general questions about electricity: What is electricity? How is electricity generated? How is electricity transported to your house? How do the circuits in your house work? Please present your answers. You can choose the form of the presentation yourself, but you are provided with a flip chart and three markers of different colours. Your presentation has to involve 3 parts: introduction, body part, and conclusion. In your group you have to agree about the role you fulfill: a person who looks for information, a person who prepares a presentation. One role can be fulfilled by several people. Please do not forget to include the description of roles in your presentation and explain why a person has been chose for a particular role. You have to keep in mind that all members of your group have to speak during the presentation and you are not allowed to read. You have 15 minutes for preparation and 3 minutes for presentation. Use the web-sites below:

<https://learn.sparkfun.com/tutorials/what-is-electricity/all>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llPdWHZaCOY>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-electricity-definition-lesson-quiz.html>

<https://www.alliantenergykids.com/AllAboutEnergy/HowElectricityIsMade>

<http://www.ecofriendlykids.co.uk/how-electricity-made-easy-explanation.html>

<https://www.hometips.com/how-it-works/electrical-panel-circuit-breakers.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnnpLaKsqGU>

The Process

1. You can explore the web-sites together as a group and agree on information you are going to use in your presentation;
2. As soon as you have agreed on information, agree on the roles of members of your group. It is very important to define a leader;
3. The leader of a group organizes its work and provides the group's members with their responsibilities mentioned in the description of the task. The leader monitors the fulfillment of the tasks. All the steps of the task can be fulfilled at the same time.

Appendix 4

Experiential approach through a mini–project to improve learners’ speaking skills



www.shutterstock.com • 1395330164

Description: A computer mouse – a small device that you move across a surface in order to move a cursor on your computer screen. It is wired. It has two buttons and a scroll wheel between them.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Task:

1. Your task is to improve the existing device with a special function (functions) to win over the customers.
2. You have to present your upgraded device.
3. Your presentation has to involve 3 parts: introduction, body part, and conclusion.
4. In your group you have to agree about the roles: a person who is going to be a leader, a person who looks for information, a person who prepares a presentation, a person who presents. One role can be realized by several people or you can add any role you think would be useful for your presentation. Please do not forget to include the description of roles in your presentation and explain why this person has been chosen for a particular role.
5. Keep in mind that all members of your group have to speak during the presentation and you are not allowed to read.
6. You have 30 minutes to prepare and 3 minutes for presentation.

Important!

Before you start working explore the web-sites below to understand what the market offers:

https://ces19.mapyourshow.com/7_0/exhibitor/exhibitor-details.cfm?ExhID=T0006185

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ubSi4U5Hyc>

<http://wholesale-electronics.hktdc.com/>

The steps of your presentation:

1. Present the members of your group and explain their roles.
2. Briefly describe the device before your improvements.
3. Present your new device: name, target users.
4. Present the improvements you have made.
5. Explain why and how your new device could attract the new customers.
6. Create a memorable slogan for your device.



www.shutterstock.com • 757097446

Description: Headphones – a wired device with parts that cover each ear through which you can listen to something, such as music, without other people hearing.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Task:

1. Your task is to improve the existing device with a special function (functions) to win over the customers.
2. You have to present your upgraded device.
3. Your presentation has to involve 3 parts: introduction, body part, and conclusion.
4. In your group you have to agree about the roles: a person who is going to be a leader, a person who looks for information, a person who prepares a presentation, a person who presents. One role can be realized by several people or you can add any role you think would be useful for your presentation. Please do not forget to include the description of roles in your presentation and explain why this person has been chosen for a particular role.
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ubSi4U5Hyc>

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The steps of your presentation:

1. Present the members of your group and explain their roles
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3. Present your new device: name, target users
4. Present the improvements you have made
5. Explain why and how your new device could attract the new customers
6. Create a memorable slogan for your device



www.shutterstock.com • 676906525

Description: Extension lead - an extra wire used to take electricity to a piece of electrical equipment when it is an extra distance from the nearest socket.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Task:

1. Your task is to improve the existing device with a special function (functions) to win over the customers.
2. You have to present your upgraded device.
3. Your presentation has to involve 3 parts: introduction, body part, and conclusion.
4. In your group you have to agree about the roles: a person who is going to be a leader, a person who looks for information, a person who prepares a presentation, a person who presents. One role can be realized by several people or you can add any role you think would be useful for your presentation. Please do not forget to include the description of roles in your presentation and explain why this person has been chosen for a particular role.
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The steps of your presentation:

1. Present the members of your group and explain their roles
2. Briefly describe the device before your improvements
3. Present your new device: name, target users
4. Present the improvements you have made
5. Explain why and how your new device could attract the new customers
6. Create a memorable slogan for your device



Description: Speakers – a piece of electrical equipment through which recorded or broadcast sound can be heard.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Task:

1. Your task is to improve the existing device with a special function (functions) to win over the customers.
2. You have to present your upgraded device.
3. Your presentation has to involve 3 parts: introduction, body part, and conclusion.
4. In your group you have to agree about the roles: a person who is going to be a leader, a person who looks for information, a person who prepares a presentation, a person who presents. One role can be realized by several people or you can add any role you think would be useful for your presentation. Please do not forget to include the description of roles in your presentation and explain why this person has been chosen for a particular role.
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1. Present the members of your group and explain their roles
2. Briefly describe the device before your improvements
3. Present your new device: name, target users
4. Present the improvements you have made
5. Explain why and how your new device could attract the new customers
6. Create a memorable slogan for your device



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Description: Keyboard - the wired board with a set of keys on a computer, etc. to type information or that you use in order to make it work.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Task:

1. Your task is to improve the existing device with a special function (functions) to win over the customers.
2. You have to present your upgraded device.
3. Your presentation has to involve 3 parts: introduction, body part, and conclusion.
4. In your group you have to agree about the roles: a person who is going to be a leader, a person who looks for information, a person who prepares a presentation, a person who presents. One role can be realized by several people or you can add any role you think would be useful for your presentation. Please do not forget to include the description of roles in your presentation and explain why this person has been chosen for a particular role.
5. Keep in mind that all members of your group have to speak during the presentation and you are not allowed to read.
6. You have 30 minutes to prepare and 3 minutes for presentation.

Important!

Before you start working explore the web-sites below to understand what the market offers:

https://ces19.mapyourshow.com/7_0/exhibitor/exhibitor-details.cfm?ExhID=T0006185

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ubSi4U5Hyc>

<http://wholesale-electronics.hktdc.com/>

The steps of your presentation:

1. Present the members of your group and explain their roles
2. Briefly describe the device before your improvements
3. Present your new device: name, target users
4. Present the improvements you have made
5. Explain why and how your new device could attract the new customers
6. Create a memorable slogan for your device

Appendix 5

Experiential approach through the interconnection of groups to improve learners' speaking skills

Step 1: Work in a group. Explore the web-sites listed below. Choose one web-site which in your opinion contains the most useful information.

<https://www.boredpanda.com/>

<https://kidshealth.org/#catmental-health>

<https://theconversation.com/uk>

Step 2: Explore the web-site you have chosen. Choose one text which is the most interesting for you.

Step 3: Read through the text you have chosen. Discuss the text in your group.

Step 4: In your group come up with five broad questions based on the information you have obtained from the text. Remember that your questions have to be possible to answer without reading the text, but connected with the topic of the text. Write your questions down on the piece of paper.

Step 5: Choose one member of the group who is going to be an interviewer and go to another group to collect the answers to the questions you have written. The interviewer has to write down the answers of all members of a group he is going to interview and come back to an initial group.

Step 6: Discuss the answers in your group.

Step 7: Make any changes to your questions if necessary in order to have them absolutely clear and possible to answer.

Step 8: Present your questions and answers you have got from other groups. Explain why you have made changes to your questions if any. Please keep in mind that all members of your group have to speak during the presentation and you are not allowed to read.

Step 9: Go to the group of unknown students. They will be divided into groups of 3-4 people. Your task is to collect the answers to the questions you have written. You have to interview as

many people as you can. Write down the answers. You have a few minutes to organize your work in your own way.

Step 10: Present the answers you have received. Keep in mind that all members of your group have to speak during the presentation and you are not allowed to read.

Appendix 6

Questionnaire for Students

1. Tick your favourite activity in English lessons and explain why (in one sentence).
 - Reading
 - Listening
 - Writing
 - Speaking

2. How often do you speak English?
 - Every day
 - Only in the lessons of English
 - Never

3. Do you like the speaking activities presented in the course book “Solutions”? Tick your answer.
 - Yes, I do
 - No, I do not
 - Difficult to answer

4. Evaluate your speaking skills in English. Tick your answer.
 - Fluent
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Average
 - Low
 - Very low

5. Describe your feeling about public speaking. Tick the correct answer.

- Confident
- Nervous
- Unconfident
- Shy
- Relaxed

6. Do you prefer dialogues, monologues, presentations? Tick your answer.

- Dialogues
- Monologues
- Presentations (in groups of 3 – 5 people)

7. How do you prefer to work during the lessons? Tick your answer.

- Individually
- In pairs
- In groups

8. Do you like when teachers give lectures in the lesson of English? Tick the correct answer.

- Yes, I do
- No, I do not
- I do not know

9. Have you ever heard about experiential learning? Tick your answer.

- Yes, I have
- No, I have not

10. Do you like to share your experience with others? Tick your answer and explain why.

- Yes, I do
- No, I do not

11. Do you like when other people tell you about their experience? Tick your answer and explain why.

- Yes, I do
- No, I do not

Appendix 7

Questionnaire for Teachers

1. How long have you worked as a teacher of English? Tick your answer.
 - 1 – 5 years
 - more than 5
 - more than 10
 - more than 15

2. Please evaluate the Secondary school learner's speaking skills. Tick your answer.
 - Fluent
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Average
 - Low
 - Very low

3. How often do use speaking activities designed in a course book "Solutions" in your lessons?
 - Every lesson
 - Mostly every lesson
 - Sometimes
 - Seldom
 - Never

4. How would you evaluate the sufficiency of preparation stages before speaking tasks in a course book "Solutions"? Tick your answer.

- Absolutely sufficient
 - Satisfactory, but I usually prepare 1 -2 additional tasks by myself
 - Not sufficient
5. Do you agree that speaking tasks in a course book “Solutions” are varied enough to prepare learners for speaking? Tick your answer.
- Yes, I do
 - No, I do not
6. Do you design your own speaking activities and use them during the lesson?
- Always
 - Sometimes
 - Seldom
 - Never
7. In your opinion, what is the biggest learners’ problem in speaking? Tick your answer (you can choose more than one).
- Anxiety
 - Shyness
 - Stress
 - No possibilities to practise every day
 - They do not have problems
8. What are the biggest problems the teachers face while teaching speaking? Express your opinion.
9. In your opinion, what is the most successful environment to develop speaking skills in the classroom?

- Teacher-oriented
- Student-oriented
- It does not matter

10. Do you often lecture in the lessons? Tick your answer.

- Yes, I do
- No, I do not
- Never

11. Have you ever used an experiential approach in your lessons?

- Yes, I have
- No, I have not

12. In your opinion, is it important to provide learners with possibility to share experiences during the lessons?

- Yes, it is
- No, it is not

Dokumentārā lapa

Diplomdarbs “Experiential Learning Activities as a Tool to Improve the 11th Form’s Students’ Speaking Skills in the Lessons of English in Riga Vocational School” – “Empīriskajā metodē izstrādāto aktivitāšu ietekme angļu valodas runāšanas apguvei 11. klases skolēniem Rīgas tehnikumā”

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Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

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(vārds, uzvārds, paraksts)

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